THEISTIC EVOLUTIONISTS' FORUM

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Editor: E.T. Babinski

The only national periodical focusing on both fundamentalist and atheist distortions of science and faith, while providing a hearing for apologists of either side.

The Retreat of Fundamentalism--Fundamentalism is basically the assertion that there are no errors to be found in the Bible. The Bible is viewed as 100% truthful in all respects: scientifically, historically, morally, and spiritually. Thus, all Bible verses are to be interpreted as literally as possible. Keep in mind the 'literally as possible' phrase. It is the key in any definition of fundamentalism, for when a completely literal interpretation of a verse becomes impossible, due to an advance in human knowledge, then the fundamentalist retreats to a less than literal or symbolic interpretation of that verse. Examples of this strategic retreat of fundamentalism are abundant:

LITERAL WORD OF THE BIBLE	FUNDAMENTALIST RETREAT
The rabbit...chews cud (Lev 11.6)	Though the rabbit does not in fact chew cud like a cow or camel (which regurgitate their food and re-chew it, the ball of food being known as a 'cud'), rabbits may have appeared to chew cud to the ancient Hebrews. This explanation is a retreat from the literal truth of scripture since our understanding of Lev 11.6 is now based solely on appearances.
A man's heart and bowels direct his decisions. Evil or compassionate acts originate within them. (assorted Bible verses)	The heart and bowels, organs of noisy, active appearance, naturally attracted the attention of the ancients moreso than the quiet brain, which is never spoken of even in a poetic capacity as the true seat of man's decisions. However, today we recognize how overwhelmingly important the organ of the brain is. And we are more likely to warn a friend "not to lose his head" than to be "strong of heart." Thus, modern man is no longer impressed as greatly (either anatomically or symbolically) by the ancient notion of the all-directing heart of man. And the credibility gap will undoubtedly keep widening between fundamentalist and modern notions of the heart.
The Bible states that God blew on the dust to make it come alive: God formed man from dust and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul (Gen 2.7). Birds, cattle, beasts and man...all in whose nostrils was the breath of life (Gen 2.19; 7.21, 22). Who knows that the breath of man ascends upward and the breath of the beast descends downward to the earth (at death)? (Eccles 3.19,20).	Modern scientific opinion on the soul centers round a mental dimension, a dimension linked with the brain, in other words, a dimension not "breathed into man's nostrils." Thus, fundamentalists de-literalize all verses about man's breath ascending upwards at death, regardless of ancient Hebrew notions on the subject.
The Bible states that God personally directs the weather: He says to the snow, 'Fall on the earth,' and to the rain, 'Be strong'...He draws up the drops of water which the clouds pour down... He directs the clouds...By His windy breath the heavens are cleared...from His breath ice is made...His thunder is incomprehensible (Job 26.13,14; 36.27; 37.6,10,12)	Fundamentalists assert with the rest of us that the verses to the left are poetry, a remnant of the days when meteorology was a complete mystery to man. God does not breath to form ice any more than He breathed to form man (a minor dig at Creationism literally understood). Furthermore, I'd like to see a weatherman announcing that "God breathed on Detroit today, and His mighty thunder incomprehensibly shatter-

LITERAL WORD OF THE BIBLE

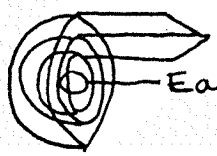
The Bible states that God lives in heaven, above us: He is the Most High God (Gen 14.18; Ps 9.2). He sits above...the earth (Isa 40.22). His seat...in the heavens... in the tent which the Lord pitched (above the earth) (Heb 8.1,2). He bowed the heavens and came down (2 Sam 22.10). The Lord came down (Gen 11.5). He (Jesus) ascended into heaven (Acts 1.9-12). God is in heaven, and you are on the earth (Eccles 5.2). The heavens are (therefore) the heavens of the Lord; But the earth He has given to the sons of men (Ps 115.16).

ed several windows in the Chrysler building." Certainly Fundamentalism has retreated to a 'purely symbolic' position here as in the other cases cited above.

FUNDAMENTALIST RETREAT

Most fundamentalists agree that God does not live in the sky overhead. And furthermore, that He does not have to 'come down' to earth any more than He has to 'ascend to His heavenly throne.' In our vast cosmos, God is, in a manner of speaking, everywhere. However, the Bible remains adamant about heaven's literal location, above the earth ("and God called the firmament heaven" Gen 1.8), and God's habitation therein. For you see, it was quite common for ancient men to imagine gods inhabiting the sky. The Babylonians built towers or ziggurats reaching to heaven to attract the sky gods' attention (Gen 11.5). In similar fashion, Abraham ascended a mountain to sacrifice his son to God. Moses spoke to God from a mountain top (Ex 19.20). Jerusalem was built on a holy hill nicknamed Mt. Zion. Jesus was transfigured on a mountain top, and he ascended into heaven from Mt. Olive. All of this implies that the notion of God living in heaven overhead was a literal belief of the ancient Hebrews. This is also borne out by Ps 115.16 wherein God keeps the heavens for Himself and gives man the earth. The heavens are thus too holy for man, they are God's abode. (Our recent invasion of God's abode by landing a man on the moon and planting a flag there actually gave some fundamentalists cold chills!) I myself do not see how fundamentalists can avoid stating outright that the ancient Hebrew idea of heaven was false and therefore scripture has at least one purely scientific error in it. And if fundamentalists will not acknowledge this, about heaven, where God lives, overhead, then I cannot bear to hear what they have to tell me about Bible verses that depict the dead, living "under the earth," beneath our feet (Philippians 2.10; Revelation 5.13)!

For the sake of those fundamentalists who refuse to acknowledge their retreat from a literal interpretation of the Bible in the above cases, I hesitate to continue, for fear that what follows may overwhelm them entirely. Still, the fact remains that the ancient Hebrews had a highly developed, picturesque view of the cosmos which was shared nearly universally by the ancients: (See diagrams, pages 3-6). Notice the general agreement among the ancients that above their heads lay a heavenly dome, or firmament, while around them lay the flat circle of the earth. This is, of course, too much for any fundamentalist to bear, let alone symbolize away. In fact, having at one time been a fundamentalist and Creationist myself, I was driven for several months to try and debunk the fact that the Hebrew conception of the cosmos was so much like 'all the rest.' The answer, I eventually discovered, was that I could no longer remain a fundamentalist, nor a Creationist. (For those who would like to read about the researches that led me inexorably to that conclusion, I still have my original manuscript, Does the Bible Teach 'Scientific' Creationism? and will photocopy all 122 pages, and mail it to all inquirers for $12.00, which includes postage.) This flat-earth, heaven-domed cosmos was the prevailing view for centuries, until it was superseded by the notion of a spherical earth, which was discovered in the writings of an ancient Greek philosopher, Pythagoras. It was in his day that people stopped speaking of the 'circle of the earth' and began calling it a ball. Yet, the earth was still imagined to lie at the exact center of the cosmos, with the stars, sun, and planets spinning around it. The idea of a firmament, or firm heavens, was also retained, since people imagined the ball of the earth lying suspended in the middle of a series of heavenly spheres:



Heavenly Spheres (pictured in cut-away form)

(Continued on page 7)

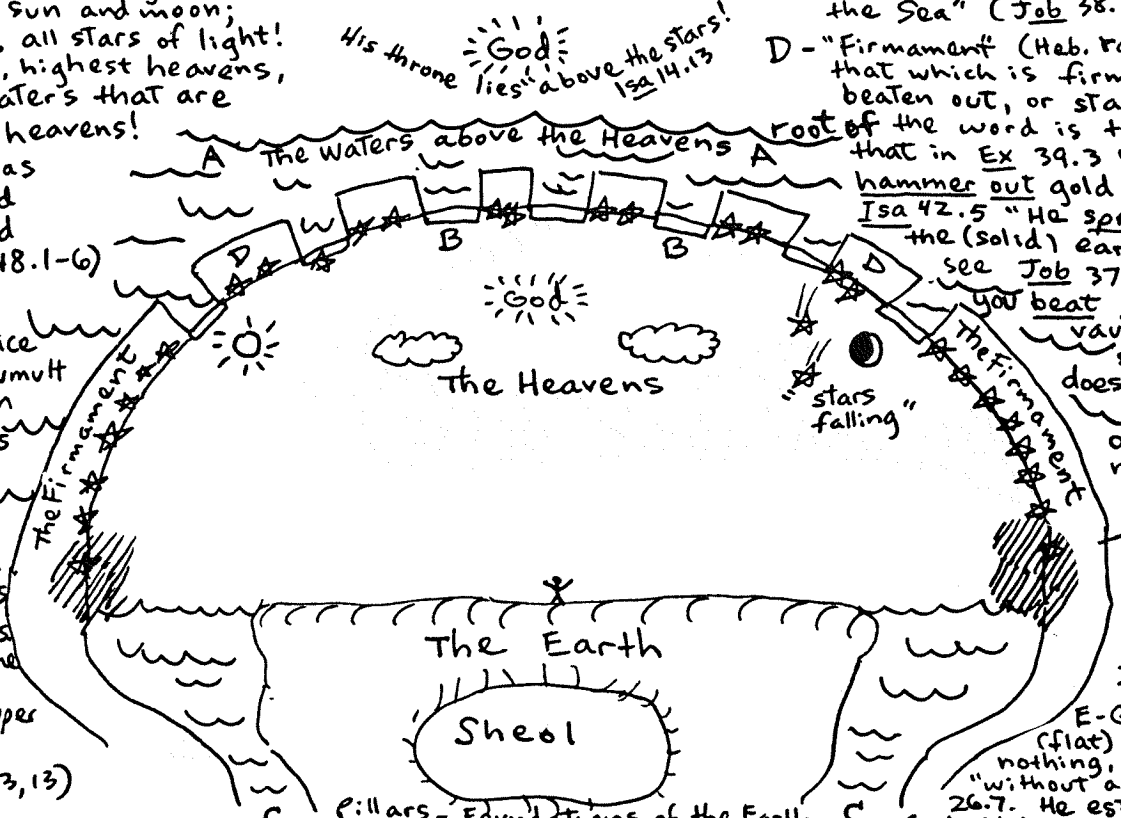
A - Praise the Lord from the heavens; Praise Him in the heights! Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all stars of light! Praise Him, highest heavens, And the waters that are above the heavens! (which) He has established forever and ever (Ps 148.1-6)

when God utters His voice there is a tumult of waters in the heavens (Jer 10.13)

He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters; He waters the mountains from His upper chambers (Ps 104.3,13)

B - "Floodgates or sluices" (Gen 7.11 ; 8.2)

THE HEBREW COSMOS (SIDE VIEW)



C - "Fountains of the Deep (Gen 7.11 ; 8.2) or "Springs of the Sea" (Job 38.16)

D - "Firmament" (Heb. raqia) means that which is firmly hammered, beaten out, or stamped. the root of the word is the same as that in Ex 39.3 "they did hammer out gold leaf" and Isa 42.5 "He spread out the (solid) earth." Also see Job 37.18 "Can you beat out the vault of the skies as He does, hard as a mirror of cast metal?"

Pillars - Foundations of Heaven (Job 26.11 II Sam 22.8)

E - God hangs the (flat) earth on nothing, literally, "without anything" Job 26.7. He establishes (upholds) the ends of the earth Pr 30.4.

E "On what do its supporting pillars rest?" Job 38.16 "(Can) the foundations of the earth be searched out below?" Jer 31.37

A - Jerusalem sits at the "center of the world" (Ez 5.5; 38.11,12 Ps 22.27 ; 59.13)

B - may all nations serve the king of Israel... may he rule from sea to sea, and from the River (Euphrates) to the ends of the earth! (Ps 72.8)

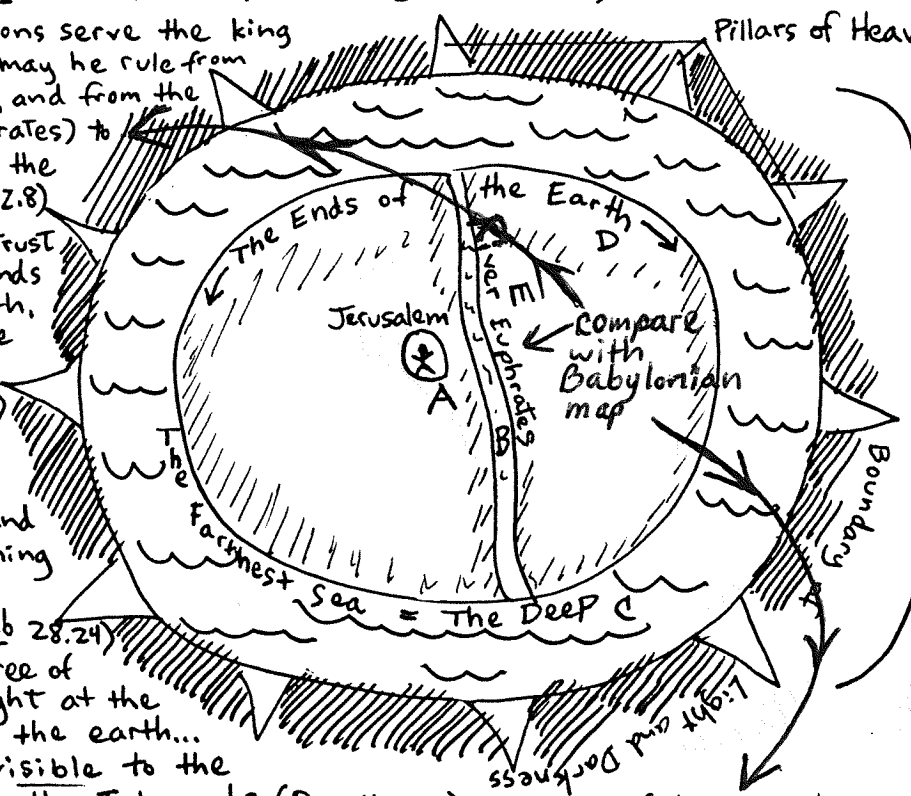
C - God is the trust of all the ends of the earth, and of the farthest sea (Ps 65.5)

D - He looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens (Job 28.24)

I saw a tree of great height at the center of the earth... it was visible to the earth's farthest bounds (Dan 4.10-11)

(A spherical earth just will not do for these verses.)

THE HEBREW COSMOS (TOP VIEW)



He who sits above the circle* of the earth (Isa 40.22)

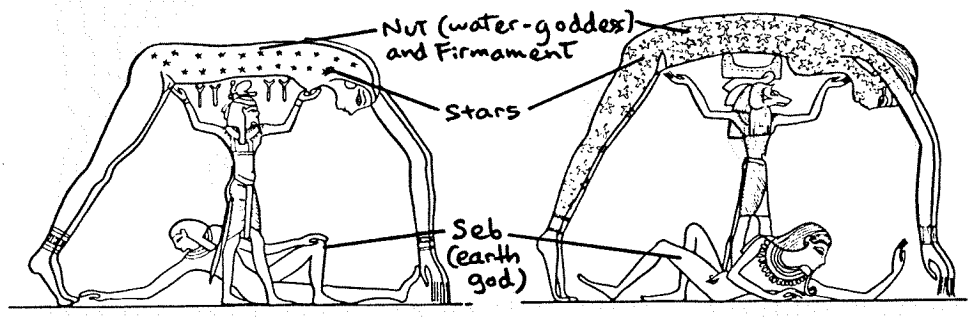
He inscribed a circle on the face of the deep (Pro 8.27)

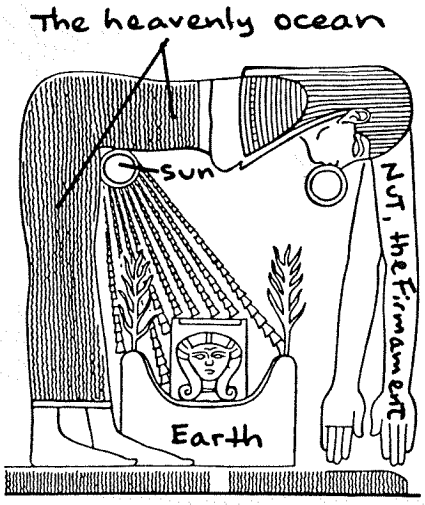
He has inscribed a circle on the surface of the waters, at the boundary of light and darkness (Job 26.10)

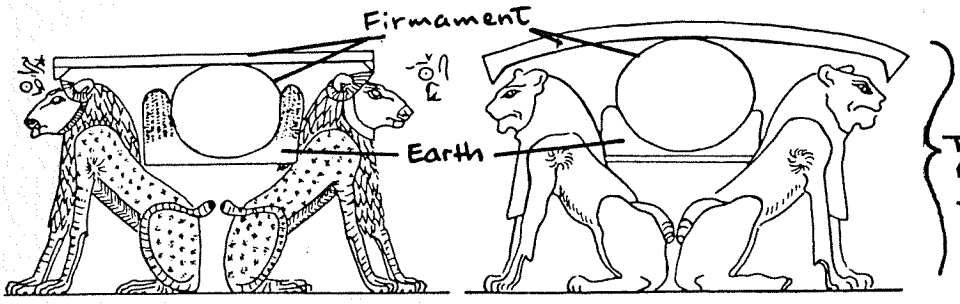
E - One of the original rivers of paradise, the "great" river (Gen 2.14 ; Josh 1.4)

*Instead of "(flat) circle," Isa could have wrote "ball" of the earth since he'd used the word "ball" elsewhere (Isa 22.18). Therefore, he must have prefered the assumption that the earth was a (flat) circle!

THE EGYPTIAN COSMOS* (SIDE VIEW)

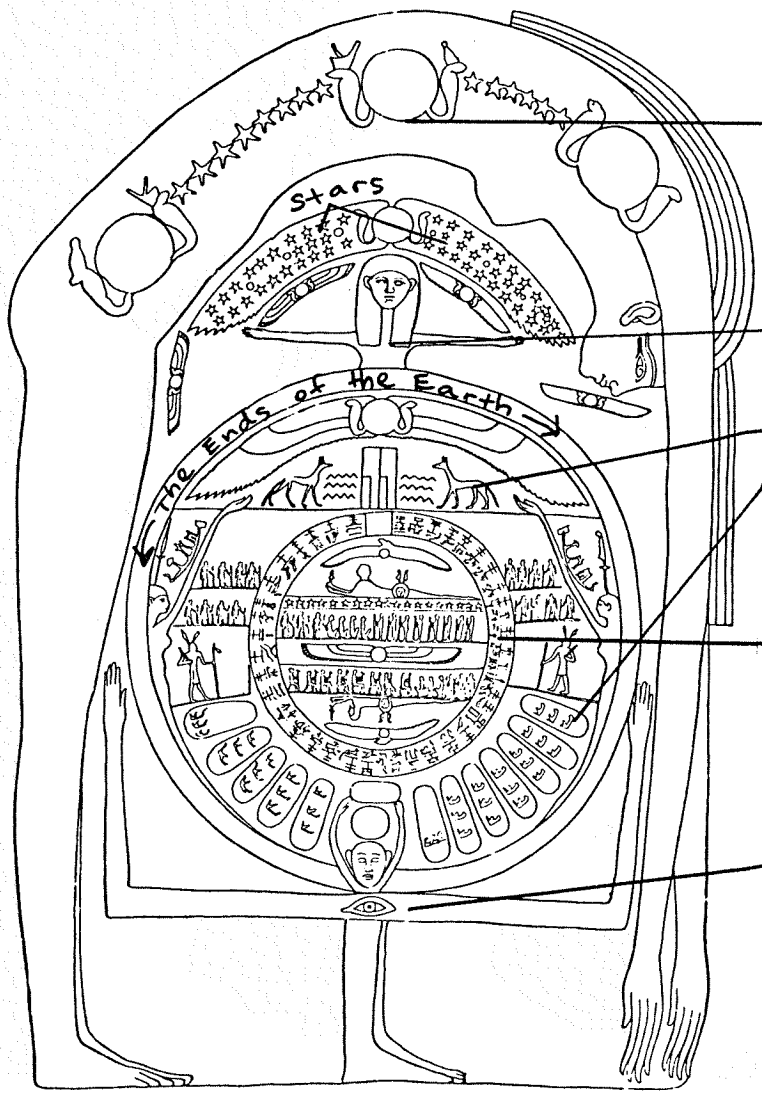






The wall-ring Egyptian representation of the firmament. The celestial dome had to be capable of restraining the waters of the heavenly ocean.

THE EGYPTIAN COSMOS (TOP VIEW)



Nu, the great world-ocean that later ancient nations believed to surround Creation.

Nut, the firmament

Outermost circle of earth contains symbols for 'desert' 'jackals' 'subdued foreign lands' and 'tomb.'

Egypt at center of flat circle of the earth (the 41 signs of Egyptian nomes).

Earth disk upheld by sign whose feet and eye identify it as a personal power. Egyptian texts agree that divine power was "the support of all things;" "laid the foundations of all things by my will."

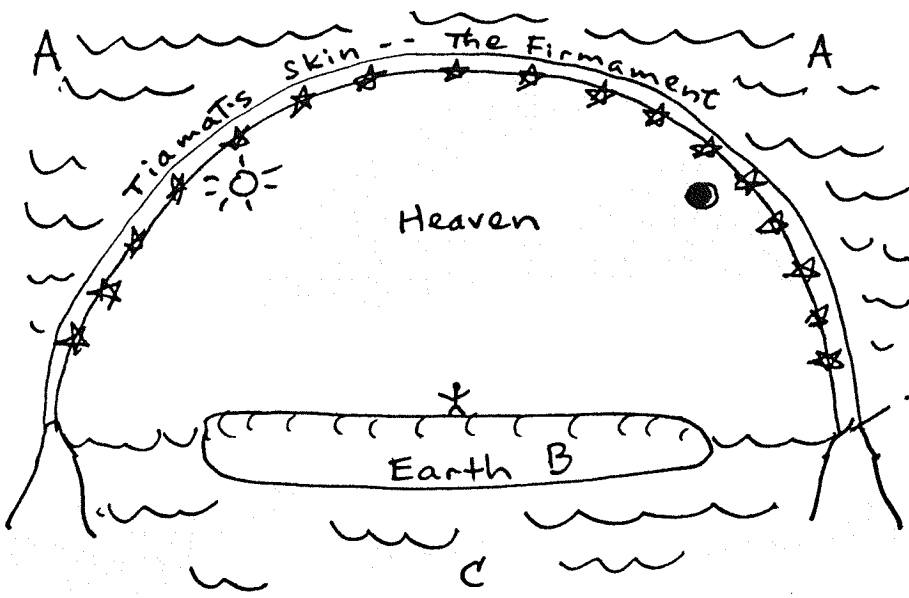
*Ancient Egyptian iconography from the Symbolism of the Biblical World by Othmar Keel, NY, Seabury Press, 1978.

THE BABYLONIAN COSMOS*
(SIDE VIEW)

A - Heavenly ocean. Marduk set guards" to prevent Tiamat's waters from escaping too freely."

B - Floating earth disc. "Marduk laid a reed mat (the earth) on the face of the waters"

C - Apsu (the deep) lying beneath the earth.



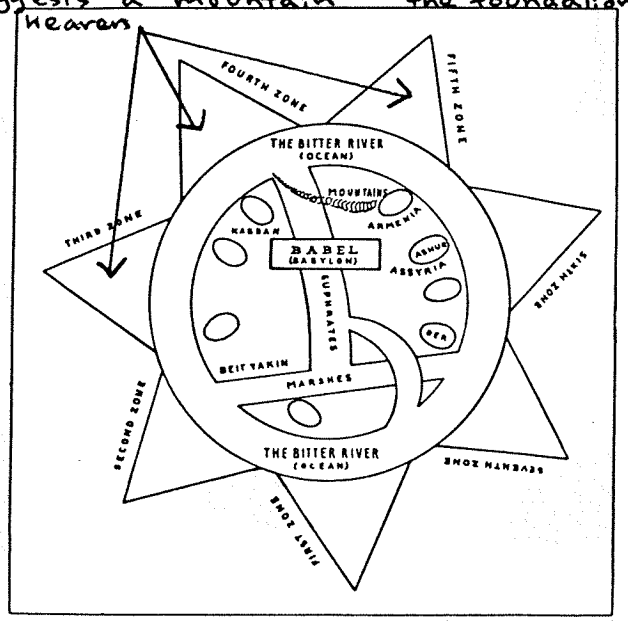
*Based on Babylonian Creation Accounts

The "foundations of heaven" (Enuma Elish, V: 19-20)

THE BABYLONIAN COSMOS
(TOP VIEW)



The marginal note pertaining to the fifth zone indicates that its height is 60 subban (1598.4 meters). That, along with its shape, suggests a mountain -- the foundations of Heaven



Babylonian world-map and its reconstruction.

The Babylonians located the home of the dead beneath the earth, the entrance to this abode lying beyond the farthest known western horizon. Compare this with the Hebrew "boundary of light and darkness," the Greek Hades, lying beyond the encircling sea, and the Egyptian outer circle of 'desert,' 'tomb,' 'jackals,' etc. Thus, the ancients agreed that the end of the earth was a region of fearful darkness and perhaps death. "From the end of the earth I call to Thee, when my heart is faint..." Ps 61.2.

THE DOME OF HEAVEN

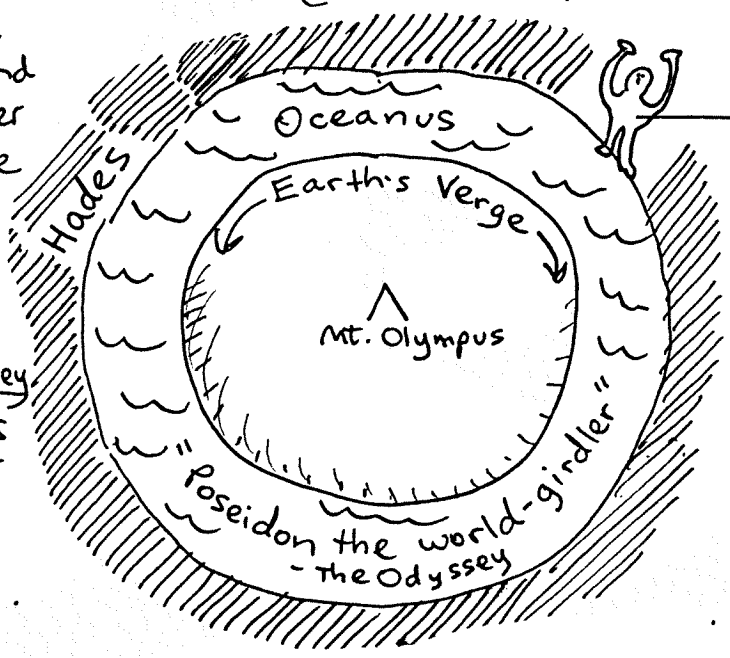
The skies of our ancestors hung low overhead. When the ancient Sumerian, Chinese, and Korean astronomers trudged up the steps of their squat stone ziggurats to study the stars, they had reason to assume that they obtained a better view that way, not, as we would say today, because they had surmounted a little dust and turbulent air, but because they had got themselves appreciably closer to the stars. The Egyptians regarded the sky as a kind of tent canopy, supported by the mountains that demarked the four corners of the earth, and as the mountains were not all that high, neither, presumably, were the heavens; the gigantic Egyptian constellations hovered close over humankind, as proximate as a mother bending to kiss a sleeping child. The Greek sun was so nearby that Icarus had achieved an altitude of only a few thousand feet when its heat melted the wax in his wings, sending the poor boy plunging into the uncaring Aegean. Nor were the Greek stars significantly more distant; when Phaethon lost control of the sun it veered into the stars as suddenly as a swerving chariot striking a signpost, then promptly rebounded to earth (toasting the Ethiopians black on its way down).

TIMOTHY FERRIS

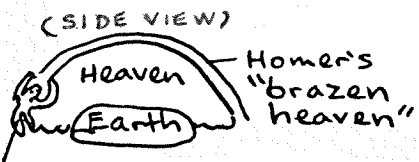
COMING OF AGE IN THE MILKY WAY

THE GREEK COSMOS

(TOP VIEW)



(SIDE VIEW)



"We had attained earth's verge and its girdling river of Ocean... here an endless dreadful night is spread over its melancholy people" - The Odyssey

Odysseus travels to an island at the edge of the world to talk with the dead.

For the Greeks, as far as the civilized world was concerned, Olympus or the temple at Delphi occupied the center of the world.

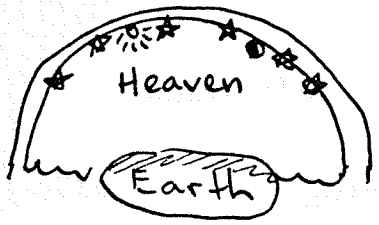
Atlas, whose are the pillars that prop the lofty sky" -- The Odyssey

Atlas stood in the west in the sea beyond the Mediterranean, that is called Atlantic after him. He bore on his shoulders either the heaven or the two pillars which the Greeks supposed kept apart earth and heaven.

This view of the cosmos remained popular even till the 5th century B.C., when knowledge of true (as opposed to spiritual) geography had begun to accumulate. As Herodotus wrote, "I smile when I see many persons describing the circumference of the earth, who have no sound reason to guide them; they describe the ocean flowing round the earth, which is made circular as if by a lathe, and make Asia equal to Europe" Histories IV, 39.

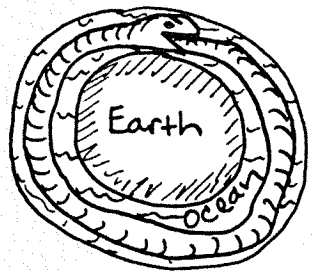
THE NORSE COSMOS

(SIDEVIEW)



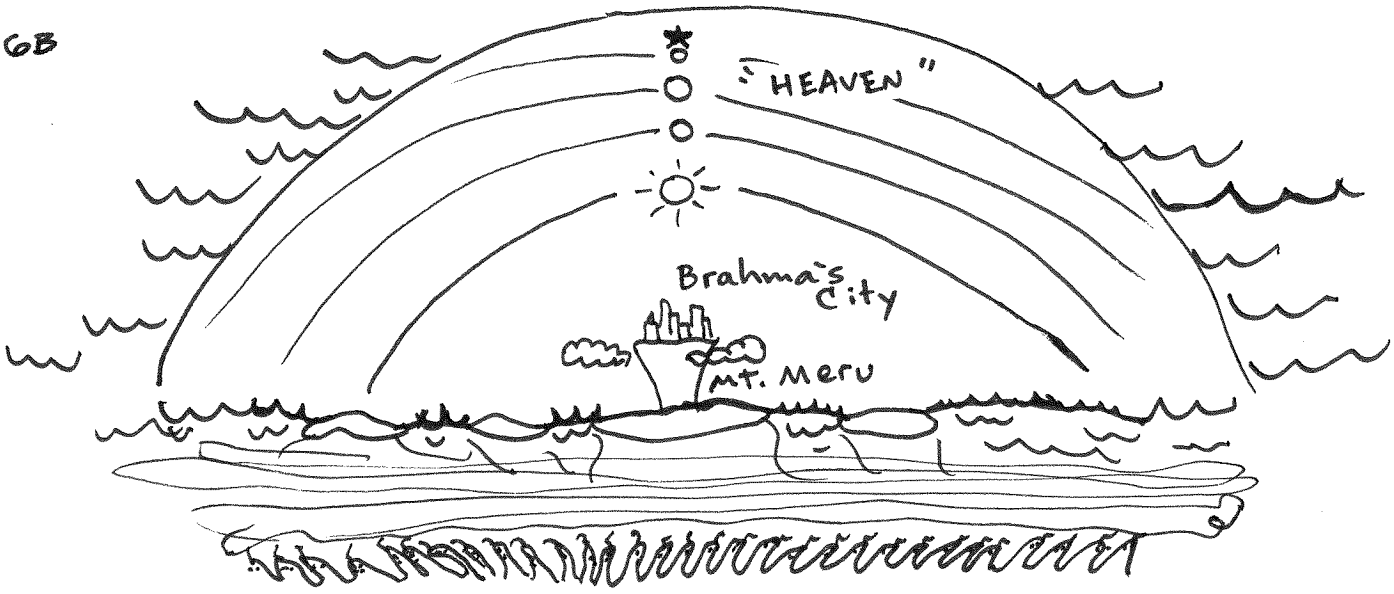
Ymir's huge skull was the dome of the sky with the sun, moon and stars (sparks of fire) fastened there.

(TOP VIEW)



Odin flung down one of Loki's children, a serpent, into the Ocean. It sank to the bottom and grew and grew until it lay in a circle around Midgard, the earth, with its fangs biting into its

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(Compare Hindu Cosmos, above, with others discussed in TEF Jan 85 & "Does the Bible Teach Scientific Creationism?")

A NOTE ON COSMOGONY (Hindu)

THE WORLD OF Indian mythology consists of seven islands and seven seas. The islands are known as *dwipas*, of which Jambu Dwipa is considered the central one. At its centre is the golden mountain named Meru. It rises 84,000 *yojanas** above the earth and extends 16,000 *yojanas* below it; its diameter is 32,000 *yojanas* at the summit and 16,000 at the base, so that it has the shape of a seed-cup of lotus. On the summit of Meru is Brahma's city, covering 14,000 leagues, and surrounding it, at its cardinal points and the intermediate quarters, is the city of Indra.

The earth is said to go down to a depth of 70,000 *yojanas* and to consist of seven layers of worlds below, called Patala Lokas. Each one of these layers has a name (Atala, Vitala, Nitala, and so on) and is inhabited by *asuras*, and also by certain semi-divine beings, among them *yakshas* and *dhanavas*. Below the seven worlds extend the coils of a dark snake, on whose thousand heads rests the entire world. The snake is called Sesha, and his coils form the couch on which god Vishnu stretches himself in rest. Below the earth and the waters and all the worlds are twenty-eight layers of hells, the province of Yama, full of instruments of torture and fire into which sinners are cast.

The earth, called Bhurloka, with its oceans and mountains, extends to the frontiers of the illumination cast by the rays of the sun and moon. The sphere of the sky extends above it up to the planets. The solar orb is situated a hundred thousand leagues from the earth, and beyond it are the spheres of Venus (Sukra), Jupiter (Budha), and Mars (Kuja). The sphere of the Seven Sages (Ursa Major) lies a hundred thousand leagues beyond Saturn, and at the same distance from that point is Dhruva (the Pole Star), the pivot of the whole planetary system. Above Dhruva, ten million leagues away, lies the sphere of the saints, called Mahar Loka. At twice that distance reside the sons of Brahma, in Janar Loka. At four times that distance is Tapo Loka (the Sphere of Penance), inhabited by the deities; at six times that distance is Satya Loka (the World of Indestructible Truth).

All the worlds are protected by a divine cosmic shell. Around the outer shell lies water equal in extent to ten times the diameter of the earth. The waters in turn are surrounded by fire, fire by air, air by mind, and mind by the origin of the elements. Enclosing the whole is the Supreme Principle, which guides all these, and which is infinite and measureless.

Of course the cosmic arrangement, as it may be deduced from the puranas, is impressive in its variety and vastness; but it is not susceptible to being mapped on any rational basis of cartography. (from Gods, Demons, and Others by RK Narayan, Bantam, NY, 1986)

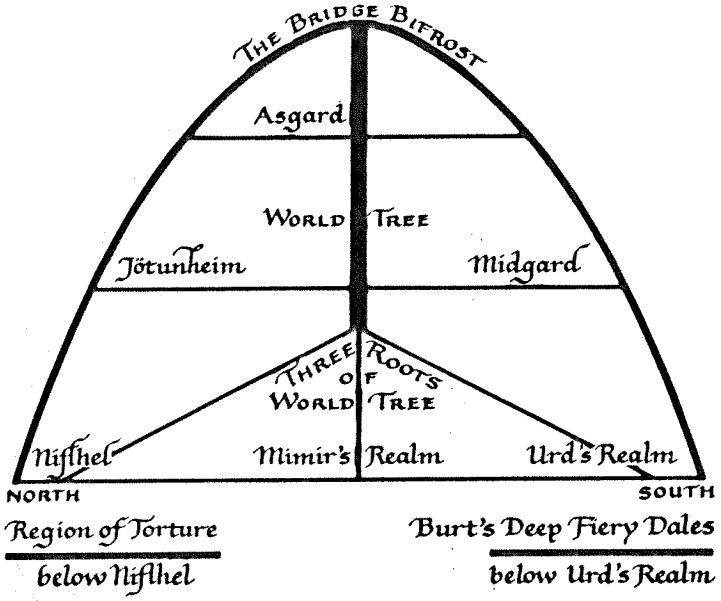
* A *yojana* is the distance traversed by a horse in one harnessing, as much as nine miles.

A DIFFERENT WAY OF LOOKING AT THE UNIVERSE (Mayan)

Here is an excellent survey of American archeoastronomy from Canadian medicine wheels to Mesoamerican aligned structures.

To the anomalist, the most interesting part of Aveni's review paper is found in his comments about the world view of the pre-Columbian Americans, particularly the Mayans. That the Mayans were acute astronomers is beyond question. They had even developed a correction scheme to keep Venus' 584-day canonic cycle on track with its true synodic period of 583.92 days. Their predictions of the position of Venus were accurate to 2 hours in 481 years! Not bad for a civilization that did not seem to have any conception that the planets revolved around the sun. The Mayas, in fact, did not seem to care what made heavenly bodies move; they only wished to predict their appearances accurately. Instead of developing celestial mechanics based on gravitation and laws of motion, as we have done, they were content with numerical algorithms; that is, ways of computing a desired result. Their astonishingly accurate predictions of Venus, solar eclipses, and other astronomical phenomena evolved from cycles of numbers advancing each day like interlocking gear teeth. These algorithms gave them no insight into cause and effect, but they got the right answers. They needed no physical laws, just patterns of numbers. It was a different way of comprehending and dealing with the universe. (Aveni, Anthony F.; "Native American Astronomy," Physics Today, 37:24, June 1984)

(from Science Frontiers -- Free Copy write PO Box 107, Glen Arm, MD 21057)



The universe as seen by the early Norse people.

The Christian church did not easily accept the transition from a flat to a spherical earth (as shown in the diagram at the bottom of page 2). As late as 548 A.D., the Egyptian monk Cosmas Indicopleustes was vigorously defending a flat earth, based on the word of scripture. His book was called Christian Topography and its first chapter was dedicated "To those who, while professing Christianity, believe like the heathens, that the heavens are spherical." Other 'fundamentalist' Christians of Cosmas' day did not think it fitting to use sacred texts to refute the heathen idea of a spherical earth, for "is there anyone so senseless as to believe that there are men whose footsteps are higher than their heads?...that the crops and trees grow downward?...that the rains and snow and hail fall upward toward the earth?" -- St. Lactantius (2nd century A.D.). Augustine was wiser than most. He was well versed in the art of fundamentalist retreat, and thus yielded a little in regard to the sphericity of the earth. However, he fought the idea that men existed on the other side of it, saying that "Scripture speaks of no such descendants of Adam," and men could not be allowed to live there, since if they did, they could not see Christ at his second coming descending through the air. Furthermore, Augustine quoted Ps 19 and Romans that "Their line is gone out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world," to confirm that the gospel had been preached through all the earth, so, as there was no preaching of the gospel on the earth's opposite side, there could be no human beings there. Believe it or not, the veracity of this fundamentalist argument of Augustine's remained unquestioned for 1000 years! Naturally, a little over 1000 years later, quess who arrived on the scene? Copernicus and Galileo. And the Christian church was forced to retreat even further from a literal interpretation of the scriptures, i.e., from an earth-centered cosmos to a sun-centered one. In vain did medieval 'fundamentalists' like the Catholic theologian, Fromundus, argue that the sun must revolve around the earth, since Ps 19.4-6 depicts the sun "coming forth as a bridegroom from his chamber...rejoicing as a strong man to run its course. It's rising from one end of the heavens, and its circuit to the other end of them." Protestants also protested Copernican theory. For instance, Martin Luther wrote, "This man (Copernicus) wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy; but the sacred Scripture tells us that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and not the earth (Josh 10.13)." While Calvin, commenting on Ps. 93, verse 1, stressed the earth's motionlessness, "Accordingly the particle אַף, aph, denoting emphasis, is introduced -- YEA, he hath established it." And in Sermon No. 8 on I Cor. Calvin railed against those who asserted that "the earth moves and turns." *(see note) (No one realized that the peculiar Bible verses about the earth not moving all originated with the much earlier Hebrew view of a firm heaven and solid, flat earth beneath it, with all objects in the sky in motion, cf. Eccles 1.5 & Ps 104.5. So you see, it was not a new error the medievalists were debating, but an ancient cosmological one in the Bible that was haunting man a second time.) But the little telescope of Galileo still swept the heavens, and another revelation was announced -- the mountains and valleys on the moon. This brought on another attack. It was declared that this, and Galileo's statement that the moon shines by light reflected from the sun, directly contradict the statement in Gen 1.16 that the moon itself is a "great light" (literal Hebrew, "lamp"). Today, of course, we laugh at how literally our Christian ancestors interpreted scripture. But there are others who are not laughing. They are Creationists like Henry Morris, who has stated that the modern scientific theory of evolution was first plotted atop the tower of Babel by Nimrod and Satan! But isn't Morris duplicating the error of his fundamentalist ancestors, who denounced the "heathen concept of a spherical heaven and earth," and later claimed that whatever they saw through Galileo's telescope was "an illusion of the Devil"? Fundamentalists ought to sit back quietly and take stock of their enormous retreat throughout the ages. They also ought to muse thoughtfully over the entire Galileo incident, for with the loss of the earth's central position in the cosmos much more was lost than merely the literal interpretations of a dozen more scripture verses. What was lost was humanity's enormous ego. Once placed in the center of an earth disc, and then placed on a sphere in the center of the cosmos, humanity was now demoted to occupying one of several planets, lying at the periphery of the cosmos. This terrified medieval Christians, who thought, "If the earth is a planet, and only one of several

*Such persons were motivated by "a spirit of bitterness, contradiction, and faultfinding;" possessed by the devil, they aimed "to pervert the order of nature."

planets, it can not be that any great things have been done specially for it as the Christian doctrine teaches. If there are other planets, since God makes nothing in vain, they must be inhabited; but how can their inhabitants be descended from Adam? How can they trace their origin to Noah's ark? How can they have been redeemed by the Savior?" But the terror provoked by these questions is only generated by man's egotism, which asserts that he still lay in the center of God's vision of Creation right through to Salvation. But does he? When will we ever discover that God, not man, lies at the center of all things?

> In Dante's Paradiso, the earth stood physically central, surrounded by the limbus of the moon and all the other heavenly spheres, greater and greater, and at last by God, but this physical reality was, in the end delusive, God standing central in spiritual truth, and our poor earth cast out -- peripheral to the concerns of Heaven save when the memory of it waked, with something not unlike an impure nostalgia, the great saints and the Christ from the contemplation of triune God. -- Peace, Gene Wolfe

For you see, all things, including man, are peripheral to the central astonishment God induces. There alone lies a 'fundamentalism' we need never retreat from.

- -

A QUOTATION

Those little earth-centered, heaven-encrusted universes of the Greeks and Hebrews seem quaint enough to us, who have formed, thought by thought from within, the immense modern Cosmos in which we live -- planned in such immeasurable proportions, and moved by so pitiless a mechanism, that it sometimes appalls even its own creators. The rush of the great rotating sun daunts us; to think to the distance of the fixed stars cracks our brains. But if man, the ephemeral being who has imagined these eternal spheres and spaces must dwell almost as an alien in their icy vastness, yet what a splendor lights up for him and dazzles in those great halls! Anything less limitless would be now a prison; and he even dares to think beyond their boundaries, to surmise that he may one day outgrow this Mausoleum, and cast from him the material Creation as an integument too narrow for his insolent Mind. -- All Trivia, Logan Pearsall Smith

- -

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THEISTIC EVOLUTIONISTS FORUM

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Editor: E.T. Babinski

The only national periodical focusing on both fundamentalist and atheist distortions of science and faith, while providing a hearing for apologists of either side.

The Genesis Record and the Firmament--Henry M. Morris, president of the Institute for Creation Research, authored in 1976 a creationist commentary on Genesis titled, The Genesis Record. In that book Morris explained what the Scriptures taught about the age, shape, and history of the cosmos. Not surprisingly, Morris' interpretation differs in several crucial respects from the interpretation of Genesis accepted by the vast majority of biblical scholars. For instance, most scholars assume that the Hebrew "firmament," which was created on the "second day" to "separate the waters," refers to a solid heavenly dome (1). While Morris interprets the "firmament" in Gen 1.6f as the space created between the waters on the earth and a water-vapor canopy above the earth. Of course, if the firmament is solid, then Genesis portrays a cosmos unrecognizable by scientific standards. While if the firmament is spacial, then Genesis may be scientifically feasible. Thus, the life or death of scientific creationism depends on a correct interpretation of the "firmament."

DEFINITION

The first step toward arriving at a correct interpretation is to examine competing definitions. Morris supplies his own as follows: "The word 'firmament' is the Hebrew raqia, meaning 'expanse,' or 'spread-out-thinness.' It may well be synonymous with our modern technical term 'space'...a 'firmament' is simply 'thin, stretched-out space.'" (2). All biblical scholars agree with Morris that the firmament, or raqia, refers to something 'spread-out,' or 'stretched-out,' but they do not agree with him that what is 'spread-out' is 'space.' Dissenting scholars insist that Morris has defined raqia only partially, and thus, not revealled to his creationist readers the full extent of its linguistic roots. For the root of raqia is raqa, and raqa tells us how the raqia is spread-out, or stretched-out: The Hebrew term "raqa = to pound the earth (as a sign of passion); by analogy to expand (by hammering); by impl. to overlay (with thin sheets of metal): beat, spread abroad (into plates), stamp, stretch" Strong's Hebrew Dictionary. In Scripture, raqa depicts the hammering out of gold leaf (Ex 39.3), the spreading out of the earth (Isa 42.5 & 44.24), and the spreading out of the sky "strong as a molten mirror" (Job 37.18). Furthermore, an ancient Phoenician word, also sharing the same root as raqia, means "tin dish!" (3). It is now obvious why Morris did not mention raqia's roots in his commentary. Because they point to something 'stretched-out' solidly, by pounding or hammering, such as earth or metal. While Morris wants us to envision something 'stretched-out' spacially, without pounding or hammering, such as the area inside a balloon or inside our lungs. But that is not how Scripture distinguishes the root of raqia!

SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT

The second step toward arriving at a correct interpretation of the "firmament" is to examine the use of the term in the context of Scripture. Genesis 1.8 states that "God called the firmament heaven." Therefore, Morris asserts that "'firmament' and 'heaven' are essentially synonymous terms, both meaning 'space.'" (4). Dissenting scholars reply that 'heaven' in Hebrew means primarily 'height' or 'loftiness,' not 'space,' contra Morris (5). And as for firmament and heaven being 'essentially synonymous,' their roots are quite different. Heaven (Heb. shameh or shamayin) means 'height,' while firmament (Heb. raqia) means that which is spread or stretched-out by hammering or pounding into firmness. Morris' task of defining these two terms as 'synonymous' is further complicated by the fact that right after "God called the firmament heaven," the author of Genesis speaks of the "firmament of the heavens," i.e., declaring heaven's all-inclusive loftiness (6), while granting the firmament a less prominent role, being merely "of the heavens," and not strictly identical to them. Other

verses in Scripture also substantiate this distinction: The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their firmament is declaring the work of His hands (Ps 19.1); The (starry) brightness of the firmament of heaven (Dan 12.3). This phrase, 'the firmament of heaven' (Gen 1.14,15,17&20), is to be expected from two words with different roots which, when combined, portray a 'firmness-spread' 'high and lofty.' While Morris' 'essentially synonymous' definition of those two terms leaves us puzzling over the Hebrews' redundancy at mentioning 'the firmament of heaven,' or, according to his definition, 'the space of space.' Besides, if the terms were really synonymous it should have mattered little to the Hebrews which term they employed more frequently. But in fact, 'heaven, heavens, heavenly' is mentioned nearly 700 times in Scripture, while 'firmament' appears only 17 times! Still, we have not touched upon Morris' main method of proving that 'firmament' and 'heaven' are essentially synonymous terms. For he proposes that "there are three particular 'heavens' mentioned in Scripture: the atmospheric heaven (Jer 4.25), the sidereal heaven (Isa 13.10), and the heaven of God's throne (Heb 9.24). Likewise the term 'firmament' is used in each of these same three ways (Gen 1.17,20; Ezek 1.22)" (7). Obviously, if 'firmament' and 'heaven' appear in identical contexts in Scripture, then Morris will have proved that they are synonymous terms. So let us examine the verses Morris has cited as proof. First, there is the atmospheric heaven in which birds fly:

Jer 4.25	Gen 1.20
And all the birds of the heavens had fled.	"Let birds fly above the earth on the face of the firmament of the heavens." (8)

As can be seen, the terms 'heaven' and 'firmament' are not synonymous here. The firmament is a solid backdrop to the birds' flight, not the heaven in which they fly. Second, let's examine the sidereal heaven:

Isa 13.10	Gen 1.17
The stars of heaven and their constellations.	And God set them (the stars) in (upon--9) the firmament of the heavens.

Here again, 'heaven' and 'firmament' are not synonymous. Rather, as that acknowledged Christian scholar, Alexander Cruden (author of the famous Cruden's Concordance) has written, "The Hebrews believed that the stars are set in this (solid) arch (the firmament), like so many precious stones in gold and silver." (10). Third, let's examine the heaven of God's throne:

Heb 9.24	Ezek 1.22,23,26
Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands...but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.	Over the heads of the living beings there was something like a firmament, like the awesome gleam of crystal, extended over their heads... under the firmament their wings were stretched out straight...Above the firmament there was something resembling a throne.

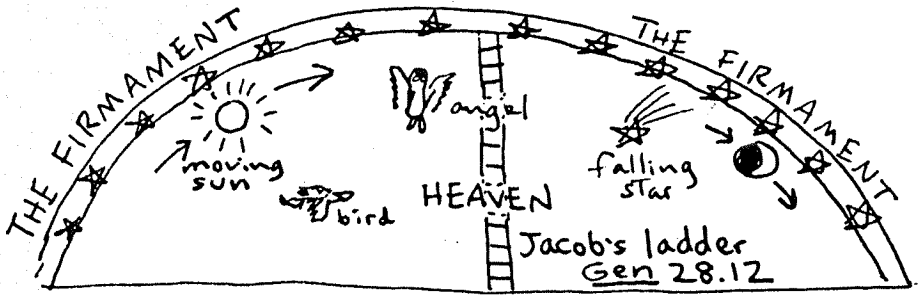
Once again, the terms 'heaven' and 'firmament' are not synonymous. The firmament, unlike heaven, is declared to resemble crystal. Angel's wings could not penetrate it as they were "stretched out straight" under it. Furthermore, above this crystal there lay a throne, obviously supported by the firmament. Ezekiel mentions nothing existing in the firmament, only above and below it. Thus, Henry Morris' 'spacial' interpretation of the firmament is not supported by Scripture. CONCLUSION: In all three cases that Morris cites as proof, 'firmament' and 'heaven' are not synonymous! All three cases also point to a solid firmament!

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The third and final step of our examination of the firmament is a step totally ignored in Morris' commentary. And not because it lay beneath his notice, but because of the stark challenge it poses to his 'scientific' interpretation of Hebrew cosmology. This third step involves viewing the Hebrew 'firmament of heaven' within the historical context of ancient conceptions of the heavens. And in this case the unanimous opinion of the Sumerians, Hittites, Phoenicians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Babylonians was that the arch of the heavens, which appeared stretched out above the earth, was solid, and supported by mountain-pillars located at the far horizons where heaven appeared to meet the earth: The Sumerian 'universe' consisted of a unified heaven and earth, which rose as a single mountain out of a primeval sea. Then the god Enlil split the mountain and lifted heaven on high. In a Hittite version of the separation of heaven and earth a saw does the dividing. In Phoenician cosmology a 'world egg' cracks into two equal halves, heaven above and earth below. In the Egyptian version Shu pushes apart Nut, the heaven, from the embrace of Geb, the earth (see pictures in

issue no. 1 of T.E.!). In the Greek cosmos Homer's "brazen heaven" was held aloft by Atlas. In the Babylonian version Tiamat, the goddess of primeval waters, was cut in two, and the firmament of heaven was formed from her skin (which held back the waters), while the earth below was formed from her remaining half. Compare Genesis where the primeval waters were split in half by the (solid) firmament to make room for heaven above and earth below. Thus, both Genesis' historical context, and the solidity of the firmament appear undeniable.

Finally, notice that, contra Morris, the ancients never thought in terms of three heavens, "an atmospheric, a sidereal, and a heaven of God's throne," since for them everything was contained in one heaven: The birds flew in it (so did the angels with their bird-like wings!), the sun and moon moved across it (Ps 19.4-6; Eccl 1.5; Josh 10.13), tiny twinkling stars fell from it (Isa 14.12-13; Dan 8.10; Matt 24.29; Rev 6.13), and God resided there, above man's head (see issue no. 1 of T.E., page 2)!



Well, we've trod the three steps up the stairway to heaven, viz., 1) DEFINITION, 2) SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT, and 3) HISTORICAL CONTEXT. And in each case we've found that Henry Morris' arguments for a 'spacious' firmament are .... specious! The Scriptures declare that the firmament was undoubtedly firm. Could any evidence be more damning to the hypothesis of scientific creationism as derived from Genesis?

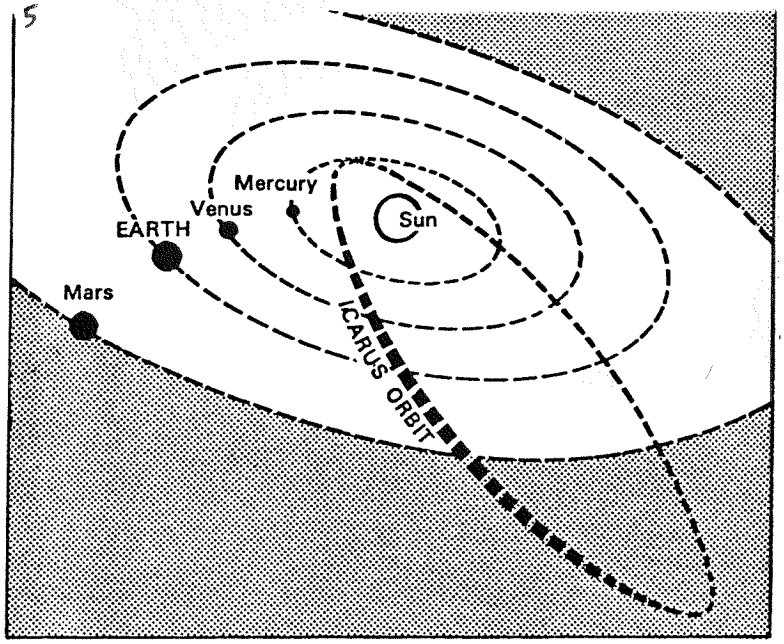
-- FOOTNOTES --

(1) Luis I. J. Stadelmann, The Hebrew Conception of the World (Rome, Italy: Biblical Institutes Press, 1970); Gerhard von Rad, Genesis: A Commentary, trans. John H. Marks (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961); Walther Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, Vol. II, trans. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967); T. H. Gaster, "Firmament," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962-76); E. A. Speiser, Genesis: The Anchor Bible Commentary (New York: Doubleday Inc., 1964); Robert Davidson, Genesis 1-11: The Cambridge Bible Commentary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1973); Gunther Plaut, Bernard J. Baumberger, and William W. Hallo eds., The Torah: A Modern Commentary (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981); U. Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, Vol. I, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1964). (2) Henry M. Morris, The Genesis Record (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1976), p. 58, 59. (3) Von Rad, p. 51. (4) Morris, p. 58. (5) Stadelmann, p. 37. See also, James Strong, Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible with Hebrew and Greek Dictionary (Nashville, TN: Crusade Bible Publishers), heaven (Heb. shameh) "from an unused root mean. to be lofty; the sky." (6) Stadelmann, p. 41, "Shamayin (heaven) designates the space above the earth, including the atmosphere, the region of the clouds, the heavenly vault, the firmament and that which exists above the firmament." (7) Morris, p. 58. (8) Cassuto, p. 49, "(Gen 1.20) means literally, 'Let birds fly on the face of (or, in front of) the firmament of the heavens.' It reflects the impression that a person receives on looking upward: the birds that fly above one's head are set against the background of the sky--in front of the firmament of the heavens." Therefore, the New American Standard Bible's translation of Gen 1.20 should not read, "Let birds fly above in the 'open' (Heb. paneh) expanse of the heavens," since paneh means literally 'face' in Hebrew! Instead, the verse should read, "Let birds fly above the earth on the face (paneh) of the firmament." In similar fashion, paneh is used elsewhere in Genesis to depict "darkness upon the face (paneh) of the deep," "the Spirit of God moved upon the face (paneh) of the waters," "upon the face (paneh) of all the earth," and "watered the whole face (paneh) of the ground!" (9) Stadelmann, p. 70. (10) Cruden's Complete Concordance (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), p. 221.

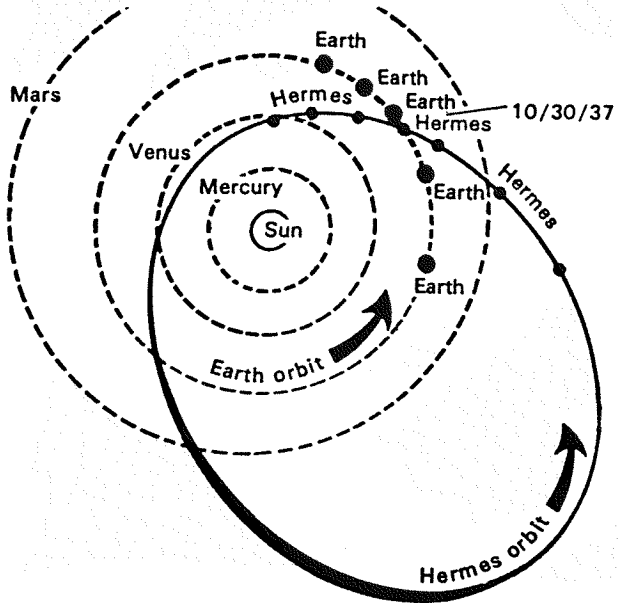
MORE ON THE SHAPE OF THE HEBREW COSMOS (HEAVEN AND EARTH)

In both issue no. 1 of T.E., and the present issue we have examined the shape of the Hebrew cosmos, which was comprised of two halves, heaven and earth: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" Gen 1.1; "The heavens above...and the foundations of the earth below" Jer 31.37. Physical contact between these halves was a common assumption of the ancients: "The earth quaked, the foundations of heaven were trembling" II Sam 22.8; "The pillars of heaven tremble" Job 26.11; "A ladder...on the earth...its top reaching to heaven" Gen 28.12. And naturally, when the earth shook, so did the heavens: "The earth quakes, the heavens tremble" Joel 2.10. To the Hebrews this was no mere earthquake, restricted to a few hundred miles of land on the surface of a single planetary sphere. This was a simultaneous convulsion of both halves of Creation. Thus, in Hebrew parlance, to "shake the earth" = to shake the whole of Creation by its very roots, and visa versa, "I shall make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken from its place" Isa 13.13. Such a cosmic convulsion may even dislodge the stars set in the firmament of heaven, "There was a great earthquake...and the stars of the sky fell...as if shaken from a tree" Rev 6.12,13. It is easy to recognize in the above verses the naive earth-centeredness of ancient Hebrew cosmology. Add to them the following verses: "The world is firmly established, it will not be moved" Ps 93.1; "He established the earth upon its foundations, so that it will not totter forever and ever" Ps 104.5; "For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and He set the world on them" I Sam 2.8; "It is I who have firmly set its pillars" Ps 75.3. However, regardless of these scriptural revelations, today we recognize that the sun is established more firmly than the earth, relatively speaking. For the earth is merely a pebble twirling round the sun's fat fiery waist. Furthermore, the sun is not the only "great light" which God has created (Gen 1.16). For we now know that each star is an equally "great light" within its own vicinity of space. And the stars luminate the cosmos in all directions, i.e., they do not exist merely to "light the earth" (Gen 1.17). Moreover, each galaxy contains at least 100 billion stars and the universe contains at least 100 billion other galaxies. We have also discovered via satellite telescopes, a ring of asteroids circling one star, and most recently, an object larger than our planet Jupiter, circling another star. And we have only begun to examine the heavens. This exploration must necessarily terrify fundamentalists who, like the ancient Hebrews, can only imagine God's plan from an earth-centered viewpoint. They honestly assume that God will destroy the earth and the entire universe (the heavens), and then create a new earth and new heavens (Isa 65.17; 66.22. Rev 21.1). But just look where the earth lies in space:

Our planet does not lie at the center of our solar system, or even at the center of the galaxy that we share with 100 billion other stars. Also, contrary to the Hebrew assumption that the earth is 'firmly established,' our sun could, theoretically, jettison a flare of hot gases at any time and envelop the earth in flames. Or, our planet might, conceivably, collide with an asteroid. More than a dozen asteroids have paths that cross the earth's orbit (see diagrams, top of next page). Moreover, none of these calamities would require the creation of a 'new heaven' along with a new earth. This is distinctly opposed to the ancient Hebrew notion of 'heaven and earth' as equal halves of the cosmos, joined by mountain pillars, the thus, sharing the same physical destiny.



The orbits of the asteroid Icarus and the earth intersect at two points, making collision a possibility.

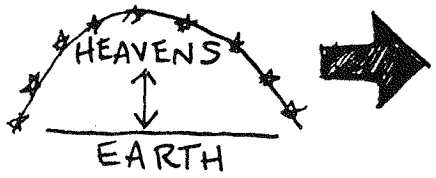


On October 30, 1937, the earth and the asteroid Hermes missed colliding by only half a million miles.
(Half a million miles is only about twice the distance from the earth to the moon.)

THE HOLY HEAVENS

The ancients all held the heavens in sacred regard. They were unreachable (i.e., untouchable, holy) and the stars of heaven shone brightly night after night from their fixed positions. While the planets, regarded by the ancients as "wandering stars," moved across the sky following orderly paths. Thus, the heavens reflected permanency and precision--intimations of the eternity and perfection that men longed for in their lives. The Hebrews, in fact, were warned many times not to worship "the sun, moon, and stars, all the host of heaven" (Deut 4.19; 17.3; II Kings 17.16; 21.5; 23.5; Jer 7.18; 19.13; 44.17,19,25). Naturally, they resisted this worship by picturing their God as greater than the host of heaven. His throne lay "above the stars" (Isa 14.13), and His glory "above the heavens" (Ps 8.1; 57.5; 113.4). Still, even for the Hebrews, the heavens remained holy in the sense that whenever the "most high" God was spoken of as dwelling in any one particular place, that place was the heavens: "The heavens are the heavens of the Lord; but the earth He has given to the sons of men" Ps 115.16; "He spreads out (the heavens) like a tent to dwell in" Isa 40.22; "In the heavens...in the true tabernacle (tent), which the Lord pitched" Heb 8.1,2. Other features added to the holiness with which the Hebrews regarded the heavens: Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven (II Kings 2.11); Angels ascended and descended on a ladder reaching to heaven (Gen 28.12); 'Manna,' food supplied to the Hebrews in the wilderness, fell from heaven; Angels told shepherds of Jesus' birth and then "went away from them into heaven" (Luke 2.15); A "star (of heaven)...went on before (the three wise men), until it came and stood over where the Child was" (Mat 2.9); God spoke out of heaven at Jesus' baptism, and the heavens opened, and a dove descended out of heaven; Jesus warned people not to swear by heaven (Mat 23.22); Jesus ascended into heaven and will come again, returning with the clouds of heaven (Mat 26.64). Even till the medieval ages the starry heavens shone with holy brightness. While the earth, thought to lie at the immovable center of the cosmos, was in comparison, viewed as a "sink of impurity," with hell lying beneath the earth, i.e., at its center. In fact, to counter Copernicus' theory that the earth moved through the heavens like all other objects, arguments such as the following were used: "Angels make Saturn, Jupiter, the sun, etc., turn round. If the earth revolves, it must also have an angel in the center to set it in motion; but only devils live there; it would therefore be a devil who would impart motion to the earth...The planets, the sun, the fixed stars all belong to one species--namely, that of stars. It seems, therefore, to be a grievous wrong to place the earth, which is a sink of impurity, among these heavenly bodies, which are pure and divine things." (Such medieval wisdom was derived directly from Scripture itself, as Scripture speaks of the heavens as a holy abode filled with God and angels lying above the earth, and sheol, hades, etc., the land of the dead lying beneath the earth: Job 11.8; Ps 71. 20; 88.3,6; I Sam 28.8,13,15; Amos 9.2,3; Philippians 2.10; Rev 5.13.)

The shocking conclusion to this section on the holy heavens is that we no longer speak of the heavens as lying above the earth (ancient Hebrew), or even around the earth (medieval Christian), for now the earth lies in the heavens, i.e., "among the heavenly bodies which are pure and divine things"! Our earth spins on the tip of one of the great spiral arms of the Milky Way Galaxy, among the host of heaven worshiped by ancient man, and which the Hebrews themselves were tempted to worship. The same heavens where God and angels, perfection and holiness were presumed to reside, and where Jesus ascended to...we are already there, circling round and round in them endlessly! 'Heaven and earth,' typically separated at creation according to ancient myths (see page 2-3, above), are thus made whole again by modern cosmology! "Now this is how it is out there. It is the tapestry of Heaven, the real Heaven of the Beatific Vision where we go when we die, and also where we already are now. The Infinity of Space is not made for a game: it is the real infinity rolling in the real eternity. But we see this tapestry now only from the reverse side. We see only the tangled threads behind: we have not the vision of the face of the picture itself. There are multitudinous emanations, and sight is only one of them which is given us here in the childhood of the soul. But it is all out there, Hell and Purgatory and Heaven, all there; or here, for we also are in the middle of Out There. And there is a time before time, and a time after time; a space beyond space, and a space inside space. They talk now of re-entrant space which is an attempt to see infinity. I talk also of re-entrant time which is the attempt to see eternity...I am saying that it is not two things but one thing. There is not a spiritual universe beyond the material universe we are in now; it is the spiritual universe where we are. We are already in the middle of Heaven; we are already in the middle of Eternity. But we cannot know it yet...A giant red star may be an aspect of an Archangel, or it may be the corollary to a statement of love. The physical and the spiritual are not two different things; they are two of the many different aspects of one thing. And Space and Time may be only two of many phases of the whole. The noonday devil is walking among the Cepheids, and Lucifer who fell like lightning is still falling. At the same time Christ has not been born, and the time is today, and the world has already ended and exploded into something bigger. We are all of us contemporaries for we all live in eternity." -- Archipelago, R. A. Lafferty



DOES ANYONE ELSE HAVE SOMETHING THEY'D LIKE TO ADD???

T.E. seeks incorrigible correspondence, vociferous views, questions, cartoons, quotations, even short short (I'm talking short) stories for possible publication. There is no payment, but you will receive a free copy of the T.E. issue your submission appears in.

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THEISTIC EVOLUTIONIST FORUM

Issue No. 3 & 4
March & April 1985

Editor: (E)dward (T)homas Babinski

The only national periodical focusing on both fundamentalist and atheist distortions of science and faith, while providing a hearing for apologists of either side.

TE REVIEWED BY BIBLE-SCIENCE NEWSLETTER, R.A.LAFFERTY, AND OTHERS IN AN ALL FORUM ISSUE!

I am anxious to read about atheist distortions in your periodical. So far--nothing.
George Cooper, President, Creation-Science Assoc., WI
Dear George, If I'd begun with atheist distortions I might have received a letter from an atheist beginning, "I am anxious to read about..." But keep your spirits up and your eyes on TE. There will be future issues on the retreat of scientism and evolutionism, etc.
Best, Ed

Re issues 1 & 2 of Theistic Evolutionist Forum and other aberrations

Points Responded to in Ed's Reply

Dear Ed:

You have been found guilty of flogging dead mice, an act even less heroic than the old business of flogging a dead horse. You have been found guilty of jousting against gnats and being unhorsed by them. You have set up straw men and attacked them with a big noise, and been knocked flat by them.

When I read Issue One I thought it was a burlesque, even though Evolution, being itself a burlesque of reason, is vaccinated against being burlesqued. But you're serious.

Do I have any more words of wisdom for Theistic Evolutionists? you ask. If so, where may you find them? I have some, and you can find them right here. Theistic Evolution is #1→ a total contradiction and anomaly. Evolution is by its nature atheistic. Darwin recognized this immediately. Then he wrestled with the problem for thirty years trying to find a loop-hole, and there was never a better man at finding loop-holes than Darwin. But he couldn't find one in this. He had to give up his belief in God.

#2→ Those picture-schematics that you draw or adapt from somewhere have nothing to do with Genesis. The Jews did not draw schematics or pictures. They were, of course, prohibited by their religion from making graven images or any other sort of images of anything in the world or outside of it. The savants among them believed that 'space' and 'place' were among the illusions of temporality and that such aspects or categories did not exist in the angelic world, in the eternity in which we already live. But the Egyptians #3→ who made gods of hawks and cats and cows as a way of denying God himself did make such fantasy-pictures and charts. So did them make them in Babylon the mother of pseudo-science. And so do the pseudo-scientists make them today.

You quote a passage from my Archipelago in your Issue No. 2, but you should have taken the trouble to read it when you quoted it. In particular you should have read: "But we see this tapestry now only from the reverse side. We see only the tangled threads behind: we have not the vision of the face of the picture itself." The business of believing that #4→ we must have an answer now, no matter what it is, no matter if it is wrong, has led to such beliefs as evolution. There are things that we do not know yet, but that is no excuse for filling in their gaps with asininities. God is not asinine, though the Theistic #5→ Evolutionists depict him as asinine. They offer God help to get himself out of the holes he has dug himself into. They amend God's words to show what God would have said if he were as smart as are the Theistic Evolutionists.

Everyone has freedom of speculation, of course, and we will know on resurrection morning which of our speculations are right and which are wrong, those that are not resolved before then. Henry M. Morris is one of the most interesting speculators on the hidden and half-hidden things. He is also one of the most slandered men of modern times. Slander is the most-used weapin in the [redacted] arsenal of the evolutionists.

The Hebrew word raqia or laraqia, as found in the sixth and seventh and eighth verses of the first chapter of Genesis, is a word that we can't understand for sure until we come to the front side of the tapestry. In the 'Interlinear Hebrew/English Bible' (Jay P. Green general editor) it is translated (probably correctly) as 'Expanse'. And the King James II version in English has also gone to the word 'expanse'. The word 'Firmament', used for it in many Bibles, comes from Jerome's Vulgate Latin Bible, though the first translators of the King James swore that they considered the Latin Bible not at all but went instead to the original languages in everything. But there was no way they could have gotten the word 'firmament',in its modern meaning, from the Hebrew word raqia. The Latin words #6→ 'firmament' and 'firmā' had changed their meaning or 'hardened' (if I may be allowed a pun) somewhat between the fifth century and the fifteenth.

#7→ Then you give me a long rigamarole of etymology-fiction or Hebraisy-fiction to show that the root rq somehow means 'to pound the earth (as an act of passion); by anaolgy to expand (by hammering)' etc, which is getting a lot of meaning out of two consonants. But it is all fiction. You write "For the root of raqia is raqa" which is not true at all. That is like writing 'The root of the English word 'goat' is the English word 'go'.' And none of your cited passages use the words you say they use or mean what you say they mean. Exodis 39.3 uses the word 'viraqia' rather that 'raqia' to mean 'hammered out' but it's a guessed-at meaning in any case. Job 37.18 uses the phrase 'hiraqia yimiv lashaqia' to mean, perhaps (this again is a guessed-at meaning) "have you beat out the expanse", #8 → but the meaning 'beat out' is in the word 'lashaqis', and the word 'hiraqia' still means simply 'expanse'.

But there is a further meaning to your word 'raqia' which you or the arguefiers you are getting this from do not mention. The 'English-Hebrew, Hebrew-English Dictionary' of Ehud Ben-Yehuda and David Weinstein (Washington Square Press 1961) gives to 'raqiai', #9→ the adjective form of 'raqia', the meaning of 'spherical'. So we know the shape of the raqia-firmament or the raqia-expanse anyhow, whatever it is made of. It is one of the spherical mantles that wrap our spherical earth, like the still-existing lithosphere or rock-mantle, the aquasphere or broken-ocean mantle, the atmosphere, the stratosphere, the ionosphere. I believe myself that the existing ionosphere is the remnant of the broken-up raqia-sphere. Yes, the author of Genesis, God, did know that the Earth was a sphere, for he made it a sphere. He was not as simple-minded as the Theistic Evolutionists believe that he was.

#10→ In your issue No. 1 you have from Leviticus "The rabbit...chews cud" - it's a hare and not a rabbit in the Hebrew though. In the United States the jack rabbit is the only common hare, and it chews much more than do the real rabbits. But I am not sure that Leviticus even mentions the 'cud' or that the Hebrews had a word for 'cud'. Oh, it's been put into the dictionary, the root grh for 'cud' which is convincing only at first sight. For the same root grh also means 'chew' and 'chewing'. 'The hare chews its chewing' might be the best translation of the Leviticus passage, and so the hare does. It brings its chew up from its throat when it wants to chew more, not from that extra stomach that only ruminants have; but it does bring it up and it does chew. I suspect that your Hebrew is at third hand from argufiers who have it at second hand.

I find the speculation of Henry M. Morris that the 'expanse' (often mistranslated as 'firmament') is a sort of vapor canopy to be a pleasqnt one. It would have given an Eden-like ambient to the whole Earth, everywhere equally warm and comfortable. It would explain the fossils of tropical plants found in all parts of the Earth. It would explain the still-undigested tropical plants in the stomachs of mammoths frozen solid when the canopy burst and let in the killing cold of space. It would explain the passage in Genesis 2, 5-6-7 "for the Lord God had sent no rain on the Earth...but a mist rose from the Earth and watered all the surface of the ground." (How do Theistic Evolutionists explain that passage?) It would explain where most of the water for the Flood came from, for ordinary rain of even forty days and forty nights wouldn't account for it. And there is a sort of poetic or cosmic justice in the canopy breaking open: thenceforth man would have to work for a living and not have nature hand it to him for free. The break-up of #11→ the raqia-sphere would also explain why the rainbow was seen by people for the first time, after they had come out of the ark, and when the Earth had acquired a normal rainfall. But all of this is no more than guess-work till we are able to see the face of the tapestry

For a long time I have had a story, Claudius and Charles, rattling around in my head. I will probably never write it now, since I gave up writing for a 'qualified forever'

last November 7th on my 70th birthday. But it would be a good story. It's about Claudius Ptolemy and Charles Darwin and the amazing parallelism of the erroneous theories of these two pseudo-scientists, each theory coming after the correct theory had been established for many centuries, each maintaining itself with slander and persecution, each smelling of brimstone, and each stale, stale, and dated from the moment of its birth. Evolution, the sillier of the two theories, is so totally Victorian in the vacuous sense of that word. And each of them had to use epicycles after epicycles to justify their existence after they were driven from position after position by the inherant absurity of their theses, the geo-centric thesis of Ptolemy and the no-center-or-meaning-at-all thesis of the evolutionists. Evolution ranks below all the other #12→ pseudo-sciences, below astrology even, below everything. But both of them had possibly the most devious of all created minds behind it. You do realize, don't you, that there is a cloven hoof in the boots you lick?

But I doubt whether you realize in what total contempt the real Evolutionists hold the Theistic Evolutionists. Once the Theistic Evolutionists called themselves Christian Evolutionists, but they gave up both their name and their Christianity when their masters hooted at them. And they will give up their present name and quasi-beliefs whenever the hooter hoots at them again.

#13→ Several words, once adequate or even splendid, have been ruined by their mis-use, words like 'gay' and 'liberal' and 'evolution'. 'Evolution' as an unfolding was a splendid concept. 'Evolution' as a metamorphosis is squalid. The idea of one species #14→ changing into another has something disgusting about it. Intellectually the idea is far lower even than the 'metampsychosis'of some orientals, the 'transmigration of souls' by which each person receives at death another kind of soul of another kind of creature, and does it again and again.

#15→ Etymologically every 'species' is 'special', and so it will remain. A child of two years old will know that a dog is a dog whether it is a St. Bernard or a Chihuahua. And he will know that a cat is a completely different sort of creature, even though it is the same size and color of his dog. And a child of two years old would know immediately that a Neanderthal Man or a Cro-Magnon Man and a Grimaldi Man were men indeed; and that a Java Man or an Australopithecus were not men, that the difference between them and men was wider than the world.

"What can a man receive in exchange for his soul?" Christ asks somewhere. If a person trades his immortal soul for Evolution then he trades it for circular-reasoning drivel. Biology and zoology and cosmology and geology and astronomy have all been turned into circular-reasoning monstrosities to accommodate evolution. Or such was the case for a hundred years or so. Science has now pretty well cleaned itself from the pseudo-sciences that owed their being to evolution. But the popular mind lags fifty or more years behind the facts, and sadly the popular mind still is likely to believe that there is some substance in evolution.

But it is so goofy to be unhorsed by gnats! You are wasting your talent, Ed.

Otherwise have fun, launch things, write things, even keep the FORUM as a sort of SPECULATIVE FORUM. But remove the narrow-mindedness and trivality of the Theistic-Evolutionists (they bleat in unison and they walk in lock-step) from it.

You can use anything in this letter, of course, but you probably won't want to. Evolutionists are truly more limited than flat-landers even. Topologically they are completely one-sided. But you might have more than two subscribers if you had more than two dimensions.

#16→ You might even write to Henry M. Morris and send him copies of your issues No. 1 and No. 2 and ask if he would like to make a statement for publication in one of your future issues. And you might want to get and review some of his later and better books than The Genesis Record. The Revelation Record, for instance, or Evolution in Turmoil. It's better and more fun to joust with real people than with gnats or straw-men of your own making. And there really is something petty about flogging dead mice.

Luck with everything you do, though, and may you raise your sights several parsecs.

Ray Lafferty

R. A. Lafferty

Dear Ed, I have enjoyed the back-issues of TE Forum I've collected, particularly the letters, which are always energetic and provocative. Ah, polemics to the right of me, polemics to the left. As a lifelong science fiction fan, I was particularly startled (and a bit aghast) to discover the letter from R. A. Lafferty in issue #3. It was disturbing to learn that he is a creationist in the Morris/Gish school, but downright sad to see Lafferty, a writer of corruscating talent and wit, spout creationist propaganda in such a niggling, meanspirited, and yes, small-minded way. (Does Lafferty really imagine he will open up channels of communication with petty remarks such as, "... there is a cloven hoof in the boots you lick?")

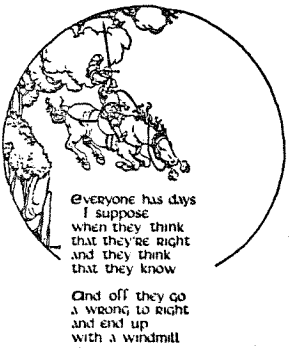
Ah, well. Sic transit gloria mundi, tuesday, and all through the week.

Science fiction writers and fans, in my experience, are generally pretty hard-headed and have little truck with mainstream creationism. Off hand, I can think of only one other writer who flirted seriously with creationism--Ronald Lambert. Eventually he rejected it. You might be interested in a letter by him that appeared in Winter 1980 issue (#37) of Science Fiction Review, p. 56:

> "I recant. Although in the past I have boosted Creationism, I am willing to admit that the weight of evidence favors Evolutionism, and I can accept evolution theory, at least as an operational hypothesis.
>
> "The Oklo uranium mine is what did me in. This site in the Gabon Republic in Africa shows unmistakable signs of having undergone nuclear fission as a natural reactor for a minimum of 100,000 years, and most likely for two million years. The distinctive fission products, their relative quantities, the time required for the evident reactions to have occured, simply make the case inarguable. Radiocarbon dating I can get around, fossils I can get around -- but I cannot get around this. There is no reasonable alternate explanation.
>
> "Nor can I make a distinction -- as many people try to do -- between the obviously vast age of the physical Earth and the duration of life on this planet, as if Genesis were valid only for describing the origin of life. There are carbon seams associated with the uranium strata in the Oklo mine and the carbon almost certainly is organic in origin.
>
> "I feel like the Frenchman who immigrated to England and became a British subject. Before, Waterloo had been to him a defeat. Now it was a victory."

With respect!

Ken



Dear Ray, I'll be responding to your points in order and in considerable depth, so hang on to your inter-linear and your Hebrew-English dictionary, for away we go... (#1) I don't see how the theory of biological evolution, when stripped of its exaggerated importance & aggrandizement of aggression can pose a threat to theism. Besides, atheists will always have their reasons for being atheists, and if it's not 'evolution' it's lung cancer, or "wasp larva feeding within living bodies of caterpillars" (one of Darwin's favorites), or the feline instinct that makes cats play with their prey (another of his favorites), or the suffering of children, or nightmares, or even the fact that man defecates. (Of course the reverse is also true, theists will always have their reasons for being theists.) The point I'm making is that 'evolution' is not a cause for atheism, rather, atheists interpret biological evolution their own way. And I think it unwise of creatiionists to quote only atheist interpretations of biological evolution which, ipso facto, prove that evoltuion is 'atheistic!' Especially since theistic evolutionists have alternate interpretations creationists never bother to quote. (#2) Try closing your eyes and thinking about the verses my 'picture schemes' are based on. (#3) The Egyptians and Babylonians were polytheists to be sure, but did not lack insight into higher notions of God as well:

EGYPTIAN IDEAS OF GOD

God is one and alone, and none other existeth with Him -- He existed when nothing else existed -- God is spirit -- No man knoweth His form. No man hath been able to seek out His likeness -- God hath stretched out the heavens and founded the earth -- What His heart conceived straightway came to pass, and when He hath spoken, it cometh to pass and endureth forever -- He fashioned men and formed the gods -- He giveth life to man, He breatheth the breath of life into his nostrils -- God is truth -- God is merciful unto those who reverence Him, and He heareth him that calleth upon Him. God knoweth him that acknowledgeth Him, He rewardeth him that serveth Him, and He protecteth him that followeth Him. (from Budge's Egyptian Book of the Dead, Dover '67, p. xciii -- see especially his discussion of Egyptian notions of a high, divine power)

EGYPTIAN HYMNS TO THE CREATOR

The Ancient of Heaven...Chief of all the gods...Supporter of the heavens, Founder of the earth...Lord of rays, Maker of light...Whose eye subdues the wicked, sending forth its darts to the roof of the firmament...Hail to Thee...to the height of the heavens, to the breadth of the earth, to the depths of the sea (cf. Job 11.8,9)...Who raises the heavens and fixes the earth...causing all things which are to exist (from Van Over's Sun Songs: Creation Myths from Around the World, New American Library '80, p. 286-291)

BABYLONIAN IDEAS OF MARDUK

Let (Marduk) exercise shepherdship over mankind...At his command let there be creation, destruction, alleviation, mercy...(Marduk) is the lord of all the gods of heaven and earth...May his words endure and not be forgotten in the mouths of mankind, whom his hands have created...The ruler of heaven and earth...he created the (heavenly) places and fashioned the firm earth...Reliable is his word, unalterable his command; The utterance of his mouth no god whatever can change...The sinner and the transgressor are an abomination before him..."Whatever I create shall remain unaltered, The command of my lips shall not return (void), it shall not be changed"(from the Enuma Elish)

(#4) I agree, most men seek answers 'now,' since curiosity, as a rule, tends to abhor a vacuum. It's obvious that the answer you 'must have now' is that each 'kind' of animal was 'specially' created. (#5) Theistic evolutionists do not depict God as 'assinine.' (Did C.S.Lewis depict God as assinine?) Furthermore, they do not 'offer God help.' They accept that the Holy Spirit was capable of using mythology to make his points in Genesis, chapt. 1. Yet fundamentalists do appear to 'offer God help' by interpreting for us the 'scientific' code contained in Genesis, chapt. 1.

SCHOLARS AGREE

Hebrew scholars of both a conservative and liberal background agree that raqia is derived from raqa. This is not, therefore, debatable. Furthermore, if a root is merely assumed, scholars will say, 'assumed.' But if a word is plainly derived from another, they call it a 'derivative:'

2407 שָׁמַה (*shmh*). **Assumed root of the following.**

2407a †שָׁמַיִם (*shamayim*) ***heaven***

2217 רָקַע (*rāqa'*) ***stamp, spread out, stretch.***

Derivatives

2217a †רָקִיעַ (*rāqia'*) ***firmament.***

2217b רִקּוּעַ (*riqqûa'*) ***expansion*** (Num 17:3).

(Examples from Theological Word Book of the Old Testament, authored by fundamentalist-creationist scholars, R.Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, Moody Press.) The verses in which raqa appears are also agreed upon by scholarly opinion. These are recorded in the Theological Word Book as being, Ezk 6.11 "stamp your foot" & 25.6 "stamped your feet;" 2 Sam 22.43 "I stamped them;" Ex 39.3 "they hammered out gold sheets;" Jer 10.9 "beaten silver;" Isa 40.19 "plates it with gold;" Num 16.39 "hammered (bronze cencers) out as a plating for the altar;" Isa 42.5 "spread out the earth" & 44. 24 "spreading out the earth;" Ps 136.6 "spread out the earth;" Job 37.18 "spread out the skies, strong as a mirror of cast bronze." What is remarkable is that in every case in which raqa appears, something firm is being "stamped, hammered, or spread" into shape. This is not true of other Hebrew words for "stretching" and "spreading," like natah, parad, muttoth, arah, yatsa, miphras, and sarach, which do not imply firmness, only extension. (These alternate Hebrew words for "stretching" and "spreading" are found in Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible.) And since raqa (and not any of those other words) is the root of raqia, it appears that the Hebrew firmament or expanse was indeed expanded firmly, like metal or earth being hammered, stamped, stretched, or pounded into shape. In fact, a Phoenician word of the same root as raqia means "tin dish." Lastly, one of the most ancient extant translations of the Hebrew scriptures, the Septuagint (a translation undertaken, it is said, by "seventy" Hebrew scholars), uses the Greek word stereoma, suggesting some firm, solid structure, to illustrate the Hebrew term raqia. (Creationists think this Greek translation is a fabrication, not based on the ancient Hebrew, but on Greek notions of a 'stone vault' of heaven, which 'slipped' into the translation. What creationists are really suggesting, therefore, is that those Hebrew scholars didn't know their own Scriptures well enough to translate them!) To quote professor C.W. Goodwin, "The root (of raqia) is generally applied to express the hammering or beating out of metal plates; hence something beaten or spread out. It has been pretended that the word raqia may be translated expanse, so as merely to mean empty space. The context sufficiently rebuts this." ("On the Mosaic Cosmogony," Essays and Reviews, London, 1860) I have already examined the Scriptural context of raqia in TE no. 2. But let me add that: "(Gen 1.20 reads literally) 'Let birds fly across the face of the firmament'... The firmament is regarded as having a face, that is a side turned toward, and, as we say, 'facing,' the earth. Across this the birds are to disport themselves" (H.C.Leupold, Exposition of Genesis). While in Ezekiel's vision of a limited 'crystal' firmament -- a canopy over the cherubim and under the throne (Ezek 1.22,26) -- notice that the wings of the living beings were "stretched out straight" beneath it (Ezek 1.23), and thus kept from entering or penetrating it. Furthermore, Ezekiel's 'crystal' frimament beneath God's throne resembles other heavenly objects: "Before (God's) throne there was...a sea of glass like crystal" (Rev 4.6); "under (God's) feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself" (Ex 24.10); "a (heavenly) city of pure gold, like clear glass...and the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass" (Rev 21. 18,21). Ezekiel's firmament, the (lit.) "eye of awesome ice," fits nicely in this array of heavenly objects, its solidity, like theirs, equally unquestionable. And we know from Genesis that the stars were set "in--or upon--the firmament," the same firmament that "separated the waters." Or, to quote Martin Luther, "Scripture...simply says that the moon, the sun, and the stars were placed, not in individual spheres but in the firmament of the heaven, below and above which heaven are the waters...Indeed, it is more likely that the stars...are fastened to the firmament like globes of fire, to shed light at night...We Christians must be different from the philosophers in the way we think about the causes of things. And if some are beyond our comprehension like those before us concerning the waters above the heavens, we must believe them...rather than either wickedly deny them or presumptuously interpret them in conformity with our understanding." (Luther's Works, Vol. 1, Lectures on Genesis, ed. Janoslaw Pelikan, Concordia Pub. House, St. Louis, Missouri, '58, p. 30, 42, 43.) Finally, be it known that you,

Ray Lafferty, have written, like Moses, of a firmament "separating waters:" "There was a great membrane or firmament built somewhere below, and old ocean was prisoned between this firmament and the fundamental rock of Gehenna-earth." (from your short story, "The World as Will and Wallpaper")!

A NOTE ON HEAVEN AND FIRMAMENT

'Heaven' and 'firmament' are not interchangeable terms. 'Heaven' includes everything above man's head: the spread-out sky, the firm vault, high 'spaces' and 'places,' etc., from the 'birds of heaven,' 'angels of heaven,' 'foundations of heaven,' 'pillars of heaven,' to the 'firmament of heaven.' Of course 'firmaments' were popular in ancient cosmogonies since their creation exemplified the primeval splitting of heaven and earth, and the raising of heaven on high (TE no.2, p. 2-3) "and God called the firmament, heaven." But to sum this up in a simple analogy, the difference between heaven and firmament is like the difference between "Main Street" and the actual hard macadam comprising the street. For "Main Street" includes the macadam, the stores, the people, the 'atmosphere' of activity beyond the mere macadam. So also 'heaven' means more than 'firmament,' and may even function as a poetic dartboard with all sorts of tempting suggestions flung its way, from heavenly curtains (a heaven of lit. 'gauze'--Isa 40.22) to heavens 'like iron or bronze,' i.e., not yielding rain (Lev 26.19; Deut 28.23) which are obvious poetic expressions. Of course none of these affect the realistic status of the (hard) firmament central to the Genesis account of creation.

But, returning to Lafferty's letter... (#6) The meaning of the Latin word 'firmament' did not "'harden' somewhat between the fifth century and the fifteenth." In fact, the history of the word is easy to trace:

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FIRMAMENT

2nd cent. B.C.--The Septuagint translates raqia as 'stereoma,' i.e., a hard firmament.
4th cent. A.D.--Jerome translates 'stereoma' as 'firmamentum,' i.e., a hard firmament.
16th cent. --Luther, in his Lectures on Genesis, writes of "this marvelous expansion of thick mist Moses calls a firmament...(whose) Maker gave solidity to this fluid material;" while Calvin, in his Commentary on Genesis, uses 'expanse' (a spacious one), i.e., the firmament softened.
17th cent. --The KJV uses 'open firmament (of the heavens)' (Gen 1.20), i.e., a soft firmament.
20th cent. --The KJV II & NASB use 'open expanse (of the heavens),' while the RSV & NEB use solid 'firmament,' or 'vault.' Catholic trans. use solid 'dome of the sky.' Jewish trans. (as far as I've been able to ascertain) have never relinquished a hard meaning for raqia.

It is interesting to note that the (spacious) 'expanse' translation had its origin right on the border-line, of the dawning of modern astronomy, around the 16th century, while the (solid) 'firmament' goes back ages before that. For instance, Calvin was aware that "Eclipses, and other things which we observe, plainly show the fixed stars are above the planets, and that the planets themselves are placed in different orbits...The sun, moon, and stars are not confusedly mixed together, but each has its own position and station assigned to it." Thus Calvin could hardly accept the notion of a single firmament containing all these objects and a solid firmament had no place in Calvin's more spacious cosmos! Luther, on the other hand, disputed the notion of "different orbits," saying, "That scheme of the spheres was thought out by later people for the purposes of teaching. Scripture knows nothing about them and simply says that the moon, the sun, and the stars were placed, not in individual spheres but in the firmament of the heaven (below and above which heaven are the waters), to be signs of future events, as we know from experience that eclipses, great conjunctions, and some other phenomena in the air are." Thus, Luther's less spacious cosmos could more easily accomodate a solid firmament (of "fluid material") since Luther did not stretch the distance between the stars and planets into "different orbits!" Of course I'm willing to bet that the ancients, not having the benefit of Calvin's modern astronomical knowledge, had a much more Lutheran view of the cosmos! (The above quotations are from Calvin's Commentary on the Book of Psalms, trans. James Anderson, Eerdmans, 1949, Ps CXLVIII, p. 305 & from

Luther's Works, ref. cited on p. 5 of this issue of TE.) Or compare the following picture, below, from Luther's Biblia, published by Hans Lufft, Wittenberg, 1534, with Calvin's interpretation of Scripture, based on the latest astronomical knowledge of his day:



Surrounding the Earth are the Sun, Moon, stars, and "waters above the firmament." From Martin Luther's Biblia. Calvin retorted that "If the astronomer inquires respecting the actual dimensions of the stars, he will find the moon to be less than Saturn...Moses describes the special use of this expanse, 'to divide the waters from the waters,' from which words arise a great difficulty. For it appears opposed to common sense, and quite incredible, that there should be waters above the heaven." Notice that Calvin does not say it is "unscriptural." While Luther's whole argument for his view is that "Scripture simply says..." (see Calvin's Commentary on Genesis, trans. John King, Eerdmans, 1948, p. 79 & 87 for the above quotes) The differences between the scriptural interpretations of these two men appears to shed light on when, how, and why the spacious 'expanse' translation arose! But returning once again to Lafferty's letter... (#7) My 'etymology-fiction' is one that scholars of both camps agree upon (see THE SCHOLARS AGREE, above). (#8) You stated that in Job 37.18, "the meaning 'beat out' is in the word lashaqis." But, as you can see below, in that verse the meaning 'beat or spread out' is in the word hiraqia:

NIV Interlinear

רָקַע (*rāqa'*) *stamp, spread out, stretch.*

†רָקִיעַ (*rāqia'*) *firmament.*

hiraqia → וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־ הָרָקִיעַ Gen 1.7

so-he-made · God · ··· · the-expanse

מוּצָק׃ כְּרְאִי חֲזָקִים לִשְׁחָקִים עִמּוֹ תִּרְקַע Job 37.18

being-cast · as-mirror-of · ones-hard · to-skies · with-him · can-you-spread-out

הָאָרֶץ לָרֹקַע Ps 136.6

the-earth · to-one-spreading-out

אַרְקֵמֵם׃ אֲדִקֵּם חוּצוֹת כְּטִיט־ 2 Sam 22.43

I-trampled-them · I-pounded-them · streets · like-mud-of

הַזָּהָב פַּחֵי אֶת־ וַיְרַקְּעוּ Ex 39.3

the-gold · sheets-of · ··· · and-they-hammered

↑↑↑

רקע = raqa, the root of the above words.

Note especially 'can-you-spread-out' (Job 37.18) and 'the-expanse' (Gen 1.7), above.

Strong's Concordance and Hebrew Dictionary

Job 37:18 thou with him s' out the sky. ≡ spread

7554. רָקַע **râqa'**, *raw-kah'*; a prim. root; to *pound* the earth (as a sign of passion); by analogy to *expand* (by hammering); by impl. to *overlay* (with thin sheets of metal):—beat, make broad, spread abroad (forth, over, out, into plates), stamp, stretch.

Young's Analytical Concordance

To (cause to) spread out or over, רָקַע *raqa,*
Job 37. 18 Hast thou with him spread out the sky

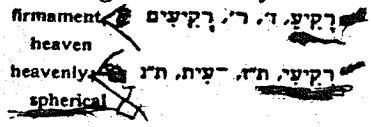
Theological Word Book of the Old Testament

rāqa' then comes to denote God's spreading forth the tangible earth (Isa 42:5; 44:24), stretching out its land above the water (Ps 136:6), or spreading out the intangible sky (Job 37:18).

(That Job regarded the sky as "intangible" is a presupposition of the creationist authors of TWBOT not borne out by the full context of the verse. But at least they agree that raqa denotes "spreading out" in Job 37.18.) As for the prefixes you note vis a vis raqia (i.e.. hi-raqia, la-raqia, vi-raqia) they are just that (prepositions, conjugation markers, and the like). (#9) You should have been suspicious whether raqia really means 'spherical,' if only because no scholar on either side of the debate has ever peeked inside an ordinary Hebrew-English dictionary and pulled out such a plum before! In fact I wrote Frederick Greenspahn, an Assoc. Prof. of Judaic Studies, concerning your 'spherical' definition, and he replied:

> The question you raise as to the meaning of raqia' can be answered by consulting the standard dictionary of Ludwig Koehler and W. Baumgartner (Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros) on page 910. (The dictionary Lafferty cites includes medieval and modern Hebrew which is not germane to the meaning of the word in the biblical period.) You might particularly note usages cited in that lexicon in Exodus 39:3, Numbers 17:4, 2 Samuel 22:43, Isaiah 40:19, 42:5, 44:24, Jeremiah 10:19, Ezekiel 6:11, 25:6 and Psalm 136:6 where the same root appears.
>
> The Kohler-Baumgartner lexicon is in English and German; you might be more comfortable with Brown-Driver-and-Briggs' English Lexicon of the Old Testament. Both should be available at almost any seminary. The references you need in the latter are on pp. 955-56.

But after you've examined things for yourself, note again what your dictionary states, from the page you highlighted and mailed to me:



It states that not only raqia means 'spherical,' but so do other 'heavenly' words! Do you accept these other words as further proofs of 'sphericity?' Or do they prove that 'your dictionary includes medieval and modern Hebrew, which is not germane to the meaning of the word in the biblical period?' For in fact, the definition 'spherical' came later, only after the earth and the heavens above it began to be regarded as 'spherical,' i.e., hundreds of years following the biblical period. Or, to quote the Christian monk, Cosmas, who could find nothing 'spherical' in the Bible at all, even though he'd written an entire book on Christian Topography, its first chapter titled, "Against those who, while wishing to profess Christianity, think and imagine like the pagans that heaven is spherical" (5th cent. A.D.). Of course, by the 16th century everyone knew that "the circuit of the heavens is finite, and that the earth, like a little sphere, is placed in the center" (Calvin). (#10) Let's not split hares! (NASB says, 'rabbit.') But why argue? Hares and rabbits belong to the same family, the main difference being that hares are born hairy and able to hop around, while rabbits bear hairless young in holes. In reply to your explanation of hares 'chewing cud,' see my reply to BSN. (#11) Speaking of rainbows...isn't their appearance linked to certain properties of light, refracted through a mist of water droplets? So wouldn't a paradisical earth, encompassed in water-vapor and with a mist rising daily from the ground have at least one rainbow in it? Even if they appeared only after the Deluge (as Genesis states), the best time to see them, meteorologists agree, is immediately following a swift downpour of rain, and not eleven months after the rains ended, the waters had abated, and the ark had landed, and Noah had begun offering animal sacrifices to the Lord! Leaving aside this question, think a moment of those timid beasts, preserved miraculously from the Deluge, only to be set fire to right after the ark landed, "and the Lord smelled the soothing aroma" (Gen 8.21).

(#12) Since you assume that the 'cloven-hoofed one' inspired Darwin's and Ptolemy's theories, does this mean that you feel the same way about all geocentric astronomers? I ask this because two geocentrists will be hosting the creationist conference in Clevland this year, and I want to know if this means that creationists also lick...cloven-hoofs, like evolutionists? (The Tychonian Society is an Ohio based organization of creationist-geocentrists!) (#13) If you were a 'gay,' 'liberal,' 'evolutionist,' I doubt that you'd waste time complaining about how the meanings of those words have been 'ruined.' Personally, I find that arguing about name-tags is never as interesting as facing the unique individuals behind them! (#14) You see something 'disgusting' about the idea of one species changing into another? Why not admit it's equally disgusting for human beings to develop from a single cell, passing through some grotesque shapes in the process? (#15) You say that every 'species' is 'special,' based on appearances that even a 'two year old' would recognize. Doesn't this ignore the fact that the same biochemical basis of inheritance (via DNA) is shared by all species, and that 'species' may be lumped together--similar 'species' comprising 'genera,' similar 'genera' comprising 'families,' similar 'families' comprising 'orders,' and so forth which suggests that all living things are somehow united and not distinct? As a former 'special' creationist I used to wonder why God would 'specially' create a being so near to man as the ape. (But now I know the answer, God did it just for a Laff!) (#16) I phoned ICR ten years ago to see about matriculating to Christian Heritage College to study scientific creationism. Morris suggested wisely that I obtain my degree in biology at a secular college, and thus get to know evolution from the inside, so to speak. Well, ten years has changed much. I mailed him my manuscript last october (I even mailed him my revisions a few weeks later). He perused everything and replied that he "disagreed strongly," yet would pass it all on to Richard Niessen. So I mailed M & N copies of TE in Jan & Feb. They're both too busy to respond at this time. And that, I think, answers your letter, Ray. Best, Ed

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THE THEISTIC EVOLUTIONIST'S FORUM — A new publication, mimeographed, called the ***Theistic Evolutionist's Forum*** is now being published. This first issue, dated January, 1985, has reached our office. At first we thought that the publication was a hoax because the positions taken by the publication are so stereotypically in error — but it does appear to be legitimate. The masthead of the ***Theistic Evolutionist's Forum*** proclaims that this is "The only national periodical focusing on both fundamentalist and atheist distortions of science and faith, while providing a hearing for apologists of either side."

Unfortunately the editor, E.T. Babinski, has chosen to ignore what creationists are saying in favor of building his own straw men and knocking them down. Or it could be that he is really ignorant of the arguments in the origins debate, approaching his newsletter with more enthusiasm than knowledge. His first article is an attempt to show that creationism is a late fundamentalist (read ignorant) aberration of true Christian faith. He ignores all of the documentation which has been published which shows that creationism and its defense against naturalism is as old as the confession of Christianity, and he ignores the fact that the founders of modern science were, nearly to a man, creationists. He would not have even had to go to creationist literature to learn this last point. A new book on Newton, **In the Presence of the Creator**, published by a secular publisher, has as its purpose to show Newton's belief in God as Creator Who is intimately involved in His world. (We'll have more on this book in a later issue). He also maintains that those who accept the historical and scientific accuracy of the Bible insist on interpreting the Bible as "literally as possible." Most creationists would feel very uncomfortable with that principle. Whenever you have humans interpreting Scripture you are going to run into problems. Our position here is that people ***should not*** interpret the Bible — the Bible should interpret the Bible. Scripture itself tells us whether we are dealing with a parable, poetry, or history. In cases where this may not be clear, other passages enlighten the difficult situations. But since this position is dangerous to the theistic evolutionist position Babinski, never mentions this principle.

Another straw man Babinski brings up is Leviticus 11:20-23 which says that "The rabbit...chews cud." This, he says, is patently wrong and is an example of how the ancient Hebrews' ignorance became a part of Scripture. When one is exposing ignorance with such vengeance, one is subject to even more severe condemnation if he is ignorant, too. In fact, the rabbit ***only appears not to chew the cud***! Studies have shown that rabbits chew the cud, and only differ from the normal cud-chewing process in mechanics. Rabbits do not have the same stomach arrangement as other cud chewers and so they must use a different approach. It turns out that rabbit feces are only partially processed by the rabbit's digestive system — and are in the same stage of digestion as the cud of a cud-chewing animal. The rabbit then re-chews his feces, completing the very same process, for the very same purposes, as other cud-chewing animals. The rabbit's only point of difference with other cud-chewing animals is that he has only one stomach so, rather than using different stomachs for processing his food, he uses the same one twice!