

# ***'Waste and Void'***

***An explanation of the  
Hebrew words  
bohu and tohu***

## **'Waste and Void'**

*In the beginning of God's preparing the heavens and the earth, the earth existed waste and void, and darkness on the face of the deep and the Spirit of God fluttering on the face of the waters.*

This above sentence is taken from Young's Literal Bible with some slight alteration to remove Robert Young's literalisation of the Hebrew tense that I might express it in idiomatic English. And I have removed his italics as I think they are not, grammatically, necessary.

I have to disagree with the word 'preparing' - I can see no evidence for it. *Bara* appears to me to be a word that conveys 'creatively made'. *Bar*, the root, is son, or clear, or - significantly - choice. *Barak* is bless. *Barar* is - again - choice or polished. *Barah* is to choose or to eat. Thus, *bara*, conveys to myself a matter of something that is blessed, choice, desirable in the context of partaking of it - 'eating'; something that is as a son, that is, a delight; something that is 'polished' or 'clear'.

It is something that is desirable, that is finished off well, that has been satisfyingly completed.

And I would further adjust Robert Young's literalisation of the Hebrew tense by saying, in common with the AV and with J N Darby: In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth - although the AV translates the plural *shamayim*, heavens, as a singular, for some reason. As to the Spirit of God, 'moved' is insufficient for the word *rachaph* ; 'hovering', J N Darby, or 'fluttering', Robert Young, is correct, in my view, its only other two occurrences being, Deuteronomy 32:11, as an eagle fluttereth over her young; and, Jeremiah 23:9, all my bones shake.

Thereafter, the earth existed *tohu* and *bohu*, says the original. I am quoting just the words themselves and, for simplicity, not inflecting them.

Twenty times is *tohu* used in the Hebrew scripture, there being a variety of English words attached to it in the AV. It appears to me, by its very usage in those twenty times, that *tohu* is the opposite of *tohar*, which only occurs three times. Now, *tohar* means glory, as in Psalm 89:44, in relation to the throne and the kingdom of David being made to cease and being cast off. The context, in this particular context of an earthly kingdom, albeit the Divinely appointed earthly kingdom of Israel, therefore - significantly - implies the *absence* of glory; the non presence of *tohar*. It is a definitive contrast.

*Tohar* is also used by Moses to describe what was seen by himself, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu - representing priesthood and sonship; and by the seventy elders of Israel - representing perfect and complete witness of testimony, a coherence of assembly such as John saw in apocalyptic revelation gathered around the throne. What was observed was the God of Israel. And what was observed was the body of heaven in clearness, *tohar*.

'Body of heaven' conveys to myself something that I have observed in daylight; that the deeper, azure, blue of the sky directly above, being more substantial than the lighter, turquoise, blue of the sky lower by the horizon suggests to my eye that there is a dimension to the blueness of sky above me. There is body to the blueness - a depth of dimension, suggested by the differing depths of atmosphere and the coloration thus produced.

And what is produced by this phenomenon is glorious. Out of a clear blue sky, there is more than just thin blueness; there is a glory to it. What the four and the seventy saw was clear, pure, unspoilt and perfect - yet was neither thin, nor empty, nor vapid : there was dimension and depth. There was glory.

Upon the nobles of the children of Israel, he laid not his hands. Because of an altar and because of burnt offerings and peace

offerings; because of sprinkled blood - Exodus 24:4, 5, 6 and 8.

Also, they saw God and did eat and drink - a different revelation than Moses being without, Exodus 34:28, for forty days and forty nights as the law was delivered, in an agreement of covenant, to the nation of Israel. There is nothing to eat or drink under that covenant.

Lastly, and once more significantly - again, a matter of definitive contrast - *tohar* is used, in a couplet, which I consider as one place, in Leviticus, 12:4 & 6, in relation to the purifying of a woman who has born either a man child or a maid child. Childbirth under the old covenant necessitates purification for, under law - as all of the first man's progeny, inevitably, are - the event produces yet more humanity that, being conceived in sin, Psalm 51:5, is born into a race that is, by inherited transgression, in contradiction to the Creator's purpose.

Therefore, once purified, *tohar*, the opposite state exists in the woman to *tohu*.

Thus for *tohar* in explanation of its opposite, *tohu* : the heavens and the earth were *tohu*, the *opposite* of glory and the *negative* of a purified state and were like the *desolation* of Israel after the cutting off of the throne and the kingdom which had been David's.

Then, as to *bohu*, *bohen* is the great toe or the thumb; *bohar* is a freckled spot and *bohu* occurs again in Isaiah 34:11 - the 'stones of emptiness', a brilliant piece of translation, in my view. *Bohu* is used but twice more, by Moses, Genesis 1:2, and by Jeremiah, 4:23, in the identical expression - in English AV translation - 'waste and void'.

*Bohu*, to my mind, is something that stands out. It is different to its surroundings, the fingers or toes, but is of the same kind. The stones stand out as part of the landscape, yet they are still part of it; for their very existence is a stark advertisement of the whole

character of the landscape. The freckled spot is a kind of skin, but stands out from the skin, in the same kind of way. There is something about an object that draws attention to it, though it be not distinctive, in itself.

Thus, the background is of the progress of flesh - the great toe; the work of the flesh - the thumb; and the earthly environment of the flesh - the landscape. And, finally - and significantly fourthly; north, south, east and west - the wider aspect of the environment of the flesh - the heavens and the earth of creation.

*Tohu* and *bohu*, therefore, is, to me, a matter of the absence of glory that, by a distinct absence, draws attention to itself. The earth was inglorious - and distinctly so.

For the whole creation *ought* to be glorious.

- 1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth;
- 2 and the earth was *tohu* and *bohu* . . .

. . . . the earth lacked glory - and it was obvious.

There is a lack, that is significant.

There is an emptiness, that cries out.

There is an incompleteness that must - it must - be addressed.

It cannot be hid.

It cannot be ignored.

It calls out to be remedied.

## ***The Expression of the Word***

All things were made by him :

And, without him, was not anything made, that was made.

He who was from the beginning; he who - before anything was created - was, already, himself, the sum and the essence of all that was sensible, reasonable, cogent and communicable : he made all things.

And without he who was that sum and essence, was not made anything. That is, God who created - created by him. In one Spirit, did God, by him who is The Word, create.

Perfect agreement, in one Spirit. Absolute cooperation. Pureness of purpose. Total alignment of intention.

Thus, all that was made, expressed - in its very existence - him who is The Word. By his exertion of power and by God's coincident expression of power.

That is *why* each thing exists. It exists as an expression of Him who personifies what is reasonable, what is sensible, what is worthy of communication.

And that is *how* each thing exists. It exists as a result of the dual exertion by God and by him who is The Word - a cooperation of divine intelligence in absolute agreement of purpose and intention.

All things : nothing was made, other than was *thus* made.

Thus it was, in the beginning.

It was all - all - good.

It was good, because it expressed . . . . him.

All of it expressed, in different ways and in several aspects . . . . him. It was all an intelligent and organised and structured expression of The Word.

God expressed his person and his nature and his being - by means of The Word - in an intelligent and organised and structured execution that presented, through the entire universe and throughout the whole of the earth and through all that it contained - God expressed himself unto his own glory.

The very structure of matter; the very way in which matter exists; the way in which matter and energy behave; everything. It

is all of it, every atom of it, a glorious expression of the Creator.

Stunning, staggering, breathtaking.

Every single particle.

Every living cell.

Each individual item of it; every aspect of every single item; and the whole organised sum of it all, together. Everything.

Then what of the state of *tohu* and *bohu* ?

Why is there this statement, immediately after the statement of the fact of created heavens and earth ?

I believe that this account of creation, that occurs first and that is a matter of *Elohim* - Deity, as such, in Person (rather than *Jehovah Elohim* : Deity as viewed in Divine Nature, through the first covenant, without further revelation) - needs careful consideration for it is a very spiritual view of Creation.

I believe it is a view of Creation as it is in its essence. It is by no means a technical description; nor is it the place for so-called "creationists" to seek ammunition or weaponry in order to act as self-appointed generals in verbal battles in the public domain against false science. That is not its purpose.

It is a deeply spiritual view of what Creation is, in its essence.

It views the consequences of Creation, as such, and views the response of Deity to those consequences.

That is my own understanding of this most spiritual passage.

Then what of *tohu* and *bohu* ?

The Creation, as such, in its bare state, is lacking. It is both *tohu* - inglorious - and *bohu* - markedly so.

As such, there is a deep which is obscure. Darkness is upon its face, such that there can be no penetration of its volume. It is utterly obscure. Nothing inside it can be known; or experienced. Darkness, on the face of it, hides the whole of it from being perceived.

This, I believe, is true of the entire First Creation, as such. Seen in its entirety; viewed even in the utmost reaches of its potential - it is, as created, but *tohu* and *bohu*.

There are waters, but they offer no rest to the Spirit of God. The Spirit hovers above.

It is impossible not to think of the dove going out from the ark in the days of Noah; going out and returning. It is impossible not to think of the bodily manifestation of the Spirit descending on the baptised Jesus as he came up from the waters of Jordan. Only when an olive branch was found, could the dove rest its foot on the earth : only when there was a man to till the ground, could the Spirit descend from heaven upon the Son of man.

Hovering, I am informed, requires hugely more effort and skill from a bird than does either gliding or flying. Birds hover only briefly. Some - such as humming birds or kestrels - have significant adaptation and specialisation in order for them to do so. The impression I receive from 'hovering' or 'fluttering' is of distress - an anxiety to land, but the reluctance to do so.

A darkened depth and unstable waters.  
This, the result of Creation.

Inglorious - and markedly so.

It is in this sense that I understand the words of Isaiah in 45:7, I form the light, and create darkness : I make peace and create evil. In forming the Creation, as such, there would be a consequence. In everlasting, this was known. In the counsels of God, there was unanimous agreement, nonetheless, to proceed and unanimous agreement as to the response required. It would necessitate redemption. It would require an Everlasting Testament. It would require the death of the Testator of that Testament.

It would require suffering, and death, and bloodshed. All was

foreknown. And all was unanimously agreed upon, in counsel, by *The Elohim* - God, himself, in Person.

The response to *tohu* and *bohu* ? The response to a dark, unknowable depth and to unstable waters ?

And God said . . . . Let Light be. . . . .And Light was.

This is the literal rendering of Genesis 1:3 as given by Robert Young; save that I have re-rendered an idiomatic past tense 'was' in place of Robert Young's literalised 'is'. My own position on this is that English idiomatically states a past tense in narrative. Some narrators attempt to use a continuous present for various effect - 'So I go to the park and I walk the dog and I see a squirrel and the dog runs after the squirrel and I never see it again', but it is not colloquial English as English is commonly spoken.

The Hebrew appears to me - from what I read in Robert Young's extensive prefaces to his Literal Bible - to express a narrative from the viewpoint of the narrator as if the narrator were viewing the events he is describing. This is understandable for that is what we do when recounting past facts - we run them through our imagination and report what we are seeing in our mind's eye.

But English does not do this and I feel it is unhelpful to force this upon an English translation, albeit that it is useful to have the extreme literal version to study.

Thus . . . . God expressed himself in Word, the first of his words that are, thus, recorded in scripture.

And God said . . . . Let light be. . . . .And Light was.

## ***The Provision of Light***

Light is a mystery; it defies all attempts at analysis.

Einstein famously said that, after what he called 'brooding' over the subject for much of his life, he was no nearer understanding what a quanta of light was than at the beginning of his cogitations. Modern day physicists have no such honesty and make many claims which, once they are narrowly examined, expose the fact that they, too, are as confounded as their mentor.

Interfere with it, and light seems to react by being other than it really is, to the frustration of scientists who refuse to receive the basic truth that, as Peter has already informed the world, The things that are made are made of things which do not appear.

Colour is a feature, not of objects that are illuminated, but is a feature of light itself.

The colour of an object depends on what it absorbs or reflects. Its structure determines what exact wavelengths of energy will be received into it and what wavelengths will be emitted from it. The colour is from the light, not the object. Light carries all the colours of the rainbow, invisibly, until it lands upon the object. Then, the magic of colour is displayed in the process of illumination.

Light illumines; nothing else can.

Regarding vision only - other senses excluded - without light, an object is totally obscure. We know not its shape. We know not its structure. We know not its composition. We know not that an object is there at all, without light.

But if light is there, all is revealed.

God is Light and in him is no darkness at all, I John 1:5. This then is the message that we have heard of him and declare unto you, says John.

Let Light be. And Light was.

To me, the words imply something. If I express the words thus :

Let Light be [here]; then there is, hidden in the wording, the implication that Light already exists . . . elsewhere. Then let it be here also - is my impression of what is implied.

And, I stress again, this is a spiritual view of Creation, as such. Creation - as first created - was *tohu* and *bohu*. There was a darkness, deeply. There was no place for the Spirit to rest. Then let Light be [here also].

And the Light in the darkness appears, is the literal rendering from John 1:5 in the EGNT. And the darkness it apprehends not.

Let Light be [here].  
And the Light in the darkness appears.  
To me, it as though Light was, already.  
It appears, from somewhere else.  
And then it is.

Let light be. And Light is.

From outside of Creation, comes he. From incomprehensible and invisible Deity, he appears - within Creation. That was the true Light which, coming into the world, lighteth every man; literal from EGNT.

And the darkness it apprehends not, John 1:5.

And saw God *that same* light - that it was good, Genesis 1:4.

Here, I have added something to Genesis 1:4 - in italics - that is missing from the English translation. There is a small Hebrew word, *et*, between the words 'God' and 'light' which the learned tell me is a mere grammatical emphasis informing the reader of the fact that an accusative case is approaching. I find this so implausible that I cannot receive it. What is certainly the case is that, in nine places in Genesis 1 - 1:1, 1:4, 1:7, 1:16, 1:16, 1:23, 1:25, 1:27 - the *et* word is present and it appears to me to be emphasising something, certainly. But I am convinced by all that is sensible that Moses is not adding a word to his text which

merely indicates a grammatical technicality.

Man shall not live by bread alone, saith Jesus, but by every word - every word - that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Like this little *et* word . . . .

Heavens; good light; firmament (the place of luminaries); the two luminaries; the governance of the luminaries; creatures of the waters; fruitfulness and multiplication of the creatures of the waters; beasts of the earth; man, in the image of God.

Nine places are emphasised and these nine places, in their order, draw attention to heavens, light, water-creatures, earth beasts and man in the image of God. All of this is pregnant with spirituality - the revelation of God's purpose, expressed in Creation, but, all of it, a spiritual expression of God's everlasting purpose in the Son of his love, his only begotten.

In this context, heavens mean something; luminaries convey truth; creatures in waters have a significance; beasts of earth have another significance; and man appears - but which humanity is being referred to. Adam ? Or is it not the second man, the Lord from heaven, the quickening spirit, raised from the dead, a new humanity in whom many form one body ?

What I understand by Moses' emphasis in this second place of emphasis, Genesis 1:4, is that God saw the *new* light to be good. He emphasises, I believe, the presence of *this* light. And not the 'light' that was already there, that is to say, the darkness. For darkness can be viewed - and is so viewed in scripture - as a form of light.

Seeing *this* Light - which had appeared - to be good, God immediately separated it from the darkness.

And so was formed Day and Night.

For the Light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not, John 1:5.

God had, thus, provided an environment of Light and Day for

men; that was separate from Darkness and Night. It was his provision.

For there are some who are not in darkness, I Thessalonians 5:5. They are children of light, and the children of the day : not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore they sleep not, as do others; but they watch and are sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But those who are of the day are exhorted to be sober, to put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

For God hath not appointed them to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Upon them is risen the Sun of righteousness with healing in his wings, Malachi 4:2, and they shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall. They shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be as ashes under the soles of their feet in the day that the Lord does this.

Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, saith the Lord, which I commanded unto him in Horeb, with the statutes and judgments.

Remember.

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers lest I come and smite the earth with a curse, Malachi 4:5,6.

Elijah is promised, by the Lord, in the last sentence of the Hebrew scriptures, after which there was four hundred years of waiting, while such as Zacharias and Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna, Joseph and Mary kept the ordinances, submitted to the first covenant, remained faithful to that which had been, thus far,

revealed and waited, patiently.

Then, after so long a time, there appeared Gabriel, the angel, standing on the right side of the altar of incense, as the people prayed without at the time of incense and as Zacharias executed the priest's office, as was the custom, and his lot was to burn incense.

Thus was announced the fulfilment of the ancient prophecies of Malachi, and of Isaiah.

Thus, did Zacharias add his own prophecy to theirs : Through the tender mercy of God, Luke 1:78, hath the dayspring from on high visited us, to give light to them that once sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death; to guide their feet into the way of peace.

And one is sent, Luke 1:76, the prophet of the Highest, who goes before the face of the Lord, to prepare his ways - to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the unburdening of their sins.

Thus was there a man sent from God, whose name was John, John 1:6. The same came for a witness to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but that he might witness concerning the Light.

That was the True Light, which, coming into the world, lightens every man, John 1:9, literal from EGNT.

Thus did God send Light into the world.

And thus did he separate Light from Darkness.

And thus did he make Day and Night.

Thus does Mark state in the opening words of his book, 'The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;'

The beginning ?

The beginning of this Gospel is as he states it : As it is written in

the prophets, Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

By this witness shall Light appear.  
Else, one remains in darkness.

One remains in a darkness of Night ruled over by a cold, stark luminary whose dark light shines above, testifying to a Light yet to come and a Day yet to dawn. For the law is but a schoolmaster to lead unto Christ : it is not, and cannot be, a way of life.

John writes to brethren, I John 2:7 and writes no new commandment, but an old commandment which they had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word they had heard from the beginning. They had not heard it from the beginning, themselves. But the commandment, itself, was from the beginning.

John wrote to the fathers, I John 2:13, because they had known him from the beginning. Again, that is to say, *he* was from the beginning.

This is the message, I John 1:5, that is heard of him, that God is Light and in him is no darkness at all. This is the *epaggelia* - the within message. This is that which is first perceived.

And this is the message that is heard from the beginning, I John 3:11, that we should love one another.

This is the *aggelia* message. This is the message from the beginning.

For God is Love.

And this message was from the beginning.

But what is first perceived in spiritual experience, is that God is Light and in him is no darkness at all.

And this is his commandment, I John 3:23, That we should

believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as he gave us commandment.

These are the commandments to children of the light and to children of the day, those who are called, the sons of God, I John 3:1. For God is Light and these are the children of Light.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth also him that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. I John 5 1-3.

Thus, Light is come.

And Light is separated from darkness.

Then there is Day.

And then, there are waters beneath . . . . and waters above.

For the Sun of Righteousness is risen. And, risen with him, is a great multitude whom no man can number. They are seated in heavenly places, with Christ. They are before the throne and their voice is as the sound of many waters, Revelation 19:6.