

## **Introduction to the Book of Genesis**

### **Introductory Matters**

#### **Title<sup>1</sup>**

The Hebrew Bible entitles the book *bereshith*, which means “in the beginning.” This title is taken from the book’s first word. In fact, it is a common practice among the books of the Torah to adopt for the title the book’s opening word or words. The LXX entitles the book *geneseos* based upon the Greek translation of *toledoth* (“account” or “generations”) in 2:4 and 5:1. Translating from the LXX, the Vulgate entitles the book *Liber Genesis*. The English Bible also adopted the title Genesis.

#### **Authorship**

The Book of Genesis is an anonymous work. Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch was the traditional view held not only by the Jews and the early church but also by most scholars prior to 1750. However, this consensus soon shifted with the advent of the Documentary Hypothesis. According to this theory, the Pentateuch is attributable to multiple authors writing long after the events transpired. Thus, Moses is not the author of the first five books of the Bible. Because of the thematic linkage between the end of the Book of Genesis and the beginning of the Book of Exodus, an attack upon Mosaic authorship of the rest of the Pentateuch is also an attack upon the Mosaic authorship of Genesis. Thus, the Documentary Hypothesis as a whole must be considered when discussing the Mosaic authorship of Genesis.

Proponents of the Documentary Hypothesis rely upon various pieces of internal evidence such as differing literary styles, differing names for God, couplets, and editorial insertions (14:14; 36:31; 47:11). They also argue that writing was unknown during the time of Moses.

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 6; Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Genesis,” online: [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com), accessed 8 March 2005, 1.

Witter (1711), Astruc (1753), and Eichhorn were among the first to attempt to explain some of the alleged differences in Genesis through the uses of documents that supposedly antedated Genesis. Geddes (1800), Vater (1802–1805), and Hartman (1831) then advanced this theory further by arguing that the Pentateuch was composed from fragments by an anonymous redactor working several centuries after the time of Moses.

This notion then advanced even further as scholars appealed to alleged documents using differing names of God that an anonymous redactor used to piece together the Pentateuch long after the time of Moses. Such scholars included Ewald (1823–1845), De Wette (1840), Lengerke (1844), Knobel (1861), Shrader (1869), Hupfeld (1853), Graf (1860), and Keuenen (1869–1870). The Documentary Hypothesis was then given its classical articulation by Julius Wellhausen (1876–1878). According to Wellhausen, anonymous editors compiled the Pentateuch from the following four documents: J (Yahwist, 850 B.C.), E (Elohist 750 B.C.), D (Deuteronomist, 621 B.C.) and P (Priestly Code, 525 B.C.). More modern advocates and revisers of this approach include Driver (1891), Briggs (1893), Eissfeldt (1922), Morgenstern (1927), and Pfeiffer (1941).<sup>2</sup>

Despite the widespread acceptance of the Documentary Hypothesis, several reasons cause it to be suspect.<sup>3</sup> First, it is contradicted by the traditional view of the Jews and the early church. Second, the Pentateuch itself declares Moses to be the author (Exod 17:14; 24:4, 7; 34:27; Num 33:1-2; Deut 1:8; 31:9). Because the Torah was originally regarded as one book, claims of Mosaic authorship made later on in the Torah can also be taken to mean that Moses

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<sup>2</sup> Information for this historical survey was taken from Josh D. McDowell, *Evidence for Christianity* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 484-88.

<sup>3</sup> Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, rev. and exp. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1964; reprint, Chicago: Moody, 1994), 89-189; Earl D. Radmacher, "The Nelson Study Bible: New King James Version," (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 113; Charles C. Bing, *Analysis of Old Testament Books* (Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1988), 1-2.

wrote Genesis as well.<sup>4</sup> Third, the rest of the Old Testament presupposes Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch (Josh 1:7-8; 8:32, 34; 22:5; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 13:23; 14:6; 21:8; 1 Chron 1:1; Ezra 6:18; Dan 9:11-13; Mal 4:4).

Fourth, the New Testament designates Moses as the author of Genesis and the Pentateuch (Matt 19:4-8; Mark 7:10; 12:26; Luke 16:29-31; 20:37; 24:27; John 5:46-47; 7:19, 23; Acts 15:1; Rom 10:5, 19). Fifth, the Pentateuch reflects a thematic literary unity that contends for a single author. Sixth, the author writes as an eyewitness to much of the Pentateuch's content, which would be impossible for a writer long after the events already transpired (Exod 15:27; Num 2:1-31; 11:7-8). Seventh, the writer demonstrates a familiarity with Egyptian culture and geography, which would be unlikely for a later writer (Gen 13:10; 16:1-3; 33:18; 39:4; 40:9-11; 41:40, 43). However, such knowledge would be consistent with Moses' Egyptian education (Acts 7:22).

Eighth, Moses' Egyptian education also gave him the ability to produce such a literary masterpiece. In fact, "Moses is the only person we know of from this early time period who had the ability to write this book. The rest of the Israelites were a nation of uneducated slaves, whereas Moses was a highly educated son of the king...Moses was the only one who had both the interest and information to write Genesis. Being Jewish Moses would have access to the family records of his ancestors (cf. Gen. 5:1; 10:1; 25:19; etc.) which were no doubt brought down to Egypt by Jacob (Gen. 46). Since Moses was bent on delivering his people from Egypt, it is natural to assume that he was familiar with the promises of God passed down by his forefathers that God would indeed deliver them (cf. Gen. 46:3-4; Exod. 2:24)."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Constable, "Notes on Genesis," 2.

<sup>5</sup> Norman L. Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 37.

Ninth, the documents that the Documentary Hypothesis relies upon have never been discovered. Tenth, the Documentary Hypothesis is built upon unfounded assumptions. For example, writing has been discovered as early as 1500 B.C., which would predate the time of Moses. Other works of literary depth similar to the variety of genres displayed in Pentateuch also predate the time of Moses.<sup>6</sup> Also, Moses could have used different names for God in order to accomplish different literary purposes. Moreover, an editor making minor changes after Moses had already completed the bulk of the work could have been responsible for the editorial insertions.

Furthermore, the couplets are explainable in terms of different stories couched in the same literary framework. In addition, archeological finds routinely reveal a credible scenario whereby the events recorded in the Pentateuch could have transpired. These finds rebut the documentary presupposition that the Pentateuch's events are historically impossible.<sup>7</sup> Finally, the upward evolutionary movement of religion from polytheism to monotheism that the Documentary Hypothesis assumes has never been proven. In sum, it is best to conclude that Moses is the author of the Pentateuch. While Moses most probably used sources (Gen 5:1), he, rather than some later figure, is the ultimate writer, redactor, compiler, and editor of Genesis.

### **Date, Place of Writing, and Recipients**

If Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch is accepted, then Genesis had to be compiled sometime during Moses' lifetime (1525–1405 B.C.).<sup>8</sup> This date presupposes an early date for the

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<sup>6</sup> K. A. Kitchen, "Moses," in *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 795, 99.

<sup>7</sup> Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Handbook*, rev ed. (Chicago: Moody, 2005), 23-27.

<sup>8</sup> Constable, "Notes on Genesis," 2.

Exodus.<sup>9</sup> If 966 B.C. was the fourth year of Solomon's reign and the Exodus transpired 480 years earlier (1 Kgs 6:1), then the Exodus took place in 1446 B.C. If Moses led the nation in the Exodus when he was 80 years old (Acts 7:23, 30) and lived an additional 40 years (Deut 34:7; Acts 7:36), then the scope of Moses' life was 1525–1405 B.C.

Jewish and Christian testimonies agree that Moses wrote the Pentateuch in the wilderness of Sinai.<sup>10</sup> It is likely that Moses wrote Genesis to the Exodus generation to help prepare them for the coming conquest.<sup>11</sup> More specifically he wrote the book to prepare his audience for entry into and obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. Thus, Moses wrote the book shortly after the Exodus. However, beyond this a specific date for the composition of the book is difficult to determine. While Moses completed the bulk of the Book Genesis, this is not to say that he completely finished the book since editorial insertions were apparently made at a later date (14:14; 36:31; 47:11).

### **Scope and Geographical Setting<sup>12</sup>**

Regarding major shifts in setting, three sections are discernible. Genesis 1–11 elapses in between the creation and the birth of Terah (2296 B.C.) and takes place in the Fertile Crescent. This section transitions the reader from Eden to Haran. Thus, this section takes place over a 1500-mile area. Genesis 12–36 elapses in between the birth of Terah (2296 B.C.) and Joseph's arrival in Egypt (1899 B.C.) and takes place mostly in Canaan. Thus, this section takes place in a roughly 200-year time period and geographically moves from Haran to Canaan. Genesis 37–50 elapses in between Joseph's arrival in Egypt (1899 B.C.) and the death of Joseph (1806 B.C.) and

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<sup>9</sup> For arguments supporting the early date for the Exodus, see my Exodus argument.

<sup>10</sup> Radmacher, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary*, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Charles H. Dyer and Eugene H. Merrill, *Old Testament Explorer*, Swindoll Leadership Library, ed. Charles R. Swindoll and Roy B. Zuck (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2001), 3.

<sup>12</sup> Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 5.

takes place mostly in Egypt.<sup>13</sup> Thus, this section takes place in less than 100 years and geographically moves from Canaan to Egypt. Accepted dates for the patriarchs are captured on the following chart.

Patriarch	Date
Abraham	2166–1991 B.C.
Isaac	2066–1886 B.C.
Jacob	2006–1859 B.C.
Joseph	1916–1806 B.C.

### Structure<sup>14</sup>

A key structural marker used throughout the book is the *toledoth*, which means, “these are the generations of” (Gen 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 25:12, 19; 36:1, 9; 37:2). This repetition yields the following literary outline: introduction to the generations (1:1–2:3), generations of the heaven and earth (2:4–4:26), generations of Adam (5:1–6:8), generations of Noah (6:9–9:29), generations of the sons of Noah (10:1–11:9), generations of Shem (11:10–26), generations of Terah (11:27–25:11), generations of Ishmael (25:12–18), generations of Isaac (25:19–35:29), generations of Esau (36:1–37:1), and the generations of Jacob (37:2–50:26). Thus, *toledoth* introduces a section rather than concludes it. *Toledoth* says this is what became of someone (or the heavens and the earth in the case of 2:4). Each *toledoth* starts out broadly and then narrows to a person, line, or group of interest to the writer within that given section. Apparently, no *toledoth* was necessary to introduce the creation of the cosmos.<sup>15</sup>

However, the outline followed here is a thematic one focusing on primeval (Gen 1–11:9) and patriarchal history (Gen 11:10–50:26) as the two key divisions in the book. These two

<sup>13</sup> Dates taken from Constable, “Notes on Genesis,” 103-4.

<sup>14</sup> Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 5-6.

<sup>15</sup> Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 72-73.

sections can also be categorized as the beginning of the human race and the beginning of the Hebrew race. The four key events of primeval history include creation (1–2), fall (3–5), flood (6–9), and national dispersion (10:1–11:9). The four key people of patriarchal history include Abraham (11:10–25:11), Isaac (25:12–26:35), Jacob (27–36), and Joseph (37–50). Another possible thematic outline is God’s generation (1–2), man’s degeneration (3–11), and God’s regeneration (12–50).

### **Message**

At the time of the Exodus, God reveals to Israel her divinely ordained role to mediate His redemptive purposes to a fallen world. This exalted position is communicated through the revelation of Israel’s unconditional covenant and God’s miraculous preservation of the nation in furtherance of this covenant. Moses’ audience could enter into this redemptive purpose through faith and obedience.

### **Purposes**

Moses wrote the Book of Genesis to accomplish at least three purposes. First, it has often been said that a nation that does not know where it has been does not know where it is going. Therefore, it was necessary for Moses to give Israel an explanation of her history. After 400 years of slavery it would be easy to see how such a history could easily be forgotten. Thus, in Genesis Moses explains how God’s original plan for creation had been lost and how Israel had been set-aside for the special purpose of mediating God’s redemptive blessings to the world.

Second, as the nation was on the verge of entering the land, Israel was in need of understanding the Abrahamic Covenant, which gave Israel a right to the land (Gen 15:18-21). Because they would soon have to take the land by fighting the Canaanites, Israel was also in

need of grasping that the Canaanites were under the judgment of God and thus it was God's will for the nation to remove and exterminate them (Gen 9:25; 15:16).<sup>16</sup> Third, because success in the conquest would be predicated upon the nation's obedience to God's will, the nation needed to be reminded of the patriarchal stories where obedience resulted in blessing (Gen 22:18). In sum, the book was intended for Moses' generation to trust God by better understanding her past, purpose, and destiny as they anticipated entrance into Canaan.<sup>17</sup> In Genesis, Moses under the guidance of the Holy Spirit selectively arranges his material to accomplish these goals in the life of the recently emancipated and redeemed nation of Israel.

### **Theological Themes**

Several theological themes recur throughout the Book of Genesis. First, the book focuses upon God's election and preservation of Israel through whom He would redemptively bless the fallen world. Second, the book's emphasis upon the preservation of the nation reveals His covenant faithfulness. Third, the book is a book of beginnings. Examples include the beginning of the cosmos (1:1), kingdom (1-2), man (1:27), Sabbath (2:2-3), marriage (2:22-24), sin (3:1-7), Satan (3:1), sacrifice (3:21), salvation (3:15), family (4:1-15), civilization (4:16-21), government (9:1-6), Israel (12:1-3), covenant (15), and faith (15:6).<sup>18</sup>

### **Unique Characteristics**

The Book of Genesis boasts some outstanding characteristics. First, "Genesis spans more time than any other book in the Bible; in fact, it covers more than all sixty-five other books of the

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<sup>16</sup> Tom R. Hawkins, *Analysis of Old Testament Books* (Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1985), 2.

<sup>17</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, "A Theology of the Pentateuch," in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 30.

<sup>18</sup> Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 7.

Bible put together.”<sup>19</sup> Second, “...Genesis gives us a synoptic preface to the entire Bible. It is the seed-plot of the Bible. The germ or beginning of all truth is within this wonderful book. Genesis is the foundation upon which the entire revelation rests; the root out of which the rest grows. Truths found here are developed in successive ages.”<sup>20</sup>

### **Christ in Genesis<sup>21</sup>**

Moses is careful to trace the messianic lineage throughout the book. Beginning with the proto evangelium (3:15) the seed is traced through Cain (4:1), Seth (4:25), Shem (9:26), Abraham (12:3), Isaac (21:12), Jacob (25:23), and Judah (49:10). Christ is also typologically seen in Adam (Rom 5:14), Abel (4:4; Heb 11:4), Melchizedek (Heb 7:3), Isaac (22:5; Heb 11:9), and Joseph (both are objects of fatherly love, hated by their brethren, rejected from ruling over their brothers, plotted against, sold for silver, innocently condemned, and divinely raised from humiliation).

### **Outline<sup>22</sup>**

- I. Prologue: primeval history (1-11)
  - A. Creation 1-2
    - 1. Creation of the cosmos 1:1- 2:3
      - a) Beginning of creation 1:1-2
      - b) Days of creation 1:3-2:3
        - (1) Day 1: light 1:3-5
        - (2) Day 2: water and sky 1:6-8
        - (3) Day 3: land and vegetation 1:9-13
        - (4) Day 4: luminaries 1:14-19
        - (5) Day 5: sea animals and birds 1:20-23
        - (6) Day 6: land animals and man 1:24-31

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Herbert Lockyer, *The Gospel in the Pentateuch* (Chicago: The Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1939), 25.

<sup>21</sup> Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 8.

<sup>22</sup> Some parts of this outline have been influenced by Charles C. Bing, *Analysis of Old Testament Books* (Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1988), 11-21.

- (7) Day 7: God's rest 2:1-3
- 2. Creation of man and woman 2:4-25
  - a) Creation of man 2:4-7
  - b) Man's stewardship 2:8-20
  - c) Creation of woman 2:21-25
- B. Fall 3:1-24
  - 1. Temptation by the serpent 3:1-5
  - 2. Sin of Adam and Eve 3:6-8
  - 3. Denial of guilt by Adam and Eve 3:9-13
  - 4. Consequences 3:14-19
    - a) Upon serpent 3:14-15
    - b) Upon Eve 3:16
    - c) Upon man 3:17-19
  - 5. God's provision continues 3:20-24
    - a) Faith that the race continues 3:20
    - b) Initial act of redemption by God 3:21
    - c) The expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden 3:22-24
- C. The terrible progress of sin 4-11
  - 1. Two lines of human descent 4-5
    - a) The first murder 4:1-15
      - (1) Births of Cain and Abel 4:1-2
      - (2) Murder of Abel 4:3-8
      - (3) Punishment of Cain 4:9-15
    - b) The ungodly line of Cain 4:16-24
    - c) The godly line of Seth 4:25-5:32
      - (1) Birth of Seth 4:25-26
      - (2) Genealogy of Adam through Noah 5:1-32
  - 2. The flood 6-9
    - a) Events prior to the flood 6
      - (1) Depravity of man 6:1-7
      - (2) Righteousness of Noah 6:8-13
      - (3) Building of the ark 6:14-22
    - b) The flood 7
      - (1) God's instructions to enter the ark 7:1-4
      - (2) Entrance into the ark 7:5-12
      - (3) God seals the ark 7:13-16
      - (4) The flood 7:17-24
    - c) The abatement of the waters 8:1-19
      - (1) The receding of the waters 8:1-5
      - (2) Tests for dry land 8:6-14
      - (3) The exit from the ark 8:15-19
    - d) Post flood events 8:20-9:29
      - (1) Noahic Covenant 8:20-9:17
        - (a) God's promise not to flood again 8:20-22
        - (b) God's provision for man 9:1-7
        - (c) Sign of the covenant 9:8-17

- (2) Post flood sin 9:18-29
    - (a) Noah's three sons 9:18-19
    - (b) Noah's sin 9:20-21
    - (c) Sin of Ham 9:22-24
    - (d) Curse of Canaan 9:25-27
    - (e) Death of Noah 9:28-29
  - 3. Tower of Babel 10:1-11:9
    - a) Table of nations 10
      - (1) Line of Japheth 10:1-5
      - (2) Line of Ham 10:6-14
      - (3) Line of Canaan 10:15-20
      - (4) Line of Shem 10:21-32
    - b) Tower of Babel 11:1-9
      - (1) Building of the tower 11:1-4
      - (2) Dispersion of the nations 11:5-9
- II. Epilogue: patriarchal history 11:10-50:26
  - A. Life of Abraham 11:10-25:11
    - 1. Intro to Abram 11:10-32
      - a) Lineage from Shem 11:10-26
      - b) His father Terah 11:27-32
    - 2. Abrahamic Covenant 12:1-25:11
      - a) Establishment of the covenant 12-17
        - (1) Abrahamic promises 12
          - (a) Abrahamic promises 12:1-3
          - (b) Arrival in Canaan 12:4-9
          - (c) Egyptian stay 12:10-20
        - (2) Preparation for the covenant 13-14
          - (a) Abram's separation from Lot 13:1-13
          - (b) Promise reaffirmed 13:14-18
          - (c) Abram rescues Lot 14:1-17
          - (d) Abram's encounter with the kings 14:18-24
        - (3) Formation of the covenant 15
          - (a) Heir promised 15:1-6
          - (b) Preparation of the animal pieces 15:7-11
          - (c) Prophecy of Egyptian bondage 15:12-16
          - (d) Covenant ratified 15:17-21
        - (4) Covenant distinguished from alternate line 16
          - (a) Hagar conceives 16:1-6
          - (b) God's promises to Hagar 16:7-14
          - (c) Birth of Ishmael 16:15-16
        - (5) Sign of the covenant 17
          - (a) Abram's change of name and promises reconfirmed 17:1-8
          - (b) Command to circumcise 17:9-14
          - (c) Sarai's change of name and promise of Isaac 17:15-22
          - (d) Performance of circumcision 17:23-27
      - b) The maturation of Abraham and Sarah's faith in preparation for covenant

blessings 18:1-22:19

- (1) Testing of Sarah's faith 18:1-15
- (2) Trial of Sodom and Gomorrah 18:16-19:38
  - (a) Abraham's intercession for the righteous in Sodom 18:16-33
  - (b) Sin of Sodom 19:1-11
  - (c) Destruction of Sodom 19:12-29
  - (d) Origin of the Moabites and the Ammonites 19:30-38
- (3) Test with Abimelech 20
- (4) Birth of Isaac 21:1-7
- (5) Hagar and Ishmael depart 21:8-21
- (6) Treaty with Abimelech 21:22-34
- (7) Offering of Isaac 22:1-19
- c) Transition of covenant from Abraham to Isaac 22:20-25:11
  - (1) Family of Nahor and the birth of Rebekah 22:20-24
  - (2) Death and burial of Sarah 23
    - (a) Death of Sarah 23:1-2
    - (b) Purchase of Sarah's burial lot 23:3-18
    - (c) Burial of Sarah 23:19-20
  - (3) Marriage of Isaac 24
    - (a) Servant's search for a bride 24:1-14
    - (b) Servant meets Rebekah 24:15-28
    - (c) Servant's explanation to Laban 24:29-49
    - (d) Servant leaves with Rebekah 24:50-61
    - (e) Servant returns with Rebekah 24:62-67
  - (4) Final years of Abraham's life 25:1-11
    - (a) Abraham marries Keturah and the birth of the Midianites 25:1-4
    - (b) Inheritance of Isaac 25:5-6
    - (c) Death of Abraham 25:7-8
    - (d) Burial of Abraham 25:9-11
- B. Life of Isaac 25:12-26:35
  1. Family of Ishmael distinguished 25:12-18
  2. Family of Isaac 25:19-34
    - a) Birth of Esau and Jacob 25:19-28
    - b) Selling of Esau's birthright 25:29-34
  3. Abrahamic Covenant reconfirmed with Isaac 26
    - a) Covenant confirmed to Isaac 26:1-5
    - b) Test with Abimelech 26:6-11
    - c) Trial with the Philistines 26:12-22
    - d) Covenant reconfirmed to Isaac 26: 23-25
    - e) Covenant with Abimelech 26:26-33
    - f) Esau's alternate line distinguished 26:34-35
- C. Life of Jacob 27-36
  1. Jacob's deception 27:1-28:5
    - a) Plot to deceive Isaac 27:1-17
    - b) Rebekah and Jacob deceive Isaac 27:18-29
    - c) Esau's grief 27:30-41

- d) Jacob departs 27:42-28:5
- 2. Abrahamic Covenant reconfirmed with Jacob 28:6-22
  - a) Esau distinguished 28:6-9
  - b) Jacob's dream 28:10-17
  - c) Jacob's vow 28:18-22
- 3. Jacob's lineage 29-30: 24
  - a) Jacob's marriages 29:1-30
    - (1) Jacob meets Rachel 29:1-14
    - (2) Jacob marries Leah 29:15-26
    - (3) Jacob marries Rachel 29:27-30
  - b) Jacob's children 29:31-30: 24
    - (1) Through Leah 29:31-35
    - (2) Through Bilhah 30:1-8
    - (3) Through Zilpah 30:9-13
    - (4) Through Leah 30:14-22
    - (5) Through Rachel 30:22-24
- 4. The preservation of Jacob 30:25-33:20
  - a) Threat of Laban 30:25-31:45
    - (1) Business deal with Laban 30:25-43
    - (2) Flight from Laban 31:1-22
    - (3) Confrontation with Laban 31:22-42
    - (4) Covenant with Laban 31:43-55
  - b) Threat of Esau 32-33
    - (1) Report of Esau's coming 32:1-8
    - (2) Prayer for divine protection 32:9-12
    - (3) Gift sent to Esau 32:13-21
    - (4) Wrestling with the angel of the Lord and Jacob's name changed 32:22-33
    - (5) Welcome by Esau 33:1-11
    - (6) Proposal by Jacob 33:12-17
    - (7) Arrival in Canaan 33:18-20
- 5. Covenant reconfirmed 34:1-35:15
  - a) Covenant threatened by rape of Dinah 34
    - (1) Rape of Dinah 34:1-5
    - (2) Shechem's request for Dinah 34:6-12
    - (3) Proposal of circumcision 34:13-17
    - (4) Performance of circumcision 34:18-24
    - (5) Vengeance of Simeon and Levi 34:25-31
  - b) Abrahamic Covenant reconfirmed at Bethel 35:1-15
    - (1) Command to go to Bethel 35:1-4
    - (2) Journey to Bethel 35:5-8
    - (3) Jacob's name changed and Abrahamic Covenant reconfirmed 35:9-15
- 6. Transition from Jacob to Joseph 35:16-36:43
  - a) Birth of Benjamin and death of Rachel 35:16-20
  - b) Sin of Reuben resulting in loss of rights of firstborn 35:21-22
  - c) Sons of Jacob 35:23-26
  - d) Death of Isaac 35:27-29

- e) Esau's line distinguished 36
  - (1) Family of Esau 36:1-14
    - (a) Wives 36:1-8
    - (b) Sons 36:9-14
  - (2) Chiefs of the sons of Esau 36:15-19
  - (3) Sons of Seir 36:20-30
  - (4) Kings of Edom 36:31-39
  - (5) Chiefs of Edom 36:40-43
- D. Life of Joseph 37:1-50:26
  - 1. Sin of Joseph's family 37-38
    - a) His brothers 37
      - (1) Jealousy of Joseph's brothers 37:1-11
      - (2) Plot against Joseph 37:12-22
      - (3) Selling of Joseph 37:23-28
      - (4) Brothers deceive Jacob 37: 29-26
    - b) Judah and Tamar 38
      - (1) Sin of Judah 38:1-5
      - (2) Widowhood of Tamar 38:6-11
      - (3) Tamar deceives Judah 38:12-23
      - (4) Tamar's disclosure 38:24-26
      - (5) Tamar's children 38:27-30
  - 2. Joseph's trials and promotion in Egypt 39-41
    - a) Joseph's faithfulness in Potiphar's house 39:1-18
      - (1) Prosperity in Potiphar's house 39:1-6
      - (2) Temptation and accusation by Potiphar's wife 39:7-18
    - b) Joseph's faithfulness in prison 39:19-41:36
      - (1) Prosperity in prison 39:19-23
      - (2) Interpreting dreams 40-41:36
        - (a) Prisoners' dreams 40
          - i) Dreams 40:1-8
          - ii) Interpretations 40:9-19
          - iii) Fulfillment 40:20-23
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          - i) Pharaoh's dreams 41:1-8
          - ii) Joseph recommended 41: 9-13
          - iii) Joseph's interpretation 41:14-32
          - iv) Joseph's advice 41:33-36
    - c) Joseph's promotion 41:37-57
      - (1) Joseph's promotion 41:37-45
      - (2) Joseph's administration 41:46-57
        - (a) Joseph's stewardship 41:46-49
        - (b) Joseph's children 41:50-52
        - (c) World comes to Egypt 41:53-57
  - 3. Jacob and Joseph's brothers go to Egypt 42-47:26
    - a) Brothers' first trip to Egypt 42
      - (1) Trip to Egypt 42:1-24

- (a) Need for trip 42:1-5
    - (b) Initial contact with Joseph 42:6-17
    - (c) Joseph's orders 42:18-24
  - (2) Return to Canaan 42:25-38
    - (a) Discovery of the provision 42:25-28
    - (b) Explanation to Jacob 42:29-35
    - (c) Jacob's grief 42:36-38
  - b) Brothers' second trip to Egypt 43-45
    - (1) Return to Egypt 43
      - (a) Decision to return 43:1-14
      - (b) Contact with Joseph's steward 43:15-25
      - (c) Contact with Joseph 43:26-34
    - (2) Joseph tests his brothers 44
      - (a) Planting of the cup 44:1-5
      - (b) Discovery of the cup 44:6-13
      - (c) Meeting with Joseph 44:14-17
      - (d) Judah intercedes for Benjamin 44:18-34
    - (3) Joseph discloses his identity 45
      - (a) Joseph's revelation 45:1-15
      - (b) Pharaoh's instructions 45:16-20
      - (c) Joseph's provision 45:21-24
      - (d) Explanation to Jacob 45:25-28
  - c) Jacob's trip to Egypt 46:1-27
    - (1) Departure for Egypt 46:1-7
    - (2) Names of Jacob's descendents brought to Egypt 46:8-27
  - d) Jacob's descendents dwell in Egypt 46:28-47:28
    - (1) Jacob and Joseph reunited 46:28-34
    - (2) Interviews with pharaoh 47:1-10
      - (a) With Joseph's brothers 47:1-6
      - (b) With Jacob 47:7-10
    - (3) The settling of the family 47:11-12
    - (4) Joseph's administration in the midst of famine 47:13-26
      - (a) Buying of livestock 47:13-17
      - (b) Buying of land 47:18-26
- 4. Guarantee of future covenant preservation 47:27-50:26
  - a) Joseph's vow to Jacob 47:27-31
  - b) Jacob blesses Joseph's sons 48:1-22
    - (1) Review of God's promises 48:1-7
    - (2) Blessing of Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh 48:8-16
    - (3) Reaffirmation of the order of God's blessing 48:17-22
  - c) Jacob's final prophetic utterances to the tribes 49:1-28
    - (1) Reuben 49:1-4
    - (2) Simeon and Levi 49:5-7
    - (3) Judah 49:8-12
    - (4) Zebulun 49:13
    - (5) Issachar 49:14-15

- (6) Dan 49:16-18
- (7) Gad 49:19
- (8) Asher 49:20
- (9) Naphtali 49:21
- (10) Joseph 49:22-26
- (11) Benjamin 49:27-28
- d) Jacob's death and burial 49:29-50:14
  - (1) Death 49:29-33
  - (2) Burial in Canaan 50:1-14
- e) Joseph's reassurances to his brothers 50:15-21
- f) Joseph's death 50:22-26

### Argument

The book's opening prologue (1–11) seeks to explain to Israel her purpose by tracing God's redemptive program and messianic lineage from Eden to Abraham. Also, this section seeks to accomplish this purpose by showing the terrible progress of sin thus explaining to the nation why God's redemptive program was necessary. The first two chapters of Genesis describe God's original work of creation. This information would help Israel understand that their God, unlike the pagan deities of the ancient Near East, is the sovereign creator.

In this section, creation is repeatedly described as "good" (1:4, 9, 12, 18, 21, 25) and "very good" (Gen 1:31).<sup>23</sup> Knowledge of the original creation would also help the nation to comprehend what God's original plan was for creation and how the nation had been set aside to be the mechanism by which God would accomplish His goal of eventually restoring creation to

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<sup>23</sup> There are at least three views on the relationship of 1:1 to what follows. First, according to the gap theory, 1:1 describes the original creation. In the lengthy gap of time before 1:2, Satan fell thus leading to the chaotic conditions (Isa 24:1; 45:18; Jer 4:23-26) of 1:2. Thus, 1:3 refers to God's recreation efforts. However, this view suffers because the Hebrew syntax does not allow for a gap between 1:1 and 1:2, God called the events of the entire chapter very good (1:31), the merism of Exodus 20:8-11 indicates that everything that God created He did so in the six days of creation, it constitutes illegitimate totality transfer to define *tohu* and *bohu* based upon how these terms are used in the post fallen world, and *tohu* and *bohu* in this context simply means unformed and unfilled rather than representing chaotic conditions. Dyer and Merrill, *Old Testament Explorer*, 8. Second, the recreation view is similar to the gap theory except that the original creation is not described in 1:1. Rather, this verse describes God's recreation. However, in addition to having the same problems as the gap theory, this view relies upon speculation about the original creation. Third, the original creation view teaches that 1:1 describes God's original creation brought into existence on the first day. The second verse describes this creation in its unfilled and unformed state through the use of three circumstantial clauses. 1:3 describes the divine filling and forming process. J. Carl Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible* (Kregel: Grand Rapids, 1997), 15-16.

its original state. Knowledge of God's six days of work and one day of rest would also help Israel understand the foundation of their work week (Exod 20:8-11)<sup>24</sup> and Sabbath rest as the sign of the Mosaic Covenant. The fact that man is the pinnacle of God's creative work is evident from his designation as God's image bearer (Gen 1:26-27). Putting data together from the first (Gen 1:1-2:3) and second (Gen 2:4-25) creation accounts,<sup>25</sup> it is evident that man and woman were given the role of theocratic administrators who would co-rule God's creation on His behalf (Gen 1:28; 2:8-20). Man's stewardship over this creation (2:15) as well as the presence of the tree of life and knowledge (2:9, 17) would remind Moses' audience that they too had the responsibility of covenant obedience in order to experience prosperity (Lev 26; Deut 28).

Genesis 3 describes how the serpent, the enemy of God, undermined God's rule and original design for creation. The inversion of God's creation hierarchy is seen in how a member of the animal kingdom deceived the woman into enticing the man to sin. Here, the God ordained chain of command is inverted. Among the many other negative consequences introduced by sin,<sup>26</sup> man lost his original position as God's theocratic administrator and now had to toil in order

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<sup>24</sup> Although day can be used for an extended period of time (Mal 4:5), ordinary days are in view here based upon the existence of the ordinal numerical modifier, the accompanying phrase "evening and morning," and the analogy to the Israeli workweek. Far easier ways could have been used to communicate ages had that been Moses' intention. In 2 Peter 3:8, Peter uses the "as" clause to refute uniformitarian thinking by explaining that what seems to take a long time is actually just like a day from God's eternal point of view. Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible*, 16-17.

<sup>25</sup> While the first chapter represents the cosmological account, the second chapter represents the anthropological account. Dyer and Merrill, *Old Testament Explorer*, 8. The differences between these chapters can be captured on the following chart.

Gen 1	Gen 2
Chronological	Topical
Outline	Details
Creation of the animals	Naming the animals

<sup>26</sup> The linguistic similarity with 4:7 indicates that the woman's desire (3:16) refers to her ambition to dominate the marriage by usurping the husband's headship. Just as Cain must master sin so that it will not dominate him (4:7), the husband must exert authority over his wife so that she will not dominate him. How the husband is to

to survive (Gen 3:17-19). The Exodus generation would experience similar consequences if they ever deviated from God's will as revealed in the Mosaic Covenant.

However, despite the consequences for sin, God's redemptive intention becomes immediately apparent. God clothed Adam and Eve with animal skins. This action is rich with Christological significance. It demonstrates that God's method of forgiveness is to punish an innocent scapegoat in the place of the guilty (Gen 3:20-21) rather than for man to cover his own guilt before God (Gen 3:7). The introduction of death (Gen 3:19) was also redemptive and merciful. It prevented man from living forever in a sinful state. Similarly, the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden prohibited them from eating from the Tree of Life and thus living forever in their sinful condition (3:23-24).

The naming of Eve as "the mother of all the living" was also redemptive since it revealed God's purposes of perpetuating the human race in spite of its sin (3:20). Most importantly, the "proto evangelium" (Gen 3:15) made it clear that one day God would send a redeemer who would defeat God's enemy, restore everything to God's original design, restore God's rulership, and restore man's position as theocratic administrator.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the information presented in Genesis 3 would help Israel understand that redemption was God's goal. In sum, by studying this chapter Moses' original audience would comprehend why redemption was necessary and why the nation had been singled out for the special purpose of mediating God's redemptive blessings to the world.

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rule his wife is explained in Ephesians 5:22-33. Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible*, 19-20.

<sup>27</sup> Eve's mistaken belief that she had begotten the messiah (4:1) and Lamech's belief that Noah would ameliorate the curse (5:29; 3:17) both indicate that they understood 3:15 in messianic terms. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Messianic Christology* (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1998), 14-17. Also, the messianic interpretation of 3:15 is supported by church tradition.

The genealogy from Adam to Noah traces the line from which the messianic blessing (Gen 3:15) would eventually come (Gen 4:25-5:32) and contrasts it with the ungodly line that would not bring forth the messianic blessing (Gen 4:17-24). The repetition of death in Genesis 5 testifies to the reality of the curse (Gen 3:19) thereby showing the Exodus generation why God's redemptive purpose through them was necessary. The fact that man still retained the image of God even in his fallen condition (Gen 5:1; 9:6) reveals man's dignity and why God sought to redeem him from the curse. Moreover, Enoch's translation (Gen 5:24) as well as Lamech's description of Noah as the comforter (Gen 5:29) provides hope that the reality of the curse will one day be done away with.<sup>28</sup> The former is also included as an example of faith to be imitated by the Exodus generation (Heb 11:5). The latter shows continuation of the messianic line and expectation.

Abel's sacrifice of faith also exemplifies the covenant fidelity that the Exodus generation is to imitate (Heb 11:4). In fact, God's choice of Abel over Cain shows the divine pattern of sovereignly choosing the younger man of faith over the older man despite the fact that cultural norms demand that the honor go to the firstborn.<sup>29</sup> Such deviance from cultural standards would communicate to the Exodus generation the value that God attaches to faith. It would also encourage them with the reminder that God's elective purposes for them cannot fail despite the odds.

The first murder shows that Cain is not the fulfillment of the "proto evangelium" (Gen 3:15) contrary to Eve's false expectation (Gen 4:1) thereby creating a future messianic

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<sup>28</sup> Ross, *Creation & Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*, 171-77.

<sup>29</sup> This pattern is repeated throughout the Book of Genesis. It is seen in Abel over Cain, Seth over Cain, Shem over Japheth, Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, Judah and Joseph over their brothers, and Ephraim over Manasseh.

expectation. The first murder also provides insight into the growing power of sin.<sup>30</sup> Knowledge of sin's power would help Moses' audience better understand why God had to work through a sanctified nation in order to mediate His blessings to the world. The first murder might also be seen in terms of Satan's attempt to prematurely cut off the messianic line in order to prevent the promise of Genesis 3:15 from becoming a reality (1 John 3:12; Rev 12:4). However, the birth of Seth to Adam and Eve (4:25-26) shows how God continued the messianic line in spite of Satan's efforts.

The growing power of sin now reaches epic proportions as the entire race becomes involved in perpetual wickedness (Gen 6:1-7) and God makes a decision to destroy humanity through the flood.<sup>31</sup> Again, the nation would need to understand sin's grasp on humanity in order to comprehend why God had to work through a single, sanctified nation to accomplish His redemptive purposes. Because Noah is in the line that would ultimately bring forth the messiah (Gen 5), it was necessary for God to safely preserve him in the ark while the world was flooded. Perhaps the intermarriage between fallen angelic beings and humans (Gen 6:1-4)<sup>32</sup> was yet

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<sup>30</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (Nashville, TN: Word, 1987), 100.

<sup>31</sup> The universality of the flood seems apparent from the fact that all of the high mountains were covered (7:19), all living things perished (7:21), the flood lasted 371-days, and the ark was needed. It is also evident from extra biblical and New Testament testimony (2 Pet 3:3-7). While the terms used in Genesis flood account can have a localized meaning elsewhere (Gen 41:57), they need not have this meaning when the context does not call for it (1:1). While some biblical events are narrated from the perspective of the participant (Josh 10) it is unlikely that this is the case here (8:2).

<sup>32</sup> Some say the sons of god were apostate Sethites that intermarried with the ungodly line of Cain. However, the term "sons of God" is not used of believers elsewhere in the Old Testament and this view fails to explain the origin of the angels. Others say that the sons of God were Cainite despots who were polygamous. However, this is a strange way to communicate this idea and there is no evidence of a monarchical system in Cain's line. The best view understands this occurrence as a reference to angels who were seeking to disrupt the promise of 3:15 by genetically contaminating the human race. This view best takes into consideration other uses of the term "sons of God" (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7), the fact that angels can take on human form (Gen 18:1-8; 19:1-5), New Testament commentary (2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6-7), the views of ancient Judaism and the church fathers, the evil of humanity at the time (Gen 6:5), the progeny of the giants (6:4), the necessity of the flood, and why Noah was called innocent (6:9). Matt 22:30 cannot be used to argue against this view since it is only describing heavenly realities rather than things taking place on the fallen earth. Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible*, 20-21; Fruchtenbaum, *Messianic Christology*, 119-22.

another Satanic attempt to corrupt the messianic line in order to preempt the promise of Gen 3:15 from being fulfilled. However, God's preservation of Noah thwarted Satan's purpose. Noah's obedience to God in constructing and entering the ark is yet another example of faith and obedience that the writer hopes that the Exodus generation will imitate (Heb 11:7). Also just as sin brought judgment, the Exodus generation will similarly experience divine discipline if they disobeyed God's covenant.

God's intent to restore creation is seen in His provision of the Noahic Covenant following the flood (Gen 8:20-9:17). The creation of human government with the power of capital punishment would serve as a deterrent preventing humanity from regressing back to the level of violence exhibited in the antediluvian world. God's desire to restore creation is also seen in His command to Noah to subdue creation and His promise, as signified by the rainbow, never to destroy the race again by water. Many of the recreation themes found in Genesis 9 reiterate motifs from the original creation account of Genesis 1–2. Also, the covenant's prohibitions against eating blood and murder would help the Exodus generation understand the universal precedent for similar prohibitions found in the Mosaic Covenant.

However, despite God's intent to restore through His gracious provision of the Noahic Covenant, man's sinful nature remained the same in the postdiluvian world (Gen 8:21). This sin nature finds ample illustration in Noah's drunkenness, the sin of Ham, and the subsequent curse of Canaan (Gen 9:18-28). Thus, a further work of redemption would be necessitated and eventually fulfilled through the coming Messiah (Gen 3:15). Therefore, the nation would understand why God set them apart for the purpose of accomplishing this restoration agenda. Noah's sin is also included to alleviate confusion that he is the fulfillment of the "proto evangelium" (3:15; 5:29) thus further heightening the messianic expectation. Also, knowledge of

the curse of Canaan would help Israel understand why the Canaanites were under a curse and therefore expelling them from the land and exterminating them was necessary.<sup>33</sup>

Moses also clarifies that the messianic line would come from Shem (Gen 9:26) rather than Ham or Japheth. Shem's line therefore would include Eber, the father of the Hebrew people, as well as Peleg eventually leading to Abraham's father Terah. Moses includes this lineage in order to clarify for the nation her messianic heritage and calling (10:21-32). Moses also discusses the cursed line of Canaan so that the Exodus generation will eventually drive them out of the land of promise (10:15-20). He also notes the origin of many of the nation's perennial enemies such as the coastland Gentiles emanating from the line of Japheth (10:1-5) and Egypt or Mizraim emanating from Ham's line (10:6-14).

The continuing existence of the sin nature in the postdiluvian world also finds illustration at the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-4). The building of the tower represented the rebellion of mankind against God's command to scatter (Gen 9:1). Here, humanity congregated for self-serving purposes by building a tower that reached into heaven. The ineffectiveness of the Noahic Covenant to restrain this "snowballing" effect of sin in the postdiluvian world would help Moses' audience comprehend why a further work of redemption through Israel was necessary. If God's recreation through the Noahic Covenant could not stop sin, then it was necessary for God to send the messiah through Israel who would one day conquer sin entirely.

The subsequent dispersion of the nations (Gen 10; 11:4-9) would also help Israel understand that obedience results in blessing and disobedience results in scattering.

Unfortunately, such scattering would recur many times throughout the nation's history (Lev 26;

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<sup>33</sup> Some attempt to understand God's curse of Canaan for Ham's sin in terms of Ham being uncurseable since he had already been blessed (9:1), through the insertion of the words "cursed be the father of Canaan," or by seeing Canaan as an accessory to Ham's sin. However, the best explanation is to see the curse directed against the Canaanite people since they were destined to follow the evil character of Ham. Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible*, 23-24.

Deut 28).<sup>34</sup> An understanding of the sinful origin of the scattered nations would help Israel better understand where her surrounding enemies came from. Because of their sinful origin, God would not work through them to accomplish His redemptive purpose. Thus, it was necessary for Him to call out a new and special nation through which He could accomplish His purposes. In sum, by explaining the need for redemption as well as her messianic heritage, the Exodus generation could gain perspective on her magnificent calling and thus be stimulated toward covenant obedience.

The rest of the Book of Genesis transitions the reader away from primeval history and instead focuses the reader's attention upon patriarchal history (Gen 11:10–50:26). Moses' goal in this section is to connect God's redemptive purposes, as unfolded in the book's opening chapters, to Israel in Egypt so as to give the Exodus generation an incentive to cooperate with God's covenant purposes by accepting and obeying the Mosaic Covenant. The redemptive promises originally given, developed, and preserved in Genesis 1–11 are now focused upon one individual, Abraham. Through Abraham would come forth the special nation that would bring God's program of redemption to fruition. Thus, Moses is careful to trace the messianic line from Noah's son Shem to Abram's father Terah (Gen 11:10-26). Therefore, Genesis 5 and 11 trace the promises of God's messianic program (Gen 3:15) from Adam to Abram.<sup>35</sup>

In Genesis 12:2-3, 7 the messianic promises from Genesis 3:15 are encapsulated in the form of the Abrahamic promises. According to these promises, land, seed and blessing would be given to Abram's descendants and through these descendants would come blessing to the entire

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<sup>34</sup> Ross, *Creation & Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*, 248.

<sup>35</sup> Some contend for large gaps of time in these genealogies based upon gaps in later biblical genealogies (Matt 1). However, it seems more likely that Moses' genealogies do not have gaps in them. Thus, they are closed rather than open. The later genealogies summarize a longer portion of history than do Moses' genealogies. Also, Moses' genealogies provide more information than do the later genealogies by giving the age of the father at the time his son was born. Furthermore, Jude states that Moses' genealogies are closed by indicating that Enoch was the seventh from Adam (Jude 14).

world. The seed aspect of these blessings specifically amplifies the promise of a redeemer given in Genesis 3:15. These promises are unconditional and therefore not based upon the performance of Abram or his descendants for their fulfillment. If they were based upon Abram's performance, they would never be fulfilled due to Abram's partial obedience.

Contrary to God's command to separate from his family (Gen 12:1), Abram instead took Terah (Acts 7:4) and Lot (Gen 12:4) on the sojourn. Contrary to God's command to go to the land that God would show him (Gen 12:2), Abram instead went to Egypt (Gen 12:10). Instead of trusting in God, Abram lied to pharaoh by telling him that Sarai was his sister. Thus, the ultimate fulfillment of these promises is not based upon the performance of Abram and his descendants but rather upon God's faithfulness. Such unconditionality would remind the Exodus generation that any past national disobedience had not cancelled God's future covenant purposes for them. Moreover, the Exodus generation should not imitate Abraham's mixed faith and instead follow God wholeheartedly.

In Genesis 12:10-20, Abram lies and tells Pharaoh that Sarai is his sister. When Pharaoh takes Sarai as part of his harem, the Lord sends plagues upon him and he returns her to Abram presumably untouched. This story is included since it represents an outworking of the Abrahamic promises. This seed is jeopardized through Pharaoh's potential sexual contact with Abram's wife. In accordance with the promise to curse those who came against God's redemptive purposes through Abram (Gen 12:3), God sends plagues upon Pharaoh. This story would undoubtedly remind Moses' audience of the plagues that God also sent upon Pharaoh and Egypt in Moses' day in order to similarly protect His covenanted nation.<sup>36</sup> This inclusion would

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<sup>36</sup> Ross, *Creation & Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*, 273.

therefore encourage them by reminding them that God had liberated His chosen nation in the past and would continue to do so.

In Genesis 13–17, the Abrahamic promises are ratified into official ancient Near Eastern covenant form. However, before the covenant ceremony of Genesis 15 could transpire, Abram had to be further sanctified. In Genesis 13, he separates from Lot and thus fulfills God's original plan of complete separation of Abram from His father's household (Gen 12:1). Thus, the land promises are restated after this separation occurs. Moses includes the information concerning Lot so that his audience will learn from his negative example. Lot compromised with the Canaanites (Gen 13:13) and consequently suffered (2 Pet 2:7-8). As a result, Moses hopes that his audience will avoid similar entanglements with the Canaanites.

In Genesis 14, Abram refuses to take tribute from the King of Sodom and thus maintains his independence from the wicked Sodomites (Gen 13:13; 14:21-24).<sup>37</sup> Abram's blessing instead comes from Melchizedek (Gen 14:18-20). Abram's maturing faith is apparent through his rescue of Lot and worship of God through the priest-king Melchizedek. Moses includes this information with the hope that his audience will imitate Abram's example of faith. With Abram now set aside, he is ready to enter into a covenant relationship with God.

In Genesis 15, God enters into or cuts a formal covenant relationship with Abram. Thus, the initial messianic expectation (Gen 3:15) that was later encapsulated into the Abrahamic promises (Gen 12:2-3, 7) now takes the form of an official ancient Near Eastern treaty between God and Abram. Such a treaty called for both parties to an agreement to pass through a row of severed animal pieces. This ritual signified that a similar fate suffered by these severed animals should be bestowed upon the breaching party if he failed to meet his obligations under the treaty.

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<sup>37</sup> Bing, *Analysis of Old Testament Books*, 6.

The unconditional nature of this treaty is seen in the fact that Abram is asleep while God alone passes through the animal pieces (Gen 15:12, 17).<sup>38</sup> Thus, the fulfillment of the treaty is totally dependent upon God rather than on the performance of Abram or his descendants. This information would encourage the Exodus generation by reminding them of God's unconditional commitment to them. Also, the chapter's emphasis upon faith as the basis for a proper relationship to God (Gen 15:6) would exemplify for the Exodus generation the type of faith that God expects of them.

The ratification of the treaty is accompanied by a prophecy that Israel would experience 400 years of Egyptian servitude and an amplification of the land promises (Gen 15:13-14, 16, 18-21). This history would explain to Moses' generation why the previous generation of Jews ended up in Egypt. This information would also be crucial to Moses' original audience who were on the verge of taking Canaan. The story would inform them that their upcoming war with the Canaanites would be in accord with God's unilateral covenant as well as His prophetic timetable. The articulation of the sin of the Canaanites not yet being full (Gen 15:16) would remind the nation that the Canaanites were not the rightful possessors of the land as they were under the judgment of God. The specific enumeration of the land promises (Gen 15:18-21) would remind the Jews that they instead are the rightful possessors of the land.

In Genesis 16, Abram impregnates Hagar and she gives birth to Ishmael. However, God explains that the covenant would be fulfilled only through the lineage of Abram and Sarai rather than through an Egyptian handmaid. Thus, the nation would have to be miraculously birthed given Sarai's old age. This story also has the same effect as Genesis 4, which specified that the

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<sup>38</sup> Not only is Abraham's lack of participation in the ritual a sign of the covenant's unconditionality, but so is the lack of any stated conditions, its eternity (Gen 17:7, 13, 19; 1 Chr 16:7; Ps 105:10), its immutability (Heb 6:13-18), and the fact that it is perpetually reaffirmed in Israel's history despite the repeated disobedience of the patriarchs. John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom: A Basic Text in Premillennial Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959), 149-52.

messianic line would pass through the Godly line of Seth rather than the ungodly line of Cain. In the same way, Genesis 16 makes it clear that the covenant would be fulfilled through the miraculous descendant of Abram and Sarai rather than through the natural lineage of Ishmael.

To reflect the great lineage that will come through this miraculous descendant, Abram's name is changed to Abraham, which means "father of nations." Similarly, Sarai's name is changed to Sarah, which means "princess" to reflect the notion that kings (including the messiah) will come from this miraculous descendant (Gen 17). These name changes would solidify in the minds of Moses' audience how the nation miraculously began through Abraham and Sarah. Another lesson included here for the benefit of the Exodus generation is that God's purposes are accomplished through faith in His promises rather than through human manipulation. This is a lesson Moses' audience would need to understand since their success in the conquest would be predicated upon obedience to God rather than upon human might. Also, the ritual of circumcision is specified as the way Abraham's descendants are to identify themselves with the covenant community. This story would assist Moses' audience in understanding the origin of the ritual of circumcision.<sup>39</sup>

Although the Abrahamic Covenant is unconditional, it contains within it a conditional blessing. A generation's disobedience can never cancel the covenant for Israel as a whole. However, in order for any generation of Jews to personally enter into the covenant's blessings, they must exhibit personal obedience.<sup>40</sup> This principle includes Abraham. Although Abraham's disobedience does not cancel the covenant for the nation, his personal obedience is a prerequisite

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<sup>39</sup> Circumcision was chosen as the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant for the following reasons. First, it signified the prominence of male headship within the covenant community. Second, the bloody ritual is reminiscent of the blood involved in the making of the Abrahamic covenant. Third, its effect upon the male sex organ serves as a reminder of sexual fidelity that those in the covenant community are to exemplify. Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible*, 24.

<sup>40</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, *Thy Kingdom Come* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1990), 66-67.

for him to experience personal blessing. Abraham's faith had not yet matured to the point where he was capable of unhindered obedience to God. Thus, God allowed both Abraham and Sarah to experience a series of events designed to develop their faith (Gen 18-20). These circumstances included the promise of a son (Gen 18:1-15), the events surrounding the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:16-19:29), and the trial with Abimelech (Gen 20). These stories evidence the deficiencies of Abraham and Sarah's faith. Sarah laughed at the promise of a child and then lied to conceal her unbelief (Gen 18:10-15). Abraham repeated the lie about Sarah being his sister (Gen 20). Through these circumstances, however, God was able to reveal more of His character and messianic program to Abraham and Sarah and their faith was beginning to mature as a result.

The story involving the depravity of Lot's daughters (Gen 19:30-38) would be of particular interest to Moses' original audience as it provides an explanation of the origin of the Moabites and the Ammonites, perennial enemies of Israel. The encounter with Abimelech (Gen 20), like the encounter with Pharaoh (Gen 12:10-20), once again illustrates the outworking of the Abrahamic Covenant in response to a crisis regarding the seed. Because the seed was threatened through Sarah's potential sexual contact with Abimelech, God once again intervened and Sarah was returned to Abraham untouched.<sup>41</sup>

Genesis 21 records the consummation of the promise with the birth of Isaac. The maturity of Abraham's faith is confirmed through his willingness to obey God's seemingly irrational

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<sup>41</sup> While advocates of the documentary hypothesis insist that this story is a repetition of what took place earlier, it is more likely that this story is a separate event couched in a similar literary form. For key differences between these events see C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 1:242.

command of offering up Isaac (Gen 22:1-18).<sup>42</sup> Abraham's obedience qualified him to experience personal blessing (Gen 22:18). Abraham's obedience would be a particularly important example for Moses' generation to understand since the nation would be blessed or cursed based upon their obedience or disobedience to the Mosaic Covenant (Lev 26; Deut 28). Thus, obedience leading to blessing finds ample illustration in the life of the patriarch Abraham (Gen 22:18). In sum, Abraham's great faith is recorded for the benefit of the Exodus generation (Heb 11:8-22).<sup>43</sup>

Genesis 22:20–25:11 represents a transition away from the patriarch Abraham to the patriarch Isaac. Thus, this section records various key pieces of transitional data, such as the birth of the sons of Abraham's brother Nahor thus creating the line producing Rebekah (Gen 22:20-24), the death and burial of Sarah (Gen 23), the marriage of Isaac (Gen 24), the inheritance of Isaac (Gen 25:5-6), and the death and burial of Abraham (Gen 25:7-11). Abraham's faith in the covenant, which Moses hopes that his audience will imitate, is seen in how he purchased Sarah's burial plot in the land of promise. Special attention is given to Isaac and Rebekah's marriage since it will be through this union that the messianic line will continue. It is for this reason that the non-Canaanite ethnicity of Rebekah is stressed. Genesis 25:1-4 records the descendants that came from Abraham's second marriage to Keturah probably to show Moses' audience the fulfillment of the promise that Abraham would be the father of many nations. It also shows the origin of the Midianites, which were a people group that would play a significant role in Israel's history (Gen 37:28; Exod 2:15-21; Num 25; Judg 6–7).

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<sup>42</sup> Here, God cannot be accused of promoting child sacrifice since 22:1 indicates that God merely sought to test Abraham. Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible*, 24-25.

<sup>43</sup> Apparently, Abraham believed that God would resurrect Isaac even if he were sacrificed (Gen 22:5; Heb 11:19).

The patriarch Isaac now moves to the forefront in the narrative (Gen 25:12-chap 26). Genesis 4 clarified that the messianic line was the line of Seth rather than the line of Cain. Genesis 16 clarified that the messianic line was the line of Sarah rather than the line of Hagar. In the same way, Genesis 25:12-18 distinguishes Isaac's line from the line of Ishmael. Because Ishmael's descendants sojourned outside the land of Canaan they have no legitimate claim to it. Therefore the Exodus generation has the right to remove these descendants from the land.

The rest of chapter 25 clarifies that the line would continue through Isaac's youngest son Jacob rather than through his oldest son Esau. The divine election of Jacob over Esau is evidenced through the prophecy that the younger would serve the older (Gen 25:23), Esau's sale of his birthright to Jacob (Gen 25:27-34), and Esau's rebellious marriages (Gen 26:34-35). Esau's bad example would communicate to the Exodus generation the necessity of not intermingling with the Canaanites. The election of the younger brother Jacob over Esau would again encourage the Exodus generation that God's elective purposes will be accomplished regardless of cultural obstacles.

The Abrahamic Covenant is reconfirmed to Isaac (Gen 26:1-5, 23-25). The covenant promises of personal blessing and protection become evident in Isaac's life as he becomes wealthy (Gen 26:12-16), enters into an agreement that protects him from Abimelech (Gen 26:26-31), and discovers water (Gen 26:32-33). Isaac repeats the sin of his father Abraham by telling Abimelech that Rebekah is his sister. The potential sexual contact of Rebekah with the Philistine men again threatens the messianic line. Thus, Moses records Abimelech's command that any man who molests Rebekah will be put to death (Gen 26:6-11).

The patriarch Jacob moves to the forefront of the narrative in Genesis 27–36. Despite the fact that he colludes with Rebekah to deceive Isaac and to cheat Esau out of the blessing of the

first born (Gen 27:1-40), the Abrahamic Covenant is reconfirmed to Jacob in the next chapter (Gen 28:10-17). Thus, this reconfirmation in the midst of such deception illustrates the unconditional nature of the covenant. Its availability to any generation is not conditioned upon the performance of Abraham's descendants. This reconfirmation of the covenant, in spite of deception, also illustrates God's election of Jacob. Jacob's escape from Esau's rage (Gen 27:41-45) as well as the admonition of his parents not to marry a Canaanite (Gen 27:46-28:5), were both necessary to protect the messianic line that would continue through Jacob. By contrast, Esau's repeated marriages to Canaanite women (Gen 28:6-9) confirm not only his non-elect status but also distinguished his lineage from that of the messianic line of Jacob.

Jacob's marriages to Leah and Rachael are carefully traced because through these marriages (and various maidservants) would come not only the messiah but also the tribes of Israel (Gen 29-30:24).<sup>44</sup> This information would assist Moses' audience in understanding the origin of the tribes. The 14 years that Jacob served Laban in order to finally marry Rachael was necessary in order to mold Jacob's character. Only as Jacob the deceiver encountered the deception of Laban could this flaw in his character be rectified.

The transfer of Laban's wealth to Jacob in spite of the latter's trickery and superstition (Gen 30:25-43) not only represents the outworking of the promise of personal blessings of the unconditional Abrahamic Covenant but it also sets the stage for the confrontation between Jacob and Esau in the following chapter. God's preservation of Jacob and his family from both Laban and Esau (Gen 31-33) was necessary because the messianic line as well as the tribes of Israel would come through his lineage. Jacob's wrestling with the Angel of the Lord as well as his change of name (Gen 32:28) shows the development of his character as he depends upon God

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<sup>44</sup> For a helpful chart showing the lineage of Jacob's sons, see John H. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament*, rev. and exp. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 18.

through these trials. By allowing Jacob to win the wrestling match,<sup>45</sup> God revealed to Jacob that he had nothing to fear. This message would also comfort the Exodus generation on the verge of their entry into the land. Also, just as Jacob fled from Laban back to Canaan despite fears, the Exodus generation should similarly enter Canaan in spite of fear.

Moses records the story of the rape of Dinah (Gen 34) because it represents a crisis of the seed of the covenant. The seed is threatened not only through intermarriage with the Canaanites (Gen 34:9) but also because of the potential reaction of the Canaanites to the vengeance taken by Simeon and Levi (Gen 34:30). Yet despite this crisis, the covenant is again reconfirmed in the following chapter as signified by Jacob's change of name to Israel (Gen 35:1-15). Thus, the covenant is once again seen as unconditional. The overreaction of Simeon and Levi in the previous chapter did not cancel the covenant.

Moses might have also recorded the Dinah incident in order to demonstrate the wickedness of the Canaanite culture. An understanding of this Canaanite wickedness would help the reader understand why it was necessary for the nation to later leave Canaan for Egypt in the upcoming Joseph narrative. This relocation to Egypt was necessary to protect Jacob's descendants from moral corruption. The story also furnishes a justification for Canaanite destruction to be carried out by the Exodus generation.

The remainder of chapter 35 and 36 transitions the reader away from Jacob as the focal point in the narrative by recording several key pieces of transitional data. Such data includes the birth of Benjamin and the death of Rachel (Gen 35:16-20), a summation of the sons of Jacob (Gen 35:23-26), and the death of Isaac (Gen 35:27-29). Thus, this information shows Yahweh's faithfulness to the seed aspects of the Abrahamic covenant despite the ongoing reality of

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<sup>45</sup> Here, it is apparent that the angel of the Lord is God. Not only is this clear from the text (Gen 32:30; Hos 12:4-5) but it is also clear from Jacob's change of name following this event to Israel, which means "he who strives with God."

patriarchal death. The sin of Reuben (Gen 35:21-22) is also recorded in order to establish in the minds of Moses' audience why Reuben lost the right of the firstborn.

The lineage of Esau is enumerated in chapter 36. This enumeration once again distinguishes Esau's line from Jacob's messianic line. It also provides Moses' audience with an explanation of the wicked origin of the Edomites who were a perennial enemy of Israel. It also explains the origin of the Amalekites (Gen 36:12-16) that Moses' audience would encounter (Exod 17:8-16; Num 14:24-45; 24:20; Deut 1).

Genesis 37–50 focuses upon the patriarch Joseph. God had several reasons for wanting to transport Jacob's descendants from Canaan to Egypt. First, the nation needed to be preserved in the midst of an approaching famine (Gen 45:7, 11). Second, the nation needed to be insulated from the morally decadent Canaanite culture (Gen 34; 38). Third, a previous prophecy required that Israel spend 400 years in Egyptian captivity before returning to Canaan (Gen 15:13-14). Fourth, God wanted to manifest His power to the nation and the world through the miraculous signs that He would employ during the Exodus event. All of these goals required that the nation be moved from Canaan to Egypt.

Joseph would be the instrument that God would use to relocate the nation in Egypt. God's selection of the youngest brother to accomplish His will instead of the eldest would again encourage the Exodus generation with the reminder that God's elective purposes will come to pass despite cultural plausibility. God revealed His purpose for Joseph to him in a dream. When he shared the dream with his brothers, they became envious and sold him as a slave into Egypt (Gen 37). By recounting Joseph's ordeals, Moses hopes to show that God will be faithful to the Exodus generation in their conquest just as God had been faithful to Joseph.

The Joseph narrative is abruptly interrupted with the recounting of the sin of Judah and Tamar (Gen 38). This insertion, like the rape of Dinah in Genesis 34, helps the reader grasp the level of moral decay in Canaan. Such awareness helps the reader understand why it was necessary to remove Jacob's descendants from Canaan in order to protect them from being contaminated by this moral pollution. It also helps Moses' audience understand why expulsion of the Canaanites from the land was a necessity. Thus, this chapter interprets the previous chapter by offering an explanation as to why Joseph had to be sold into slavery. While the previous chapter does not furnish this information, this point only becomes clear when the two chapters are considered together. The contribution of Perez (Gen 38:29) to the messianic line (Ruth 4:18; Matt 1:3; Luke 3:33) also illustrates the unconditional covenant because God's seed promises continue even in the midst of vile sin. This chapter would also help Moses' audience appreciate that the concept of Levirate marriage found in the Mosaic Law (Deut 25:5-10) has a cultural precedent.

Genesis 39–41 records the circumstances by which Joseph is promoted to second in command over all of Egypt. Joseph's exaltation is attributable to his faithfulness to God in both Potiphar's household and in prison. Ultimately, however, his promotion can be attributed to God's blessing (Gen 39:2-5, 21-23; 40:8; 41:16). The promotion of Joseph would serve as an example and encouragement to Moses' audience that was on the verge of conquering Canaan. Just as Joseph's promotion was attributable to both obedience to God as well as God's faithfulness, the conquest of Canaan would also be successfully accomplished as the nation obeyed God and trusted in His faithfulness. Also, the repeated manner in which Joseph's dreams came to pass would encourage the Exodus generation by reminding them that God will also keep His covenant promises to them.

In Genesis 42:1–47:26, Jacob’s descendants finally settle in Egypt. Joseph devises a test resulting in Judah’s willingness to become a substitute for Benjamin. This willingness has the effect of easing the hostility between Joseph and his brothers thus causing all the brothers to be reunited (Gen 45). The brothers then bring Jacob to Egypt (Gen 46). Pharaoh then receives the family and they consequently settle in Goshen (Gen 47). Joseph’s elevation over his brothers would encourage the Exodus generation with the reminder that God keeps his word (Gen 37:9-10). Their settling in Goshen has the effect of keeping them insulated from the religions of Egypt thus maintaining their purity and distinctiveness as God’s special nation. Thus, through the treachery of his brothers, the Lord’s purpose for Joseph was accomplished (Gen 50:20) as the nation was relocated from Canaan to Egypt.

The content of Genesis 47:27-50:26 guarantees that the covenant blessings will extend beyond the patriarchal era.<sup>46</sup> Such a future expectation can be seen in Joseph’s vow to bury Jacob’s bones in Canaan (Gen 47:27-31), Jacob’s blessing of Joseph’s sons (Gen 48:8-22), Jacob’s prophetic blessings pronounced upon the tribes (Gen 49:1-28), Jacob’s burial in Canaan (Gen 50:1-14), Joseph’s prediction that the nation would return to Canaan (Gen 50:24), and the oath by the sons of Israel that they would bury Joseph’s bones in Canaan (Gen 50:25). The blessing of the youngest motif as displayed in Jacob’s blessing of Joseph’s sons again would encourage the Exodus generation by reminding them of the inevitability of God’s elective purposes. Also, Joseph’s request that his bones be buried in Canaan would serve as an example of faith for the Exodus generation to emulate (Heb 11:22).

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<sup>46</sup> Bing, *Analysis of Old Testament Books*, 9-10.

Of particular significance regarding the guarantee of future covenant blessing is the prediction that the messiah will come from Judah (Gen 49:10; Matt 1:2, 6).<sup>47</sup> This prophecy would help Moses' audience to understand that God had a future for the nation and they could be a part of that glorious future by fulfilling their obligations under the terms of the Mosaic Covenant. Joseph's reassurances to his brothers that he would not retaliate against them but would rather provide for them in the wake of Jacob's death (Gen 50:15-21) serves as an appropriate transition into the Book of Exodus. Because Joseph died (Gen 50:26) his protective custody of the nation was no longer present. This absence paved the way for a subsequent pharaoh to enslave and mistreat the nation (Exod 1).

In conclusion, because of the sin in Eden, man lost his position as God's theocratic administrator. Thus, God set in motion His redemptive program that would bring forth the Messiah who would one day restore God's original design for creation (Gen 3:15). To accomplish this goal God created and preserved an elect nation that would one day bring forth the long awaited messiah (Gen 49:10). The restoration of God's rulership over what was lost in Eden will be the work of this future Messiah.<sup>48</sup> The foundation of this new nation is the Abrahamic Covenant. This covenant, which is described (Gen 15) and traced through the Book of Genesis, would later be confirmed to the Exodus generation (Exod 6:2-8). In sum, by understanding where they came from and where they are going, Moses' generation, through covenant obedience, should cooperate and contribute to God's messianic and covenant purposes.

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<sup>47</sup> Genesis 49:10 is messianic in that it teaches that the ruler's staff would remain in Judah "until the one comes to whom it belongs" (the meaning of Shiloh). Judah is selected for this honor because Reuben disqualified himself from the rights of the firstborn because he slept with his father's concubine. Simeon and Levi were similarly disqualified because of their overreaction to the Shechemites. Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible*, 27.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 10.

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