

# INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS

## I. Title and Theme.

- A. In Hebrew (the Masoretic Text) the title is the first word of the book that is the noun with the prepositional suffix “בְּרֵאשִׁית” – ber<sup>e</sup>-shiyth” meaning “in a beginning”.
- B. The English name “Genesis”, is a word that came into being by way of Latin derived from the Septuagint (LXX) translation of Gen.2:4a (literal translation) “*This is the book of a beginning/origin* (γένεσις – genesis) *of the heavens and the earth...*”
- C. While the English draws from Gen.2:4 for its title, that verse functions as a summation, not an introduction.
- D. Gen.2:4 can be viewed as the authors colophon (inscription or emblematic device ending a title page) designed to link together the idea of “beginning” to a host of beginnings to include the universe, life, man, marriage, evil, language, civilization, nations, religion and the promises to Abraham regarding his descendants (Israel).
- E. Further, it ties together the physical account of cosmology and genealogy with the theological significance behind it (i.e., the Angelic conflict; fall of man, salvation, etc.).
- F. These insights reveal the theme of the book as historical and theological narratives from the time of the original creation through the early patriarchs (ends with Joseph).
- G. The author utilizes various literary genre in his recording to include drama (ex.Gen.1:1-2:3), poetry (ex.Gen.2:23; 4:23-24; 8:22) and prophecy (ex.Gen.3:15; 49:1ff [also poetic]).

## II. Authenticity (canonization) and authorship.

- A. This book has long been accepted by most conservative theologians as part of the Old Testament canon.
- B. It is the first book of the first section of the Hebrew canon called “The Torah” or “Law”.
- C. This section in the Septuagint is known as the Pentateuch (5 scrolls).
- D. It is sometimes referred to as “The Five Books of Moses”.
- E. The Bible does not explicitly name Moses as the author.
- F. Attestation to Mosaic authorship otherwise includes:
  - 1. External evidence:
    - a. Ben Sirah’s *Ecclesiasticus*, 24:23 circa 185 BC.
    - b. The *Baba Bathra* 14b, a part of the Jewish Talmud.
    - c. Philo of Alexandria, a Jewish philosopher circa 20 BC to 42 AD.
    - d. Josephus, circa 37-100 AD.
    - e. The Jews themselves attribute the writing of the Torah (Pentateuch) to Moses.
  - 2. Internal evidence:
    - a. Moses wrote via Divine mandate for the people. Exo.17:14; 24:4,7; 34:27-28; Num.33:2; Deu.31:9,22,24-26
    - b. O.T. authors attribute the 1<sup>st</sup> 5 books to Moses. Jos.8:31; 2Kgs.14:6; Ezer.6:18; Neh.8:1; 13:1-2; 2Chr.25:4; 34:14; 35:12; Dan.9:11; Mal.4:4
    - c. N.T. authors also recognized his authorship. Mar.12:19,26; Luk.16:29,31; Luk.20:28,37; 24:27,44; Joh.1:45; 5:46-47; Act.15:21; 28:23; Rom.10:5
    - d. The most natural reading of Luk.24:27 is that Moses was the author of the beginning of the O.T.

## INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS

- e. The book of Exodus begins with the Hebrew “waw/ו” indicating a continuation of narrative from Genesis by the author (a pattern maintained in Leviticus and Numbers with Deuteronomy serving as a treatise).
  - f. Genesis closes with the account of Jacob and his family entering Egypt and Exodus begins with a summary of that event.
  - g. Moses was highly educated having been raised in the house of Pharaoh (Exo.2:10; Act.7:22) answering any objections as to his academic ability.
    - 1) Moses was born in the 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty of Egypt during the reign of Amenemhet III and was the recipient of tremendous knowledge ~1525 BC.
    - 2) The Great Pyramid of Khufu was constructed in the 4<sup>th</sup> dynasty (~1900 BC) and reveals many features demonstrating the knowledge of Egypt.
      - a) The perimeter according to ancient Greeks was half a minute of longitude.
      - b) 1/600<sup>th</sup> of a degree was equal to a Greek stadium that equals 185 meters. The slant height was 185 meters.
      - c) The vertical height to the perimeter was pi.
      - d) A cubit was 25.025 inches and so the side determined a solar year of 365.2422 days.
    - 3) These ancient peoples recognized that:
      - a) The earth was round.
      - b) The circumference of the earth with high accuracy.
      - c) Pi was a mathematical constant.
      - d) The solar year was 365 days.
      - e) The earth was tilted.
    - 4) Josephus says that Abraham gave much of this information to them.
  - h. While the events of Genesis occurred well before Moses’ life (ending events of Genesis with Joseph’s death ~60 years before Moses’ birth), this in no way dismisses the historical accuracies in Genesis.
  - i. Moses was a prophet (Deu.34:10), had direct dialogue with God (Exo.6:2) and thus the advantage of supernatural revelation.
  - j. Furthermore, he was the son of Jochebed the daughter of Levi (Exo.6:20; Num.26:59), who was the son of Jacob (Gen.35:23), son of Isaac (Gen.25:26), son of Abraham (Gen.21:3) only removed from the Patriarch of the Jewish race by 4 generations.
  - k. We can rest assure that Moses received accurate oral teaching handed down from and concerning the lives of the Patriarchs.
- G.** The most noteworthy attack on Mosaic authorship is the JEDP theory advanced by certain liberals in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century most notably associated with the German scholar Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918).
- H.** The theory advances a documentary hypothesis seeking to rearrange the text proposing 4 authors or sources penning the Pentateuch over a few hundred years:
- 1. Jawist (or Yahwist, from Yahweh) in its use describing God starting in Gen.2:4 including much of Genesis and parts of Exodus and Numbers dating ~850 BC.

## INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS

2. Elohism (from Elohim) in its use for God starting Gen.15 covering similar to J elsewhere dating ~750 BC.
  3. Deuteronomy, pertaining to 2Kgs.22:8 whereas “the Book of the Law” that was found was discovered during Josiah’s reform while remodeling the temple supposedly being the book of Deuteronomy, written by an unknown priest of Josiah’s time to support his reform dating ~621 BC.
  4. Priestly encompasses writings scattered from Gen.1 to the end of Deuteronomy as supposedly priestly rewrites of ritual and procedure dating ~400 BC.
- I. The problem with the JEPD theory is that it posits that Moses didn’t write any of the Torah, which completely contradicts the internal evidence of both the OT and NT.
  - J. Further, it is only evidence of liberal modern day literary types that have no depth of attesting evidence otherwise (these types debate rationalism (intellectualism) over authority, say the Bible is just another book, etc.).
  - K. There are other spurious advances (such as Supplementarians i.e., Moses wrote most but it has been edited by others) that attack the doctrine of verbal plenary inspiration in their own ways and are to be rejected.
- III. Date of writing.
- A. From Exo.17:14, we may propose with a certain amount of accuracy that Moses had already begun or had completed Genesis.
  - B. The conflict with Amalek occurred shortly after the exodus in 1445 BC.
  - C. Moses was 80 years old beginning the exodus and had 40 years to complete the Torah. Cf.Exo.7:7; Deu.34:7
- IV. Sources corroborating the historical settings in Genesis. Ref. Dr. Bob Utley, Commentary on Genesis, “How it all Began: Genesis 1-11”
- A. Biblical sources.
    1. Creation – Psa.8; 19; 33; 50; 104; 148; Joh.1:3; 1Cor.8:6; Col.1:16; Heb.1:2; 2Pet.3:5.
    2. Flood – 2Pet.2:5; 3:6
    3. Angelic infiltration – 2Pet.2:4; Jud.6
    4. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob’s time – 2Kgs.13:23; Jer.33:26; Mat.1:2; 8:11; 22:32; Mar.12:26; Luk.3:34; 13:28; 20:37; Act.3:13; 7:8,32
  - B. Archaeological sources.
    1. Earliest known literary parallel of the cultural setting of Gen.1-11 is the Ebla cuneiform tablets from northern Syria dating about 2500 BC, written in Akkadian.
    2. Creation.
      - a. The closest Mesopotamian account dealing with creation, *Enuma Elish*, dating from (1) NIV Study Bible about 1900-1700 BC or (2) John H. Walton’s *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context*, p.21, about 1000 BC. It was found in Ashurbanipal’s library at Nineveh and other copies were found at several other places. There are 7 cuneiform tablets written in Akkadian that describe creation by Marduk.
      - b. “The creation seal” is a cuneiform tablet that is a picture of a naked man and woman beside a fruit tree with a snake wrapped around the tree’s trunk and

## INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS

positioned over the woman's shoulder as if talking to her. It has been interpreted presently as referring to prostitution seeking to deflate any Biblical value.

3. Creation and Flood – *The Altrahasis Epic* records the rebellion of the lesser gods because of overwork and the creation of seven human couples to perform duties of these lesser gods. Humans were destroyed because of: (1) over population and (2) noise. Human beings were reduced in number by a plague, two famines and finally a flood, planned by *Enlil*. *Altrahasis* builds a boat and brings animals on board in order to save them from the waters. These events parallel in order to Gen.1-8. This cuneiform composition dates ~1900-1700 BC.
  4. Noah's flood.
    - a. A Sumerian tablet from Nippur, called *Eridu Genesis*, dating ~1600 BC, tells about *Ziusudra* and a coming flood.
      - 1) *Enka*, the water god, warns *Ziusudra* of a coming flood.
      - 2) *Ziusudra*, a king-priest, believes the revelation and builds a huge square boat and stocks it with all kinds of seeds.
      - 3) The flood lasted 7 days.
      - 4) *Ziusudra* opened a window on the boat and released several birds to see if dry land had appeared.
      - 5) He also offered a sacrifice of an ox and sheep when he left the boat.
    - b. A composite Babylonian flood account from four Sumerian tablets known as the *Gilgamesh Epic* originally dating ~2500-2400 BC, although the written composite form in cuneiform Akkadian is much later (~1900-1700 BC), tells about a flood survivor, *Utnapishtim*, who tells *Gilgamesh*, the king of *Uruk*, how he survived the great flood and was granted eternal life.
      - 1) *Ea*, the water god, warns of a coming flood and tells *Utnapishtim* (Babylonian form of *Ziusudra*) to build a boat.
      - 2) He and his family, along with selected healing plants, survived the flood.
      - 3) The flood lasted 7 days.
      - 4) The boat came to rest in northern Persia, on Mt. Nisir.
      - 5) He sent out 3 different birds to see if dry land had yet appeared.
  5. The Mesopotamian literature that describes an ancient flood are all drawing from the same source. The names often vary, but the plot is the same.
  - C. Egyptian creation accounts can be found in John H. Walton's, *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context*, pp.23-24, 32-34.
    1. In Egyptian literature, creation began with unstructured, chaotic, primeval water. Creation was seen as a developing structure (hill) out of watery chaos.
    2. In literature from Memphis, creation occurred by the spoken word of Ptah.
    3. Each of the major cities of Egypt had separate traditions emphasizing their patron deities.
- V. Outline of Genesis: Due to the nature of physical and spiritual parallels, we may divide the book accordingly.
- A. Physical and genealogical (based on the phrase "the generations of") outline.
    1. Creation and restoration. 1:1 – 2:4

## INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS

2. Beginnings of humanity. 2:5-4:26
  3. Generations of Adam. 5:1-6:8
  4. Generations of Noah. 6:9-9:17
  5. Generations of the sons of Noah. 9:18-11:9
  6. Generations of Shem. 11:10-26
  7. Generations of Terah (Abraham). 11:27-25:11
  8. Generations of Ishmael. 25:12-18
  9. Generations of Isaac. 25:19-35:29
  10. Generations of Esau. 36:1-8
  11. Generations of the sons of Esau. 36:9-43
  12. Generations of Jacob. 37:1-50:26
- B. Theological outline.**
1. The impact of the Angelic conflict, creation and restoration. 1-2
  2. The spiritual fall of man. 3
  3. Results of the fall. 4-11
    - a) Affects on Cain and his family.
    - b) Affects on Seth and his family
    - c) Evil affects everyone.
    - d) Great flood.
    - e) STA is still present in Noah's family.
    - f) –V dominates in rebellion; the tower of Babel.
    - g) God's dispersion.
  4. One man for all humanity (Gen.3:15; cf.Rom.5:12-21). 12-50
    - a) Thru race/genetics: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
    - b) Judah, the kingly line of Messiah.
    - c) Joseph (double inheritance – Savior of both Israel and Church?).