

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF GENESIS

Series: Studies in Genesis

BEGINNINGS

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ:

The Hebrew title for the book is “In the Beginning.” Later, when the Hebrew OT was translated into Greek around 250 BC, the translators used the title “Genesis,” which means “origins” or “beginnings.” This is an appropriate title since this book gives us the beginning of almost everything, including the beginning of the universe, life, humanity, death, marriage/family, sin,, civilization, government, art, language, and redemption, the role of Israel in God’s plan to bless the nations.

Genesis not only deals with the origins of everything and how things began, it gives us revelation into the important questions of life.

Genesis is not just the first book of the Bible, it is a foundational book which unlocks the rest of the Bible. Genesis shows us that the God of Israel is the Creator of all things and traces the history from creation to the time of God’s selection of Israel as a special people. Genesis sets the stage for the drama of redemption that will unfold, leading to the cross, and culminating at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb.

WHO WROTE IT?

Genesis is one of the first five books of the Jewish Scriptures known as the Pentateuch (means “five scrolls”) or the Torah (means “teachings, instruction”). The tradition among most Jews and Christians is that Moses wrote these five books. The Pentateuch itself records instances in which God instructs Moses to record things (Exo. 17:14; 24:4; Deut. 31:24; John 5:46). The author never brings attention to himself, so technically, the book is anonymous.

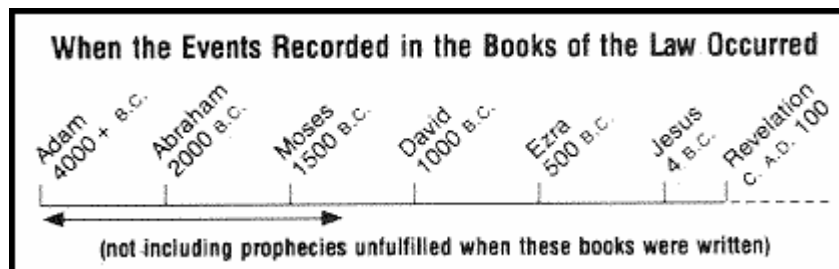
There are several instances of loanwords from Egyptian that are found in Genesis, which suggest that the author had roots in Egypt, as Moses did (Acts 17:22).

OUTLINE OF GENESIS

- I. Chapters 1-11 Creation, Fall, Flood, and Babel
 - A. Creation of Heaven and Earth. Everything is described as good (Chapters 1-2)
 - B. Origin and results of sin as man drifts spiritually and physically away from Eden (Chapters 3-11)
- II. Chapters 12-36 The Origins of Israel: The Three Patriarchs and Joseph
 - A. Abram (Abraham) and God’s Covenant (Chapters 12-23) contrasted with Lot
 - B. Isaac (Chapters 24-26) contrasted with Ishmael
 - C. Jacob (Chapters 27-36) contrasted with Esau
 - D. Joseph (Chapters 37-50)

GENESIS AT A GLANCE

FOCUS	FOUR EVENTS				FOUR PEOPLE			
REFERENCE	1:1 ———	3:1 —	6:1 —	10:1 —	12:1 ———	24:1 —	27:19—	37:1–50:26
DIVISION	CREATION	FALL	FLOOD	NATIONS	ABRAHAM	ISAAC	JACOB	JOSEPH
TOPIC	HUMAN RACE				HEBREW RACE			
	HISTORICAL				BIOGRAPHICAL			
LOCATION	FERTILE CRESCENT (Eden-Haran)				CANAAN (Haran-Canaan)		EGYPT (Canaan-Egypt)	
TIME	c. 2000 YEARS (c. 4000+ –c. 2166 B.C.)				281 YEARS (c. 2166–1885 B.C.)		81 YEARS (1885–1804 B.C.)	



Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1996). *Nelson's complete book of Bible maps & charts : Old and New Testaments*. (Rev. and updated ed.). Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson.

ORIGINS OF ISRAEL

Gen 12:1-3 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. 2 "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Genesis introduces the problem: God creates a world that is very good, but mankind rebels against God, and falls away. What do you do with a race that does not want to know you, love you, or obey you? God seeks to redeem mankind, but mankind does not want God.

God now proceeds to redeem mankind through his sovereign selection of Abram (name changed to Abraham in chapter 17). His purpose of election was that all the peoples on earth would be blessed. The patriarchs had no natural or moral claim on God, yet, what set them apart was that they were a people of faith.

Heb 11:3, 6

³ *By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.*

⁶ *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

God was planting a people at the crossroads of Asia, Africa, and Europe, a significant trade route, where all the peoples of the earth could see a model of the kingdom of heaven on earth. God's purpose was to bless all the nations of the earth. This was ultimately fulfilled as Jesus, born as a Jew, became the Lord of all and a blessing to all the peoples on the earth.