



Beginnings 1

Quran

[Verses] Made Distinct, 41: 10-12

10 He placed solid mountains on it, blessed it, measured out its varied provisions for all who seek them — all in four Days. 11 Then He turned to the sky, which was smoke — He said to it and the earth, 'Come into being, willingly or not,' and they said, 'We come willingly' — 12 and in two Days He formed seven heavens, and assigned an order to each. We have made the nearest one beautifully illuminated and secure. Such is the design of the Almighty, the All Knowing.

وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ مِنْ فَوْقِهَا وَبَرَكَ فِيهَا وَقَدَّرَ فِيهَا
أَقْوَاتَهَا فِي أَرْبَعَةِ أَيَّامٍ سَوَاءً لِّلسَّابِلِينَ ﴿١٠﴾ ثُمَّ أَسْتَوَى
إِلَى السَّمَاءِ وَهِيَ دُخَانٌ فَقَالَ لَهَا وَلِلْأَرْضِ ائْتِيَا طَوْعًا
أَوْ كَرْهًا قَالَتَا أَتَيْنَا طَائِعِينَ ﴿١١﴾ فَقَضَاهُنَّ سَبْعَ
سَمَوَاتٍ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ وَأَوْحَىٰ فِي كُلِّ سَمَاءٍ أَمْرَهَا ۗ وَزَيَّنَّا
السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحَ وَحِفْظًا ۗ ذَٰلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ
الْعَلِيمِ ﴿١٢﴾

English translation: M.A.S. Abdel Haleem

Introduction

This passage is taken from chapter 41 of the Quran titled *Fussilat*. It literally means elaborated, detailed or designed. This chapter is believed to have been revealed in Mecca and takes its name from the second verse which describes the Quran as a book whose verses are logically explained in Arabic recitation for the people who know. Verses 9-11 occur after a series of questions addressed to those who doubt the origins of revelations. One of the answers to their doubts is the miracle of creation as explained in this passage. This passage is however hotly debated, because when we count the days of the different stages of creation we arrive at a total of eight days, while in other Quranic passages (7:54-58) it is stated that the creation took place in six days.

Text notes

The term '*day*' in the Quran does not always refer to 24 hours. In verse 22:47 it is stated that a day in the sight of God is like a thousand years of our reckoning, and in 70:4, the day is compared with 50,000 years.



New Testament

John 1: 1-5

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4 in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

¹Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. ²οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν. ³πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν. ὃ γέγονεν ⁴ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων: ⁵καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν.

English translation: NRSV

Introduction

This is the very beginning of the Gospel of John – one of four different accounts of the life and death of Jesus that were written between 30 and 60 years after his death using collected traditions and perhaps eye witness accounts. The first chapter of John's Gospel, often known as the Prologue to John, picks up many of the themes that will be important later in the Gospel. The author would have known the book of Genesis and appears to have deliberately modeled his opening words on the beginning of Genesis 1.



Hebrew Bible
Genesis 1: 1-5

1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. 2 Now the earth was unformed and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters. 3 And God said: 'Let there be light.' And there was light. 4 And God saw the light that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. 5 And God called the light Day and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning one day.

א בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ
ב וְהָאָרֶץ הִיְתָה תְהוֹמוֹ וְבָהוּ וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל פְּנֵי תְהוֹמוֹ וְרוּחַ
אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם.
ג וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אוֹר וַיְהִי אוֹר.
ד וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאוֹר כִּי טוֹב וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין
הָאוֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ.
ה וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְאוֹר יוֹם וּלְחֹשֶׁךְ קִרְא לַיְלָה וַיְהִי
עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד. {פ}

English translation: JPS

Introduction

These verses are at the very beginning of the Bible, and come at the start of a stylized account of the creation of the world and its filling with plant life and animals, including human beings. In Genesis 1 the creation is portrayed as taking place over six days, and the story is characterized by its rhythmic quality and the repetition of key phrases such as “God said” and “It was good.”