

Preliminary Textual Work on Creation Themes

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Genesis 1.1

1:1 בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ

The Hebrew text can be rendered a number of different ways--all are literal translations:

- 1) When God started creating the heavens and the earth
- 2) In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth
- 3a) With *reshit* God created the heavens and the earth
See Proverbs 8.22: "The LORD created me *reshit*

יהוה קנני ראשית דרכו קדם מפעליו מאז

Who is created to be *reshit* ?

Wisdom. . . on the basis of Proverbs 8.1:

הלא־חכמה תקרא ותבונה תתן קולה

- 3b) With Wisdom God created the heavens and the earth
- 4) Bereshit created gods with the heavens and the earth
- 5) Bereshit created gods alongside Heavens and Earth

These kinds of readings surface in various traditions: Greek, Targum, Rabbinic literature, "gnosticism".

A project for study: Biblically-based gnosticism is rooted in bible; works just like classical midrash.

Syriac: כִּבְרֵי בְרֵא אֱלֹהִים בְּרֵא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ Agrees with Hebrew exactly.

Alexandrinus, U₂ (PAmherst 003--contains Gen 1.1-5)

Old Greek: ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν In the beginning God made. . .

Aquila: ἐν κεφαλῶν ἐκτίσεν θεὸς οὐρανὸν καὶ τ[ῆ]ν γῆν In heading [playing on ראש ?] God created...
translates Hebrew אֶת reserving ποιεω
for עשה

Targums:

בְּקִדְמִין בְּרֵא יְיָ יִתְּשֵׁמִיא וְיִתְּ אֶרְעָא ONK 1:1

In ancient times the LORD created the heavens and the earth.

מִן אוּלָא בְרֵא אֱלֹהִים יִתְּשֵׁמִיא וְיִתְּ אֶרְעָא PSJ 1:1

From the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

מִלְקִדְמִין בְּחִכְמָה בְּרֵא דֵי יִי שְׁכַלְל יִתְּשֵׁמִיא וְיִתְּ אֶרְעָא NFT 1:1

From ancient times with wisdom the son of LORD perfected the heavens and the earth.

[** This is the result of a correction after erasure--*vav* before שְׁכַלְל is still visible]

Perhaps:

בְּחִכְמָתָא בְּרֵא יִי וְשְׁכַלְל

With Wisdom the LORD created and perfected. . .

[P Nfmg and VN lack "and perfected"]

Hebrew *reshit* = Son

Jerome *Hebr quaest.* Gen 1.1

4 Ezra = 2 Esdras 6:38, 43: In the beginning of creation you spoke the word . . . and your word perfected the work.

