THE SYNTACTIC-PRAGMATIC FUNCTION OF GENESIS 1:1-2 IN THE CREATION NARRATIVE

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The relationship between Gen 1:1-2 and the rest of the first chapter of the Hebrew Bible has occasioned a long scholarly debate, which has produced in its wake a considerable amount of literature. The divergence and polarity of views on these verses seem to result from the atomistic nature of traditional approaches in biblical studies. Approaching the text from the perspective of grammatical textlinguistics and pragmatics, this article has yielded results that both confirm and reshape scholarly thinking on Gen 1:1-2. This fresh look at the text brings with it a re-interpretation of בראשית *"in the beginning." Gen 1:1-2 presents as antecedent information that succinctly relates a previous act of creation. Thus understood, the pragmatic function of* בראשית *is to distinguish this previous creation (vv. 1-2) from the six-day creation in (vv. 3-31), particularly to indicate that* השמים *and* הארץ *(v. 1) were not created on* יום אחד *(i.e., the first day of the six-day creation). The article, therefore, demonstrates that the textlinguistic/pragmatic approach promises a fresh avenue for understanding and interpreting the biblical text, especially such difficult passages as Gen 1:1-2.*

1. Introduction

The syntactic-semantic function of Gen 1:1-2 has received considerable scholarly discussion, yet the debate is far from over.[1] Recently, for example, G. Pfandl, upon reviewing the major views on vv. 1-2, has stated that this text "allows for both the passive gap theory or [*sic*] the traditional Creation

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[1] For summaries of the various views on syntax in Gen 1:1-3, see e.g., K. A. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 136-144; J. T. K. Lim, "Explication of an Exegetical Enigma in Genesis 1:1-3," *AJT* 16 (2002): 302,307; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1. (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 11-13; V. P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 103-117; W. P. Brown, *Structure, Role, and Ideology in the Hebrew and Greek Texts of Genesis 1:1-2:3*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, no. 132 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1993), 62-77; G. F. Hasel, "Recent Translations of Genesis 1:1: A Critical Look," *Bible Translator* 22 (1971): 156-57; S. D. Giere, *A New Glimpse of Day One: Intertextuality, History of Interpretation, and Genesis 1:1-5* (Berlin: de Gryuter, 2009), 19, n. 12.

theory."[2] In view of the difficulty with which the text presents interpreters, S. D. Giere despairingly concludes, "The ambiguity of the relationship of MT Gen 1:1-2 to the subsequent verses likely will never be completely resolved as the ambiguity is inherent in the text itself."[3] More work, nevertheless, needs be done on the subject.

Generally, scholarly opinions on the function of vv. 1-2 have been informed by their understanding of the phrase בראשית "in the beginning." On the one hand, some scholars consider בראשית as a *construct* noun and argue that v. 1 be read as a temporal subordinate clause, even if this means re-vocalizing ברא "create" as an infinitive construct (cf. Hos 1:2).[4] Among these scholars, some take v. 1 as a protasis (i.e., preposed dependent temporal clause) and v. 2 as apodosis.[5] Others treat v. 1 as protasis, v. 2 as parenthetical statement, and v. 3 as apodosis.[6] It is even argued that Gen 1:1 is a "*bare restrictive relative clause*," a kind of clause with a head (construct)+Ø+verb structure.[7] Thus read, v. 1 is a temporal dependent clause—reducible to a

2   G. Pfandl, "Does Genesis Teach that the Earth Existed in an Unformed State Prior to the Creation Week?" in *Interpreting Scripture: Bible Questions and Answers*, Biblical Research Institute Studies, vol. 2, G. Pfandl, ed. (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2010), 111.

3   Giere, *A New Glimpse of Day One*, 20.

4   See the history of this view in C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*: *A Commentary*, trans. J. J. Scullion (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1984), 95; Brown, *Structure, Role, and Ideology*, 62-72.

5   See e.g., W. Gross, "Syntaktische Erscheinungen am Anfang althebräischer Erzählun gen: Hintergrund und Vordergrund," in *Congress Volume—Vienna 1980*, VTSup 32, ed. J. A. Emerton (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 131-145; H. G. Stigers, *A Commentary on Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 48-50.

6   E.g., Giere, *A New Glimpse of Day One*, 20-21; B. Vawter, "Genesis," *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, ed. Reginald C. Fuller, rev. and updated (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1975), 173; N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish, 1989), 5; E. A. Speiser, *Genesis: An Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, Anchor Bible, vol. 1. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987), 3,12. Brown, *Structure, Role, and Ideology*, 70-72, argues that v. 1 is circumstantial clause dependent on v. 3. Cf. B. W. Anderson, "A Stylistic Study of the Priestly Creation Story," in *Canon and Authority: Essays in Old Testament Religion and Theology*, ed. G. W. Coats and B. O. Long (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 153, who says that v. 3 cannot be the apodosis of a temporal clause with v. 1 as its protasis. Waltke, *Genesis*, 58, observes: "A telic verb . . . only finds meaning at the end of a process. The Hebrew term *bara'*, meaning "to create," only refers to a completed act of creation (cf. Deut 4:32; Ps 89:12; Isa 40:26; Amos 4:13), so it cannot mean that, in the beginning, God *began* the process of creating the cosmos."

7   R. D. Holmstedt, "The Relative Clause in Biblical Hebrew: A Linguistic Analysis" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 2002), 123. Italics his.

prepositional phrase—modifying v. 3a (main clause), with clauses 2a-2c being parenthetical or circumstantial.[8] In any case, scholars advocating this view are largely inspired by Ancient Near Eastern cosmogonic parallels to Gen 1:1-2 as well as 2:4-6.[9] On the other hand, several scholars consider ראשית as an *absolute* noun and thereby render v. 1 as an independent clause. This traditional understanding also has several ramifications as regards the relation of v. 1 to v. 2 and the subsequent narrative. The major positions could be summarized as follows:[10] (1) v. 1 serves as the title or summary of the whole chapter while v. 2 describes the situation prior to creation, that is, a preexistent chaos;[11] (2) v. 1 refers to an original creation which became contaminated with evil and v. 2 sets the stage for reconstruction;[12] (3) v. 1 refers to an original creation of the heavens and earth, with v. 2 describing the state of the earth as it was originally created; v. 3 begins creation of life on earth;[13] (4) v. 1 functions both as summary/superscription and original

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[8] Hence, the translation, "In the particular beginning that God created the heavens and the earth—now the earth was formless and void and darkness was upon the surface of the deep and the wind of God was hovering over the surface of the waters—God said, "Let there be light!" Then there was light" (Holmstedt, "The Relative Clause in Biblical Hebrew," 124; idem, "The Restrictive Syntax of Genesis 1:1," *VT* 58 (2008): 56-67, where he rejects the idea of an absolute beginning: "there were potentially multiple periods or stages to God's creative work" [ibid., 56]).

[9] E.g., Speiser, *Genesis*, 5; Brown, *Structure, Role, and Ideology*, 65, 73; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 102; J. E. Atwell, "An Egyptian Source for Genesis 1," *JTS* 51 (2000): 451.

[10] Pfandl, "Does Genesis Teach," 110-111, categorizes these positions as follows: (a) Genesis 1:1 as a title, (b) the ruin-reconstruction theory, (c) the passive gap theory, (d) creation of the universe on day one, and (e) the traditional creation theory.

[11] E.g., B. K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 58; idem, "The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1-3. Part 3: The Initial Chaos Theory and the Precreation Chaos Theory," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 132 (1975): 216-228; J. H. Walton, *Genesis*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 70; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 94; G. von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. J. H. Marks, rev. J. Bowden, Old Testament Library (Bloomsbury, London: SCM, 1972), 49.

[12] This is what is usually known as the reconstruction theory. Some advocates of this view translate היה in v. 2 as "became" (e.g., G. L. Archer Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* [Chicago: Moody, 1974], 190). See also Waltke, "The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1-3," 216-228.

[13] E.g., Lim, "Explication of an Exegetical Enigma in Genesis 1:1-3," 305-308; J. H. Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound: A Provocative New Look at the Creation Account* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1996), 101-109; idem, "Exegetical Notes: Genesis 1:1-2:4a," *Trinity Journal* 5 (1984): 73-82; A. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis: The Story of Creation*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 89-95; Hasel, "Recent Translations of Genesis 1:1," 156-57. Cf. N. Winther-Nielsen, "'In the Beginning' of Biblical Hebrew Discourse: Genesis 1:1 and the Fronted Time Expression," in *Language in Context: Essays for Robert E. Longacre*, ed. S. J. J. Hwang and W. R. Merrifield (Arlington, TX: University of Texas

act of creation;[14] and (5) v. 1 is part of the creative work on the first day of the creation week.[15]

It is observable from the brief overview that studies on the function of Gen 1:1-2 and its relationship to the rest of the creation account are in the state of flux, benefiting scholarship only with "the impossibility in coming to any decisive conclusion."[16] If anything, the resulting divergence of views on vv. 1-2 is a signal that the traditional, atomistic approaches in biblical studies have outlived their utility, at least, as far as this text is concerned. Accordingly, it is posited here that the textlinguistic/pragmatic approach promises a fresh avenue for understanding the function of Gen 1:1-2.[17] After a few remarks on structure, the Hebrew text of 1:1-2 will be examined from a textlinguistic perspective, highlighting the pragmatic notions of word order, clause typology, and 'grounding', and their bearing on the delineation of the function of these verses.

2. Structure in Gen 1:1-2:3

1. *Overall Structure*: Two major structures are observable in Gen 1. The first is a linear structure, following the sequence of creation: introduction

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Press, 1992), 77-78; M. F. Rooker, "Genesis 1:1-3: Creation or Re-creation? Part 2," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149 (1992): 415-416, 426.

[14] E.g., B. T. Arnold, *Encountering the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 25; Vawter, "Genesis," 174; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 117.

[15] H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1942), 39, 42, 45.

[16] Giere, *A New Glimpse of Day One*, 19, n. 12.

[17] For a definition of textlinguistics, see for example, R. E. Longacre, *Joseph—A Story of Divine Providence: A Text Theoretical and Textlinguistic Analysis of Genesis 37 and 39-48* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1989); W. R. Bodine, ed., *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992); idem, ed., *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1995); R. D. Bergen, *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994); E. van Wolde, ed., *Narrative Syntax and the Hebrew Bible: Papers of the Tilburg Conference 1996* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); D. A. Dawson, *Text-Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, JSOTSup. Series, no. 177 (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1994); D. O. Moomo, "The Meaning of the Biblical Hebrew Verbal Conjugation from a Crosslinguistic Perspective" (D. Litt. diss., University of Stellenbosch, 2004), 49-66; S. J. Floor, "From Information Structure, Topic and Focus, to Theme in Biblical Hebrew Narrative" (D. Litt., diss., University of Stellenbosch, 2004); S. G. Dempster, "Linguistic Features of Hebrew Narrative: A Discourse Analysis of Narrative from the Classical Period" (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, Canada, 1985); J. S. DeRouchie, "A Call to Covenant Love: Text Grammar and Literary Structure in Deuteronomy 5-11" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2005); D. Bediako, *Genesis 1:1-2:3: A Textlinguistic Analysis* (Saarbuecken, Germany: VDM, 2010).

(1:1-2), day one (1:3-5), day two (1:6-8), day three (1:9-13), day four (1:14-19), day five (1:20-23), day six (1:24-31), and day seven (2:1-3). The second is a thematicc structure, depicting a bi-triadic order of creation as follows:

Day	Day
1 Light (1:3-5)	4 Lights (1:14-19)
2 Firmament (1:6-8)	5 Inhabitants (1:20-23)
sky	birds
seas	fish
3 Dry land (1:9-10)	6 Land Animals (1:24-25)
Vegetation (1:11-13)	Human beings (1:26-31)[18]

It is worth noting that this thematic structure places both Gen 1:1-2 (introduction) and 2:1-3 (day seven) on its periphery—these units lie outside the boundaries of the symmetry (1:3-31). Such an observation is important, as it bears on the understanding of the function of Gen 1:1-2.

  2. *Clause Structure*: Gen 1 contains about ninety-six clauses, representing fourteen clause types. Forty-nine (51%) of these clauses are *wayyiqtol* (i.e., *waw*+imperfect) clauses, none of which is found in Gen 1:1-2. In 1:3-2:3, most of the other clause types are embedded in *wayyiqtol* clauses (i.e., these other clauses continue the information initiated by *wayyiqtol* clauses), implying that the bulk of the material in Gen 1 stands on the primary story-line. In other words, *wayyiqtol* clauses present the narrative thread of Gen 1 in the form of sequential happenings. Instructively, the divine activity on each of the six days of creation begins with the *wayyiqtol* clause ויאמר אלהים "and God said." The abridged clausal outline of Gen 1:1-2:3 below shows this phenomenon.

בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ[1]

והארץ היתה תהו ובהו[2]

וחשך על־פני תהום

ורוח אלהים מרחפת על־פני המים

ויאמר אלהים[3]

ויאמר אלהים[6]

ויאמר אלהים[9]

ויאמר אלהים[14]

ויאמר אלהים[20]

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[18]   See e.g., Waltke, *Genesis*, 57; J. T. Walsh, *Style and Structure in Biblical Narrative* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2001), 37; D. A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 49.

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24ויאמר אלהים

2:1ויכלו השמים והארץ וכל־צבאם

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As can be seen from this outline, ויאמר אלהים does not appear in the first and last paragraphs: Gen 1:1-2 (introduction) and 2:1-3 (day seven). This may imply that in these paragraphs the six-day creation, perhaps in the immediate interest of the author of Genesis, has either not yet begun (1:1-2) or is already completed (2:1-3).

3. *Communicative Structure*: Apart from 1:1-2 and 2:1-3, each paragraph exhibits three communicative domains. These levels of narrative perspective include the author's (1) report of divine speeches/commands, (2) report of divine activities following the speech, and (3) further closing remarks (usually structural expressions). Gen 1:1-2 and 2:1-3 do not neatly belong to any of these domains, probably because these paragraphs lie outside of the six-day creation.

3. Clausal Analysis

Gen 1:1-2 contains four clauses: (1) בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ (v. 1; clause type: *x-qatal*); (2) והארץ היתה תהו ובהו (v. 2a; clause type: *we-x-qatal*); (3) וחשך על־פני תהום (v. 2b; clause type: *nominal*); and (4) ורוח אלהים מרחפת על־פני המים (v. 2c; clause type: *participial*).

Clause 1 has a marked word order, indicated by the fronting of an adjunct,[19] particularly a prepositional phrase of time reference (i.e., בראשית)

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[19]   In verbal clauses, a clause may be divided into two fields: preverbal field and main (or postverbal) field. Each of these fields has some obligatory order of constituents. Obligatory elements in the preverbal field include, for example, interrogatives, demonstrative/deictic adverbs, independent personal pronouns, certain subordinated conjunctions and discourse markers, negatives, and infinitives. In the main field, shorter constituents with deictic function tend to occupy the primary postverbal position while long constituents tend to occur at the end of the clause (C. H. J. van der Merwe, J. A. Naudé, and J. H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, Biblical Languages: Hebrew 3 (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1999), 340). Any clause whose constituent order deviates from the unmarked/obligatory sequence in a given field is said to be marked. For instance, the verbal clause has a marked word order when the verbal constituent is preceded by any non-obligatory constituent such as subject or object. Similarly, a non-obligatory element (apart from subject or object) found in the primary postverbal field is in a marked information status (see B. L. Bandstra, "Word Order and Emphasis in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: Syntactic Observations on Genesis 22 from a Discourse Perspective," in *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, ed. W. R. Bodine [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992], 117-118, 123). The following has been considered to be the unmarked order in the main field when all the constituents are lexicalized: Subject-Object-Indirect object-Prepositional object-Other complement/adjunct+complement/

which adverbially modifies the entire clause.[20] The placement of בראשית in the preverbal field of the clause suggests, first, that it is a focused constituent,[21] the purpose of which, probably, is to place the creation of הׁשמים and הארץ at some earlier time. Second, the fronting of בראשית disallows clause 1 from standing on the narrative foreground, but highlights the information contained in the clause as background information, since in narrative texts x+*qatal* clauses mostly convey background, as opposed to foreground, information.[22] Third, the fronting of בראשית leads the reader to anticipate the unfolding of a main story that goes beyond the scope of ראׁשית; by so doing בראשית signals that clause 1 is an initial phase of the divine creative activity. The constituent structure of clause 1 (i.e., ב+x[time ref.]+*qatal*+subj+obj) suggests that it is a simple, declarative sentence, and for that matter, an independent clause/sentence.[23] Thus read, and as argued

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adjunct (place)-adjunct (time) (van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 340). From a functional-grammatical perspective, Buth gives the following order: pragmatic position-verb-subject-object (R. Buth, "Functional Grammar, Hebrew and Aramaic: An Integrated, Textlinguistic Approach to Syntax," in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature*, ed. Walter R. Bodine [Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1995], 80). A non-obligatory constituent in the preverbal position is said to be fronted. Marked word order/fronting has significant semantic-pragmatic functions, including the marking of focus, topic (or contextualizing constituent), action discontinuity/backgrounding, and dramatic pause (see C. H. J. van der Merwe, "Discourse Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew Grammar," in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. R. D. Bergen [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994], 33; S. J. Floor, "From Information Structure, Topic and Focus, to Theme in Biblical Hebrew Narrative" [D.Litt. diss., University of Stellenbosch, 2004], 187).

20   See also Winther-Nielsen, "'In the Beginning'," 67-80). Cf. B. T. Arnold and J. H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003], 184.

21   See also A. Moshavi, "The Discourse Functions of Object/Adverbial-Fronting in Biblical Hebrew," in *Biblical Hebrew in Its Northwest Semitic Setting: Typological and Historical Perspectives*, ed. S. E. Fassberg and A. Hurvitz (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2006), 231, who argues that "verbal clauses with a preposed object or adverbial have one of just two discourse functions: *focusing* and *topicalizing*" [emphasis his]. Bandstra, "Word Order," 117, observes that the marked word order MVSO also indicates the setting of a new stage.

22   See e.g., van der Merwe, "Discourse Linguistics," 29-34, 39-40; R. E. Longacre, "Discourse Perspective on the Hebrew Verb: Affirmation and Restatement," in *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, ed. W. R. Bodine [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992], 177-189.

23   See also A. J. Frendo, "Genesis 1:1: An Archaeological Approach," in *Michael: Historical, Epigraphical, and Biblical Studies in Honor of Professor Michael Heltzer*, ed. Y. Avishur and R. Deutsch (Tel Aviv-Jaffa: Archaeological Center, 1999), 163, who concludes that the "Hebrew grammar itself shows that Genesis 1:1 had better be viewed as a main independent clause." Cf. E. van Wolde, "The Text as an Eloquent Guide: Rhetorical, Linguistic and Literary Features in Genesis 1," in *Literary Structure and Rhetorical*

below, v. 1 refers to a semantically self-contained previous creation—appropriately conveyed through a declarative, independent sentence.[24] That v. 1 conveys a previous creation activity seems to provide the basis for the selection of its second grammatical object, הארץ, as the primary topic in clause 2a.[25] The constituent structure of clause 2a confirms this observation. First, the ו+x+*qatal* (היתה) structure of clause 2a suggests that it is a disjunctive clause.[26] This means that clause 2a does not contain an action sequential to the action in clause 1; rather, clause 2a describes the state of הארץ as it was created.[27] Second, the structure of 2a, especially the presence of the disjunc-

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Strategies in the Hebrew Bible, ed. L. J. de Regt, J. de Waard, and J. P. Fokkelman (Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1996), 135.

[24]   The understanding of v. 1 as independent clause receives the support of the major textual witnesses (e.g., LXX and SP). This has been recognized even by scholars who take v. 1 as dependent clause (e.g., Brown, *Structure, Role, and Ideology*, 35, 65; Giere, *A New Glimpse of Day One*, 285, "LXX Gen 1:1 and 1:3 are both independent clauses that leave little room but to say that there are two creations in LXX Gen 1:1-5"). The Masoretic accentuation also seems to support reading v. 1 is independent clause (e.g., it is argued that the placement of the disjunctive accent *tiphạ* on בראשית suggests that the Masorets took it as absolute noun phrase [Hasel, "Recent Translations of Genesis 1:1," 158-159, following E. J. Young, "Relation of the First Verse of Genesis 1 to Verses Two and Three," *WTJ* 21 [1959]: 133-146). The structure of clause 2a, namely, the fronting of הארץ, the disjunctive function ו, and the lexicalization of היתה strengthen the argument. If v. 1 were to be taken as a superscription or even a dependent, temporal clause, the constituents of v. 2a would perhaps have been structured differently, for example, *wayyiqtol*+x (so also e.g., Keil and Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, 1:46; Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound*, 103; E. Kautzsch and A. E. Cowley, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1909), 453. U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, vol. 1, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961; reprint, Jerusalem, Magnes, 1978), 19, rightly observes that V-X structure (rather than X-V) is required for 1:2 to be a dependent clause).

[25]   Note that the grammatical objects השמים and הארץ are effected, rather than affected, direct-object accusatives. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 93, rightly observes, "The first verse of Genesis briefly records the creation of the universe in its essential form, and the second verse singles out a part of this universe, viz., the earth, and describes its condition in some detail."

[26]   See also B. K. Waltke and M. P. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 129, who further note that "interclausal *waw* before a non-verb constituent has a disjunctive role. There are two common types of disjunction. One type involves a continuity of scene and participants, but a change of action, while the other is used where the scene or participants shift" (ibid., 650). See also B. Jongeling, "Some Remarks on the Beginning of Genesis 1:2," *Folia Orientalia* 21 (1980): 27-32.

[27]   The fronting of הארץ before hayah seems to signal simultaneity, rather than sequential

tive ו, indicates that it is a main clause rather than a dependent, parenthetical clause.[28] Similarly, the lexicalization of היה in clause 2a seems to require that clause 2a be read as a main clause.[29] In other words, if clause 2a were a dependent clause, its constituents would probably be structured different-ly,[30] and it would not require the lexicalization of היה.[31] Third, because v. 2 selects and describes its primary topic, הארץ, from v. 1, it follows that v. 2 cannot fully be understood without v. 1, a fact which seems suggested by

ity (for this kind of fronting, see van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 349). Further, the use of the disjunctive *waw* rather than a *waw*-consecutive or *waw*-relative in 2a seems to require that no chronological gap be po-sited between v. 1 and v. 2. As in v. 2, the disjunctive *waw* primarily introduces a de-scription of an entity in a preceding clause, not a sequential action.

[28] For example, the presence of the *waw*-conjunction in 2a may argue against its being taken as a parenthetical construction (cf. Winther-Nielsen, "'In the Beginning'," 71, 73). See also Brown, *Structure, Role, and Ideology*, 65, 71; Hasel, "Recent Translations of Ge-nesis 1:1," 158-159, 165-166; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 13; Young, "Relation of the First Verse," 133-146.

[29] J. W. Dyk and E. Talstra, "Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic Features in Identifying Sub ject and Predicate in Nominal Clauses," in *The Verbless Clause in Biblical Hebrew: Lin-guistic Approaches*, ed. C. L. Miller (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 159, are right that היה "has its own specific lexical frame, while allowing for the formal similarities between structures in Hebrew in which 'to be' appears and those in which it is not present (nominal clauses)." The lexicalization of היה may serve (1) to "support various clausal morpheme markers" including tense, aspect and modality (C. Sinclair, "Are Nominal Clauses a Distinct Clausal Type?" in *The Verbless Clause in Biblical Hebrew: Linguistic Approaches*, ed. C. L. Miller [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999], 75), (2) to inject "a modicum of dynamism" in its clause (Longacre, *Joseph—A Story of Divine Providence*, 82), or (3) may operate as a normal verb because its lexicalization is obliga-tory in main sentences (A. Niccacci, "Simple Nominal Clause [SNC] or Verbless Clause in Biblical Hebrew," *ZAH* 6 [1993]: 216-224). This suggests that clauses with lexicalized היה are not exactly the same as strictly verbless clauses; the former has some discourse pragmatic functions that the latter does not. See also P. Joüon and T. Mu-raoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Roma: Instituto Biblico, 1991), 576-577; Kautzsch and Cowley, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 454.

[30] This has long been noted by many commentators, including Keil and Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, 1:46; Cassuto, *Commentary*, 19; Leupold, *Exposition*, 45; D. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 1. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1967), 44; Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound*, 102-103; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 3; Stigers, *Commentary*, 49; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chap-ters 1-17*, 116. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 93, adds that the subject-verb structure of v. 2 suggests that 'earth' is emphasized, and that v. 1 is independent.

[31] This what B. S. Childs, *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament* [Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1960], 33, seems to miss when he states that היה in v. 2 is superfluous since it is as-sumed in a nominal clause.

the constituent structure of v. 2.[32] Indirectly, therefore, the structure of clause 2a supports the observation that v. 1 is an independent clause.

With its grammatical subject, הארץ, in the preverbal field,[33] clause 2a introduces and focuses attention on הארץ as the sphere of divine activity described in a series of sequential actions beginning with v. 3. In other words, while clause 1 indicates that God created השמים and הארץ at some previous time, clause 2a selects הארץ and its inhabitants as the focus of the six-day creation. This explains why the state of הארץ, not השמים, receives detailed description in v. 2, which is, as it were, a part of narrative stage setting. It is generally understood that השמים and הארץ in v. 1 express totality, that is, a merism.[34] However, among other reasons,[35] the individuative functions of

[32]   D. T. Tsumura, *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2: A Linguistic Investigation* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1989), 78, n. 41, similarly observes that it would be "strange that a Hebrew creation narrative should begin with the present word order of v. 2, i.e., waw+NP[noun phrase]+VP[verb phrase], without any temporal description." If, as stated above, v. 2 may not fully understood without v. 1, it follows that v. 1 is more than a title or summary of the narrative that ensues. If v. 1 is taken as a mere summary, then v. 2 becomes somewhat anomalous and unexplainable. Against the summary view of v. 1, Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 13, taunts, "How can God be said to create the earth (v. 1), if the earth pre-existed his creative activity (v. 2) as this view implies?" Similarly, v. 1 does not seem to have the structure of a title (e.g., Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound*, 102-103; Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, 42; Lim, "Explication of an Exegetical Enigma in Genesis 1:1-3," 307; Hasel, "Recent Translations of Genesis 1:1," 154-66). Titles are more likely to be couched in cleft sentence (Gen 2:4; 6:9; 11:10; 36:10; 37:2). Furthermore, unlike v. 1, a title sentence may not be connected to the following text by the conjunction ו, nor would it begin with a prepositional phrase as in Gen 1:1 (Brown, *Structure, Role, and Ideology*, 71; Hasel, "Recent Translations of Genesis 1:1," 165).

[33]   In the OT היה may both begin a clause or may appear in the second position after the subject (for the former, cf. Gen 2:7,10; 4:3,14; 5:23,31-32; 6:21; 9:11,14; 12:12; 24:14; Num 20:2; Josh 8:35; 10:14; 1 Kgs 8:29; Isa 7:23). This may indicate that when lexicalized, היה behaves as a full verb, whether the predication is complete or not. This means that when the subject of a היה-clause is placed in the first position, the order is marked as in a verbal clause. Thus, הארץ in 2a may be considered both as a fronted primary topic. The comments of Floor, "Information Structure," 280, are important: the *we-x-qatal* structure is a marker for the fronting of nouns for primary topic shift or a "topic theme announcing and topic contrasting." Further, "the fronted, marked word-order focus structure in a *we-X-qatal* clause contains thematic information, but thematic in the sense of framing or staging the subsequent theme development. It provides the setting" (ibid., 313).

[34]   E.g., Skinner, *Commentary on Genesis*, 14; Sarna, *Genesis*, 5; Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 129; Waltke, *Genesis*, 59; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 15; N.-E. Andreason, "The Word 'Earth' in Genesis 1:1," *Origins* 8 (1981): 16; Giere, *A New Glimpse of Day One*, 21.

[35]   D. T. Tsumura, "Genesis and Ancient Near Eastern Stories of Creation and Flood: An Introduction," in *"I Studied Inscriptions from before the Flood": Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1-11*, ed. R. S. Hess and D. T. Tsumura (Wino-

the direct object marker (את)[36] and the definite article (ה), and the singling out of הארץ for further description in clauses 2a-c argue against a simply merismatic understanding of the word-pair.

The nominal clause 2b—where היתה seems to do double duty—and the participial clause 2c are coordinated clauses, both of which further describe the state of הארץ in general. Thus, rather than dependent circumstantial clauses,[37] clauses 2a-c may be seen as coordinated clauses that bring הארץ to the center-stage.[38] In clause 2a הארץ is described as תהו ובהו, in 2b חשך is upon תהום, and in 2c רוח אלהים hovers over המים. It appears that תהום (2b) and המים (2c) further define תהו ובהו (2a) which function together as a single predicate

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na Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 33, suggests that הארץ constitutes an antonymous word pair with השמים in Gen 1:1, where הארץ refers to everything under השמים. Note that because הארץ in v. 1 is singled out in v. 2 as a specific entity, it follows that השמים and הארץ in v. 1 are treated as separate entities. Cf. Brown, *Structure, Role, and Ideology*, 102, n. 12; Tsumura, *The Earth and the Waters*, 78, 82-83, 163; J. Bergman and M. Ottosson, "ארץ," *TDOT*, 1:393-394; Frendo, "Genesis 1:1: An Archaeological Approach," 166.

36 See J. A. Cook and R. D. Holmstedt, *Ancient Hebrew Grammar* (Draft Copy, 2008), 33, who state, "The function word את precedes direct objects of Biblical Hebrew verbs if those direct objects are individuated (i.e., if they are strongly characterized as distinct entities or individuals—which means that they are also often marked with the article." Arnold and Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 31, see a solitary use the article in השמים and הארץ (so Waltke and O'Connor, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 250).

37 Some scholars see v. 2 as a subordinate circumstantial clause (e.g., Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 102; Kidner, *Genesis*, 44; Stigers, *A Commentary on Genesis*, 49; R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline*, 2d ed. [Toronto: University of Toronto Pres, 1976], 83; Holmstedt, "The Relative Clause in Biblical Hebrew," 124; idem, "The Restrictive Syntax of Genesis 1:1," 56-67). Some would even think that v. 2 is out of place (Childs, *Myth and Reality*, 30-42; Gunkel, *Genesis*, 104). Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 15, argues that v. 2 is disjunctive but it is circumstantial to v. 3 rather than to v. 1 (so F. I. Andersen, *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew* [The Hague: Mouton, 1974], 85). However, Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 117, notes that "contemporaneous circumstance is adequately handled by a verbless clause," hence suggests that v. 2 is "distinct from and prior to v. 3" (so Waltke, "The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1-3," 225-228). While v. 2 contains descriptive clauses, these clauses are not subordinate. V. 1 is a simple declarative, independent sentence. V. 2 does not describe the circumstance in which the action in v. 1 took place, but rather describes the condition of the earth when the creative act in v. 1 was complete. Therefore, the clauses in v. 2 should not be read as circumstantial clauses. A. Niccacci, "Basic Facts and Theory of the Biblical Hebrew Verb System in Prose," in *Narrative Syntax and the Hebrew Bible: Papers of the Tilburg Conference 1996*, ed. E. van Wolde (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 173, notes that circumstantial constructions are indicated by the movement from *wayyiqtol* to *we-x-qatal* clauses.

38 See Kidner, *Genesis*, 44, who considers v. 2 as "an expansion of the statement just made, and its own two halves are concurrent. It sets the scene, making the earth our vantage point" (so also Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound*, 109).

complement describing הארץ.[39] The terms תהום and המים may thus be hypo-nymous to תהו ובהו,[40] a word-pair which, in the context of vv. 1-2, can be considered as a nominal hendiadys.[41]

To summarize, Gen 1:1-2 contains four main clauses: *x-qatal*, *we-x-qatal*, nominal, and participial. The transitive declarative *x-qatal* clause (v. 1) possibly constitutes an initial creative activity; the *we-x-qatal* clause (v. 2a) both coordinates v. 1 and v. 2 disjunctively and topicalizes הארץ, within whose parameters the ensuing divine activity (1:3-2:3) is situated. Clauses 2b and 2c are each conjunctively coordinated to 2a, as made clear by the use of coordinating conjunction as well as their parallel descriptions of the state of הארץ. Finally, as indicated by their modes of predication as well as the low level of transitivity, the clauses in v. 2 are stative-descriptive clauses; these clauses describe the state of הארץ as it was originally created.[42]

4. Gen 1:1-2 as Antecedent Information

It has been argued elsewhere that Gen 1:1-2:3 is best understood as a historical narrative text in its own right.[43] Like other historical narrative

[39]   Were תהום and המים not to be understood as part, or contents, of הארץ, clauses 2b and 2c would hardly make sense here. See also Tsumura, *The Earth and the Waters*, 67-74; Cassuto, *Commentary*, 25; Sarna, *Genesis*, 7; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 17.

[40]   So also Tsumura, *The Earth and the Waters*, 67-74; idem, "A 'Hyponymous' Word Pair, *'rs* and *thm(t)*, in Hebrew and Ugaritic," *Biblica* 69 (1988): 258-260. It appears that תהום describes הארץ while המים specifies תהום. In any case, תהום and המים as well as חשך, all define תהו ובהו. The expression, therefore, does not convey sinister/chaotic connotation. הארץ is described תהו ובהו because it is not yet readied for habitation (cf. vv. 3-31). Following an extensive philological and comparative study on the meaning of תהו ובהו, Tsumura similarly concludes, "The biblical context and extra-biblical parallels suggest that the phrase . . . in Gen 1:2 has nothing to do with 'chaos' and simply means 'emptiness' and refers to the earth which is an empty place, i.e. 'an unproductive and uninhabited place'" (Tsumura, *The Earth and the Waters*, 156; cf. Waltke, *Genesis*, 59; Rooker, "Genesis 1:1-3: Creation or Re-creation? Part 1," 316-323).

[41]   See e.g., Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 130; Walton, *Genesis*, 73; Cassuto, *Commentary*, 19-20; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 3, 15; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 108; Arnold and Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 148. Some have considered the expression as a farrago (e.g., J. M. Sasson, "Time . . . to Begin," in *Sha'arei Talmon: Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and the Ancient Near East Presented to Shemaryahu Talmon*, ed. M. Fishbane and E. Tov (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 188; Brown, *Structure, Role, and Ideology*, 75, who renders it as "mingled mass").

[42]   It is interesting to note that whether one takes v. 1 as an independent clause or a subordinate clause, the argument that vv. 1-2 present antecedent information stands supported (Cf. Holmstedt, "The Relative Clause in Biblical Hebrew," 124-125).

[43]   Daniel Bediako, "Genesis 1:1-2:3 as Historical Narrative Text Type," *Valley View Uni*

texts, the major 'genre-determining' factor in Gen 1 is the dominance of *wayyiqtol* clause types.[44] For example, beginning with Gen 1:3, every verse in 1:3-2:3 commences with a *wayyiqtol* verb form—the only exceptions are vv. 18 and 30, but even these verses are embedded in initial, matrix *wayyiqtol* clauses. In narrative texts, as in Gen 1, *wayyiqtol* clauses present the narrative foreground information (i.e., main storyline) in the form of sequential happenings, while other clause types (e.g., *x-qatal* and descriptive clauses) present background information.

As noted earlier, the first paragraph of Gen 1:1-2:3, namely vv. 1-2, does not contain a *wayyiqtol* form. Rather, it contains *x-qatal*, *we-x-qatal*, nominal, and participial clauses. If, as established, *wayyiqtol* clauses present narrative storyline, and *qatal/x-qatal* and descriptive clauses in narrative texts convey background information, then vv. 1-2 is background information.[45] It is further suggested, however, that vv. 1-2 constitutes a special kind of background information: because vv. 1-2 begin the creation account, and because the rest of this account cannot be fully understood without these verses, it is probable that vv. 1-2 provide antecedent information along with descriptive, typical narrative-stage-setting elements upon which the six-day creation narrative proper, beginning with v. 3, rests.[46] This observation is sustainable for several reasons, some of which are given below.

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44 It is a consensus that in narrative texts the dominant verbal form is *wayyiqtol*, and that this form presents mainline or foreground information in a linear (as opposed to a segmented) fashion (see e.g., A. Niccacci, "The Biblical Hebrew Verbal System in Poetry," in *Biblical Hebrew in Its Northwest Semitic Setting: Typological and Historical Perspectives*, ed. S. E. Fassberg and A. Hurvitz (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2006), 266; Longacre, *Joseph—A Story of Divine Providence*, 59,81; idem, "Discourse Perspective on the Hebrew Verb," 180; idem and S. J. J. Hwang, "A Textlinguistic Approach to the Biblical Hebrew Narrative of Jonah," in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. Robert D. Bergen [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994], 337-338; Dawson, *Text-Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, 213; J. P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: A Practical Guide*, trans. Ineke Smit [Leiden: Deo, 1999], 171); van der Merwe, "Discourse Linguistics," 29-34, 39-40; idem, "A Critical Analysis of Narrative Syntactic Approaches, with Special Attention to Their Relationship to Discourse Analysis," in *Narrative Syntax and the Hebrew Bible: Papers of the Tilburg Conference 1996*, ed. E. van Wolde [Leiden: Brill, 1997], 143).

45 See also A. Niccacci, "Analysis of Biblical Hebrew Narrative," in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. R. D. Bergen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 179, 183; C. J. Collins, *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P. & R., 2005), 42, 51; Winther-Nielsen, "'In the Beginning'," 74; F. I. Andersen, "On Reading Genesis 1-3," in *Backgrounds for the Bible*, ed. M. P. O'Connor and D. N. Freedman (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 141.

46 Winther-Nielsen, "'In the Beginning'," 77, has argued from a functional grammatical

First, marked word order (XV) in biblical Hebrew is basically a backgrounding feature. For example, as noted above, *x-qatal* and *we-x-qatal* clauses in narrative mark background/offline information as opposed to foreground/mainline information, at least text-syntactically.[47] In the case of Gen 1:1-2, therefore, clauses 1 (*x-qatal*) and 2a (*we-x-qatal*) are both demoted from foreground to background information by means of fronting. Second, clauses 2a-c are descriptive clauses. In narrative texts descriptive clauses convey background information, and in most instances set the narrative

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perspective that although בראשׁית is a time setting element, the rest of v. 1 "expresses a highly foregrounded state of affairs," since a "temporal specification does not necessarily alter the foreground/background values." His conclusion supports the basic thesis of this study, namely that v. 1 is an initial creation report: "At one and the same time it [Gen 1:1] contains a temporal specification and describes a foregrounded self-contained action. The main clause 'in the beginning' is temporally staged as befits its discourse-initial position on a content plane, but otherwise describes an action. In a sense it is a whole narrative of just one clause embedded or preposed at the beginning of a full narrative. The following clauses of 1:2 further elaborate details of initial action-setting, and the earth in the beginning of 1:2 rhetorically links back to 1:1, singling out a subtopic of 1:1 for further description. Syntactically, however, it provides the backgrounded information . . . introducing the following narrative in 1:3ff" (ibid.). It should be stated, however, that Winther-Nielsen defines 'foreground/background' as semantic notions, not pragmatic notions (78).

The following statement from the viewpoint of general linguistics may be noted: "In narrative research, scholars working in different frameworks agree that the opening of a story typically relates to the state of affairs existing prior to the onset of the plot. Thus, the initial part of a story provides the hearer-reader with a backdrop to the ensuing chain of events and plays an important role in the organizational structure of and communicative function of the narrative, because it orients the addressee toward what is to come by specifying the who, when, where, and why of the events to be recounted" (R. A. Berman and I. Katzenberger, "Form and Function in Introducing Narrative and Expository Texts: A Developmental Perspective," *Discourse Processes* 38 [2004]: 58).

[47] See van der Merwe, "Discourse Linguistics," 29-34, 39-40; idem, "An Overview of Hebrew Narrative Syntax," in *Narrative Syntax and the Hebrew Bible: Papers of the Tilburg Conference 1996*, ed. E. van Wolde (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 10-17; M. Eskhult, *Studies in Verbal Aspect and Narrative Technique in Biblical Hebrew Prose* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1990), 37, 57, 102; E. Talstra, "Workshop: Clause Types, Textual Hierarchy, Translation in Exodus 19, 20, and 24," in *Narrative Syntax and the Hebrew Bible: Papers of the Tilburg Conference 1996*, ed. E. van Wolde (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 126-127; Longacre, "Discourse Perspective on the Hebrew Verb," 177-189; idem, "Weqatal Forms in Biblical Hebrew Prose: A Discourse-Modular Approach," in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. R. D. Bergen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 50-95; Dawson, *Text-Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, 40; A. Niccacci, "On the Hebrew Verbal System," in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. R. D. Bergen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 117-147.

stage, especially when they appear at the beginning of the narrative as in v. 2.[48] This strongly suggests that the function of v. 2 is to set the stage for, but not necessarily part of, the six-day creation narrative. Third, according to A. Niccacci, nominal clauses (defined as non-verb-first or verbless clauses) may be grammatically main clauses—as are clauses in vv. 1-2—but textually dependent upon an adjacent verbal (verb-initial) clause.[49] In this regard, Gen 1:1-2 may be seen at the text level to be subordinated, or preparatory, to the verb-first clauses beginning in v. 3. More importantly, it is observed that the shift from *(we-)x-qatal* clauses at the beginning of the pericope (vv. 1-2) to *wayyiqtol* clauses starting with v. 3 intimates a movement from antecedent to foreground information.[50] Such a shift in narrative texts represents a break in communication and signals the inception of the narrative proper. Fourth, even a cursory reading of Gen 1:3-31 shows that each of the six days of creation opens with ויאמר אלהים and closes with ויהי־ערב ויהי־בקר. The implication of this formulaic, enveloping phenomenon is that both Gen 1:1-2 (i.e., antecedent information) and 2:1-3 (i.e., day seven) lie outside of the six-day creation. Yet, Gen 1:1-2 and 2:1-3 cannot be placed on the same functional level because while both units lack expressions characteristic to days one through six, 2:1-3 contains *wayyiqtol* clauses and 1:1-2 does not. Thus, while 1:1-2 provides information antecedent to the six-day creation which is presented through a string of *wayyiqtol* clauses in vv. 3-31, 2:1-3 conveys divine activity sequel to the six-day creation.

Besides the pragmatic notions of word order, clause typology, and grounding, the thematic structure in Gen 1:1-2:3 and some lexical items in 1:2 cumulatively buttress the observation that vv. 1-2 provides antecedent information, namely a divine creation activity prior to the six-day creation. According to the thematic structure shown above and which is generally accepted, the six-day creation unfolds through a bi-triadic format, so that,

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[48] In narrative, (1) foreground is signalled emically by *wayyiqtol* (preterite) forms, (2) background actions are conveyed by perfect or noun (focus) plus perfect constructions, (3) background activities are presented through participial clauses (הנה+participle, participle, or noun + participle), and (4) setting is indicated by descriptive constructions (preterite of היה, perfect of היה, verbless clauses, and existential clauses). See Longacre, "Discourse Perspective on the Hebrew Verb," 180; idem, *Joseph—A Story of Divine Providence*, 75-76, 81; idem and Hwang, "A Textlinguistic Approach," 337-338; van der Merwe, "Critical Analysis of Narrative," 143.

[49] Niccacci, "On the Hebrew Verbal System," 127-132; idem, "Analysis of Biblical Hebrew Narrative," 177-183; idem, "Basic Facts and Theory," 172-173, 179-181.

[50] Niccacci, "On the Hebrew Verbal System," 127-128; idem, "Basic Facts and Theory," 172-173, 196-200. See also Dawson, *Text-Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, 31.

for example, the objects of creation on day one (light, 1:3-5) and day four (luminaries, 1:14-19) correspond. Clearly, this structure excludes Gen 1:1-2 and 2:1-3 because there are no corresponding parallels in the triadic format to the elements in these two units. This implies, once again, that Gen 1:1-2 and 2:1-3 lie outside the six-day creation.

It has been argued here that the function of v. 2 is to set the stage for, and therefore not part of, the six-day creation narrative. This explains why v. 2 picks up and describes הארץ in its 'not-yet-habitable' state. Prior to clause 2b, only two entities are discourse-active, namely השמים and הארץ. However, in the description of הארץ in v. 2 several new terms are introduced: המים,[51] חשך, רוח אלהים, תהום. It is interesting to note that while v. 2 presents these phenomena in the description of הארץ, nowhere in the six-day creation narrative (vv. 3-31) is the creation of these phenomena mentioned. For example, even though חשך (v. 5), ימים (v. 10; cf. vv. 6-7), and יבשה (v. 10) are named on days one and three, the objects are not created on these days. The same observation goes for השמים and הארץ; outside of vv. 1-2, the narrative presupposes the prior existence of these objects, so that no reference is made to the creation of these objects during the six days (1:3-31). It follows, then, that the objects mentioned in vv. 1-2 were not created during the six-day creation, but were created at a time prior to the six-day creation.[52] This renders the conclusion that the creation of השמים and הארץ (v. 1) belongs to a previous creation—an initial creation antecedent to, and serving as the basis for, the six-day creation—all the more plausible.

5. בראשית

Does בראשית in Gen 1:1 refer to a specific beginning (i.e., an absolute beginning, a relative beginning, or the beginning of the six-ay creation),[53] or to a period of time (i.e., an undefined period of time or the span of the six days

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[51]   Note also the use of the article with המים, even at its first occurrence.

[52]   In fact, a careful reading of Gen 1 indicates that vv. 3-31 do not merely elaborate on v. 1, but rather present the six-day creation as a narrative subsequent to vv. 1-2.

[53]   See e.g., Holmstedt, "The Relative Clause in Biblical Hebrew," 124; idem, "The Restric tive Syntax of Genesis 1:1," 56-67; Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, 1:46; W. Eichrodt, "In the Beginning: A Contribution to the Interpretation of the First Word in the Bible," in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg*, ed. B. W. Anderson and W. Harrelson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 1-10; W. Warning, "Terminological Patterns and the First Word of the Bible: בראשית 'in the Beginning'," *TB* 52 (2001): 267-274; Hasel, "Recent Translations of Genesis 1:1," 154-167; Lim, "Explication of an Exegetical Enigma in Genesis 1:1-3," 301-314; R. M. Davidson, "The Biblical Account of Origins," *JATS* 14 (2003): 4-10; Giere, *A New Glimpse of Day One*, 20-21.

of creation)?[54] This question is a reflection of the atomistic nature that most studies on Gen 1 have taken. These studies have focused on the vocalization of בראשית,[55] its nominal form (whether it is construct or absolute),[56] and its usage in the rest of the Hebrew Bible.[57] The brief discussion of בראשית that follows does not seek to trace the atomistic, age-long debate. Rather, it attempts to answer why the author chooses to use בראשית at the beginning of the narrative.

In the clausal analysis above, it was stated that בראשית is a clausal adverb, that is, it modifies clause 1. Moreover, because the clauses of v. 2 describe the state of הארץ when it was initially created, בראשית by extension modifies v. 2. This macro-adverbial function requires that בראשית be taken as an absolute noun, after all, it does not stand in a construct relationship with an explicit head noun (cf. Jer 26:1; 27:1; 28:1; 49:34). And because בראשית is not in construct relationship with a head noun, the question as to

54 See Walton, *Genesis*, 68; Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound*, 38, 105; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 14; Waltke, *Genesis*, 58.

55 It is often argued that the pointing of בראשית (i.e., without the characteristic vowel of the article) indicates that the Masoretes understood it as a construct form. Nonetheless, because there is no explicit genitive, one may not insist that the Masoretic pointing is conclusive evidence for taking בראשית as a construct (cf. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 46; J. Barr, "Hebrew Lexicography: Informal Thoughts," in *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, ed. W. R. Bodine [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992], 147; Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 89-95; Waltke, "The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1-3," 338; Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, 1:46; Sailhamer, "Genesis," 21; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 3).

56 See Holmstedt, "The Relative Clause in Biblical Hebrew," 123-124. בראשית has an adverbial function in Gen 1:1, and since "time designations in adverbial expressions do not need the article, seldom have the article, and occur in the absolute state," there is no need to maintain that בראשית here is a construct (cf. Hamilton, *Pentateuch*, 32; Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 89-95; Hasel, "Recent Translations of Genesis 1:1," 156-57; Arnold, *Encountering the Book of Genesis*, 25; idem, "בראשית," *NIDOTTE* 3:1025-1028; Eichrodt, "In the Beginning," 66-72; Barr, "Hebrew Lexicography: Informal Thoughts," 147; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 12).

57 Apart from Gen 1:1, the phrase בראשית in its other four occurrences (Jer 26:1; 27:1; 28:1; 49:34) stands in a construct relationship with ממלכה (cf. Gen 10:10). Likewise, ראשית is almost always used as in construct relationship with explicit genitives. In rare cases, however, it is used as absolute noun (e.g., Lev 2:12; Deut 33:21; Job 40:29; Ps 105:36). In Deut 33:21, ראשית fills the direct object function-slot. The phrase מראשית also occurs four times (Num 15:21; Deut 26:2; 1 Sam 2:29; Isa 46:10), all but Isa 46:10 being in the construct state with explicit nouns. In Isa 46:10, מראשית is used adverbially with a predicate participle. Such adverbial use of מראשית parallels בראשית in Gen 1:1. Contrary to the scholars who seek to repoint ברא in Gen 1:1 as an infinitive (cf. Gen 5:1), Isa 46:10 and Gen 1:1 seem to imply that whether with a finite verb or participle, when ראשית is used adverbially it may be absolute, though anarthrous (cf. Gen 38:28).

whether this term refers to a specific beginning or a period of time is not warranted by the syntagmatic context of vv. 1-2.

As argued in this study, Gen 1:1-2 functions as antecedent information succinctly relating a previous act of creation, and thus provides the base for understanding the subsequent narrative of the six-day creation (vv. 3-31). This function of vv. 1-2 is the appropriate context within which to construe בראשית. Although in v. 1, בראשית intimates that God created השמים and הארץ at some previous time, the pragmatic function of the term extends beyond the level of v. 1. Overall, בראשית is used to clearly mark vv. 1-2 as reporting divine act of creation distinct from, and antecedent to, the six-day creation (vv. 3-31).[58] The creation event and its description in vv. 1-2 can easily be conflated with those of the first day of the six-day creation (vv. 3-5). Probably to preclude the ambiguity, the author uses בראשית as the temporal locus for the creation of "the heavens and the earth" in v. 1—with the state of "the earth" being described in v. 2—but uses יום אחד as the temporal locus for the creation of "light" and division of "day"/"night" in vv. 3-5. It is also instructive to note that whether in Gen 1 or elsewhere (Jer 26:1; 27:1; 28:1; 49:34), בראשית cannot refer to a segment of time within the scope of one day; since the time referent conveyed by בראשית far transcends the boundaries of a single day, it follows that Gen 1:1-2—modified by בראשית—is not meant to be considered as part of the creative activity on day one of the six-day creation.[59] Taken together, therefore, the pragmatic function of בראשית is to distinguish the creation of "the heavens and the earth" in vv. 1-2 from the six-day creation in vv. 3-31, particularly to show that "the heavens and the earth" (v. 1) were not created on 'day one' (i.e., the first day of the six-day creation).

6. Conclusion

The syntax and function of Gen 1:1-2 have long engaged scholarly attention which has yielded considerably large amount of literature. Most of the studies done on the subject are linguistically atomistic, promising within their purview no beam of conceivable scholarly consensus. In view of the semantic cul-de-sac that these studies have reached, this article has indicated that textlinguistics/pragmatics promises fresh avenues for understanding difficult texts such as Gen 1:1-2. Following intra-clausal and inter-clausal analyses from a textlinguistic perspective—focusing especially on

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[58]   This further shows that the debate as to whether בראשית indicates an absolute beginning or relative beginning is not particularly necessary.

[59]   Note that the segments of 'day one' are spelt out as 'evening' and 'morning'. Since בראשית cannot refer to a segment of one day, it is not possible, for example, to equate בראשית with 'morning'.

word order, forms of predication, clause types, and their functions on both clause and text levels—it is concluded that Gen 1:1-2 is an antecedent information which provides the narrative base for the six-day creation. V. 1 reports a previous act of creation and v. 2 describes the state of the earth as it was originally created, thereby setting the narrative stage for the six-day creation (vv. 3-31). Understood within this pragmatic context, the macro-adverbial phrase, בראשית, is used to mark vv. 1-2 as a divine act of creation distinct from, and prior to, the six-day creation. Unmistakably, therefore, בראשית disallows conflating vv. 1-2 with the divine activity on 'day one' of the six-day creation (vv. 3-5)—"the heavens and the earth" (v. 1) were created "previously" (בראשית) rather than on "day one" (יום אחד) of the creation week.