From Openness to Stabilization: Genesis 1:1 in the Masoretic, Versional, Rabbinic, and Christian Traditions

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Abstract

This article asks a narrower historical question than the companion grammatical study**,** *Bereshit as Subject in Genesis 1:1: A Philological Reassessment*—not whether Genesis 1:1 *can* be read with **berēʾšît** as a nominal subject, but whether the history of transmission and interpretation shows a recurring tendency to **stabilize** the verse so that **אלהים** is unmistakably the subject and clause-initial **בראשית** no longer remains open to broader construal. The argument distinguishes textual evidence from reception evidence and proceeds in layers: the relative openness of the pre-Masoretic consonantal text; Greek versional clarification; rabbinic memory of translational adjustment; Masoretic vocalic and accentual stabilization; medieval Jewish commentary; Christian reception; and early modern to modern vernacular consolidation. The central claim is limited. These witnesses do not prove the original authorial intention of Gen 1:1, nor do they demonstrate that a Bereshit-subject reading was ever standard. They do, however, suggest a repeated history of interpretive pressure toward foregrounding **אלהים** as subject and reducing the live ambiguity of clause-initial **בראשית**. The article therefore advances a historical-plausibility claim rather than a syntactic one: later traditions appear not merely to preserve Genesis 1:1, but at key points to regularize how it is heard, read, and translated.

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1. Introduction

The companion study**,** *Bereshit as Subject in Genesis 1:1: A Philological Reassessment*, argued a narrow grammatical claim: Genesis 1:1 can be read with **berēʾšît** as a nominal subject without violating attested Biblical Hebrew clause patterns, even though the resulting coordination profile remains distributionally under-attested. The present article asks a different question. Not whether that reading is grammatically licit, but whether the **history of transmission and interpretation** shows a recurring tendency to **stabilize** the verse so that **אלהים** is unmistakably the subject and clause-initial **בראשית** no longer remains open to broader construal.

This is therefore an article about **historical plausibility**, not direct syntactic proof. Its concern is not to recover original authorial intention from later witnesses, nor to claim that a Bereshit-subject reading was ever the standard public construal of Genesis 1:1. Its narrower aim is to ask whether successive stages of textual transmission, translation, vocalization, commentary, and theological reception display a discernible pattern: namely, a tendency to regularize how the verse is heard, read, and translated by foregrounding **אלהים** as subject and reducing the live ambiguity of clause-initial **בראשית**.

The inquiry proceeds in layers. It begins with the relative openness of the **pre-Masoretic consonantal text**, where clause-initial **בראשית** stands before the fuller stabilizing force of later vocalization and accentuation. It then turns to **Greek versional clarification**, asking whether the Septuagint already reflects a movement toward a more determinate subject structure. From there the discussion considers

1 This article was prepared with analytical and drafting assistance from ChatGPT (OpenAI, GPT-5 Thinking). All final interpretations, claims, and responsibility remain with the author.

rabbinic memory of translational adjustment, especially traditions that imagine Genesis 1:1 as requiring protective handling, and then the **Masoretic tradition**, which did not alter the consonants but did regulate their public reading through vocalic and prosodic guidance. The article then traces how this stabilized trajectory is further reflected in **medieval Jewish commentary**, **Christian reception**, and finally in **early modern and modern vernacular translations**, where the verse often appears in a form whose ambiguity has already been substantially managed before the ordinary reader encounters it.

The argument depends on a careful distinction between **textual evidence** and **reception evidence**. Ancient versions and Masoretic vocalization bear on the public shape of the verse as transmitted; rabbinic, medieval, and Christian comments bear on how communities understood, guarded, or amplified that transmitted shape. These later witnesses do not prove the earliest syntax of Genesis 1:1. They can, however, reveal where later readers perceived the verse as unstable, difficult, or in need of clarification. In that sense, stabilization history does not replace grammatical argument; it supplements it by asking how a grammatically possible reading may have been progressively narrowed in public tradition.

The central claim is deliberately limited. This article does not argue that Genesis 1:1 originally meant "Bereshit created …," nor that later translators or commentators consciously suppressed that reading at every stage. It argues something more modest but historically important: that the evidence suggests a repeated pattern of interpretive pressure toward foregrounding **אלהים** as subject and reducing the openness of clause-initial **בראשית**. The result is not a proof of origin, but a more precise account of how a verse once standing in relative textual openness came to be received in increasingly stabilized forms.

Stated differently, the question is no longer only whether the Bereshit-subject reading is **grammatically possible**. It is whether later traditions, by translation, vocalization, commentary, and doctrinal consolidation, were also participating in a long history of making Genesis 1:1 more determinate than the bare consonantal line requires. That historical question, though distinct from the grammatical one, is not unrelated to it. If the companion grammatical study argued that the reading remains licit, the present article asks whether the history of the verse helps explain why that possibility came to recede from view.

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2. Pre-Masoretic Textual Openness and Greek Versional Stabilization

At the earliest recoverable level, Genesis 1:1 stands before the reader as a **consonantal Hebrew clause** whose first word, **בראשית**, is not yet locked by the fuller stabilizing force of later vocalization and accentuation. That observation does not by itself establish any particular reading. It does, however, mark the historical starting point for the present inquiry. The question here is not whether the bare consonants prove a Bereshit-subject construal, but whether they leave more room than later reading traditions would publicly permit. In that sense, the pre-Masoretic text is best described as a state of **relative openness**: the clause is not unbounded, but neither is it yet fully regularized by the para-textual means that later readers came to inherit.

This point matters because the companion grammatical study argued that a Bereshit-subject reading is **grammatically licit though distributionally under-attested**. Once that grammatical possibility has been granted, even in a limited way, the historical question changes. One no longer asks only what the clause could mean in principle, but also how later communities handled a clause whose opening word stood before the reader without the stabilizing help of Tiberian pointing or accentuation. Historical

plausibility enters precisely here. If later traditions repeatedly move to foreground **אלהים** as subject, then the relative openness of the earlier consonantal line becomes not an abstract possibility but a meaningful stage in the verse's reception history.

The earliest large-scale witness to such stabilization is the **Septuagint**. However one assesses the translator's precise motive in Genesis 1:1, the Greek form presents the verse in a way that plainly foregrounds **ὁ Θεός** as subject. That does not prove that the translator was consciously suppressing a rival Hebrew construal, nor does it show that the Greek preserves the only possible sense of the consonantal text. It does show that, at a very early stage in the verse's translation history, the clause appears in a form whose subject structure is more determinate and whose opening no longer leaves **בראשית** visibly poised at the head of the line in the same way as the Hebrew consonants do.

Modern discussion of Septuagintal style strengthens this observation. The Greek translators do at times invert [2] or reshape Hebrew word order for syntactic or exegetical reasons, and Genesis 1:1 has long stood among the instances where such regularization is plausible. The significance of that fact for the present study is limited but real. One need not claim that the translator intended to block a Bereshit-subject reading in order to observe that the Greek rendering participates in a broader process of **versional clarification**. The verse enters Greek not as a neutral mirror of consonantal openness, but as a text already heard through a more controlled subject-object relationship.

That versional clarification becomes even more suggestive when viewed alongside later Jewish memory of translational adjustment. The present section does not yet depend on rabbinic tradition; that comes next. But it is worth noting already that later reflection did not remember Genesis 1:1 as a clause whose order was entirely free of interpretive risk. The Septuagint's importance, therefore, lies not in proving the earliest Hebrew syntax, but in showing that one of the oldest and most influential receptions of the verse already presents it in a form that reduces the live openness of clause-initial **בראשית**.

The conclusion of this section is accordingly narrow. The **pre-Masoretic consonantal text** should be treated as relatively open, not as self-interpreting; the **Septuagint** should be treated as an early witness to **versional stabilization**, not as decisive evidence for original authorial intention. Together they frame the historical problem. Genesis 1:1 begins its extant life as a Hebrew clause whose first word stands before later vocalic control, yet it enters broad transregional reception through a Greek form that more firmly foregrounds **God** as subject. That movement from openness toward clarification is the first major layer in the stabilization history of the verse.

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3. Rabbinic Memory and Masoretic Stabilization

If the Septuagint represents an early stage of versional clarification, rabbinic and Masoretic tradition show that the impulse toward clarification did not disappear. It was remembered, re-described, and eventually built into the public reading of the Hebrew text itself. The evidence at this stage is different in kind from the evidence of the Greek version. It is not primarily translation evidence, but a combination of **rabbinic memory**, **exegetical containment**, and **para-textual stabilization**. None of

2 Tov, E. (1999). The rabbinic tradition concerning the 'Alterations' inserted into the Greek translation of the Torah and their relation to the original text of the Septuagint. In Tov, E., The Greek and Hebrew Bible: collected essays on the Septuagint. Brill.

these proves the earliest syntax of Genesis 1:1. All, however, are highly relevant to the historical question posed in this article: whether later Jewish tradition perceived the verse as sufficiently open or unstable to require a more determinate hearing.

The clearest rabbinic witness is **Megillah 9a** [3], which preserves the tradition that the translators wrote **אלהים ברא בראשית**. Taken by itself, that report cannot be treated as neutral documentary history of the original Septuagint translators. It is a late rabbinic memory, shaped by its own literary and theological concerns. Yet precisely for that reason it is historically significant. It shows that Jewish tradition could imagine Genesis 1:1 as a clause in which the ordinary Hebrew order was not left untouched, but was remembered as having been adjusted so that **אלהים** stood first and the risk of misunderstanding was reduced. The value of the passage, then, is not that it solves the textual history of the Septuagint, but that it witnesses a specifically Jewish awareness that the verse could be perceived as vulnerable to misconstrual if left in its clause-initial Hebrew form.

That awareness becomes even more explicit in later interpretation of the rabbinic tradition. Rashi's [4] comment on **Megillah 9a** sharpens the logic behind the remembered inversion: if the verse began with **בראשית**, someone might take it as a name and infer that one authority created another. Whether or not one accepts that as a reconstruction of the translators' motive, it is an extraordinarily important historical witness to the range of construals that later Jewish commentary could still imagine. The comment does not endorse the Bereshit-subject reading. On the contrary, it marks that possibility as dangerous. But that is precisely why it matters. It shows that a major Jewish exegete could still see the clause-initial position of **בראשית** as carrying enough independent force to require explicit containment. In that sense, the memory preserved in **Megillah 9a** and the explanation supplied by Rashi are not evidence of openness preserved; they are evidence of openness remembered and then guarded against.

A similar containment logic appears in **Bereshit Rabbah 1.7** [5], where the polemical concern is not translator behavior but the theological danger of positing "two authorities." The midrash argues that no one can say that two powers created the world, because Scripture does not say **"God created"** in the plural, but **bara** in the singular; likewise it does not say **"God said"** in the plural, but **vayomer** in the singular. The point here is not syntactic neutrality. It is exegetical boundary-setting. Genesis 1:1 is read under pressure from anti-dual-authority concerns, and singular verbal morphology is deployed as the decisive barrier against any reading that might seem to divide ultimate agency. Like the material in **Megillah 9a**, this does not prove the original meaning of the verse; it does show that rabbinic tradition recognized Genesis 1:1 as a site where theological containment had to be made explicit.

Alongside that remembered and interpretive containment stands the **Masoretic tradition**, which represents a different mode of stabilization. The Masoretes did not alter the consonantal sequence of Genesis 1:1. Their achievement lay elsewhere: in the addition of **vocalization**, **accentuation**, and a regulated public reading tradition. These para-textual features do not rewrite the verse, but they do powerfully guide how it is to be heard. What is relatively open in an unpointed consonantal line becomes much more determinate once vowels and accents direct the reader toward a settled parsing. In that sense, the Masoretic tradition should not be described polemically as distortion; it is more accurately understood as **stabilization by reading discipline**. It preserves the consonants while narrowing the range of live public construal.

This distinction is important. The Septuagint stabilizes by **translation**; rabbinic memory stabilizes by **recollection and polemical framing**; the Masoretic tradition stabilizes by **Hebrew vocalic and**

3 Megillah 9a. https://www.sefaria.org/Megillah.9a.12?lang=bi

4 Rashi. Commentary on Megillah 9a. https://www.sefaria.org/Rashi_on_Megillah.9a.12?lang=bi.

5 Bereshit Rabbah 1.7: https://www.sefaria.org/Bereshit_Rabbah.1.7?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en

prosodic control. The three are not identical, but they converge in effect. All reduce the extent to which clause-initial **בראשית** remains available to a broader syntactic hearing. The first does so by rendering the verse into a clarified Greek clause; the second by remembering or defending the verse against dangerous construal; the third by giving the Hebrew line a fixed vocalic and accentual realization. Together they show that Genesis 1:1 was not transmitted only as a string of consonants, but as a verse increasingly enclosed within interpretive guidance.

The result is a more precise historical picture. Rabbinic tradition did not merely inherit Genesis 1:1; it also remembered the verse as one that could require protective handling, and it argued explicitly against dual-authority readings by appeal to singular verbal form. The Masoretic tradition did not change the consonants, but it did regularize the way those consonants were publicly voiced. None of this proves that a Bereshit-subject reading was once dominant, nor that later authorities consciously suppressed it at every stage. But it does make clear that the transmission history of Genesis 1:1 includes more than passive preservation. It includes repeated acts of **stabilization**, through memory, commentary, vocalization, and accentuation, all tending toward a more determinate subject structure than the bare consonantal line by itself compels.

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4. Medieval Jewish Commentary: Difficulty Acknowledged, Then Contained

If rabbinic tradition remembers Genesis 1:1 as a verse that could require protective handling, medieval Jewish commentary shows that this sense of difficulty did not disappear. On the contrary, it remained visible, even where the stabilized public reading was no longer in serious doubt. The significance of medieval commentary for the present article is therefore twofold. First, it preserves explicit acknowledgment that the verse is not exhausted by a flat or effortless reading. Second, it shows how that acknowledged difficulty is increasingly contained within interpretive frameworks that prevent clause-initial **בראשית** from becoming too independent or too unstable in public hearing.

A key witness is Rashi's well-known comment on Genesis 1:1: **"אין המקרא הזה אומר אלא דרשני"**—"this text says nothing but 'interpret me.'" [6] That remark does not endorse a Bereshit-subject reading, nor does it claim that the verse lacks sense altogether. Its importance lies elsewhere. It openly registers that Genesis 1:1 resists a merely unreflective construal and demands explanation. In the context of the present study, that comment functions as evidence not for a particular syntax, but for the continued perception that the verse remains unusually dense and in some sense unresolved. Medieval Jewish exegesis thus begins not by denying difficulty, but by acknowledging it.

That difficulty is then more sharply focused in Rashi's comment on **Megillah 9a**. There the danger is stated explicitly: if the verse began with **בראשית** and were left in that form, someone might take **בראשית** as a name and infer that one authority created another. Whether or not this is historically what the Septuagint translators feared is not the point. As a medieval reception witness, the comment is extraordinarily revealing. It shows that Rashi could still imagine the clause-initial position of **בראשית** as carrying enough independent force to threaten theological misunderstanding unless the subjecthood of **אלהים** were made unmistakable. In other words, the possibility is not preserved as a live option to be adopted, but neither is it absent from awareness. It survives as a construal that must be fenced off.

6 Chabad. Rashi on Genesis 1:1. https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8165/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true

Tosafot (Feldman) [7] continues this logic at a further stage of reception. The explanatory emphasis shifts somewhat, but the pattern remains the same: readers and translators are imagined as preferring a form in which God stands unmistakably first and the verse is protected from misconstrual. For the purposes of the present article, Tosafot is important not because it adds early textual evidence, but because it shows how later Jewish commentary could continue to rationalize and reinforce the movement toward a stabilized subject-first reading. The concern is no longer simply what the Hebrew clause could bear in principle, but how a received text should be publicly understood without inviting error.

Yet medieval Jewish commentary does not only narrow; it also preserves surplus meaning. That is where **Ramban** [8] becomes especially important. Ramban does not return the verse to pre-stabilized openness, nor does he argue for a Bereshit-subject syntax in the grammatical sense pursued by the companion grammatical study. What he does show is that even after subjecthood has been effectively regularized in public reading, **בראשית** can still be treated as carrying more than a flat temporal value. In his discussion, the word may allude to **חכמה**, and the opening of Genesis can still be felt to contain a concealed metaphysical depth not exhausted by straightforward translation. This is a different kind of witness from Rashi on **Megillah 9a**, but it is no less relevant. It shows that stabilization does not eliminate semantic or theological richness; it reorganizes where that richness is allowed to reside.

The medieval evidence therefore has a distinctive profile. It neither preserves the verse in raw openness nor flattens it into simplicity. Rather, it acknowledges difficulty, constrains dangerous construals, and relocates surplus meaning into controlled exegetical channels. Clause-initial **בראשית** remains charged, but that charge is increasingly managed. It may still invite derash, mystical reflection, or typological depth, yet it is no longer readily permitted to function as an uncontrolled competitor to **אלהים** as subject in the public hearing of the verse.

The historical significance of this stage is accordingly clear. Medieval Jewish commentary confirms that Genesis 1:1 continued to be experienced as a verse of exceptional density, but it also shows that the tradition had developed increasingly explicit ways of containing that density. Difficulty is acknowledged, then contained; openness is remembered, then disciplined. In the stabilization history proposed here, that is precisely the role of the medieval layer: it preserves the memory that the verse is not simple, while simultaneously reinforcing the interpretive boundaries within which its difficulty may be handled.

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5. Christian Reception: Septuagint Authority and Theological Consolidation

Christian reception of Genesis 1:1 begins, in the main, not from the relative openness of the unpointed Hebrew consonantal line, but from the **Greek Septuagint**, and therefore from a form of the verse already shaped by versional clarification. This point is historically important. Whatever possibilities may remain visible in the Hebrew text when read without later vocalic control, Christian theology

7 Feldman, P. Point by point summary of Tosfos. https://dafyomi.co.il/megilah/tosfos/mg-ts-009.htm

8 Ramban on Genesis 1. https://www.sefaria.org/Genesis.1?ven=Tanakh:_The_Holy_Scriptures,_published_by_JPS&vhe=Tanach_with_Text_Only&lang=bi&with=Ramban&lang2=en

largely encountered Genesis 1:1 through a textual medium in which **God** was already plainly foregrounded as subject. The question for the present article is not whether Christian interpreters invented that stabilization, but how deeply they inherited it and how fully they came to authorize it.

A particularly clear witness is **Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.21.2–3** [9]. There Irenaeus recounts that Ptolemy requested the Jewish Scriptures in Greek, that the people of Jerusalem sent seventy elders skilled in both languages, and that Ptolemy separated them from one another lest they conceal the truth by consultation. When they were brought together, he says, all compared their work and were found to have produced the same translation "in the very same words and the very same names, from beginning to end," so that even the Gentiles present recognized that the Scriptures had been translated "by the inspiration of God." He goes on to say that the Scriptures were thus interpreted "with such fidelity" and that this translation preserved for Christians the "unadulterated Scriptures in Egypt," prior to the appearance of Christianity and in harmony with apostolic proclamation. Later attempts to produce different translations are therefore treated by him as presumptuous and doctrinally suspect.

The importance of this passage for the present article is not that it settles what happened historically in Alexandria in the third century BCE. It plainly belongs to late second-century Christian apologetic and uses the Septuagint tradition polemically against rival translators and rival Christologies. Its historical value lies elsewhere. It shows that by Irenaeus' time the Greek Scriptures could be treated not merely as a translation, but as a providentially authorized textual form whose wording carried theological authority of its own. The Septuagint is not presented as a secondary aid to the Hebrew; it is presented as a faithful and divinely supervised vehicle of revelation, protected in its very phrasing against later alteration.

That development has a direct bearing on Genesis 1:1. Once the Greek wording is received as providentially confirmed, the verse is no longer encountered as a still-open Hebrew line whose first word stands before the reader in relative syntactic exposure. It is encountered as a verse already mediated through a stabilized translation in which **God** is unmistakably the agent of creation. Christian theological reflection, including later reflection on the divine Word, therefore proceeds from a textual form in which the primacy of **God** as subject is not under active grammatical negotiation. Theological consolidation does not remove all depth from the verse, but it does narrow the field of viable public construal at the point where grammar meets doctrine.

This does not mean that Christian theology simply erased interpretive richness. It means, rather, that richness was increasingly developed **downstream of a stabilized subject structure**. Questions of creation, Logos, wisdom, and divine agency were explored within a framework that had already received Genesis 1:1 through Greek clarification and then through the authority attached to that Greek form. In that respect Christian reception differs from the earlier stages examined in this article. The Septuagint is not merely one witness among others; in Christian tradition it becomes the normative avenue through which the opening verse of Genesis is heard, cited, and theologized.

The historical point is accordingly limited but clear. Christian reception does not provide independent evidence for the earliest Hebrew syntax of Genesis 1:1. It does, however, show how strongly a stabilized rendering of the verse could be received, authorized, and then embedded in theological tradition. If the pre-Masoretic consonantal line represents relative openness, and rabbinic and Masoretic traditions represent forms of Jewish stabilization, Christian reception marks a further stage in which the **Greek stabilization itself becomes doctrinally authoritative**. At that point the clause is no longer merely clarified; it is canonically consolidated in a form that leaves little public space for alternative

9 Irenaeus in Against Heresies 3.21.2-3. https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/irenaeus-book3.html

hearings of clause-initial **בראשית**.

6. Early Modern and Modern Vernacular Stabilization

The final stage of the history considered here is **vernacular stabilization**. By the early modern and modern periods, Genesis 1:1 had long been received through the combined force of **Masoretic vocalization**, **Greek versional precedent**, and centuries of Jewish and Christian commentary. As a result, most readers no longer encountered the verse as an unpointed Hebrew clause whose first word might still stand in relative syntactic openness. They encountered it in translation, and therefore in a form already shaped by prior decisions about how the verse should be heard. At this stage the history of stabilization becomes especially powerful precisely because it becomes difficult to see. What earlier periods debated, guarded, or regularized now often appears simply obvious.

This is true even where modern translations differ. Some preserve the familiar standalone rendering, "In the beginning God created …" [10]; others adopt temporally subordinate construals such as "When God began to create …" [11] or "In the beginning, when God created …." [12] These renderings differ significantly in syntax and interpretation, yet they share one important feature: they all continue to manage the opening of the verse in ways that prevent clause-initial **בראשית** from functioning freely as an independent nominal subject. In that respect, modern translation debates do not reopen the older openness of the consonantal text so much as redistribute the ways in which that openness is controlled. The alternatives may vary, but they remain alternatives within an already stabilized field.

The historical significance of vernacular translation is therefore not merely linguistic but cultural. Once a given rendering becomes established in liturgy, preaching, catechesis, study Bibles, and educational materials, it does more than transmit the text: it shapes what ordinary readers assume the text could possibly mean. A stabilized translation gradually acquires the force of transparency. Readers no longer experience it as one construal among others, but as the verse itself. At that point the interpretive work performed by translation becomes difficult to distinguish from the text's supposed plain sense. The process of stabilization has succeeded so well that it disappears from view.

This late phase also helps explain why arguments about Genesis 1:1 are often framed as debates between a familiar "traditional" reading and a handful of temporal alternatives, while the possibility of a Bereshit-subject construal rarely enters the public field at all. That absence is historically telling. It does not show that the reading is grammatically impossible; the companion grammatical study argued the contrary. It shows, rather, that by the vernacular stage the range of live public options has already been narrowed by prior centuries of translation, vocalization, commentary, and doctrinal consolidation. Modern readers inherit not only a text, but also a heavily curated history of how that text is expected to begin.

The point of this section is therefore limited but important. Early modern and modern vernacular traditions do not provide direct evidence for the earliest syntax of Genesis 1:1. What they do provide is the final and most socially effective layer of stabilization. In them, the verse reaches broad reading communities in forms whose ambiguity has already been substantially managed before the ordinary reader encounters it. The result is a public scriptural culture in which one rendering may feel self-

10 King James Version (1982), Holman Bible Publishers
11 The Jewish Publication Society (2023), The JPS Hebrew-English TANAKH Revised Edition
12 Catholic Bible Press (2020), New American Bible: Revised Edition (NABRE)

evident even though that self-evidence is historically produced rather than simply given.

The conclusion of the article now follows naturally. Genesis 1:1 need not be treated as a verse whose meaning was fixed all at once and merely repeated thereafter. The evidence considered here suggests instead a layered history: relative openness in the pre-Masoretic consonantal text; early clarification in Greek; rabbinic memory of protective handling; Masoretic stabilization through vocalization and accentuation; medieval containment of acknowledged difficulty; Christian sacralization of the Septuagintal form; and vernacular consolidation in early modern and modern translation. None of this proves the original authorial intention of the verse. It does, however, make historically plausible the claim that later traditions were not only preserving Genesis 1:1, but also repeatedly regularizing how it should be heard. In that sense, historical plausibility joins grammatical possibility: the question is not only whether a Bereshit-subject reading is licit, but whether the history of the verse helps explain why that possibility came to recede from public view.

Conclusion

This article has not argued that Genesis 1:1 originally meant "Bereshit created …," nor that later translators and commentators consciously suppressed such a reading at every stage. Its claim has been narrower and historical: the evidence suggests a layered process of **stabilization** by which the relative openness of the pre-Masoretic consonantal line was progressively narrowed through Greek versional clarification, rabbinic memory and anti-dual-authority containment, Masoretic vocalic and accentual discipline, medieval Jewish commentary, Christian authorization of the Septuagintal form, and vernacular consolidation in early modern and modern translation. None of these witnesses, taken alone, proves original authorial intention. Taken together, however, they make historically plausible the claim that Genesis 1:1 was not merely preserved, but repeatedly regularized so that **אלהים** would be heard as the unmistakable subject and clause-initial **בראשית** would no longer remain open to broader public construal. Historical plausibility thus joins grammatical possibility: if the companion grammatical study showed that the Bereshit-subject reading is licit though under-attested, the present article helps explain why that possibility could recede from view in the verse's long reception history.