



THE BOOK OF GENESIS

Author: According to Jewish tradition, Moses wrote the book of Genesis.

Date: Many sections were probably recorded directly by Moses during the Exodus. Some scholars date the Exodus around 1445 BC; other scholars date it in the 1200s BC.

Purpose: The purpose of Genesis is to assert that God, whose existence the author assumed and did not try to prove, created the entire universe and everything in it. God created the universe not as an extension of himself, but by his powerful and creative word. When the man and woman fell into sin in chapter 3, Satan intended to harm humanity for ever. But God had a good plan for all of humanity—the plan that led to the birth and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. God revealed his plan through the promise he made to Abraham (12:2-3).

Overview and Story: "If you do not know where you came from, you will not know where you are going," says an African proverb. Family and tribal history are an essential part of African life. The first book of the Bible gives us a foundational understanding of the past, beginning with creation, to help us understand the Bible and the redemption story.

Genesis is the book of beginnings. It is fundamental to our understanding of the human story. It tells us that we are not products of some cosmic accident or conflict in the spiritual realm. Rather, a very thoughtful and powerful God created everything and made it beautiful. He then created humans and filled us with his breath to reflect him and live in fellowship with him and with one another. Many African traditions teach that the heavens and the earth, once close to each other, were separated because of a breach caused by humans. Genesis explains that this breach is sin—the wilful disobedience of the first humans that resulted in a broken relationship with God and fellow humans, and being driven from the Garden of Eden.

Genesis shows the progressive and destructive nature of sin, which had now become a part of the human reality. Sin led to the first murder and the corruption of the entire human race. When "the LORD observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil" (6:5), he sent the Flood. The human plot to build the Tower of Babel shows that people's attempt to connect with God failed because they wished to exalt their own reputation and place. God rejected this attempt, and Genesis tells us that God responded by giving humans different languages. God had a different way to rebuild the relationship, his choice of the family of Abraham.

God called Abraham to leave his land and his people in Ur (in modern Iraq) and go to a place he did not know. God promised him blessings, land, and descendants. Abraham was not perfect, but he obeyed God. His faith and obedience to the faithful God eventually led to the founding of the nation of Israel through his descendants well after the end of Genesis. The stories of Abraham's son Isaac, his grandson Jacob, and their families are very much like stories of many families today. Their stories are filled with internal conflicts, marital problems, jealousy, envy, and lies. Yet, each time they got to the edge, God preserved the family in fulfilment of his promises. Genesis ends with the story

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of Joseph who was sold into slavery by his brothers. God used their evil plan to save the entire family through Joseph who gained favour and prominence in Egypt.

What Genesis Teaches Us:

- Genesis answers many of the profound questions people ask, such as: Where did I come from? (God created us; 1:1) and What is my purpose? (to have a relationship with God; 15:6)
- The impact of the Fall is deep and far reaching. We are unable to resolve the problem of sin by ourselves. All creation and human society fell into disorder when the relationship with God was fractured. No amount of war and conquest, power and privilege, riches and fame, or any other human accomplishment can resolve this problem. The solution is to restore relationship with God as the giver of life and order.
- No human being is perfect. If we sin and ask for forgiveness, God will surely reconcile with and redeem us. God is not waiting for perfect people to do his work, but people who are willing to trust and obey him at all times. Adam failed. Noah failed. If you and I were to start again, we would fail.
- We can trust God who created the universe and every living being to handle the concerns of our lives. Over and over again we see God intervening in a hopeless situation—childlessness, famine, war, imprisonment—and transforming those situations. We just need to trust and obey him. Only God writes the final story.
- The genealogies in Genesis remind us of the value God places on families in his divine plan. Families are under attack. As part of God's family, we must take seriously the task of building godly families through which God works for his own glory.

OUTLINE AND RHYTHM (Blessing-Sin-Punishment-Blessing...)

Primeval History (1:1–11:29)

God intervenes in a chaotic situation (1:1–4:16)

Man is created—blessing (1:1–2:15)

Human depravity—the Fall and sin through disobedience to God's Word (3:1–7)

God deals with human depravity—punishment by banishment (3:8–4:16)

Transition: genealogy and family of Adam (4:17–5:32)

God intervenes in a chaotic situation (6:1–9:28)

Man becomes fruitful—blessing (6:1–4)

Human depravity—consistently and totally evil (6:5–8)

God deals with human depravity—punishment by flooding (6:9–9:17)

Transition: genealogy and family of Noah (9:18–10:32)

God intervenes in a chaotic situation (11:1–9)

Man becomes prosperous—blessing (11:1–2)

Human depravity—sin by claiming equality with God (11:3–4)

God deals with human depravity—punishment by scattering (11:5–9)

Transition: genealogy and family of Shem (11:10–29)

Patriarchal and Matriarchal History (12:1–50:26)

God blesses the patriarchs (12:1–50:26)

Life and times of Abraham (12:1–25:11)

Transition: genealogy and family of Ishmael (25:12–18)

Life and times of Jacob (25:19–35:29)

Transition: genealogy and family of Esau (36:1–42)

Life and times of Joseph (37:1–50:26)

The Account of Creation

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*²The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

³Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light "day" and the darkness "night." And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day.

⁶Then God said, "Let there be a separation between the waters, to separate the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth." ⁷And that is what happened. God made this space to separate the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens. ⁸God called the space "sky."

And evening passed and morning came, marking the second day.

⁹Then God said, "Let the waters of the sky flow together into one pool, so dry ground may appear." And that is what happened. ¹⁰God called the dry ground "land" and the waters "seas." And God saw that it was good. ¹¹Then God said, "Let the land sprout vegetation—every sort of seed-bearing plant, and trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. These seeds will then produce more of their kind of plants and trees from which they came." And that is what happened. ¹²The land produced vegetation of every sort of seed-bearing plant, and every tree bore fruit with seed-bearing fruit. Their seed

1:1 Or In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth.



APPLICATION

WE WORSHIP

Many religions and people groups have drawn their creation stories from the Bible. Parents tell these stories over and over to their children. Many of these creation stories have been passed down for generations. But God's account of creation in Genesis. But in other stories, the Bible gives reasons for why we worship and praise God.



PROVERBS & STORIES

The Tsanguis of the Republic of the Congo tell a story about a dance. The dance is called *mbuli, uba luata milimbala a matsotsove*, and it is a traditional dance. The dance is done wearing raffia, not woven into beautiful dancer suits. Only the men dance. Genesis says that the heavens and the earth were created by God. And at every day

When Nahor was 29 years old, he became the father of Terah. ²⁵After the birth of Terah, Nahor lived another 119 years and had other sons and daughters.

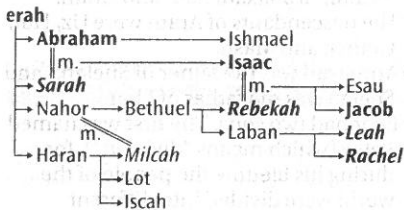
After Terah was 70 years old, he became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

he Family of Terah

This is the account of Terah's family. Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran was the father of Lot. But Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans, the land of his birth, while his father, Terah, was still living. ²⁹Meanwhile, Abram and Nahor both married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah. (Milcah and her sister Iscah were daughters of Nahor's brother Haran.) ³⁰But Sarai was unable to become pregnant and had no children.

³¹One day Terah took his son Abram, his daughter-in-law Sarai (his son Abram's wife), and his grandson Lot (his son Haran's child) and moved away from Ur of the Chaldeans. He was headed for the land of Canaan, but they stopped at Haran and settled there. ³²Terah lived for 205 years* and died while still in Haran.

Abraham's Family (Genesis 11:27-30).



¹⁰ Or the ancestor of; also in 11:12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24.
¹³ Greek version reads ¹²When Arphaxad was 135 years old he had other 430 years and had other sons and daughters, and then the birth of Shalah, Cainan lived another 330 years and had other sons and daughters. The ancient versions read 145 years; compare 11:26 and 12:4.

CHANGES

When Abram was 29 years old, he became the father of Terah. ²⁵After the birth of Terah, Nahor lived another 119 years and had other sons and daughters.

After Terah was 70 years old, he became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

The Call of Abram

12 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. ²I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. ³I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you."

⁴So Abram departed as the LORD had instructed, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. ⁵He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all his wealth—his livestock and all the people he had taken into his household at Haran—and headed for the land of Canaan. When they arrived in Canaan, ⁶Abram travelled through the land as far as Shechem. There he set up camp beside the oak of Moreh. At that time, the area was inhabited by Canaanites.

⁷Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "I will give this land to your descendants." And Abram built an altar there and dedicated it to the LORD, who had appeared to him. ⁸After that, Abram travelled south and set up camp in the hill country, with Bethel to the west and Ai to the east. There he built another altar and dedicated it to the LORD, and he worshipped the LORD. ⁹Then Abram continued travelling south by stages towards the Negev.

Abram and Sarai in Egypt

¹⁰At that time a severe famine struck the land of Canaan, forcing Abram to go down

^{12:7} Hebrew seed.



APPLICATION

TREATING YOUR NEPHEW AS YOUR OWN SON • Genesis 12:1-5

Following God's instructions, Abram left his country and took Lot, his nephew and the son of his deceased brother Haran, with him. Abram took care of his orphaned nephew as if Lot were his own son, even when Lot got himself into trouble.

This story pictures an extended family in which Abram saw his brother's son as his own son, not just as a nephew. In such circumstances, orphans are cared for and the deceased brother's memory is honoured. However, the popularity of individualism has started to weaken the bonds of the extended family in Africa. Traditionally African children did not belong only to their

12:1
 Gen 15:7
 Acts 7:3
 Heb 11:8

12:2
 Gen 13:16;
 15:5; 17:4;
 18:18; 22:17
 Zech 8:13

12:3
 Gen 22:18; 26:4
 Exod 23:22
 Acts 3:25
 Gal 3:8

12:4
 Gen 11:26, 31

12:6
 Gen 33:18; 35:4
 Deut 11:30

12:7
 Gen 13:15
 Gal 3:16

12:8
 Gen 4:26; 8:20;
 22:9

12:9
 Gen 13:1; 20:1

12:10
 Gen 26:1; 42:5

12:11
 Gen 29:17

12:12
 Gen 20:11



AFRICAN TOUCH POINTS

TO EVERY TRIBE

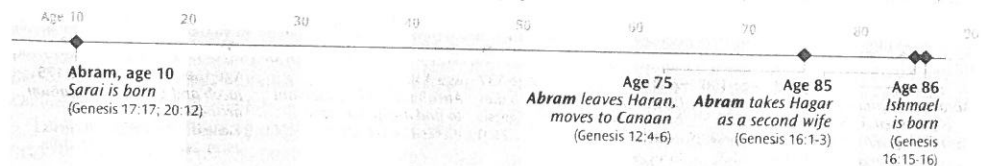
God moved Abram from his home in Haran, in modern-day Iraq, to the place where the nation of Israel is today (Genesis 12:1). Israel is called the "land bridge" because it is the piece of land between Africa, Europe, and Asia. When people from Africa travelled to Europe they had to go through Israel, the "land bridge." And people of Asia and Europe often travelled across that "land bridge" as they went from one continent to another.

God sent the family of Abram to the "land bridge." Why? So they could be in place to become recognised and respected by all people, which would eventually help them to spread God's Kingdom to "all the families" in Africa, Europe, and Asia (Genesis 12:3). In heaven we will sing to Jesus. Our song will be, "Your blood has ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9).

Faith in God must spread to all nations and tribes. God made that promise to Abraham nearly four thousand years ago. But today, faith in God still has not reached people of certain tribes and languages. God laid the foundation for missions long ago by placing his people on the land bridge between all the great nations in the ancient world. Jesus said the workers are few, so we must ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers (Matthew 9:37-38), and our churches must send missionaries (Acts 13:2-39).

to Egypt, where he lived as a foreigner. ¹¹As he was approaching the border of Egypt, Abram said to his wife, Sarai, "Look, you are a very beautiful woman. ¹²When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his

Abraham's Life (Genesis 11:27-25:11). Continued on next page.





AFRICAN TOUCH POINTS

NO ORPHANS

In many parts of Africa, when a child is born into a specific family, it requires the whole village to raise the child. Therefore, there are technically no orphans because there is always a family member who will step in as substitute parent if the natural parents of the child die.

It is also a common practice in parts of Africa for a barren couple to take a child from a brother and treat the child as their own, even though the child may keep the real father's name. This practice is common in the Bible as well. Lot was raised by his uncle, and so was Esther. In our own time, such practices will ensure that there are no street children and that every child's needs are provided, even when the parents are not alive.

wife. Let's kill him; then we can have her!
13 So please tell them you are my sister. Then they will spare my life and treat me well because of their interest in you."

14 And sure enough, when Abram arrived in Egypt, everyone noticed Sarai's beauty. 15 When the palace officials saw her, they sang her praises to Pharaoh, their king, and Sarai was taken into his palace. 16 Then Pharaoh gave Abram many gifts because of her—sheep, goats, cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.

17 But the LORD sent terrible plagues upon Pharaoh and his household because of Sarai, Abram's wife. 18 So Pharaoh summoned Abram and accused him sharply. "What have you done to me?" he demanded. "Why didn't you tell me she was your wife?" 19 Why did you say, 'She is my sister,'



PROVERBS & STORIES

FOOLISH FEAR

Sometimes we are so afraid of what will happen if we tell the truth that we lie instead. We can be so afraid of those in power over us that our fear causes us to try and trick them. How foolish! Lies are soon exposed (Proverbs 12:19).

Abram was afraid (Genesis 12:10-20). As Egypt's supreme ruler, Pharaoh could do anything he wished to insignificant foreigners, including killing a man for his wife. But Pharaoh did not tolerate being made to look foolish.

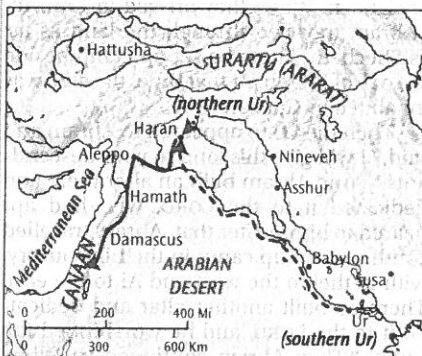
The Bashi people say, *Omurhebwa arhaba mwenge*,

12:16
Gen 20:14;
24:35
12:17
1 Chr 16:21
Ps 105:14
12:18
Gen 20:9-10
12:19
Gen 20:5; 26:9
13:1
Gen 12:9
13:2
Gen 12:5
13:3
Gen 12:8-9

and allow me to take her as my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and get out of here!" 20 Pharaoh ordered some of his men to escort them, and he sent Abram out of the country, along with his wife and all his possessions.

Abram and Lot Separate

13 So Abram left Egypt and travelled north into the Negev, along with his wife and Lot and all that they owned. 2 (Abram was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold.) 3 From the Negev, they continued travelling by stages towards Bethel, and they pitched their tents between Bethel and Ai, where they had camped before. 4 This was the same place where Abram had built the



Abraham's Journey to Canaan (Genesis 12:1-9).

"Ur of the Chaldeans" (Genesis 11:28, 31; 15:7) has traditionally been identified with Ur in Mesopotamia (southern Ur), a chief city of ancient Sumer. Some scholars have proposed a northern Ur to the north of Haran, where Abram's extended family settled (see Genesis 27:43; 28:10; 29:4; Acts 7:2-4).

altar, and there he worshipped again.

5 Lot, who was travelling with him, had also become very wealthy with sheep and goats, herds of cattle, and many tents. 6 But the land could not support both Abram and Lot with their flocks and herds living so close together. 7 So disputes broke out between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot. (At that time the Canaanites and Perizzites were also in the land.)

8 Finally Abram said to Lot, "Let us separate. This conflict will come between us and our herdsmen. After all, we are close relatives. 9 The whole countryside is open to us. Take your choice of any section of land you want, and we will separate. If you take the land to the left, then I'll take the land to the right. If you prefer the land on the right, then I'll go to the left."

10 Lot took a long look at the Jordan Valley in the land of the Amorites. The whole area was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the LORD or the beautiful land of Egypt. (Before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) 11 Lot chose for himself the Jordan Valley to the east of them. He and his family moved there with his flocks and servants. Abram stayed in the land of Canaan with his uncle Abimelech. 13:15 Hebrew seed; also in 13:16. 14:1 Hebrew



PROVERBS & STORIES

Material blessings turned out to cause a problem for Abram and Lot. They were both wealthy and had more cattle than the land could support. This drew strife between the two relatives and their servants. Lot said to Abram, "Let's not allow this conflict to continue between us and our herdsmen. After all, we are close relatives."

To remedy the situation and maintain peace, Lot had to go separate ways. A Swahili proverb says, *u fa utajenga ukuta*, meaning, "If you do not build a wall, you will build a chasm." Relational cracks lead to chasms.

We must ask for God's wisdom sometime soon.



APPLICATION

AI

In ancient times, powerful monarchs provoked aggressive battles against neighbouring monarchs. Many of those wars were fought with weaker leaders surviving only by making agreements, pledging loyalty to them. One of those wars was in which Abram's nephew Lot was captured along with many others.

Lot had separated from his uncle after the herdsmen over sharing grazing ground for their flocks. Lot chose the best part of the land and was

Abraham's Life (Genesis 11:27-25:11). Continued from last page.

