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SEMANTICS AND THE SEMANTICS OF ברא: A REJOINDER TO THE ARGUMENTS ADVANCED BY B. BECKING AND M. KORPEL

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In *The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* in the winter of 2010 Bob Becking and Marjo Korpel (BK) published a response[1] to Ellen van Wolde's analysis of ברא in Genesis 1:1–2:4a meaning "to spatially separate" instead of "to create."[2] The present article discusses questions of semantics, BK's criticisms, and their proposal to read ברא as "to construct."[3]

1. SOME DIFFICULTIES IN THE COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF ברא "TO CREATE"

The common understanding of the verb ברא "to create" is more problematic than is often thought. There are a series of problems.

(1) The first is the lexical problem that the Piel form of the verb ברא clearly refers to "cutting" in Josh 17:15, 18, and Ezek 21:24. The question, then, is: How does this verb's Piel meaning of "to cut" relate to its Qal meaning "to create"? Most Biblical Hebrew dictionaries solve this problem by distinguishing two or three homonymous roots: ברא I "to create" (Qal and Niphal), ברא II "to consume food" (Hiphil), ברא III "to cut, clear" (Piel), and some of them follow Gesenius' 1835 *Thesaurus* and 1883 *Handwörterbuch* in

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[1] B. Becking and M. C. A. Korpel, "To Create, to Separate or to Construct: An Alternative for a Recent Proposal as to the Interpretation of ברא in Gen 1:1–2:4a," *JHS* 10 (2010), article 3.

[2] E. J. van Wolde, *Reframing Biblical Studies: When Language and Text Meet Culture, Cognition and Context* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 184–200; "Why the Verb ברא Does Not Mean 'To Create' in Genesis 1.1–2.4a," *JSOT* 34.1 (2009), 1–21. BK refer incorrectly throughout their article to Van Wolde, "Why the Verb ברא Does Not Mean 'To Create' in Genesis 1," whereas the correct title is "…in Genesis 1.1–2.4a."

[3] The first, synchronic part of this article (sections 1-5) is written by Ellen van Wolde, the second, diachronic part (section 6) by Robert Rezetko. Together they take responsibility for the entire article.

his hypothesis of a historical semantic development of the root from "to separate, divide" to "to create."[4]

(2) Another problem has been noticed and presented by Hendrik Brongers, as follows.[5] In the traditional theological view, the fact that God is the only subject of the verb ברא in the Hebrew Bible has led to the conclusion that this exclusive relation to God is the verb's most defining feature. And to express God's unique creative act at the very beginning, his wonderful creation of something completely new. If this were true, Brongers argues, one has to explain why in Genesis 1:1–2:4a the verb ברא is *not* used as a distinguishing activity for God, since the verb עשה appears even more prominently in the description of God's creative activities than the verb ברא does in Genesis 1:1–2:3. In addition, those who take ברא to designate an exclusive idea of creation have to explain why sometimes, for example, in v. 21 ("God ברא the big Tannînîm") and v. 25 ("God עשה the wild animals of the earth"), or in v. 26 ("let us עשה human beings") and v. 27 ("God ברא the human beings"), the verbs are used interchangeably.[6] The same is true for Gen 5:1; 6:7; Isa 43:7; 45:12; and Amos 4:13. Numerous also are biblical texts in which the verb ברא is used in a meaning with no reference whatsoever to what is commonly called *creatio prima*: Exod 34:10; Num 16:30; Isa 45:7; 48:6-7; 57:19; 65:17-18; Jer 31:22; and Ps 51:12. And Brongers concludes: "All these occurrences can be understood as a proof that ברא has a much less exclusive meaning than is commonly assumed. It is true that ברא always has YHWH or Elohim as its subject and that it never occurs with an accusative of material. Yet the fact that the verb is repeatedly mentioned in one breath with verbs like עשה and יצר and the fact that it is used in contexts in which the verb עשה could have been used,

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[4] See KB/HALAT: ברא I "schaffen" (Qal and Ni.); ברא II "mästen" (Hi.); ברא III "abholzen" (Pi.); ברא IV = ברה I "essen;" ברא I = ברה II, ברה II denom. of ברית (1 Sam 17:8). HALOT: ברא I "create" (Qal and Ni.); ברא II "make oneself fat" (Hi.); ברא III "cut down, clear" (Pi.); ברא IV = ברה I "consume food;" ברא II, ברה II denom. of ברית (1 Sam 17:8). Gesenius' 18.Auflage: ברא I "schaffen" (Qal and Ni.); ברא II "mästen" (Hi.); ברא III "zurechtschneiden" (Pi.); ברא IV = ברה I "essen," ברה I = ברא II, ברה II denom. of ברית (1 Sam 17:8). THWAT (W. H. Schmidt) ברא I "schaffen" (Qal and Ni.); ברא II "mästen" (Hi.); ברא III "abstrauen" (Pi.). DCH: ברא I "create" (Qal and Ni.); ברא II "be fat, fatten" (Hi., perh. Ni. Ps 104:30); ברא III "cut, cut down, cut out" (Pi.); ברא IV "eat" = ברה I. NIDOTTE (R. C. Van Leeuwen): ברא I "create, separate (as by cutting)" (Qal); "be created" (Ni.); ברא III "cut" (Pi.)." For Gesenius' views and literature, see BK, 3, nn. 4–6.

[5] H. A. Brongers, *De scheppingstradities bij de profeten* (Amsterdam: H. J. Paris, 1945), 13–16.

[6] Brongers, *De scheppingstradities*, 14.

cause that one should be very careful drawing too far-reaching conclusions."[7]

(3) In addition to these reservations expressed by Hendrik Brongers in 1945, we can say that the common understanding that the verb ברא is exclusively used with God as subject, is only true for the Qal forms but not for the Piel and Hiphil forms. And, of course, it is also logically incorrect to deduce from the premise "God is the only subject of the verb ברא in the Hebrew Bible" that this exclusive relation to God is the verb's most defining feature. Although ברא does not appear with the mention of material out of which something is created, it is regularly collocated with verbs that do. "More significantly, *br'* is used of entities that come out of preexisting material: e.g., a new generation of animals or humans, or 'a pure heart' (Ps 104:29-30; 102:18[19]; 51:10[12])."[8] In addition, S. Lee has shown convincingly in his survey of the 48 occurrences of ברא in the Hebrew Bible that the concept of novelty has been wrongly connected with this verb.[9]

(4) Another point is that if ברא were the exclusive term for the creation of the heaven and the earth one might wonder why in Exodus 20 the Sabbath is twice defined in relation to God's creation of the heaven and the earth, in which God's creation is resumed by עשה and not ברא. A similar question might be posed with regard to Gen 14:19, 22 where God is twice mentioned as "the creator of heaven and earth" (אל עליון ק[ו]נה שמים וארץ), in which not בורא but קונה is used to designate God as the creator of heaven and earth.[10]

(5) Not only does Genesis 1:1–2:4a contain seven times the verb ברא and seven times the verb עשה to express divine actions of making, also outside this text the verb עשה is often used to describe creation.[11] God is in the Hebrew Bible called both בורא, traditionally translated "creator," and עושה, traditionally translated "maker,"[12] and Mark S. Smith points to the usage of the verb עשה

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[7] Brongers, *De scheppingstradities*, 15–16 (translated from the Dutch).

[8] R. C. Van Leeuwen, "ברא," W. A. VanGemeren (ed.), *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (5 vols.; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997), vol. 1, 728–35 (731).

[9] S. Lee, "Power Not Novelty: The Connotations of ברא in the Hebrew Bible," A. G. Auld (ed.), *Understanding Poets and Prophets: Essays in Honour of George Wishart Anderson* (JSOTS, 152; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 199–212 (211): "As a result, we may now draw the final conclusion that a consistent understanding of the verb ברא does point definitively to the connotations of YHWH's sovereign power and control."

[10] The same is true for Deut 32:6, Ps 139:13, and Prov 8:22 where God is called the creator, again with the noun קונה.

[11] In Gen 3:1; Pss 95:5; 100:3; 119:73; Prov 8:26; Job 9:9; 31:15; and Neh 9:6.

[12] בורא: Isa 40:28; 42:5; 43:15; 45:7, 18; 57:19; 65:17, 18 (x2); Qoh 12:1.

for the Israelite deity that is reflected in the Hebrew personal names Asael, Asayah, and Yaasiel, all denoting "God made/created."[13]

(1)–(5) Based on these distributional linguistic data, one can raise the question whether the often presupposed distinctive features of ברא have been well defined; they necessitate a new examination.

(6) Apart from these linguistic questions, there are some textual problems with the common understanding of "to create" as well. The first problem regards Gen 1:1. When v. 1 is understood as a summary of the events described in vv. 6-10, a position taken by most biblical scholars, what is the consequence for the meaning of ברא in v. 1? Since vv. 6-10 describe God's actions with regard to the heaven and the earth as both making (עשה) and dividing (בדל Hiphil), the verb ברא in v. 1 should signify at least both "to create" and "to divide." A related question is how we can understand the difference in meaning between the verbs ברא, עשה, and בדל.

(7) Still another textual problem is Gen 1:21, commonly translated "God created the great sea monsters, and all the living creatures of every kind…and all the winged birds of every kind." However the previous verse showed that the sea monsters were already present, and not made by God (cf. also Isa 51:9-10; Pss 74:13-14; 148:7, texts that entail the same notion of pre-existent sea monsters). So, if the sea monsters were already present, how then could the verb ברא in v. 21 indicate that God creates these animals?

(8) In Num 16:30 the word combination ברא בריאה cannot possibly express "create creation." "And Moses said: 'If these men die as all men do, it was not YHWH who sent me. But if YHWH creates creation [ברא Qal + noun בריאה] and the ground opens its mouth, and swallows them up, and they go down alive into Sheol, you shall know that these men have despised YHWH." How is YHWH's creation related to the opening of the ground? (For the explanation of Num 16:30 with ברא meaning "to separate," see below.)

(9) Also in Exod 34:10 the verb ברא Qal is difficult to understand in its sense of "to create" (see commentaries). God offers his covenant to Moses: "I hereby make a covenant. Before all your people I will עשה wonders that have not been ברא on all the earth or in any nation." Two possibilities have been suggested by biblical scholars: either ברא is used synonymously with עשה, both expressing "making," or the two verbs express different meanings. (For the explanation of Exod 34:10 with ברא meaning "to separate," see below.)

עושה: Isa 17:7; Prov 14:31; 17:15.

[13] M. S. Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 224, n. 61.

(10) Another well-known text in which the verb ברא Qal is difficult to understand in its sense of "to create" is Isa 45:6-7: "I am the former (יוצר) of light and the creator (בורא) of darkness. I am the maker (עושה) of good and the creator (בורא) of evil." Did God create darkness? If a reference to Genesis 1 is presupposed in Isaiah 45, this would be impossible, as in Genesis 1 darkness is pre-existent. And did God create evil, at least according to Isaiah 45? (See below for an analysis.)

(1)–(10) These linguistic and textual questions gave rise to renewed linguistic, textual, and comparative research of the verb ברא in Genesis 1:1–2:4a.[14]

The main problem hovering in the background of such a study is, how can Biblical Hebrew linguists and biblical scholars make a verifiable or falsifiable semantic analysis of Hebrew words in general and of the word ברא in particular? Semantic questions in biblical scholarship have been resolved within the field of ancient or classical Hebrew itself and/or in relation to cognate Semitic languages, often with considerable results. Yet in the last half century general linguistics has greatly developed. At the beginning of the 20th century structural linguistics arose in Europe, while in the fifties American linguists started to develop generative linguistics. Both are autonomous or context-independent linguistic approaches that intend to explain universal innate patterns in language. The last quarter of the 20th century showed a growing interest and expertise in culture, cognition, and context dependent linguistics.[15] Should not the latter linguistic approaches to semantics be more fully appreciated in modern biblical studies, especially because they are not aimed at universal structures, but at specific time- and place-related language usages? At least it is our idea that Biblical Hebrew semantics can greatly profit from such linguistic approaches. The following example might help to illustrate the difference a new approach can make to biblical semantics.

2. A SEMANTIC DETOUR: COGNITIVE CROSS-LINGUISTIC STUDIES OF VERBS EXPRESSING "SEPARATION-EVENTS"

Recently linguists examined languages in 28 typologically and genetically diverse languages from all over the world including all kinds of words used to express the events that involve a "separation in the material integrity of an object/unit." The results of these studies were published in *Cognitive Linguistics* 18.2 (2007) and *Cognition* 109 (2008). For example, in English separation events are ex-

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[14] Van Wolde, *Reframing Biblical Studies*, 184–200; "Why the Verb."
[15] For a survey of developments in cognitive linguistics see Van Wolde, *Reframing Biblical Studies*, 29–33.

pressed by verbs such as *break*, *cut*, *clip*, *carve*, *chop*, *deal*, *hack*, *half*, *saw*, *slash*, *slice*, *split*, *tear*, *cut off*, *cut down*, *clear out*. All these verbs, not only in English but also in other languages, construe the process of separation in distinct ways.

In many languages verbs designating the temporal process of separation include the instrument; thus in English *cut* entails a knife, *clip* a pair of scissors, *saw* a saw; so, with these languages one can construe the cutting-event as a tool-related action. Compare, for example, the difference between English, German, French, Italian, and Spanish "*cut* hair" and Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, and Dutch that express the hairdresser's activity as "*clip* hair." One might wonder whether these differences in language reflect distinct (historical) habits in hairstyling.

In some languages (but not in others) verbs designating the temporal process of separation include the surface or space; e.g., English *clear* in "The forests were being cleared (from trees)." In some languages, the verbs that designate the temporal process of separation include energetic movement as in English *chop*. In some languages the semantic category of agentivity plays an important role.[16]

Most languages know the distinction between reversible and non-reversible separation events.[17] Consider, for example, the distinction in English between reversible separation such as "opening a teapot" and "pulling apart paper cups" and verbs expressing non-reversible separation such as "chopping a carrot" or "tearing a robe."

Languages differ in whether information about the state-change (the separation) is typically located in a single verb, as in the English verbs *cut*, *clear*, and *chop*, or is spread out across a number of constituents such as additional verbs, affixes or particles. For example, in English the beginning or inchoative state is included in the verb *break off*.

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[16] Ameka and Essegbey describe the African language Ewe in which the category of agentivity is determinative. They distinguish four classes: highly agentive verbs (*dzá* "slash," *si* "cut," *kpa* "carve"), agentive verbs (*tso* "cut," *sé* "cut"), non-agentive verbs (*lá* "snap off," *dze* "split"), and highly non-agentive verbs (*vú* "tear," and others). The highly agentive verbs describe events involving agents only and, therefore, do not occur in the intransitive, while agentive verbs express separations that occur spontaneously. On the other hand, highly non-agentive verbs do not lexicalize agents at all. Non-agentive verbs can describe separations that require an instrument. See F. K. Ameka and J. Essegbey, "Cut and Break Verbs in Ewe and the Causative Alternation Construction," *Cognitive Linguistics* 18.2 (2007), 241–50.

[17] A. Majid, J. S. Boster, and M. Bowerman, "The Cross-Linguistic Categorization of Everyday Events: A Study of Cutting and Breaking," *Cognition* 109 (2008), 235–50.

Even the semantic categories of very closely related languages appeared not to be the same. Asifa Majid, Marianne Gullberg, Miriam van Staden, and Melissa Bowerman present an extensive analysis of four closely related Germanic languages, namely English, German, Dutch, and Swedish.[18] One and the same approach for the synchronic comparison of word meaning in these languages demonstrates that even though these languages are closely related, there are differences in the number of categories, their exact boundaries, and the relationships of the terms to one another.[19] Consider the cognate verbs *break* (English), *brechen* (German), *breken* (Dutch), and *bräcka* (Swedish). English *break* is indifferent to how the effect was brought about, and it is also used to describe the destruction of a wide variety of objects, such as sticks, ropes, plates, and yarn. *Brechen*, *breken*, and *bräcka*, in contrast, all pick out a much more circumscribed set of events. Germen *brechen* and Dutch *breken* are used primarily for breaking long thin things by hand, i.e. snapping events. Swedish *bräcka*, on the other hand, is a rare verb used mainly for separating or cracking brittle, two-dimensional objects. The semantic category picked out by German *brechen* and Dutch *breken* exists in Swedish also, but it is not associated with the cognate term *bräcka*, but rather with an entirely different verb, *bryta*.

In sum, language users construe the same events in distinct ways. The language the native speakers are using enables them to express their experiences, perceptions, and ideas in accordance with a number of culture- and context-bound categories. In order to understand the semantic values of lexical terms, linguists have to take into account these categories, their exact boundaries, and the relationships of the terms to one another—all of which are to be analyzed in their own specific contexts of use.

We will compare these modern semantic insights to biblical semantic studies of the verb ברא and to BK's semantic discussion and will signal a series of inadequacies in these biblical semantic approaches.

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[18] A. Majid, M. Gullberg, M. van Staden, and M. Bowerman, "How Similar are Semantic Categories in Closely Related Languages? A Comparison of Cutting and Breaking in Four Germanic Languages," *Cognitive Linguistics* 18.2 (2007), 179–94.

[19] In English there are two large clusters of terms, one to designate breaking events, the other to designate cutting events. In German, however, there are three large clusters: a large breaking cluster, a cutting cluster, and a separate tearing cluster. Dutch has four distinct clusters: breaking, tearing, cutting-with-a-single-blade, and cutting-with-scissors. Swedish has five clusters for categorizing cutting and breaking events: a large breaking cluster, snapping, cutting-with-a-single-blade, cutting-with-scissors, and tearing. See Majid, Gullberg, Van Staden, and Bowerman, "How Similar are Semantic Categories."

3. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EARLIER SEMANTIC STUDIES OF THE VERB ברא "SEPARATE" AND VAN WOLDE'S PROPOSAL

3.1 Biblical Studies that Consider the Possibility of ברא meaning "to Separate"

In modern biblical scholarship the following authors have suggested that the meaning of the verb ברא is "to cut," "to separate," or "to divide." Wilhelm Gesenius[20] was the first and he set the tone by explaining that the verb ברא signifies "to separate, cut, tailor, make as a sculptor" and from there "to produce, make" and, finally, "to create." Samuel Driver took the next step: "The root signifies *to cut* (see, in the intensive conjug., Josh. xvii. 15, 18; Ez. xxiii. 47): so probably the proper meaning of ברא is *to fashion by cutting, to shape.*"[21]

Hendrik Brongers paid extensive attention to Genesis 1:1–2:3; however, he did not describe the meaning of the verb ברא as such, but the concept of creation in Genesis 1:1–2:3, including all verbs and verses. In his view, in this text creation entails separation or division: "God's creative activity can best be described as 'arrangement.'"[22] Johannes van der Ploeg argued that to cut a stone, wood, bones, implies that one gives it a new form, in a sense a new life.[23] That is why, in his opinion, it does not come as a surprise that in Hebrew the terms ברא Qal "to create" and ברא Piel "to cut" are combined.[24] The idea of cutting, modeling, forming gave (accord-

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[20] For Gesenius' views and literature, see BK, 3, nn. 4–6.

[21] S. R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis, with Introduction and Notes* (London: Methuen & Co., 1904), 3. And he continues: "In the simple conjugation, however, it is used exclusively of God, to denote viz. the production of something fundamentally new, by the exercise of a sovereign originative power, altogether transcending that possessed by man." Similarly, E. König, *Hebräsches und aramäisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament* (Wiesbaden: Sändig, 1910¹, 1936⁶ reprinted 1969), 47: ברא "heraushauen, schaffen Gn 1,1; auch etwas umschaffen zu (Jes 65,18). Pi. Jos 17,15: u. *haue* dir dort (im Walde) *heraus*! V. 18: u. du wirst aus ihm heraushauen; *schaffen* (Hes 21,24b)."

[22] Brongers, De scheppingstradities, 16–18.

[23] J. van der Ploeg, "Le sens du verbe hébreu ברא bārāʾ. Étude sémasiologique," *Le Muséon* 59 (1946), 143–57.

[24] Van der Ploeg, "Le sens du verbe," 151: "Nous avons vu que chez plusieurs peuples l'idée de «couper» a plusieurs fois donné naissance à une généalogie sémantique qui a abouti au sens de «créer». En taillant la pierre, le bois, l'os, on lui donne une forme nouvelle, et d'une certaine façon un être nouveau. Il n'est donc point étonnant de voir se rejoindre en hébreu *bārāʾ* (qal) = créer, et *bārāʾ* (piʿel) = couper, découper. On peut en conclure que l'élément *bar* a primitivement signifié couper."

ing to Van der Ploeg) birth to ברא's highest meaning: production out of nothing. Therefore, ברא Qal expresses: *creatio ex nihilo*.[25]

Émile Dantinne offered the most extensive analysis of the verb ברא, starting from the difficulty that in five biblical texts the meaning "to create" is less certain. In three of them, Josh 17:15 and 18 and Ezek 23:47, the verb clearly signifies "to cut."[26] "Pour exprimer l'idée de créer, même, peut-être, *ex nihilo*, les anciens Hébreux ont employé un mot auquel s'associe la notion de séparer, si souvent formulée explicitement dans le récit de la Création. BâRâʾ, c'est « séparer, couper, tailler, produire en taillant, comme un sculpteur », de là, « fabriquer, faire », et, finalement, « créer »."[27] The difference between Enuma Elish and Genesis is, according to Dantinne, that Genesis speaks of *creatio ex nihilo*, whereas Enuma Elish speaks of Marduk's division out of chaos; hence, in Genesis 1 the word ברא has evolved from separation to *creatio ex nihilo*.[28]

Karl-Heinz Bernhardt follows Dantinne in that he considers the verb ברא's fundamental meaning to be "to separate,"[29] yet in

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[25] Van der Ploeg, "Le sens du verbe," 153, 155, 157: "L'idée de couper, modeler, former, a donné naissance à celle de créer dans son plus haut sens de *productio ex nihilo*, et cela se comprend, car «former» est une idée plus universelle que «bâtir» et plus spirituelle, ou plus métaphysique, si l'on veut, que procréer.…Lorsque Jahvé créa quelque chose sans qu'il y eût d'objet ou de matière préexistante, il la créa nécessairement *ex nihilo*.…Il est vrai que dans plusieurs textes le verbe *bārāʾ* est employé *promiscue* avec עשה, יצר, etc. Mais il ne s'ensuit pas que *bārāʾ* avait d o n c fondamentalement le même sens. Le parallélisme poétique exigeait souvent l'usage de plusieurs mots à la fois, et la tendance sémitique à la verbosité faisait le reste. Dans toute production, quelque chose de nouveau reçoit l'être. Quand Jahvé produit quelque chose, il le fait d'une façon proportionnée à sa toute-puissance, et si besoin est, il la tire du néant. C'est le sens du verbe ברא."

[26] É. Dantinne, "Création et séparation," *Le Muséon* 74 (1961), 441–51 (447): "La connexion de la racine B R ʾ avec l'idée de séparer n'est pas seulement prouvée par son emploi, au piʿêl, avec le sens de couper, dans *Jos.*, xvii, 15 et 18, ainsi que dans *Éz.*, xxiii, 47. Il y en a d'autres indices: 1) L'existence, en hébreu, en plus de B R ʾ, d'autres racines comprenant les consonnes B et R, avec des dérivés évoquant les idées de couper, de découper, de partager, de traverser.…2) La même racine, ou des racines apparentées, exprimant la notion de séparation dans d'autres langes sémitiques."

[27] Dantinne, "Création et séparation," 446.

[28] Dantinne, "Création et séparation," 448, quotes M. J. Lagrange, *Études sur la religion sémitique* (Paris : V. Lecoffre, 1903), 332: "Vienne Marduk, le soleil matinal, ses premiers rayons *séparant* la masse chaotique en deux parties, le ciel et la terre.…Marduk triomphe du chaos et le *divise*." And Dantinne adds: "Séparation, notez-le, mais point créer. Il a été réservé aux lecteurs de la Genèse d'y découvrir la Création, la Création *ex nihilo*."

[29] K.-H. Bernhardt, "ברא," G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, and H.-J. Fabry (eds.), *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament* (10 vols.; Stutt-

his following study of the textual occurrences of ברא in the Hebrew Bible, he argues that its meaning is restricted to describing God's creative actions.[30] Claus Westermann also bases his view of ברא on Dantinne.[31] Although the title of Paul Beauchamp's 1969 study of Genesis 1, *Création et séparation*, might suggest the idea that he shares the view that the verb ברא signifies "to separate," he actually relates the concept of separation to the verb בדל only, and not to ברא, as well as to the seven-day structure and the story composition.

Van Leeuwen is critical with respect to common biblical theological explanations of the term ברא.[32] He concludes that "OT *brʾ* (pi.) is predicated of humans, but in q. and ni. its subject or implicit agent is always God. While the pi. signifies (resultative) 'cut' exclusively, the q. signifies 'create' with the exception of Num 16:30, 'cut.' Consequently, the semantic development from 'cut' to 'create' described by Claus Westermann (99, after F. Delitzsch and others) is a natural one. By 'cutting,' a particular shape is given to an object that, as it were, comes into being."[33]

We took so much time and space to describe previous scholarship in order to demonstrate that all biblical scholars who considered the verb ברא to mean "to separate, cut, or divide" subsequently understand this process of separation in one way only, namely as "to cut a particular shape," "to fashion by cutting," "to shape," or "to create." The metaphorical imagery that prevails in

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gart/Etc.: W. Kohlhammer, 1970–1998), vol. 1, 773–77 (773): "Warscheinlich hat das hebr. ברא die Grundbedeutung 'trennnen' (Dantinne); vgl. die Ableitung von einer zweiradikaligen Grundwurzel *br* bei G. J. Botterweck."

[30] Bernhardt, "ברא," 774: "Das Verbum ברא ist in seinem Anwendungsbereich streng begrenzt. Es dient ausschließlich zur Bezeichnung des göttlichen Schaffens.…ברא soll als spezieller theologischer Terminus die Unvergleichbarkeit des Schöpferwirkens Gottes gegenüber allem sekundären Machen und Bilden aus vorgegebener Materie durch den Menschen begrifflich eindeutig zum Ausdruck bringen."

[31] C. Westermann, *Genesis 1: Teilband 1: Genesis 1–11* (BKAT 1/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1974).

[32] Van Leeuwen, "ברא," 731: "In the past, biblical theologians, eager to discover theological significance in individual words, have overloaded *brʾ*, create, with semantic freight in three respects. First, it was commonly emphasized that this vb. is predicated only of Israel's god as subject; second, that *brʾ* never appears with explicit mention of material out of which something has been 'created'; third, that *brʾ* was a uniquely nonmetaphorical, nonanthropomorphic vb. for creation, since it was predicated only of Israel's god. Upon these linguistic foundations theological arguments concerning the uniqueness and incomparability of Yahweh's creative activity were erected. These points (and theological pronouncements founded upon them) are, however, somewhat misleading."

[33] Van Leeuwen, "ברא," 732.

these views is that of a sculptor: God, who like a Michelangelo, sculptures the universe.

The above described cognitive cross-linguistic studies (section 2) elucidate a serious semantic shortcoming in these biblical semantic studies that all limit the idea of [SEPARATION] or [CUTTING] to separation in the sense of [FASHIONING] or [PRODUCTION]. That is to say, these scholars take it for granted that ברא expresses a first stage in a conceptual process that starts with cutting and ends with creation. This explains why the scholars in earlier times (e.g., Van der Ploeg, Dantinne) kept on trying to keep this meaning of ברא in line with the notion of *creatio ex nihilo*. Although this approach disappeared in later literature (e.g., Westermann, Van Leeuwen), scholars nevertheless associated the concept of separation with "the making of." Yet, from a linguistic point of view, the idea that separation should be understood as fashioning is only one of the possibilities. The question is, therefore, in what way does the verb ברא construe the process of separation in Biblical Hebrew?

3.2 The verb ברא and its expression of the process of separation

The only way to answer this question is to start with a semantic analysis of the clearest usages of the verb ברא in the Hebrew Bible and analyze the texts with an open mind.

(1)–(5) The texts that are most clear are the Piel usages of the verb in Joshua 17[34] and Ezekiel 21 and 23.[35] The Piel of ברא expresses in Josh 17:15, 18 not "to cut down trees," but "to make an empty space by cutting down trees." Ezekiel 21:24 contains the verb ברא twice to designate "to cut out a spot." Ezekiel 23:47 evokes "to cut down" adulteresses, to clear the place of them. The Piel or intensive form of ברא thus figures in a spatial domain and

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[34] BK, 3, wrongly refer to the Piel use of ברא in Isa 17:15; they mean, of course, Josh 17:15.

[35] Joshua 17:15: "'If you are a numerous people,' Joshua answered them, 'go up to the forest country and *clear* (ברא) an area for yourselves there, in the territory of the Perizzites and the Rephaim, seeing that you are cramped in the hill country of Ephraim.'" Joshua 17:17-18: "But Joshua declared to the House of Joseph, to Ephraim and Manasseh: 'You are indeed a numerous people, possessed of great strength; you shall not have one allotment only. The hill country shall be yours as well; true, it is forest land, but you will clear it (ברא) and possess it to its farthest limits.'" Ezekiel 21:24: "The word of YHWH came to me: 'And you, O mortal, choose two roads on which the sword of the king of Babylon may advance, both issuing from the same country; and cut out (ברא) a spot; at the head/top of the road to the city cut out (ברא) a spot.'" Ezekiel 23:46-47: "For thus said YHWH God: 'Summon an assembly against them, and make them an object of horror and plunder. Let the assembly pelt them with stones and cut them down (ברא) with their swords; let them kill their sons and daughters, and burn down their homes.'"

designates the temporal process of [SEPARATION IN THE SPATIAL INTEGRITY OF A UNIT IN ORDER TO MAKE SPACE] in which the act itself is marked as intensive, i.e. "cutting" or "clearing" violently.

(6) Another text with a clear usage of ברא Qal "to cut," "to separate" is Num 16:30.[36] Here it is followed by the accusative noun בריאה, "something separated." Humbert, Milgrom, and Van Leeuwen translate it as "chasm."[37] In Num 16:30 ברא Qal is used in reference to YHWH to indicate that he is performing the action subsequently specified by the ground's opening of the mouth, including notions such as lips that spread out, a throat that swallows up without any previous chewing, so that the men who despised YHWH go down alive into Sheol. Hence, the collocation ברא בריאה designates a spatial separation. YHWH distances himself from these men, by sending them into the underworld, where they have to stay apart from the Israelites.

(7)–(13) Van Wolde studied the seven occurrences of the verb ברא in Genesis 1:1–2:4a.[38] Her conclusions are that Gen 1:1 describes the very first act that God separates or sets apart the heaven(s) and the earth; that Gen 1:27a (twice ברא) does not express God's creation of the human being, but that God is setting the human being apart, on a place spatially distant from him, namely on earth; that Gen 1:27b indicates that God separates the human being into two sexes, each connected with its own life sphere; that in Gen 2:3 God, after having finished the six creation days, sets the seventh day apart from the other six days, and declares it holy; and that, finally, Gen 2:4a resumes the story with "These are the begettings of the heaven and the earth in their being separated," thus forming an inclusio with Gen 1:1. Thus, the setting apart of the spatial domains and their inhabitants is considered to be crucial for the understanding of Genesis 1:1–2:4a, and as important as the creation of the inhabitants of these spatial realms and as the temporal arrangement in a week (six days plus Sabbath).

Based on these thirteen occurrences, the following hypothesis with regard to the verb ברא Qal has been formulated: the verb ברא Qal functions in the cognitive domain of space and designates the

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[36] Numbers 16:30: "And Moses said: 'If these men die as all men do, it was not YHWH who sent me. But if YHWH makes a separation (ברא Qal + noun בריאה) and the ground opens its mouth, and swallows them up, and they go down alive into Sheol, you shall know that these men have despised YHWH.'"

[37] P. Humbert, "Emploi et portée du verbe *bārā* (créer) dans l'Ancien Testament," P. Humbert, *Opuscules d'un hébraïsant* (Mémoires de l'Université de Neuchâtel, 26; Neuchatel: Secrétariat de l'Université de Neuchatel, 1958), 146–65 (147); J. Milgrom, *Numbers: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1990), 137; Van Leeuwen, "ברא," 732.

[38] Van Wolde, *Reframing Biblical Studies*, 184–200; "Why the Verb."

temporal process of [SEPARATION IN THE SPATIAL INTEGRITY OF A UNIT IN ORDER TO SET OBJECTS OR PHENOMENA APART, TO SET THEM AT A DISTANCE, OR TO MAKE SPACE WITHIN THE SPATIAL UNIT], which is shortened into [SEPARATION IN THE MATERIAL OR SPATIAL INTEGRITY OF A UNIT]. Whereas the intensive form or Piel of ברא expresses that this act is performed intensively or even violently, or with an instrument that requires force or violence, the Qal form of ברא expresses this temporal process neither intensively nor violently. The latter can, dependent on the context of use, be translated "to divide, separate, set apart, disconnect." The translation "to differentiate" is not recommended because it entails more abstract notions such as "distinguishing, making a distinction between."

Above, two other texts were mentioned that create difficulties when the word is understood to designate "to create," namely Exod 34:10 and Isa 40:21-26. These texts will be reconsidered in the light of this new hypothesis.

In Exod 34:10 God offers his covenant to Moses: "I hereby make a covenant. Before all your people I will עשה wonders that have not been ברא on all the earth or in any nation." Starting from the view that each word construes an event in its own way, the two verbs עשה and ברא are considered to express distinct meanings. Exodus 34:10-16 describes the two sides of the covenant: a positive side, the loyalty between God and Israel, and a negative side, the attitude towards the other nations, who are to be driven out. The positive side is described in v. 10 as נפלאת "wonders." These amazing deeds of Israel's God vis-à-vis Israel set the Israelites apart from the other nations. Obviously, wonders are unifying them as much as they are dividing them from the other people. This is what is described in v. 10: the making of the wonders and the disjunctive effect with regard to other nations. Hence, the approximate translation: "I hereby make a covenant. Before all your people I will work wonders that have not been set apart on all the earth or in any nation." This view is confirmed by the idea of covenant, כרת ברית. It might be compared with the pre-Islamic Arabic understanding of covenant, which stresses both the loyalty to the deity as well as the disjunction and distance to the people excluded from the covenant, and so also the biblical covenant can be conceived of as both binding and separating: the people of Israel are closely connected to their deity and separated from the other nations and their deities. These two sides are exactly described in Exod 34:10-16.

Another text is Isa 40:21-22, 26 where in v. 26 the verb ברא Qal figures in the larger metaphorical context of the making of the heaven and the earth. Verses 21-22 describe how God founded (יסד) the earth, spread out (נטה) the heavens like a veil, stretched out the heavens like a tent to dwell in. It shows God as the one who is enthroned above the vault of the earth from where he can see the inhabitants as grasshoppers, so large is the distance between heaven and earth. This distance prefigures the difference in his

power (vv. 23-24: he brings potentates to naught; makes rulers on earth as nothing) and his incomparability (v. 25). This entire image is concluded in v. 26 "Lift high your eyes and see: מי־ברא אלה." This verse does not merely describe "the making of these things," since this has been metaphorically conceived as the founding of the earth and as the spreading out of the heavens. Reference is made to the distance between the two cosmological realms in analogy to the distance in power between God above and human beings below and is expressed by ברא, "Lift up your eyes and see: Who separated these?"

Comparable also is Isa 4:5: "YHWH will ברא Qal 'spread out' a cloud over the whole shrine and meeting place of Mount Zion" (cf. Ps 105:39 and Job 26:9 where the same concept of "spreading out a cloud" is expressed by the verb פרש). Futato showed that the word ענן designates cloud mass, cloud cover, or undifferentiated cloud and often includes the notion of extent or expanse.[39] The verb ברא designates this spreading out (imagine someone who spreads out his or her arms) of a blanket of clouds. Here again a spatial notion is entailed, in which ברא denotes a temporal process that starts with unity and proceeds to extensiveness. This use of the verb with regard to the spreading out of the heavens occurs more often in Isaiah, namely in Isa 42:5: "Thus said the deity YHWH who separated (ברא) the heavens and spread them out, who beat out (רקע) the earth and what brings it forth." Notice here the plural suffix used for the heavens, and in contrast the beating out of the earth which is construed with the singular. This use of ברא meaning "spreading out" can also be compared to the use in the Akkadian text *The Dream of Lugalbanda* (line 333), which describes how Lugalbanda made a bed: "He spread out, *bàra*, a linen sheet."[40] Another text in Isaiah, Isa 45:16-18, can be understood similarly. Here God, designated האלהים, is described as the one "who spread out/set apart the heavens (ברא), who formed the earth and made it, who established/founded it. He did not set it (the earth) apart (ברא) *tohû*, but formed it for habitation."

In short, the novelty of Van Wolde's proposal is to understand the verb ברא Qal "to separate" within the cognitive domain of space. It is considered to be a spatial concept, not a concept that figures in the domain of construction. Also new with respect to previous scholarship is that she does not consider the verb ברא to express the first step in a process that necessarily ends up with

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[39] M. D. Futato, "ענן," W. A. VanGemeren (ed.), *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (5 vols.; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997), vol. 3, 465–66.

[40] H. L. J. Van Stiphout, "Reflections on the Dream of Lugalbanda (A typological and interpretative analysis of LH 322-365)," J. Prosecký (ed.), *Intellectual Life of the Ancient Near East: Papers Presented at the 43rd Rencontre assyriologique internationale Prague, July 1–5, 1996* (Prague: Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Oriental Institute, 1998), 397–412 (406).

creation. And different from other biblical scholars she has not limited her explanation of the verb ברא to v. 1 of Genesis 1 only, but is (to the best of her knowledge) the first scholar to apply this spatial view of ברא to Gen 1:21, 27; 2:3-4.

4. OTHER SEMANTIC QUESTIONS: PREPOSITIONS, COGNATE LANGUAGES, PARALLELISM, AND METAPHORS

4.1 Verbs and Prepositions

So far we discussed a first inadequacy in the biblical semantic approaches to the verb ברא, namely the idea that separation can be understood in one way only, namely "to fashion by cutting." A second semantic shortcoming is noticeable in BK's remarks in section 4.1 and regards the collocation of verbs of separation with the preposition מן "from, out of."

> A Hebrew verb with the meaning "to separate" requires at least one preposition, like מן or בין, as can be observed with the verb בדל. It could be argued that there are texts where a preposition is not required. However, this is the case only when בדל is used in the meaning of "to select." Otherwise "separate" has to be taken as "split, cleave." (BK, 7)

In the spatial domain, events involving a [SEPARATION IN THE MATERIAL OR SPATIAL INTEGRITY OF A UNIT] are expressed in Biblical Hebrew by verbs that express "to separate" or "to cut" in distinct ways. The following four verbs are most used: בדל (x42), בקע (x51), חלק (x56), פרד (x27) (numbers DCH). The verb בקע is always used *without* a preposition; the verb חלק is often used with the preposition ל "into," but is also used *without* a preposition. The verb בדל is mainly used with the preposition בין "between," but also with the prepositions ל "into," ב "in," and מן "from."

Let us first look more carefully at one of these four verbs, namely the verb פרד. It occurs 27 times in the Hebrew Bible, of which 9 times are with the preposition מן, 4 times with the preposition בין, and 12 times without a preposition. Each of these usages are, of course, to be studied extensively within the spatial and metaphorical conceptualization of the text. Thus, פרד is used with מן in Gen 2:10 in a geographical domain to describe the river that branches out from Eden, whereas in Gen 10:5, 32 it is used in the ethnic domain to describe the people who separate themselves from other people, and in Judg 4:11 it is used in the human domain to describe someone who separates himself from another. Each of these four texts expresses a distinct spatial mental image, that might or might not differ from the mental image expressed by פרד with the preposition בין, especially when two parties are involved. This is, for example, the case in Ruth 1:17. Interestingly, the verb פרד is also often used *without* a preposition, e.g., in 2 Sam 2:23 where Saul

and Jonathan ונפרד "never parted in life or in death," in Gen 30:40 where Jacob הפריד "separated the sheep," or in Hos 4:14 where daughters-in-law יפרדו "separate" ("turn aside" NJPSV). Other occurrences of פרד without a preposition are Deut 32:8; Pss 22:15; 92:10; Prov 16:28; 17:9; 18:1; 19:4; and Job 4:11; 41:9.

Another example of a "separation verb" that figures in various collocations, is the verb גרע. It is used six times with מן, five times with את, once with אל, and six times without a preposition.

Therefore, one cannot automatically conclude that in order to express the concept of [SEPARATION], a verb necessarily should be collocated with the preposition מן "from"; it all depends on the way the act of separation is construed. BK have reached conclusions on the basis of far too insufficient research.

This second semantic shortcoming can be summarized as follows. To make assertions about collocations, an analysis of complete data sets is a first condition to be met. In fact, what is needed is a complete semantic analysis of the lexical fields of "cut" and "separate" in a way similar to the earlier described linguistic studies and to lexical semantic studies such as those presented by Malul and Zanella.[41] Such an analysis would not only include the four most used verbs of separation, but all others too.[42] To be included are profound linguistic studies of prepositions, and the way they construe the spatial environment. A similar linguistic analysis is needed for words that express "making, creation, shape, form, fashion," in short "words of creation." And, finally, a profound study of fixed word combinations, such as collocations with prepositions, is necessary. It is time for biblical scholarship not to draw linguistic conclusions on hap-snap reference to biblical texts and on semantic assumptions that are not valid anymore in modern linguistic research.

4.2 Cognate Languages and Texts in Cognate Languages

A third semantic shortcoming in BK's discussion is visible in their discussion of Sumerian and Babylonian languages and texts.

> The Sumerian *Song of the Hoe* contains the following line:…"and not only did he [=Enlil] hasten to separate heaven from earth." In this text the adverbial case marker "ta" (in "ki-ta") indicates the ablative with the separating force, hence

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[41] M. Malul, *Knowledge, Control and Sex: Studies in Biblical Thought, Culture and Worldview* (Tel Aviv-Jaffa: Archaeological Center Publication, 2002); R. Zanella, *The Lexical Field of the Substantives of "Gift" in Ancient Hebrew* (SSN, 54; Leiden: Brill, 2010).

[42] In addition to the four Hebrew verbs of separation mentioned above, the full study would have to look also at: גרע, גרז, גזל, גזז, גדע, בצע, נתח, נקף, נסח, מנה, כרת, כרסם, כסח, חרם, חצץ, חצה, חצב, חלף, הרס, הגה, קצץ, קצה, קצב, פשח, פרק, פרץ, פרם, פצץ, פצם, פסל, פלח, פלג, נתק, נתץ, תזז, שסף, שסע, שבב, קרע.

"from." A comparable feature is present in the late bilingual text from Uruk:…"Utu, when the heavens were made distant from the earth." In the late Babylonian version the preposition *itti*, "from," is used. In the other texts that Van Wolde refers to, prepositions or an ablative are present. These remarks imply that the Mesopotamian concept of origin can be labelled as "separating A from B," which is different from "differentiating into A and B"—as Ellen van Wolde assumes for Genesis 1, and therefore are of no use as comparative material in an argument on the interpretation of Genesis 1. (BK, 8–9)

First of all, Van Wolde's view is that the verb ברא designates [SEPARATION IN THE SPATIAL INTEGRITY OF A UNIT] and BK's idea of differentiation does not fully cover that view. Second, BK presuppose, according to this explanation, that cognate languages use comparable grammatical constructions. The earlier described cross-linguistic studies of terms of "cutting" and "breaking" have demonstrated that this is an incorrect assumption. Languages construe events in different ways. Even words that are etymologically related (e.g., English *break*, German *brechen*, Dutch *breken*, and Swedish *bräcka*) can be used in completely different grammatical constructions and can have known different semantic evolutions. Thus an English text containing the verb "break" is translated in Swedish not with *bräcka* but by another term that covers the idea of English "break" best. Thus the Sumerian and Akkadian texts that open their creation stories with the beginning of the universe use the term b a d and *parāsu* respectively to designate the separation of the heaven and the earth,[43] whereas Gen 1:1 uses the term ברא to express the very same notion of separation because in Biblical Hebrew this term covers the idea of "breaking open a unity, separating, setting apart" best. Similarly, the Samaritan Hymn IV 13, discussed below, expresses the notion of separation as "God נפש 'spreads out' and makes טעיל 'space' between the waters of the *tehôm* and the heavenly vault." And the very same concept is designated by the verb ברא in Isa 42:5, "Thus said the deity YHWH who separated the heavens and spread them out," and in Isa 45:16-18, "who set the heavens apart/spread out the heavens." And this is exactly what is expressed in Gen 1:1 by the verb ברא, "to separate, set apart, make space."

An example of differences in grammatical constructions of cognate languages is the following. In English one could say "clear off" in a clause such as "he cleared off the biggest trees," but also in a (rude) command to someone, meaning that this person should leave. In both cases, a plot is freed from the presence of something ("trees") or someone ("you"). This grammatical collocation is not the same in cognate languages such as French, Dutch, or German.

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[43] See Van Wolde, "Why the Verb."

BK compare grammatical constructions of verbs of separation in Sumerian and Akkadian and conclude from these constructions that Biblical Hebrew should have used the same grammatical constructs to express the same idea of separation. Their lack of proper semantic reasoning is amazing.

4.3 Participle בורא and Parallelism

BK, 9, are right in their critique that the participle of בורא is used as an abstract noun to describe God. They are also right that Van Wolde depended in her view on Florentino García Martínez. This does not mean, of course, that the noun בורא expresses "creator." It still depends on the semantic analysis what meaning should be attached to this nominalized participle. BK choose to support their view in relation to Isa 45:7: "I am the former (יוצר) of light and בורא of darkness. I am the maker (עושה) of good and בורא of evil."[44] First, if a reference to Genesis 1 is presupposed in Isaiah 45, the meaning of ברא "create" would be impossible, since in Genesis 1 God did not create darkness, but made light and separated this light from the pre-existent darkness. Analogously Isa 45:7 would describe that darkness and evil did already exist, but that God formed light and set it apart from pre-existent darkness, that he made good and set it apart from pre-existent evil. The participle בורא would then express this spatial divine action as a durative activity.[45]

The main argument BK offer to support their view is that of parallelism:

> It is quite clear that ברא is paralleled here by the verb עשה and יצר indicating that the three verbs are part of the same semantic field and that their meaning is interconnected. (BK, 9)

The fact that words belong to the same semantic field, does not imply that they express the same or an interconnected meaning. On the contrary, words that figure in one semantic field construct events—that are referentially related—in different ways. In other words, a semantic domain is the collection of words that refer to an event or to events that are related in reality or in the thought of reality, yet the way these words conceptualize this event or these events can be completely different. The use of the notion of parallelism in biblical scholarship bears the risk of mixing sense with reference. Say the words עשה, ברא, and יצר all belong to the se-

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[44] BK translate the first person forms in Isa 45:7 incorrectly with third person forms. They translate: "He who forms light and creates darkness, who makes peace and creates evil."

[45] It is difficult to understand how BK's own proposal of ברא meaning "to construct" would fit Isa 45:7: "I am the former of light and the constructor of darkness? I am the maker of good and the constructor of evil?"

mantic field of "creation." The events referred to are those of "making something new that did not exist before." Words conceptualize these events in different frameworks of thinking, in various metaphorical complexes. Thus עשה can conceive of this event as "a completely new making of" in a general non-metaphorical framework of thinking. The verb יצר conceives of the creation event as "the forming out of pre-existing material," within the pottery framework. The verb יסד conceptualizes the creation of the earth as the founding or setting on pillars, whereas the verb נטה conceptualizes the creation of the heavens as the spreading out of an expanse (similar to that of a tent). And the verb ברא conceptualizes the act of creation in terms of spatial separation, as the setting apart of phenomena. Consequently, the particular nuances of meaning and the semantic overlap and difference between the various words in a semantic domain ask for a much more nuanced view than that offered by BK. The danger of the concept of parallelism is that one brings the meanings of the paralleled terms *a priori* into one line. One considers the meanings of paralleled terms to be interconnected and thus misses the variation in metaphorical constructions of meaning.

A full discussion of all texts in which ברא occurs in the Hebrew Bible falls outside the scope of this response article. Too often BK's textual explanations on pages 11–13 reflect the same—in our view—wrong semantic assumptions in regard to parallelism, the idea of semantic domain, the fact that they do not take into account metaphorical frameworks of thinking, etc. It is time now to discuss BK's own hypothesis. Before doing so, however, an excursus on the etymology of the verb ברא is offered, since etymological arguments are often used in the discussion—also by BK—to support the view that ברא means "to create" (or using BK's terminology: "to construct").

5. EXCURSUS: ETYMOLOGY OF THE VERB ברא

5.1 BK's Etymological Detour

BK base their criticism of Van Wolde's proposal partly on etymology. In particular, their etymological argumentation is grounded on (1) Arabic and (2) Greek.

(1) With regard to Arabic, they state:

> It has been recognized meanwhile that the Arabic root *brʾ*, "to create" is probably an Aramaic (or Hebrew?) loanword which was confused early on with Arabic *brw/bry* "to cut off, form by cutting."[46] In Classical Arabic the phonetic difference between various forms of these verbs is slight and in unvocalized

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[46] In BK, 5, n. 12 they refer only to A. Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary in the Qurʾān*, 75–76, published in 1938.

texts invisible.[47] Already the early Arabic lexicographers no-
ticed the confusion of the two roots. Because the existence of
the Hebrew root ברה<*brw/y*, "to cut in half," may be as-
sumed on the basis of the well-known idiom כרת ברית, literal-
ly "to cut a covenant," and the noun ברית "covenant, treaty,
contract," it seems likely that a similar confusion has taken
place in the few places where ברא Piel occurs. There are more
examples of this type of confusion of the weak consonants א
and ה at the end of verbal forms. (BK, 5)

From an etymological perspective one can hardly call this sol-
id argumentation, for the following reasons.

(a) BK assume a possible confusion of the weak consonants א
and ה in Hebrew that caused the confusion in Arabic.[48] However,
there is another possibility to consider, namely that the Arabic
brw/bry "to cut off, form by cutting" is based on Hebrew ברא.

(b) In classical Arabic there is indeed a small phonetic distinc-
tion between *brˀ* and *brw/bry*, but in unvocalized texts the differ-
ence between the two is visible in imperfect verb forms. Only in
perfect forms the two forms cannot be distinguished.[49]

(c) BK fail to notice that in Arabic the word *bariˀa* expresses
"to be liberated, i.e. separated," *ˀabraˀa* "to separate," *barâ* "to
tailor, cut." Actually, recent studies of the Arabic root *brˀ* have
shown a more complex picture than that offered by the few older
dictionaries consulted by BK.[50] Joas Wagemakers shows that in
pre-Islamic Arabic the root *brˀ* is mainly used in contexts of dis-
tancing and liberation.[51] In an extensive study of the Arabic term

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[47] To substantiate their claim they refer in BK, 5, n. 13 to three old
Arabic-English/French dictionaries: E. W. Lane (1863); R. Blanchère
(1967); J. Penrice (original 1873, republished in 1976) (cf. BK, 5, n. 13, for
bibliographical references).

[48] BK offer without any arguments the same solution, that is the con-
fusion of the weak consonants א and ה, as a "likely explanation" of the
difference in meaning between Hebrew ברא Qal and Piel.

[49] In practice, of course, manuscripts can be difficult to read and, be-
cause of handwriting or transmission problems, these forms may not
always be easily detectable.

[50] See U. Rubin, "Barāˀa: A Study of Some Quranic Passages," *Jerusa-
lem Studies of Arabic and Islam* 5 (1984), 13–32; E. Kohlberg, "Barāˀa in
Shiˀi Doctrine," *Jerusalem Studies of Arabic and Islam* 7 (1986), 139–75; J.
Wagemakers, "Defining the Enemy - Abū Muḥammad al-Maqdisī's Radi-
cal Reading of Sūrat al-Mumtaḥana," *Die Welt des Islams* 48 (2008), 348–
71; "The Transformation of a Radical Concept: *al-walāˀ wa-l-barāˀ* in
the Ideology of Abu Muḥammad al-Maqdisī," R. Meijer (ed.), *Global
Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* (London: Hurst & Co., 2009), 81–
106.

[51] See, for instance, the use of the term *brˀ* in the concept *al-walāˀ
wa-l-barāˀ*, roughly translatable as "loyalty and disavowal," in which one
shows loyalty to other members in their own group, while disavowing

barāʾa in Quranic passages, Uri Rubin demonstrates that *barāʾa* is a proclamation of the unilateral *repudiation* of all the treaties which Muhammad signed with former allies.[52] The word *barāʾa* itself expresses disconnection and is used to describe that Muhammad has to state publicly that he no longer has a connection with those tribes that had helped him before to defeat the enemy. In contrast, in Quranic passages that relate to creation, the standard expression for "to create" is *kh-l-q*, a word which expresses "to divide, apportion" or "to create." In Classical Arabic dictionaries the verb *bariʾa* is translated "separate," whereas the verb *baraʾa* is commonly understood to express "to create, to form out of nothing," in which the understanding of Gen 1:1 as *creatio ex nihilo* seems to have exerted its influence. The nouns *bāriʾ* and *khāliq* are used in the Quran to designate "the creator."

(d) Also in the Quran we find images of the creation of the heavens and the earth that fit the "separation" idea of Gen 1:1, namely Sura 21, verse 30. Pickthall translates this passage as follows: "Have not those who disbelieve known that the heavens and the earth were of one piece, then We parted them, and We made every living thing of water? Will they not then believe?"[53] The Quran translation by Arberry presents most clearly the antonymous word pair that lies at the heart of this verse: "Have not the unbelievers then beheld that the heavens and the earth were a mass all sewn up, and then We unstitched them and of water [We] fashioned every living thing? Will they not believe?"[54] The Arabic word *ratqan*, the noun derived from the verb *rataqa* "to sew," is used here as an antonym of *fataqa* "to separate, take apart, unsew," and is rendered by Arberry as "unstitched" (*Fa-fataqnāhumā*, "we have them both unstitched"). In this metaphor, the heaven and earth were first of one piece, then the tailor-God unstitched or unsewed it into pieces, and fashioned of water every living thing.

(e) In BK's reference to more recent studies of South-Arabic dialects that would confirm Gesenius-Buhl's thesis that several

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outsiders. The first concept is expressed by *wly*, "to be loyal to," the second concept is expressed by *brʾ*, "to distance, disavow" (Wagemakers, "Transformation of a Radical Concept," 81–83). "Central to al-Maqdisī's (i.e. Salafist) ideology is the concept of *al-walāʾ wa-l-barāʾ*, which refers to the complete loyalty (*walāʾ* or *muwālāt*) that Muslims should show to God, Islam, and other Muslims, while expressing disavowal (*barāʾ*) of and staying away from everything else" (Wagemakers, "Defining the Enemy," 351). On the origins of *al-walāʾ wa-l-barāʾ*, see Kohlberg, "Barāʾa in Shiʾi Doctrine."

[52] Rubin, "Barāʾa: A Study."

[53] M. M. Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran: An Explanatory Translation by Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall* (New York: The New American Library, 1953).

[54] A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted: Volume 1: Suras I-XX. Volume 2: Suras XXI-CXIV* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1955).

South-Arabic dialects know the root *brʾ*, "to build, make, give birth," it becomes apparent from BK, 6, n. 16 that this is only partially true, "The Mehrite and Soqotrite verbs Buhl adduced for the meaning of 'to give birth,' however, are nowadays seen as derivatives of the root *brw*/*bry* 'to cut off, separate.'"[55]

(f) BK fail to mention other cognate Semitic languages that clearly oppose their position (see below).

(g) David Cohen, who has dealt extensively with etymology, is disqualified without much ado.[56] Is this because he attributes to ברא the meaning "to cut, tailor, separate"?

In sum, BK's etymological argumentation with regard to Arabic appears to be biased and their references to relevant literature are highly selective.

(2) The second element in BK's etymological argumentation regards the relationship between Biblical Hebrew and Septuagintal Greek.

> In any case, it is significant that the Old Greek translation of the HB (LXX) mostly chooses κτιζειν, "to found, build" which only secondarily means "to create," as its rendering of ברא Qal. (BK, 6)

Very recently, Michael O'Connor wrote on the Septuagint and the verbs used to express creation in Ben Sira.[57] He explains that the common word for "to create" in the Septuagint is κτιζω; it is used 60 times. The Greek version of Ben Sira contains this verb κτιζω 23 times, and in 15 cases the Hebrew text is extant. In these 15 texts, 6 times κτιζω represents the Hebrew verb חלק "to divide, apportion." In his semantic analysis of the usages of חלק in Ben Sira, O'Connor demonstrates that this verb is used both in the sense of "to divide, division, portion" (Ben Sira 14:9 [x3]; 16:16; 33:13; 41:21; 42:3; 45:22) and in the sense of "to create" (Ben Sira 31:13; 38:1; 39:25; 40:1). These results allow him to conclude that the Septuagint's κτιζω expresses either "to divide, apportion" or "to create." So, BK's conclusion with regard to Greek is much less certain than suggested.

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[55] Cohen mentions also South-Arabic *hbrw* "tailler en pièces" and Ethiopian *bäräw belä* "être dispersé, se dissoudre" (D. Cohen, *Dictionnaire des racines sémitiques ou attestées dans les langue sémitiques: Fascicule 2: ʾTN. - GLGL* [Louvain: Peeters, 1994], 82).

[56] BK, 5–6, n. 15: Cohen "appears to be confused by the previous discussion. On extremely flimsy evidence he too attributes to *BRʾ* the meaning 'couper, tailler, séparer.' As a matter of fact, Cohen knows that his reference to Punic *brʾ* is dubious, but proposes it nevertheless."

[57] M. O'Connor, "The Language of Creation in Ben Sira: חלק = κτιζω," J. Corley and V. Skemp (eds.), *Studies in the Greek Bible: Essays in Honor of Francis T. Gignac* (CBQMS, 44; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2008), 217–28.

5.2 Etymological Studies and ברא

Various etymological studies of Hebrew ברא have been made that offer valuable information. Samson Hirsch is one of the first to mention the notion of "leaving a unity" that lies at the heart of all cognate terms ברא, ברה, ברח, פרח, פרא, פרע.[58] G. Johannes Botterweck describes the root *br* and its etymological development from the hypothetical and rarely attested origin of "making of noise" into the widely attested meaning of "to form" and "to separate."[59] Émile Dantinne presents a great number of Hebrew verbs—פרם, פרד, and שבר, חבר, בור, באר, ברר, ברח, ברה, ברא—פרש, פרר, פרק, פרץ, פרר, פרק—in which the biconsonantal items בר and פר express the notion of cutting or separating.[60]

Cohen's *Dictionnaire des racines sémitiques*, *The Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*, Von Soden's *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*, and *The Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*, indicate that the biconsonantal item *br* (and *pr*) expresses in Akkadian the notion of separation: *bari* means "between, among," *barītu(m)* "intervening space, interval," *bāru* "open country," *bēru* "distant, remote" (e.g., *bēru ina šamê* "the linear distance–between stars–in heaven"), *bēru(m)* "selected,

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[58] S. R. Hirsch, *Der Pentateuch übersetz und erklärt: Erster Teil: Die Genesis* (Frankfurt am Main: Kauffmann, 1867¹, 1903⁴), 4: ברא. Die verwandten Wurzeln: ברח, ברה, פרח, פרא, פרע die sämtlich ein hinausstreben und hinaustreten aus einer Innerlichkeit oder einer Gebundenheit bedeuten, ergeben für ברא ebenfalls den Begriff des Hinaussehens in die Äußerlichkeit; heißt ja auch Chaldäisch ברא ohne weiteres das Draußenseiende, draußen. ברא ist somit das Äußerlichmachen eines bis dahin nur im Innern, im Geiste Vorhandengewesenen. Es ist jenes Schaffen, dem nichts anderes als der Gedanke und der Wille vorangegangen."

[59] G. J. Botterweck, *Der Triliterismus im Semitischen* (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1952), 64–65 (64): "Daß auch bei der Wurzel *br* die Entwicklung von einer Schallbedeutung ausgegangen ist, zeigen noch einige spärliche Reste: arab. *barbara* „meckern (von einer Ziege) > schreien, lärmen, murren, brummen"; *birbir* „Ruf der Schafe"; *burbur* „schreiend, lärmend."…Mit dieser Schallbedeutung bezeichnete man auch das Geräusch des „Schabens, Spaltens" und schließlich die Tätigkeit des Spaltens selbst, weil sie ja das Geräusch verursacht: so arab. *barā* „schaben > glätten > mager machen"; hebr. *bārā(ʾ)* „(spalten >) schaffen, hervorbringen." Die Bedeutung „spalten" differenziert sich dann weiter zu „trennen": arab. *barra* VIII. „von seinen Genossen getrennt sein, IV. auf dem lande wohnen oder reisen"; *barr* „(abgetrennt >) Festland, Ufer," *barran* „draußen," hebr. *bar* „freies Feld, Acker"; arab. *ḫabira* „(getrennt >) menschenscheu sein und zu Hause hocken," *ḫabara* „bleiben, verweilen"; hebr. *bārār* „absondern, auslesen, reinigen"; *bārāh* „scheiden, entscheiden, festsetzen, (absondern >) einhauen, essen." Ferner gehört zur Bedeutung „trennen" assyr. *birū* „hungrig" und *būru* „Hunger." Die Bedeutung „scheiden" differenziert sich noch weiter zu „underscheiden, sehen"; so assyr. *barū* „scheiden, entscheiden, richten, sehen, schauen," *bīru* „Gesicht," *bārū* „Seher.""

[60] Dantinne, "Création et séparation," 447.

double hour (i.e. twelfth part of the day)," *bêru(m)* "to choose, select," *biri* "between," *birā* "between, among," *birītu(m)* "interval, separation, cutting," *birtu* "between," *bīru* "interval, pause after a march," and *parāsu(m)* "cut, separate, decide."[61] The meaning of the verb *barû* A has evolved in Akkadian into "to look upon, to observe, to look attentively."[62]

In contrast, the etymological relation between Hebrew ברא and Akkadian *banû* is very weak. *The Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* distinguishes *banû* A and *banû* B, and describes *banû* A as "to build, construct, form," which is applied to buildings, statues, etc. and with reference to a deity it mainly indicates "to create" in relation to the creation of humankind or of gods, and *banû* B is described as "to grow, beget."[63] In modern Assyriology it is known for a fact that the traditionally presupposed equivalence between Hebrew ברא and Akkadian *banû* "to build, beget" is problematic, and should be discarded.[64]

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[61] Cohen, *Dictionnaire des racines sémitiques*; A. L. Oppenheim et al., *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago: Volume 2, B* (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1965); W. von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch: Volume 1, A-L* (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1965); J. Black, A. George, and N. Postgate, *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian* (2nd [corrected] printing; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000).

[62] Malul, *Knowledge, Control and Sex*, analyses the relation between verbs of separation and their relation to knowledge and seeing in Biblical Hebrew and in Sumerian and Akkadian. He makes an inventory of verbs of separation, such as חקר, בדק, בקר, ברר, בחן, צרף, בחר, נסה, and בין, and demonstrates that all of them clearly connote the idea of knowledge one way or the other. The verbs ברר, בחן, צרף, and בחר also occur in contexts of refining metals, which convey the connotation of separation and removal of the dross, and Malul points to Sumerian and Akkadian equivalents (Malul, *Knowledge, Control and Sex*, 106, n. 28). "Thus, they reflect a kind of concrete process which, when applied to the process of knowledge, is understood to take place in the abstract sense within one's mind.…Finally, note also the interesting use of such roots as בדק, בקר, and others, where knowledge is attained by cleaving and breaking and thus bringing to light what has been 'buried' somewhere" (Malul, *Knowledge, Control and Sex*, 144).

[63] See W. G. Lambert, "Technical Terminology for Creation in the Ancient Near East," J. Prosecký (ed.), *Intellectual Life of the Ancient Near East: Papers Presented at the 43rd Rencontre assyriologique internationale Prague, July 1–5, 1996* (Prague: Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Oriental Institute, 1998), 189–93 (192): "The Akkadian embraces two quite distinctive ideas which have different Sumerian equivalents. The one is *banû* = dû 'make,' or more specifically 'build,' while the other *banû* = (u)tu alludes to parentage."

[64] See S. Anthonioz, *L'eau, enjeux politiques et théologiques, de Sumer à la Bible* (VTS, 131; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 584: "Aussi la racine hébraïque ברא, «créer», a-t-elle été (traditionnellement) posée comme équivalente de l'akkadien *banû*. De fait, l'équivalence peut être établie sur le plan sémantique à tous ses niveaux, puisque les notion liées de construc-

To conclude, the etymology of ברא that BK present falls short. In contrast, a number of etymological studies of ברא show that it is very well possible that ברא is etymologically related to Akkadian words that express the idea of "division" and "separation."[65] The usages of pre-Islamic Arabic *brʾ* designating the acts of distancing and disconnection, and the occurrences of the Septuagint's κτίζω designating either "to divide, apportion" or "to create" confirm this option, too.

Are there any other linguistic and/or textual witnesses? Yes, there are. First, the Qumran Aramaic fragment of 4QEn[c] I VI (= 1 Enoch 13:6–14:16) which contains the line ליא חלק ועבד וברא, "So he has divided/decreed and made and divided/separated" (translation J. T. Milik). Second, there are the texts of an important group in Hellenistic Judaism, the Samaritans. The texts of the Samaritan liturgy are particularly instructive, because cosmology and the view of God as creator play an important role.[66] God is very often described in these texts as "the creator of the world," עבודה דעלמה, and with the collocation פעל כל עלמה. Equally frequent is the expression of the idea that God created everything, עבודה דכלה.[67] In all these Samaritan creation texts, the divine act of creation is expressed either by עבודה or פעל, but never by ברא. Hans-Friedrich Weiss made an analysis of how in Samaritan cosmology two main groups of texts are distinguishable.[68] The first group of texts relate their view of creation to Genesis 1 and understand the creation of the world as God's battle against the powers of chaos. The second group has its origins in Greek-Hellenistic philosophy. To the former belong, among others, Hymns IV 13 and V 3:

מי תהומה מעס · ומי רקיעה תלא · נפש לבינתוך · טעיל לרחמין

Hymn IV 13

גלא יבשה · ממי תהו ובהו

Hymn V 3

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tion/décoration et production/végétation sont présentes dans le déroulement narratif de Gn. 1. Cependant, cette équivalence reste problématique sur le plan étymologique."

[65] The same concept of separation is expressed in Syriac by the verb *barrî* "to separate, liberate," and by the adverb *bar* "outside" (C. Brockelman, *Lexicon Syriacum* [2nd edition; Hildesheim: Olms, 1966]). So far the verb *bārāʾ* does not occur in Phoenician, nor in Ugaritic (Lambert, "Technical Terminology," 189).

[66] See H.-F. Weiss, *Untersuchungen zur Kosmologie des hellenistischen und palästinischen Judentums* (TU, 97; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1966), especially 129–38; and the edition and glossary of the texts of the Samaritan liturgy by A. E. Cowley, *The Samaritan Liturgy* (2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1909).

[67] Weiss, *Untersuchungen zur Kosmologie*, 130.

[68] Weiss, *Untersuchungen zur Kosmologie*, 131–38.

In Hymn V 3 God reveals the dry material by putting the waters of the *tehôm* aside. Hymn IV 13 is even more explicit, and Weiss translates it as follows: "Die Wasser der Tehom halt er zurück, und die Wasser der (Himmels-)Feste hält er hoch. Er hat ausgebreitet (נפש) zwischen ihnen einen Raum (טעיל) für die, die ihn lieben."[69] Cowley explains the meaning of טעל in Samaritan texts as follows: "טעל…*to be* or *make wide*; impft. נטעיל…*spread open*…; imperat. טעיל *spread out*…טעיל…*space*."[70] The metaphoric image presented in Hymn IV 13 is in line with the beginning of Genesis 1 and describes the making of the space between the waters of the *tehôm* and the heavenly vault. And this is exactly what is expressed in Biblical Hebrew by the verb ברא, "to separate, set apart, make space," in the view of Van Wolde.[71]

6. The Meaning and Significance of ברא: BK's Alternative Proposal

6.1 Summary of BK's Arguments

On pp. 14–18, 20, BK seek "to address the meaning and significance of ברא from the perspective of a more historical approach"(BK, 14). They argue that God creates with ברא in late texts such as Genesis 1–2 (postexilic Priestly Writer; 1:1–2:4a) and Chronicles (personal name "Beraiah," בראיה; 1 Chr 8:21) in order to avoid anthropomorphism (the attribution of human characteristics to the deity). Older texts have terms such as בנה "to build," יצר "to form, shape," עשה "to make," and קנה "to beget, bear, create," words that may connote procreation. Consequently the change in language relates to a theological shift in thinking over time, from older texts that use anthropomorphic language about God to later texts that refer to creation in a way that sharply contrasts God's activity to human activity. Therefore they also suggest the translation "to construct, build" for ברא rather than "to create" or "to separate."

BK offer the following items of support for their alternative proposal regarding the meaning of ברא in Gen 1:1–2:4a:

(1) In Israel's preexilic period cognates of the Hebrew verb ברא are unattested in Semitic languages (e.g., Akkadian, Aramaic, Phoenician, Ugaritic, and also epigraphic Hebrew) which mainly use instead cognates of Hebrew בנה and קנה in contexts of creation (e.g., Akkadian *banû*, Ugaritic *qny*) (BK, 5–7, 14–15, 17). Although they do not *explicitly* state that the root ברא was an *absolutely* late development, speaking instead about a "shift" in meaning or usage

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[69] Weiss, *Untersuchungen zur Kosmologie*, 131.
[70] Cowley, *The Samaritan Liturgy*, vol. 2, lvii.
[71] Van Wolde, *Reframing Biblical Studies*, 184–200; "Why the Verb."

("semantic/theological shift") in biblical books dating to the exilic and postexilic periods, an implication of their discussions of the etymology of ברא and especially the antiquity of old(er) terms such as קנה and its cognates in other Semitic languages seems to be that the root ברא made a *relatively* late(r) entrance into Biblical Hebrew.

(2) In Biblical Hebrew the verb ברא is used only in relatively late texts (e.g., Genesis 1:1–2:4a, Deutero-Isaiah) whereas earlier texts have verbs such as עשה ,יצר, בנה, and קנה (e.g., Gen 2:4b-25; 14:19, 22) (BK, 14–18).

(3) The verb ברא appears nevertheless in several biblical texts (Deut 4:32; Jer 31:22; Amos 4:13) possibly dating to the preexilic period although "the date of each of these texts [=verses]…is disputed" and "[s]cholars have not only expressed doubt about the pre-exilic date of all three texts [=verses] but also advanced a postexilic date" (BK, 16).

(4) The distribution of Israelite personal names supports the lateness of the root ברא, such that for example the name אלקנה is found in relatively early texts whereas in a late book like Chronicles we find the name בראיה (1 Chr 8:21) (BK, 15, n. 60, 17).

(5) The shift in vocabulary from early biblical texts (with בנה, יצר ,עשה, and קנה) to late ones (with ברא) relates to a change in thought about the concept of creation (BK, 15–20). Thus BK conclude their article with this statement: "In sum and to place our discussion within the general frame of the theological approach of the author of Genesis 1, this text reflects [postexilic] Priestly theology. This is a temple oriented theology. Just as the temple in Jerusalem had been built by human hands, YHWH is imagined as having 'constructed' the cosmos as his temple. To avoid an anthropomorphic confusion the verb ברא was used instead of the verb בנה" (BK, 20).

Close scrutiny of each of these points exposes a number of general difficulties with BK's argumentation. These include incomplete, and therefore misleading, citations of data for the vocabulary of "creation" in Biblical Hebrew; unstated assumptions about the dates of origin of biblical sources and books and their relative chronological relationships to one another; and confident acceptance and assertion of points of view that are disputed among biblical scholars. Related specifically to the second, third, and fourth points, in the following remarks we will demonstrate that the linguistic distribution and opposition of certain verb lexemes and Israelite personal names in the Hebrew Bible do not support BK's "more historical approach."

6.2 Critique of BK's Argument Based on Verb Lexemes

A first significant piece of evidence that BK cite in support of their broader historical argument is the biblical distribution of ברא and other verb lexemes such as בנה, יצר, עשה, and קנה. They make the following statements, for example:

> It is worth noting that in the HB, the verb ברא is used only in relatively late texts. In an older text such as Gen 14:19, 22, the word קנה is used, a verb meaning both "to beget" and "to create." (BK, 14)

> We assume that, gradually, the formula involving the ambiguous verb קנה, which might suggest procreation, became obsolete.…Against this background, a specification of the meaning of the verb ברא I in the Qal stem emerged in the language. As a result of this specification, the verb ברא I Qal became one to be used exclusively with YHWH as grammatical subject.…It is difficult to establish a date for the theologically motivated specification of ברא. One may argue for a pre-exilic date for this semantic/theological shift on the grounds of three texts, namely Amos 4:13; Deut 4:32 and Jer 31:22. But the date of each of these texts, is disputed. Scholars have not only expressed doubt about the pre-exilic date of all three texts but also advanced a postexilic date. We cannot embark here in a full discussion on the dating of these texts, but we may note that the specified use of ברא is widely attested in exilic and post-exilic texts, especially in Deutero-Isaiah. (BK, 15–16)

> Traces of this shift can be found elsewhere in the HB.…Ezekiel 28…Ps 89:13. (BK, 16–17)

> In other words, the preference for ברא is a case of a theologically motivated preference for a "neologism," meant to avoid anthropomorphisms that were also current in Canaan.…The only mode of creation attested in the ancient Near East which was eventually rejected in Israel was that of procreation. Therefore, the more theological term ברא was needed, instead of the ambiguous קנה. (BK, 17–18)

The following table displays the full distribution in the Hebrew Bible of the verb ברא and also the related verbs בנה, יצר, and קנה, *when they have the deity as their subject.*[72]

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[72] A few remarks of explanation: First, a complete study would also have to include the verbs פעל, עשה, נתן, נטה, מוט, כון, יסד, בדל, and שים, but their exclusion from the present study does not affect the result. Second, ברא II (Hiphil; 1 Sam 2:29) and ברא III (Piel; Josh 17:15, 18; Ezek 21:24 [x2]; 23:47) are excluded from the table. Third, the designation of J and P verses in the table follows M. Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (trans. B. W. Anderson; Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 17–19, 28–32, 35–36, 262–76. Finally, in all these cases the deity is

	ברא	בנה	יצר	קנה
Genesis	J: 6:7 P: 1:1, 21, 27 (x3); 2:3, 4 (Ni.); 5:1, 2 (Ni.), 2	J: 2:22	J: 2:7, 8, 19	14:19, 22
Exodus	J: 34:10 (Ni.)			
Numbers	J: 16:30			
Deuteronomy	4:32			32:6
Samuel		1 Sam 2:35; 2 Sam 7:27 (//1 Chr 17:25)		
Kings		1 Kgs 8:16 (//2 Chr 6:5); 11:38 (x2; non-//)	2 Kgs 19:25 (//Isa 37:26)	
Isaiah	I: 4:5 II: 40:26, 28; 41:20; 42:5; 43:1, 7, 15; 45:7 (x2), 8, 12, 18 (x2); 48:7 (Ni.); 54:16 (x2); 57:19 III: 65:17, 18 (x2)		I: 22:11; 27:11; 37:26 (//2 Kgs 19:25) II: 43:1, 7, 21; 44:2, 21, 24; 45:7, 9 (x2), 11, 18 (x2); 46:11; 49:5 III: 64:7	
Jeremiah	31:22	18:9; 24:6; 31:4, 28; 33:7; 42:10; 45:4	1:5 (K/Q); 10:16; 18:11; 33:2; 51:19	
Ezekiel	21:35 (Ni.); 28:13 (Ni.), 15 (Ni.)	36:36		
Amos	4:13	9:6, 11	4:13; 7:1	

the subject, but the objects vary significantly. In this context it is unnecessary to discuss in detail the objects affected by the deity. What is immediately noticeable is that the verbs discussed here overlap semantically and often different verbs are used for the same type of object, e.g., both ברא and קנה for heaven(s). The verbs are used in relation to both concrete and metaphorical objects that include the universe, earth, and their adjuncts (e.g., mountains, wind); people, groups of people, and their adjuncts (e.g., eyes, hearts); animals; places and buildings; various kinds of things (e.g., pottery, throne); a number of abstract entities (e.g., people's destinies, wondrous deeds, salvation, kingdom); and the generic origins of everything.

	ברא	בנה	יצר	קנה
Zechariah			12:1	
Malachi	2:10			
Psalms	51:12; 89:13, 48; 102:19 (Ni.); 104:30 (Ni.); 148:5 (Ni.)	28:5; 51:20; 69:36; 78:69; 89:3, 5; 102:17; 127:1; 147:2	33:15; 74:17; 94:9; 95:5; 104:26; 139:16	139:13
Proverbs				8:22
Qoheleth	12:1			
Lamentations		3:5		
Chronicles		1 Chr 17:10 (//2 Sam 7:11, עשה), 25 (//2 Sam 7:27); 2 Chr 6:5 (//1 Kgs 8:16)[73]		

To begin we should restate the basic claim of BK: early biblical texts use (anthropomorphic) verbs such as בנה, יצר, and קנה, whereas late biblical texts (especially P) use the (non-anthropomorphic) verb ברא. Does the biblical data substantiate this hypothesis?

Some biblical sources, excluding P (Priestly source/redaction) since it is the issue of debate, seem to support BK's argument. Thus they say "the specified use of ברא is widely attested in exilic and postexilic texts, especially in Deutero-Isaiah" and "[t]races of this shift can be found elsewhere in the HB.…Ezekiel 28…Ps 89:13" (BK, 16). One might also mention in support of their thesis the following texts that they do not specifically cite: III Isaiah (65:17-18), Malachi (2:10), Qoheleth (12:1), and several potentially late Psalms (104:30; 148:5). This is modest support for BK's thesis. But much other evidence challenges it.

First, ברא is used in possibly early texts. BK remark: "One may argue for a pre-exilic date for this semantic/theological shift on the grounds of three texts, namely Amos 4:13; Deut 4:32 and Jer 31:22. But the date of each of these texts, is disputed" (BK, 16). They cite secondary literature in support of both options (BK, 16, nn. 63–64), that these verses could be either preexilic or postexilic, and we could easily multiply additional references in support of

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[73] All together in synoptic Samuel–Kings//Chronicles we find the following situation: 2 Sam 7:11 (עשה) // 1 Chr 17:10 (בנה); 2 Sam 7:27 (בנה) // 1 Chr 17:25 (בנה); 1 Kgs 8:16 (בנה) // 2 Chr 6:5 (בנה). The more anthropomorphic verb בנה in undisputed postexilic 1 Chr 17:10 is interesting when compared to the more generic עשה in 2 Sam 7:11.

both options. But it should also be pointed out that J (the "Yahwist"; Gen 6:7; Exod 34:10; Num 16:30), I Isaiah (4:5), and several potentially early Psalms (51:12; 89:13, 48; 102:19), also use ברא.

Second, בנה, יצר, and קנה are used in possibly late texts. BK hint at the continued use of these verbs in late texts (BK, 15, n. 61), but the entire set of data and the full implications of this observation are not given. So, for example, III Isaiah has both ברא (65:17, 18 [x2]) and יצר (64:7), Zechariah has only יצר (12:1), and one possibly late Psalm has only יצר (104:26). We will look below at the interesting cases of Proverbs 8 and Chronicles.

Third, BK remark that traces of the shift from the use of the early verbs to the use of ברא ("replacing 'old' terms for creating") can be seen, for instance, in Ezekiel 28 and Ps 89:13. In the context of their discussion (BK, 16) it seems that they wish to date this change to around the time of the exile. It is interesting to observe in this regard that some books typically associated with the time of the exile have both ברא and one or more of the other verbs, albeit in different proportions: II Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel. On the other hand, Lam. 3:5 uses the "anthropomorphic" verb בנה for the deity's actions. Furthermore, other texts that are not normally associated with the exile, but rather are considered either preexilic or postexilic as the case may be, attest the so-called early verbs and late verb ברא: J, Deuteronomy, I Isaiah, III Isaiah, Amos, Psalms 51, 89, 102. If the time of the exile represents a sort of transitional period in the linguistic and conceptual portrayal of the deity's actions, then the "mixture" in these various texts requires explanation.

Fourth, a particularly interesting passage that is not mentioned by BK is Proverbs 8. Verses 22-31 say:

> 22 The LORD created me (קָנָנִי) at the beginning of His course as the first of His works (מִפְעָלָיו) of old. 23 In the distant past I was fashioned (נִסַּכְתִּי), at the beginning, at the origin of earth. 24 There was still no deep when I was brought forth (חוֹלָלְתִּי), no springs rich in water; 25 Before the foundation of the mountains were sunk, before the hills I was born (חוֹלָלְתִּי). 26 He had not yet made (עָשָׂה) earth and fields, or the world's first clumps of clay. 27 I was there when He set (בַּהֲכִינוֹ) the heavens into place; when He fixed the horizon upon the deep; 28 When He made the heavens above firm, and the fountains of the deep gushed forth; 29 When He assigned (בְּשׂוּמוֹ) the sea its limits, so that its waters never transgress His command; when He fixed the foundations of the earth, 30 I was with Him as a confidant, a source of delight every day, rejoicing before Him at all times, 31 rejoicing in His inhabited world, finding delight with mankind. (NJPSV)

This is not the place for a detailed discussion of this passage. The following observations, however, are pertinent to the present discussion. First, Proverbs 1–9 and 30–31 are usually considered

the youngest parts of the book, later than chapters 10–29, and having a Persian and/or Hellenistic origin, and this applies in particular to chapter 8, which some view as a response to Greek philosophy.[74] Second, the verbs used of Wisdom's genesis (by Yahweh) in Prov 8:22-31 describe it in the language of birth, using קנה and the even more anthropomorphic verb חיל "to be brought forth [through labor pains]"[75]; Prov 8:24-25, twice.[76] In short, the likely date of this passage, its choice of vocabulary, and its highly anthropomorphic portrayal of the deity do not square easily with BK's historical explanation of ברא. So, in summary, the distribution in Biblical Hebrew of the verb lexemes studied here does not tally well with the historical approach suggested by BK.

6.3 Critique of BK's Argument Based on Proper Names

A second significant piece of evidence that BK cite in support of their broader historical argument is the biblical distribution of Israelite personal names such as אלקנה and בראיה (point 4, above). They make the following statements, for example:

> We assume that, gradually, the formula involving the ambiguous verb קנה, which might suggest procreation, became obsolete (BK, 15). In this connection it is interesting to note that the Israelite personal name אלקנה is attested only between the 10th and 8th century BCE… (BK, 15, n. 60)

> In 1 Chron 8:21 a Benjaminite man is mentioned, named Berayah, בראיה. Scholars agree on its meaning: "YHWH created (the child)."…However, the name can be seen as a later parallel to אלקנה, "El created (the child)." The name Elqanah only occurs in relatively early texts. It seems quite likely that this is related to the theological change of verbs for God's creation work. The more anthropomorphic בנה "to build," קנה with the meaning of "to beget, bear, create," and יצר "to shape (like a potter)," would have been exchanged then for ברא—a verb for building that had become obsolete in everyday Hebrew and therefore was a suitable choice if one wanted to avoid an anthropomorphism. If that is true, it would explain why a man named בראיה only occurs in a quite late text like 1 Chronicles and that this name is not attested in 10th to 8th century inscriptions, whereas more anthropomorphic names like

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[74] See, for example, M. V. Fox, *Proverbs 1–9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 18A; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 6. See also the more recent summary in A. Lenzi, "Proverbs 8:22-31: Three Perspectives on Its Composition," *JBL* 125 (2006), 687–714 (especially 688–89).

[75] HALOT 311.

[76] See, for example, Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 279–89.

עשהיהו, "Yhwh made (the child)," and אלקנה do occur in those times. (BK, 17)

Israelite personal names that embed the name of the deity are known as theophoric names ("bearing a god"). The most common divine epithets in Israelite theophoric names are the hypocoristics ("pet-names") יה/יהו and אל. These names illustrate the beliefs that the name-giver or name-bearer has about the deity, making a declaration about or expressing a petition to him/her, such as giving thanks for a child or expressing hope for his/her blessing.[77] Consequently it is not surprising that a large number of names in the Hebrew Bible refer in some way to a child's genesis in relation to the deity.

The following table summarizes the most obvious and/or frequent theophoric personal names in Biblical Hebrew that associate the deity with the progeniture of a child.[78] For each name the root, Hebrew name, English equivalent,[79] and a complete set of references are given. Following the table we will draw some conclusions about the significance of these names in relation to BK's historical explanation of ברא.

Root	Hebrew	English	References
ברא	בראיה	Beraiah	1 Chr 8:21[80]
קנה	אלקנה	Elkanah	Exod 6:24; 1 Sam 1:1, 4, 8, 19, 21, 23; 2:11, 20; 1 Chr 6:8, 10, 11 (x2), 12, 19, 20, 21; 9:16; 12:7; 15:23; 28:7[81]

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[77] Helpful resources on theophoric names in the Hebrew Bible include: J. D. Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names in Ancient Hebrew: A Comparative Study* (JSOTS, 49; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988); D. R. Hunsberger, *Theophoric Names in the Old Testament and their Theological Significance* (Ph.D. thesis, Temple University, 1969); D. M. Pike, *Israelite Theophoric Personal Names in the Bible and their Implications for Religious History* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1990); J. H. Tigay, *You Shall Have No Other Gods: Israelite Religion in the Light of Hebrew Inscriptions* (HSS, 31; Atlanta: Scholar Press, 1986). Older studies of value are: G. B. Gray, *Studies in Hebrew Proper Names* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1896); M. Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung* (BWANT, III, 10; Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1928).

[78] For less common names related to other roots see the resources cited in the previous footnote, e.g., Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 92–94, 176, 284–86.

[79] These names are usually rendered in English as "God/Yahweh has made/built/created" (perfect) and "God/Yahweh makes/builds/creates" (imperfect), and "work/creation of Yahweh" in the case of the final four items.

[80] Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 171; Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 92, 339; HALOT 154.

[81] Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 20–21, 172; Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 84, 92, 111, 359; HALOT 60.

Root	Hebrew	English	References
פעל	אלפעל	Elpaal	1 Chr 8:11, 12, 18[82]
יצר	יצר	Jezer	Gen 46:24; Num 26:49 (x2); 1 Chr 7:13[83]
	יצרי	Izri	1 Chr 25:11[84]
בנה	בניה	Benaiah	2 Sam 20:23; Ezek 11:13; 41:13; Ezra 10:25, 30, 35, 43; 1 Chr 4:36; 11:22, 31; 27:14; 2 Chr 20:14[85]
	בניהו	Benaiah	2 Sam 8:18; 23:20, 22, 30; 1 Kgs 1:8, 10, 26, 32, 36, 38, 44; 2:25, 29, 30 (x2), 34, 35, 46; 4:4; Ezek 11:1; 1 Chr 11:24; 15:18, 20, 24; 16:5, 6; 18:17; 27:5, 6, 34; 2 Chr 31:13[86]
	בונה	Bunah	1 Chr 2:25[87]
	בוני	Bunni	Neh 11:15[88]
	בנוי	Binnui	Ezra 8:33; 10:30, 38; Neh 3:24; 7:15; 10:10; 12:8[89]
	בָּנִי	Bani	2 Sam 23:36; Ezra 2:10; 10:29, 34, 38; Neh 3:17; 8:7; 9:4 (x2), 5; 10:14, 15; 11:22; 1 Chr 6:31; 9:4[90]
	בֻּנִי	Bunni	Neh 9:4; 10:16[91]
	יבנה	Jabneh	2 Chr 26:6[92]
	יבנְיה	Ibneiah	1 Chr 9:8[93]

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[82] Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 34, 172; Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 84, 93, 138, 357; HALOT 60.

[83] Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 172; HALOT 429; hypocoristic of *יצריה(ו).

[84] Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 172; HALOT 429; hypocoristic of *יצריה(ו).

[85] Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 21, 172–73; Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 92, 111, 156, 157, 158, 237, 338; HALOT 139–40.

[86] Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 21, 172–73; Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 91, 338; HALOT 140.

[87] Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 40, 172–73; Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 156, 158, 338; HALOT 115; hypocoristic of בניה(ו).

[88] Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 39, 172–73; Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 158, 338; HALOT 115; hypocoristic of בניה(ו). Cf. בְּנִי.

[89] Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 38, 172–73; Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 156, 158, 338; HALOT 139; hypocoristic of בניה(ו).

[90] Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 38, 172–73; Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 157, 158, 338; HALOT 139; hypocoristic of בניה(ו).

[91] Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 38–39, 172–73; Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 158, 338; HALOT 139; hypocoristic of בניה(ו). Cf. בוני.

[92] Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 212; Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 92, 338; HALOT 384.

[93] Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 27–28, 212; Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 92, 338; HALOT 384.

Root	Hebrew	English	References
	יבניה	Ibneiah	1 Chr 9:8[94]
	יבנאל	Jabneel	Josh 15:11; 19:33[95]
עשה	אלעשה	Eleasah	Jer 29:3; Ezra 10:22; 1 Chr 2:39, 40; 8:37; 9:43[96]
	עשהאל	Asahel	2 Sam 2:18 (x2), 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 30, 32; 3:27, 30; 23:24; Ezra 10:15; 1 Chr 2:16; 11:26; 27:7; 2 Chr 17:8; 31:13[97]
	עשיאל	Asiel	1 Chr 4:35[98]
	עשיה	Asaiah	2 Kgs 22:12, 14; 1 Chr 4:36; 6:15; 9:5; 15:6, 11; 2 Chr 34:20[99]
	יעשיאל	Jaasiel	1 Chr 11:47; 27:21[100]
	יעשו\י	Jaasu/ai	Ezra 10:37[101]
	מעשיה	Maaseiah	Jer 21:1; 29:21, 25; 37:3; Ezra 10:18, 21, 22, 30; Neh 3:23; 8:4, 7; 10:26; 11:5, 7; 12:41, 42[102]
	מעשיהו	Maaseiah	Jer 35:4; 1 Chr 15:18, 20; 2 Chr 23:1; 26:11; 28:7; 34:8[103]
	מעשי	Maasai	1 Chr 9:12[104]
	בעשיה	Baaseiah	1 Chr 6:25[105]

On the basis of this table several significant first impressions are that (1) there are many more theophoric personal names related to the progeniture of children than BK mention in their article, and, more importantly, (2) *these appear most often in undisputed postexilic*

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[94] Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 27–28, 212; Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 92, 338; HALOT 384.

[95] HALOT 383–84.

[96] Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 21, 90, 172; Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 92, 111, 356; HALOT 59.

[97] Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 21, 27, 90, 92, 172; Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 92, 356; HALOT 893.

[98] Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 28, 206; Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 92, 157, 356; HALOT 893.

[99] Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 21, 172; Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 92, 157, 356; HALOT 893.

[100] Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 28, 206; Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 93, 134, 160, 356; HALOT 423.

[101] Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 28, 206; HALOT 423; hypocoristic of יעשיאל; K: יעשו; Q: יעשי.

[102] Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 172; Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 116, 157, 163, 248, 356; HALOT 617.

[103] Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 172; Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 116, 157, 163, 248, 356; HALOT 617.

[104] Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 172; Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 163, 356; HALOT 617; hypocoristic of מעשיה(ו), or perhaps corruption of עמשסי (cf. Neh 11:13).

[105] Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 172, 239; Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 116, 356; HALOT 147; corruption of מעשיה?

texts where, according to BK, they should not be found. Instead, their discussion treats only אלקנה and בראיה, with a short reference to "more anthropomorphic names like עשהיהו [in inscriptions]" (see the quotations above). Furthermore, it is interesting to chart the distribution of all these names, which in their view are presumably "more anthropomorphic" than בראיה:

Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Numbers	4
Former Prophets: Joshua, Samuel, Kings	45
Latter Prophets: Ezekiel, Jeremiah	9
Writings: Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles	107

Thus, whereas "in a late book like Chronicles we find the name בראיה," it is not true that "more anthropomorphic" names like the ones they mention, אלקנה and עשהיהו, are found principally in so-called early texts, since these kinds of names clearly predominate in the late books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles, and in fact they occur more often there than in all the rest of the books of the Hebrew Bible combined. This viewpoint is affected very little even if we eliminate some of the indistinct (e.g., יצר) and abbreviated (e.g., בונה) forms in the table above, though we do not feel that this is necessary.[106]

A few more specific remarks are in order. First, with regard to the Pentateuch, BK are concerned mainly with ברא in Genesis 1:1–2:4a, and they point out that "[i]n an older text such as Gen 14:19, 22, the word קנה is used" (BK, 14). So also, they say, whereas בראיה is used in the late book of Chronicles (1 Chr 8:21), אלקנה is used in "relatively early texts" that date "between the 10th and 8th century BCE." However, they seem not to notice that in Exod 6:24, a Priestly text, another אלקנה is mentioned, a descendant of Levi and a son of Korah. The significance of this is that although BK's late Priestly Writer uses ברא in Genesis 1:1–2:4a, apparently he did not feel compelled to suppress the mention of a person having the name אלקנה in Exod 6:24. We will look below at the purported historical settings of the people with the theophoric personal names given in the table above.

Second, as a possible illustration of the shift in thinking from the preexilic to the postexilic period, BK cite the book of Ezekiel, and chapter 28 in particular. They say:

> Traces of this shift can be found elsewhere in the HB. For instance, Ezekiel 28 clearly presupposes a tradition which is more or less parallel to Genesis 2. But, significantly, in contrast to the author of the garden-narrative who uses יצר "to form, shape" (Gen 2:7–8, 19), עשה "to make" (Gen 2:18), and בנה

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[106] See especially the discussion of "abbreviated forms" in Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 149–69.

"to build" (Gen 2:22) to describe God's work of creation, Ezek 28:13, 15 uses ברא. (BK, 16–17)

In the framework of BK's historical argument it is interesting to observe that elsewhere in the book of Ezekiel, and in the book of Jeremiah which is also associated with the exile, several "more anthropomorphic" names are mentioned: בניה(ו) (Ezek 11:1, 13; 41:13), מעשיה(ו) (Jer 21:1; 29:21, 25; 35:4; 37:3), and אלעשה (Jer 29:3).

Third, above we mentioned the frequency of "more anthropomorphic" names in the late writings of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles. These data clearly contradict BK's historical explanation of ברא. The "more anthropomorphic" names are actually more widely used in "late" rather than "early" writings. Thus, insofar as Israelite personal names are concerned, BK's argument that there was a theological shift in thinking over time is supported by usage neither in the Priestly source/redaction (i.e. אלקנה in Exod 6:24) nor in the undisputed late biblical books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles.

Related to the previous point we should remark briefly on the purported historical settings of the people that are mentioned in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles. Most of the theophoric personal names given in the table above occur in genealogical lists.[107] Those mentioned in Ezra, Nehemiah, and 1 Chronicles 9 are situated in the (early-)postexilic period. In contrast the people mentioned in other chapters of Chronicles are situated in the preexilic period. Consequently in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles, whether in terms of their status as late biblical writings or the historical periods about which they speak, it is impossible to trace a line of development from "early" to "late" writings. Finally, it is interesting to observe that the storyline in 1 Chr 8:21 in fact situates "late" בראיה in Israel's preexilic period.

The biblical data presented above cast a shadow over BK's "more historical approach" to the distribution and use of ברא in Biblical Hebrew. We have offered here detailed (but not comprehensive) discussions of several significant pieces of evidence that they cite: the distribution of certain verb lexemes and Israelite personal names. A careful look at the other points they offer in support of their alternative proposal (see above) highlights other flaws in their argumentation and demonstrates further that their thesis is

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[107] The issue of the historical antiquity and reliability of the biblical genealogies is outside the parameters of this article and in any case the matter does not affect the present discussion. On the genealogies in 1 Chronicles 1–9 see J. T. Sparks, *The Chronicler's Genealogies: Towards an Understanding of 1 Chronicles 1–9* (Society of Biblical Literature, Academia Biblica, 28; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), and the summary of recent research given in R. K. Duke, "Recent Research in Chronicles," *CBR* 8 (2009), 10–50 (35–36).

untenable insofar as the Hebrew Bible is concerned. This does not come as a surprise since much linguistic data of Biblical Hebrew[108] and the notion of (anti-)anthropomorphism in biblical literature[109] are far less diachronically stratified than BK would have us believe. In conclusion, BK's proposal that "late" ברא replaced "more anthropomorphic" בנה, יצר, קנה, and so on in "late" biblical writings, is not supported by the actual Biblical Hebrew data and must be rejected.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Van Wolde has argued that the verb ברא should be construed to mean "to separate" rather than "to create." In reply Becking and Korpel countered that Van Wolde's arguments were inadequate and that in fact ברא is best rendered "to construct." In this article we have bolstered Van Wolde's earlier arguments by means of a critical review of earlier biblical studies, by a reflection on biblical semantics, and by additional support from various semantic studies, especially biblical and extra-biblical treatments of verbs expressing "separation-events," and etymological studies, as well as by external confirmation in Samaritan texts. Thus we have shown also that Becking and Korpel's arguments against Van Wolde's proposal and in support of their own are themselves deficient. In particular, their alternative proposal that ברא means "to construct" is challenged by a more complete analysis of biblical data than BK provided in their rejoinder. In conclusion, Van Wolde's proposal that ברא in Genesis 1:1–2:4a means "to spatially separate" remains a viable explanation for the semantics of this verb.

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[108] I. Young, R. Rezetko, and M. Ehrensvärd, *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts: Volume 1: An Introduction to Approaches and Problems. Volume 2: A Survey of Scholarship, a New Synthesis and a Comprehensive Bibliography* (Bible World; London: Equinox Publishing, 2008).

[109] B. F. Batto, "The Divine Sovereign: The Image of God in the Priestly Creation Account," B. F. Batto and K. L. Roberts (eds.), *David and Zion: Biblical Studies in Honor of J. J. M. Roberts* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 143–86; I. Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), 128–37; M. S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 83–93; M. S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (2nd edition; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, and Dearborn: Dove Booksellers, 2002), 137–47. For example, Smith says: "Israelite anthropomorphism hardly ends with the monarchy. Post-exilic literature, where anthropomorphism might be less expected, is in fact replete with it. Later works belonging even to the priestly tradition continued to transmit anthropomorphic imagery" (Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 89).