

PAR-SHA 2

EXPOSITION [1:6-8]

6. E-LO-HIM SAID: BECOME A RANGE WITHIN THE WATERS
AND IT (IS TO) BE A DIVIDER BETWEEN (ONE BODY OF) WATER AND OTHERS.

רָקִיעַ RA-QEE-YA (RANGE): “Firmament/dome” reflect ancient beliefs that the heavenly bodies are embedded in a celestial vault (*a view erroneously ascribed to the Israelites due to some prophetic imagery*); others use “space/expanse”. RA-QEE-YA is something “beaten/stretched” but retaining contiguity (cf. NUMBERS 17:3; EZEKIEL 1:22; JOB 37:18) so it could be a מַבְדִּיל MABH-DIL (DIVIDER) between aqueous regions.

7. E-LO-HIM MADE THE RANGE AND (HE) DIVIDED
BETWEEN THE WATER UNDER THE RANGE AND THE WATER ABOVE – AND IT BECAME AS IT IS.

וַיַּעַשׂ VA-YA-AHSS (AND [HE] MADE): An עָשָׂה OH-SEH “makes” directly (cf. GENESIS 18:17; EXODUS 18:17; DEUTERONOMY 21:12); what is “made” is not determined by the necessary tasks but by what is made becoming functional (cf. GENESIS 27:17; DEUTERONOMY 21:12; ESTHER 1:9). OH-SEH differs from בִּוְרָא BOH-REH (CREATE); יַחַד Y-H-W-H declared אֶעֱשֶׂה אֲנִי אֶעֱשֶׂה EH-EH-SEH NIPH-LA-OHTH (I WILL MAKE WONDERS - EXODUS 34:10) which were never נִבְרָא NIBH-R'OO (CREATED). The first verb is active first- person future; the second past passive. What He will perform cannot be “created” by forces or human actions. Only He can “make wonders”. The PAR-SHA opened with His utterance but He “made” [finished] the RA-QEE-YA.

וַיְהִי־כֵן VA-Y'HEE KHEIN (AND IT BECAME AS IT IS): Usually translated “and it was so/and it became thus”, neither is accurate (see v. 3 - VA-Y'HEE). KEIN (KHEIN here for syntactic reasons) is “correct/upright/congruent” (cf. EXODUS 10:14; NUMBERS 9:16; KINGS I 6:26). Two-consonant words do not normally lend themselves to etymological analysis (see Introduction); KEIN is an exception due to our familiarity with the gamut of its usage. It is most likely KA-HEIN (“As these”), which became “It is as you see” or simply “Yes”. In this chapter, VA-Y'HEE KHEIN does not mean things materialized the way He ordained [it would not occur otherwise to the Israelites] but became as you now see them. What follows in the text refers to subsequent developments; what had “become” was completed before the next stage began.

8. E-LO-HIM CALLED TO THE RANGE (TO BE) HEAVEN
IT BECAME A MIXTURE AND (THEN) BECAME AN EMERGENCE – A SECOND DAY

וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְרָקִיעַ שָׁמַיִם VA-YI-Q'RA E-LO-HIM LA-RA-QEE-YA SHA-MA-YIM (AND E-LO-HIM CALLED TO THE RANGE [TO BE] HEAVEN): The RA-QEE-YA was transformed into the “heaven” (v. 1). {The heavens “declare His honor” (PSALMS 19:1 [2 in the Hebrew]) but the RA-QEE-YA relates what “His hands made”.} A precocious youngster reading verses 14-19 may wonder what those grayish things that seem close and move slowly are - why are they not in that PAR-SHA that tells of the heavenly bodies? Now he will know the clouds introduced on the second day.

יּוֹם שֵׁנִי YOHM SHEI-NEE (A SECOND DAY): “A second day” - not because it followed the first [it is not יּוֹם הַשֵּׁנִי YOHM HA-SHEI-NEE - the second day]; it was the next layer in the habitation-building strata.

DECOMPRESSED RECAPITULATION

E-LO-HIM directed a range to divide terrestrial waters from those above, like the clouds. Not relying on natural processes, He made the atmosphere, calling on it to be part of heaven.

The RA-QEE-YA hosts the earth's climate system and air layer through which water, rising from earth, precipitates back to irrigate land and replenish rivers, lakes and aquifers. Due to its complexity and the delicate mechanisms needed to integrate a global network, E-LO-HIM did not just “speak” but “made”. This explains why טוֹב TOHBH (GOOD) is not mentioned in this PAR-SHA. His evaluation was unnecessary - He steered the entire process.