

MICRO TOPIC 1.2.1

# Creation 'day' is longer than 24 hours



This study examines how the Hebrew word 'yom' (translated 'day' in English) is used in the Bible creation story. The Genesis account itself helps us understand how we should understand that term of time measurement.

Historically, most Christians have believed that the entire universe was created in six literal days in approximately 4000 BC, but only because 'yom' has been translated as 'day' in English

versions of the Bible. This is not an incorrect translation, but **yom**, like **day**, its English equivalent, can have two meanings: (1) 24 hours or (2) long indefinite period of time.

The Bible is its own best interpreter. As much as possible, other portions of the Bible – and particularly surrounding portions – should interpret the meaning of any word that is ambiguous. A rule of translation is that if a word has two or more meanings, select the one that is most in accord with surrounding passages and common knowledge.

Most Christians have never carefully studied Genesis 1 and 2. They just believe without question what they have been told by tradition for centuries – since the King James Bible in 1611 and before – that the whole universe was created in six 'days' (*presumably* calendar days).

**In this study we see that the Bible DOES NOT COMPEL a six-day interpretation.** One person studying the Bible can conclude that God created the universe in six 24-hour periods. Another person studying the Bible can conclude that God created the universe over billions of years.

The Bible's description of creation is broad enough to accommodate both interpretations. These are just differences in method and timing; the important thing is that **GOD DID IT!**

This site takes the view that God created the universe according to a master plan in stages over a **very long period of time**. This view is preferable **because it is substantiated by modern science**.

# NOTES



## DEEP BIBLE STUDY

### Genesis Chapters 1 and 2

*It's all about 'yom'*

The Hebrew word for 'day' in the Genesis account is 'yom,' which like the english word 'day,' usually means a **24 hour period** but can also mean a **long indefinite period**, like we say **this is the day of social media** (Pronounced YOME like HOME )

In ancient Hebrew usage, 'yom' can mean either a 24-hour day or an indefinite time period unless a number is associated with it.

## TEN REASONS

why creation 'day' is longer than 24 hours

### > REASON 1. 'Evening' and 'morning' means start and finish

**GENESIS 1: 5, 8, 13, 19, 23 and 31.** In the modern world, a 24-hour day is measured from sunrise to sunrise, but in ancient Israel a day was measured from sunset to sunset. The phrase '**And there was evening**' means the start of something. Used together with the phrase '**and there was morning**' means that it was completed.

In ancient Hebrew, these phrases were the markers for the **beginning of something** and the **completion of something**; therefore, **day** ('yom') does not necessarily mean a 24-hour time period.

### > REASON 2. Takes longer than 24 hours to produce vegetation

**GENESIS 1:11-12.** At beginning of Day 3, God said, 'Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And it was so. **The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the third day.**'

It takes more than 24 hours for land to produce vegetation and bear fruit; therefore, **day** ('yom') as used here is more than 24 hours.

### > REASON 3. No 24-hour measurement until Day 4

**GENESIS 1:14-19.** The phrase 'And there was evening, and there was morning – the [number] day' is the closing statement for Days 1, 2 and 3. But the sun didn't come (accretion and visibility) until Day 4, for purpose of '**signs and seasons, and for days and years.**'

The concept of a 24-hour day came AFTER **yom** time was already used in previous verses to express events prior to Day 4, the day the sun was 'made' (accretion, core formation; gigantic rock chunks, dust and gas pulled together by gravity). We now know from science that the sun and earth were shaped into their present forms about 4.5 billion years ago. It took a long time to develop a cohesive core, constant gravitation and stable orbits. There was already light (through dense cloud cover) but in this day the sun was made visible and reliable for purposes of measuring 'days and years;' therefore, calendar measurement (24-hour days) did not even exist for the first three days.

### > REASON 4. Seventh Day still open and longer than 24 hours

**GENESIS 2:2.** The phrase 'And there was evening, and there was morning – the [number] day' is the closing statement for each of the six days of creation

but not for the seventh day of rest (pause in new creations).

The **seventh day is still open** because the closing statement is not used; therefore, since more than 24 hours have already passed, **day** ('yom') as used here is more than 24 hours.

### > REASON 5. Day is used as both singular and plural

**GENESIS 2.4\*.** This verse says, 'This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, **in the day the Lord God made earth and heaven.**' The previous chapter says God made earth and heaven in six separate **days**.

As a closing statement, this verse uses the word **day** (singular) to express everything that happened in the preceding six days (plural). **Day** ('yom') in this verse means the SUM of six **days**; therefore, **day** means an indefinite period of time, more than 24 hours.

### > REASON 6. Too much animal reproduction for 24 hours

**GENESIS 1:24 and 2:19.** 'And God said, **Let the land produce living**

**creatures** according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind. And it was so. ... [later, Chapter 2] Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. **He brought them to the man** to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature was its name.'

In Day 6, God used the **land to produce living creatures**. Since the land is not deity, it would have taken a long time to produce so many creatures by natural conception and birth; therefore, **day** ('yom') means more than 24 hours.

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### > REASON 7. Adam did not die within 24 hours

**GENESIS 2:16\***. *God said Adam must not eat the fruit from a particular tree, 'for in the day you eat from it you will surely die.' He ate the fruit but did not die within 24 hours.*

Some people say that this warning to Adam meant 'spiritual death,' but that concept would be completely meaningless to him in his first day of life. And he did not die that day. Adam lived a long earthly life before death (he was denied eternal life); therefore, **day** ('yom') means more than 24 hours.

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### > REASON 8. Interpretation consistency

**GENESIS 3:7**. *'Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked.'*

The most literal interpretation of this passage would lead us to believe that Adam and Eve were blind until they sinned. But we understand that this is a figure of speech, not to be taken literally. If **eyes** can be interpreted figuratively in the creation narrative, so can **day** ('yom') be interpreted figuratively.

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### > REASON 9. Science shows that 'day' is same as an 'age'

*In the scientific community, it is a proven fact that the universe has aged over a long period of time – billions of years – not six days.*

When Christians say all that creation happened recently in a week's time, this shows ignorance of science and undermines credibility of the Bible.

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### > REASON 10. Honors God

*A universe that unfolds majestically with precision over billions of years is even more marvelous than one put together in a week.*

It diminishes God's creation by saying it is less amazing than it really is.

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\* The New International Version (NIV) is the only major translation that, erroneously and for no apparent reason, omits the English word **day** in these two passages, but the Hebrew word **yom** is written in the original text.



### Creation 'day' is more than 24 hours

Except for the way **'yom'** in Hebrew was translated **'day'** in English – totally a translation issue – there is nothing in these Bible verses or in all of science that even suggests that each of God's creative processes was a time span equal to 24 hours in our modern calendar.

## Scholarly definitions of 'yom'

[Ancient Hebrew Research Center](#): *'The Hebrew word **yom** means a 'day,' but not specifically a twenty-four hour period, but instead more generically like in a*

not specifically a twenty-four hour period, but instead more generically like in a day that something occurs.'

[Strong's Exhaustive Concordance / Hebrew #3117](#) for **yom**: '1) day, time, year 1a) day (as opposed to night) 1b) day (24 hour period) 1b1) as defined by evening and morning in Genesis 1 1b2) as a division of time 1b2a) a working day, a day's journey 1c) days, lifetime (pl.) 1d) time, period (general) 1e) year 1f) temporal references 1f1) today 1f2) yesterday 1f3) tomorrow'

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