

**The Book of Genesis**

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**Time for 24**  
929 English  
Siegal Lifelong Learning  
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Kennicott Bible (La Coruña, 1476), fol. 9v

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**The Bible**

The Bible is the record of God's relationship with humanity, with special attention to one small subset of humanity, the people of Israel.

But the camera remains tenaciously on humanity, here on earth, for very rarely do we gain glimpses of heaven.

And when we do, the later rabbinic tradition deems those texts to be either allegorical (Job) or too dangerous for mere mortals to read (Ezekiel).

2

Four main divisions of the book of Genesis:

1. Primeval History (chs. 1–11)
2. Abraham Cycle (chs. 12–24)
3. Jacob Cycle (chs. 25–36)
4. Joseph Story (chs. 37–50)



Kennicott Bible (La Coruña, 1476), fol. 9v

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**When and Why Was Genesis Written?**

Genesis as a national narrative for a newly minted nation during the 10th century B.C.E., with its stories set in the past, though reflecting the present:

1. Virgil, *Aeneid* (written during the reign of Augustus Caesar)
2. [anonymous], *Beowulf* (written c. 750, England)
3. Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh* (written c. 1000, Persia)
4. Elias Lönnrot, *Kalevala* (19th century, Finnish national epic)

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**Key themes in Genesis**

1. God and humanity (chs. 1–2)
2. universalism (chs. 1–11) and particularism (chs. 12–50)
3. the younger son motif (Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Perez, Ephraim – and see also Abel)
4. the barren woman motif (Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel)
5. the lowly (Hagar, Tamar)



Kennicott Bible (La Coruña, 1476), fol. 14v

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**Two Creation Accounts: Genesis 1 and Genesis 2**

Genesis 1	Genesis 2
1. Elohim 'God'	1. YHWH Elohim 'Lord God'
2. Creation by fiat	2. Creation by physical action
3. Order of creation: veg / animals / humans	3. Order of creation: human / veg / animals
4. Male and female together	4. Male first, then female
Cosmocentric: 1:1 – 'heaven and earth'	Anthropocentric: 2:4 – 'earth and heaven'

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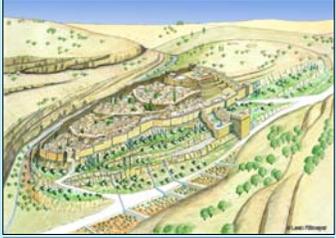


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### The newness of Israel during the 10th century B.C.E.

1. 12 formerly loosely confederated tribes now united within a single monarchy.
2. Jerusalem as the new capital city (no longer Shechem) and the new religious center (no longer Shiloh).
3. construction of the Temple to replace the centuries-old Tabernacle, with the former reflecting the shift to urbanism, and with the latter harking back to Israel's nomadic origins.

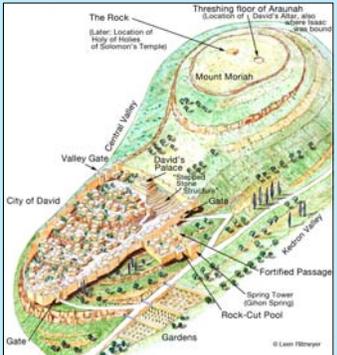


artist's rendering of 10th-century Jerusalem

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9

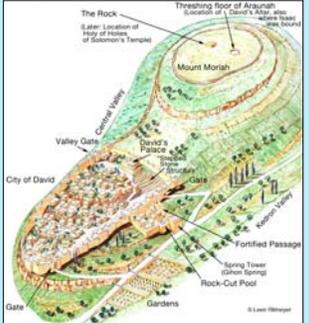
### Clues within the book of Genesis

1. all 12 tribes (regardless of their historical origins) descend from a single ancestor: Jacob / Israel.
2. 17:6 – “and kings shall come forth from you”
3. 17:16 – “kings of peoples shall issue from her”
4. 15:18 – “to your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates”
5. 49:10 – “the scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's-staff from between his legs; so that tribute shall come to him, and to him shall be the homage of peoples”
6. along with the general emphasis placed on Judah throughout the book of Genesis (see especially his impassioned speech in 44:18–34).

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### Clues within the book of Genesis

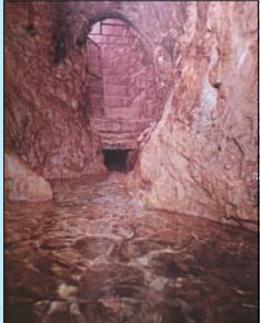
7. 14:18 – “and Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine; and he was a priest of God Most High”
8. 14:20 – “and he [sc. Abram] gave him a tenth of everything”
9. 22:14 – “the mount of the LORD” (elsewhere = Jerusalem)
10. 2:13 – “the name of the second river is Gihon” (= the main spring of Jerusalem, where Solomon was anointed king by Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet in 1 Kings 1:38–39)



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### Clues within the book of Genesis

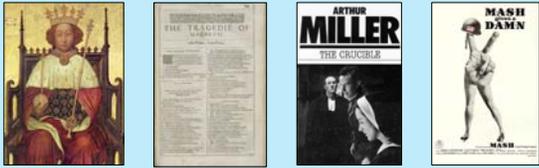
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**More popular examples of stories narrating the past though refracted through the present:**

1. Shakespeare's histories (Richard II, Richard III, etc.)
2. Shakespeare's Scottish play (Macbeth)
3. Arthur Miller, *The Crucible* (1953)
4. Robert Altman, "M\*A\*S\*H" (1970)



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Linguistic dating of the book of Genesis = 10th century B.C.E.

composed in standard Biblical Hebrew prose

*The Genesis of the Bible*  
GARY A. RENDSBURG  
Inaugural Lecture of the Blaich and Irving Louisa Chair in Jewish History  
October 29, 2014

[https://jewishstudies.rutgers.edu/component/docman/?task=doc\\_download&gid=117&Itemid=158](https://jewishstudies.rutgers.edu/component/docman/?task=doc_download&gid=117&Itemid=158)



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**The Book of Genesis**

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**Chiasmus in the Book of Genesis**



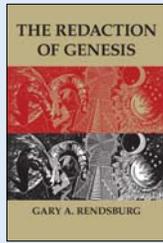


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**The Abraham Cycle (chs. 12–22) – Part One**

- A Genealogy of Terah (11:27–32)
- B Start of Abram's Spiritual Odyssey (12:1–9)
- C Sarai in foreign palace; ordeal ends in peace and success; Abram and Lot part (12:1–13:18)
- D Abram comes to the rescue of Sodom and Lot (14:1–24)
- E Covenant with Abram; Annunciation of Ishmael (15:1–16:16)

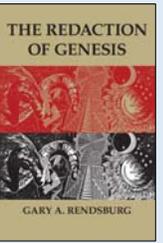


**Focal Point: 17:1–5: Abram > Abraham | Elohim introduced | covenant**

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**The Abraham Cycle (chs. 12–22) – Part Two**

- E' Covenant with Abraham; Annunciation of Isaac (17:1–18:15)
- D' Abraham comes to the rescue of Sodom and Lot (18:16–19:38)
- C' Sarah in foreign palace; ordeal ends in peace and success; Abraham and Ishmael part (20:1–21:34)
- B' Climax of Abraham's Spiritual Odyssey (22:1–19)
- A' Genealogy of Nahor (22:20–24)



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**Abraham Cycle: B and B'**

1. 12:1–9 God speaks to Abram for the first time  
22:1–19 God speaks to Abraham for the final time
2. 12:1 רָאָה לֵךְ *lek leka* 'go forth'  
22:2 רָאָה לֵךְ *lek leka* 'go forth'
3. 12:1 'to the land that I will show you'  
22:2 'to the land of Moriah . . . which I will point-out to you'
4. 12:1 'from **your** land, and from **your** birthplace, and from the house of **your** father'  
22:2 '**your** son, **your** favorite, whom **you** love, Isaac'



C.U.L. T-S A1.13 folio 1v, with Genesis 12:1-5

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**Abraham Cycle: B and B'**

5.	12:6	Abram's journey takes him to the terebinth of <b>Moreh</b>
	22:2	Abraham's journey takes him to the land of <b>Moriah</b>
6.	12:7	'And he built there an altar to YHWH'
	22:9	'And Abraham built there the altar'
7.	12:3	'And all the families of the earth shall be blessed'
	22:18	'And all the nations of the earth shall be blessed'
8.	12:6	'the place of Shechem' ( <i>maqom šekem</i> )
	22:6 / 22:3	'the place' ( <i>maqom</i> ) + 'and he arose' ( <i>wayyeškem</i> )



C.U.L. T-S A1.13 folio 1v,  
with Genesis 12:1-5

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**Abraham Cycle: B and B'**

9.	12:7	'and YHWH appeared to Abram' ... 'to YHWH who appeared to him'
	22:14	'YHWH of Appearance' ( <i>YHWH-yir'eh</i> ) ... 'on the mount of YHWH who appeared'
10.	22:9	Abram journeys to the Negev
	22:19	Abraham journeys to Beer-sheva
11.	12:1-9	story unfolds in two stages
	22:1-19	story unfolds in two stages (see v. 15 <i>šenit</i> )
12.	12:8	וַיֵּצֵא וַיֵּשֶׁב וַיֵּצֵא וַיֵּשֶׁב <i>wayya'teq</i> 'and he proceeded'
	22:9	וַיֵּצֵא וַיֵּשֶׁב וַיֵּצֵא וַיֵּשֶׁב <i>wayya'aqad</i> 'and he bound'

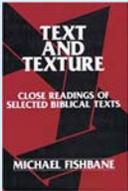


C.U.L. T-S A1.61 folio 1r,  
with Genesis 22:17-23:5

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**The Jacob Cycle (chs. 25–35) – Part One**

A	Oracle sought, struggle in childbirth, Jacob born (25:19–34)
B	Interlude: Rebekah in foreign palace, pact with foreigners (26:1–34)
C	Jacob fears Esau and flees (27:1–28:9)
D	Messengers (28:10–22)
E	Arrival at Haran (29:1–30)
F	Jacob's wives are fertile (29:31–30:24)

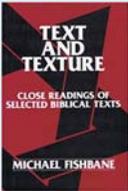


**Focal point: 30:22–25: Rachel gives birth, Jacob decides to return to Canaan**

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**The Jacob Cycle (chs. 25–35) – Part Two**

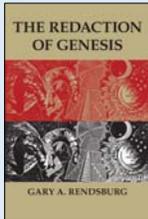
F'	Jacob's flocks are fertile (30:25–43)
E'	Flight from Haran (31:1–54)
D'	Messengers (32:1–32)
C'	Jacob returns and fears Esau (33:1–20)
B'	Interlude: Dinah in foreign palace, pact with foreigners (34:1–31)
A'	Oracle fulfilled, struggle in childbirth, Jacob becomes Israel (35:1–22)



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**The Joseph Story (chs. 37–50) – Part One**

A	Joseph and his brother, Jacob and Joseph part (37:1–36)
B	Interlude: Joseph not present (38:1–30)
C	Reversal: Joseph guilty, Potiphar's wife innocent (39:1–23)
D	Joseph hero of Egypt (40:1–41:57)
E	Two trips to Egypt (42:1–43:34)
F	Final test (44:1–34)

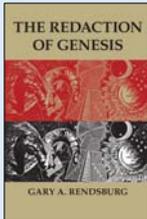


**Focal point: 45:1–4: Joseph reveals himself to his brothers**

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**The Joseph Story (chs. 37–50) – Part Two**

F'	Conclusion of test (45:1–28)
E'	Two tellings of migration to Egypt (46:1–47:12)
D'	Joseph hero of Egypt (47:13–27)
C'	Reversal: Ephraim first-born, Manasseh second-born (47:28–48:22)
B'	Interlude: Joseph nominally present (49:1–28)
A'	Joseph and his brothers, Jacob and Joseph part (49:29–50:26)



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**The Three Focal Points**

1. Abram > Abraham | Elohim introduced | covenant  
 > **covenant**
2. Rachel gives birth, Jacob decides to return to Canaan  
 > **land of Canaan**
3. Joseph reveals himself to his brothers  
 > **people of Israel**

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**The Three Focal Points**

**covenant / land of Canaan / people of Israel**

God and the people of Israel are forever inextricably linked via the covenant;  
 God is to be the God of the people of Israel, while Israel is to be people of God;  
 and this drama is to unfold in the land of Canaan, a gift from God to the people of Israel.

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Gen 17:7–8—“And I will establish my covenant between me and you, and between your seed after you for their generations, as an everlasting covenant, to be for you as God, and to your seed after you. And I will give to you, and to your seed after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

Ezek 37:25–26—“And they shall dwell in the land which I gave to my servant Jacob, and in which your ancestors dwelled; they and their children and their children’s children shall dwell there forever; and David my servant shall be their leader forever. And I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will set them and I will multiply them, and I will set my sanctuary in their midst forever.”

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BYU Studies Quarterly – 59:2 Supplement

Conference Proceedings

Introduction  
 Donald W. Perry and John W. Welch - pg.5

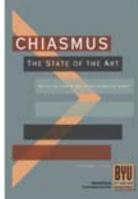
**Chiasmus in the Book of Genesis**  
 Gary A. Rendsburg - pg.17

Chiasmic Structuring of the Genesis Flood Story: The Art of Using Chiasm as an Effective Compositional Tool for Combining Earlier Chiasmic Narratives  
 Stewart R. Scott - pg.35

Exegesis or Eisegesis: Does Chiasmic Analysis Help Us to Understand Leviticus 20?  
 Jonathan Burdette - pg.67

At the Intersection of Scribal Training and Theological Profundity: Chiasm as an Editorial Technique in the Primeval History and Deuteronomy  
 Bernard M. Levinson - pg.85

<https://byustudies.byu.edu/journal/volume-59-2-supplement-chiasmus-2020/>



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