1. 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. But the earth was desolate and void, and darkness was upon the face of the murrain deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering on the face of the waters. And God said, Be there light: and light was, 'And God saw the light, that it was good: and God caused a division between the light

1. 1. IN THE BEGINNING — Rabbi Isaac said: The Torah which is the Law book of Israel should have commenced with the verse (Exod. I:1) 'In the beginning of this month shall be unto you the first of the months' which is the first commandment given to Israel. What is the reason, then, that it commences with the account of the Creation? Because of the thought expressed in the text (Ps. CXL. 6) 'He declares to His people the strength of His works (i.e. He gave an account of the work of Creation), in order that He might give them the heritage of the nations.' For should the peoples of the world say to Israel, 'You are robbers, because you took by force the lands of the seven nations of Canaan', Israel may reply to them, 'All the earth belongs to the Holy One, blessed be He; He created it and gave it to whom He pleased.' When He willed He gave it to them, and when He willed He took it from them and gave it to us' (Yalk. Exod. XII. 2). 'In the beginning God created' — This verse calls aloud for explanation in the manner that our Rabbis explained it: God created the world for the sake of the Torah which is called (Prov. VIII. 22) 'The beginning (רומא) of His (God's) way,' and for the sake of Israel who are called (Jer. II. 3) 'The beginning (רומא) of His (God's) increase.' If, however, you wish to explain it in its plain sense, explain it thus: At the beginning of the Creation of heaven and earth when the earth was wild and void and there was darkness, God said, 'Let there be light.' The text does not intend to point out the order of Creation, but to state that those (heaven and earth) were created first; for if it intended to point out this fact, it should have written היה רומא את אמת האברות 'At first God created the world' etc. And for this reason: Because, wherever the word רומא occurs in Scripture, it is in the construct state. E. g., (Jer. XXVI. 1) 'In the beginning of (רומא) the reign of Jehoiakim'; (Gen. X. 10) 'The beginning of (רומא) his kingdom'; (Deut. XVIII. 4) 'The firstfruit of (רומא) thy corn.' Similarly here you must translate היה רומא את אמת האברות as though it read היה אברות את רומא, at the beginning of God's creating. A similar grammatical construction (of a noun in construct followed by a verb) is: (Hos. I. 2) היה אברות את רומא, which is as much as to say, 'At the beginning of God's speaking through Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea. Should you, however, insist that it does actually intend to point out that heaven and earth were created first, and that the meaning is, 'At the beginning of everything He created these, admitting therefore that רומא is in the construct state and explaining the omission of a word signifying 'everything' by saying that you have texts which are elliptical, omitting a word, as for example (Job III. 10) 'Because it shut not up the doors of my mother's womb' where it does not explicitly explain who it was that closed the womb; and (Isa. VIII. 4) 'He shall take away the spoil of Samaria' without explaining who shall take it away; and (Amos VI. 12) 'Dost he plough with oxen, and it does not explicitly state, 'Dost a man plough with oxen'; (Isa. XL. 10) 'Declaring from the beginning the end,' and it does not explicitly state, 'Declaring from the beginning of a thing the end of a thing,' if you assert that this verse intends to point out that heaven and earth were created first, you should be astonished at yourself, because as a matter of fact the waters were created before heaven and earth, for, lo, it is written. (v. 2) 'The Spirit of God was hovering on the face of the waters,' and Scripture bears witness when the creation of the waters took place — consequently you must learn from NOTES 1) See Appendix. 2) The Rabbis translated thus: For the sake of (2) the Torah and Israel which bear the name of רומא God created the heaven and the earth.

3) See Appendix.