

# THE FIRST BOOK OF MOSES, CALLED GENESIS

## INTRODUCTION

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**AUTHOR**: Moses, the great lawgiver and deliverer of Israel. Moses was the great leader who led Israel from Egyptian bondage and through the wilderness wanderings.

Moses' authorship is questioned by some commentators. It is true that Genesis is silent: the book does not name an author. But the evidence is strong—very strong—that Moses is the author.

The great weight of evidence points to Moses being the author of Genesis. The evidence can be summarized in the following points.

1. Genesis is the first book of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible), and the Pentateuch is said to be written by Moses. In fact, the Pentateuch is sometimes simply called "Moses" ([John 5:46](#); [Luke 24:27](#), cp. [Luke 24:44](#)).
2. Each of the five books of the Pentateuch says that Moses is the author, except for Genesis ([Exodus 17:14](#); [Exodus 24:3-4](#); [Exodus 34:27](#); [Leviticus 1:1](#); [Leviticus 4:1](#); [Leviticus 6:1](#), [8](#), [19](#), [24](#); [Leviticus 7:22](#), [28](#); [Leviticus 8:1](#); [Numbers 33:2](#); [Deut. 1:1](#); [Deut. 17:18-19](#); [Deut. 27:1-8](#); [Deut. 28:58](#), [61](#); [Deut. 29:19-20](#), [27](#); [Deut. 30:10](#); [Deut. 31:9-11](#), [24-26](#)).
3. The Old Testament always refers without exception to Moses as the author of the Pentateuch ([Joshua 1:7-8](#); [Joshua 8:31-32](#); [1 Kings 2:3](#); [1 Kings 8:9](#), [53](#); [2 Kings 10:31](#); [2 Kings 14:6](#); [Ezra 6:18](#); [Neh. 13:1](#); [Daniel 9:11-13](#); [Malachi 4:4](#)).
4. The New Testament always refers to Moses as the author of the Pentateuch which includes Genesis ([Matthew 8:4](#); [Matthew 19:7-8](#); [Matthew 23:2](#); [Mark 1:44](#); [Mark 7:10](#); [Mark 10:3-4](#); [Mark 12:19](#), [26](#); [Luke 5:14](#); [Luke 16:29-31](#); [Luke 20:37](#); [Luke 24:27](#), [44](#); [John 1:17](#); [John 3:14](#); [John 5:45-46](#); [John 6:32](#); [John 7:19](#), [22-23](#); [Acts 3:22](#); [Acts 13:39](#); [Acts 15:1](#), [5](#), [21](#); [Acts 26:22](#); [Acts 28:23](#); [Romans 10:5](#), [19](#); [1 Cor. 9:9](#); [2 Cor. 3:15](#)). The weight of the Scriptural evidence is that Moses is the author of the whole Pentateuch including Genesis.

5. The Talmud, the earliest writings of the Jews, says that Moses was the author of Genesis.

6. Moses was an eyewitness, an actual participant in the events of Exodus through Deuteronomy. For example, note his observation of twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees ([Exodus 15:27](#)).

7. Moses was well acquainted with Egypt. The author of Genesis is familiar with Egyptian names, and Genesis actually has a larger number of Egyptian words than any other book in the Old Testament.

8. The ordinance of circumcision is said to be part of the law of Moses ([John 7:23](#)), and circumcision was instituted in [Genesis 17:12](#), as well as in [Exodus 12:48](#) and in [Leviticus 12:3](#).

9. Genesis and Exodus form a whole; that is, Exodus is just incomplete without Genesis. It is Genesis that explains such questions as...

- how Israel got into Egypt.
- how Israel was freed from Egyptian slavery and was formed as a nation.
- how Israel became so involved with the promises and covenant relationship with God.
- why the Exodus of Israel and the journey into the land of Canaan were so important.

There is also this fact: in the Hebrew the first word in the *Book of Exodus* is "and" ([Exodus 1:1](#)). It connects Exodus with some former writing. The weight of the evidence is that the same person wrote both Exodus and Genesis, and Moses is said to be the author of Exodus.

One final thing should be said about Moses writing Genesis. All the events in Genesis happened before Moses: they occurred about four hundred years before his time. How then does he know about such events as the creation and such persons as the Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph? The following possibilities seem reasonable since God is a God of revelation.

1. God revealed *to Adam* the creation account (see [Deeper Study #1—Genesis 1:1-2:3](#) [Introd.]; note, pt.4—[Genesis 3:21](#) for discussion).

2. Adam and his descendents—the godly line—were led to preserve God's dealings with them. Each person, especially one who was truly godly, was bound to pass on—both by spoken and written word—the most significant events of their lives, which would be their relationship to God and His promises. Norman Geisler, who has written an excellent survey of the Old Testament, says this:

*"We can conclude that Moses, using the family records which had been passed on to him, compiled the Book of Genesis.... Jewish history shows that family records were kept and passed on to later generations. Moses could have copied his material from such records just as Hezekiah's men copied from Solomon's writings to complete the Book of Proverbs (cf. [Proverbs 25:1](#))" (A Popular Survey of the Old Testament, p.38).*

3. Moses was well educated in "all the wisdom of the Egyptians" ([Acts 7:22](#)). He was well prepared by God to take both the written and oral testimony of his forefathers and write the beginning history of the world, especially under the inspiration of God's Spirit. (See note— 2 [Tim. 3:16](#).) Again, Norman Geisler has an excellent comment on this point:

*"Moses is the only person we know of from this early time period who had the ability to write this book. The rest of the Israelites were a nation of uneducated slaves, whereas Moses was a highly educated son of the king ([Acts 7:22](#)). Moses was the only one who had both the interest and information to write Genesis. Being Jewish Moses would have had access to the family records of his ancestors (cf. [Genesis 5:1](#); [Genesis 10:1](#); [Genesis 25:19](#); etc.) which were no doubt brought down to Egypt by Jacob ([Genesis 46](#)). Since Moses was bent on delivering his people from Egypt, it is natural to assume that he was familiar with the promises of God passed down by his forefathers that God would indeed deliver them (cf. [Genesis 46:3-4](#); [Exodus 2:24](#))" (A Popular Survey of the Old Testament, p.37).*

**DATE:** Probably some time between 1450-1406 B.C. Perhaps sometime before 1487 B.C.

1. Moses lived 120 years ([Deut. 34:7](#)).
2. Moses spent 40 years in Egypt ([Acts 7:22-23](#)).
3. Moses spent 40 years in Midian ([Exodus 2:15](#)).
4. Moses spent 40 years leading Israel through the wilderness experiences ([Deut. 8:2f](#)).

Now, we know with some accuracy when Moses lived:

**"And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD" ([1 Kings 6:1](#)).**

The fourth year of Solomon's reign was about 966 B.C.; therefore, Moses led Israel out of Egypt around 1446 B.C. (480 years before Solomon's 4th year as king (NIV Study Bible, p.2). Based upon this information, Moses' life would be dated as follows:

- ⇒ Moses in Egypt 1526-1486 B.C.
- ⇒ Moses in Midian 1486-1446 B.C.
- ⇒ Moses leading Israel through the wilderness 1446-1406 B.C.

Moses had access to the records and writings of Israel only when he was with them. He was not with them in Midian, so he wrote Genesis either when he was living as the adopted son of

Pharaoh in Egypt and was close by Israel and their writings, or else when he was with them in the wilderness.

Whatever the case, Moses wrote Genesis either during the years he was in Pharaoh's court or during the years of the wilderness wanderings, either...

- around or before 1487 B.C.
- or 1447-1407 B.C.

**TO WHOM WRITTEN:** Israel in particular and the human race in general.

God is a God of love and truth; consequently His love is bound to lead Him to reveal the truth to all people everywhere...

- the truth of their origin: where they have come from
- the truth of their purpose: why they are on the earth
- the truth of their end and destiny: where they are going

Genesis was written to both Israel and the human race, to reveal the truth of their origin, purpose, and destiny. God's very purpose in creating man is for all people to know these three great truths.

**PURPOSE:** Three purposes can be gleaned from Genesis, a historical, doctrinal, and Christological purpose.

1. The historical purpose: to encourage and strengthen Israel in its faith and trust in God. Remember, for about 430 years the children of Israel suffered the awful bondage of slavery in Egypt, and now during the time that Genesis was being written, they were suffering through the trials and temptations of the wilderness wanderings. The one thing the people needed above all else was to be encouraged and strengthened in their faith in God. Historically, Genesis was written to teach Israel five strong lessons.

- a. To teach Israel that there was only one living and true God, one God who had created and purposed all things ([Genesis 1-11](#)).
- b. To teach Israel its roots, that they had actually been chosen by God Himself through Abraham, appointed to be *the chosen line* of God's people.
- c. To teach Israel that *the promised seed*, the Savior, was to be sent into the world through them. They were *the chosen line* through whom God was going to save the world. Salvation—*the promised seed*—was to come through Israel.
- d. To teach Israel that they were to receive *the promised land*, the land of Canaan, and that God would be faithful to His Word and give them *the promised land*.
- e. To teach Israel that they must believe and follow God...
  - in conquering and overcoming the trials and enemies of life.
  - in seeking after *the promised land*.

2. The doctrinal or spiritual purpose: to teach all people everywhere...

- a. To teach that God is the Sovereign Creator: He is the Lord and Majesty of the universe, the Supreme Intelligence and Force of all creation, both visible and invisible ([Genesis 1-2](#)).

- b. To teach that God created man and woman: He created them to pour out His grace upon them and to secure their personal fellowship and service, both now and forever ([Genesis 1:26-2:25](#)).
  - c. To teach the origin of sin and death: why these two awful things exist and infect the lives of people so deeply ([Genesis 3](#)).
  - d. To teach God's mercy and grace: that God has mercy upon man and will pour out His grace upon him, if man will just repent and turn back to God ([Genesis 1-50](#). Cp. the lives of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.)
  - e. To teach the faithfulness of God and His Word: that what God says and promises will be fulfilled no matter what He has to do to overcome the terrible failings of men ([Genesis 9-50](#). Cp. the failings of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.)
  - f. To teach that all true believers—both ancient and present—are to receive *the promised land* (a symbol of heaven).
3. The Christological or Christ-centered purpose: to teach that *the promised seed* pointed to Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world, that Jesus Christ is *the promised seed* who came from the godly line of...
- the woman ([Genesis 3:15](#))
- Seth ([Genesis 4:25](#))
  - Shem ([Genesis 9:27](#); [Genesis 11:10-26](#))
  - Abraham ([Genesis 12:3](#); cp. [Romans 9:7-9](#))
  - Isaac ([Genesis 21:12](#))
  - Jacob ([Genesis 25:23](#); cp. [Romans 9:10-12](#))
  - Judah ([Genesis 49:10](#))

### **SPECIAL FEATURES:**

1. Genesis is "The Great Book of Prehistoric Times" or "The Great Book of Creation." In fact the title, "The Book of the Creation of the World" was an actual title given to Genesis during the early history of the Jews and Jewish tradition (Talmudic times). It is the only written record of prehistoric times that is both accurate and satisfying to the human mind and heart. Man's mind seeks accuracy, and his heart craves a satisfying understanding lying behind the accuracy of facts. In Genesis God gives a glimpse of prehistoric times and reveals what lies behind the beginning of creation and history.

2. Genesis is "The Great Book of Beginnings." The very first word of Genesis is *Bereshith* which means "in the beginning." The Jews have sometimes even referred to the book simply as *Bereshith*. The Greeks called the book Genesis (genesis), which is the title the English speaking world has adopted. Genesis means origin, source, generation, beginning. It is a record of several major beginnings.

- a. The beginning of the universe, both of heaven and earth ([Genesis 1:1-11:31](#)).
- b. The beginning of man and woman ([Genesis 1:26-31](#); [Genesis 2:4-25](#)).
- c. The beginning of God's covenant with man ([Genesis 2:15-17](#)).
- d. The beginning of sin ([Genesis 3:1-13](#); [Genesis 4:8-15](#)).
- e. The beginning of salvation, of man's deliverance from sin and death through God's promised *seed*, the Savior of the world ([Genesis 3:14-21](#)).
- f. The beginning of the family ([Genesis 4:1-15](#)).

- g. The beginning of civilization and society ([Genesis 4:16-9:29](#)).
- h. The beginning of the nations and races ([Genesis 10-11](#)).
- i. The beginning of Israel, God's chosen people ([Genesis 12-50](#)).
- j. The beginning of the hope for *the promised land* (Canaan, a symbol of heaven) ([Genesis 12-50](#)).

3. Genesis is "The Great Book of Generations." The word "generations" (toledot) means offspring, descendants, or history of a person. The word is used ten times by the author to divide the book under ten headings. The author begins each section with the words, "These are the generations." Genesis is often outlined by these sections. They are as follows:

- a. The generations of the heavens and earth ([Genesis 2:4-4:26](#)).
- b. The generations or history of Adam ([Genesis 5:1-6:8](#)).
- c. The generations or history of Noah ([Genesis 6:9-9:29](#)).
- d. The generations or history of the sons of Noah ([Genesis 10:1-11:9](#)).
- e. The generations or history of Shem ([Genesis 11:10-26](#)).
- f. The generations or history of Terah (Abraham) ([Genesis 11:27-25:11](#)).
- g. The generations or history of Ishmael ([Genesis 25:12-18](#)).
- h. The generations or history of Isaac ([Genesis 25:19-35:29](#)).
- i. The generations or history of Esau ([Genesis 36:1-43](#)).
- j. The generations or history of Jacob ([Genesis 37:1-50:26](#)).

Please note, The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible® does not strictly follow this division because it is sometimes difficult for the reader to connect what is being read with the given subject heading. For example, "the generations of Terah" covers fourteen chapters; yet the whole section has to do with Abraham, one of the sons of Terah.

4. Genesis is "The Great Book of Human Ancestry." (See Special Feature, point 3.)

5. Genesis is "The Great Book of Patriarchal History" or "The Great Book of the Patriarchs." The lives of the fathers of Israel, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are covered by Genesis.

6. Genesis is "The Great Book that Launches God's Grace Toward Man." Of course, creation and life itself with all their privileges are an act of grace, an act of God's favor toward man. *By grace* means much more than just creation and life, as wonderful as they are. Grace means that God favors man despite man's terrible sin and rebellion against God. God favors man by saving him from a destiny of corruption and death to a life of perfection that is to last forever. This glorious salvation was launched right after Adam's first sin and rebellion against God, launched when God began to seek and call out to Adam, "Where art thou?" ([Genesis 3:9](#)). God became the seeking Savior, ready to launch His glorious plan of salvation and redemption, all through His wonderful grace. But this was not all: the theme of grace continued as God sacrificed the life and blood of an animal in order to secure "coats of skin and clothe" Adam and Eve in their nakedness ([Genesis 3:21](#)). A life had to be sacrificed in order to clothe and save them. From then on, God is seen ever seeking and crying out to man "where art thou" in order to cover and forgive man's sin and failure. Even the chosen people of God, the patriarchal fathers themselves, demonstrated time after time an unbelievable tendency toward sin and rebellion that necessitated God's intervening grace.

7. Genesis is "The Great Book that Launches God's Plan of Salvation." (See Special Features, point 6.)

8. Genesis is "The Great Book that Begins the History of Redemption." (See Special Features, point 6.)

9. Genesis is "The Great Book that Begins the Trail of Blood and Sacrifice." (See [Special Features](#), point 6; and see note—[Genesis 3:21](#), esp. pt.4.)

10. Genesis is "The Great Book that Establishes God's Covenant Relationship with Man." Genesis shows God's very special relationship with man, how God established His first four covenants with man at four crucial times in man's history.

These covenants are:

- a. The Edenic covenant whereby God met man's most basic needs ([Genesis 2:15-17](#)).
- b. The Adamic covenant or the covenant with Adam whereby God promises redemption ([Genesis 3:15](#)).
- c. The Noahic covenant or the covenant with Noah whereby God preserves the human race ([Genesis 6:18](#); [Genesis 9:8-17](#)).
- d. The Abrahamic covenant or the covenant with Abraham whereby God begins a new race (the Jews) to be *the chosen line* of God's people ([Genesis 12:1-3](#)).

It is important to note that the covenants with Adam and Noah were universal covenants; that is, they cover the relationship that exists between God and the whole human race. But the covenant with Abraham is a limited covenant; that is, it covers only the relationship that exists between God and His chosen people, the believers of the earth who diligently follow God ([Genesis 11:6](#)).

11. Genesis is "The Great Book that Begins Man's Pilgrimage of Faith."

- ⇒ Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah—*the godly line* of God's people—believed God: they demonstrated great faith in God (see note—[Genesis 3:15](#); note—[Genesis 3:21](#); note—[Genesis 4:3-4](#); note—[Genesis 5:21-24](#); and note—[Genesis 6:9-10](#)).
- ⇒ Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were men of great faith. Scripture declares:

**"These all died *in faith*, not having received the promises but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country...a better country, that is, an heavenly" ([Hebrews 11:13-16](#)).**

Man's life—his pilgrimage from birth right on through death and to whatever lies beyond—is either a pilgrimage into the unknown or a *pilgrimage of faith* in God's promises. Genesis is the story of men who walked the *pilgrimage of faith*.

12. Genesis is "The Great Book that Reveals and Deals with the Major Promises of God."

- ⇒ There is God's promise to send *the promised seed*, the Savior of the world, to crush the power of that "old serpent, called the devil" ([Genesis 3:15](#); cp. [Rev. 12:9](#); [Rev. 20:2](#)).
- ⇒ There is God's promise to always see that a *godly line* of people exists so that He can fulfill his promises and purposes upon earth ([Genesis 3:15](#); [Genesis 12:1-3](#)).
- ⇒ There is God's promise to give *the promised land* of Canaan to Israel. But note: *the promised land* refers to both a physical inheritance and a spiritual inheritance. *The promised land* is a symbol of heaven which God has promised to all genuine believers who diligently seek after Him ([Genesis 12:1](#) cp. [Hebrews 11:8-10](#), [13-14](#), [16](#); see

note—[Genesis 11:29](#); note—[Genesis 12:1](#); note—[Romans 4:13](#); and note—[Gal. 3:16](#)).

13. Genesis is "The Great Book of the Promised Seed," the Savior of the world. The *promised seed* is one of the major themes that runs throughout the whole Bible (see note—[Genesis 3:15](#); note—[Gal. 3:6-7](#); and note—[Gal. 3:16](#)).

14. Genesis is "The Great Book of Theological Pictures." Biblical doctrines are not developed in Genesis, but practically every doctrine that is developed in the New Testament is pictured or illustrated in Genesis.

a. There are the names or doctrinal pictures of God as...

- The Almighty God (Elohim, [Genesis 1:1](#)).
- The God of redemption and revelation, the covenant God who establishes a personal relationship with man (Jehovah or Yahweh, [Genesis 2:4](#); [Genesis 2:7](#)).
- God Most High (El Elyon, [Genesis 14:18-20](#)).
- God Almighty (El Shaddai, [Genesis 17:1](#); cp. [Exodus 6:3](#)).
- The Everlasting God (El Olam, [Genesis 21:33](#)).
- God of Seeing (El Roi, [Genesis 16:13](#)).
- God, the God of Israel (El-elohe-Israel, [Genesis 33:20](#)).
- God of Bethel (El-Bethel, [Genesis 35:7](#)).
- God of Abraham ([Genesis 24:12](#); [Genesis 28:13](#); [Genesis 31:42](#); cp. [Exodus 3:6](#)).
- The Fear of Isaac ([Genesis 31:42](#), [53](#)).
- The Strong or Mighty One of Jacob ([Genesis 49:24](#); cp. [Isaiah 1:24](#); [Psalm 132:2](#)).
- The Lord God of Shem ([Genesis 9:26](#)).
- The Lord of all (Adonay, [Genesis 18:27](#); cp. [Exodus 23:17](#); [Isaiah 6:1](#); [Isaiah 10:16](#), [33](#)).

b. There are the doctrinal pictures of...

- justification ([Genesis 15:6](#) cp. [Romans 4:3](#), [20-23](#)).
- righteousness and the necessity of being clothed in righteousness by God ([Genesis 3:21](#)).
- creation ([Genesis 1-2](#)).
- redemption ([Genesis 3:21](#)).
- salvation through the *promised seed*, the Savior of the world ([Genesis 3:15](#); [Genesis 12:3](#)).
- heaven, the *promised land* ([Genesis 12:1](#)).
- believers, a godly line of people who follow God ([Genesis 4-50](#)).
- mercy ([Genesis 4:15](#); [Genesis 6:8](#); [Genesis 18:26](#); [Genesis 19:16](#)).
- election ([Genesis 25:21-23](#) cp. [Romans 9:9-13](#)).
- judgment ([Genesis 6:1-7](#); [Genesis 19:24](#) cp. [Genesis 18:16-33](#)).
- death and the hope of conquering death through the promises of God, the *promised seed* ([Genesis 3:15](#); [Genesis 5:24](#)), and the *promised land* ([Genesis 12:1-3](#); [Genesis 22:5](#); [Genesis 47:29](#); [Genesis 50:24](#) cp. [Hebrews 11:13-14](#), [16](#), [17-19](#), esp. [Hebrews 11:19](#)).
- prayer ([Genesis 18:23](#); [Genesis 25:21](#); [Genesis 32:24-32](#)).
- human law ([Genesis 9:4-6](#)).



On and on the list could go, but the above list illustrates how Genesis is "The Great Book of Theological or Doctrinal Pictures."

15. Genesis is "The Great Book of Israel's Beginnings." From [Genesis 12](#) onward—from the selection of Abraham through Joseph—the book is simply a history of Israel's beginnings, the beginning of the Jewish nation, the nation chosen by God to be His witness to the world.