

GENESIS

*God chooses Abraham to bless all the families of the earth through him.*

SETTING

From the creation of the world to approx. 1650 BC

KEY VERSE

*"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.'"*

12:1-3

Last updated February 7, 2023

[INTRODUCTION 5](#_Toc126580586)

[STRUCTURE 6](#_Toc126580587)

[God and the world 6](#_Toc126580588)

[God and Abraham's family 6](#_Toc126580589)

[WHO IS THE AUTHOR? 8](#_Toc126580590)

[Moses? 8](#_Toc126580591)

[A completely different author much later? 9](#_Toc126580592)

[GOD BLESSES 10](#_Toc126580593)

[PART 1: CHAPTERS 1-11 10](#_Toc126580594)

[GENRE? 10](#_Toc126580595)

[ARGUMENTS FOR AN EARLY DATING 10](#_Toc126580596)

[WHAT KIND OF GENRE IS CHAPTER 1? 11](#_Toc126580597)

[Interpretation 1: Days are 24-hour days in a literal week 12](#_Toc126580598)

[Interpretation 2: The days are long periods 12](#_Toc126580599)

[Interpretation 3: The days are 24-hour days with long periods between each day 13](#_Toc126580600)

[Interpretation 4: The framework view 14](#_Toc126580601)

[Interpretation 5: The creation is a cosmic temple 16](#_Toc126580602)

[Summary 17](#_Toc126580603)

[“IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH.” (GEN 1:1) 17](#_Toc126580604)

[Why was man created? 17](#_Toc126580605)

[God's image 18](#_Toc126580606)

[MAIN POINTS FROM CHAPTER 1 18](#_Toc126580607)

[CHAPTER 2-4 THE STORY OF HEAVEN AND EARTH (2:4 - 4:26) 19](#_Toc126580608)

[DIFFERENT VIEWS OF ADAM AND EVE 20](#_Toc126580609)

[MAN IN CHAPTER 2 25](#_Toc126580610)

[THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE (2:22-24) 25](#_Toc126580611)

[TREES 26](#_Toc126580612)

[THE SNAKE 27](#_Toc126580613)

[THE SIN 28](#_Toc126580614)

[MAIN POINTS FROM CHAPTERS 2-4 29](#_Toc126580615)

[CHAPTER 5: THE BOOK OF ADAM'S GENEALOGY (5:1 - 6:8) 29](#_Toc126580616)

[DID THEY LIVE THAT LONG? 29](#_Toc126580617)

[WHO WERE THE “SONS OF GOD” IN 6:1-4? 30](#_Toc126580618)

[1. Angels 31](#_Toc126580619)

[2. Kings who saw themselves as divine. 31](#_Toc126580620)

[3. Combination of 1 and 2. 32](#_Toc126580621)

[4. The family of Seth married into the family of Cain. 32](#_Toc126580622)

[NOAH'S GENEALOGY (6:9 - 9:29) 32](#_Toc126580623)

[Global or local flood? 32](#_Toc126580624)

[Which story is true? 33](#_Toc126580625)

[CHAPTER 10-11: THE NATIONS AND THE TOWER OF BABEL (BABYLON) 34](#_Toc126580626)

[SUMMARY OF PART 1 36](#_Toc126580627)

[TIMELESS TRUTHS AND APPLICATION 36](#_Toc126580628)

[PART 2: ABRAHAM (CH. 12-25 ) 37](#_Toc126580629)

[UR IN CHALDEA (11:28) 37](#_Toc126580630)

[THEME: ABRAHAM'S JOURNEY OF FAITH 37](#_Toc126580631)

[DID THE PATRIARCHS BREAK THE LAW? 38](#_Toc126580632)

[ABRAHAM'S JOURNEY OF FAITH 38](#_Toc126580633)

[CHAPTERS 15-17: THE CENTER OF ABRAHAM'S STORY 39](#_Toc126580634)

[Chapter 15 39](#_Toc126580635)

[The covenant with Noah (and all living creatures) (9:8-17) 41](#_Toc126580636)

[The covenant with Abraham (chapters 12, 15 & 17) 41](#_Toc126580637)

[The covenant with Israel (The old covenant) (Ex. 24) 42](#_Toc126580638)

[Chapter 16 42](#_Toc126580639)

[CHAPTER 20 43](#_Toc126580640)

[CHAPTER 22: GOD TESTS ABRAHAM 44](#_Toc126580641)

[CHAPTERS 23-25 45](#_Toc126580642)

[SUMMARY OF PART 2 (ABRAHAM) 45](#_Toc126580643)

[REFLECTION QUESTIONS - ABRAHAM'S JOURNEY OF FAITH 45](#_Toc126580644)

[PART 3: ISAAC (CHAPTERS 25-28) 46](#_Toc126580645)

[PART 4: JACOB (CHAPTERS 25-36) 47](#_Toc126580646)

[CHAPTER 32: THE TURNING POINT 48](#_Toc126580647)

[CHAPTER 33: THE MEETING WITH ESAU 49](#_Toc126580648)

[CHAPTER 35: BACK TO BETHEL 50](#_Toc126580649)

[SUMMARY OF PART 4 (JACOB) 51](#_Toc126580650)

[WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS? 51](#_Toc126580651)

[PART 5: JOSEPH (CHAPTERS 37-50) 52](#_Toc126580652)

[CHAPTER 37 52](#_Toc126580653)

[CHAPTER 38: JUDAH AND TAMAR 53](#_Toc126580654)

[OTHER DIFFICULT TEXTS IN GENESIS 54](#_Toc126580655)

[1. Ham sees Noah's "nakedness" (9:20-27) 54](#_Toc126580656)

[2. Lot's daughters (19:30-38) 54](#_Toc126580657)

[3. Shechem and Dinah (ch. 34) 54](#_Toc126580658)

[CHAPTERS 39-41 55](#_Toc126580659)

[CHAPTER 42 56](#_Toc126580660)

[CHAPTERS 43-47 56](#_Toc126580661)

[CHAPTERS 48-49 57](#_Toc126580662)

[Messiah in 49:8-12 58](#_Toc126580663)

[KEY VERSES IN THE “STORY OF JOSEPH”: 45:5-8 AND 50:20 58](#_Toc126580664)

[SUMMARY OF PART 5 (JOSEPH) 59](#_Toc126580665)

[CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF GENESIS 60](#_Toc126580666)

[JESUS IN GENESIS 60](#_Toc126580667)

[APPLICATION QUESTIONS 62](#_Toc126580668)

# INTRODUCTION

The book of Genesis begins with the words "in the beginning", and that is also the Hebrew name of the book. This is an appropriate name as it deals with many beginnings, especially the beginning of the universe, humans, and Israel.

The book can be divided into two main parts: Chapters 1-11 and chapters 12-50. The first 11 chapters are about "God and the world", where the story moves forward quickly. We know little about when the various events occurred because we have little other information from other sources or archaeology. There is also a question of the genre here that affects how these chapters are to be interpreted.

Part 1 intends to answer why Abraham had to be chosen, which God it was that did this, and how Abraham fits into world history. Part 1 ends with the tower of Babel and the people being scattered over the earth.

Part 2 begins with the story zooming in on Abraham in Chapter 12 (around 1900 BC), and the rest of the book follows him and his family. Part 2 is the longest and therefore also the most important. Parts 1 and 2 are linked by the key verses 12:1-3, where God promises Abraham

1. a land
2. that he will become a great nation
3. that the whole world will be blessed through him

It becomes clear that the focus shifts from the whole world (Part 1) to Abraham (Part 2) because God wants to bless the whole world through Abraham. God chooses Abraham and Israel because he has the whole world in mind.

It is this promise that drives history forward in the OT: They will get land and become a great nation, but the ultimate goal is always that the whole world will be blessed through this family. The historical books after the Book of Genesis continue to tell the story of Abraham's family. Eventually, we come to David, and from David's family, the Messiah will also come. So, the whole OT story is really about the genealogy of Jesus. And already at the very beginning, after the Fall has occurred, God says that one of the woman's descendants will strike the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15, Rom 16:20; Gal 4:4, Rev 12). Paul speaks of the blessing of the whole world in Gal 3, where he explains that the "blessing" is the justification by faith (v. 8) and that Jesus is the descendant of Eve mentioned (v. 16). Psalm 110 and Hebrews 5-7 say that the Messiah should be a *"priest in the order of Melchizedek"*, and Melchizedek himself appears in Genesis 14. The ladder to heaven that Jacob dreams of (Genesis 28:12) also points to Jesus (John 1:51). Jesus is called the *"Lion of Judah"* in Rev 5:5, and this expression is taken from Genesis 49:9-12 where Jacob says that his son Judah is like a lion and that a king will come from his tribe.

Traditionally, Moses has been seen as the main author of the books of Moses, but some details and paragraphs have been added later. In recent times, there have been many theories about this question of authorship. No single theory has managed to satisfy everyone. Regardless of who the author was and how many sources he used, he was more interested in telling us about God than giving us hints about his own identity.

## STRUCTURE

### God and the world

A recurring phrase in the book is "This is the account of the family line of...". Since there are exactly ten genealogies that begin in Genesis, it seems that the author has structured the book around these genealogies. A literal translation of Genesis 2:4 is *"This is the genealogy of the heavens and the earth"*, so the same word is used there. In the NIV, it is translated as *"This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created",* and in the ESV, it is translated as *"These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created".*

1:1 - 2:3 Prologue: God creates the heavens and the earth

2:4 - 4:26 The story of heaven and earth

5:1 - 6:8 Adam's genealogy

6:9 - 9:29 Noah's genealogy

10:1 - 11:9 The genealogy of Noah's sons

11:10 - 26 Sem's genealogy

### God and Abraham's family

11:27 - 25:11 Tarah's genealogy (and the story of Abraham)

25:12-18 Ismael's genealogy

25:19 - 35:29 Isaac's genealogy (and the stories of Jacob and Esau)

36:1 - 37:1 Esau's genealogy (x2)

37:2 - 50:26 Jacob's genealogy

The book opens with a universal perspective. The first 11 chapters (except for the last section) are about God and the world. Then it zooms in on Abraham whom God called to bless the whole world. After that, the rest of Genesis and the Pentateuch deal with his family.

**1. Ch. 1-11: God and the world**

Chapters 1-11 deal with what we call primordial history. It is difficult to know when this happened because we have no other sources that can help us date the events. In addition, the question of genre makes it even more difficult; how was this meant to be read?

*“No matter what you say (or write) about the early chapters of Genesis, you are in a lot of trouble with a lot of people.”* Richard Averback

It ends with the people being scattered all over the world (which, from their perspective, was the area around the Middle East). Chapter 10 probably comes after chapter 11 (Tower of Babel) chronologically. Chapter 10 mentions lots of names and tells where they spread and who the ancestors of the various peoples were. The story of the Tower of Babel explains how they were dispersed. It starts universally before zooming in on Abraham to again go out universally to the whole world. When we get to Abraham, it becomes easier to date; we are then around the year 2000 BC. The first 11 chapters answer the following questions:

1. Why did Abraham have to be chosen?

2. Which God did this?

3. How does Abraham fit into world history?

*"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 12:1-3*

**2. Ch. 12-50: God and Abraham's family**

Ch. 12-25: Abraham

Ch. 25-28: Isaac

Ch. 28-36: Jacob

Ch. 37-50: Joseph (Joseph is not in Jesus' family line; it was Judah who became the ancestor of David and Jesus, but Joseph was important for the people's survival.)

## WHO IS THE AUTHOR?

### Moses?

No trace in Genesis tells who wrote the book, but the books of Moses have always been a unit. In the New Testament, they refer to the books of Moses as "Moses". If one concludes that Moses wrote most of the books of Moses, one can also assume that he wrote Genesis after he came into the picture himself. Several verses tell us that Moses wrote:

* *“Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it”* Ex. 17:14a
* *"Moses then wrote down everything the Lord had said."* Exodus 24:4
* *"The Lord said to Moses: 'Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.'"* Exodus 34:27

Num 1:2, Deut. 31:9 and Deut. 31:22 also says that Moses wrote, to which Jesus also testifies:

* [God said to Moses:] *“Take a census of the whole Israelite community by their clans and families, listing every man by name, one by one.”* Num 1:2
* *"So Moses wrote down this law and gave it to the Levitical priests, who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel."* Deut. 31:9
* *"So Moses wrote down this song that day and taught it to the Israelites."* Deut. 31:22
* *"If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me."* John 5:46
* *"And he began to explain to them what is written about him in all the scriptures, starting with Moses and all the prophets."* Luke 24:27

However, it does not seem natural that Moses writes the following about himself:

*"Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth."* Num 12:3

"*At the Lord’s command Moses recorded the stages in their journey."* Num 33:2

*"And Moses the servant of the Lord died there in Moab, as the Lord had said. He buried him in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where his grave is."* Deut 34:5-6

Moses probably wrote most of the Pentateuch, but another person wrote parts of it.

### A completely different author much later?

These two sayings look back in time, the second from a much later period:

* *"And quarreling arose between Abram’s herders and Lot’s. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time."* Genesis 13:7)
* *“These were the kings who reigned in Edom before any Israelite king reigned”* Gen 36:31

The city of Laish is not called Dan until Judges 18:29.

* *"When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trained men born in his household and went in pursuit as far as Dan."* Genesis 14:14

Traditional: Moses is the main author, but some details and sections have been added later, perhaps in exile in the 6th century.

Possibly: The texts were written by Moses and others, but the texts have been edited by one or more people later.

"The Four-Source Hypothesis", also called "The Documentary Hypothesis" (JEPD), dominated in the 19th and 20th centuries but has been on the way out for a while. It does not seem to be as simple and "scientific" as this hypothesis suggests, and it is excessively critical of the texts.

No matter who the author was and how many sources he used, he was more interested in telling us about God than giving us hints about his own identity. No matter who the author was, we can do like Jesus and look at the texts as the Word of God.

## GOD BLESSES

God blesses 31 times in Genesis; it is a keyword that is repeated 87 times in the book. Abraham was blessed to be a blessing. God blesses all the way, even when people have sinned or gone astray. He truly intends on blessing.

# PART 1: CHAPTERS 1-11

## GENRE?

**Theological history with imagery from the themes of the time?**

What we read in the Bible is theological history because the theological interpretation is as important as the events. Sometimes chronology is set aside because theology is more important; there is a point to be made.

Some believe that Israel has borrowed other peoples' myths and mythologies and created its own mythology. It does not have to be a common mythology, but a tendency to use the same images, words and expressions. It describes true events, but perhaps not a literal account of what happened. The images and themes are taken from the culture and religion of that time.

We have three other creation accounts to compare with.

1. The Sumerian King List
2. The Atrahasis Epic (Babylonian)
3. Eridu Genesis (Sumerian)

They are all from 1600-1700 BC, originating from the area Abraham came from, and all have a similar structure. This is an argument that these chapters from Genesis were also written at that time. All these creation accounts either begin with describing creation, or creation has already taken place when the story begins. Then there are genealogies, the flood, and more genealogies up until the time of Abraham.

## ARGUMENTS FOR AN EARLY DATING

*from egyptologist Kenneth Kitchen*

The structure of chapters 1-11 is typical of pre- 1600 BC.

A great flood is mentioned in writings from the 18th and 17th centuries BC.

How language arose (chapter 11) is also mentioned in a Sumerian writing from the 19th -18th centuries BC about a king who lived around 2600 BC.

Cuneiform (a system of writing first developed by the ancient Sumerians of Mesopotamia c. 3500-3000 BC) spread from Mesopotamia to Hebron no later than the 17th century BC. Stories followed.

Perhaps the structure and main content date back to the time of Abraham and came from Mesopotamia. A written Hebrew version may have come later [e.g., by Moses in the 15th century BC].

## WHAT KIND OF GENRE IS CHAPTER 1?

Genesis 1 is one reason why many believe the Bible is completely irrelevant. How is it possible to still believe in this creation account? Isn't this a primitive representation of the beginning of the universe that science disproved long ago? The main problem with Genesis 1 (actually 1.1 - 2.3) is that we are not sure what kind of genre this text is, as we do not have many other texts to compare it to. Thus, it is difficult to be sure how it should be interpreted, as it is the genre that gives us the keys to interpretation. That a physics textbook should be understood in a different way than a poem is quite obvious. But what about the creation story? Does it deal with scientific topics without using scientific language? It seems poetic but does not resemble poetry elsewhere in the Bible. It has typical features of a narrative but has, for example, repeated expressions and a structure that is unusual for the other stories in the Bible. Or is it above all a theological text? Because of this uncertainty, there are also different interpretations of this chapter.

1. **A scientific text?** Without scientific language…
2. **A narrative?** Is that history as elsewhere in the Bible and therefore meant literally?

Typical features of narrative text from Gen 1: *"and God said..."*, *"and there was..."*, *"God called..."* is used 55x, which is typical of biblical narratives. It is therefore natural to read it chronologically.

Also, its expressions and structure are unusual for narratives.

1. **Is it poetry?** And does that mean symbolic? It is poetic but has no parallelisms.
2. **Is it an “ancient cosmology”?** A mythical text?

*"A narrative text with elevated, semi-poetic language."* Edward Young

*"An unusual narrative text due to the very structured way of saying it. 'Exalted prose narrative', the purpose is 'quasi-liturgical'.* C. John Collins

*"A complex genre"* Henri Blocher

### Interpretation 1: Days are 24-hour days in a literal week

This is claimed to be the most natural interpretation. Expressions such as *"and God said..."*, *"and it was..."*, and *"and God called..."* are typical of the Bible narratives and are used 55 times in this chapter. It is therefore natural to read the chapter as a single chronological narrative. It is also argued that this would be the way the Israelites would have understood it. But it is not the case that people have always interpreted it that way until science said otherwise. Already in the 2nd century, the theologian Origen asked: "What intelligent man can believe that the first, the second and the third day [...] existed without the sun, the moon and the stars?" Can one claim that the natural understanding of the days is a 24-hour day before the sun is created on day 4? God may have let there be light in another way, apart from the sun, on day 1. Augustine (415 AD) also believed that they could not be ordinary days since our days are based on the sun. He and others believed that creation happened in an instant.

This view is usually associated with "young earth creationism", which claims that the earth is only 6,000 years old, and the biggest challenge will then be to explain why the natural sciences have other answers.

### Interpretation 2: The days are long periods

As early as the 2nd century, the apologist Justin Martyr and the theologian Irenaeus suggested that the days could have been long periods of time, based on Psalm 90:4 and 2 Pet 3:8.

*"A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night."* Psalm 90:4

*"But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day."* 2 Pet 3:8

The same Hebrew word for "day" is also used for the whole creation week in Genesis 2:4.

*“These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.”* Genesis 2:4 ESV

“Day” is normally used for the period with daylight, not for a 24-hour period. But even if the literal interpretation is 24 hours, the author may not have meant a literal interpretation.

Many modern readers thus find more accord with science by interpreting the days as long periods in the earth's history. They claim that the Bible was ahead of natural science. But one still has to explain how the sun can be created on day 4 - even after the trees. Another general objection is the tendency to "overinterpret": That one "stretches" words and expressions to fit with today's categories. While that might fit with science today, it wasn't as the Israelites would have understood it.

### Interpretation 3: The days are 24-hour days with long periods between each day

This is a variant of interpretation 2, which retains the literal days from interpretation 1. God speaks twice on day 3 to emphasize that it goes from inorganic to organic matter, and he also speaks twice on day 6 to show that creation now passes from animals to humans.

*“You don't get over either the gap between non-life and life, or the gap between animals and humans, by random natural processes.”* John Lennox

*“And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.” And it was so. God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.”* Gen 1:9-13

*"And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”"* Gen 1:24-26

The same objections as for interpretation 2 apply here.

### Interpretation 4: The framework view

This interpretation has roots in the Middle Ages and possible precursors in, for example, the Jewish philosopher Philo (1st century) and the theologian Augustine (4th-5th century), who did not interpret the days literally but thought that all had been created in a moment.

*“The days of creation are not time periods but rather categories where the created is arranged by the author for doctrinal reasons, to describe the whole act of creation, which in reality happened at the same time.” Augustine*

*"It has been unfortunate that one tool that our account uses to express the coherence and purposefulness of the creator's work, namely the distribution of the various acts of creation over six days, has been seized and interpreted too literally. The six days are only one of many devices used in this chapter to emphasize the system and order that has been built into creation.” Gordon Wenham*

The author has to use metaphors and "human" language so that the reader can understand. When the text says that God said, commanded, called and saw, is this a human expression of the truth that God creates? If God is described humanly, then days and other aspects may also not be meant to be interpreted literally. The purpose may be to show that the creation is carefully and artistically executed.

**STRUCTURE**

It was quite common in ancient writings that 6 represented incompleteness, while 7 represented a solution.

* *"created"* 7x (about man 3x)
* God "made/did" 7x (the root of the word 10x)
* *"God said"* 10x (3x about man, 7 otherwise)
* *"blow"* 10x
* God blesses 3x
* *"earth"* 3x7 times
* *"Elohim"* 7x5 times
* 1:1 contains 7 words

The days are understood here as "picture frames". They are presented as ordinary days, but that does not mean a literal week. The creation is told thematically in two patterns, with two days corresponding to each other, as shown in the table below. The light is created on day 1 and the lights on day 4 are parallels. With such a structure, it is more logical that the sun comes on day 4. Sky and sea come on day 2, and birds and fish fill them on day 5. Land appears on day 3, and land animals and humans are created on day 6.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  **Form (vs. "desolate")** | **Fill (vs. "empty")** |
| Day 1 | Light | The lights | Day 4 |
| Day 2 | Sky and sea | Birds and fish | Day 5 |
| Day 3 | Land | Land animals and humans | Day 6 |
| Vegetation | Food |

This understanding is therefore neither chronological nor scientific, but primarily theological. For example, the sun is introduced later to show that God is the source of light, and at the same time, it becomes a hint that the text is not meant to be chronological. In addition, the words "sun" and "moon" are not used (instead "the two great lights") to convey that these should not be worshipped, which was common in other religions. "The big sea animals" that are created on day 5 are interpreted as sea monsters from ancient mythologies, where they are "forces of chaos" that symbolized rebellion against the creator gods. In Genesis, there is no such struggle because God is almighty.

The challenge for this viewpoint is to argue that the text is not meant chronologically, though it sounds like that. Despite the claim that the texts should be understood based on old interpretations rather than scientific interpretation, another objection has been raised that it is an attempt to harmonize the Bible and science - and that it is science that controls the interpretation.

### Interpretation 5: The creation is a cosmic temple

A continuation of the previous interpretation is that Genesis 1 is about the dedication of a "cosmic temple" of God. The basis for this view is to distinguish between material and functional creation. Because creation accounts from Israel's neighboring cultures from the same time are more about the organization of what already existed than about creation from nothing, one thinks that the creation in Genesis 1 is not intended to be "material" but "functional". We are used to thinking that "creation" means that something comes into being, while they would say that "creation" happens when something takes on its function after it has been created. Day 7 becomes important because it is the day God rests, and sits on the throne and rules. At that time, it was thought that the gods rested only in the temple. Since temples were seen as symbols of the universe, the universe could also be seen as one cosmic temple. The point of Genesis 1 then becomes that the universe is a place for God's presence and that everything belongs to him. The genre then becomes ancient cosmology. John Walton supports this view and bases it on the following scriptures that see the universe as the temple of God: Genesis 2:10; 1 Kings 8:27; Isaiah 66:1-2.

One challenge for those who believe Genesis 1 describes a functional creation is to argue that, for example, Col 1:16-17 and Heb 11:3 do not interpret Genesis 1 materially. Hebrews 11:3 says that “what is seen was not made out of what was visible”, which seems to indicate a material creation from nothing. Colossians 1:16-17 says that all visible things have been created through Jesus.

*“For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”* Colossians 1:16-17

*“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.”* Hebrews 11:3

It is also a challenge to defend why there are so few traces of a functional creation interpretation in church history if that is how everyone would understand it. Another objection is that the extra-biblical creation accounts also speak of the material construction of the temple.

### Summary

So how are we to understand Genesis 1? In any case, we see that it was not modern scientific discoveries about the age of the earth that led to the less literal interpretations. Nor should we be anxious that science contradicts the Bible. God speaks both through creation (the general revelation) and through the Bible (the special revelation). It was precisely this that motivated the famous scientists of the 16th and 17th centuries. But although God speaks both through the Bible and through creation, both are interpreted by imperfect humans. Both the question of genre and the constant development of science should perhaps lead to a little humility around this question. And maybe Genesis 1 isn't about science at all? The most important thing we can agree on anyway is that God is the creator and sustainer of the universe, and man is unique in a universe that is not random.

## “IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH.” (GEN 1:1)

How should this be understood?

1. The start of day 1?
2. Happened at an unknown time before the 6 days – as defined by "God said" - "it was evening and it was morning". (C. John Collins, John Lennox)
3. A preliminary summary of what is described in the rest of the chapter. (John Walton, Bruce Waltke)

### Why was man created?

Man was not created as an “epilogue” to bring the gods food, as in Enuma Elish, but as the crowning achievement of God's creation for which God provides for him.

Not to take over the work of the lower gods and build canals (the Atrahasis epic), but to become many and rule.

### God's image

Kings put up pictures of themselves to remind people that they were in charge, and idols were seen as divine, earthly versions of the gods. The images of the gods were placed in temples to convey their presence.

**All** people are God's representatives on earth with stewardship responsibilities, not just the kings who were considered divine.

Also resembles God in many ways (1:26, 5:1, 3). Our mental and spiritual capacities, self-awareness, intelligence, creativity, moral responsibility…

*"Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."* 1:26

*"This is the written account of Adam’s family line. When God created mankind, he made them in the likeness of God."* 5:1

*"When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth."* 5:3

Man and woman are an expression of God's design and his roles for us, and together they perfectly reflect his image.

Human rights are a result of man being created in God's image (9:6).

*"Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind."* 9:6

## MAIN POINTS FROM CHAPTER 1

1. God is the Creator of everything and is in full control.

2. The universe is ordered and not random.

3. God is much greater than other gods. He creates with his word and needs nothing.

4. Man is unique and created with a purpose.

## CHAPTER 2-4 THE STORY OF HEAVEN AND EARTH (2:4 - 4:26)

Adam means "man", and it is translated as *"mankind"* or *"the* *man"* when it has a definite article. When it does not have a definite article, it is usually translated as the name Adam, but this does not always work. The context and grammar must both be considered when translating it. Adam comes from *"adama",* which means "earth". Adam was taken from the earth (*adama*) and made into Adam. Earth is mentioned just before man is created, both in chapter 1 and 2, so there is a connection there.

*"Then God said, “Let us make mankind [hebrew adam] in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created mankind [hebrew haadam] in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."* (1:26-27)

In the last verse, *haadam* means mankind and includes both males and females.

"*Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one [hebrew adam] to work the ground, but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. Then the Lord God formed a man [hebrew haadam] from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man [hebrew haadam] he had formed."* (2:5-8)

*"'The Lord God took the man [hebrew haadam] and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man [hebrew haadam], “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.” The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man [hebrew haadam] to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man [hebrew haadam] to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man [hebrew haadam] gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam [hebrew adam] no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man [hebrew haadam] to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s [hebrew haadam] ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man [hebrew haadam], and he brought her to the man [hebrew haadam]. The man [hebrew haadam] said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.” That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Adam [hebrew haadam] and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.”* 2:15-25

## DIFFERENT VIEWS OF ADAM AND EVE

1. Traditional/ literal

2. Representatives

3. Non-historical

**1. TRADITIONAL/LITERAL**

Created 6,000-10,000 years ago without biological parents like the first two humans from whom everyone descends. The events were literal and historical.

**Objections:**

* Who was Cain afraid of? (4:14) He has killed Abel, and Seth is not yet born, so he is either afraid of his parents or sisters if there were no other people present. Therefore, it seems like the author is indicating that there are other people there.

*"Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.”* (4:14)

* Did the land of Nod already have a name? (4:16)

"So Cain went out from the Lord’s presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden." 4:16

* Who was Cain's wife? A sister (who must have been fine at the time) or someone outside the garden?
* Did he build a city for just three people? (4:17)

"Cain made love to his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Cain was then building a city, and he named it after his son Enoch." 4:17

* Chapters 1-11 are about the whole world and humanity in general. Don't chapters 2-3 describe something that is true for everyone so that Adam and Eve are representatives? Isn't that why they are called "Man" and "Life"?

Science says that modern man is 200,000 years old, and genetic research seems to rule out that humanity came from two individuals at least 500,000 years apart (and then they did not farm as Adam and Eve do).

In the book *"In Quest of the historical Adam"* by William Lane Craig, the premise is that Ch. 1-11 are "mythical history" and that there were no other people outside the garden. He writes:

*“Based on the latest archaeological findings, Adam and Eve can probably be identified as belonging to the last common ancestor of Homo sapiens and Neanderthals, commonly called Homo heidelbergensis, who lived more than 750,000 years ago."*

*"It is noteworthy that population genetics (...) does not rule out the existence of two genetic "progenitors" of the human race that lived more than 500,000 years ago. The mythical story in Genesis is entirely consistent with current scientific evidence regarding human origins."*

*"We can imagine a first population of hominids - animals that were like humans in many respects but lacked the ability to rational thought. From this population God selected two and endowed them with intellect by renovating their brains and giving them rational souls. One can imagine a regulatory genetic mutation, which caused a change in brain function, which resulted in significantly greater cognitive capacity. Such a transformation can equip individuals with the neurological structure to support a rational soul."*

**2. REPRESENTATIVES**

Adam and Eve ("Man" and "Life") were historical figures who represent all people (Rom 5:12, 1 Cor 15:22, 45-49).

*“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned”* Rom 5:12

*"For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive."* 1 Cor 15:22

*"So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man."* 1 Cor 15:45-49

The story is about all people's experiences with temptation and moral fall.

Eve became *"the mother of all the living"* (3:20) is then interpreted as in 4:20-21 (the origin of, the inventor) and not biologically.

*“Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who live in tents and raise livestock. His brother’s name was Jubal; he was the father of all who play stringed instruments and pipes.”* 4:20-21

The genealogies go back to Adam because they are about Israel and do not necessarily mean that he was the ancestor of all people, although all people may be related to Adam.

*"Quite consistent with the genetic evidence, it is possible that Adam was created from dust, and Eve from his rib, less than 10,000 years ago in a divinely created garden where God could dwell with them—the first beings with the possibility of to be in a relationship with him. Perhaps their fall brought responsibility for sin to all their descendants. When they left the garden, their offspring mingled with their neighbors in the surrounding towns. In this way, they became the genealogical ancestors of all those in recorded history. Adam and Eve are here the "ancestors" of all mankind. Even if this scenario were to be false or unnecessary, there is nothing in evolutionary science to interfere with this. So, evolution exerts very limited pressure on our understanding of Adam and Eve, suggesting only (next to Scripture) that their descent was not pure.”* S. Joshua Swamidass

**Version A:**

God entered into a special relationship with two people in Africa (where man is thought to have originated) approximately 200,000 years ago. Genesis recounts this in a way the Israelites could understand. (Blocher) (E.g., by using Hebrew names for people who lived long before anyone spoke Hebrew?)

Objections: Somewhat dishonestly, directed too much by science, the "fall" becomes a long historical process.

**Version B:**

10,000-4,000 BC in the Middle East: God created Adam and Eve, or appeared to two pre-existing peasants whom we know as Adam and Eve, and chose them as spiritual representatives of all mankind. (Keller, Wright et al.)

Was chosen for a priestly task in a holy place (2:8, 15).

*"Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed."* 2:8

*"The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it."* 2:15

They were supposed to bring life and a relationship with God (cf. Exodus 19:6), but they failed. Death that was already in the world would then reach them too.

*"you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."* Exodus 19:6

Objections: What was the spiritual status of previous people, and were they created in God's image? How did sin spread?

**JOHN WALTON'S VIEW:**

1. “Good” does not mean “perfect”. God established enough order for man to live and for his plan to unfold. A "checklist" with conditions that are crossed off but still a long way to go before the new earth. People before/outside Eden did "sinful" actions but were not held accountable due to lack of revelation; they had not been taught that it was sin (Rom 5:13).

"To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone’s account where there is no law."

1. If chapter 2 continues from chapter 1, the people in chapter 1 need not be Adam and Eve. Then there may be other people outside the garden (created in God's image) in chapters 2-4. (La Peyrère, 1596-1676).
2. Paul calls Adam *"the first man"*, but calls Jesus "*the second man*" and "*the last Adam*" (1 Cor 15:45-48). Meant theologically, not literally.

*"So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven."* 1 Cor 15:45-48

**3. NON-HISTORICAL/METAPHORIC**

Explains what happened to a group of people, symbolized by Adam and Eve, who became the origin of all later people. Does not tell us concretely how humans came to be. The point is human nature, identity, and purpose. (CS Lewis)

1. Symbolic stories in the genre of the time.
2. Compressed literary description of a long historical process.

Objection: Adam and Eve are presented as historical figures.

*"It is almost universally confirmed that all species have a common "ancestor", but the mechanisms that drove the process are still under heated debate. Fossils, comparative anatomy, and the genome all point to common descent, but they provide no information about what factors drove the changes. All of these offer "snapshots" at different stages, while evolutionary models attempt to assemble these into a video. Consequently, one can theoretically accept the concepts of "phylogenetic continuity" [genetic development] and common descent, but still be very skeptical of the current mechanisms proposed by evolutionary models (mutation, natural selection). Some of these standard mechanisms that have been part of evolutionary theory may well be insufficient to carry the weight. Scientists have long recognized this, and other models are constantly being put forward.”* John Walton

## MAN IN CHAPTER 2

In two of the other creation accounts, Enuma Elish and the Atrahasis Epic, man is created from clay and divine elements (a demon god's blood or the gods' saliva).

The Bible says that man was created from dust and that God breathed life into him. This is probably not meant literally, but rather to convey identity and relationship.

Dust = mortality in 3:19 (Job 10:8-9). The point is that we are mortal, not that we are made of dust.

*“By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”* 3:19

*“Your hands shaped me and made me. Will you now turn and destroy me? Remember that you molded me like clay. Will you now turn me to dust again?”* Job 10:8-9

The point may not be the origin of man, but that we are mortal and that God makes a way for us to have life.

Rib or side (2:22-23)? If it is a rib, there is at least some flesh on it:

*“Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man. '”* 2:22-23

The point is not what Eva is made of, but her identity. Familiar motifs from the literature of the time are used to convey truths about humanity.

## THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE (2:22-24)

“Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man. That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.” 2:22-24

**POINT OF VIEW FROM HENRI BLOCHER'S BOOK “IN THE BEGINNING”**

* v. 24 is cited as fundamental by Jesus in Matt 19:4-6 and Mark 10:6-9, and by Paul in Eph 5:31 and 1 Cor 6:16.

*“Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”* Matt 19:4-6

*“But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”* Mark 10:6-9

*“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”* Ephesians 5:31

*“Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.”* 1 Corinthians 6:16

* *"Forsake his father and his mother"* involves the civil authorities. It's not a private thing.
* *“Leave”* comes before *“one body”.*
* Remarkable that it is included in Genesis 2, where there is only one pair. Could easily have been left out. Purpose: Provide a framework for the marriage.
* Definition of marriage: *“A covenant sanctioned by the authority responsible for social order, in which a man and a woman commit themselves unreservedly to each other to live a common life and unite sexually.”*
* God was not satisfied with just forming the woman. He introduces her to the man and invites them to form a life together ("The first wedding").

## TREES

The tree of life and the tree of wisdom were well-known motifs in other religions and texts.

*"knowledge of good and evil"*:

* *“And the little ones that you said would be taken captive, your children who do not yet know good from bad—they will enter the land. I will give it to them and they will take possession of it.”* Deuteronomy 1:39
* *“So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?”* 1 Kings 3:9
* Knowledge of right and wrong = wisdom

The trees in the garden give what only God can give (life and wisdom), which can only be found in him.

*"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."* Proverbs 9:10

The trees are about God's presence on earth and what a relationship with him makes possible.

## THE SNAKE

Not identified with Satan anywhere in the OT and quickly disappears from the scene. Connects with Satan in Rom 16:20 and especially Rev 12:9, 20:2. Perhaps also in John 8:44.

*“The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.”* Rom 16:20

*"The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him."* Rev 12:9

*"He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years."* Rev 20:2

*"You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."* John 8:44

Symbol of a "chaos monster" in other religions (cf. Isa 27:1), and often associated with death. What would the original readers think?

*“In that day, the Lord will punish with his sword — his fierce, great and powerful sword — Leviathan the gliding serpent, Leviathan the coiling serpent; he will slay the monster of the sea.”* Isa 27:1

It was believed that there were chaos monsters that the gods had to fight and keep in check for the cosmos to exist. The difference is that in the book of Job, Leviathan is God's little "pet". It is no threat; God is in full control of these chaotic monsters. What would the original readers think? That dark forces spoke through the snake? Or that it was symbolic of the beginning of the daily fight against evil? (3:15)

*“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.”* (3:15)

Perhaps Genesis shows the reader what/who the serpent really is. Perhaps more "sin" than "Satan", until this is connected in the New Testament.

The choice: Would they be with God, trust Him, and learn wisdom from Him (His definitions of right and wrong) - or disobey and do it their own way?

The sin was to put oneself in the center (cf. Rom 1)

*“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness.”* Rom 1:18

*“For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him”* Rom 1:21

*“Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done.”* Rom 1:28

We lost our relationship and access to God and damaged his creation with our poor ability to bring order on our own through our wisdom.

Since this first rebellion, we have tried to redefine everything we lost. We are still trying to figure out who we are and why we are here.

## THE SIN

*The Jesus Storybook Bible* by Sally Lloyd-Jones & Jago describes God’s reaction to the fall like this:

*God could not let his children live forever any longer, not with such great pain, not without him. There was only one way to protect them. “You must leave the garden at once! This is not their home anymore. You can't stay here anymore.”*

*Before Adam and Eve left the garden, God gave them a promise: “It will not always remain this way. I will save you! And when I do, I will fight the snake. I will remove the sin and the darkness and all the sadness you have let in here. I will come and get you!” One day God himself would come.*

God sends them out of the garden to win them back. They could not live forever if they were to destroy themselves. They had to get out of the garden so they would not destroy themselves forever.

##  MAIN POINTS FROM CHAPTERS 2-4

1. Humans are mortal but were created to have life through a relationship with God, embodied in the tree of life (literally or symbolically).
2. We have the choice to trust God's definition of good and evil or to define it ourselves, as concretized in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (literally or symbolically).
3. The "fundamental sin" is putting oneself in the center. This leads to separation from God and death (spiritually and physically).
4. Something is wrong with the world, and it needs to be fixed.

## CHAPTER 5: THE BOOK OF ADAM'S GENEALOGY (5:1 - 6:8)

## DID THEY LIVE THAT LONG?

Adam became 930 years old. The other people mentioned in chapter 5 also became 777 to 969 years old, except for Enoch, who was taken up to God when he was 365 years old. Did they live that long? There are 3 interpretations:

**1. Literally:**

A became the father of B. A lived for several hundred years. This was possible because of different living conditions before the flood, then sin caused God to shorten man's lifespan.

**2. It represents the total lifetime of several people in a family:**

Matthew chapter 1 shortens the lists of kings from the OT by skipping several generations. (Father = ancestor, son = descendant)

A became the father of P, who became the father of Q, who became the father of R, who became the father of S, who became the father of T, who became the father of B. A became the father of the family that ended up with B. After he had become the father of P, he lived for x years. The family of A was several hundred years old.

**3. Symbolic numbers:**

The Sumerian king Enmenluanna ruled for 43,200 years. After the flood, the maximum lifespan was 120 years in Genesis and up to 1,560 years in the Sumerian King List. It is hard to imagine that cultural differences should make them able to live so much longer in one culture than in another.

Speculations regarding the Sumerian King List:

1. The number 600 may have been used as a multiplicator before the flood and 60 after the flood to indicate heroic status.
2. To indicate how different the world was before the flood, the numbers are multiplied by 60$×$60.

There is still no convincing solution for the genealogical tables in Genesis 5 and 11. (Noah became a father when he was 500 and lived until he was 950.)

## WHO WERE THE “SONS OF GOD” IN 6:1-4?

*"When human beings began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. Then the Lord said, “My Spirit will not contend with humans forever, for they are mortal; their days will be a hundred and twenty years.” The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown."* 6:1-4

### 1. Angels

Called *"sons of God"* elsewhere. This is the oldest interpretation, as far as we know. It goes back to the 3rd century and is found both in 1 Enoch, rabbinic literature, and among the early church fathers.

In that case, the sin is to break boundaries (1 Pet 3:19-20; Jud 6-7)

*“After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits — to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water”* 1 Pet 3:19-20

*"And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their proper dwelling—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire."* Jud 6-7

Objections:

* The judgment (flood) affects humans and not angels.
* Jesus also says that angels do not marry (Matthew 22:30) - but perhaps the disobedient would be able to do that?

### 2. Kings who saw themselves as divine.

Jewish interpretation from the 3rd century (In Psalm 82, the word "gods" is used for some earthly judges, it seems).

*“I said, ‘You are “gods”; you are all sons of the Most High.’ But you will die like mere mortals; you will fall like every other ruler.”* Ps 82:6-7

Gilgamesh was 2/3 god, practiced "the right to the first night", was heroic, and was 5 meters tall.

Progression of sin: Individuals (Adam & Eve) → family (Cain) → society (at that time) → everyone (the flood).

The sin is that they exalted themselves, formed harems, and abused their mandate from God. Oppressive regimes are a result of sin.

Objection: 1 Pet 3:19-20 and Jud 6-7 (see point 1) and 2 Pet 2:4. If this is the same event.

*"For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment"* 2 Pet 2:4

### 3. Combination of 1 and 2.

The kings were human beings who became controlled by the fallen angels (demons). (Dan 10)

*“Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come; but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince.”* Dan 10:20b-21

### 4. The family of Seth married into the family of Cain.

Christian interpretation from the 3rd century. (Augustin, Luther, Calvin, until the 19th century)

The sin: Intermarriage

Objection: Reading too much into the text. Strange to call Cain's female descendants *"the daughters of humans"*.

## NOAH'S GENEALOGY (6:9 - 9:29)

### Global or local flood?

*eretz* = earth/land. Translated as "land" in 80% of the cases.

"all" (6:7, 13) is not meant universally, e.g., 2 Chronicles 36:23. The fish are not destroyed by the flood.

*"So the Lord said, “I will destroy all the people I created on the earth. I will destroy every person and every animal and everything that crawls on the earth. And I will destroy all the birds in the air, because I am sorry that I have made them."* Gen 6:7 ERV

*"So God said to Noah, “I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth."* Gen 6:13

*"This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: 'The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of his people among you may go up, and may the Lord their God be with them.'" 2 Chron 36:23*

Do 8:1 and 8:3 make more sense as a local flood?

*"But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark, and he sent a wind over the earth, and the waters receded."* 8:1

*"The water receded steadily from the earth. At the end of the hundred and fifty days the water had gone down"* 8:3

If it was a global flood, where did the waters recede?

Noah's ark is 2.5 times larger than other very large boats known at the time from Egypt, and half the size of today's tankers.

The Epic of Gilgamesh: Utnapishtim builds a cube-shaped ark. No reason is given for the flood. All living creatures are brought into the ark. The flood lasts 7 days. He sends out a dove, a swallow, and a raven. He gets immortality as a reward.

The Atrahasis Epic: Atrahasis builds a round ark. The reason for the flood is overpopulation and too much noise for the gods. After the flood, a demon will snatch newborns so that there will not be overpopulation again. Many women will be childless. Opposite of Gen 9:1.

*"Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth."* Gen 9:1

Sumerian flood story (Eridu Genesis): Ziusudra survived the flood and was immortalized.

### Which story is true?

From Jens Bruun Kofoed

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **THE MESOPOTAMIAN FLOOD ACCOUNTS**  | **GENESIS**  | **POINTS TO THE BIBLE** |
| Poetry (poem) | Prose (narrative text) | Easier to interpret and appear more historical. |
| Mesopotamian texts were mostly not rooted in real history. Gilgamesh did indeed exist, but that was much earlier. | Rooted in historical figures | More believable |
| 1st pers. narration, narrated by Atrahasis and Utnapishtim, and their explanation of why the gods did this. | 3rd pers. narration focusing on God, Noah says nothing. God's story and his explanation of why he allowed this to happen. | God knows more than people and is more trustworthy. |
| Makes up 370 lines of the Epic of Atrahasis and 200 lines of the Epic of Gilgamesh.  | Genesis 6:9 - 8:22 corresponds to approx. 120 lines in Sumerian or Akkadian. | Stories usually get longer and longer over time. |

## CHAPTER 10-11: THE NATIONS AND THE TOWER OF BABEL (BABYLON)

Chapters 10-11 tell about:

* The genealogy of Noah's sons (10:1 - 11:9)
* Shem's genealogy (11:10-26)
* Abraham

In the Babylonian creation account, Enuma Elish is also told about the construction of Babel (which is another name for Babylon). There, it is said that a temple tower is being built for the gods. It was believed that heaven and earth met on such towers. A person says to the gods: "This is Babylon, your permanent abode. Find your comfort here. Sit down in joy. The great gods sat down, mugs of beer were set around, and they feasted." Against this background, the Bible's story about the tower of Babel can be a satire on Babylon's claim to be the center of the world and the "gate of the gods" (*babel*). Instead, there will be confusion (*balal*).

It is a common interpretation that chapter 11 comes before chapter 10 chronologically because in 10:31 it says that they had different languages, but in 11:1 they speak the same language.

*"These are the sons of Shem by their clans and languages, in their territories and nations."* 10:31

*"Now the whole world had one language and a common speech."* 11:1

They wanted to make a name for themselves (11:4) → "Babylonize" the world and take God's place.

*"Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth."* Genesis 11:4

God had again asked the people to fill the earth (9:1). Instead, they gather in one place to get a name - and try to “take back” God.

Sin breaks "boundaries" in chapter 3, 6:1-4 and chapter 11.

*"When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it."* Gen 3:6

*"Then the Lord said, “My Spirit will not contend with humans forever, for they are mortal; their days will be a hundred and twenty years."* Gen 6:1-4

*"Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves"* Gen 11:4

God scatters them (Ch. 10) but still calls Abram out of the center of the rebellion (11:31).

If the expression "the whole earth" in ch. 11 is interpreted as "all their world", the confusion of the languages can be limited to the languages of the 70 nations mentioned in ch. 10.

Genesis 1-11 ends in Babylon. Then we have gone from God's presence to exile in Babylon - where the readers may be sitting and waiting for what will happen next. Perhaps this is parallel to Israel's history.

Pentecost represents a restoration where the nations can once again return to God.

*"When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."* Acts 2:1-4

On the day of Pentecost all peoples were represented and there was great confusion. The expression used for "separated" in Acts 2:3 is taken from 10:5 and 10:32 and from Deuteronomy 32:8 (where it seems like the confusion of languages is described). It is translated as *"spread"* in the NIVin chapter 10 and *"divided"* in Deuteronomy 32:8.

*"When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel."* Deuteronomy 32:8

In 11:10, a genealogy from Shem to Abraham begins, which mentions 10 generations.

In the earliest extant Greek translation of the Old Testament from the original Hebrew, Septuagint (LXX), and in Luk 3:34, an additional generation (Kenan) is included between Arphaxad and Shelah. Matthew does the same in Matt 1:8-9, where he skips over three generations (Ahasia, Joash and Amaziah) between Jehoram and Azariah (also called Uzziah) compared to the genealogy in 1 Chronicles 3:10-11. There are 10 generations from Adam to Noah and 10 generations from Noah to Abraham, but it is difficult to calculate backward in time based on this since there may be generations that have been skipped.

## SUMMARY OF PART 1

Humans have a problem called sin. God will always judge sin, but he is also gracious and never gives up on people. The target of this story is Jesus.

## TIMELESS TRUTHS AND APPLICATION

1. God is the Creator and the only one to be worshipped.
2. The world is incredible. Take care of it and enjoy it! Everything created shows God's greatness and glory.
3. Humans are something different from animals and have infinitely great value.
4. Marriage is God's arrangement; resting once a week is good for us. Creation care is meaningful because God intended us to do it.
5. God wants a relationship, but people put themselves at the center. Life and wisdom are found only in Him. Humanism is more serious than it sounds.
6. We are represented by Jesus and not Adam! We are living in the last episode of God's great plan.
7. Long for the Restoration! We must abhor our sin and the sin of the world and restore creation, especially humans.
8. We can relate to all people as being created in God's image.

# PART 2: ABRAHAM (CH. 12-25 )

Abraham is called the "Father of all believers". Based on the Bible, it can be estimated that Abraham lived in the period 1955-1780 BC.

The last thing that happened before Abraham came on the scene was that the people who built the tower of Babel wanted to make a name for themselves. God wants to make Abraham's name great and calls him out from the center of rebellion (Ur in Chaldea is in the Babylon area). Again, God blesses the world and gives it a second chance by choosing Abraham.

## UR IN CHALDEA (11:28)

The Chaldeans lived in the first millennium BC. (In ch. 11, we are at the beginning of the second) and were Babylonians. Chaldea is therefore a later designation to specify which Ur (in today's Iraq) is being referred to. Ur was founded in the year 3800 BC. and was the city of the moon god Nanna (also called Sin). It was a central city in that civilization and not necessarily an easy place to leave. In Jos 24:2, it says that Abraham's father worshiped foreign gods, so it is possible that Abraham also worshiped the moon god before God revealed himself to him.

*"* *Joshua said to all the people, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘Long ago your ancestors, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates River and worshiped other gods."* Jos 24:2

## THEME: ABRAHAM'S JOURNEY OF FAITH

How does Abraham respond to God's promises? How does he respond to obstacles that threaten fulfillment? Will he trust that God can keep what he has promised?

Either there was already a famine when Abraham arrived in Canaan, or it came shortly after (12:10). He goes to Egypt. Perhaps we are meant to ask why? For the readers, Egypt brings negative associations.

He tells Sarah to say she is his sister (a half-truth, 20:12) so he won't be killed.

*"Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not of my mother; and she became my wife."* 20:12

Perhaps he is thinking that we must be careful not to die so that the promise that I will become a great nation can come true. Or does he put Sarah (and the promises) in danger to save himself? It is not until chapter 18 that he realizes that it is Sarah who will be the mother, so he may be thinking a little more about himself than about Sarah and the promises here.

Saved by God (v. 17) and returns with greater wealth (v. 16). God blesses him anyway, despite doubt and cowardice. (24:1)

*"Abraham was now very old, and the Lord had blessed him in every way."* 24:1

## DID THE PATRIARCHS BREAK THE LAW?

Abraham married his half-sister (20:12), and Jacob married two sisters (29:21-30), but Leviticus 18:9,11,18 forbids both.

Judah (38:2) married a Canaanite woman (vs. Exodus 34:15-16 and Deuteronomy 7:3).

This happened before the Law of Moses was given. This confirms the stories as credible, as it would have been unlikely that later writers under the Law of Moses would have drawn such a picture of their origin from their imagination.

## ABRAHAM'S JOURNEY OF FAITH

**Ch. 13:** He did not use God's promises as an excuse to choose first but instead allowed Lot to choose. The reader knows that it was a bad choice (v. 10), even though it looked very good. Abraham avoided disaster by trusting in God.

*“Lot looked around and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan toward Zoar was well watered, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt. (This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.)”* 13:10

**Ch. 14:** Abraham sets after the four kings who have taken Lot captive. He pursues them throughout the country from south to north and defeats them. Is this an expression of his trust in God?

*"After Abram returned from defeating Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley). Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.” Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything. The king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the people and keep the goods for yourself.” But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “With raised hand I have sworn an oath to the Lord, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the strap of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, ‘I made Abram rich.’ I will accept nothing but what my men have eaten and the share that belongs to the men who went with me—to Aner, Eshkol and Mamre. Let them have their share."* 14:17-24

Melchizedek was king in (Jeru) Salem and priest of "God, the Most High" ("El elyon”).

El elyon:

* Canaanite god or general title? (The sources do not agree)
* Identified with Yahweh by Abraham in v. 22.

In any case, Melchizedek becomes a contrast to the king of Sodom, one who blesses Abraham (“I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you;” 12:1).

v. 23: Abraham keeps nothing for himself. Because he trusts God? (v. 20)

*"But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “With raised hand I have sworn an oath to the Lord, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the strap of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, ‘I made Abram rich.’"* 14:22-23

## CHAPTERS 15-17: THE CENTER OF ABRAHAM'S STORY

### Chapter 15

Sandwich: Lot plays an important role in chapters 13-14 and chapters 18-19, while there is a focus on Abraham between these sections.

*"After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.” But Abram said, “Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.” Then the word of the Lord came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.” He took him outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness."* 15:1-6

15:2-3: Abraham is questioning God's promise and intends to give the inheritance to a servant. When God has not given him a son, he has "made" one heir to take care of them when they grow old (a common solution).

15.6: Abraham has confidence in God's promise, and it was counted to him as righteousness. This is a very important verse for Paul and for us.

15.7-21: God makes a covenant with Abraham.

*"He also said to him, “I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.” But Abram said, “Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?” So the Lord said to him, “Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.” Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away. As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. Then the Lord said to him, “Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.” When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates— the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites."* 15:7-21

v. 8: Although Abraham believed that God would give him descendants, he wonders how he can know that he will inherit the land. Giving him an entire country where people live seems a bit more difficult to achieve…

v. 10: Abraham prepares a regular covenant by cutting the animals in half and arranging the halves opposite each other. Those who made the covenant walked between the pieces of meat. It symbolized what one could do to the other if the pact was broken.

v. 17: Only God walks between the pieces of meat. Abraham is unable to do so because God sent a deep sleep over him. An unconditional pact (“one-way covenant”), a confirmation of the promise of the land (v. 8).

### The covenant with Noah (and all living creatures) (9:8-17)

**God:** Will never allow a great flood to destroy the earth again.

**Noah:** Noah does nothing, and nothing is required of him.

**Conditional/unconditional?** An unconditional covenant based on God's promise.

**Sign:** The rainbow. As if God's war bow was hung on the wall.

### The covenant with Abraham (chapters 12, 15 & 17)

**God:** Shall provide "people, land and blessing" - to all families on earth (12:1-3)

"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." 12:1-3

**Abraham:** Must leave his country and be led by God, live rightly before God and teach his family to do the same, and keep the circumcision.

**Conditional/unconditional?** Essentially unconditional, although Abraham must show a general response.

**Sign:** Circumcision. A symbol that sets this family apart as belonging to God. Symbolized that their fertility and future is in God's hands and that one would stay cut off from the people if one broke the pact.

### The covenant with Israel (The old covenant) (Ex. 24)

**God:** Bless them if they followed the law, curse them if they don’t (Lev. 26, Deut. 28).

**Israel:** Follow the Law of Moses.

**Conditional/unconditional?** Conditional.

**Sign:** The Sabbath (Exodus 31:12-18)

“Say to the Israelites, ‘You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the Lord, who makes you holy.” Exodus 31:13

### Chapter 16

Abraham is 85 years old and still has no children. It has been 10 years since the promises were made (verses 1 and 3). It is quite human to begin to wonder what God really meant…

Abraham tries to fulfill God's promises in his own way and with the help of his own possibilities.

God sees Hagar (v. 13), saves her, and wants to make her family great (v. 10).

Does he live happily (for 13 years) in the ignorance that the promise will be fulfilled through Sara?

Sandwich: God's promises and covenant in chapters 15 and 17, with Abraham's human efforts in chapter 16.

17:1-5: 13 years later. God makes a covenant with Abraham that will guarantee many descendants.

**Abraham's duty:** “walk before me faithfully and be blameless” (v. 1) and circumcise all male descendants (vv. 9-14).

**Sign:** Circumcision.

**Conditional/unconditional?** A partially conditional covenant, but one that is connected with the unconditional covenant in chapter 15 (vv. 7-8).

v. 16: New info: The descendants will come through Sarah! (v. 21)

v. 17 is parallel to v. 3, but this time he laughs (while worshiping?). He suggests that they go for Ishmael, but God says that Isaac will be born within a year.

v. 23: Trust God's promise and do as God has said.

The justification by faith from chapter 15 held even though he doubted. There is room for doubt in our faith.

## CHAPTER 20

Abraham stays in Gerar and says that his wife, Sarah, is his sister. King Abimelek takes Sarah as his wife, but before he has gone near her, God warns him in a dream.

Similar story as in chapter 12, where Abraham flees to Egypt because of the famine.

“Duplicates” (parallel stories): Used deliberately in Semitic literature to achieve an effect. The reader is meant to see connections between the stories.

* Famine vs. voluntary
* Trouble vs. warning Abimelek in a dream
* Dowry for Sarah vs. compensation from Abimelek
* Expelled by Pharaoh vs. invited to stay wherever he likes in the land by Abimelek
* Saved by God both times

Abimelech responded better than Pharaoh, which was unexpected by Abraham (vv. 4, 8, 11). Some people fear God. He should have trusted God.

*"Abraham replied, “I said to myself, ‘There is surely no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.’"* 20:11

Even after the confirmations and covenants in chapters 15 and 17, he falters again and does the same as in Egypt in chapter 12 (a plan, v. 13). He trusts more in his own reasoning (v. 11) rather than God's promise of protection (12:3).

## CHAPTER 22: GOD TESTS ABRAHAM

Chapter 21: Isak is finally born - after 25 years! (With some hesitation and doubt along the way)

The big question: Has Abraham learned anything during these 25 years? Has he learned to trust God?

He has faith, but does he fear God? (v. 12)

What is his motivation? Until now, he had everything to gain. Now he is asked to show in practice that he trusts God's promise and that his motivation was God himself.

Why must God test Abraham? Doesn't God know everything?

*"God involves himself with those who follow him - he leads, guides and tests them... He examines people to develop certain desired qualities."* John Hartley (the quote has been translated)

Abraham answers "here I am" twice. He expresses total surrender. He does not pray for Isaac's life as he did for Sodom in chapter 18. He says "we will return" (v. 5) and has confidence that God will provide for the sacrificial lamb (v. 8). He passes the test and shows that he fears God (v. 12).

*"and he concluded that God was capable of raising him from the dead, which, figuratively, is indeed what happened."* Heb 11:19

The word used for "figuratively" also has the meaning "parable" in Greek. As this happens at Moriah, which could be the place where Solomon built the temple, it is natural to see this story as a foreshadowing of Jesus' sacrifice (which the church fathers did).

*"Then he said: 'Take your son, your only one, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah! There you shall offer him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains. I will tell you which one.'"* 22:2

*"Then Solomon began to build the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah..."* 2 Chron 3:1

1. God asks Abraham to do what God himself will do in approx. the same place later.
2. Abraham's (and Isaac's) obedience points to Jesus' obedience.
3. The ram takes Isaac's place.

Chap. 22 shows that Abraham has "reached the finishing line" on his journey of faith. After some hesitation, he shows that he trusts God completely.

## CHAPTERS 23-25

**Ch. 23:** For those of us who read this in Western culture, it is strange that Abraham would not accept this gift. But in that culture, it would have meant that he was in debt to the Hittites. He seems to tru st God's promise that the land will belong to his descendants eventually. This will be the first part of the land that he owns.

**Ch. 24:**

* Isaac must not marry a Canaanite because Abraham's descendants would become a new people. He trusts God here too.
* God finds Rebekah for Isaac.
* This is one of two times in the Bible when God says who someone should marry. We have more freedom and usually don't get signs.

**Ch. 25:** Sends away his other sons because only Isaac was to inherit the land. Less conflict.

## SUMMARY OF PART 2 (ABRAHAM)

Abraham is chosen to become a great nation from which the blessing of the whole world will come. God's great plan begins in earnest here. Abraham is the great hero of faith in the NT, the first whom the Bible says was justified by faith. We are justified in the same way and are therefore called children of Abraham. However, Abraham's faith is not always steady. He does not always trust God as much, yet he does not lose his justification - neither do we. He must wait 25 years before the promise of a son with Sarah is fulfilled, and he learns to trust God in the meantime. It is an encouragement to us when we must wait on God.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS - ABRAHAM'S JOURNEY OF FAITH

Are there any similarities between Abraham's journey of faith and your own?

How has your faith changed so far in your life?

What can you learn or be encouraged by?

# PART 3: ISAAC (CHAPTERS 25-28)

This may have taken place between 1855-1675 B.C.

"Now there was a famine in the land—besides the previous famine in Abraham’s time—and Isaac went to Abimelek, king of the Philistines in Gerar. The Lord appeared to Isaac and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live." 26:1-2

Chapter 26: Parallel to chapters 12 and 20. We are supposed to compare Isaac to Abraham. Does this happen between 25:20 and 25:21?

*"and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah … Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was childless. The Lord answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant."* 25:20-21

It seems that Esau and Jacob have not yet been born at this time. Therefore, it is probably a retrospective. If they had children, it would be clear that Rebekah was Isaac's wife. Therefore, it is probably an earlier story that is placed later. It is good to be aware that the events in the Bible are not always described in chronological order.

Abraham: Egypt & Gerar; Isaac: Gerar, "don't go to Egypt".

vv. 3-4: The promise to Abraham is confirmed for Isaac. (vv. 24, 28)

*"Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring[a] all nations on earth will be blessed"* 26:3-4

*"That night the Lord appeared to him and said, “I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham."* 26:24

v. 7: A lie, worse than Abraham for she is not his half-sister. Isaac doubts/fears right after God has confirmed the promises.

*"When the men of that place asked him about his wife, he said, “She is my sister,” because he was afraid to say, “She is my wife.” He thought, “The men of this place might kill me on account of Rebekah, because she is beautiful.”"* 26:7

vv. 10-17: Still fear of God among the Philistines (v. 28), embarrassing for Isaac that he did not trust God? God also blessed him with wealth (vv. 12-16).

*"Isaac asked them, “Why have you come to me, since you were hostile to me and sent me away?” They answered, “We saw clearly that the Lord was with you; so we said, ‘There ought to be a sworn agreement between us’—between us and you. Let us make a treaty with you"* 26:27-28

The word used for the Lord in verse 28 is Yahweh, which indicates knowledge of God.

God confirms the promise of descendants, land and blessings for Isaac. Isaac, like his father, is not a great hero of faith. Nevertheless, God is determined in His plan and blesses Isaac.

# PART 4: JACOB (CHAPTERS 25-36)

This may have taken place between 1795-1647 B.C.

Jacob is Israel's ancestor. *"He struggled with the angel and overcame him"* (Hos 12:4)

**Ch. 25:** Jacob is connected to the *heel* (*eqeb*, v. 26, as if he wants to hold Esau back) with associations to deception (27:36). Esau does not care much about his inheritance rights and is therefore called godless in Heb 12:16.

**Ch. 27:** Rebekah knows that *"the older will serve the younger"* (25:23), but did this mean that he had to get the inheritance rights? It was customary to call all the sons to him and bless them (ch. 48-50). Jacob lives up to his name (vv. 35-36).

**Ch. 28:** While fleeing, he meets God and calls the place Bethel, which means "God's house". The plan is to return home one day with God's help (vv. 20-21).

*"Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father’s household, then the Lord will be my God"* vv. 20-21

Abraham's blessing is given to Jacob in vv. 3-4.

*“So Isaac called for Jacob and blessed him…May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples. May he give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now reside as a foreigner, the land God gave to Abraham.”* Gen 28:1-4

The promise is confirmed in vv. 13-15.

*"There above it stood the Lord, and he said: “I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring."* Gen 28:13-14

**Ch. 29:** Jacob is tricked in the dark, just as he had tricked his blind father. Favors Rachel, while Leah is striving to be loved. But it is Leah who becomes the ancestress of Jesus and six of Israel's 12 tribes.

**Ch. 30:** God blesses those who come into contact with those who are in covenant with him (v. 27). Maybe this is a sign that all nations should be blessed.

Laban and Jacob deceive each other, and Laban has changed Jacob's wages ten times.

vv. 37-43: Was it God who gave Jacob the idea so all the strong animals became his? (31:9-12)

*“So God has taken away your father’s livestock and has given them to me. In breeding season I once had a dream in which I looked up and saw that the male goats mating with the flock were streaked, speckled or spotted. The angel of God said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob.’ I answered, ‘Here I am.’ And he said, ‘Look up and see that all the male goats mating with the flock are streaked, speckled or spotted, for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you.”* Gen 31:9-12

## CHAPTER 32: THE TURNING POINT

vv. 3-8: Jacob returns home and makes contact with Esau again after 20 years. He hears that Esau is coming against him with 400 men and fears the worst. He splits the camp in two so that some can escape.

vv. 9-20: He prays and plans to send gifts to Esau in several pools, hoping to overwhelm him.

vv. 21-23: He gets up in the night and crosses the river with all his family and everything he owns, probably to protect them. Then he goes back to the other side alone.

Jacob is at the bottom, terrified and despairing. He thinks the past has caught up with him, and he can't trick his way out of this situation. Then suddenly God meets him - in a surprising way: Not in a dream (as before) with promises, but God meets Jacob's fear by letting him fight all night!

Was a fight what he needed most to release his frustration? Is it an expression of Jacob's inner conflict with himself or with God? In any case, it forced him to concentrate on God and gave him no time to worry about tomorrow.

Sandwich: Esau - Battle - Esau. Is this a way for Jacob to get done with the trickery and the past?

Jacob is not one to give up, so the angel dislocates Jacob's hip. This made him even more vulnerable to Esau, and he had to trust God even more. Jacob refuses to let go of his opponent without being blessed, and "blessing" has been part of his life and identity. He gets a new identity with the name Israel (“Fighting with God”, “God fights”, or perhaps “God endures”).

➡ The readers are also called Israel. Their ancestor fought with God. Would they then understand that they can also "fight with God"?

Jacob wants to know his opponent's name, but instead receives the blessing he has sought all his life. He wasn't supposed to be remembered as one who stole the blessing but as one who got it by fighting with God.

Almost like getting the aggression out before finally being embraced.

## CHAPTER 33: THE MEETING WITH ESAU

In the end, he limps towards the meeting with Esau with a weaker body and a stronger faith. He is more certain now that the confrontation with Esau will go well. After all, he had just "won over" God.

Did he need to be reunited with his brother before he could meet God? (Matthew 5:23-24)

*"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift."* Matt 5:23-24

In v. 3, Jacob bows down seven times in front of Esau. In 32:4, he calls Esau lord and himself Esau’s servant. When Isaac blessed him in 27:29, he told Jacob that peoples should bow down to him and that he should be lord over his brothers. Will he return the blessing he stole? In v. 11, the word "blessing" is actually used and not "present".

*"Please accept the present that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me and I have all I need.” And because Jacob insisted, Esau accepted it."* 27:29

Esau reacts like the father in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:20). It is almost a verbatim repetition, so perhaps Jesus wanted to highlight Esau as a model of how God meets us?

*"But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him."* Gen 33:4

*"he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."* Luk 15:20b

## CHAPTER 35: BACK TO BETHEL

In the dream Jacob had on the night he left home (28:15), God promised to bring him back. Bethel has something of the same function in Jacob's life as Isaac had for Abraham.

*"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."* Gen 28:15

Finally, he returns, after 20 years with Laban (31:38) and some time in Shechem (ch. 34). God has kept his promises, and Jacob has changed.

God repeats the blessings, the new name, and the promises to Abraham (vv. 10-12). Much is repeated from chapter 28, but not the promise of God's protection on the road, which was now fulfilled.

vv. 14-15: Jacob repeats the actions from 28:18-19 (plus a drink offering). The ring is closed.

*"Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. He called that place Bethel"* Gen 28:18-19

*“Jacob set up a stone pillar at the place where God had talked with him, and he poured out a drink offering on it; he also poured oil on it. Jacob called the place where God had talked with him Bethel.”* Genesis 35:14-15

## SUMMARY OF PART 4 (JACOB)

Jacob lives up to his name and deceives his own brother and his blind father, and he and Laban each deceive each other several times. He meets God on the run and is promised protection. He favors his wives and sons as he was favored by Rebekah and creates unhealthy family relationships.

When Jacob faces the past again, God meets him in his perplexity - by letting Jacob fight with him. This becomes a turning point, he is saved from both God and Esau (32:11, 30), and we sense a change in Jacob's character. He finally returns to Bethel and knows that God has protected him all the way, as he promised.

It is okay that Jacob is not a great role model, because it is not he or other people who are the heroes of the Bible. It is God who is the hero, and he makes his plan happen through his grace.

## WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS?

We already have every spiritual blessing in Christ (Eph 1:3), but life with God can still sometimes feel like a struggle. Job wrestled with God and wondered if God is just; Habakkuk was frustrated with how God rules the world; 1/3 of the Psalms expressed complaints and frustration with God.

Jeremiah thought God had tricked him, describing God as "like a dry stream, like water that cannot be trusted" (Jer 15:18), and that he had allowed himself to be lured into the prophetic ministry *(“You deceived me, Lord, and I was deceived”* 20:7). At one point, he said, *“I will not mention his word or speak anymore in his name”* (20:9). At the same time, he knew that God is with him *"like a mighty warrior"* (20:11).

God knows us fully and bears all of us and all our feelings. He gladly allows us to take our aggression out on Him instead of ourselves or others. Feel free to wrestle with God, but don't let go until you know the peace that comes from His blessing.

Are you in a battle with God, or do you think you need to be?

# PART 5: JOSEPH (CHAPTERS 37-50)

1 This may have taken place between 704-1594 BC.

*“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”* 50:20

## CHAPTER 37

*"Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them. Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age”* Gen 37:2-3a

Joseph gossips about his brothers (v. 2), is favored (vv. 3-4), and tells about his dreams (vv. 5, 9). It seems that Joseph thinks he is going to be the hero, but it is God who ends up being the hero, as he always is. It's a good reminder for us too. Some people are better than others, but we are not the great heroes. The brothers plan to kill him (v. 20), except Reuben (vv. 21-22), but Judah suggests selling him instead (vv. 26-27).

20 shekels of silver = three years' wages for a shepherd and the usual price for a slave (Leviticus 27:5). Sold "out of the covenant", since he is sold to another people.

v. 25: Ishmaelites are also called Midianites (Judges 8:24), so these were two names for the same people group. The Midianites were also descendants of Abraham. Midian was one of the sons Abraham had with Keturah (25:2) after Sarah died. Midian was an area, and those who lived there were descendants of Abraham, either through Midian or through Ishmael. It explains how Jethro, Moses' father-in-law in Midian, knows of Yahweh.

v. 31: Jacob is tricked with a goat, as he had tricked his father (27:9).

## CHAPTER 38: JUDAH AND TAMAR

An interruption about Judah, while Joseph has just arrived in Egypt. This is Jacob's genealogy (37:2), not the story of Joseph. Therefore, it is appropriate to tell about Judah. It is a reminder that we are following the family line of Judah. Joseph’s story is necessary to explain how Judah's family survived.

The brother had a duty to marry his sister-in-law if she became a widow, and the father had to see to it that it happened. Later (Deuteronomy 25:5-10), one could refrain, but with shame.

Onan refuses both to do this and to *"be fruitful and multiply"* (1:28), probably because he saw her as betrothed to Shela (v. 11). In addition, he does not seem to care much about God's promise to give Jacob many descendants.

*"Judah then said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, “Live as a widow in your father’s household until my son Shelah grows up."* 38:11

Judah plays a supporting role in the story of Joseph, partly as a "competitor" to the firstborn Reuben. Judah emerges more and more as the leader (37:22 vs. 26-27, 43:3-5, 42:37 vs. 43:8-10, 44:14-34, 46:28):

*"Then Reuben said to his father, “You may put both of my sons to death if I do not bring him back to you. Entrust him to my care, and I will bring him back."* 42:37

*"Then Judah said to Israel his father, “Send the boy along with me and we will go at once, so that we and you and our children may live and not die. I myself will guarantee his safety; you can hold me personally responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him here before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life. As it is, if we had not delayed, we could have gone and returned twice."* 43:8-10

*"Joseph was still in the house when Judah and his brothers came in, and they threw themselves to the ground before him… [Judah:] Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord’s slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers."* Genesis 44:14,33

*"Now Jacob sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph to get directions to Goshen. When they arrived in the region of Goshen"* 46:28

Ch. 38 seems to be part of Judah's character transformation up to ch. 44. It is 22 years from Joseph being sold until they meet again, so there is plenty of time to mature. It also tells how the next generation in the Messiah's family came to be. Tamar enters Jesus' genealogy and is specifically mentioned by name (Matthew 1:3).

## OTHER DIFFICULT TEXTS IN GENESIS

### 1. Ham sees Noah's "nakedness" (9:20-27)

Could be a euphemism for intercourse (Leviticus 18:6-17), but it seems most likely to be interpreted as Noah being naked. In that culture, this brought shame and dishonor to Noah, and it was a serious act to do it to one's parents. Ham tells it (brags about it?) to the brothers instead of doing something about it.

Why exactly was Canaan, Ham's youngest son, cursed for this? An old rabbinical interpretation is that Ham could not be cursed because he had been blessed by God (9:1), something Noah could not go against. The curse is probably prophetic about the Canaanites during the conquest of the land later.

Neither the author nor God says it is okay to get so drunk, even though it is written in the Bible.

### 2. Lot's daughters (19:30-38)

Perhaps v. 8 had done something with their relationship and respect for Lot and also given them an example of how to exploit others to one's advantage.

*"Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don’t do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof."* 19:8

The story is a digression to explain the origin of the Moabites and Ammonites, who later became bitter enemies of Israel.

Neither the author nor God supports what they did, even if it is written in the Bible.

### 3. Shechem and Dinah (ch. 34)

Dinah went out alone, which was unwise and unusual.

Shechem and Hamor do not mention the rape and only discuss marriage. Possibly “a high bride price" is supposed to be compensation, but they show no regret.

Simeon and Levi take violent revenge. It is hard to say how many they killed, as a city in the OT was often not very big.

Neither the author nor God supports what they did, even if it is written in the Bible.

## CHAPTERS 39-41

**Ch. 39:** vv. 1-6 is a parallel to vv. 19-23:

*"Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh’s officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there. The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the Lord blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the Lord was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. So Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph’s care; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.”* 39:1-6

*“When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, “This is how your slave treated me,” he burned with anger. Joseph’s master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined. But while Joseph was there in the prison, the Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph’s care, because the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.”* 39:19-23

* *"The Lord was with Joseph"* both when he was with Potiphar (v. 2) and in prison (vv. 21, 23).
* He is put in charge of both places.
* He is trusted in both places.
* Everything he did was successful for him (vv. 2-3, 23).
* God is clearly with him all the way. Is he making Joseph more humble by going from slave to prison?

**Ch. 40:** He has interpreted a "double dream", and that happened. What did he think of his own two dreams while in prison?

**Ch. 41:** 13 years later, he is finally free (37:2, 41:46).

## CHAPTER 42

He remembers the dreams in v. 9, but Benjamin and Jacob are missing for them to be fulfilled.

He wants to see if the brothers have changed and recreates the situation, this time with freedom as a reward.

First with Simeon in prison (vv. 16, 19). The brothers see the parallel (vv. 21-22).

*"They said to one another, “Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that’s why this distress has come on us.” Reuben replied, “Didn’t I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn’t listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood."* 42:21-22

Then with Benjamin (44:10-13, 17).

vv. 35-36: Does Jacob think they have sold Simeon?

## CHAPTERS 43-47

**Ch. 43:** Other authors in ancient times also mention that the Egyptians did not like to eat with strangers (v. 32). Probably foreigners in general and not Hebrews in particular.

*"They served him by himself, the brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews, for that is detestable to Egyptians."* 43:32

**Ch. 44:** Judah gives the book's longest speech and shows himself to be a changed man. He admits that they are guilty of what they did to Joseph (v. 16 *“God has uncovered your servants’ guilt.”*), and he is willing to take Benjamin's place (v. 33).

**Ch. 45:** The change in Judah and the brothers, in addition to hearing about his father's reaction to the events 22 years ago, was too much for Joseph. He says they should not accuse themselves, since it was to save lives that God sent him ahead of them to Egypt (vv. 5-8). He realized that the dreams meant that God had this plan all along.

**Ch. 46:** vv. 2-4: Only vision in the story of Joseph. Jacob needed to hear that it was God's plan for him to go to Egypt. The promise to bring him out of Egypt as well (v. 4) can be understood as meaning that he would not be buried there (47:30), but also that Israel as a people would return one day. This is how the Israelites ended up in Egypt.

*"And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night and said, “Jacob! Jacob!” “Here I am,” he replied. “I am God, the God of your father,” he said. “Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. 4 I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph’s own hand will close your eyes."* Gen 46:2-4

Chapter 47: Jacob and his sons get the best area of Egypt.

## CHAPTERS 48-49

**Ch. 48:** Jacob blesses the younger Ephraim before Manasseh in a peaceful irony.

**Ch. 49:** Ruben loses his inheritance rights due to 35:22 *“While Israel was living in that region, Reuben went in and slept with his father’s concubine Bilhah, and Israel heard of it.”*

*"Turbulent as the waters, you will no longer excel, for you went up onto your father’s bed, onto my couch and defiled it."* 49:4

Simeon and Levi lose their inheritance rights due to Chapter 34 (revenge their sister Dinah, who had been defiled, by killing all the men in the city).

*"Simeon and Levi are brothers— their swords are weapons of violence. Let me not enter their council, let me not join their assembly, for they have killed men in their anger and hamstrung oxen as they pleased. Cursed be their anger, so fierce, and their fury, so cruel! I will scatter them in Jacob and disperse them in Israel."* 49:5-7

Simeon becomes part of Judah (Jos 19), and Levi becomes the priestly tribe with its own cities all over the country (Jos 21).

Judah gets 5 verses (vv. 8-12, second most after Joseph).

### Messiah in 49:8-12

v. 8: He will take the lead over the other brothers/tribes.

v. 9: The Lion of Judah becomes a title for Jesus (Rev 5:5).

v. 10: Repeated by Ezekiel to the last king of Judah before the exile (Ezek 21:27):

*“The crown will not be restored until he to whom it rightfully belongs shall come; to him I will give it.”* Ezek 21:27

*"The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his."* v. 10

Seems to have been interpreted messianically.

v. 11a: → Zech 9:9? → Jesus rides into Jerusalem

*"He ties his foal to a grapevine, the colt of his donkey to a choice vine."* v. 11a NLT

*"Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."*

v. 11b: →Isa 63:1-3? → Jesus' return in Rev 19:13

*"He washes his clothes in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes."* 11b NLT

*"Who is this who comes from Edom, from the city of Bozrah, with his clothing stained red? Who is this in royal robes, marching in his great strength? “It is I, the Lord, announcing your salvation! It is I, the Lord, who has the power to save!” Why are your clothes so red, as if you have been treading out grapes? “I have been treading the winepress alone; no one was there to help me. In my anger I have trampled my enemies as if they were grapes. In my fury I have trampled my foes. Their blood has stained my clothes."* Isaiah 63:1-3

*"He wore a robe dipped in blood, and his title was the Word of God."* Rev 19:13

## KEY VERSES IN THE “STORY OF JOSEPH”: 45:5-8 AND 50:20

*“But don’t be upset, and don’t be angry with yourselves for selling me to this place. It was God who sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives. This famine that has ravaged the land for two years will last five more years, and there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. God has sent me ahead of you to keep you and your families alive and to preserve many survivors. So it was God who sent me here, not you! And he is the one who made me an adviser to Pharaoh—the manager of his entire palace and the governor of all Egypt.”* Genesis 45:5-8

*“You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.”* Genesis 50:20

Joseph realizes that God is behind the scenes and turns evil into something good.

Same with Jesus: Acts 2:23, 4:27-28

*"But God knew what would happen, and his prearranged plan was carried out when Jesus was betrayed. With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to a cross and killed him."* Acts 2:23

*"In fact, this has happened here in this very city! For Herod Antipas, Pontius Pilate the governor, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were all united against Jesus, your holy servant, whom you anointed. But everything they did was determined beforehand according to your will."* Acts 4:27-28

Similarities between Joseph and Jesus: Left his father, was hated by his brothers, sold for silver money, captured, was punished despite being innocent, exalted, forgives, and saves many.

## SUMMARY OF PART 5 (JOSEPH)

Joseph made some mistakes as a youngster but learned a lot as he grew. He does a good job everywhere he goes, and he inspires trust and is given responsibility. God is behind the scenes, turning evil into something good, and had a plan all along.

The story of Joseph explains how they ended up in Egypt, where the readers have come out from.

It shows how God uses the actions of sinful people to save the world (50:20).

*“You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.”* Genesis 50:20

It also traces the relationship between Joseph and his brothers, especially Judah, who has an important supporting role.

22 years away from the family "corresponds" to Jacob's 20 years — and Abraham's 25 years waiting for Isaac. A lot has happened to Joseph also since he was a young and immature 17-year-old.

# CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF GENESIS

The book is the first part of how all families in Jordan were to be blessed in Abraham.

God, so to speak, never chooses the eldest son to carry on the Messiah's lineage. Seth (not Cain or Abel), Isaac (not Ishmael), Jacob (not Esau), Judah (not Reuben, Simeon or Levi)…

God blesses even if people fail or rebel. People do evil again and again, but God gives them new chances. (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph...)

The book ends with the fact that they have become 70 people in Egypt (46:27), with a hint towards the exit (50:25-26). Genesis prepares Exodus, which is the center of the books of Moses.

*"Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath, and he said, “When God comes to help you and lead you back, you must take my bones with you.” So Joseph died at the age of 110. The Egyptians embalmed him, and his body was placed in a coffin in Egypt."* 50:25-26

Ends with Israel's 12 sons looking to the future. Genesis is a family history that is a prologue to a people's history.

## JESUS IN GENESIS

One of the woman's seed will strike the serpent's head (3:15 → Gal 4:4-5, Rom 16:20, Rev 12)

*"But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship."* Gal 4:4-5

*"The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you."* Rom 16:20

*"Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death."* Rev 12:10-11

The blessing of the whole world (12:3 → Gal 3:8, 16)

*"I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."* 12:3

*"Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.”"* Gal 3:8, 16

*"The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ."* Gal 3:16

*"The Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring[seed] I will give this land.”* Gen 12:7

Melchizedek (ch. 14 → Heb 5-7)

*"he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him 10 and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek."* Heb 5:9-10

*"the name Melchizedek means “king of righteousness”"* Heb 7:2

*"one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life. For it is declared: “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”"* Heb 7:16-17

Justification by faith (15:6 → Rom 4:3, Gal 3:6)

*"Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness."* Gen 15:6

*"What does Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."”* Rom 4:3

*"So also Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”"* Gal 3:6

Abraham and Isaac (ch. 22 → Heb 11:19)

*"Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death."* Heb 11:19

The heavenly ladder (28:12 → John 1:51)

*"He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it."* 28:12

*"Jesus said, “You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that.” He then added, “Very truly I tell you, you will see ‘heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on’ the Son of Man.”"* John 1:50-51

The story of Joseph → The story of Jesus

A king from Judah (49:9-10 → Rev 5:5)

*"You are a lion’s cub, Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his."* 49:9-10

*“Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.”* Rev 5:5

## APPLICATION QUESTIONS

While our role in God's plan of salvation may not be significant as Joseph did:

*"We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, those whom he has called according to his free will. Those whom he has foreknown, he has also foreordained to be fashioned in the image of his Son, so that he will be the firstborn among many siblings."* (Rom. 8:28-29)

When you look at how God was with Joseph in the background and used evil for something good, what do you think about God's involvement in your life?

**PATIENCE AND FAITH IN GOD'S PROMISES**

God often has much more time than we do, and it can be a great test of patience to wait for his timing. We have several examples of people in the Bible who waited long to see God fulfill his promises, and it might be interesting to see if they learned anything while they waited. Let's look at Abraham and David.

Abraham was promised that he would have a son when he was 75 years old (Genesis 12:4). Ten years later, it's no wonder he begins to wonder what God meant, as he is 85 and Sara is 76 years old, and it becomes even more unlikely that they can have children. They think, therefore, that it might be a good idea for the slave woman Hagar to become the mother of this son instead of Sarah, and thus Ishmael is born (Ch. 16). But it will be another 15 years before Isaac is finally born (Ch. 21). Abraham learned that God did not need help fulfilling His promise. He also learned that although he doubted along the way (Genesis 17:17), God was still faithful and kept what he promised.

David is anointed king as a young boy in 1 Sam 16, but he does not become king until maybe 15 years later. Before this finally happens, he has been on the run from Saul in the wilderness for perhaps ten years and lived in caves instead of being the king. During this period, we can trace character development in David. He learns to leave the "Saul problem" to God and trust that God will take care of it in His timing. He will not lay hands on Saul himself, even if several wearisome years would pass before it was the right time for David to take over the throne. It was precisely impatience that had led Saul to blunder earlier (1 Sam 13:8-14), and this will be the beginning to the end of his reign. The big difference between Saul and David was that David understood that it was God who is the real king. He seems to have learned this in the wilderness, whereas Saul never understood it.

Such tests of patience can become important periods in our lives as well. We learn to be patient and to trust God; his timing is the best. Maybe it helps us too to become less self-centered (Phil 2:3-4) and to develop a healthier theology and image of God.

*"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others." Phil 2:3-4*

Perhaps we learn to get by with less (Phil 4:11-13) and avoid "the dangers of wealth" (e.g., Luke 12:13-34).

*“I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.” Philippians 4:11-13*

Perhaps it drives us closer to God and makes us more dependent on him, so we avoid becoming proud (e.g., 1 Pet 5:5).

*"All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.'" 1 Pet 5:5*

Maybe it gives us a stronger faith so it can last until the end (1 Pet 1:7).

*"These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed." 1 Pet 1:7*

The Eternal God sees our entire short timeline and knows exactly when the time is right. It can be difficult, but we can try to say like David: *“But I trust in you, Lord; I say, 'You are my God.' My times are in your hands"* Psalm 31:15-16