

234 The rest—in the sense of both remnant and repose—should simply be silence. But some last words are in order, mainly because the end—in the sense of both goal and termination—arrives not on the last workday but rather the day after (2:2). The seventh day is declared holy not because it was when something magnificent was made, but because nothing was. Hence the Hebrew word for seven (*sheva*) can also be read as satiation or saturation (*sova*), while the word for Saturday (*shabat*) is closely linked to the idea of going on strike (*shavat*). God's supreme act and highest achievement is not the creation of humanity, but his own recreation.

וישבת ביום השביעי מכל
מלאכתו אשר עשה

שבע

שבת

235 According to Exodus (20:8), it is only after Moses received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai that the Sabbath was instituted as a temporal temple to stop the linear flow of everyday life. This weekly commemoration of the coda to the cosmogenic story from Genesis (2:1-3) is never mentioned anywhere in I-II. To simply assume that the seven days of creation reflect the seven days of the week is to ignore another canonical interpretation, one that has been well established by the highest authorities of the Judeo-Christian tradition since early medieval times: *millennialism*.

זכור את יום השבת לקדשו

ויברך אלהים את יום השביעי
ויקדש אתו

236 According to this theory, one godly day represents a thousand earthly years, and all of human history is already encapsulated in the first chapter of Genesis. Everything is already written. Each day of creation is a prefiguration of a distinct millennial epoch. The true Sabbath is therefore not the last weekday but the seventh millennium. What the year 6000 will mark is not exactly the end of the world but the *rest* of the world, after which some say that it will begin anew.

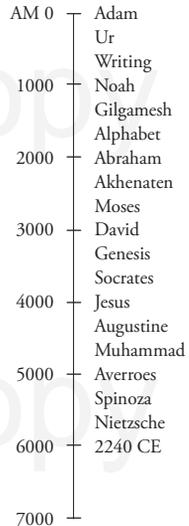
237 This widespread alternative reading has become less fashionable in modern times, but its deep roots keep it alive even today. As preposterous or marginal as it may sound, millennialism is one of the least original and best documented exegetical approaches to the pre-Abrahamic text explored in this treatise. Its proponents include some of the most influential Church fathers and Jewish rabbis. It also had a deep impact on key modern thinkers who theorized the end of history and the end of inequality.

התשע"ז

238 According to the Hebrew calendar, the sentence you are reading was written in the year AM 5777. The two letters stand for *Anno Mundi*, or the year of the world: the time that has passed since the event described in the first verse of Genesis. To assume that the world was created only about six thousand years ago is not as ignorant as it sounds. Think of “the world” as a human construct, not a natural reality. Its inception coincides with the cradle of civilization, rather than the Big Bang. The

genesis at stake is not that of life on earth but of humanity's mastery over it. Therefore, 1-11 is not a purely cosmological text but a deeply anthropological one.

239 This world is as old as the construction of the first cities in the Fertile Crescent, around 3800 BCE, which led to the invention of writing and the beginning of human history. The biblical genealogies document the first millennium (until Noah's birth) and the second millennium (up to Abraham's story). The chronology gets fuzzier in the third millennium (ending with the rise of King David and the construction of the First Temple, around 1000 BCE) and the fourth (concluding with the chain of events that led to the destruction of the Second Temple, about two thousand years ago, though this catastrophe did not make the cut for the Masoretic Text). For most historians, only the past four thousand years are within reach. They usually flail in the dark when considering the first two millennia, purportedly covered by Genesis 1-11.



240 There is no need to get bogged down here by calculations of specific dates. Biblical time is less exact than our own. The world in Genesis is ruled neither by the revolution of the stars nor by round numbers, but by God. Like a day, a millennium begins and ends with an extended and uncertain period of dawn and dusk (see, for example, 1:31). It does not depend on great events, such as a catastrophic war, a natural disaster, the arrival of a Messiah, or the rising of the dead. There is no certitude that the

יהי ערב ויהי בקר יום הששי

end (or the rest) of the world will come with a bang 222 years from today. But even a cursory look at a newspaper reveals that human history is more or less on schedule.

241 The millennial narrative gives an outline marked by some major signposts over the past six thousand years of world history and delineates the upcoming sabbatical millennium. Due to its general nature, it is not meant to prescribe any individual course of action. In the grand scheme of things, personal choices and even collective ones are utterly trivial. Exactly because millennialism is a generic idea that tolerates numerous exceptions and variations, this flexibility gives stronger validity to its claim that the fate of the human species as a whole is already pre-scribed. This also means that human life is nothing but a postscript to Genesis.

242 It is unknown when exactly 1-11 was written, but we can say with sufficient certainty that it was, in the eyes of whoever wrote it, a fourth-millennium composition. Put differently, it is a product of the middle of history. From this perspective, the axis around which history revolves may coincide with the very introduction of the text under consideration, along with the singular God at its center. This three-thousand-year-old midpoint is also the highest point of the rainbow: the moment when thinking about the generative beginning of the world gives way to meditations about its idle ending. At this zenith, as the key figure of humanity shifts from Adam to Noah, the world begins its slow decline.

243 In the absence of death or a deadline, there are two main reasons to stop a creative work: because the result is *very* good or because it is *very* bad. If the artwork is merely good or bad, then there is at least a possibility of its improvement, but no justification for its abandonment. God finished his work after the sixth day because he “found it very good” (1:31). Maybe humans will exclaim “Enough!” after the sixth millennium for opposite reasons, though some will surely refuse to make this call and will continue to try to mend the un-mendable. Millennialism, though, is not the same as nihilism. Saying no to everything is merely the negative manifestation of universalism.

וירא אלהים את כל אשר עשה
והנה טוב מאד

244 The life of the world, like every life, is not everlasting. Today it has almost run its course. Although the world may seem tired, it also appears to be accelerating toward the greatest calm. Its almighty God and enterprising humans, whose first baby steps were duly recorded in 1-II, are planning their retirement these days. The two Edenic trees are already gray. Contemporary readers can look at late capitalism as symptomatic of the threshold between the sixth and seventh millennia; a Friday afternoon as it were, when observant Jews make the last frenetic preparations, readying their houses right up to the moment when the Sabbath is welcomed with a song that contains this line: “The end of doing is accomplished by thinking the beginning.” After this liturgy concludes, leisure commences.

סוף מעשה במחשבה תחילה

- 245 Apologists adhering to every Abrahamic creed have accommodated into their millennial accounts the advent of their own religion, with its own heroes, on the world stage, but other epochal moments can be shown to parallel elements of the cosmogenic allegory. For example, the creation of man and woman on the sixth day can be interpreted as a prefiguration of the spread of modern secularism in the sixth millennium. In this context, to be secular is to be of this world, attuned to the life of the world. It is an integral part of the divine plan, not an attempt to sabotage it. But such speculations about the development of civilization, as tempting as they may be, cannot be resolved in this treatise, which treats the entire history of humanity as water under the bridge, rather than the bridge itself.
- 246 While the tenure of *Homo sapiens* as the master of the world represents the six thousand years of recorded history, the present commentary only considers the rainbow's two points of contact with the earth. Both the pre-Abrahamic world and the present one stand for what may be called *humanity degree zero*. Everything in between is the knotty story of nature's subjugation to man's needs and man's subjugation of other men. If I-II was written with a certain audience in mind, then we, today, are it. This text feels more legible now than ever.
- 247 The world in its prehistoric state, before year zero, when the footprint of the human race was still erasable, is precisely what in Genesis is called Bereshit. Bereshit—

the unwritten and immemorial millennia inhabited by pre-civilized humans and nonhuman organisms—is the not-yet world. So it is also Bereshit, not God, that could be the key to the posthistoric epoch to come, which exists outside the symbolic order of the present world. There is, however, still a way to get a glimpse of the coming no-longer world—not only during the Sabbath day, but also during the Sabbath year, when the land lies fallow, since agricultural activity is forbidden during this period by Jewish law.

248 The true significance of these cyclical events is well known according to a mystical view called *torat hash-mitor*: the seventh day and seventh year are merely rehearsals for the dialectical standstill or generic strike of the thousand-year Sabbath. Upon its impending arrival, some of the most fundamental concepts—God, human, world—will find themselves out of work. They will have no other choice but to join Bereshit and finally come to rest. However, there are no illusions that everyone will be able to comprehend this pre-Abrahamic wisdom and enter the sabbatical millennium. For both material and spiritual reasons, eliminating work is as difficult as it is rare. For this to begin, our book must end.

תורת השמיטות

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