

# REACTIONS

*Readers are invited to submit their reactions to the articles in our journal. Please address contributions to: ORIGINS, Geoscience Research Institute, 11060 Campus St., Loma Linda, California 92350 USA.*

## **Re: Hasel: the “Days” of Creation in Genesis 1: Literal “Days” or Figurative “Periods/Epochs” of Time?” (ORIGINS 21:5-38).**

I am convinced by the arguments advanced by the late Gerhard Hasel that the Hebrews believed that the days of Genesis 1 were literal, twenty-four hour days.

However, then unfortunately Dr. Hasel performs a great leap of faith. He states: “Genesis 1 is a factual account of the origin of the livable world. This record is accurate, authentic, and historical” (p 19). This is simply an assertion of Dr. Hasel. Conceptually and logically, it does not follow from a conclusion about the Hebrew belief concerning the nature of “days” in their creation account.

The Hebrews believed that the earth was fixed immovable in space. I wonder if Dr. Hasel would have stated that this is an “accurate and authentic” representation of reality. I suspect not.

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### **Editorial Response:**

*Unfortunately, Dr. Gerhard Hasel is unable to reply. A few comments from Dr. William Shea make a contribution to the discussion. They should not be construed as Dr. Hasel's interpretation.*

As an almost casual concluding comment, Dr. Taylor suggests that the Hebrews had the concept that Earth did not move. The inference is that their ancient views evidently conflict with modern science which says that Earth does move, both on its axis and around the sun.

Psalms 93:1 and Psalm 119:90 are often used to suggest that the Hebrews believed that Earth was fixed in space. Unfortunately, that is not what the texts are saying. Context and lexical use can provide assistance. In Psalm 93:1-2, the subject of meditation by the psalmist is first the majesty and power of God, and then His eternal existence. Verse 1a reflects upon the former, and verse 2 reflects upon the latter. The idea about the immovability of Earth is found in the thought pair of verse 1b. In this verse, the paired idea is that God established Earth. Thus the real extension of the idea is that God created and established Earth, and it continues because of that creation. This is indicated by the verb *mut*, which does not mean “to stand” or “stand still”; it means “to stagger, totter, waver, or wobble.”

In a positive sense *mut* is sometimes used in the Old Testament for earthquakes or the hearts of the wicked when they meet God in judgment. If

one wishes to address unscientific ideas, one should actually say that the Psalmist is denying the occurrence of any earthquakes in Israel. We know this is not the case, because the plate of the Jordan Rift Valley produces approximately five major earthquakes per century, and these were known and recognized in biblical times. This also is not the intent of the text.

Psalm 93:1-2 simply signifies that Earth was created and established by God, and, like its Creator, its establishment continues to this day. Not the earthquakes that cause it to go *mut*, nor even the floods of waters mentioned in the next two verses will disrupt what was established by God.

A very similar idea is found in Psalm 119:89-91. In this passage, the Psalmist reflects upon nature before he turns to the subject of the Torah in the next five verses. His reflection in this section begins with God's Word in the heavens: "For ever, O Lord, thy word [Hebrew, *dabar*] is firmly fixed in the heavens" (RSV). Does this mean that God's word, like congealed breath, stands in the heavens like an immovable Goodyear blimp while the sun, moon, and stars rotate around it? A literal-minded scientist might make such a conclusion, but the actual meaning is that the word spoken by God in heaven has eternal effects and is an ongoing rule for His creation.

Next comes the subject of God's truth. In verse 90, the literal Hebrew translates "from generation to generation (is) your '*emunah*.'" The first exegetical point is that the word generation is repeated, as is commonly done, to show the returning cycle of generation after generation, in essence from the Psalmist's generation to ours today. And still with all the generations that have come and gone, before and after the Psalmist, God's truth continues. The word use for that aspect of His nature is commonly translated, "steadiness, reliability, honesty, duty, faithfulness, security." Generations may come and go, but God goes on forever, and His truth continues through it all.

Earth then becomes an illustration of this continuing cycle: Earth was not just created and then eradicated. It still stands, it still exists, it still continues, just as God's truthful nature does. Of interest at this point is the poetic structure of the psalm. Earth — the object — is inserted between a pair of verbs. The first verb is a perfect for past action at a point of time; specifically, the time when God established Earth. The verb that follows the object and its conjunction is the verb "to stand" (*'amad*), used here in the imperfect, which if by itself would indicate continuing action or existence. What was established in the past — Earth at creation — continues in existence, and God's continuing nature and existence guarantees that Earth will still do so in the future. This verse is not talking about the rotation or celestial movement of the planet.

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