

# Genesis 1 — The Beginning That Explains Everything — God Creates the Heaven and the Earth, the Spirit Broods on the Deep, the Divine Council Says Let Us, and Man Is Made in the Image of God

*Genesis 1: the opening chapter of the Bible, the creation of the heaven and the earth in six days — light and darkness divided, the firmament, dry land and seas, plants, the sun and moon and stars, the swarms of sea and sky, the beasts of the earth, and at last man and woman made in the image of God, and all of it pronounced very good. Genesis 1 narrates 'the beginning' itself, before any datable history; the traditional 4004 BC (Ussher's later calculation) is a number the text never claims. Read with its two Restoration companions, Moses 2 and Abraham 4, both already live on this site.*

This is the front door of the whole canon. Every other chapter this project will ever comment on stands downstream of these thirty-one verses; open any scripture at random and you are somewhere inside the world this chapter builds. So it is worth slowing down at the threshold. Genesis 1 is not trying to tell you *when* — it gives no date, and it never will; the traditional 4004 BC is a seventeenth-century calculation (Archbishop Ussher's), not a claim the text makes. It is telling you *who*, and *what kind*, and *whose*. The first sentence of the Bible names God as the subject of the first verb, and from there the chapter answers the oldest question a human being can ask — where did all this come from? — with a single, unhurried word: him.

## Hebrew Word Studies

**bara' (H1254) (בָּרָא)** — **to create, shape, bring into being vv. 1, 21, 27.** The signature verb of the chapter, and one the Hebrew Bible almost never lets anyone but God perform. Humans *make* (*asah*, H6213) and *form* (*yatsar*); only God *bara's*. The word carries no built-in claim about raw material — Abraham's parallel account glosses the same act as "organized and formed" (Abr. 4:1) and "went down to organize man" (Abr. 4:27), which is why Latter-day Saints read creation as the ordering of eternal elements rather than conjuring from absolute nothing: "the elements are eternal" (D&C 93:33). Watch *where* the chapter spends the word — it appears at exactly three thresholds, and each is a genuine birth: verse 1, the cosmos itself; verse 21, the first creatures with *nephesh*, breathing life; verse 27, three times in one verse, for man. The verb rises as the stakes rise. When Moses receives this same account he sets *bara'* beside the name of the Creator's agent — "by mine Only Begotten I created these things" (Moses 2:1) — and the New Testament finishes the thought: "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (Jn. 1:3). The first verb in the Bible is God's, and the New Testament hands it to Christ.

**ruach (H7307) / rachaph (H7363) (רוּחַ / רָחַף)** — **spirit, breath, wind / to hover, flutter, brood v. 2.** Two words that turn the bleakest verse in the chapter warm. *Ruach* is spirit, breath, wind all at once — the same word that will breathe life into Adam and blow back the Red Sea. Here it belongs to God, hovering over the dark water before a single thing has form. And the verb the King James flattens into "moved" is *rachaph* — a rare, tender word that means to flutter or brood. Its only other memorable appearance describes an eagle over its nest: "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young" (Deut. 32:11), the same *rachaph*. So the image is not a wind stirring a puddle; it is a parent bird brooding over the deep, warming a chaos toward life. Abraham's account catches this with a single perfect participle the King James missed: "the Spirit of the Gods was brooding upon the face of the waters" (Abr. 4:2). Hold that picture, because it reframes the whole chapter. Creation does not begin with a bang of raw force; it begins with brooding tenderness over formlessness — which is exactly how God still works on any life that feels "without form, and void." Where there is darkness on the face of your own deep, the first move of God is not judgment but this: a warm and patient hovering, over the very chaos, before the first "let there be."

**tselem (H6754) / demuth (H1823) (צֶלֶם / דְּמוּת)** — **image, statue, representation / likeness, resemblance, similitude vv. 26, 27.** The two words at the theological summit of the chapter. *Tselem* is a concrete noun — an image, even a carved statue; *demuth* is resemblance, similitude. Much of Christian tradition rushed to make these purely spiritual or functional (man "images" God by ruling creation on his behalf). Latter-day Saints do not have to spiritualize what the words plainly say, because latter-day revelation is emphatic: "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's" (D&C 130:22). Man resembles God because man is, in the most literal and dignified sense, of God's family. And Genesis itself proves the reading four chapters later: "Adam... begat a son in his own likeness, after his image" (Gen. 5:3) — the *identical* pair, *demuth* and *tselem*, now describing how Seth relates to his father Adam. The chapter is teaching a proportion: as Seth is to Adam — a

true son, of the same kind, bearing the family resemblance — so Adam is to God. This is why the plainest doctrine of the human family is written on page one. Every person you will ever meet, of every nation, "male and female" alike (v. 27), carries the *tselem* of God. Racism, contempt, the casual dismissal of another soul — all of it collides head-on with Genesis 1:26. You cannot despise the image and revere the Original. It is also the seed of the deepest hope in the Restoration: a being made in the image of God is a being with the capacity, through Christ, to grow up into the likeness — "we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (Moro. 7:48; 1 Jn. 3:2).

**tov (H2896) / me'od (H3966) (טוֹב / מְּאֹד) — good, pleasing, beautiful, functional / exceedingly, very, muchness vv. 4, 31.**

The word *tov* rings through the chapter like a bell — seven times God "saw that it was good," and once, at the end, everything together is *tov me'od*, "very good," good to the utmost. This is not sentimental. *Tov* means good the way a finished tool is good, the way ripe fruit is good — fit, functional, beautiful, whole. And its placement is a doctrine all by itself: the verdict "good" is pronounced on *matter* — on oceans, dirt, bodies, animals, light — before there is any sin to spoil it and before any fall to grieve it. That single fact cuts against a very old religious instinct that treats the physical as inherently lower or corrupt, the body as a prison, the earth as a mistake. Genesis 1 will not allow it. The material world is not fallen wreckage; it is God's own craftsmanship, appraised by the Craftsman and stamped *very good*. Latter-day Saints build a great deal on that appraisal: a body is a gift, not a sentence; "men are, that they might have joy" (2 Ne. 2:25); and the earth itself, made and called good, is destined to be renewed and glorified, not discarded (A of F 1:10; D&C 130:9). Whatever the fall would later break, Genesis 1 records the original reading, and it should be the last word we let anything else overwrite: God looked at all of it, and it was very good.

### From the Chapter's Architecture

*There is one more architectural feature, invisible in Genesis alone but unmistakable once the three accounts lie together — the layering of a spiritual and a temporal creation. Moses received the key: "For I, the Lord God, created all things, of which I have spoken, spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth" (Moses 3:5). The Restoration reads Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 not as two clashing creation stories — the perennial embarrassment of the critics — but as two true passes over one work: a creation planned and made spiritually in the councils of heaven, and then executed naturally upon this earth. Genesis 1, with its council and its cosmic sweep, sits comfortably as the pattern; Genesis 2, with its garden and its named man, as the planting. Where secular reading sees a contradiction to be explained, the Restoration sees a sequence to be honored — the same event, witnessed twice, by a God for whom the blueprint and the building are both real.*