

Introduction to Genesis

Genesis means beginning or origin. The book was first written in Hebrew by Moses. Genesis like the rest of the Bible is Scripture; therefore, the primary author was the Holy Spirit (2Ti 3:16) guiding Moses to write the very words in the text. Later it was translated into Greek in the Septuagint (LXX). Genesis is the first book in the Torah and the Hebrew Bible, the Tanakh. Characters in Genesis are also referenced in the Quran – the sacred text of the Islamic false religion. Genesis is divided up into two major sections: chapters 1-11 and chapters 12-50. Ten *toledoths* (Hb) (generations) or family records is how the author moves the reader from Adam to Jacob and his 12 sons who become the 12 tribes of Israel the nation. The book is classified as narrative in nature and one of the 17 historical books of the Old Testament (OT) canon.

The central character of the entire story is the Lord God (2:4). The English word Lord is a translation of the Hebrew word for YHWH, pronounced Yahweh or Jehovah. The three most important human characters of the book are Adam, Noah, and Abraham. The most important women are Eve, Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel. Throughout the narrative, God is always present and actively working to accomplish His will and fulfill covenant promises. He is the hero of the story.

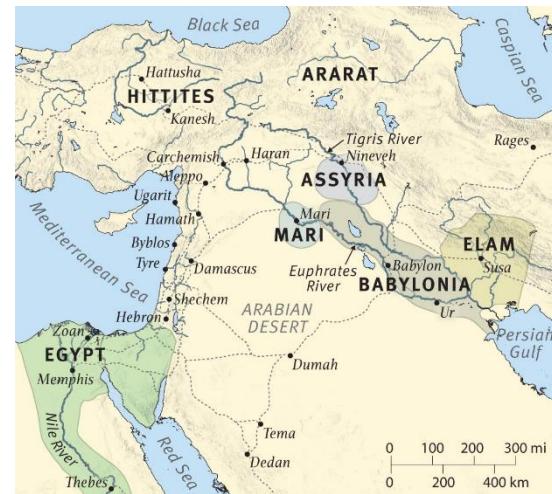
If the story of the entire Bible can be divided up into four parts: **Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration**, Genesis contains all four elements. Creation occurs in chapters 1-2, the Fall happens in chapter 3, and micro-pictures of redemption and restoration are seen in the characters' lives. The geography includes Mesopotamia, Canaan, and Egypt.

The most important verse and sentence in the book is the first (1:1); it contains seven Hebrew words or ten English words. *"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."* Creating the heavens and the earth out of nothing (ex nihilo) was God's greatest act of sovereign, omnipotent power. God as the Creator is foundational to His authority and ownership of the earth (Ps 24:1,1Co 10:26).

The authenticity of the book of Genesis as the Word of God is validated by the number of times Jesus and the authors of the New Testament (NT) reference the text of Genesis. In Matthew 19, Jesus stated that the word of Genesis 2:24 was spoken by God. Adam – as the first man – is authenticated by Luke, Paul, and Jude. Jesus confirmed the historicity of Noah and the flood in Matthew and Luke. There are 72 references to Abraham in the NT. The writers of the NT clearly believed that Genesis was historically reliable as the primary source document for the origin of man.

Listing all that is important in Genesis would be impossible; however, one sees in Genesis:

- God, the Sovereign Creator, and His attributes
- The origin of man, sin, and death
- Humans, male and female, are made in the image of God
- A creation/cultural mandate
- The Proto-Evangelium
- The Noahic and Abrahamic Covenants
- Mysterious characters like Melchizedek and the sons of God
- The origin of the Jewish people and the nation of Israel
- Preincarnate appearances of Christ
- Types and shadows of Jesus
- Two millennia of human history
- Incredible stories of God's sovereign providence
- Yahweh's covenant-keeping faithfulness and love
- Judgment for sin, wickedness, and evil



Bergen sums it up well. He writes, "Genesis lays the groundwork for everything else we read and experience in Scripture. Through Genesis, we understand where we came from, how we got into the fallen state we are in, and the beginnings of God's gracious work on our behalf. Genesis unfolds God's original purpose for humanity." (Robert D. Bergen, "Genesis," in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 3.).