

# Introduction to Genesis

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## Where is it in the Bible?

Genesis is the first book in the Old Testament and, therefore, the first book in the Bible. It is also the first book of the five books that are called the Pentateuch or the Torah.

## Who wrote it?

Traditionally, Moses was thought to be the author of Genesis and of the Pentateuch as a whole. Since the Reformation, however, scholars have recognized that the question of authorship is more complex. It is now thought that Genesis is the product of a long period of development which involved many authors and editors.

## When was it written?

Genesis was probably written and revised over a period of hundreds of years. It was probably completed during or shortly after the Babylonian exile (587-538 B.C.)

## What is it about?

Genesis is a book about beginnings. The first eleven chapters talk about the beginning of the world and mankind and the fall into sin. The rest of Genesis tells about the beginning of Israel and the promises God made to the patriarchs.

## How is it structured?

- I. The Primeval Story (1:1-11:26)
  - a. Creation (1:1-2:25)
  - b. The Fall (3:1-24)
  - c. Cain and Abel (4:1-16)
  - d. Life before the Flood (4:17-6:4)
  - e. The Flood (6:5-9:17)
  - f. The Descendants of Noah (9:18-10:32)
  - g. The Tower of Babel (11:1-9)
  - h. The Descendants of Shem (11:10-11:32)
- II. The Story of the Patriarchs (12:1-50:26)
  - a. Abraham and Sarah (12:1-25:18)
  - b. Isaac and Jacob (25:19-36:43)
  - c. Jacob's Sons: Joseph and His Brothers (37:1-50:26)

## What are some of its themes?

- **Beginnings:** Genesis teaches us about God's activity in creating and sustaining the world. It talks about the beginning of marriage and family, society and civilization, craft and industry. Sadly, it also explains how sin entered the world and corrupted God's good creation. But Genesis also shows us the beginnings of God's plan of redemption.
- **Covenant:** In Genesis, covenant involves divine promises and the blessings that accompany them. It refers to promises made to the entire world through Noah and to those made to the family of Abraham.
- **Relationship:** Genesis gives us a picture of the relationships between God and the world, between God and human beings, and between human beings.