

Stargazing with the Saints: Exploring Genesis, Celestial Creation, and the Legacy of the Masoretes

Dustin Burlet
Millar College of the Bible

Abstract

The Masoretic accentuation of Day Four of creation (Gen 1:14–19) confirms the (primary) witness of the rest of Scripture (Ps 136:7–9; Jer 31:35) that the “stars” (כוכבים) and moon together are coregents of the night sky. Said otherwise, despite the anti-mythological, polemical thrust of Genesis 1, the (secondary) voice of the Masoretes supplements the primary text of Scripture in refuting any interpretation or translation of these heavenly bodies that does not do justice to this canonical truth.

*“See the Way... He Holds... The Stars in His Hands...
See the Way... He Holds... My Heart...”*

– MISTY EDWARDS

Introduction

If one has ears to hear, astronomy speaks a “powerful word” about Yahweh as Creator.¹ This is, perhaps, especially so concerning the כוכבים, i.e., the “stars” (see Ps 19:1–6).² This paper argues that the “stars” (כוכבים) of Creation (Day Four) should be understood as being co-rulers together with “the moon,” i.e., the “lesser

- 1 Merrill, Eugene H. “Foreword” (9–11, quote from page 11) in Danny R. Faulkner with Lee Anderson Jr., *The Created Cosmos: What the Bible Reveals About Astronomy* (Green Forest, AR: Master, 2016).
- 2 Jonathan D. Sarfati, *The Genesis Account: A Theological, Historical, and Scientific Commentary on Genesis 1–11*. (Powder Springs, GA: Creation Book Publishers, 2015) rightly maintains that the biblical meaning of “star” is “any small bright heavenly object.” This sense includes comets and meteors, i.e., “shooting stars,” and what the ancient Greek astronomers called *aster planētēs*, “wandering star(s),” something which we now (scientifically) call “planets” (distinguished from “stars”) 205. See also *DCH* 4:371; *HALOT* 1:463; Newman, *NIDOTTE*, 2:609, 14; Hartley, *TWOT*, 1:425–26. Cf. *TLOT* 1:63–67. For more details concerning Psalm 19 (aside from the commentaries), some of the most recent works include, Lee Roy Martin, “Science, Scripture, and Self: Epistemological Implications of Psalm 19,” *Pharos Journal of Theology* 103 (2022): 1–17; Frederick J. Gaiser, “‘The Law of the Lord Is Perfect’: The Wisdom Psalms,” *Word & World* 41 (2021): 201–10; William P. Brown, “The Joy of Lex and the Language of Glory in Psalm 19,” *Journal for Preachers* 43 (2020): 11–17; Rüdiger Lux, “Theologie im Vorhof: Psalm 19 und die Predigt der Psalmen,” *Pastoraltheologie* 107 (2018): 4–13. Cf. T. A. Perry, *Psalm 19: Hymn of Unification* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2016).

light,” to govern the night (Gen 1:14–19).³ Conjointly (and for this reason) despite the anti-mythological, polemical thrust of Genesis 1, *in toto*, the “stars” (כוכבים) of the cosmos were no mere “afterthought.”⁴

As will be shown later, this assertion involves closely examining the Masoretic accentual system. The Masora system of the Masoretic Text (MT) of Scripture is a “sophisticated” and “integrated” mechanism of interpretation and transmission for the purpose(s) of copying and preserving the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (HB/OT).⁵

Said otherwise, the Masoretic accentuation system, an “encoded” method of interpretation that is “far closer to the original community than our own,” confirms Scripture’s witness (see Ps 136:7–9; Jer 31:35) that the “stars” (כוכבים) are joined to the “lesser light,” i.e., the moon, and, therefore, “implicitly share in the rule of the night.”⁶ Thus, to think of them as being some sort of afterthought by God is altogether erroneous.

This paper will seek to elucidate the above matters while also providing a brief exposé to certain general matters concerning the overarching context of Genesis One.

Genesis One – Sequence and Chronology

The first chapter of the Bible’s first book lays the theological foundation for all that follows in Scripture.⁷ As Tremper Longman III relates: “Genesis 1–11 is the foundation of the book of Genesis, which is the foundation of the whole Bible [OT and NT].”⁸ Incontrovertibly, the significant import of this biblical book cannot be understated.⁹

3 For exhaustive scriptural references concerning the “moon” (including its not insignificant theological import), see Ryken, et al., eds, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), “Sun, Moon, and Stars,” 827–28 alongside the (many) related entries accompanying this specific article.

4 The term “afterthought” comes from Mark D. Futato Sr., *Basics of Hebrew Accents*, Zondervan Language Basics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 40. Polemics, as a whole, will be addressed later on.

5 Yosef, Ofer, *The Masora on Scripture and Its Methods*, *Fontes et Subidia ad Bibliam pertinentes* (FoSub) 7 (Boston, MA: de Gruyter, 2020), xi.

6 Futato, *Basics of Hebrew Accents*, 40. Cf. C. John Collins, *Reading Genesis Well* (Zondervan, 2018), 156.

7 See Dustin Burret, *Judgment and Salvation: A Rhetorical-Critical Reading of Noah’s Flood in Genesis* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2022), 1, 29.

8 Paul Copan and Douglas Jacoby, *Origins: The Ancient Impact and Modern Implications of Genesis 1–11* (New York: Morgan James, 2019), i.

9 For a thorough review of some contemporary works published on Genesis (2015 to 2020) see Tammi J. Schneider, “In the Beginning and Still Today: Recent Publications on Genesis,” *Current in Biblical Research* 18 (2020): 142–59. For academic resources on Genesis published prior to 2015, the most comprehensive tool currently available is John F. Evans, *A Guide to Biblical Commentaries and Reference Works*, 10th ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016): 67–78. Cf. Kenton L. Sparks, *The Pentateuch: An Annotated Bibliography* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2019).

All too often, however, “the richness and beauty” of the first creation account is “overwhelmed by acrimony.”¹⁰ Many debates tend to focus on whether or not Genesis 1 was intended to offer a list of the divine creative acts *vis à vis* a chronological order.¹¹ That is, many scholars opine that the seven days of creation are only intended to convey “*theological* truths—not *chronological* truths.”¹² Paul Copan and Douglas Jacoby, for instance, maintain: “the six days in Genesis 1 appear to be topical, not sequential.”¹³

This dubious assessment, however, tends to break down upon further analysis. Specifically, do not the waters of “Day One” need to exist prior to them being able to be separated on “Day Two” and for the events of “Day Three” to occur? Likewise, is it not logical to assume that in order for humanity to rule over the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the fish of the sea as the LORD commanded (see Gen 1:28), at least some of these things would need to have been created earlier? In addition, although one may, perhaps, argue that not everything in the Creation week is necessarily sequential since “light” is created before the traditionally accepted sources of the light (i.e., the heavenly bodies; cf. Gen 1:3–6 and Gen 1:14–19), it nonetheless remains evident that some kind of ordered,

10 Gregg Davidson and Kenneth J. Turner, *Manifold Beauty of Genesis One: A Multi-Layered Approach* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2021), 3. A nigh exhaustive analysis of this controversy (*sans* an effective discussion of so-called Young Earth [Age] Creationism, something that may, perhaps, be due to the differences between British and American evangelicalism) may also found be in the quite aptly but rather provocatively titled volume of John C. Lennox, namely *Seven Days that Divide the World: The Beginning According to Genesis and Science*, 10th Anniversary Edition (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2021).

11 See Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1967), 54–58. Cf. Denis O. Lamoureux, *The Bible and Ancient Science: Principles of Interpretation* (Tullahoma, TN: McGahan, 2020), 165.

12 Copan and Jacoby, *Origins*, 62. Italics original. Cf. Kline, “Space and Time,” 2–15.

13 Copan and Jacoby, *Origins*, 69. To be clear, among other things, certain scholars maintain the lack of the article on “each of the first five days suggests they may be dischronologized.” See Johnny V. Miller and John M. Soden, *In the Beginning . . . We Misunderstood* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2012), 50. An effective refutation of this assertion (grammatically/syntactically) may be found in Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Days of Creation in Genesis 1: Literal ‘Days’ or Figurative ‘Periods/EPOCHS’ of Time?” *Origins* 21 (1994), 5–38 (esp. 7–8). Cf. Andrew E. Steinmann, “אָהַר as an ordinal number and the meaning of Genesis 1:5,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45 (2002): 577–84 alongside his “A Note on the Refrain in Genesis 1,” *Journal for the Evangelical Study of the Old Testament* 5 (2016): 125–40. Other contrastive details are also able to be found in Conrad M. Hyers, “Narrative Form of Genesis One: Cosmogonic, Yes; Scientific, No,” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 36 (1984): 208–15 and C. John Collins, “The Refrain of Genesis 1: A Critical Review of Its Rendering in the English Bible,” *Technical Papers for The Bible Translator* 60 (2009): 121–31.

chronological sequence is still assumed by Scripture itself (cf. Exod 20:11).¹⁴ To sum up, it would seem evident that most attempts to rearrange the days of the creation week tend to force impossibilities or reduce them into absurdities.¹⁵

Genesis One – Parallel Structure

Another thorny issue involves the parallel structure of the days of creation. To be clear, “some . . . have challenged the existence of a parallel structure (days 1–3 aligned with days 4–6) arguing that the luminaries of day 4 were placed in the heavens of day 2 (not day 1), and [the] fish from day 5 were placed in the seas of day 4 or the water made prior to day 3 or the water made prior to day 1 (not in the ‘waters below’ of day 2).”¹⁶ In response to this, Gregg Davidson and Kenneth J. Turner (cogently) maintain:

If attention is only given to the *placement* of the luminaires in day 4, then perhaps an argument can be made against a parallel with day 1 because of the expanse (*raqia* ‘) into which the luminaires were placed was made in day 2. If we are considering *purpose*, however, the parallel is strong. Day 1 and day 4 both serve to separate light from dark and day from night. The objection of aligning the water of day 2 with the fish of day 5 is that the seas (*yammim*) are not named until day 3. But if we again give attention to *purpose*, the expanse (*raqia* ‘) in day 2 was made in order to separate the waters on the earth from the water above the dome (or expanse) of the sky, giving rise to the realms of ocean and sky. This is consistent with the structure and word choice of the fifth day. Day 5 begins with fish filling the waters (*mayim*) and birds flying across the surface of the heavens (*shamayim*). The parallel structure thus proves to be robust.¹⁷

14 As one scholar (perhaps baldly, but not un-cogently) asserts: “Exodus 20:8–11 resists all attempts to add millions of years anywhere in or before Genesis 1 because in Exodus 20:11 . . . God says He created the heavens, the earth, the sea, and *all that is in them* during the six days described in Genesis 1. He made nothing before those six days. It should also be noted that the fourth commandment is one of only a few of the Ten Commandments that contains a reason for the commandment. If God created over millions of years, He could have not given a reason for Sabbath-keeping or He could have given a theological or redemptive reason as He did elsewhere (cf. Exod 31:13 and Deut 5:13–15). . . . Ultimately, the question of the age of the earth is a question of the truth and authority of Scripture. That’s why the age of the earth matters so much and why the church cannot compromise with millions of years (or evolution).” Terry Mortenson, “Young-Earth Creationist View Summarized and Defended.” No Pages. Online. Italics original. <https://answersingenesis.org/creationism/young-earth/young-earth-creationist-view-summarized-and-defended/>. Cf. C. John Collins, *Genesis 1–4: A Linguistic Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Philipsburg, NJ, 2006), 56–58, 83, and, especially, 122–29, alongside 249–67.

15 See Bulet, Review of *Origins* by Copan and Jacoby in *Conspectus* 32 (2016–17): 214–17 from whom much of this paragraph’s wording (including exact phrasing at times) has been derived.

16 Davidson and Turner, *Manifold Beauty of Genesis One*, 37.

17 Davidson and Turner, *Manifold Beauty of Genesis One*, 38. All italics original.

In brief, there seems to be a “definite structure” or a “definite schema” wherein the first three days of creation (Gen 1:3–13) correspond to the following three (Gen 1:14–31).¹⁸

This chronological, sequential order of events poignantly communicates God’s “providence and forethought” via the “problem, preparation, and population” rubric.¹⁹

Outline of Genesis 1

Problem (v. 2)	Preparation (days 1–3)	Population (days 4–6)
Darkness	1a Creation of Light (Day)	4a Creation of Sun
	1b Separation from Darkness (Night)	4b Creation of Moon, Stars
Watery Abyss	2a Creation of Firmament	5a Creation of Birds
	2b Separation of Waters Above from Waters Below	5b Creation of Fish
Formless Earth	3a Separation of Earth from Sea	6a Creation of Land Animals
	3b Creation of Vegetation	6b Creation of Humans

To conclude, the above framework appreciates how God is characterized by peace—not chaos, confusion, and disorder (1 Cor 14:33)—while effectively teaching how the cosmos is not the result of incidental/mere chance but careful planning, wisdom, and insight.²⁰

Ancient Near Eastern Culture – Rhetoric, Worldview, and Polemics

With the above in mind, one can more carefully examine what will be the primary

18 See Copan and Jacoby, *Origins*, 73. Cf. Craig H. Robinson, “The De-Creation of Genesis 1 in the Trumpets of Revelation 8–9,” *Trinity Journal* 43 (2022): 59–83.

19 Copan and Jacoby, *Origins*, 73. Copan and Jacoby further state (74): “Each of the problems is remedied by a corresponding separation (vv. 4, 7, 9—although the word ‘separate’ is only implied in the third instance). Once the barriers are removed, the earth will return to its primordial state. This is precisely what will happen in the Flood (Gen 6–8).” Cf. Burlet, *Judgment and Salvation*, 152–53. While certain tensions (chronologically) may still, perhaps, be present even within this rubric (one notes, for instance, that the text of Genesis 1:2 actually has the “Formless Earth” come first, then the “Darkness” and, lastly the “Watery Abyss”) I remain persuaded that the basic gist remains the same. I am indebted to Matt Woodmass (via private communiqué) for drawing my attention to these important matters. NB: the following chart comes from Copan and Jacoby, *Origins*, 74 crediting Hyers, “Narrative Form of Genesis One,” 211b. For similar tables of the parallel structure of the Creation week, see Davidson and Turner, *Manifold Beauty of Genesis One*, 29, 31, 38; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 7; Bruce K. Waltke and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 185–86. Cf. Elizabeth B. Hayes, “Whose World? Whose Time? A Text World Theory Examination of the Style and Message of Genesis 1:1–2:25,” in *Doubling and Duplicating in the Book of Genesis: Literary and Stylistic Approaches to the Text*, edited by Elizabeth R. Hayes and Karolien Vermeulen (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016), 144–66 (especially the diagram on page 162).

20 See Copan and Jacoby, *Origins*, 73. Cf. Waltke and Yu, *Old Testament Theology*, 183–84.

focus of this work, namely the fourth day of Creation (Gen 1:14–19). Day Four delineates each of the main types of astronomical bodies, i.e., the sun, moon, and stars.²¹ To be clear:

The text goes to great length to discuss the creation of these lights, suggesting that the subject was very important to the ancients. Since these ‘lights’ were considered deities in the ancient world, the section serves as a strong polemic The Book of Genesis is affirming they are created entities, not deities. To underscore this the text does not even give them names. If used here, the usual names for the sun and moon [*Shemesh* and *Yarikh*, respectively] might have carried pagan connotations, so they are simply described as greater and lesser lights. Moreover, they serve in the capacity that God gives them, which would not be the normal function the pagans ascribed to them. They merely divide, govern, and give light in God’s creation.²²

Put otherwise, in contrast to the “pagan impulse” which deified the “heavenly bodies” for their capacity to give light, something required for all life (plants, animals, humans), the text of Genesis (cf. Wis. 13:2) consistently separates “light from its Creator, making it an index to the divine instead of deity itself” (cf. Ps 33:6–9; 74:16; 147:4; 148:1–6).²³

C. John Collins astutely notes that the “purpose of the [Genesis] stories is to lay the foundation for a worldview Thus, Genesis aims to tell the story of beginnings the ‘right’ way, to counter the other stories; it professes to offer the divinely authorized way for its audience to picture the events.”²⁴ In this manner, the rhetoric used in Genesis is “tacit.”²⁵ Kenneth A. Mathews (rightly) asserts: “rather than actual polemic, the Genesis accounts are *inferentially* undermining

21 For exhaustive scriptural references (including their theological import), see Ryken, et al., eds, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, “Sun, Moon, and Stars,” 827–28 and each of the related (article) entries.

22 The NET Bible. See also Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Significance of the Cosmology in Genesis 1 in Relation to Ancient Near Eastern Parallels,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 10 (1972): 1–20 alongside his “Polemic Nature of the Genesis Cosmology,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 46 (1974): 81–102. Cf. Shay Zucker, “Hebrew Names of the Planets,” *Proceedings of The International Astronomical Union* 260 (2011): 301–305 and John H. Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 171–72.

23 Ryken, et al., eds, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, “Light,” 509.

24 Collins, *Reading Genesis Well* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 153. For more details on this not insignificant aspect of Genesis, something which I, myself, term “worldview formative rhetoric,” see Burlet, *Judgment and Salvation*, 8, 65–70.

25 John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 103. Cf. Brian Neil Peterson, *Genesis as Torah: Reading Narrative as Legal Instruction* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018), 63–64; Wenham, *Genesis*, 51.

the philosophical basis for pagan myth. There are undertones of refutation in Gen 1–11, but they are not explicit disputations.”²⁶

While Scripture seems to explicitly engage with many ancient Near East mythologies (ANE), such as the *Enuma Elish*, it is vital to recognize that Genesis utilizes “imagery, not theology, from pagan myths.”²⁷ John H. Sailhamer poignantly states:

Behind this narrative is the author’s concern to emphasize that God alone created the lights of the heavens, and thus no one else is to be given the glory and honor due only to God (cf. Ne 9:6 [Deut 4:19; Isa 47:13]). The passage also states that God created the lights in the heavens for a purpose, namely to divide day and night and to mark the ‘seasons and days and years’ (vv. 17–18). These two concerns form the heart of [Gen] ch. 1. God alone is the Creator of all things and worthy of the worship of people.²⁸

The theological import of the creation account (Gen 1) may also be highlighted by the specific order in which the luminaires appear, namely, the sun, moon, and stars (Gen 1:14–19). This is something that contrasts with the *Enuma Elish* where priority is given to the stars.²⁹ Marduk first makes constellations (the stars), then organizes time, i.e., sets the calendar, and fixes the polestar before, finally, instructing the moon and the sun (in that order).³⁰ An English translation of the Sumero-Akkadian text is found below:

He bade the moon come forth;
entrusted night (to him);
assigned to him adornments of the night
to measure time;
and every month, unfailing,
he marked off by a crown.
“When the new moon is rising
over the land

26 Mathews, *Genesis 1–11*, Christian Standard Commentary (China: Holman Reference, 2022), 517. Italics original. Cf. Davidson and Turner, *Manifold Beauty of Genesis One*, 55–75.

27 Waltke and Yu, *Old Testament Theology*, 181 (see too page 176).

28 Sailhamer, *Genesis* in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Revised Edition*, edited by Tremper Longman III and David Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 21–331 (quote page 65). For more details on biblical chronology in general with respect to the cult, see Michael LeFebvre, *The Liturgy of Creation: Understanding Calendars in Old Testament Context* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019).

29 A thorough review of these creation accounts is found in Waltke and Yu, *Old Testament Theology*, 198.

30 See Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion* Revised Edition (New Haven: CT: Yale University Press, 1978), 179.

Shine you with horns, six days to measure;
 the seventh day, as half (your) crown (appear)
 and (then) let periods of fifteen days be counterparts,
 two halves each month.
 As, afterward, the sun gains on you
 on heavens foundations,
 wane step by step,
 reverse your growth!”³¹

In stark contrast, Scripture clearly communicates the stars were “created by God (Gen 1:16; Ps 8:4[4]) and are under his providential control (Isa 40:26; Jer 31:35[34]). . . . Thus, stars are a part of God’s self-revelation in nature, his handiwork pointing beyond themselves to God’s brightness, purity, greatness, and power” (Ps 19:1[2]).³²

Indeed, there is only one true and living God who is supreme and sovereign over creation.³³ God is “unquestionably superior even to the highest stars (Job 22:12) . . . In climax, the individual who will bring salvation to Israel is foreseen as ‘a star [which] shall come forth out of Jacob’ (Num 24:17). Jesus, in Rev. says, ‘I am . . . the bright morning star’ (Rev 22:16; cf. II Peter 1:19). Then too the faithful who diligently labor to people to God shall shine like the stars forever (Dan 12:3; cf. I Cor 15:41f.”³⁴

The Stars and English Bible Translations

It is extremely unfortunate that many English translations fail to clearly communicate the not insignificant role that the stars (along with the moon) have in ruling over the night. This issue, however, does not seem to depend on any differences in Bible translation philosophy, i.e., “formal” equivalence vs. “functional” or dynamic equivalence.³⁵

For example, the New King James Version, the New American Standard Bible (1995 update)/the New American Standard Bible (2020), the New English Translation, the New International Version (1984/2011), and the New Living

31 Jacobsen, *Treasures of Darkness*, 179.

32 Newman, *NIDOTTE* 2:611.

33 Babatunde A. Ogunlana, “Inspiration and the Relationship between Genesis 1:1–2:4A and Enuma Elish,” *BTSK Insight* 13 (2016): 87–105 (quote from page 100).

34 Hartley, *TWOT*, 1:426. Aside from the commentaries, stimulating details concerning Paul’s words in 1 Cor 15:41 may also be found in Keith Starkenburg, “What is Good for Christ is Good for the Cosmos: Affirming the Resurrection of Creation,” *Pro Ecclesia* 30 (2021): 71–97.

35 Comprehensive details on these different philosophies of Bible translation(s) may be found in Mark L. Strauss, *40 Questions about Bible Translation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2023) and William D. Barrick, *Understanding Bible Translation: Bringing God’s Word into New Contexts* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2019); See too Ward, *Authorized: The Use and Misuse of the King James Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2018).

Translation, alike, each render the end of Genesis 1:16 as something very much akin to “He made the stars also.” That is, each one of these (otherwise excellent!) translations starts a new sentence when detailing the stars specifically. Regrettably, though, this interpretation fails to explicate the star’s function and purpose in creation. It also needlessly ambiguates their divinely appointed role as co-rulers of the night with the moon, i.e., the lesser light, in accordance with the Masorah tradition (the details of which will be explained at length later on).³⁶

Choosing not to start a new sentence, however, does not necessarily solve things. The Revised Standard Version reads: “And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also” (Gen 1:16). The King James Version has: “And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: *he made* the stars also” (Gen 1:16 - italics original). John Goldingay’s *First Testament* rendering of Gen 1:16 reads: “God made the two big lights (the bigger light to rule the day and the smaller light to rule the night) and the stars.” My critique of these renderings is similar in nature to that already noted above. In brief, it is extremely difficult (if not impossible) to see what significance (if any) the stars have within Day Four of creation (Gen 1:14–19). “What do the stars actually *do*?”

Again, merely changing the punctuation fails to fix the problem. The English Standard Version, for instance, states: “And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars” (Gen 1:16). The Christian Standard Bible renders Gen 1:16: “God made the two great lights — the greater light to rule over the day and the lesser light to rule over the night — as well as the stars.” The Holman Christian Standard Bible has: “God made the two great lights—the greater light to have dominion over the day and the lesser light to have dominion over the night—as well as the stars” (Gen 1:16). The New Revised Standard Version puts Gen 1:16 as: “God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars.” The Bible in Basic English (BBE) and The Message, by Eugene Peterson, are both quite similar to this. Interestingly, the Common English Bible distinctively renders the text: “God made the stars and two great lights: the larger light to rule over the day and the smaller light to rule over the night” (Gen 1:16).

To critique, while each of these translations effectively communicates that the primary job of the sun and moon is to rule over day and night, respectively, none of them fully delineate the stars’ function and purpose in creation. They each also needlessly ambiguates the stars’ divinely appointed role as co-rulers of the night with the moon.³⁷

36 Compare Futato, *Basics of Hebrew Accents*, 40–41 alongside Collins, *Reading Genesis Well*, 156.

37 Compare Futato, *Basics of Hebrew Accents*, 40–41.

Various Commentaries on Genesis One and the Stars (Day Four)

In a related way, while many commentators do an excellent job of stressing the polemical nature of the Genesis 1 text, they also, lamentably, tend to underplay that the stars “co-rule” the night along with the moon (Gen 1:16; cf. Ps 136:7–9; Jer 31:35). A few (select) examples from certain contemporary, reputable, commentators should suffice.

Victor P. Hamilton (1990) opines: “It is significant that in Gen. 1 the reference to the stars, which are so prominent in pagan cosmogonies, is touched on so briefly and quite anticlimactically. Given the MT’s word order in v.16, one may safely describe the creation of the stars as almost an afterthought or a parenthetical addition.”³⁸ Nahum M. Sarna (1991) maintains that the brief dismissal of the star’s creation is a “tacit repudiation of astrology.”³⁹ Bruce K. Waltke with Cathi J. Fredricks (2001) also maintains: “The slight, almost passing mention of the stars may have a polemical function, since ancient Near Eastern people often believed stars directed people’s destinies.”⁴⁰

David M. Carr (2021) likewise asserts: “God’s initial creation speech (1:14aβ) and the report of God’s installation of the lights in the heavenly plate (18aα) do not explicitly exclude the stars from the function of distinguishing day and night in the first of its list of functions of the astral bodies, but this is clarified in 1:16 by the clear exclusion of stars from ‘rule’ over day and night in the list of functions of these bodies when God actually creates them.”⁴¹ Lastly, Kenneth A. Mathews (2022), plainly states:

The God of the Hebrews . . . revealed to his people that the sun and moon were no more than creations that were subject to this purposeful will. The passage also limits the importance of the stars. In the Babylonian cosmogony *Enuma Elish*, the stars have a prominent role; but in the Genesis account the creation of the stars is treated almost as an aside, downplaying their role in God’s sight. The Hebrew text simply adds [afterward], as if a mere afterthought—‘as well as the stars’ ([Gen] 1:16).⁴²

38 Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 128. In like manner, Sarfati (2015) also states: “But despite the enormous power and number of the stars, Genesis 1:16 just says, ‘and the stars,’ almost as an afterthought. That is, creating even these uncountably many enormous hot balls of gas was effortless for the Almighty Elohim! Also, unlike the sun and moon, they [the stars] have no ruling function.” *The Genesis Account*, 207–208.

39 Sarna, *Exodus*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 10. See too Sarfati, *The Genesis Account*, 208 from whom this reference was derived.

40 Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 63.

41 Carr, *Genesis 1–11*, International Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2021) 61.

42 Mathews, *Genesis 1–11*, 101.

Oddly, even when the ruling role of the stars is mentioned, the specifics are often understated and/or rather muted and impotent. Derek Kidner (1967), for instance, states:

. . . the dominant interest is theological. Sun, moon and stars are God's good gifts, producing the pattern of varied *seasons* (14) in which we thrive (*cf.* Acts 14:17) and by which Israel was to mark out the year for God (Lv. 23:4). As *signs* (14) they will speak for God, not for fate (Je. 10:2; *cf.* Mt. 2:9; Lk 21:25, 28), for they *rule* (16, 18) only as light bearers, not as powers. In these few simple sentences the lie is given to a superstition as old as Babylon and as modern as a newspaper-horoscope."⁴³

Similarly, John Goldingay (2020) maintains:

While God thus makes sun and the moon, they are not named, unlike day, night, heavens, earth, and seas. Alongside this odd fact is the offhand determination of a further object of God's making, 'and the stars.' Even for people who do not know what a vast panoply the stars comprise, this comment might seem to understate their impressiveness. Therein may lie the point. For many people in Israel's context, sun, moon, and stars signified deities standing behind those entities, which were the means of the gods' determining events on earth. Genesis puts them in their place as mere lampposts in the sky. They rule, but they rule on behalf of the real God and in a way that helps people structure their relationship with God.⁴⁴

To restate my primary argument, the Masoretic accentuation of Day Four of creation (Gen 1:14–19) confirms the witness of the rest of Scripture (Ps 136:7–9; Jer 31:35) that the “stars” (כוכבים) and the moon are coregents of the night. Said otherwise, despite the anti-mythological, polemical thrust of Genesis 1, the (secondary) voice of the Masoretes supplements the primary text of Scripture in refuting any “afterthought” interpretation of these heavenly bodies.⁴⁵ The final section(s) of this work will focus on each of these aspects (in turn), beginning with a general orientation to the MT accents.

The Masoretic Accentual System: General Orientation

Besides the familiar diacritical marks known as vowel points, the Masoretic Text

43 Kidner, *Genesis*, 48–49. All italics original.

44 Goldingay, *Genesis*,

45 I am indebted to Matt Woodmass (private communiqué) for his clarifying comments regarding my thesis.

(MT) of the HB/OT also uses various other marks of significance. They consist of (1) marks denoting possible textual problems, (2) marks referring to marginal notes, (3) marks signifying the phonetic union of words, and (4) marks of accentuation.⁴⁶ It is this fourth category, marks of accentuation, that will be the focus of the rest of this article.⁴⁷

There are two main systems of accentuation within the HB/OT.⁴⁸ One system of accentuation marks is used in the so-called “poetic” books of Job, Proverbs, and Psalms.⁴⁹ The remaining Twenty-One Books, i.e., the so-called “prose” books, use a functionally similar but different accentuation system.⁵⁰ This includes, of course, the book of Genesis.

Although the Masoretic accentuation system presupposes that the biblical text had previously been divided into verses, Paul Joüon and Takamitsu Muraoka astutely recognize that these verses are each of varying length (but no less than three words) and that the actual division into verses does not always accord with logic; i.e. the apodosis is sometimes separated from its protasis in order to avoid too long a verse (see, for example, Deut 19:16–17; 1 Kings 3:11–12; 21:20–21; Ruth 1:11–13).⁵¹

As noted above, since the accents preserve the traditional understanding of the text: “No serious expositor of Scripture should neglect such important keys to Biblical exposition.”⁵² David Robinson and Elisabeth Levy put it well in stating:

The Masoretic pointing as a whole, and the punctuation in particular, is arguably one of the greatest literary and linguistic achievements in history. Its development spanned more than a thousand years and was

46 Much of this sentence, including instances of specific wording, has been derived from James D. Price, *The Syntax of Masoretic Accents in the Hebrew Bible*, SBEC 27 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1990), 1. Cf. Marcus A. Leman, *Reading with the Masoretes: The Exegetical Utility of Masoretic Accent Patterns*, GlossaHouse Dissertation Series 8 (Wilmore, KY: Glossahouse, 2019), 3, 8–11.

47 Another scholar states that the Hebrew accents are indicators of three things: (1) the stressed syllables in words, (2) the intonation of words for singing/chanting, and (3) the syntactic relationship between words, i.e., “meaning” or “sense.” Futato, *Basics of Hebrew Accents*, 14.

48 I. Yeivin, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah* Translated and edited by E. J. Revell SBLMS 5 (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1980), 165–74; *BHRG* §9.5; JM §15.d; *IBHS* §1.6.4; GKÇ §15.

49 A notable exception is the narrative portion(s) of Job, i.e., Job 1:1—3:1 and 42:7–17. These “Three Books” are also called the “Books of Truth” because of the acronym “truth” אמת derived from the first letters of their original names, i.e., “Job,” אִיּוֹב, “Proverbs,” מִשְׁלֵי, and “Psalms,” תְּהִלִּים. Sung Jin Park, *The Fundamentals of Hebrew Accents: Divisions and Exegetical Roles Beyond Syntax* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 149; JM §15.d. Though several signs used in the Three Books are identical to those used in the Twenty-One Books, their names are “different in accordance with their difference in functions.” Park, *Fundamentals of Hebrew Accents*, 149. See too Price, *Syntax of Masoretic Accents*, 161.

50 See Park, *Fundamentals of Hebrew Accents*, 149.

51 See JM §15.e from whom much of the structure and wording/phrasing of this sentence has been derived.

52 Price, *Syntax of Masoretic Accents in the Hebrew Bible*, 7.

only possible through the co-operation of countless forgotten scholars whose dedication to accuracy was without parallel. It offers to all the ‘people of the Book’ a detailed explanation of how the great biblical teachers understood their sacred text.⁵³

To say again, though by no means inerrant in any sense, the MT accentual system helps interpreters determine the primary units of thought by revealing the joints/seams of a text and, for this reason, close attention should be paid to them as they frequently “offer material assistance in unraveling the sense of a difficult passage” and “the best authorities continually appeal to them, on account of their bearing upon exegesis.”⁵⁴ As Marcus A. Leman puts it: “While the Masoretes are not infallible, they evince faithfulness and rigor in the interpretation they have provided to subsequent generations. Their work continues to demand careful analysis throughout the exegetical process.”⁵⁵ The essence of this thoughtful exhortation is further echoed by Bruce K. Waltke, who judiciously opines:

So important is the accentuation of Hebrew grammar for understanding that medieval Jewish sources paid more attention to it than to establishing the correct pronunciation of words At present it is best to consider the accents as an early and relatively reliable witness to a correct interpretation of the text.⁵⁶

Given such, the remainder of this paper will examine how the MT accentual system can help to assist in the effective interpretation and translation of Genesis 1:16 with respect to the stars themselves and their key role as “co-rulers” with the moon.

The Masoretic Text of Genesis 1:16: Analysis and Translation

The analysis will begin with a fresh English translation alongside a select commentary of certain grammatical/syntactical features.⁵⁷ The MT of Genesis 1:16 may be seen below:

53 Robinson and Levy, “The Masoretes and the Punctuation of Biblical Hebrew,” in *British & Foreign Bible Society*, May 2, 2002, 25. http://lc.bfbs.org.uk/e107_files/downloads/masoretes.pdf

54 S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew and Some other Syntactical Questions* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1892), 101–102.

55 Leman, *Reading with the Masoretes*, 145.

56 Waltke, “The New International Version and Its Textual Principles in the Book of Psalms,” 25–26. It is, therefore, quite interesting how “sparsely” Waltke’s (otherwise superb) *IBHS* volume treats accents. See Price, “The Syntax of Masoretic Accents in the Hebrew Bible,” 7 from whom this quote was plundered.

57 See Bulet, *Judgment and Salvation*, 95–96.

וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־שְׁנֵי הַמְּאֹרֹת הַגְּדֹלִים
 אֶת־הַמְּאֹר הַגְּדֹל לְמַמְשֵׁלֶת הַיּוֹם
 וְאֶת־הַמְּאֹר הַקָּטָן לְמַמְשֵׁלֶת הַלַּיְלָה
 וְאֵת הַכּוֹכָבִים:

“Then^a God^b made^c the two^d great^e lights,^f
 the greater luminary^g to^h governⁱ the day
 evenⁱ the lesser luminary to govern the night
 [accompanied] with^k the stars.”^l”

- a. The *waw* is sequential, i.e., it expresses “temporal sequence, describing an action or situation subsequent to a previous action or situation.” *GBHS* §3.5.1.a. See also Robert B. Chisholm Jr., *From Exegesis to Exposition: A Practical Guide to Using Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids; Baker, 1998), 120 (hereafter abbreviated EE). NB: “the seemingly endless functions of *waw* are actually not so much functions of *waw* alone but of the larger clausal and supra-clausal structures of which *waw* is a part.” Miles Van Pelt, ed., *Basics of Hebrew Discourse: A Guide to Working with Hebrew Prose and Poetry* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2019) 60; *BHRG* §40.23. Cf. R. C. Steiner, “Does the Biblical Hebrew Conjunction- ו Have Many Meanings, One Meaning, or No Meaning at All?,” *JBL* 119 (2000) 249–67. This linguistic truth is presumed throughout this (textual) analysis.
- b. “The more generic name *Elohim* is often used to emphasize God’s general relationship to his creatures” while “God’s proper name *Yahweh* highlights his covenant relationship with individuals and groups.” Andrew E. Steinmann, *Genesis* Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019) 12.
- c. Aside from the lexicons, a stimulating excursus on *‘āśā* with respect to creation and function may be found in Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology*, 133–39.
- d. For grammatical details on the numeral here, see DG §46b; JM §142.c.
- e. For more information on the correlative comparatives, see GKC §133f alongside Fuller and Choi, *Invitation to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, §23c.
- f. For exhaustive scriptural references to this term (including its theological import), see Ryken, et al., eds, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, “Sun, Moon, and Stars,” 827–28 and the related entries.
- g. Helpful syntactical notes on apposition here may be found in *IBHS* §12.5.a.
- h. The *lamed* (preposition) denotes purpose. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, §277; *GBHS* §4.1.10.d.

- i. The verb specifically refers to “the act of having control or dominion over and is therefore not exclusively bound to the king as subject.” Nel, *NIDOTTE* 2:1137.
- j. The *waw* + non verb construction is disjunctive (contrastive). See Chisholm, *EE*, 126 alongside Robert B. Chisholm, *A Workbook for Intermediate Hebrew* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006) 264.
- k. The disjunctive *waw* serves to expand on that which preceded it. *GBHS* §4.3.3.d.
- l. For details on the generic use of the article (generic), including its usage with plurals, see *IBHS* §13.5.1.f alongside JM §137.m. Cf. *BHRG* §24.4 and Peter Bekins, “Non-Prototypical Uses of the Definite Article in Biblical Hebrew,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 58 (2013) 225–40. NB: It is interesting that the *tiphcha* on נא suggests the grouping with the prior material on the lesser luminary, rather than pointing ahead to the object (whether it is a DDO or not). I am indebted to Douglas K. Smith for this insight (private communiqué). Alongside this, it seems reasonable to maintain that the lack of a *maqeph* may be because the stars don’t have an associated prep phrase with a purpose statement (which is a kind of disjunction). In addition, the NETS understands the נא as being a DDO (and not a preposition). This seemingly helps to maintain the obvious parallel with the previous objects. Much (much!) thanks also to David J. Fuller (private communiqué) for helping me to (begin to) wrap my head around this. Cf. Robert Althann, “Does ‘et (‘aet-) sometimes signify ‘from’ in the Hebrew Bible” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 103 (1991) 121–24. Further grammatical information about this verse, as a whole, may also be found in *IBHS* §14.2.d; DG §113f, 118c (see page 148).

As seen above, the MT of Genesis 1:16 is divided in half by the *athnak*.⁵⁸ This major disjunctive accent separates the “predicate (‘made’), subject (‘God’), and direct object (‘two great lights’) from the amplification of the direct object (‘the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night’). . . . The first half of this verse is then divided in half by *zaqeph* [on the word *Elohim*]. . . which separates the predicate and subject (‘God made’) from the direct object (‘two great lights’).”⁵⁹

The second half of Gen 1:16, i.e., the portion following the *athnak*, uses *zaqeph* twice: first on the initial phrase “the day,” and secondly on the later phrase “the night.” Mark D. Futato Sr. states: “whenever *zaqeph* is repeated in a half verse, the first *zaqeph* is the one that divides the half in half; the second *zaqeph* divides

58 NB: these half divisions are not reckoned in accordance with word count but sense. See *BHRG* §9.5.2.1; Fuller and Choi, *Invitation to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 371; Futato, *Basics of Hebrew Accents*, 36.

59 Futato, *Basics of Hebrew Accents*, 36. Cf. Barry Bandstra, *Genesis 1–11: A Handbook on the Hebrew Text*, Baylor Handbook on the Hebrew Bible (Waco, TX: Baylor, 2008). NB: the *zaqeph qaton* is another major disjunctive accent that divides the units created by the *athnak* in half. See *BHRG* §9.5.2.1.

the second half of the half in half. That being said, the first *zaqeph* separates the greater light that rules the day from the lesser light and the stars that shine at night.”⁶⁰

To summarize, were the Masoretes intending to altogether separate the stars from the moon and the sun, i.e., two great lights, one might expect the *athnak* to be on the phrase “the night” but it is not—instead, as seen above, the second *zaqeph* is on “the night,” thereby demonstrating that the Masoretes understood the moon and the stars together to be co-rulers over the night and no mere “after-thought” of God’s creation.⁶¹

Other canonical references further vindicate this assertion (Ps 136:7–9; Jer 31:35).⁶²

Genesis 1:16 and Psalm 136:7–9

Psalm 136 is the last of the *hallel* psalms of Book Five of the Psalter.⁶³ For this reason, it is sometimes referred to as *Hallel HaGadol*, i.e., “The Great Hallel.”⁶⁴ The most pertinent section of text for our purposes is Ps 136:7–9 which reads:

לְעֵשָׂה אֲוֵרִים גְּדֹלִים כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסָדוֹ׃
אֶת־הַשָּׁמֶשׁ לְמַמְשָׁלֶת בַּיּוֹם כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסָדוֹ׃
אֶת־הַיָּרֵחַ וְכּוֹכְבֵי־לַיְלָה כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסָדוֹ׃

“To^a the maker^b of the great lights^c—
for^d his steadfast love^e is everlasting!^f
The sun^g to rule^h by dayⁱ—
for his steadfast love is everlasting!
The moon and stars to rule the night—
for his steadfast love is everlasting!”

60 Futato, *Basics of Hebrew Accents*, 40. For more details, see the resources listed above.

61 Futato, *Basics of Hebrew Accents*, 40–41.

62 Cf. Futato, *Basics of Hebrew Accents*, 41.

63 The correspondence between the five-fold structure of the Psalms and the Pentateuch, i.e., the five books of Moses, is noted in a midrash from the Talmudic period on Psalm 1 which reads: “As Moses gave five books of laws to Israel, so David gave five books of Psalms to Israel (Braude 1:5).” Waltke, *NIDOTTE* 4:1110. For more details, see Tremper Longman III, *How to Read the Psalms* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1988) 43 alongside Willem VanGemeren, *Psalms* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2017).

64 Yitzhak Bauxbaum, *The Light and Fire of the Baal Shem Tov* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2006), 399. James V. Hamilton Jr., states that as “one of the most grammatically and structurally parallel poems in the whole of the Psalter, Ps 136 has as its most characteristic element the refrain that stands at the end of every one of its twenty-six verses, ‘for to the age his loving-kindness.’” James M. Hamilton Jr., *Psalms Volume 2: Psalms 73–150*, Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2021), 435.

- a. For grammatical details on the prefixed *lamed* preposition, see *BHRG* §39.11.
- b. This phrase could also be rendered as “to he who made/works.” Hamilton, *Psalms 73–150*, 435.
- c. “The description of the creation of the sun, moon, and stars compares with that in Gen. 1:16–18, where God makes the two great lights (there *mē’ōrōt*, here the more common *’ōrīm*) to rule the day and the night (though the psalms says ‘rule over’). John Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150 Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008) 592.
- d. “The rule . . . is that *kī* be given its more usual causal sense unless greater sense can be extracted by taking the conjunction as a concessive or emphatic.” For more details, see Burlet, *Judgment and Salvation*, 15. Cf. *BHRG* §40.29.
- e. “The concept of faithfulness, steadfast love, or more generally kindness, represented by *hesed*, has a strong relational aspect that is essential to any proper definition of the term . . . the divine exercise of *hesed* is based on God’s covenantal relationship with his people . . . *hesed* is the ‘essence’ of the covenant relationship” of Yahweh. Baer and Gordon, *NIDOTTE*, 2:211.
- f. This term conveys the sense of “a long time . . . usually eternal . . . but not in a philosophical sense.” *HALOT* 1:1798.
- g. “Genesis 1 keeps sun and moon in their place (Babylonian religion turned them into deities) by not naming them; they are simply the greater and less light. The psalm (not needing to safeguard against that error?) calls them by their familiar names.” Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, 592.
- h. The *lamed* preposition denotes purpose. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, §277.
- i. The *beth* preposition is temporal. *GBHS* §4.1.5.b.

As seen above, there is no separation whatsoever between the sun’s rule/governance over the day (Ps 136:8) and the moon and the stars ruling together over the night (Ps 136:9).⁶⁵ This intertextual (biblical-theological) connection provides further evidence, canonically speaking, that the stars should be understood as being co-rulers together with the moon.⁶⁶

Genesis 1:16 and Jeremiah 31:35

The final text that vindicates the primary thesis of this paper is Jeremiah 31:35. It reads:

65 See Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, 588, 92 alongside Collins, *Reading Genesis Well*, 156.

66 Cf. Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Nelson, 2002), 294.

כֹּה אֶמַר יְהוָה
 נִתְּנוּ שְׁמֵשׁ לְאֹר יוֹמָם
 חֻקֹּת יָרֵחַ וְכּוֹכְבִים לְאֹר לַיְלָה
 רָגַע הַיָּם וַיִּהְיֶה מוֹ גְּלִיּוֹ
 יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ:

*“Thus says the LORD . . .^a
 who gives^b the sun for^c light by day^d
 the decrees regarding^e the moon and the
 stars for light by night.^f
 who stills the sea^g when its waves roar —
 the LORD of armies^h is his name!”*

- a. Speeches and dialogue “express thoughts, motives, desires and beliefs.” That is to say, “Divine monologues lead us directly into Yahweh’s mind . . . This indeed is the value conventionally ascribed to the monologue: it imprints on a speech the mark of *utmost sincerity* and of absolute *truthfulness* . . . Moreover, what the speaker says will always express faithfully what he thinks, since he is supposed to ‘think’ the very words of the text.” See Burlet, *Judgment and Salvation*, 75, 108. NOTE: “LXX has v.37 before vv.35–36.” John Goldingay, *The Book of Jeremiah* The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 2021) 659.
- b. Notably, the same verb is also used in Gen 1:17. F. B. Huey Jr., *Jeremiah/Lamentations* New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B. & H., 1993) 287.
- c. For grammatical details on the prefixed *lamed* preposition, see *BHRG* §39.11.
- d. NOTE: “Tg ‘to give light’ here and in the next colon parses *l’ôr* as a verb rather than a noun.” Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 659. For more details, see Robert Hayward, *The Targum of Jeremiah: Translation, with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus, and Notes* The Aramaic Bible: The Targums (Collegeville, MN: College Press, 1987).
- e. See BDB 349–50; *HALOT* 1:346 for further defense of this translation.
- f. NOTE: “LXX lacks *the decrees regarding*.” Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 659.
- g. “Tg, Syr thus take the verb as *raga* ‘II as in v.1, not *raga* ‘I (‘stir up’; so LXX, Vg); the subsequent *waw*-consecutive is then epexegetical (*TTH* 75–76; *IBHS* 33.2.2; *JM* §117j). Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 659.
- h. See Tremper Longman III and Daniel Reid, *God is a Warrior* Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic 1995) for more details on this key theme.

As seen above, while the sun is clearly reckoned to give light by day, no partition exists between the moon and the stars concerning their ordinance(s) to give light by night.⁶⁷

This regular “patterned movement of sun, moon, and stars” gives hope to Judah who, like Ephraim, “could seem all but obliterated as a people.”⁶⁸ To put things differently:

To emphasize the unchangeable nature of God’s love (cf. Rom 8:38–39), Jeremiah stated that there is as much chance of God’s rejecting Israel as the fixed order of nature to break down (cf. 33:20–26). Israel’s existence as a nation, the Lord says, is as permanent as creation itself, and his promise is as sure as the greatness of his power and the faithfulness of his character (cf. 32:17–20; 33).⁶⁹

God gives hope to his people by demonstrating his sovereignty over all creation—the sky above and the sea below.⁷⁰ As Karl Barth eloquently states: “‘The day continually dawns for man, and the sun, moon and stars which indicate the separation of day from night shine for him’ in order that they may know that he has time and place when ‘the Word of God is spoken to man, and judges him, and becomes his radically saving and preserving promise, and summons him to pray for the grace of God.’”⁷¹ To God alone be praise!

Conclusion

This paper contends that the “stars” (כוכבים) of Creation (Day Four) should be understood as being co-rulers with the moon to govern the night (Gen 1:14–19). Conjointly (and for this reason) despite the anti-mythological, polemical thrust of Genesis 1, as a whole, they should not be thought of as being only a mere “afterthought.”⁷² According to the nuances and intricacies related to the (Hebrew) Masoretic accentual system, an “encoded” method of interpretation that is “far closer to the original community than our own,” the “stars” (כוכבים) are joined to the “lesser light,” i.e., the moon, and, therefore, “implicitly share in the rule of the night.”⁷³ This comports with other canonical references which provide further

67 See Michael B. Shepherd, *A Commentary on Jeremiah* Kregel Exegetical Library (Grand Rapids; Kregel 2023), 665–78.

68 Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 659 quoting Barth, *CD III*, 1:164.

69 Huey, *Jeremiah*, 297.

70 Michael L. Brown, *Jeremiah in The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Revised Edition*, edited by Tremper Longman III and David Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 405.

71 Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 659 quoting Barth, *CD III*, 1:164.

72 The language of “afterthought” has been derived from Futato, *Basics of Hebrew Accents*, 40.

73 Futato, *Basics of Hebrew Accents*, 40–41.

vindication and Scriptural witness of this thesis (see Ps 136:7–9; Jer 31:35).⁷⁴ *Soli Deo gloria.*⁷⁵

74 Cf. Futato, *Basics of Hebrew Accents*, 41 alongside Collins, *Reading Genesis Well*, 156

75 This paper, which I had initially considered titling “Stellar Insights from the Masoretes,” partly because I had asked ChatGPT to help me (thank you AI!), has benefited immensely from the thoughts, comments, feedback, and critique provided by the various fellows of the Creation Theology Society (hosted by Cedarville University [Cedarville, Ohio] in tandem with the 9th International Conference on Creationism) and the Canadian American Theological Association. A special thank you must go to Christopher Zoccali for his willingness to accept my invitation to submit an article for consideration for publication with *CATR* and especially, David J. Fuller, without whom I simply would not have been able to publish this article.