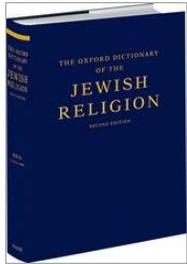


Oxford Reference



The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion (2 ed.)

Edited by Adele Berlin and Maxine Grossman

Publisher: Oxford University Press

Print Publication Date: 2011

Print ISBN-13: 9780199730049

Published online: 2011

Current Online Version: 2011

eISBN: 9780199759279

GENESIS, BOOK OF

(Heb. *Be-Re'shit* [In the Beginning]; from the opening word of the book), the first book of the Torah, whose English title was taken from the Greek *genesis* (coming into being). The book, which is divided into fifty chapters, consists of four cycles, the first of which covers primeval history (1.1–11.26) and describes the creation of the world and Israel's understanding of the origins of humanity (stories about Adam and Eve, Noah, and the Flood, etc.). The second cycle (11.27–22.24) presents the life story of Abraham and centers on his relationship with God, the establishment of the covenant, and Abraham's quest for an heir (realized by his son Isaac). The third major unit is the Jacob cycle (25.19–35.22), which details the trials and tribulations of the third of Israel's patriarchs. There is no special cycle devoted to Isaac, whose character is the least developed of the three patriarchs. The final unit is the Joseph story (37.1–50.26), which concentrates on Jacob's favorite son and the migration of the Israelites to Egypt. Small units of linking material (23.1–25.18, 35.23–36.43) provide minor details necessary to round out the stories of the patriarchs; they are placed between the Abraham and Jacob cycles and between the Jacob and Joseph cycles. The *Book of Genesis* lays the foundations for the historical accounts, teachings, and legislation of the subsequent books of the Bible. Major issues are the sovereignty and providence of the one God who created the world, who is the source of morality, and who guides Israel; the emergence of the peoples of the world; the special relationship of the patriarchs to God and the election of their seed to be God's people; and God's promise of the land of Canaan as Israel's ultimate home. The traditional Jewish view of the *Book of Genesis* is that it is of divine origin and was given by God to Moses at Sinai. Since the seventeenth century, critical scholars have rejected this view and have proposed various dates for the authorship and/or final redaction of *Genesis*. Several indications in the text point to a tenth-century BCE (Davidic–Solomonic) date. Such clues include the promise of kings descending from Abraham and Sarah (17.6, 17.16); Abraham's tithing to a priest of Salem (Jerusalem; 14.18–20); Abraham's sacrifice of a ram on "the mount of the Lord" (22.14), a phrase used elsewhere in the Bible only with reference to Jerusalem; Israel's rule over Edom (27.29); the latter's rebellion (27.40); the close relationship with Ammon and Moab (19.36–38); and the connection between Judah and royal rule (49.8–10). All of these reflect the historical, political, and theological developments of the united kingdom under David and Solomon. According to this view, the *Book of Genesis* presents the early history of Israel as filtered through the lens of an Israelite author (or authors) of the tenth century BCE.

Bibliography

Gary A. Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis* (Winona Lake, Ind., 1986).

Find this resource:

Nahum M. Sarna, Genesis, *The JPS Torah Commentary* Philadelphia, 1989).

Find this resource:

Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington, Ind., 1985).

Find this resource:

–GARY A. RENDSBURG

WAS THIS USEFUL? Yes No

PRINTED FROM OXFORD REFERENCE (www.oxfordreference.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2013. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single entry from a reference work in OR for personal use. Subscriber: Pennsylvania State Univ. Library - Penn State; date: 28 August 2015



Access is brought to you by