

The Pentateuch

The Greek word *Pentateuch* translates into English as “five scrolls” and is a standard Christian designation for the first five books in the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Jews often refer to these same books as *Torah*, a Hebrew word meaning “instruction.” These books are also referred to in both Judaism and Christianity as the *Five Books of Moses* in deference to the ancient tradition of Moses as the author.

PENTATEUCH CONTENT OUTLINE

The beginnings of humanity (Gen 1-11)
 Abraham’s story (Gen 12-25)
 Jacob’s story (Gen 26-36)
 Joseph’s story (Gen 37-50)
 Israelites in Egypt (Exod 1-12)
 Israelites delivered from Egypt (Exod 12-15)
 Israelites in the wilderness (Exod 15-18)
 Israelites at Sinai (Exod 19-40; Leviticus; Num 1-10)
 Wilderness wanderings (Num 11-21)
 Encampment on the Plains of Moab across the Jordan from Jericho (Num 22-36; Deuteronomy)

GENESIS

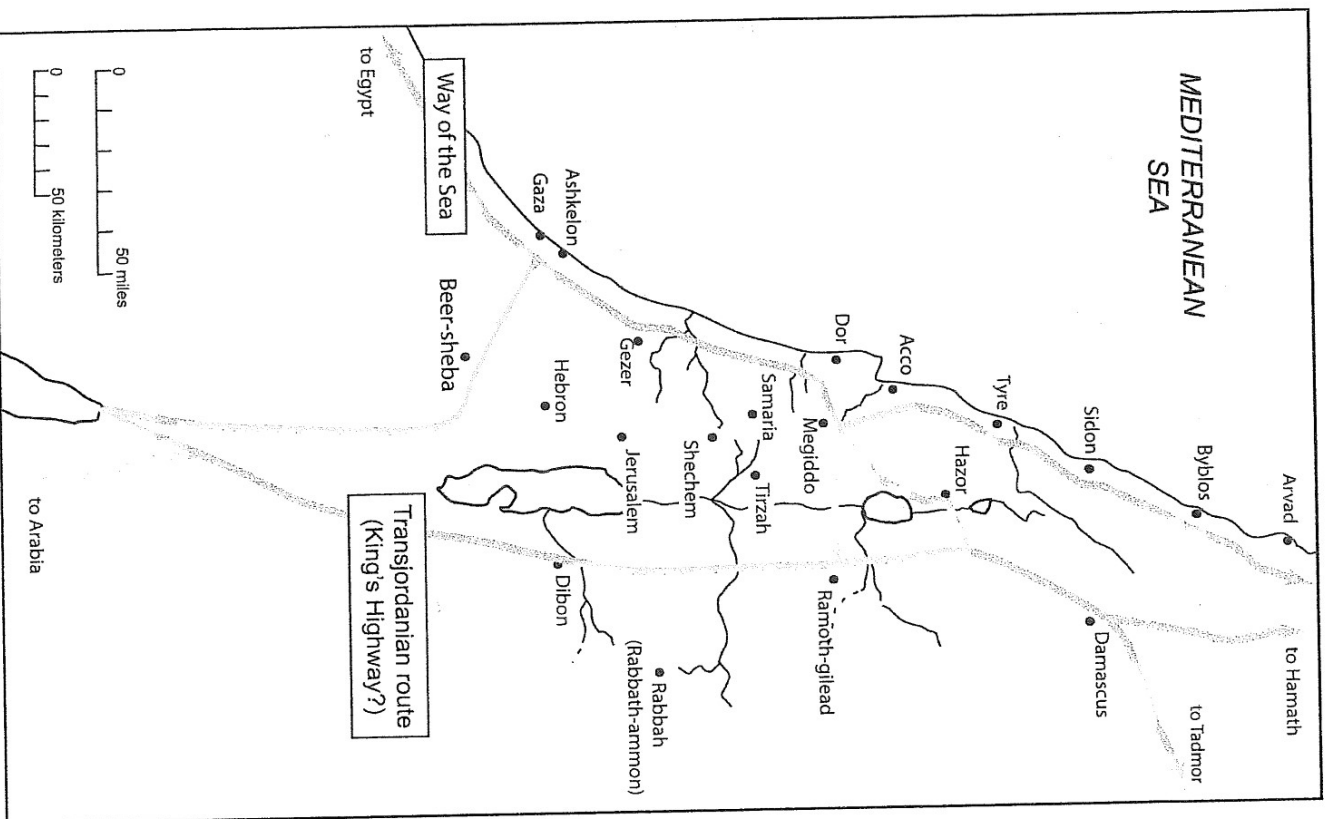
The English word *Genesis* is the Greek word for "origin" and was used to title this biblical book in the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament from the original Hebrew that was produced in the third to second century BCE. In the Jewish tradition, the book is entitled *Beresit*, which is the first Hebrew word in the book and means "in the beginning."

Synopsis

The book of Genesis tells a story of beginnings: the beginning of the world, of humanity, and of God's relationship with all creation. After the creation, the first human couple, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God, and the relationship between humans and God was immediately challenged. Their son Cain murdered their other son, Abel. Violence persisted, prompting God's decision to destroy the earth by a flood. After the flood, God promised never to destroy the earth or its creatures again and made a covenant with Noah and every living creature.

The book then turns from a more universal, worldwide perspective to focus on a single family. Abram/Abraham and his wife Sarai/Sarah made a journey to the land of Canaan, where God promised them land and numerous descendants. They traveled to Egypt and ventured through multiple Egyptian cities, encountering various leaders including the pharaoh of Egypt and the kings of Salem and Gerar. The story focuses on the divine promise to Abraham of a son; however, Sarah was barren. In her despair, she attempted to give Abraham a son through her Egyptian slave-girl, Hagar. Her plan succeeded, and Ishmael was born. However, God's promise was for Abraham's heir to come through Sarah. Finally, at an advanced age, Sarah bore a son and named him Isaac, the child of the promise. God asked Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. Abraham obeyed, but God provided a ram in Isaac's place. After Sarah's death and burial in Hebron, Abraham arranged a marriage between Isaac and Rebekah before marrying Keturah himself. Abraham died at 175 years old.

Isaac and Rebekah had twin sons, Esau and Jacob, who immediately engaged in sibling rivalry. Esau, the firstborn, sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew. Jacob tricked his father, Isaac, into giving him the blessing that was due Esau. Jacob had to leave home to escape Esau's anger. While away, Jacob had a dream at Bethel, encountered Rachel, and eventually married both Leah and Rachel, the daughters of Laban. Through these two sisters and their two slaves, Bilhah and Zilpah, Jacob had twelve sons and one daughter. Jacob became a wealthy man with large flocks and numerous slaves. Ultimately, Jacob and his family fled from Laban and his sons. Laban pursued



Map 2. Main Roads and Cities of Ancient Palestine

(Originally published in J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, 2nd ed. [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006], 8.)

Jacob, and the two men made a covenant. After Jacob reconciled with Laban, he traveled to reconcile with his brother, Esau, sending presents in advance of their meeting. The night before he reached Esau, Jacob wrestled with a man (or God?) who dislocated Jacob's hip. After the brothers' reconciliation, they went in separate directions, with Jacob going to Succoth and Esau to Seir. Meanwhile, Jacob and Leah's daughter, Dinah, was raped by Shechem the Hivite, and her brothers took revenge on him and his city. The attention to Jacob ends with the birth of Benjamin and the deaths of Rachel and Isaac.

At this point, the focus of Genesis shifts to one of Jacob's sons, Joseph, the second to the youngest, dreamed of his brothers bowing down to him. These dreams, combined with his father's favoritism, caused great jealousy to arise in his brothers. They connived to get rid of Joseph, first throwing him in a pit and then selling him to a passing caravan. Joseph ended up in Egypt and rose to power in Pharaoh's administration as a trusted adviser after interpreting one of Pharaoh's dreams. When the famine predicted in Pharaoh's dreams arrived, ten of Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to buy grain. Joseph, whom they did not recognize, gave them the grain but demanded they return to Egypt with their youngest brother, Benjamin. Eventually, Joseph revealed himself to his brothers and brought all his family, including his father, to Egypt. As Jacob grew ill, he blessed Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, and offered final words to each of his own sons. Jacob died and was buried with Sarah, Abraham, and Isaac. Joseph forgave his brothers for their poor treatment of him. Joseph died in Egypt.

Content Outline

The Beginnings of Humanity

The world is created in six days	Genesis 1
The man and the woman are created	Genesis 2
The man and the woman listen to the serpent, disobey God, and are punished	Genesis 3
Cain kills Abel, his brother; Cain's descendants; Seth is born	Genesis 4
The ten generations from Adam to Noah	Genesis 5
God plans judgment via a flood; God instructs Noah to construct an ark	Genesis 6
Noah's family and pairs of animals board the ark; the flood begins	Genesis 7

The flood ends; Noah sacrifices; God promises not to destroy the earth again

Genesis 8

God establishes a covenant with Noah and all living creatures; Noah curses Canaan

Genesis 9

The descendants of Noah's three sons

Genesis 10

City and tower of Babel; the ten generations from Noah to Abram

Genesis 11

Abraham's Story

Abram, Sarai, and Lot migrate to Canaan following God's direction, then journey to Egypt

Genesis 12

Abram settles in Canaan; Lot settles in Sodom

Genesis 13

Abram rescues Lot from battling kings and is blessed by King Melchizedek

Genesis 14

God establishes a covenant with Abram; God promises descendants and land

Genesis 15

Ishmael is born to Abram and Hagar

Genesis 16

God establishes a covenant with Abraham using the sign of circumcision

Genesis 17

Abraham hosts three visitors; Sodom and Gomorrah
The wickedness of Sodom's men; the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

Genesis 18

Abraham passes Sarah off as his sister to King Abimelech of Gerar

Genesis 20

Sarah gives birth to Isaac; Hagar and Ishmael are sent to the wilderness

Genesis 21

Abraham's near-sacrifice of his son Isaac

Genesis 22

Sarah dies and is buried in the cave of the field of Macpelah in Hebron

Genesis 23

Abraham sends his servant to get Isaac a wife; Rebekah is brought to Isaac

Genesis 24

Abraham marries Keturah; Abraham dies; Esau and Jacob are born to Rebekah

Genesis 25

Jacob's Story

Isaac passes Rebekah off as his sister to King Abimelech of Gerar	Genesis 26
Jacob tricks Isaac into blessing him instead of Esau	Genesis 27
Esau marries Ishmael's daughter; Jacob flees from Esau and dreams at Bethel	Genesis 28
Jacob encounters Rachel; Laban deceives Jacob; Jacob marries	Genesis 29
Leah, Rachel, Bilhah, and Zilpah bear children	Genesis 30
Jacob and his family flee from Laban; Laban pursues them; Laban and Jacob make a covenant	Genesis 31
Jacob prepares to meet Esau; Jacob wrestles at night at Peniel	Genesis 32
Esau and Jacob are reconciled	Genesis 33
Dinah is raped by Shechem; Simeon and Levi massacre the men of Shechem's city	Genesis 34
Jacob goes to Bethel; Rachel gives birth to Benjamin and dies; Isaac dies	Genesis 35
Descendants of Esau	Genesis 36
<i>Joseph's Story</i>	
Joseph dreams and his brothers sell him; Joseph ends up in Potiphar's house	Genesis 37
Judah unknowingly has sex with his daughter-in-law, Tamar; she gives birth to twins	Genesis 38
Joseph refuses to have sex with Potiphar's wife; he goes to prison	Genesis 39
Joseph interprets the dreams of Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker while in prison	Genesis 40
Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dream and is promoted to a top position in Egypt	Genesis 41
Joseph encounters his brothers in Egypt; the brothers return to Canaan for Benjamin	Genesis 42

The brothers return with Benjamin and dine with Joseph	Genesis 43
Joseph schemes to keep Benjamin in Egypt with him	Genesis 44
Joseph reveals himself to his brothers; the brothers return to Canaan to get Jacob	Genesis 45
Jacob and his entire family go to Egypt; Jacob and Joseph reunite	Genesis 46
Famine occurs in Egypt; Jacob requests to be buried with his ancestors	Genesis 47
Jacob blesses his grandsons Manasseh and Ephraim	Genesis 48
Jacob utters his last words to his sons; Jacob dies	Genesis 49
Jacob is buried with his ancestors; Joseph reassures his brothers; Joseph dies	Genesis 50

People

Adam and Eve —first couple
Cain, Abel, and Seth —sons of Adam and Eve
Noah and his unnamed wife —characters in the flood story
Shem, Ham, Japheth —sons of Noah and his wife
Terah —father of Abram/Abraham
Abraham (aka Abram) —husband of Sarai/Sarah; father of Ishmael and Isaac
Sarah (aka Sarai) —wife of Abraham; mother of Isaac
Lot —Abraham's nephew; Haran's son
Lot's unnamed wife and two daughters
Melchizedek —king of Salem
Hagar —Sarah's Egyptian slave-girl; Ishmael's mother
Abimelech —king of Gerar
Ishmael —Abraham and Hagar's son
Moab and Ben-ammi —sons of Lot and his two daughters
Isaac —Abraham and Sarah's son; father of Esau and Jacob
Rebekah —wife of Isaac; mother of Esau and Jacob; daughter of Bethuel the Aramean
Keturah —Abraham's wife
Esau —first son of Isaac and Rebekah
Jacob —second son of Isaac and Rebekah
Judith, Basemath, Adah, Oholibamah, Mahalath —the names of Esau's wives

Laban—Rebekah's brother; father of Rachel and Leah
Leah—Jacob's elder wife; daughter of Laban
Rachel—Jacob's younger wife; daughter of Laban
Zilpah—Leah's maid
Bilhah—Rachel's maid
Deborah—Rebekah's nurse
Reuben—Jacob and Leah's first son
Simeon—Jacob and Leah's second son
Levi—Jacob and Leah's third son
Judah—Jacob and Leah's fourth son
Issachar—Jacob and Leah's fifth son
Zebulun—Jacob and Leah's sixth son
Dinah—Jacob and Leah's daughter
Dan—Jacob and Bilhah's first son
Naphthali—Jacob and Bilhah's second son
Gad—Jacob and Zilpah's first son
Asher—Jacob and Zilpah's second son
Joseph—Jacob and Rachel's first son
Shechem—son of Hamor the Hivite
Benjamin—Jacob and Rachel's second son
Tamar—wife of Er, Judah's first son
Perez and Zerah—twin sons of Judah and Tamar
Potiphar—official in Pharaoh's court
Potiphar's unnamed wife
Pharaoh—king of Egypt
Asenath—daughter of Potiphera, wife of Joseph
Manasseh—Joseph's first son
Ephraim—Joseph's second son

Places

Garden of Eden—Adam and Eve's first habitat
Land of Nod—Cain settles here after killing his brother Abel
Mountains of Ararat—place where the ark lands after the flood subsides
Land of Shinar—where the Tower of Babel is built
Ur of the Chaldeans—Abraham and Terah's original homeland
Canaan—area that will become biblical Israel
Shechem—Abraham stops here and sets up an altar
Bethel—place associated with Abraham and Jacob
Egypt—Abraham and Sarah, as well as Joseph's brothers, journey here because of famine

Sodom and Gomorrah—cities destroyed by God
Gerar—Abraham and Sarah stop here; Isaac settles here
Wilderness of Paran—Ismael's home
Land of Moriah—site of Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac
Beersheba—place associated with Abraham and Sarah
Hebron—place associated with Abraham and Sarah
Peniel—place associated with Jacob
Edom—place associated with Esau and his descendants
Goshen—area of Egypt associated with Joseph

Key Concepts

Creation—beginning of the world, of plants and animals and humanity
Flood—water covers the earth; Noah and his family survive in an ark
Noahic covenant—first covenant in the Bible between God and the world; rainbow is its sign
Tower of Babel—structure built by humans to reach the heavens
Promise of land and descendants—God's promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
Abrahamic covenant—made between God and Abraham; includes land and many descendants; circumcision is its sign
Circumcision—sign of the Abrahamic covenant between God, Abraham, and his descendants
Birthright—special inheritance given to the firstborn son
Chosen—God's election of Abraham and his family to be God's people

Important Quotations

“So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” (Gen 1:27)
 “And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.’” (Gen 2:16–17)
 “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.” (Gen 2:23)
 “Am I my brother's keeper?” (Gen 4:9)
 “I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.” (Gen 9:13)

"Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing." (Gen 12:1-2)

"The LORD said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh, and say, "Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?" Is anything too wonderful for the LORD? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son.'" (Gen 18:13-14)

"Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you." (Gen 22:2; God speaking to Abraham)

"Give me children, or I shall die!" (Gen 30:1; Rachel speaking to Jacob)

"Then the man said, 'You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed.'" (Gen 32:28)

"But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept." (Gen 33:4)

"Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves." (Gen 37:3)

"Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today." (Gen 50:20)

Days of Creation in Genesis 1

1st day: light, darkness, day, night

2nd day: sky and sea

3rd day: dry land and plants

4th day: lights in the sky (stars), the greater light, the lesser light

5th day: living creatures in the waters, birds, sea monsters

6th day: living creatures on the earth, wild animals, humans

7th day: God rests

Life of Abram/Abraham

Abram before the Journey to Canaan

- Abram is mentioned for the first time in conjunction with his father, Terah, and his brothers, Nahor and Haran; there is no birth story (Gen 11:26-27)

- Abram takes Sarai as his wife; she is barren and without children (Gen 11:29-30)
- Abram journeys with his wife, father, and nephew from Ur to Haran (Gen 11:31)

Abram without Children

- God calls Abram to leave his father and go to the land of Canaan with his wife and nephew (Gen 12:1-9)
- Abram and Sarai journey to Egypt because of famine; Abram tells Pharaoh that Sarai is his sister (Gen 12:10-20)
- Abram separates from Lot when he comes out of Egypt and settles in Hebron (Gen 13)
- Abram rescues Lot from captivity and is blessed by Melchizedek (Gen 14)
- God makes a covenant with Abram, promising him land and descendants (Gen 15)

Abraham and Ishmael

- Abram has his first son, Ishmael, through Hagar; although Sarai devised this plan, she deals harshly with Hagar (Gen 16)
- God changes Abram's name to Abraham and Sarai's name to Sarah; God makes an everlasting covenant with Abraham, promising him land and descendants; the sign of this Abrahamic covenant is circumcision (Gen 17)
- Three men visit Abraham and promise Abraham and Sarah a son; Sarah laughs because of her old age (Gen 18:1-15)
- Abraham and God negotiate about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:16-33)
- Abraham and Sarah journey to Gerar; Abraham tells King Abimelech that Sarah is his sister (Gen 20)

Abraham and Isaac

- At age 100, Abraham has a second son, Isaac, through Sarah; Abraham sends Hagar and Ishmael away (Gen 21:1-21)
- Abraham makes a covenant with Abimelech at Beersheba (Gen 21:22-34)
- God commands Abraham to sacrifice Isaac but provides a ram instead at the last moment (Gen 22)
- Abraham mourns Sarah and buries her (Gen 23)
- Abraham sends his servant back to his homeland to get Isaac a wife (Gen 24)
- Abraham marries Keturah and has six children with her (Gen 25:1-6)
- Abraham dies at age 175 (Gen 25:7-11)

Life of Jacob

Esau and Jacob at Home

- Jacob is born after his twin, Esau (Gen 25:19-28)
- Clever Jacob gets the birthright from Esau (Gen 25:29-34)
- Trickster Jacob gets the blessing from his father, Isaac, by disguising himself as Esau (Gen 27:1-29)
- Esau wants to kill Jacob, so Rebekah schemes to get Isaac to send Jacob away to find a wife (Gen 27:41-28:5)

Jacob Leaves Home

- Jacob dreams at Bethel (Gen 28:10-22)
- Jacob meets Rachel, daughter of his uncle Laban (Gen 29:1-14)
- Jacob works seven years for Rachel but is tricked into marrying Leah (Gen 29:15-25)
- Jacob works another seven years and marries Rachel (Gen 29:26-30)
- Jacob has children with Leah, Bilhah, Zilpah, and Rachel (Gen 29:31-30:24)
- Jacob acquires wealth, while Laban does not (Gen 30:25-43)
- Jacob flees from Laban; Laban pursues him; they make a covenant (Gen 31)
- Jacob begins his journey to meet his brother, Esau (Gen 32:1-21)
- Jacob wrestles with a man at Peniel, who changes Jacob's name to Israel (Gen 32:22-32)
- Jacob reconciles with Esau (Gen 33:1-17)
- Jacob returns to Bethel (Gen 35)

Jacob in Canaan

- Jacob settles in Canaan (Gen 37)
- Jacob mourns the "death" of his son Joseph (Gen 37)

Jacob in Egypt

- Jacob journeys to Egypt to see Joseph (Gen 46)
- Jacob settles in Goshen (Gen 46)
- Jacob requests to be buried with his ancestors (Gen 47)
- Jacob blesses Joseph's son (Gen 48)
- Jacob says his last words to his own sons (Gen 49)
- Jacob dies (Gen 49:33)
- Jacob is buried with his ancestors (Gen 50)

Jacob's Twelve Sons and One Daughter

Sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin, Dan, Naphthali, Gad, Asher, Joseph

Daughter: Dinah