

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: ANDERSON: REACTIONS (ORIGINS 6:7)

Professor Anderson's query illustrates the usefulness of consulting the original language of the biblical text, for a direct reading of Genesis 2 in the English translation he has quoted could indeed convey the impression that animals were created after man. The Hebrew verbal system differs from that of English by having only two tenses, the imperfect and the perfect, and the word "tense" in the temporal sense does not fit them very well. The imperfect verb *yiser* in Genesis 2:19 is preceded by the conjunctive letter *waw* which in Hebrew has the standard grammatical effect of converting it into a perfect. In the simplest cases Hebrew perfects are translated with the English past tense; so this verb commonly has been translated "formed." The spectrum of English translations for perfect verbs in Hebrew is broader than just the simple past, however, and in this verse an English past perfect fits the context best. One reason for preferring a past perfect translation here is the parenthetical nature of this verse. The preceding verse quotes God as stating that He would make (*'e'sê*) a helper (singular) for Adam. This intent was fulfilled in verse 22 which states that God built (*yiben*) woman from the rib which He had taken (note the past perfect translation of this Hebrew perfect in the RSV which Anderson has quoted) from man. That God did not intend one of the animals to be Adam's helper is evident from the singular versus plural contrast here and probably also from the different verbs that were juxtaposed in verses 18 and 19. The reference to the animals in verse 19 is parenthetical, therefore, and the conjunction with which this verse begins should be translated in a disjunctive manner to bring out this point. This fits the past perfect translation proposed for the verb which follows it. Thus the opening of Genesis 2:19 is best translated, "Now Yahweh God had formed every beast...." The preferable past perfect translation of this verb refers back to the creation of the beasts and birds on the 6th and 5th days of the preceding narrative respectively (note that both are mentioned here in an inverted order), and the verb at the beginning of Genesis 2:19 does not need to imply they were created again after man.

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