

# Genesis

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## Who Wrote Genesis and When?

There is abundant evidence that Moses wrote Genesis as well as the next four books of the Bible. Although the book never names its Author, Genesis is considered part of a larger collection called the Pentateuch or sometimes called “Torah” (Law). Evidence from the rest of the Pentateuch indicate Moses as its author (Ex. 17:14; 24:4; 34:27; Num 33:1-2; Deut 31:9). The authenticity of Moses’ authorship is further supported by his personal disciple... Joshua (Josh 1:8; 8:31). Other Old Testament books also confirm Moses’ authorship (1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 14:6; 21:8; 2 Chronicles 23:18;25:4; 35:12; Neh 8:14; 13:1; Dan 9:11-13). Within the New Testament it becomes evident that the Jewish leadership of that day considered the Pentateuch as written by Moses (Matt 19:7; Mark 10:4; 12:19; Luke 20:28). Two thousand years ago Jesus attributed the Pentateuch to Moses (Luke 24:44; John 1:45). Paul also indicated that Moses personally wrote the Law (1 Cor. 9:9).

Other internal evidence also indicates that the Egyptian raised Moses wrote Genesis.<sup>1</sup> The writer’s knowledge of the Egyptian title given to Joseph (41:45), other Egyptian expressions (41:40,43) as well as the Torah’s greater usage of Egyptian words when compared to the rest of the Old Testament support Moses as the author.

Moses is also supported as the writer of the Pentateuch when we consider the writings of Justin Martyr, an early theologian who sought to justify Christianity before Roman leaders. Justin demonstrated that even the Grecian writers before him recognized Moses as a writer and ancient leader of Israel.

“For in the times of Ogyges and Inachus, whom some of your poets suppose to have been earth-born,<sup>29</sup> Moses is mentioned as the leader and ruler of the Jewish nation. For in this way he is mentioned both by Polemon in the first book of his *Hellenics*, and by Apion son of Posidonius in his book against the Jews, and in the fourth book of his history, where he says that during the reign of Inachus over Argos the Jews revolted from Amasis king of the Egyptians, and that Moses led them. And Ptolemaeus the Mendesian, in relating the history of Egypt, concurs in all this. And those who write the Athenian history, Hellenicus and Philochorus (the author of *The Attic History*), Castor and Thallus and Alexander Polyhistor, and also the very well informed writers on Jewish affairs, Philo and Josephus, have mentioned Moses as a very ancient and time-honoured prince of the Jews.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Archer provides a listing which I have summarized. Gleason L. Jr. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*(Chicago: Moody Press, 1994)..., pg 120-125.

<sup>29</sup> [Autochthones]. That is, sprung from the soil; and hence the oldest inhabitants, the aborigines.

<sup>2</sup>Roberts, Alexander ; Donaldson, James ; Coxe, A. Cleveland: *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol.1 : Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*. Oak Harbor : Logos Research Systems, 1997, S. 277

While he could have used other material in the authorship of Genesis (Luke 1:1-4), Paul indicated that Moses penned Genesis under the direction of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim 3:16).

Given Mosaic authorship, Genesis was written during Moses' forty year leadership of the Jewish nation as they left Egypt and prepared to enter Canaan. It is accepted that Solomon began his reign in 970BC.<sup>3</sup> Since the temple started in 966BC (four years following Solomon's inauguration) and the temple started 480 years after the Exodus we simply add 480 years to 966 BC arriving to 1446BC. Judges 11:26 also provides supporting evidence for a 1446BC exodus.<sup>4</sup> The Pentateuch was written during the last third of Moses' life as he led Israel out of Egypt and to the boundary of Canaan.

### **“JEDP” Theory**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Mosaic authorship came under attack through the writings of Julius Wellhausen.<sup>5</sup> Wellhausen proposed that the books of Moses were not written by this leader but were compiled statements by later editors. According to Wellhausen the writer's use of different names with reference to God (Yahweh, Elohim), the redundancy of stories (creation account for example Gen. 1,2), as well as the seemingly odd placement of Genesis 38 (story of Judah and Tamar) within the story line serve as evidence of a later editor. According to his theory some of the verses within the Pentateuch can be divided into four separate categories: J (Jehovah), E (Elohim), D (Deuteronomic), P (Priestly).<sup>6</sup> According to Wellhausen the Bible passages within

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<sup>3</sup> Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 28. Rodger C. Young, "Three Verifications of Thiele's Date for the Beginning of the Divided Kingdom," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 45, no. 2 (2007).

<sup>4</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests a History of Old Testament Israel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996)..., pg. 146-151.

<sup>5</sup> Although Wellhausen had several predecessors (Jean Astruc, Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, William DeWette) it is Wellhausen who formalized the theory. Gleason provides a historical summary. "1. Astruc said that different divine names point to different sources—J and E division; this idea was extended more thoroughly by Eichhorn (E earlier than J). 2. De Wette defined D as a manufacture of Josiah's time (621 B.C.). 3. Hupfeld divided up E into the earlier E<sup>1</sup> (or P) and the later E<sup>2</sup> (which more closely resembles J). His order of documents was PEJD. 4. Graf thought that the legal portions of P were Exilic, latest of all, even though historical portions may be early. His order of documents was: P<sup>1</sup>EJD<sup>2</sup>. 5. Kuenen felt that historical portions of P must be as late as the legal. He gave as the order of documents: PEJD. 6. Wellhausen gave the Documentary Theory its classic expression, working out the JEDP sequence upon a systematic evolutionary pattern. Observe the contradictions and reversals which characterize the development of this Documentary Theory. (1) Different divine name points to different author (Astruc, Eichhorn), each with his own circle of interest, style, and vocabulary. (2) Same divine name (Elohim), nevertheless employed by different authors (Hupfeld); whereas some E passages really do not greatly differ from J in circle of interest, style, or vocabulary. (3) That Elohist (P) which most differs from J in interest and style, must be the earliest (Jahweh being a later name for God than Elohim). (4) No, on the contrary, this P must be latest instead of earliest (for this fits in better with Evolutionary Theory about the development of Hebrew religion from the primitive polytheistic to the priest-ridden monotheistic.) (5) J of course is later than E (all the critics up to Graf); but no, J is really earlier than E (Kuenen and Wellhausen). Ibid., 98.

<sup>6</sup> Under this theory it is promoted that portions of the Pentateuch labeled J were written around 850BC. "J" supposedly written by an ethical Judean scribe refers not only to prophet like passages but also of those which speak of men with vividness and of God in anthropomorphic terms. According to this theory "E" written by a Northern Scribe around 750 BC with less concern for theological matters and supposedly providing more objective material by recording dreams and visions. "D" reflects material completed by Hilkiah around 621 as part of Josiah's reform. This view holds that the priest and King united to "find" Deuteronomy providing a psychological platform to unite

Moses' writings represent four distinct characteristics demonstrating different belief structures concerning God which were collected and placed together at varied times throughout the Israelite history. Not willing to accept the idea that early Israel was monotheistic while other nations were polytheistic, Wellhausen's proposed theory applies to scripture what Darwin applied to humanity ... evolution.

The following lengthy quote from Archer provides a summary of the JEDP development with noted questions concerning the theory's validity.

“1. Astruc said that different divine names point to different sources—J and E division; this idea was extended more thoroughly by Eichhorn (E earlier than J). 2. De Wette defined D as a manufacture of Josiah's time (621 B.C.). 3. Hupfeld divided up E into the earlier E<sup>1</sup> (or P) and the later E<sup>2</sup> (which more closely resembles J). His order of documents was PEJD. 4. Graf thought that the legal portions of P were Exilic, latest of all, even though historical portions may be early. His order of documents was: P<sup>1</sup>EJD<sup>2</sup>. 5. Kuenen felt that historical portions of P must be as late as the legal. He gave as the order of documents: PEJD. 6. Wellhausen gave the Documentary Theory its classic expression, working out the JEDP sequence upon a systematic evolutionary pattern. Observe the contradictions and reversals which characterize the development of this Documentary Theory. (1) Different divine name points to different author (Astruc, Eichhorn), each with his own circle of interest, style, and vocabulary. (2) Same divine name (Elohim), nevertheless employed by different authors (Hupfeld); whereas some E passages really do not greatly differ from J in circle of interest, style, or vocabulary. (3) That Elohist (P) which most differs from J in interest and style, must be the earliest (Jahweh being a later name for God than Elohim). (4) No, on the contrary, this P must be latest instead of earliest (for this fits in better with Evolutionary Theory about the development of Hebrew religion from the primitive polytheistic to the priest-ridden monotheistic.) (5) J of course is later than E (all the critics up to Graf); but no, J is really earlier than E (Kuenen and Wellhausen).”<sup>7</sup>

While giving credit to others,<sup>8</sup> Gleason notes nine different reasons for rejecting the Documentary Thesis.<sup>9</sup> 1) He recognizes circular reasoning among the Documentary Theorists as they start with an 18<sup>th</sup> century anti-supernatural presupposition and then proceeds to argue that the Pentateuch must be explained by some anti-supernatural means without addressing other options (possibly divine). 2) Although the theory is based on the text itself, the theory evades texts that are contrary to their theory. 3) Although the Hebrews were a “Word” based community this theory assumes a lower standard of writing among the Jews than their

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the kingdom politically providing continual monetary gain through phrases such as “city which Jehovah shall choose.” “P” is claimed to be concerned with the establishment and organization of Jewish theocracy.

<sup>7</sup> {Archer, 1994 #127}, 98.

<sup>8</sup> “The most thorough going refutation of the Wellhausen hypothesis to appear at the end of the nineteenth century in America was furnished by William Henry Green of Princeton, in his *Unity of the Book of Genesis* (New York: Scribner, 1895) and *Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch* (New York: Scribner, 1896). With great erudition and skill he showed how inadequately the hypothesis explained the actual data of the biblical text, and upon what illogical and self-contradictory bases the critical criteria rested.” Archer., pg. 96.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pg. 112-116.

contemporaries. 4) Hebrew documents are not treated with the same archeological credibility as other ancient documents. 5) Assumes a purely human origin of the Hebrew faith demanding that no religion has started out monotheistic. The same people fail to note that no religion has started polytheistic and then moved to monotheism. 6) Whenever by ingenious manipulation of the text a “discrepancy” can be made out by interpreting a passage out of context, no reconciling explanation is to be accepted, but the supposed discrepancy must be exploited to “prove” diversity of sources. 7) Although other ancient Semitic literatures show multiplied instances of repetition and duplication by the same author in their narrative technique, Hebrew literature alone cannot show any such repetitions or duplications without supposedly being attributed to a secondary author. 8) Assume that modern science has the skill to accurately substitute rare words with more commonly used words within the ancient text whenever they don’t understand a given context. 9) These theorists feel more competent to reconstruct ancient Bible history than to accept the preserved record found in the Scriptures. The problem lies in the fact that modern liberal scholarship maintains an anti-supernatural presupposition (even within our postmodern society) without proposing a credible explanation for the Pentateuch in light of the evidence.

### **To Whom was Genesis Written?**

Moses wrote Genesis to the first two generations of newly freed Jewish Nation.

### **Why was Genesis Written?**

While Genesis serves as a historical book explaining both human and national history, the book also serves as an encouragement demonstrating to Israel God’s covenant faithfulness to His people.

### **What the Book’s Message?**

The Creator God has established His redemptive Covenant with Abraham and his descendents.

### **What is Genesis’ Theme**

Beginnings

## **Overview of the Book of Genesis**

After leading the Jewish nation from bondage by the miraculous working of God, Moses wrote that the God of their Father Abraham was the Creator of the Universe (Gen 1-2). Moses reminded the Jewish nation that although God had created the earth for blessing, Adam sinned and incurred the judgment of God (Gen 3). Moses further noted that the rebellion continued through the period of Abel, Noah and throughout the nations (Gen 4-11). After discussion the sinful state of humanity, Moses gave details concerning the Hebrew Patriarchal family. Beginning with father Abraham, Moses records God’s covenant with Abraham as well his continued commitment to the Hebrew patriarch (12-25). Throughout the rest of the book Moses records God’s faithfulness to the covenant descendents of Abraham working through Isaac (26-27), Jacob (38-36) and Joseph (37-50).

## Outline of Genesis

Genesis has traditionally been outlined by following a two part major division. This understanding is that chapters 1-11 focus on humanity's foundations while the later chapters 12-50 focus on the covenant history of Israel specifically. However, studies have revealed another way of outlining Genesis. Throughout the book the word תולדות (pronounced "tolodot" meaning what happened to) occurs. The word indicates that information is given in the particular section addressing a particular person. While תולדות may also refer to prior statements,<sup>10</sup> this linguistic tool provides a substantial indicator that the book should be understood with this kind of division. Allen Ross has provided a significant defense for the תולדות divisions.<sup>11</sup> Since both the "Tolodot" outline and the more traditional outline have their benefits each will be provided.

### "Tolodot" Outline

- I. God's Creation and Man's Fall (1-11:26)
  - A. The Creation 1:1-2:3
  - B. What Became of Creation 2:4-4
  - C. What Became of Adam 5:1-6:8
  - D. What Became of Noah 6:9-9:29
  - E. What Became of Noah's Sons 10:1-11:9
  - F. What Became of Shem 11:10-26
- II. God's Redemptive Blessings Through Abraham's Seed (11:27-50:26)
  - A. What Became of Terah 11:27-25:11
  - B. What Became of Ishmael 25:12-18
  - C. What Became of Isaac 25:19-35:29
  - D. What Became of Esau 36:1-43
  - E. What Became of Jacob 37:1-50:26

### Traditional Outline

- I. God's Creation and Man's Fall (1-11)
  - A. God's Creative Works (1:1-2:25)
  - B. Man's Rebellion (3:1-5:8)
  - C. Establishment of New World (9:1-11:32)
- II. God's Redemptive Blessings Through Abraham's Seed (12-50)
  - A. Abraham (12:1-25:34)
    - 1. Abraham's Call and Early Years (12:15-21)
    - 2. Abraham's Middle Years in the Land (16:1-20:18)
    - 3. Abraham's Latter Days in the Land (21:8-25:34)
  - B. Isaac (26:1-27:45)
  - C. Jacob (27:46-36:43)
    - 1. Jacob's Life in Haran (27:46-31:55)
    - 2. Jacob's Life in Canaan (32:1-36:43)
  - D. Joseph (37:1-50:26)
    - 1. Joseph Abandoned in Egypt by Brothers (37:1-45:3)
    - 2. Joseph United with Family in Egypt (45:16-50:26)

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<sup>10</sup> {Dyer, 2001 #364}, 1.

<sup>11</sup> Allen Ross, *Creation and Blessing*(Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998), 69-88.

## Questions for Genesis

1. Has the “tolodot” divisions of Genesis developed in research?
2. What evidence exists that “tolodot” may refer to earlier documents?
3. In what ways has research added to our understanding of Genesis’ unity through Genesis 37?
4. Has our understanding of the waw grammar rules in Genesis 1:1, 2 changed as related to the Gap theory?
5. What is the credibility of the research as related to Noah’s ark and its present existence?
6. What changes have occurred in the debate of the conditionality of the Abrahamic Covenant since Allis and Pentecost?
7. A key issue within the complementation/egalitarian debate is Paul’s use of the creative account as related to Eve’s role. In what ways has the feminist debate handled the creative setting of women?
8. What are the latest advances or setbacks for those who advocate the JEDP theory?
9. What kind of claims have been made in identifying the “Sons of God” in Genesis 6 as it is related to 2 Peter 2:4,5?
10. The Jewish/Arab conflict has long been in action. Knowing that world peace is a goal among nations at this point, has there been any research in Genesis that would seek to “tone down” this conflict between Jacob and Esau?
11. What significance does the repeated mention of the long lives have to do with the overall structure of Genesis? Could the mention of this long life in 5 be used to stress the effects of sin mentioned just two chapters earlier? Could the second mention of years (11) during the post-flood years heighten the idea of the effects of sin leading up to God’s answer for man’s dilemma in (12).

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