

GENESIS

THE STORY OF BEGINNINGS

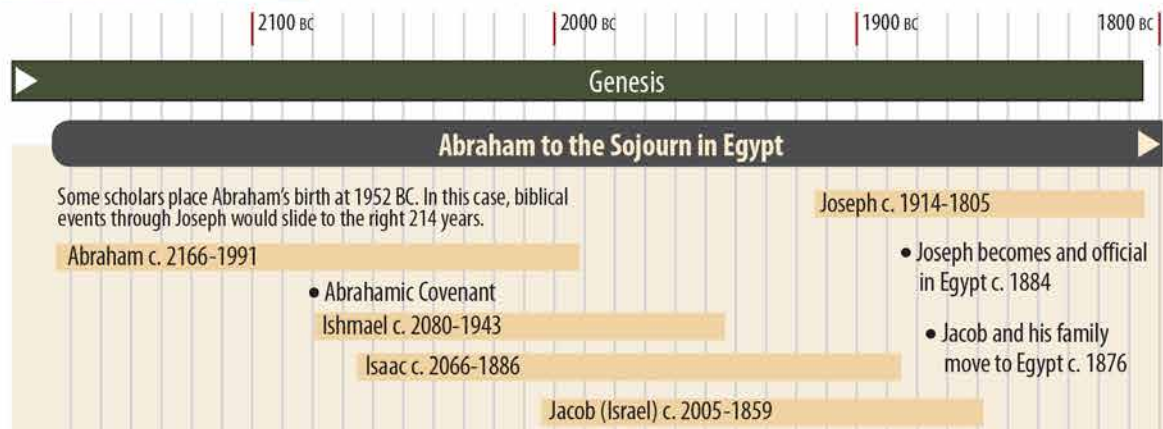


Genesis

The name Genesis comes from the Greek word *gignesthai*, which means “to be born” or “to be produced.” The Hebrew title of the book is *bereshit*, the first word of the book that is translated as “in the beginning.”

Purpose

The book of Genesis is a book about beginnings. It narrates the beginning of all things, of the nations, and of God’s people, Israel. Genesis spans many hundreds of years—more years than any other book of the Bible. These years encompass the very beginning of the universe to a time when Abraham’s descendants flee to Egypt escaping a famine around the 1800s BC. Genesis tells us about the good beginning of creation, the beginning of all human problems, and the beginning of God’s solution to those problems.



Outline

1. Origin of the World (1:1–2:3)
 - a. Seven days of creation
2. Origin of the Nations—These are the generations of:
 - a. The heavens and the earth (2:4–4:26)
 - Adam and Eve, and the fall
 - Cain and Abel
 - b. Adam (5:1–6:8)
 - Genealogy from Adam to Noah
 - c. Noah (6:9–9:29)
 - The flood and God's covenant with Noah
 - d. The sons of Noah (10:1–11:9)
 - Tower of Babel
3. Origin of Israel—These are the generations of:
 - a. Shem (11:10–26)
 - Genealogy from Noah's son Shem to Abram's father Terah
 - b. Terah (11:27–25:11)
 - Call of Abram and the covenant with Abram
 - Hagar and her son Ishmael
 - Isaac born to Abraham and Sarah
 - c. Ishmael (25:12–18)
 - Genealogy of Ishmael
 - d. Isaac (25:19–35:29)
 - Isaac's sons Jacob and Esau
 - Jacob and his wives Leah and Rachel
 - e. Esau (36:1–37:1)
 - Genealogy of Esau
 - f. Jacob (37:2–50:26)
 - Jacob's twelve sons
 - Joseph in Egypt
 - Jacob and his family move to Egypt

Origin of a Nation

The book of Genesis is most naturally divided by the repetition of the Hebrew expression *elleh toledot*, which means, "these are the generations" (sometimes translated as "begat"). The word *toledot* is related to a word that means "to father, to give birth." It refers to the origin of a family or a nation.



Abraham's Journey from Ur to Canaan
by József Molnár

Sections of Genesis	Themes	People
Origin of the World (1:1–2:3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Creation ■ Sovereignty ■ Humans as God's image ■ Human responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ God ■ Human beings
Origin of the Nations (2:4–11:9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Human failure and sin ■ Death ■ Sin and punishment ■ Promise and grace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Adam and Eve ■ The Serpent ■ Cain and Abel ■ Noah
Origin of Israel (11:10–50:26)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Covenant ■ God's plans of redemption ■ God's people ■ God's work through a family ■ God's work through the nations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Abraham and Sarah ■ Hagar ■ Lot ■ Isaac and Rebekah ■ Jacob, Rachel, Leah, Bilhah, Zilpah ■ Jacob's 12 sons ■ Tamar ■ Potiphar

In Genesis we see that:

- God is the creator of all things, the world, the nations, and Israel. Creation begins a story of relationships. God wants to relate to his creation, especially to humans.
- Although God created all things good and was pleased with them, humans abused their freedom and, because of sin, broke their relationship with God, with each other, and with nature.
- However, God's grace extended to humanity. Instead of leaving them in their rebellion and corruption, God promised to act directly to solve the human predicament. He announced the coming of the One who would crush the head of the deceiving serpent (Gen. 3:15). On the cross, Jesus crushed Satan's head.
- God began his plan of restoration by choosing the family of Abraham to start over. God made a covenant with Abraham. God relates, guides, rescues, and provides for the family he has chosen.

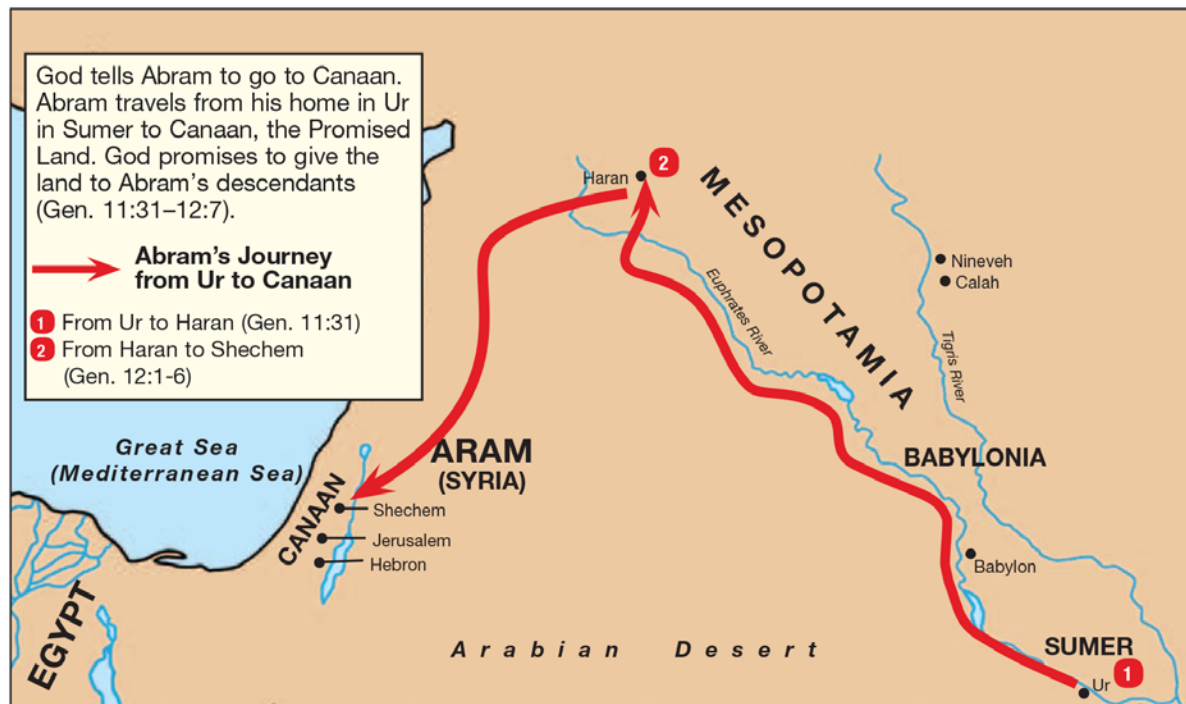
Background

Author: Although the book of Genesis does not name its author, Jewish and Christian tradition has accepted the author of Genesis (and the other four books of the Pentateuch) to be Moses.

Date: Moses would have written Genesis (and the rest of the Pentateuch) between 1446 BC (a possible date of the exodus) and 1406 BC (the date of Moses' death).

Setting: In chapter 12, God calls Abraham to leave his hometown of Ur to travel to the land of Canaan, the Promised Land. The city of Ur, located in southern Iraq, was an important cultural center in the second millennium (2000s) BC. Archaeological remains attest to the glory and importance of the city. Among the documents, many names were found that resemble the names of Abraham's family. As with many cities of the ancient world, Ur was a center for many deities including the main god of the city, the moon god Sin.

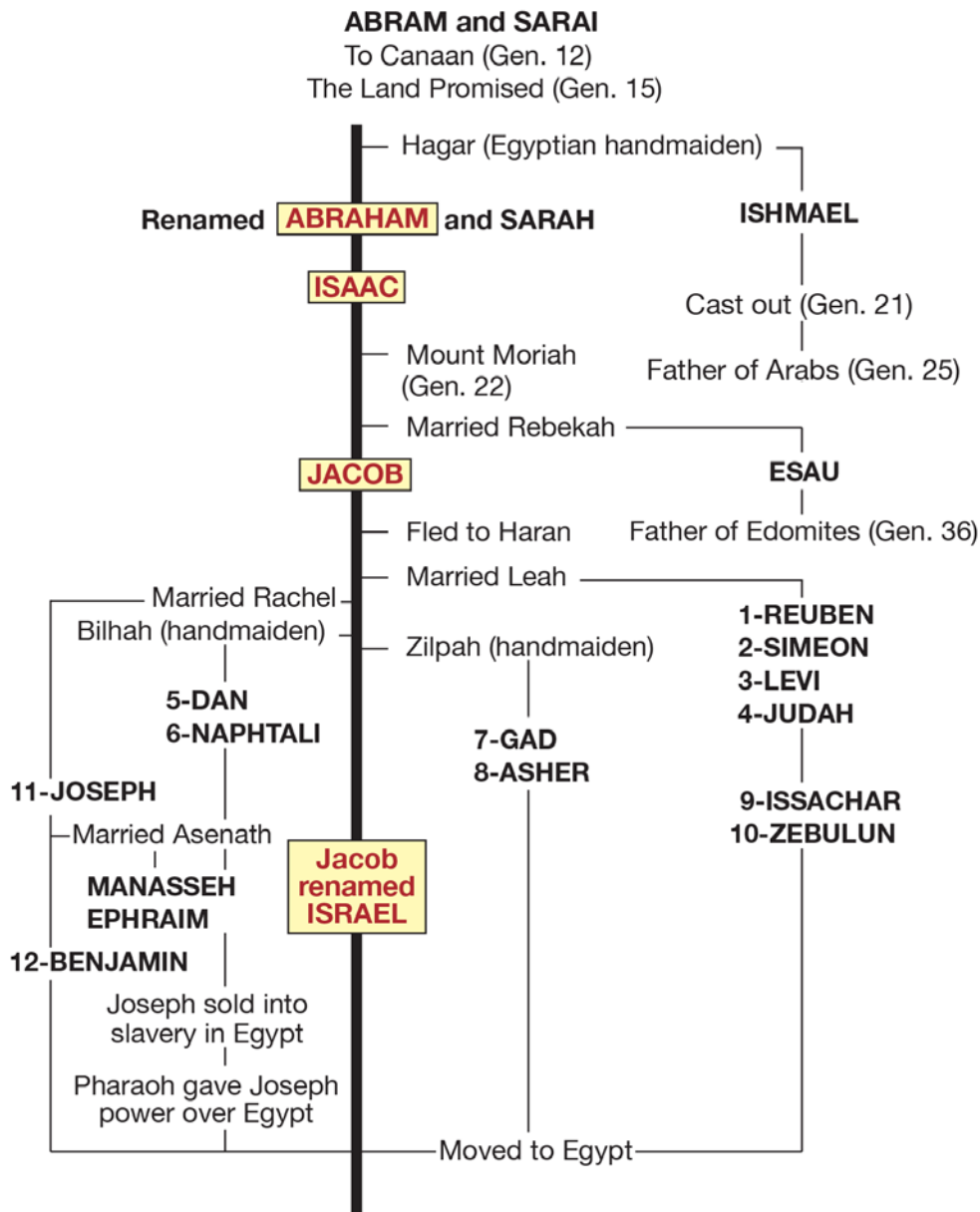
The land of Canaan was surrounded by powerful kingdoms: the Mesopotamian kingdoms—Assyria and Babylonia—to the north, and Egypt to the south. The book of Genesis ends with Abraham's descendants no longer living in Canaan, but in northern Egypt in the land of Goshen.



Key Verses

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.—Gen. 3:15

The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. 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. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”—Gen. 12:1



The Royal Standard of Ur
The Bible mentions Ur as Abraham's home (Gen. 11). Archaeological exploration has shown Ur as a powerful cultural center in the time of Abraham (2100s BC). The Royal Standard of Ur (shown here) was discovered in an ancient cemetery in modern Iraq, south of Baghdad.

Being God's People

Then: In Genesis, God reveals himself as the Creator and King, who loves his creation. He plans to redeem humanity through a person and a family, so all the nations, and creation itself, will be blessed. God chose Abraham and his descendants to be blessed and to be a blessing to others. Even though each person—like Isaac, Rebekah, Judah, an even Joseph—had their shortcomings, God still used them to fulfill his promises.

Now: God is on a mission to redeem his creation. As he called people in ancient times to be part of that mission, he continues to call believers today. Hebrews 11:8 tells us that “By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.” As in Old Testament times, it still takes faith for us today to let God to lead us where he wants us to go—especially when, like Abraham, we don’t know what lies ahead.

Jesus in Genesis

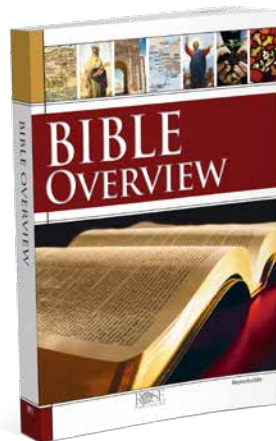
As a book of origins, Genesis shows the origin of humanity’s greatest predicament: sin. It also shows that God’s mercy promised his own solution to this quandary: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Gen. 3:15). In addition, God promised Abraham, “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. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Gen. 12:2–3). All of these promises point to God’s final and perfect solution for humanity’s fallen state: Jesus, God’s own Son.



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Nuzi Tablets

Excavations of the ancient city of Nuzi, located southwest of Kirkuk near the Tigris River, revealed over 5,000 baked clay tablets. The tablets contain official documents and letters exchanged between Assyrian kings and Egyptian pharaohs. They reveal many previously unknown customs that agree with the biblical portrayal of the patriarchs. The tablet shown here is from a royal archive and lists the workers on the royal estate and the rations they were given.

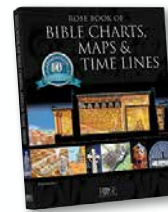


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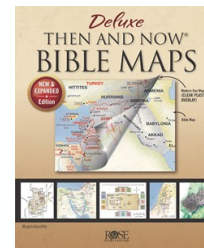


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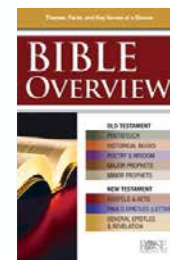


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