

## NAME

*"It might help my analysis if I knew what Genesis was, beyond the Biblical reference"* (Spock - Star Trek II - The Wrath of Khan)

The book gets its name from the first word of the book and hence the first word of Scripture: בְּרֵאשִׁית ([“bereshith”] meaning “in the beginning” - from רָאשׁ [“rush”] meaning “first, beginning, head”). The LXX translates this as γένεσις ([genesis] meaning “origin, source”). Which is where we receive our English word “Genesis” - which comes from the Greek via the Latin to the English.

## AUTHOR

Jewish tradition and the New Testament ascribe authorship to Moses (John 1:7; 5:46; 7:19,23). However, as with the rest of the canon, recent higher criticism has questioned Mosaic authorship. In part the question is asked, *“How could Moses have written concerning events he did not himself witness?”* (The events of Genesis conclude about 300 years prior to the birth of Moses - see Date below). The same higher critical analysis which is used to question Mosaic authorship is similarly applied to the other 4 books of the Pentateuch.

The basic premise was that, since Moses could not have witnessed the events he writes concerning, he must have used ancient source documents. These source documents would have included historical records which had been passed down. Initially, the study allowed for the possibility that Moses’ relationship with God was unique and therefore a process of Divine revelation may have been involved.

In 1753 J. Astruc attempted to identify the source documents. By 1800 Moses, as author, was replaced by an unnamed redactor.

Scholars have used JEP to examine the Pentateuch/Genesis chronologically to determine authorship. JEP is based upon the vocabulary used - especially in the name of God. The theory is that different authors used different names/vocabulary/style - and thus were from different periods according to the development of language/description of God. So a chronological development of authorship may be developed by identifying these differences and potential source documents.

A rough over simplification follows:

J = Jehovah - The Yahwist (YHWH - יהוה) - usage earlier in book - pre chapter 15

E = Elohim - The Elohist (Elohim - אֱלֹהִים / Adonai - אֲדֹנָי) - usage earlier in book - pre chapter 15

P = Priest - The priestly source was identified 1860-1870 by K. H. Graf and J. Wellhausen. They postulated that the P source was exilic/post exilic - possibly c. 6th century.

JEP was subdivided into J, J<sup>1</sup>, J<sup>2</sup> and S = Edomite, O = Edomite, L = an early lay source. These are listed sequentially as: LJEBDHP

What JEP leads one to is as clear as mud. J literature is found mixed with P literature, etc. Even single verses can become dissected as to supposed source material - each source having its own vocabulary, character, and theology. The bottom line point is that the application of JEP as a literary criteria for evaluating authorship is inconclusive if not spurious.

Conservative scholarship has maintained Mosaic authorship based on Moses as redactor by a process of Divine revelation and the utilization of historical source material.

- I. His Name  
"Moses" means "drawn out" (Exodus 2:10). His name at court would be "Ramoses" as the King on the throne was Rameses II (see below).
- II. His Life
  1. The son of Levi - Exodus 2:1  
The son of Levi, born of that union, became the greatest man among mere men in the whole history of the world (Numbers 12:3). How far he was removed in genealogy from Levi, it is hard to know: only four generations (Genesis 46:11; Exodus 6:16-20); at least ten or twelve generations (Exodus 12:37; 38:26). This is probably because in some lists only the important heads of families are given. The names of the immediate mother and father of Moses are not certainly known. The mother "*saw that he was a fine child*" (Exodus 2:2); so they defied the commandment of the king (Exodus 1:22) and for three months hid him instead of throwing him into the river.
  2. Adopted prince - Exodus 2:5-10  
The princess of Egypt saved the child by adopting him. Thus he would receive her family name. The usual meaning of this royal name was that he was "born of" a royal princess through the intervention of the God Ra. But, since he was not "born of" the princess they fell back upon the primary meaning of the word "drawn out" (Exodus 2:10 - see above). The family name was "Mes" or "Moses." Pharaoh's daughter was probably the sister of the king on the throne. She would then be lineal heir to the throne, but debarred by her sex. Josephus relates (Ant. II, IX, 7) that she had no natural son, and thus Moses became heir to the throne, not with the right to supplant the reigning Pharaoh, but to supersede any of his sons.  
  
Very little is known of Moses' youth and early manhood at the court. He would certainly be educated as a prince. "Instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22).
  3. Friend of the people  
The faith mentioned in Hebrews was at work (Hebrews 11:23-28). See Exodus 2:11-14; Acts 7:24. He became practically a traitor and endangered his throne rights and probably his civil rights also. He thought to do right and be a nobody than to be a tyrant and rule Egypt.
  4. Refuge in Midian - Exodus 2:15  
We are told nothing of the escape and the journey, how he eluded the vigilance of the court guards and the frontier sentinels. The friend of slaves is strangely safe while within their territory. He reached the Sinaitic province of the empire and lived there. There God mellowed and matured the haughty prince instructed in the wisdom of the Egyptians. He was transformed into the wise, well-poised, leader, statesman, lawgiver, poet and prophet. God usually prepares His great ones in some quiet place away from the haunts of men and near to the "secret place of the most High" (Psalm 91:1).
  5. Leader of Israel - Exodus 3:10  
He was given a most appalling commission - to go back home and deliver his kinsman from a terrible slavery at the hand of the most powerful nation on earth. Why was he not arrested as a traitor when he returned to the court?
  6. His own family - Exodus 2:16,21,22
  7. Death - Exodus 34:7

### III. Moses' Place In The Scriptures

Joshua 8:30-35; 24:5  
1 Samuel 12:6-8  
1 Chronicles 23:14-17  
Psalm 77:20; 99:6; 105; 106  
Isaiah 63:11,12  
Jeremiah 15:1  
Daniel 9:11-13  
Hosea 12:13  
Micah 6:4  
Malachi 4:4  
Matthew 17:3; 19:8  
Mark 7:9-13; 9:4; 12:26  
Luke 9:30; 16:29-31; 24:27,44  
John 1:17,45; 3:14,15; 5:46  
Acts 28:23  
Romans 5:14  
Jude 9  
Revelation 15:3

### IV. Moses' Work And Character

#### 1. The Author

The Jewish Church, from its most remote antiquity, has ascribed the work (writing of Genesis) to Moses; and the Christian Church from its foundation has attributed it to him too. Jesus and His apostles have completed the evidence and put the question beyond doubt.

There are a few things in the Pentateuch which were probably added by a later hand: Deuteronomy 1:1-5; 2:12; 34:5-12 (Also Genesis 12:6 "*And the Canaanite was then in the land*"; Numbers 21:14 "*In the book of the wars of the Lord.*"). These were probably the work of Ezra, who according to tradition, collected and arranged the Old Testament canon.

From Adam to Noah there was but one man necessary to the correct transmission of the history of this period of 1656 years. This history was probably known to Methuselah (Genesis 5:21,27), who lived to see them both. In like manner, Shem connected Noah and Abraham, having lived to converse with them both; as Isaac did with Abraham and Joseph, from whom these things might be easily conveyed to Moses by Amram who was contemporary with Joseph. Even on the authority of tradition alone these writings stand upon a foundation of credibility. But the unerring Spirit of God directed Moses also in the selection of facts and the ascertaining of dates. In his writings Moses also constructed everything according to the pattern which God showed him in the mount.

#### 2. The Lawgiver

Moses first gave laws concerning the Passover (Exodus 13). At Sinai Moses gave a code of laws known as the Book of the Covenant (Exodus 24:7). This contains the Moral Law (Exodus 20:1-17). This is followed by a brief code suitable to their present needs and immediate prospects (Exodus 20:24,26; 21-23).

Some of the laws of Moses relating as they did to passing problems, have themselves passed away; some were abrogated by Christ and others explicitly fulfilled; but most of it is the warp and woof of the best in the great codes of the world to this day. The morality of the Decalogue is unapproached among collections of moral precepts. Its divinity, like the divinity of the teachings of Jesus, lies not only in what it includes but what it omits.

The laws of Moses were not a collection of court decisions, but codes given abstractly and arranged in systematic order.

### 3. The Prophet

Moses' work and character culminate in the prophetic office. It was as prophet that he held the place of highest eminence in the world until a greater Moses came (Deuteronomy 18:15,18,19; Acts 3:20-23). He gave to Israel a ritual of worship which most completely typified the redemptive mercy of God and which is so wonderfully unfolded in Hebrews, as it has been more wonderfully fulfilled in the atoning death of Christ. Moses' revelation of God is transcendent. The vision that Moses gives of God exalts and glorifies Him beyond expression.

## DATE

The events of Genesis conclude approximately 300 years prior to the birth of Moses. Depending on when one dates creation the events of Genesis cover a period of approximately 2,400 years. A rough approximation of the times and events covered is below.

Creation	4,000 B.C.???
Noah and the Flood	3000 to 2500 B.C.
Tower of Babel	2400 B.C.
Abraham	2166 to 1991 B.C.
Isaac Born	2066 B.C.
Jacob and Esau Born	2006 B.C.
Joseph	1915 to 1805 B.C.
Moses	1526 to 1406 B.C.
Exodus	1446 B.C. - Isaac & Family in Egypt 1876 to 1446 B.C.

Date of Creation guestimations: From Adam to Abraham there are 20 generations or according the ages portrayed about 2010 years. From time of Abraham until now there is approximately 4,000 years.

Notes on the usage of יָמַי ("yam") in Scripture:

- Day verses night
- Day as a division of time - "work day" "seven days"
- Day as defined by evening and morning
- Day as a particular day - Day of Judgment, Sabbath Day, Day of Yahweh (His coming)
- Days of life - chronological age
- Day as a period of time - harvest day (Proverbs 25:12); Days of going from the land (Isaiah 58:5)

The debate about "days" verses "ages" of creation is inconclusive. There are a tremendous number of equally valid theories which purport one view over the other. Crucial is to make sure that we do not try to cram Scripture into our recent scientific understanding and theories but allow Scripture to speak for itself and consider where our understanding may need to be modified. Also crucial is to understand the point of the Genesis creation account which is that God, who is preexistent has created everything that exists according to His choosing. Scripture never seeks to defend the existence of God. Genesis begins with the assumption of God's existence.

God being the creator touches on at least three attributes of God. Two of these are incommunicable attributes, meaning that they surpass human comprehension in that there is no correlation to the experience of mankind by which these attributes may be explained.

Eternity: God is free from the succession of time. (Psalm 90:1-6; 102:27; 2 Peter 3:8) God transcends the temporal limitations of duration and succession and possesses His existence in one indivisible present. Only God possesses this attribute which makes things like God's acts of creation, preservation, providence, incarnation, atonement, and in fact all His dealings within the created time-space universe all that much more special and wonderful. God, who is self-sufficient, chooses to deal with us. Specifically the Eternity of God gives us confidence because: 1) God sees and knows all things independent of the succession of time. Which is in direct contrast to our perception of succession within the time-space universe. For God all things occur in a single unitary now. Nothing can occur in our lives which will come as a surprise to God. And, 2) God uses time. He has mastery over sequential time. He created time for His own purposes. We are slaves being bound to time. Terms like "eternal life" and "eternal death" are qualitative not quantitative. In other words the issue is how we will spend eternity not how long eternity will be. Which is a joyful hope for the believer, Because God is eternal the promise of remaining in God's presence eternally is irrevocable.

Self-existence: God's existence is not dependent upon anything outside of Himself. (Exodus 3:14,15; 6:3; Isaiah 41:4; John 5:26; 8:58; Revelation 1:8) Thomas Aquinas said, "*He is the first cause; Himself uncaused.*" We struggle with this because for us everything has a point of origin. But, by saying that God is "uncaused" we are not talking about origins. God's self-existence is His nature and not an act of His will. Otherwise He would have power to will His annihilation. Everything is dependent on God. He caused it's existence. God, speaking of His self-existence, reveals Himself to Moses as "I am" (Exodus 3:14,15). An identity by which Jesus later identified Himself (John 8:58). It is important for us to consider this relationship as God the self-existent One, in Jesus, becomes personally knowable. Jesus said, "*I am with you always*" (Matthew 28:20). Because God is self-existent we know that He will always be with us. God will remain eternally the same with His people. (John 5:26) God is an independent thinker. His thoughts (Romans 11:33,34), counsel and wisdom (Psalm 33:11), will (Daniel 4:35; Romans 9:19), and power (Psalm 115:3) are independent of all things and exist because of Him. God is the ultimate source of wisdom, strength, and truth. There is no source which is greater.

The third attribute is a communicable attribute of God in that it is comprehensible by mankind because there is within it a correlation to the experience of mankind.

Sovereignty: God upholds all things by His power and determines their just end. He is in complete control. (Genesis 14:19; Deuteronomy 10:14,17; Acts 17:24-26; Ephesians 1:11) With regard to His acts of creation and redemption no one is forcing God to do these. The initiation and completion of these acts are completely God's choice alone. God is not obligated to do anything. God's sovereignty takes us completely out of the picture. We cannot earn God's favor. That we are unable to earn God's favor gives us confidence in Him. God is not "wishy-washy" that He might be looking for a reason to "dump the whole thing" especially when we get too obnoxious with our sin. God is not going to throw up His hands and give up on us. He knew before He brought creation into being what He was getting Himself into.

### **THEME**

Type of Literature: Law, History.

Halley (page 43): Founding the Hebrew nation

Mitchell: God's Sovereignty - God is boss. There are at least 104 separate acts of God in Genesis which demonstrate His sovereign choosing and Divine choice.

Key word (Nelson's): Beginnings

Key Verses (Nelson's):

*"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."* 3:15

*"I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."* 12:3

Key chapter (Nelson's): 15 - Central to all of Scripture is the Abrahamic Covenant, which is given in 12:1-3 and ratified in 15:1-21. Israel receives three specific promises: 1) The promise of a great land - *"from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates..."* (15:18); 2) The promise of a great nation - *"so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted."* (13:16); and 3) The promise of a great blessing - *"I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing."* (12:2).

### The Three basic Promises & Covenants of the Old Testament

In founding of the Hebrew nation God's ultimate purpose was to bring a Savior into the world; His immediate purpose was to establish in the Hebrew nation an example of the worship of the one true God in the midst of a world of idolatry (Genesis 3:15; Deuteronomy 6:4).

#### 1. God's Promise To Abraham - Genesis 12:2,3

God founded the Hebrew nation for the specific purpose of making it a Messianic nation to the world; that is, a nation through which one day a great and wonderful blessing would come from God to all the nations.

#### 2. God's Covenant with the Hebrew Nation - Deuteronomy 11:26-28

If Israel would be true to Him they should prosper in the land of Canaan; if they forsook Him and served idols they should be removed out of the land. The Old Testament is an account of God's effort to establish in the world of idol-worshippers the thought that there is one true and living God by building a nation as a living example.

#### 3. God's Promise To David - 2 Samuel 7:16

That David's family should reign over God's people forever. God selected on family from whom would come the Messiah.

Genesis is a book of beginnings. This book records the beginning of Divine revelation; the beginning of doctrine (teaching); the beginning of the universe, man, sin, nations, music, literature, language, etc. In fact, all in the Bible of real importance finds its beginning in Genesis (except God, of course).

Genesis is also a book of incompleteness. While everything begins in Genesis, nothing really ends there. For example, we find how the earth began in Genesis; but in order to find how the earth ends, one must read the book of Revelation. Thus the book does not really complete the story of the earth or anything else for that matter.

Consequently the nature of the book of Genesis is to introduce these great matters of which the Bible concerns itself.

### Outline:

- I. Four Great Events chapters 1-11 (The first eleven chapters record four great events)  
Chapters 1 to 11 record two opposite progressions: *“God’s orderly creation to its climax in man as a responsible and blessed being; and the disintegrating work of sin, to its first great anticlimax in the corrupt world of the flood , and it second in the folly of Babel.”* (Tyndale)
  1. Creation 1,2  
of the physical universe including the earth, plants, animals, and man - God says, God moves, God does what He wants when He wants it
  2. Fall 3-5  
of man into sin and its consequences - God chose to give man a choice, God chose when to test man, God dictated the penalty, God executed the penalty
  3. Flood 6-9  
sent from God in judgment upon man because of his sin - God acting in judgment and retribution - and yet Noah finds grace in the Lord
  4. Tower 10,11  
of Babel built by man in defiance of God, and its implications for the human race - God confuses language, God forces man to populate the planet - we find here the beginnings of the nations
- II. Four Great Men chapters 12-50 (The final 39 chapters deal with four great men)  
Chapters 12 to 50 record the germinal account of Abraham and his seed. Movement from the Noaic Covenant (Genesis 9:8-17) which is general to all mankind to a narrowing to a specific family through which all the families of the earth will be blessed (Abrahamic Covenant 12:1-3 et.al.).
  1. Abraham 12-25:10  
through whom God chose to work - God chooses one person that God wishes to use
    - a. His call - chapter 12
    - b. Lot - chapters 13,14
    - c. God’s promise - chapters 15-17
    - d. Sodom - chapters 18,19
    - e. Heritage - chapters 20:1-25:10
  2. Isaac 25:11-27:46  
the son of Abraham through whom God would perpetuate His promises to Abraham - birth as a son is a miracle of God - God chooses Isaac over Ishmael
    - a. God’s promise - chapter 26
    - b. His birthright - chapter 27
  3. Jacob 27-36  
the son of Isaac who became the father of twelve sons, who in turn became the founders of the twelve tribes of Israel - God chose Jacob over Esau even before they were born “The older will serve the younger”
    - a. God’s promise - chapter 26
    - b. His birthright - chapter 27
  4. Joseph 37-50  
the favored son of Jacob whose life in many details seems to typify our Lord Jesus Christ - God works in Joseph’s life even with things going continually against him.
    - a. Prophet - chapter 37
    - b. Prisoner - chapters 39,40
    - c. Prime minister - chapter 40
    - d. Reconciliation - chapters 42-45
    - e. Reunion - chapters 46-50

NOTE: Master the eight key words and names above, and you will have the book of Genesis at your fingertips. Notice also how the outline above demonstrates the sovereignty of God in the beginnings of history. God is sovereign and man is a responsible creation of God.

### RECIPIENTS

God's people - specifically the Hebrews...and us.

### CONTRIBUTION TO CANON

The whole system of the Christian religion depends upon the accuracy of certain statements in Genesis. The credibility of the entire Bible depends largely on that of its first chapters. Genesis is the foundation for all that follows. What happened to the first Adam explains what happened to the second Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45-47). The first promise of the Redeemer is given here and He is shown as coming from Israel and the tribe of Judah.

By introducing the Bible's great themes, Genesis functions somewhat like Union Station in Los Angeles. All the rail lines begin there and then branch out northward, eastward, and southward all across the United States. However, eventually they all come together again in Grand Central Station in New York City. Think of Los Angeles as Genesis, New York City as the book of Revelation, and all the other books of the Bible as the territory in between. These great concepts (earth, man, sin, salvation, etc.) begin in Genesis, wind their way through the rest of the Bible, and find their consummation in the book of Revelation.

Genesis is one of the five key books of the Bible. All Scripture is inspired and profitable, but some parts of the Bible are of greater significance than others. Certain books are generally considered of primary significance, and Genesis would inevitably be in this category. The other five:

1. Genesis - is important because it tells how everything begins. Like the first chapter of a mystery novel it develops the plot of the story.
2. Daniel - is important because it is indispensable for a correct understanding of the book of Revelation. Much of the imagery and framework of Revelation is taken from Daniel. The book of Revelation expands what Daniel initially presents, especially with reference to the future seven year tribulation. This Daniel is a primary book.
3. Matthew - is important because it forms a bridge between the Old and New Testaments. It helps the child of God make a proper transition from the Old to the New, and understand the relationship between the two.
4. Romans - is the most important book in all the Bible (opinion). It sets forth in systematic fashion the main message of the Bible: The story of redemption.
5. Revelation - is important because it tells how everything ends. Like the final chapter of a novel it solves the mystery. Often people, when in a hurry, will read the first chapter of a detective story and immediately turn to the last chapter to find who committed the crime. Thus both the first and last chapters are significant. So it is with Genesis and Revelation.

Genesis forms the foundation of all major Biblical truths. Much of the rest of the Bible would really be of little value if it were not for the information contained in Genesis. By way of example, the message of redemption in the book of Romans has no significance apart from the account of the fall of man recorded in Genesis.

What could Genesis contribute to our lives?



**RESOURCES**

Gromacki, Robert C. *New Testament Survey*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1978

Halley, Henry H. *Halley's Bible Handbook*, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Zondervan Publishing House

Horton, David, General Editor. *The Portable Seminary*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Bethany House Publishers, 2006

*Nelson's Quick Reference - Bible Maps And Charts*, Nashville, Tennessee; Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1994

As general resources I've relied on my class notes from various professors at Biola University (especially those of Dr. Curtis Mitchell), Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, and Talbot Seminary as well as notes shared with me by Annie Kartoizian.

Additional reference material has come from the study Bibles of the English Standard Version, New American Standard Version, and The New Living Translation.

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