

# **Genesis**

(Beginning or Origin)

Hebrew: bere'shith "In Beginning" based on Genesis 1:1

Greek: Genoseos "Of Birth" based on Genesis 2:4

## **Summary:**

**Torah** (Hebrew term for law or instruction): Divided into 5 separate books, later referred to as the Pentateuch ( means 5 vessels)

Unfolds the record of the beginning of the world, human history, family, civilizations, and salvation. Story of Gods plan and purpose for creation. Reveals person and nature of God (Creator, Sustainer, Judge, Redeemer). Talks about the consequences of sin. Creation is shattered by the Fall (willful disobedience of Adam and Eve). Fellowship with God is broken. God used ordinary people to do great things. Provides universal history of mankind and the patriarchal history of the nation of Israel. Genesis lays the groundwork for everything else we need and experience in scripture. It helps us understand where we come from, how we got into fallen state, and the beginning of God's gracious work on our behalf. Genesis plays an introductory role for the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), for the entire Old Testament, and for the entire bible. It is the grand story of human existence.

The first section (chapter 1-11) is the general history, commonly called "primeval history", showing how humanity descended from one couple and became sinners. The second section (chapter 12-50) is the patriarchal history, focusing on the covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants: Isaac, Jacob, & Jacobs 12 sons.

Genesis is a narrative of relationships, particularly routed in covenant. In the ancient world, communication was primarily oral, because the cultures were hearing-dominant. Writing was done by specialists called scribes. Scribes produced documents rather than what we call books. Scribes were not authors but they preserved the words of authority figures such as Moses.

**Author:** Moses: The events of the book ends 300 years before Moses was born. The rest of the Bible and most church historians attribute authorship to Moses. Genesis is technically anonymous, but both old and new testaments unanimously recognize Moses as the Torah's author. There are two views on how Genesis may have been written: 1) Genesis 1-50 were written on tablets that Moses arranged in chronological order and added the material on Joseph (That would make Moses the compiler not the author); and 2) Genesis was composed around the time of the Exodus from Egypt.

**Audience/ Setting:** People of Israel. Region currently known as Middle East. Wilderness during Israels wandering somewhere in the Sinai Peninsula.

**Purpose:** Record Gods creation of the world and his desire to have a certain set of people dedicated to worshipping Him.

## **Key people:**

**Adam & Eve:** God's first human creations (mother and father of the nation)

**Noah:** Only follower of God in his generation. Second father of human race. Built the ark. A drunk.

Relatives: Grandfather- Methuselah; Father- Lamech; Sons- Ham, Shem, and Japheth

**Abraham**: Founder of the Jewish nation. Successful and wealthy rancher. Faithful (willing to sacrifice his only son). Spent most of his life in Canaan. When under pressure, he distorted the truth. Contemporaries were Abimelech and Melchizedek.

Relatives: Brothers- Nahor and Haran; Father- Terah; Wife- Sarah; Nephew- Lot; Sons- Ishmael and Isaac

**Sarah**: Mother of a nation and ancestor of Jesus. The wife of Abraham. Had a hard time believing God's promise that she would have a child (Isaac) in her old age (90).

Relatives: Father-Terah; Half brothers- Nahor and Haran

**Isaac**: Born to Sarah (age 90) and Abraham (age 100). First descendant in fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. Lied under pressure (like his father). Wealthy livestock owner.

Relatives: Half brother to Ishmael; Wife- Rebekah; Twin sons- Jacob and Esau.

**Rebekah**: Accomplishment oriented. Favored one son (Jacob). Deceived husband.

Relatives: Grandparents- Nahor and Milcah; Father- Bethuel; Brother- Laban

**Jacob**: Third link in God's plan to start nation from Abraham. Father of 12 tribes. 12 sons and 1 daughter. Was considered a deceiver by name (before name changed). Occurred in Canaan. He was a Shepherd and Livestock Owner.

Relatives: Parents- Isaac and Rebekah; Wives- Leah and Rachel

**Joseph**: Jacob's favorite son. He was overconfident and new his purpose at an early age. Sold into slavery by his brothers and falsely imprisoned by Potiphar's wife. Became the ruler of Egypt and saved the nation from famine.

Relatives: Wife- Asenath; Sons- Manasseh and Ephraim

### **References:**

KJV Illustrated Bible Handbook  
KJV Foundation Study Bible  
Life Application Study Bible  
NIV Cultural Background Study Bible