

## CHAPTER TWO

# FOUNDATION BOOKS (1)

Genesis–Exodus

**T**he first five books of the Bible form a distinct division of the biblical library. Jews refer to these five books as the *Torah* or *law*. At every synagogue service prescribed selections of these five books are read.

For the Jews these five books are regarded as the holiest of the books of their Bible (our Old Testament). Among Christian scholars the first five books are generally called the *Pentateuch*, which means *five scrolls*. When the New Testament references these books, it uses such titles as *law of Moses* (Luke 24:44), *Moses* (Luke 24:27; John 5:46), *writings of Moses* (John 5:46–47), or *word of God* (Mark 7:13).

Modern critics regard the Pentateuch as the product of anonymous authors living centuries apart. They charge that these five books are full of contradictions and errors. The New Testament titles mentioned in the previous paragraph, however, affirm that these books were the product of Moses. The majority of Christians throughout the world continue to believe and maintain that the Pentateuch is not a late, anonymous, untrustworthy compilation. These are the five books of Moses, the great lawgiver and prophet of God.

Bookwise the Pentateuch begins with Genesis and ends with Deuteronomy. Eventwise these books cover biblical history from creation to the death of Moses. Since most biblical scholars do not attempt to date creation, it is impossible to determine how many

years are covered in these books. It can be determined from biblical data, however, that the death of Moses occurred about 1407 BC. Characterwise the Pentateuch begins with Adam and ends with Moses.

1<sup>st</sup> Bible Book  
 Book of Genesis  
 Patriarchs and Promises

Genesis is the seventh largest book in the Old Testament. It contains 50 chapters, 1,527 verses, and 32,267 words. In Jewish circles the first book of the Bible is sometimes called *Bereshith* (*b-ray'-sheath*), the first word in the Hebrew Bible. This word is translated *in the beginning*. The name *Genesis* comes from the ancient Greek and Latin Bibles. This is an appropriate name for the first book of the Bible. *Genesis* means *origin, birth, generation, beginning*.

### Situation

After the long Egyptian bondage, God's people needed to be reminded of their roots—their heritage—and the promises God had made to their fathers. Some think that Moses wrote Genesis while he was still in Egypt before he fled for his life to the land of Midian (Exodus 2:15). If this is the case, then Genesis was written about 1490 BC. It is more likely, however, that Moses wrote this book during the forty years that he led the Israelites through the wilderness. This means that the book was written about 1425 BC.

Genesis makes no specific claim of authorship. From the earliest times, however, this book has been considered part of a five-volume set called the *Pentateuch*. The other four books of this collection make numerous claims that God spoke to and through Moses.

### Plan

Genesis can be summed up in the words *patriarchs and promises*. The book focuses on the fathers of the Israelite nation and the

promises that God made to them. The material is well-organized from several points of view.

**Literary plan.** Genesis has been organized in two main divisions. Chapters 1–11 offer the only authoritative account of the beginnings of the created world. In these chapters Moses describes four pivotal events: creation, the Fall of man into sin, the Flood of Noah’s day, and the dispersion of mankind at the tower of Babel. In chapters 12–50 Moses relates the beginnings of the chosen people, the Israelites. In these chapters there are four pivotal characters—four generations of the same family: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

Moses has inserted into the Genesis storyline fragments of a long genealogy at eleven different places. These fragments serve as bridges from one part of the story to its sequel. In Hebrew the word *toledoth* (*toh-lay-dohth*’) is used to mark these genealogical fragments. *Toledoth* is translated *generations* in KJV, *account* in NIV. Clearly Moses intended the word *toledoth* to signal divisions of his work.

**Spiritual plan.** A spiritual structure to Genesis can also be discerned. Chapters 1–11 trace the *degeneration* of mankind in individuals (ch. 3), a family (ch. 4), society (ch. 6), and the nations (ch. 11). Chapters 12–50 trace God’s plan for *regeneration* (renewal; new birth) in individuals (12:1–35:21); a family (35:22–38:29); in society (39:1–50:21); and in a nation (50:22–26).

**Chronological plan.** Genesis reports three periods of Old Testament history, and the beginning of a fourth period. The period from creation to the Flood is called the Beginnings Period (Genesis 1–9). From the Flood to the Call of Abraham is called the Scattering Period (Genesis 10–11). The duration of these first two periods of biblical history cannot be determined. From the Call of Abraham to the *Eisodus*—the going down into Egypt—is called the Pilgrim Period (Genesis 12–45). From the *Eisodus* to the death of Joseph is the first seventy years of the Egyptian Period (Genesis 46–50).

**Geographical plan.** Genesis focuses on three key areas. The venue of the first eleven chapters is the Fertile Crescent, that arc-

shaped region stretching from the northern shore of the Persian Gulf to the borders of Egypt. Chapters 12–36 unfold for the most part in the land of Canaan. The land of Egypt is the venue for Genesis 37–50. Three key journeys are reported in Genesis: Abraham’s journey from Ur (southern Iraq) to Canaan (Genesis 12), the journeys of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob throughout the land of Canaan (Genesis 13–36), and the journey of the family of Jacob from Canaan to Egypt (Genesis 46).

### Eternal Purpose

If one thinks of the great themes of the Bible as streams, the headwaters of those streams arise in Genesis. This book begins with creation. It answers the age-old questions, “Where did we come from?” and “Why are we here?” Genesis takes us back beyond recorded history. It reveals the origin both of the universe and of the human race. Genesis teaches that to understand who we are and where we came from we must begin with God.

Genesis ends with a coffin (figuratively speaking) – the coffin of Joseph. The note of Joseph’s death ominously hints at the status of Israel at the beginning of the Book of Exodus, namely bondage. Moses wrote Genesis in order to remind the Israelites that God had promised to deliver them from bondage and give them the land of Canaan (Genesis 15:16; 46:4).

The larger purpose of the book is to set forth the promise that through a descendant of Abraham all nations of the earth one day will be blessed (Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 28:14).

Genesis stresses that through faith man relates to his Creator. Faith is a fundamental principle of life. Failure in faith is failure in life. Genesis illustrates that faith may differ in expression. In Abraham faith manifested itself in obedience. Faith manifested itself in Isaac’s patient interaction with adversaries. In Jacob faith manifested itself in a radical transformation of character.

### Anticipation

Genesis contains four great announcements that specifically point forward to the coming of Messiah. First, Messiah will come

from the seed of woman. He will crush the head of Satan (Genesis 3:15). Second, Messiah will come from the race of Shem, for God will dwell in the tents of Shem (Genesis 9:26). Unfortunately the true significance of this prediction has been blurred by the translation of the NIV. Third, Messiah will come from the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. All nations will be blessed through this Promised Seed (Genesis 12:3; 26:4; 28:14). Fourth, Messiah will come from the tribe of Judah. He will usher in a peaceful and prosperous age (Genesis 49:10).

Genesis is also full of typology. A type is a person, place, object, or event that God designed to be a preview of coming events in the Christian Age. Each type has a corresponding anti-type that is identified in the New Testament. This means that we are to look for correspondence between the type and the antitype. In Genesis there are four major types.

- ❖ **Adam (Romans 5:14):** a picture of Christ as head of a new creation.
- ❖ **Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:3):** a picture of Christ's priesthood.
- ❖ **Flood (1 Peter 3:21):** a picture of baptism.
- ❖ **Isaac (Hebrews 11:19):** a picture of Christ's resurrection.

## Keys

The key chapter in the Book of Genesis is chapter 15. In this chapter God ratifies the covenant that he made with Abraham when he brought him into the land of Canaan. That covenant involved three major promises: *progeny*, *position*, and *possession*.

Abraham was seventy-five and childless when God promised that he was to have a son. He waited in faith another twenty-five years before the child of promise was finally born.

God promised that the descendants of Abraham were to be blessed and were to be a blessing (Genesis 12:2). They were to have a special *position* in respect to God. The descendants of Abraham eventually became the nation Israel. God chose Israel to be a priestly nation to intercede for all other nations.

God also promised Abraham a *possession*—the land of Canaan (Genesis 12:7).

The key verses in Genesis are these: *The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. <sup>2</sup>I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing"* (Genesis 12:1-2). Abram (later called Abraham) was called by God to leave his homeland in Ur in southern Mesopotamia (modern Iraq). These verses mark the beginning of God's program of redemption through the descendants of Abraham.

In Genesis certain phrases appear frequently. The phrase *these are the generations of* appears eleven times in the book. The phrase *son of* is used in Genesis some twenty times.

The key words in the book are various forms of *bless*, which appear seventy-seven times. The word *die* or *died* appears in Genesis fifty-seven times.

## Special Features

Four facts related to Genesis are worthy of special mention:

- ❖ Genesis provides a historical perspective for the rest of the Bible by covering more time than all the other biblical books combined.
- ❖ The first three chapters of Genesis are essential to a proper understanding of the last three chapters of Revelation.
- ❖ At least five ancient documents have turned up that reference a great flood in the ancient world, thus substantiating the Genesis account.
- ❖ God seems to champion the underdog throughout Genesis. Firstborn sons were passed over in favor of younger sons; at least three ladies—Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel—were delivered from the ancient stigma of childlessness.

## HEAR

God speaks in Genesis! We must hear! Here are some outstanding chapters for getting started in reading Genesis.

- ❖ How did it all begin? (Genesis 1)
- ❖ How did we get into this mess? (Genesis 3)
- ❖ Flood, ark, and rainbow (Genesis 6-9)
- ❖ Why do we speak different languages? (Genesis 11)
- ❖ Why is Israel special to God? (Genesis 12)
- ❖ What does God think of immorality? (Genesis 19)
- ❖ How does God fulfill his promises? (Genesis 21)
- ❖ How does faith reveal itself? (Genesis 22)
- ❖ Choosing the right wife (Genesis 24)
- ❖ Faith is living without scheming (Genesis 27)
- ❖ Encouragement in time of uncertainty (Genesis 28)
- ❖ God blesses those who yield to him (Genesis 32)
- ❖ Blessing in spite of mistreatment (Genesis 37)
- ❖ Planning wisely for disaster (Genesis 41)

Here are a few of the favorite lines from Genesis:

- ❖ *"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man"* (Genesis 2:23).
- ❖ *"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman* (Genesis 3:4).
- ❖ *"Am I my brother's keeper?"* (Genesis 4:9).
- ❖ *Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD* (Genesis 6:8).
- ❖ *"I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth"* (Genesis 9:13).
- ❖ *Abram believed the LORD; and he credited it to him as righteousness* (Genesis 15:6).
- ❖ *Is anything too hard for the LORD?* (Genesis 18:14).
- ❖ *"God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering"* (Genesis 22:8).
- ❖ *"Give me children, or I'll die!"* (Genesis 30:1).

- ❖ “How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?” (Genesis 39:9).
- ❖ “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives” (Genesis 50:20).

2<sup>nd</sup> Bible Book  
 Book of Exodus  
 Plagues and Precepts

Exodus is the sixth largest book of the Old Testament. It contains forty chapters organized into 1,207 verses—a total of 32,692 words. Jewish tradition uses the first two Hebrew words of the book for a title: *Ve’elleh Shemoth* = *And these are the names*. The title *Exodus* (*the way out*) comes from the Greek and Latin Bibles.

The importance of Exodus in the sacred collection is indicated by the degree to which it is cited in subsequent biblical literature. Hebrew poets and prophets quote Exodus and make use of its lessons of deliverance, faith, and hope, in their songs and prophecies. Likewise, New Testament writers frequently allude to the contents of this book. Exodus has been a source of inspiration for both Jews and Christians throughout the ages.

### Situation

The contents of Exodus claim to have been given by God to Moses (Exodus 24:4). The book reflects a detailed, firsthand knowledge of events and places connected with Israel’s exodus from Egypt. Exodus was probably written about 1444 BC while the people of Israel were wandering in the vast wilderness east of Egypt.

Exodus begins with a brief recapitulation of Genesis 46. This shows that Moses intended Exodus to be a sequel to Genesis. About 1877 BC the family of Jacob descended into Egypt. Because of Joseph’s position in that land, the Israelites were treated cordially. Eventually a Pharaoh arose who did not know Joseph

(Exodus 1:8). The Israelites were gradually persecuted and then enslaved. Altogether the Israelites were in Egypt 430 years (Exodus 12:40). Toward the end of that period, God raised up a deliverer for his people. That deliverer's name was Moses.

The text does not identify the Pharaoh in Exodus. There is some dispute about Egyptian chronology. If the standard chronology is followed, the Pharaohs mentioned in Exodus belonged to the Eighteenth Dynasty. The Pharaoh who did not know Joseph (Exodus 1:8) may have been one of the Hyksos rulers who invaded Egypt about 1730 BC.

The Pharaoh who launched the intense persecution of the Israelites may have been Ahmoses I. The Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus probably was Amenhotep II.

<b>Moses and the Pharaohs of the Eighteenth Dynasty</b>				
Thutmose I	Thutmose II	Hatshepsut	Thutmose III	Amenhotep II
Moses born 1527 BC	Moses groomed for the throne of Egypt		Moses flees to Midian 1488 BC	Moses returns 1448 BC

Besides Moses, Aaron (Moses' brother and spokesman), and Pharaoh, there are five major characters in Exodus. *Miriam* was the sister of Moses, the leader of Israel's women. *Joshua* was Moses' assistant and commander of Israel's army. *Jethro* (Reuel) was priest of Midian and Moses' father-in-law. *Hobab* was Moses' brother-in-law who accompanied Israel from Sinai. *Zipporah* was Moses' "Cushite" wife.

## Plan

Exodus can be summed up in the words *plagues and precepts*. The book is organized into three clearly discernable divisions.

- ❖ **Call out of Egypt** (Exodus 1-19)
- ❖ **Covenant at Mount Sinai** (Exodus 20-24)
- ❖ **Construction of the Tabernacle** (Exodus 25-40)

In the first nineteen chapters Moses speaks about the persecution of Israel (chs. 1–6), the plagues against Egypt (chs. 7–12) and the path to Sinai (chs. 13–19). In these chapters God prepares a deliverer, overcomes the Egyptian antagonists, and finally effects the actual deliverance. Israel's exodus from Egypt was one of the most amazing events in world history. In emancipating his people from slavery the God of the Bible was demonstrating his superiority to the gods of the greatest nation on the face of the earth. God's awesome power met the needs of his desperate people.

The middle chapters of Exodus focus on Israel's consecration at Mount Sinai. This section contains commands, judgments, and ordinances that were designed to set Israel apart from the world of nations as a holy people. *Commands* have to do with moral life (chs. 19–20), *judgments* with social life (chs. 21–23) and *ordinances* with religious life (chs. 24–40). God organized his people into a nation with the Ten Commandments as their constitution. These chapters reveal the holiness of God and the obligations of the people who served him.

The last sixteen chapters of Exodus focus for the most part on the construction of a tent-shrine. God promised his people that this tent was to be the place where he dwelled in the midst of his people. The Tabernacle was first verbally designed in detail by God (chs. 25–31). The actual construction was delayed by the sin of the people at the foot of the mountain (chs. 32–34). Because of the intercession by Moses the Lord finally authorized the construction of the shrine in chapters 35–40. The structure of the Tabernacle underscored the holiness of God. At the same time, it portrayed his eagerness to fellowship with people.

As for chronology, Exodus briefly summarizes how Israel came into Egypt and became enslaved. The book then focuses on about two years. The plagues lasted about nine months. After leaving Egypt the Israelites spent over eleven months traveling to Mount Sinai and camping there (Exodus 40:2, 17). The two years upon which Exodus focuses are 1448–1447 BC.

Geographically, Exodus also displays a three-stage format: Israel in Egypt and Moses in Sinai (chs. 1–12); Israel en route to Mount Sinai (chs. 13–19); and Israel at Mount Sinai (chs. 20–40).

## Eternal Purpose

Obviously Exodus was written in order to continue the history of the Israelite people in the earliest days of their nationhood. The deeper purpose of the book is to reveal through law, ritual, and symbol the character of God.

There are four basic themes in Exodus. The first theme is *redemption*, portrayed in the Passover. The second theme is *deliverance*, portrayed in the exodus from Egypt. The third theme is *governance*, as set forth in the law revealed at Mount Sinai. The fourth theme is *worship*, as set forth in the Tabernacle chapters.

**Redemption.** As the Lord directed, each Israelite family smeared the blood of a lamb on the doorposts of their residence. As the death angel passed through the land of Egypt he passed over the houses where there was blood. The firstborn sons in those houses were spared. They were redeemed from death by the blood of the lamb. This redemption was celebrated in the Passover meal that was rich in symbolism. The Israelites ate unleavened bread and bitter herbs that night. They ate with their robes girded up about their waists and their staves in their hands (Exodus 12).

**Deliverance.** God blasted Egypt with ten plagues in order to bring about Israel's deliverance from bondage. The plagues gradually intensified. A pattern is discernible in the first nine plagues. In each set of three plagues the first two were announced by Moses in advance, the last one was unannounced. The first three plagues affected the entire land of Egypt. The next six were experienced only by the Egyptians. The final plague was a special case.

Plagues Against Egypt			
First Triad	Second Triad	Third Triad	Last Plague
1. Water to blood 2. Frogs 3. Lice (gnats)	4. Flies 5. Cattle disease 6. Boils	7. Hail 8. Locusts 9. Darkness	10. Death of the Firstborn
Whole Land Affected	Only Egypt Affected		Protected by Blood

**Governance.** At Mount Sinai God gave to Israel the law by which the nation was to be governed. God's law defined a just, moral way of life for Old Testament Israel. Its concern for the poor and oppressed, its concepts of a criminal justice system, its ecological concern for the land, and its emphasis on equality for all were centuries ahead of their time. The Ten Commandments are a summary of all that God expected of his people. The first four of these laws describe man's duty to God; the last six define man's relationship to his fellow man.

<b>Ten Commandments</b>	
<b>Duty to God</b>	<b>Duty to Man</b>
1. No other gods. 2. No graven images. 3. No profanity. 4. Remember the Sabbath.	5. Honor father and mother. 6. Do not murder. 7. Do not commit adultery. 8. Do not steal. 9. Do not lie. 10. Do not covet
<b>Summarized</b> <i>Love the LORD your God            with all your heart</i> (Matt 22:37)	<b>Summarized</b> <i>Love your neighbor            as yourself</i> (Matt 22:39)

**Worship.** Exodus is also concerned about worship. This book reports the origins of most of the religious ceremonies and customs of Israel, the construction of the Tabernacle, and the formation of the priesthood and sacrificial system. As such, Exodus is foundational for the following history of Israel. Under God's directions Moses introduced a unique design for worship. It underscored the holiness of God and the sinfulness of mankind. It provided access to God for penitent sinners. The worship system introduced in Exodus sets forth basic principles that are still applicable in the Christian Age.

### Anticipation

There are no direct predictions of the coming of Messiah in Exodus. There are, however, a number of types or previews of the Christian Age. Aaron the high priest is a type of Christ who is our

high priest (Hebrews 5:4-5). The lawgiver Moses is a type of Christ as our great prophet and teacher (John 1:17). Egypt, the land of Israel's bondage, is a type of the bondage of sin. The Red Sea is a type of baptism (1 Corinthians 10:2).

The Passover lamb of Exodus 12 is a type of Christ who died so that we might not experience God's wrath (1 Corinthians 5:7). The manna provided by God during the wilderness journey is a type of Christ or Christ's words (John 6:58). The rock from which water came forth is a type of the water of life that Christ provides to his followers (1 Corinthians 10:24).

The grand type of Exodus is the Tabernacle. The sacred shrine was designed to set forth the spiritual realities of the Christian Age. The outer court is the world. The holy place within the tent is a type of the church. The holy of holies where the ark was kept is a type of heaven (Hebrews 9:12). The typology of the Tabernacle furniture is set forth in the following chart.

<b>Typology of the Tabernacle Furniture</b>		
<b>Furniture</b>	<b>Symbolical Meaning to Israelites</b>	<b>Typical Meaning to Christians</b>
Bronze Altar	Atonement through Sacrifice	Christ our altar (Heb 13:10)
Bronze Laver	Cleansing from Defilement	Baptism (Titus 3:5)
Table of Showbread	Spiritual Sustenance	Christ the Bread of Life (John 6:35); the Lord's Supper
Lampstand	Illumination through Revelation	Christ is Light of the world (John 8:12); Christians reflect this light.
Incense Altar	Acceptable Supplication	Prayer in the name of Jesus (Rev 8:3-4)
Ark of the Covenant	Access through Covenant Relationship	Christ embodies a New Covenant (1 Cor 11:25)

## Keys

Without question the key chapters in the Book of Exodus are chapters 12–14. These chapters record Israel’s deliverance from Egyptian bondage.

The key verses in the book are probably these: *You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.* <sup>5</sup>*Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine,* <sup>6</sup>*you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation* (Exodus 19:4-6a). Other possibilities for key verses are 3:8 or 12:51.

The key phrase in Exodus is this: *as the LORD commanded Moses* (15 times). The key words in Exodus are *deliver* or *delivered*, which are used thirteen times.

## Special Features

Five facts related to Exodus are worthy of note:

- ❖ The ten plagues seem to have been aimed specifically at individual Egyptian gods.
- ❖ The *Red Sea* of Exodus is more properly translated *Sea of Reeds*. This does not mean, however, that the Israelites crossed some marsh. *Sea of Reeds* was the ancient name for the Red Sea. The Greek version and two New Testament passages verify that Israel actually crossed the Red Sea (Acts 7:36; Hebrews 11:29).
- ❖ There are two kinds of laws in Exodus. An *apodictic* law is worded like this: *Do not do such and such*. A casuistic law is worded: *If a man does X, then his punishment will be Y*.
- ❖ The modern state of Israel captured the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt in the Six-Day War of 1967. This is the same area where the ancient Israelites wandered for forty years. The Israelis returned the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt as a result of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in 1979.
- ❖ On the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah spoke with Jesus about his *decease* (KJV), lit., his *exodus* (Luke 9:31).

## HEAR

God has spoken in Exodus. We should be willing to hear. You can sample the book by studying the following outstanding chapters:

- ❖ Baby Moses in the river reeds (Exodus 1)
- ❖ Moses' call to service (Exodus 3-4)
- ❖ Ten plagues and a battle of wills (Exodus 7-11)
- ❖ Passover instituted (Exodus 12)
- ❖ Crossing the Red Sea (Exodus 14)
- ❖ Tablets with Ten Commandments (Exodus 20)
- ❖ Glory fills the Tabernacle (Exodus 40)

Here are some of the favorite lines in Exodus:

- ❖ *I AM* (Exodus 3:14): God's name as revealed to Moses.
- ❖ *"Let my people go"* (Exodus 5:1): Moses' demand to Pharaoh.
- ❖ *You shall have no other gods before me* (Exodus 20:3): the first Commandment.
- ❖ *Life for life, eye for an eye, tooth for tooth* (Exodus 21:23-24). The punishment must fit the crime.
- ❖ *"Whoever is for the LORD? come to me"* (Exodus 32:26).
- ❖ *The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness* (Exodus 34:6).