

## Creation Week: Day Four

*Genesis 1:14-19*

<sup>14</sup> And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, <sup>15</sup> and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. <sup>16</sup> And God made the two great lights – the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night – and the stars. <sup>17</sup> And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, <sup>18</sup> to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

On each day of the creation week there is a general pattern which is followed in the recounting of the day’s activities which may be summarized in three words: commandment, fulfillment, and assessment. First, God gives the command for something to “be”. Then it is brought into existence. Finally it is pronounced “good.”

We should note that in the passage before us the divine fiat and its fulfillment are arranged in a literary structure known as a chiasm. This is a structural device in which concepts or ideas are arranged in a special symmetrical relationship, often for the sake of emphasis.

### Chiastic Structure of 1:14-19

And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens

A<sup>1</sup> to separate the day from the night.

B<sup>1</sup> And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years,

C<sup>1</sup> and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.”

And God made the two great lights – the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night – and the stars. <sup>17</sup> And God set them in the expanse of the heavens

C<sup>2</sup> to give light on the earth,

B<sup>2</sup> to rule over the day and over the night

A<sup>2</sup> to separate the light from the darkness.

And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

This type of literary device is used very frequently throughout the Bible, especially in the Old Testament.

We have noted before the correspondence between the creative acts of God performed on the first three days and those performed on the last three days.

<u>DAY</u>	<u>DAY</u>
1 – Light	4 – Sun, moon, and stars
2 – Sea and sky	5 – Fish and fowl
3 – Earth and plants	6 – Land animals and man

(1:14) *And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens..."* God had created light itself on day one. Now he creates luminaries to carry the light. Moses is speaking, of course, about the sun, moon, and stars.

In addition to the obvious purpose of giving light to the earth, both by day and by night, the heavenly bodies are also designed by God to mark the passage of time: days and seasons and years. All nations have looked to astral phenomena to guide them in the agricultural year, as well as in other endeavors.

(Read marked passages from Hesiod's *Works and Days*, pp. 71-79)

It was perhaps *because* of this correlation between the movement of the stars and the agricultural cycle that men began to think that the heavenly bodies themselves had divine powers and actually *caused* the cyclical events of the agricultural year. Thus what God intended to be a help and blessing to man in his labor, man turned into a foundation for idolatry. In fact, in other ancient accounts of creation, the heavenly bodies are often deified.

The Babylonian poem presents the luminaries and stars to as the "likeness" ...of the gods, and to a certain extent identifies them with the gods, endowing them with personality and mind and will. The Torah, on the contrary, depicts them as material entities, created by the word of the One God, and wholly devoid of personality, mind or will. (Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, vol. 1, p. 43)

The Torah uses guarded language. The sun and moon are not even named in this passage.

The sun and moon are...not named, but referred to only as *the great light* and *the lesser light*. This may be an implicit polemic against the worship of astral bodies. (Jewish Study Bible)

Despite the carefully guarded language, the people of Israel, at different times in their history, were prone to worship the heavenly bodies, as their pagan neighbors did (Deut. 4:19; Job 31:26-28; 2 Ki. 17:16; 21:3; 23:5; Jer. 8:2; Ezek. 8:16).

There are five planets visible to the naked eye (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn). And while the vast majority of the heavenly bodies remain fixed in their positions relative to one another, these planets, together with the sun and moon, appear to move about from place to place (relative to the stars). This is why these planets are referred to in Jude (as elsewhere in ancient literature) as “wandering stars” (Jude 13). It is quite likely that the menorah in the tabernacle was intended to represent these seven heavenly bodies.



The pagans thought of them as living objects, invested with divine powers. This is reflected in the fact that they were each named after a god.

English names	Latin names	Greek names	Babylonian names
Sun	Sol	Helios	Shamash
Moon	Luna	Selene	Nanna
Mercury	Mercurius	Hermes	Nabu
Venus	Venus	Aphrodite	Ishtar
Mars	Mars	Ares	Nergal
Jupiter	Jupiter	Zeus	Marduk
Saturn	Saturnus	Kronos	Ninurta

One of the ways in which these gods were honored was by naming the days of the week after them. This appears to have been done first by the Greeks. The Romans imitated the practice. Subsequently, the Germanic peoples substituted their own

deities for some of the Roman ones, and their substitutions have become current throughout the western world.

Day of the week	Pagan god	Explanation
Sunday	Sun	
Monday	Moon	
Tuesday	Tiw	Tiw, the Germanic god of war
Wednesday	Woden	Woden, the supreme Germanic god
Thursday	Thor	Thor, the Germanic god of thunder
Friday	Frigg	Frigg, wife of Woden and foremost of Germanic goddesses
Saturday	Saturn	

### *Israel's Festive Calendar*

Not only does the agricultural year correspond to the movement of the heavenly bodies, so too does Israel's festive calendar. This is surely included in what God intended when he gave the heavenly bodies "for signs and for seasons, and for days and years" (1:14).

The Jews, like most ancient peoples, used a calendar based on the cycles of the moon, and even though we have long since gone to a solar calendar, we still use the term "month" (moon + th).