

THE STORY OF CREATION

which is by nature conservative, and just as of old the holy days began at evening, so the custom remained and was embodied in the laws of the Bible. The sacrificial regulations, which connect the night with the preceding day, offer no difficulty to our hypothesis. On the contrary, they tally with our explanation, for all the laws relating to the sacrifices were framed to accord specifically with the conditions obtaining in the Land of Canaan.

At a later period, when the whole of Jewish life was concentrated in the sphere of religion, the mode of reckoning appertaining to the Sabbath and festivals once again became norm for civil affairs, too. Nevertheless, traces of the former civil practice are still to be discerned in such Talmudic expressions as 'the night after the thirteenth which is the evening preceding the fourteenth' (B. Berakhoth 4a), and in some penitential hymns for the evening of the Day of Atonement, which refer to the Day of Atonement as *tomorrow* (e.g. the hymn ירצה עם צדיקים *Yirze 'am 'ebhyōn* — 'May He regard the needy people with favour' by Isaac ibn Gi'at).

One Day] The use here of the *cardinal* instead of the *ordinal* number, as for the other days, is to be explained, with Nahmanides [Rabbi Moses son of Nahman], as follows: 'First implies precedence over another in number or grading, when both are in existence', but in our case there was only *one day*, for the second had not yet been created. In the same way we may explain expressions like באחד לחודש *be'ehādḥ laḥōdheš* [literally, 'on one of the month', that is, on the first of the month] and באחד בשבת *be'ehādḥ bešabbāth* ['on one of the week', that is, on the first day of the week]; see Gesenius — Buhl, *Hebr. und aram. Handwörterbuch über das AT*, s.v. אחד *'ehādḥ*. But verses like ii 11, *The name of the first* [literally, 'one'] *is Pishon*, compel us to extend the rule of Nahmanides and to state that even when all the objects enumerated together exist at the same time, we are able, momentarily, to pay attention only to the first of them, and must therefore designate it *one*.

SECOND PARAGRAPH

THE STORY OF THE SECOND DAY

6. *And God said,*
'Let there be a firmament / in the midst of the waters,
and let it serve as a means of separating / the waters from the waters.'
7. *And God made the firmament / and separated the waters / which were under the firmament from the waters / which were above the firmament.*
And it was so.
8. *And God called / the firmament Heaven.*
And there was evening and there was morning, / a second day.

6. *Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters.*] In the midst of the waters of the deep, which constituted the upper stratum of the original amorphous matter, there was to be formed a *firmament* [רָקִיעַ *rāqīa'*]. The root of the word is the same as that of וַיִּרְקְעוּ *wayeragge'u* ['and they did hammer out'] in Exod. xxxix 3: *And they did hammer out gold leaf*; the term signifies a kind of horizontal area, extending through the very heart of the mass of water and cleaving it into two layers, one above the other — the upper and lower layers of water.

How the space between heaven and earth was formed we are not told here explicitly; nor are the attempts of the commentators to elucidate the matter satisfactory (see my remarks on this subject in my aforementioned article in *Annuario*, p. 24, note 1). To me it seems that the sense of the passage is to be explained in the light of the statement in v. 8: *And God called the firmament Heaven*, that is, this firmament is none other than what we designate *heaven*. From this we may infer that immediately after its formation, the firmament occupied of its own accord the place appointed for it by the will of God, which is the site of the heavens as we know it. Thus as soon as the firmament was established in the midst of the layer of water, it began to rise in the middle, arching like a vault and in the course of its upward expansion it lifted at the same time the upper waters resting on top of it. This marked a considerable advance in the marshalling of the components of the universe

And there was evening and there was morning, one day] When day-time had passed, the period allotted to darkness returned (and there was evening), and when night-time came to an end, the light held sway a second time (and there was morning), and this completed the first calendar day (one day), which had begun *with the creation of light*.

This method of reckoning the day [i.e. a day and a night] from sunrise appears to be at variance with the accepted Israelite practice of connecting the day-time with the preceding night, that is, the custom of regarding sunset as the starting-point of the day. In order to remove this inconsistency, Jewish exegetes, both medieval and modern (among the latter, Hoffman and Jacob), sought to place forced and improbable interpretations on the words, *and there was evening and there was morning*. Only a few, like Rashbam [Rabbi Samuel son of Meir], gave the correct explanation of the verse, which Ibn Ezra, nevertheless, endeavoured to refute by composing his *Sabbath Letter*.

Present-day scholars are of the opinion either that our section reflects an old usage that subsequently fell into desuetude (so, for instance, Dillmann and Holzinger), or that the two methods of reckoning the day were used concurrently in different circles (so, for example, Gunkel and, among Jewish exegetes, Bornstein, see *התקופה Hatkufa*, vi, pp. 302-311). But the verse remains difficult, even for those who accept the documentary hypothesis, since the account of creation and the laws of the Pentateuch are attributed by them to P [Priestly Code], and it is unthinkable that this source should mention at the beginning a detail that conflicts with the statutes recorded in subsequent sections of the document.

It would appear, therefore, that the solution to the problem must be sought in another direction. An examination of the narrative passages of the Bible makes it evident that whenever clear reference is made to the relationship between a given day and the next, it is precisely sunrise that is accounted the beginning of the second day. For example: *They made their father drink wine that night . . . and ON THE NEXT DAY*, etc. (xix 33-34). Similarly: *When he arose early NEXT MORNING* (Jud. vi 38); *and ON THE MORROW the people rose early* (ibid. xxi 4); *If you do not save your life tonight, TOMORROW you will be killed*. (I Sam. xix 11); *and TOMORROW*

you and your sons shall be with me (ibid. xxviii 19). Consonant with this tradition is the use of the expressions: *בַּיּוֹם bayyôm* ['the day' = *today*], *הַלַּיְלָה hallaylā* ['the night' = *tonight*], *שֶׁמֶשׁ 'eme* ['yesterday' = *last night*].

Nor is this all. If we consider the Scriptural sections dealing with the ritual laws, particularly those that prescribe that the observance of Israel's holy days must begin in the evening, we see clearly that these passages corroborate, in their method of reckoning the dates, the evidence of the narrative portions. In Exod. xii 18, it is stated: *In the first month, on the FOURTEENTH day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread*. It is on the evening preceding the fifteenth day that the obligation of eating unleavened bread comes into force, yet that evening is referred to as the *fourteenth*. So, too, in Lev. xxiii 32, with regard to the Day of Atonement, it is enjoined: *and you shall afflict yourselves on the NINTH day of the month beginning at evening, from evening to evening shall you keep your Sabbath*; thus the evening before the tenth is called *the ninth of the month*.

It will thus be seen that throughout the Bible there obtains only one system of *computing time*: the day is considered to begin in the morning; but in regard to the festivals and appointed times, the Torah ordains that they shall be observed also on the night of the preceding day. This point is explicitly emphasized whenever a certain precept has to be observed particularly at *night*, like the eating of unleavened bread on the night of Passover and fasting on the evening of the Day of Atonement. In the case of the Sabbath and the other festival days, however, there was no need to stress that work was prohibited on the night preceding, since agricultural tasks (and it is specifically these that the Torah has in mind) are performed only by day. There is no discrepancy, therefore, in our verse at all.

The underlying reason of the particular rule applying to the incidence of festivals and appointed times may be explained thus: the method of counting the day from the evening, which is customary among nomads, was the older usage; but when in civil life a new system came into force, which regarded sunrise as the commencement of the day in accordance with the conditions prevailing in the Land of Canaan, the change did not affect the religious tradition,