Preliminary Textual Work on Creation Themes
Tammie Wanta

Genesis 1.1

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 . . . .
   יוהו קָנָן אָדוֹת רְדֵּ֣ם קֹדֶם עַמָּ֣ה
   Who is created to be reshit ?
   Wisdom . . . on the basis of Proverbs 8.1:
   הַיְּלַוָּא הָסָּרָא תָּבוּשָּׁה חַטַּה קָרְלָה
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: Ὀργίαν δεῖ ἀναλαμβάνει τὸν ἄλλον καὶ τὴν γῆν
Agrees with Hebrew exactly.

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

Old Greek: ἐν ὀργίᾳ ἐκτίσεν ὁ θεὸς τῶν οὐρανῶν καὶ τῆς γῆς
In the beginning God made...

Aquila: τὸν κηραλαίῳ ἐκτίσεν θὰ σὺν τῶν οὐρανῶν καὶ τῆς γῆς
In heading [playing on ὄρος ?] God created...

translates Hebrew יה
reserving γνωστο for יד

Targums:

From the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

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

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

[** This is the result of a correction after erasure—ουαο before ἐκτίσει is still visible]

Perhaps:

With Wisdom the LORD created and perfected . . .

Hebrew reshit = Son
Jerome Hebr quaeast. 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.
Creation of the world in/by wisdom:

Proverbs 8.22:

יהוה קסםراسותה יבבית קסם פומעתליא הווה

The LORD created me reshit of his ways, in front of his works of old.

Aramaic: יוהה קסמסיד יבבית יב悰יה ( Hercyia) יברועדס מועדה יברועד יברועד

The LORD created me at the head of his creation, and before his first works.

Syriac: יוהה קסמסיד יבבית יב悰יה ( Hercyia) יברועדס מועדה יברועד יברועד

Syriac and Aramaic agree in all but the last word.

Old Greek: κύριος ακτισεν με αρχην οδον αυτου εις έργα αυτου

Agrees with more Hebrew than Syriac/Aramaic.

Proverbs 3.19:

יהוה חכמה עשתה אראין כוכב שבתון

The LORD with Wisdom laid the foundations of the earth, established the heavens with understanding.

Aramaic: יוהה חכמה עשתה אראין כוכב שבתון

God with Wisdom set the foundations of the earth, and fixed the heavens with understanding.

Note: Aramaic ספ ?

Jastrow notes p-s-final weak: “to spread, extend”

A misreading of letters is also possible-- ספ is the more common word.

Syriac: יוהה חכמה עשתה אראין כוכב שבתון

The Lord with Wisdom set the foundations of the earth, and fixed the heavens with insight.

Syriac has affinities to both Aramaic and Hebrew.

Recall that in 8.22, Syriac and Aramaic mostly agree.

Old Greek: ο θεος τη σοφη εθεμελησεν την γην ιτοιμασεν δε ουρανου εν ορονησει

God with Wisdom founded the earth, and prepared the heavens with insight.

Wisdom/Ben Sira 9.9:

[Hebrew from Genizah?]

Syriac: יוהה חכמה עשתה אראין כוכב שבתון

And with you was Wisdom, who knows your works and was with you when you made the worlds, and knows what is beautiful before your eyes, and what is right in your commandments.

Syriac here maps rather well to the Greek.

Old Greek: και μετα σοι η σοφη ειδωλε αξ γην σου και παρουση οτε εποιης τον κοσμον και 

And with you was Wisdom; she is the one who knows your works and was present when you made the world, and she is the one who understands what is pleasing in your eyes and what is right in your commandments.
Psalm 104.24

How many are your works, O LORD! With wisdom you made all of them; the earth is full of your creatures.

Aramaic: מַהְרַבּוּ מִזְעַשְׁרוֹ הָיָה כָלָּם בָּחָבְמוּהּ עָשָׂיתָ מִלְּאָה הָאָרְרִים קְנִינְךָ

Syriac: سِيَزْهَرُ مُحَلُّوا مَتْنًا مَالُهُو مَكَّالُها مُعِشِّتُها [مَتْنًا] عَلَى مَالُهُ مُكَذِّبِهَا

Greek: ὡς ἐμεγαλύνθη τὰ ἑργά σου κύριε πάντα ἐν σοφίᾳ ἐποίησας ἐπιληψίθη ἡ γῆ τῆς κτήσεώς σου

Aramaic = Hebrew
Syriac = Aramaic = Hebrew
Greek = Syriac = Aramaic = Hebrew
Another Trajectory: An Issue in Amos: Amos 4.13

יכ הוה וצרורי ברך והנה נפגע Laden מודירתה טשעל שנער Enabled טעם זרח ודרך עלייתם ארץ

יוהו אלהי צבא ישראל.

For look! The one who forms the mountains and creates wind and declares to adam what is his thought— he is the one who makes dawn of the darkness and treads on the heights of the earth— the LORD God of Hosts is his name!

Greek:

diātì idou ἐν τοῖς στερεοῖς βροντῆς καὶ κτίσιοι πνεῦμα καὶ ὕπαγγέλλων εἰς ἀνθρώπους τῶν χριστῶν αὐτοῦ ποιῶν ὄρθρον καὶ ὁμίλησιν καὶ ἐπιβάϊνων ἐπὶ τὰ ὕψη τῆς γῆς κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ

For look! I am the one who strengthens the thunder and creates wind and declares to humans his Christ—[I am the one] who makes dawn and darkness and treads on the heights of the earth—Lord God Ruler of All is his name.

1) Notice Greek “thunder” for Hebrew “mountains”: Hebrew רגע = “thunder.”
2) Notice different speaker.
3) Greek translation is perhaps reading a Hebrew manuscript which has מים instead of מים שלמה.

Aramaic:

אורי הוא מהלב נער טוב ואהלו ברך והנה נפגע Laden מודירתה טשעל שנער Enabled טעם זרח ודרך עלייתם ארץ

כניזור עפרה לאוול וחקור עליתה נ�ך לטרפיא לטרפיא לטרפיא לטרפיא לטרפיא ארץ יז אהל.

For look! It is revealed that the one who formed the mountains and created the wind [perhaps “Spirit” here] to reveal to humanity what are his works, to establish the light splendor for the righteous ones just like the light of the morning that goes, and establishes, along with the darkness that comes for the wicked ones, for breaking the wicked of the earth— the LORD God of Hosts is his name.

Syriac:

صخل ثغ دير وجودون لالة نفعا بنان مودیره مودیره مودیره مودیره مودیره مودیره مودیره مودیره

For the one who created the winds and created the mountains and reveals to the sons of man what he’s that praise/glory; he makes dawn darkness and treads on the height of the earth— the Lord God of Power is his name.

* In addition to the interesting textual issue surrounding “his thoughts” and “his Messiah,” the Amos passage is of interest in that the Hebrew can be read to suggest the first human’s presence at the time of creation. The passage may hint at an ancient idea wherein the creation of the first man occurred prior to the time of the creation of the physical world.

1) The notion is not that far removed from what one finds in the Genesis 2-3 creation account; there, the creation of man occurs at the beginning of God’s creative activity.

2) The idea would seem to have been more popular than the ‘biblical record’ would have us think, as early rabbinic reports and even medieval midrashic compositions seem to actively polemicize against the notion. For example, see Tosefta Sanhedrin 8:7 and Jerusalem Talmud Berakhot 12d.
Tosefta Sanhedrin 8:7: “Our rabbis taught: Adam was created on the eve of the Sabbath. Why? So that the sectarians could not say, ‘The Hold One, blessed be He, had a partner in His work of creation.’”

Jerusalem Talmud Berakhot 12d: “The sectarians asked Rabbi Simlai, “How may gods created the world?” He said to them, “Are you asking me? Go and ask the first man, as it is written (Deuteronomy 4:32): ‘Ask now of the first days which were before you, since God created man upon the earth.’ It is not written here ‘they created’ but ‘he created.’” They said to him, “It is written, ‘In the beginning God created (Genesis 1:1).’ ‘Is it written, ‘(they) created?’ It is only written, ‘(he) created.’” Rabbi Simlai said, “In every passage where the sectarians go wrong, they have an answer close by.”

In different ways, both texts seem to testify to the popularity of traditions which claimed exalted status for Adam.

For more, see Alan F. Segal, Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity and Gnosticism (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), especially 109–14, 124–27, 151.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew</th>
<th>Aramaic</th>
<th>Greek</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>מרי הדומישה נמלכתה מבליון מברילדה</td>
<td>מרי הדומישה נמלכתה מבליון מברילדה</td>
<td>[Same as Hebrew]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is this who darkens counsel with words with no knowledge!</td>
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<td>וirate כנער תᠷ הרער</td>
<td>[Same as Hebrew]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gird up your loins like a man; I will question you, and you will declare to me!</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>שזא הירית בברא הדרה</td>
<td>שזא הירית בברא הדרה</td>
<td>[Same as Hebrew]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell!—if you have understanding!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ויריבש מטריה הכ חדע און</td>
<td>ויריבש מטריה הכ חדע און</td>
<td>[Same as Hebrew]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who set its measurements? If indeed you know! Who stretched out a measuring line upon it?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>וחוליהו אבר אבנה</td>
<td>וחוליהו אבר אבנה</td>
<td>[Same as Hebrew]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upon what were its bases planted? Who cast its cornerstone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בברית אלאמר</td>
<td>בברית אלאמר</td>
<td>[Same as Hebrew]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>while the morning stars sang together and all the divine beings shouted for joy!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בברית אלאמר</td>
<td>בברית אלאמר</td>
<td>[Same as Hebrew]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in the time that the morning stars praised together and all the group of angels made a joyful noise?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>התיווסכ ρυπετον με βουλήν συνίχουν δε ρήματα εν καρδίᾳ εμε δε οὐέσται κρυπτείν</td>
<td>ἦσαν ὑπερ ἀνήρ την ὁσφύν σου ἔρωτησε δο σε σὺ δε μοι ὑποκρίθητι</td>
<td>Gird up your loins like a man; I will question you, and you will answer me!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>πού ἢς εν τῷ θεμελιώδει με τὴν γην ὑπαγειούν δε μοι εἰ ἐπιστή σύνειαν</td>
<td>Where were you when I founded the earth? Announce to me if you know understanding!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>τίς ἢ ῃ τὰ μέτρα αὐτῆς εἰ ῥώδας ἢ τίς ὁ ἐπαγαγὼν σπάρτιον ἐπὶ αὐτῆς</td>
<td>Who placed the measurements of it? If you know! Who drew a cord upon it?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐπὶ τῖνος οἱ κρίκοι αὐτῆς</td>
<td>ἐπίθησιν τις δὲ ἐστιν ὁ βαλὼν λίθον γονισαίν ἐπὶ αὐτῆς</td>
<td>Onto what were its rings fastened? Who cast the cornerstone upon it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ὁτὲ ἐγεννήθησαν ὄστρα ἵππειαν με φωνή μεγάλη πάντες ἄγγελοι μου</td>
<td>When the stars came into being, all of my angels praised me in a great voice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Syriae:

2: ἀρχήν ἰδεῖν ἡμῖν ἄπαυστα καιρόν ἀπασχολεῖ
Who is this that minds the mind (?) with words with no knowledge?

3: ὁδεγεῖται σαὶς ἑαυτὸν ἔφη
Gird up your loins like a man, and I will question you, you will declare to me.

4: ὅπου ἔδωκας ἡγεῖται ἡ γῆ ἐν περιπτώσει ἡγεῖται ἡ γῆ ἐν ἁγιασμῷ
Where were you when I fixed the foundations of the earth? Show!—if you have understanding!

5: ὃ ἐπεστράφη ἐκ τῶν [ἐπεστράφη ἐκ τῶν] ἐπεστράφη ἐκ τῶν
Who placed its measurements? If you know! Who stretched out a measuring line upon it?

6: ὅποιος κατέστη [ὁποίος κατέστη] ὁ παρόντας κατέστη [ὁποίος κατέστη]
Upon what do its bases stand? Who cast its cornerstone?

7: ὅποιος ἐποίησεν [ὁποίος ἐποίησεν] ἄστρα τῶν οὐρανῶν τὰ ὁλοκληρώματα ὑμῶν ἔφερεν
He created (?) together the stars of the dawn, and all of the sons of the angels made a joyful noise.
[Notice that different elements in this line maps to both Hebrew and Aramaic]

The passage continues with creation imagery: subduing and setting the limits of the sea and making clouds. Indeed, though the Lord’s diatribe continues through chapter 41, the message is already clear: Job is in no position to challenge the ways of God because he does not possess the necessary wisdom; he was not present at the time of creation and thus cannot declare the answers. The rhetorical effect here is forceful, and we might think that no one could possibly have access to this knowledge. Interestingly, a passage from an earlier chapter in Job seems to suggest just the opposite.

In Job 15.7-9 Eliphaz reprimands Job as such:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 ἀρχήν ἰδεῖν ἡμῖν ἄπαυστα καιρόν</td>
<td>ἀρχήν ἰδεῖν ἡμῖν ἄπαυστα καιρόν</td>
<td>τί γὰρ μὴ πρῶτος ἀνθρώπων ἐγενήθης ὡς πρὸ θεῶν ἐπάγγεις</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐποίησεν ἄστρα τῶν οὐρανῶν τὰ ὁλοκληρώματα</td>
<td>ὅποιος ἐποίησεν ἄστρα τῶν οὐρανῶν τὰ ὁλοκληρώματα</td>
<td>ἦ σύνταξα μικρὸν ἀκήκους εἰς δὲ σὲ ὀφείλει σοφία</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>τὰ ἔδωκας ἡγεῖται ἡ γῆ ἐν περιπτώσει ἡγεῖται ἡ γῆ ἐν ἁγιασμῷ</td>
<td>τὰ ἔδωκας ἡγεῖται ἡ γῆ ἐν περιπτώσει ἡγεῖται ἡ γῆ ἐν ἁγιασμῷ</td>
<td>ἔχως καὶ ἀνοίγω τὰ ὀφθαλμά σου ἐπὶ τὴν ὀλίγήν</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ὅποιος κατέστη</td>
<td>ὅποιος κατέστη</td>
<td>τί γὰρ οἶδας ὅ ποικὶ οἰκεῖον ἢ τὴ συνεδρίᾳς ὅ οἰκεῖ θαυμάζει</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ὅποιος κατέστη</td>
<td>ὅποιος κατέστη</td>
<td>[Same as Hebrew]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐν περιπτώσει ἡγεῖται ἡ γῆ ἐν περιπτώσει ἡγεῖται ἡ γῆ ἐν ἁγιασμῷ</td>
<td>ὅποιος κατέστη</td>
<td>[Same as Hebrew]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Syriac:

7: ܠܐ ܡܕܢܗܕ ܐܢܘܦܝܐ ܙܘܒ ܐܢܘܦܝܐ ܠܒܕܚܡܐ ܡܝܢܐ
Perhaps you were born the first man? Or before the hills you were conceived?

8: ܘܠܒܟܡܐ ܢܐ ܕܠܒܕܚܡܐ ܠܒܕܚܡܐ ܡܝܢܐ ܡܐܒܘܛܐ ܡܡܟܘܗܢ
Have you listened in on the mystery of the Lord? And do you alone uncover wisdom?

9: ܠܒܠܐ ܠܒܠܐ ܢܐ ܕܠܒܕܚܡܐ ܠܒܕܚܡܐ ܡܝܢܐ ܡܐܒܘܛܐ ܡܡܟܘܗܢ
What do you know that we do not know? What do you understand that these do not?

[Note that the Syriac seems to have affinities with the Hebrew and the Aramaic.]

As in Job 38, the point here is that Job does not possess the requisite insight. Note though that the language of Eliphaz' rebuke—"Are you the first man that was born? Where you brought forth before the hills?—implies that the first human did. Because he was present at the creation of the world, the first man can declare the secrets which Job cannot.
Genesis 1.2

And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was on the face of the Deep, and a wind from God was hovering on the face of the water.

Syriac: Follows Hebrew exactly; surrence dots indicate plural forms: “faces” and “waters”.

Old Greek: ἡ δὲ γῆ ἦν ἄφρατος καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστος καὶ σκότος ἐπάνω τῆς ἄβυσσου καὶ πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐπεφέρετο* ἐπάνω τοῦ ὀδοτος **

* E (Bodianus): ἐπεφέρετο ** E (Bodianus): ὀδοτος

And the earth was invisible and unformed, and darkness was on the Abyss, and a wind of God was hovering on the water.

Aquila: [Brhbs-Hx]: ἡ δὲ γῆ ἦν κένομα καὶ [o]θοκεv [rest of line unattested α']: empty and nothingness
Theod: [jezBrhbs-Hx]: θέν καὶ οὐθέν [neologism to echo Hebrew?]
Sym[cj]: ἄργον καὶ ἀδιάκριτον uncultivated and undifferentiated

Both Aquila and Theod render Hebrew ὑλὴ προσωμον literally with ἐπὶ προσωμον

Aramaic:

And the earth was empty and barren, and the darkness was spread out on the face of the Deep, and a wind from before the LORD was blowing on the face of the water.

[Has the Aramaic simply translated the problematic tohu and bohu? So also NFT (immediately below)?]

And the earth was formless and chaotic, empty of people and barren of all creatures, and the darkness was on the face of the Deep, and a merciful wind from before God was blowing on the face of the water.

Genesis 1.3

And God said, “Let there be light.” And there was light.

Syriac: Follows Hebrew exactly.

Greek: καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς γενηθήτω φῶς καὶ ἐγένετο φῶς

[p] has τὸ φῶς; [q] omits καὶ ἐγένετο φῶς

And the LORD said, “Let there be light.” And there was light.

And God said, “Let there be light for lighting up the world.” And immediately there was light.

And the Memre of the LORD said “Let there be light.” And there was light, according to the decree of the Memre.