

GENESIS

INTRODUCTION

WHY READ THIS BOOK?

From time to time, most people wonder about the deeper questions of life: Why am I here? What is life all about? Genesis takes you back to the beginning of time to find the answers. It tells about many beginnings: the first plants and animals, the first man and woman, the first sin, the first news of God's salvation. It also shows God's dealings with Noah, Abraham and others, demonstrating God's desire to restore the relationship with his people that was broken by Adam and Eve's sin.

WHO WROTE THIS BOOK AND WHEN?

Moses probably wrote this book around 1440 BC. But since he was not an eyewitness to the earliest events, he relied on revelation from God and, perhaps, earlier oral or written records.

WHAT PERIOD OF HISTORY DOES IT COVER?

From the time of the creation (a date that can only be speculated) to the time when the Hebrews arrived in Egypt and grew into a nation (about 1800 BC).

WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

To show that when God made the creation, it was good. But Genesis goes on to say that when sin entered the world, it corrupted the creation. The story tells the beginning of God's plan for salvation. Genesis provides the framework on which the rest of the Bible builds.

TO WHOM WAS IT WRITTEN?

Since this book announces that *all peoples on earth will be blessed* through Abraham (12:3), it seems fair to conclude that all people can benefit from the account of this patriarch and his descendants.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN GENESIS:

Notice the focus Genesis places on the relationship between God and humanity — a relationship that was broken in the garden and restored through sacrifices and personal encounters with God. Through the stories of history, Genesis illustrates cycles of sin and repentance.

WHEN DID THESE THINGS HAPPEN?

2200 BC 2100 2000 1900 1800 1700 1600 1500 1400



WHY DID GOD'S SPIRIT HOVER OVER THE WATERS OF THE EARTH? (1:2)

To preserve what had been created up to this point and to prepare it for the further activity of God. This verse acknowledges the Holy Spirit's role in the creation process.

WHY MEASURE A DAY FROM EVENING TO MORNING? (1:5,8,13,19,23,31)

In the creation process, God inserted daylight into what previously had been only darkness. Evening was the first transition from one day to another. Because of this, the Hebrew calendar considers sunset the beginning of a day.

HOW COULD GOD CREATE THE EARTH AND WATERS FROM NOTHING? (1:9-10)

The point here is that God created everything that exists. Many believe God created *ex nihilo* (out of nothing). In that case, the water-and-ground formation in verses 9-10 represents original formation. But we need to remember that the Bible doesn't explain how God created everything; it is more concerned with helping us understand that he did the creating.

The Beginning

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

³And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

⁶And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." ⁷So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. ⁸God called the vault "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

⁹And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good.

¹¹Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds."

SETTING OF GENESIS 1:1



And it was so. ¹²The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

¹⁴And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, ¹⁸to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

²⁰And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky." ²¹So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." ²³And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

²⁴And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. ²⁵God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock

HOW COULD THERE HAVE BEEN LIGHT BEFORE GOD CREATED THE SUN AND THE MOON? (1:14-16)

Some say that the earlier light created by God (v. 3) was from some source other than the sun, perhaps iridescence from God himself. Others say that the phrase the heavens and the earth (v. 1) means the universe—all the heavenly bodies including sun, moon and stars. According to this view, God created the sources of light (v. 1) but did not reveal them until later (v. 3)—perhaps by removing some sort of cloud of darkness (v. 2). Finally, he brought the process to completion and established the rhythm and order of the solar system (v. 14), assigning the sun and moon their place and purpose—thus giving us days, nights and seasons.

DID GOD CREATE DINOSAURS AT THIS TIME? (1:24-31)

It is plausible that God could have made them on the fifth or sixth day. The Bible doesn't specifically mention dinosaurs, though it may refer to them using terms such as monster (Ps 74:13), dragon (Rev 12:3) or Behemoth (Job 40:15-19).

WHY DID GOD SAY, LET US [PLURAL] MAKE MANKIND IN OUR IMAGE? (1:26)

Often kings referred to themselves in this way. The Hebrew word for God (Elohim) is plural, perhaps indicating that God was taking counsel with himself. Some think this describes God speaking to his heavenly court of angels. But this may also hint at the mystery of the Trinity—in the unity of God there is plurality.

ARE THESE LITERAL 24-HOUR DAYS? 1:3-31

Regardless of whether the "days" of creation were figurative or literal 24-hour periods, this passage is a truthful description of what took place. It indicates that there is intelligence, meaning and purpose behind all existence. In other words, the word of God directed the method of creation as well as the source of creation (Ps 33:6,9; Heb 11:3). Yet human beings have been given the privilege of exploring, through scientific investigation, how God may have engineered these events and how long he took to do so.

Many understand the six days of creation as representing long periods of time because the sun, which marks a 24-hour day, wasn't created until the fourth day. And the word day is used in chapters 1-2 in three distinct ways: (1) as approximately 12 hours of daylight (Ge 1:5); (2) as 24 hours (1:14) and (3) as a period of time involving, at the very minimum, the whole creative activity from day one to day seven (see 2:4, where the word that is translated when is the same word that is elsewhere translated day). The light (1:3) could not have come from the earth's sun if the sun was not created until the fourth day. The light could have come from other sources that God provided in the universe prior to the creation of the sun. We can only speculate about what the atmospheric conditions might have been at that time.

JOB

INTRODUCTION

WHY READ THIS BOOK?

To explore the most difficult questions of life — questions most people ask at some time or another: Why is there evil in the world? Why do pain, suffering and heartache exist? Why do the righteous suffer? How can the just nature of an almighty God be defended in the face of evil, especially human suffering — and even more particularly, the suffering of the innocent? If you've puzzled over such questions — or perhaps been disappointed by simplistic answers — you'll appreciate the honest way the book of Job looks at God's mysterious ways.

WHO WROTE THIS BOOK?

Probably an unknown Israelite, though no one knows for sure. Scholars have speculated about many possible authors: Job (though he was not an Israelite), Elihu, Moses, Solomon, Isaiah, Hezekiah or Baruch (the prophet Jeremiah's friend).

WHEN WAS IT WRITTEN?

The cultural and historical settings seem to reflect the times of Genesis 12–50, the second millennium BC. Some think the story of Job was passed down orally from generation to generation and only later put into writing.

WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

To address the question of suffering. The writer tells Job's story in a way that allows readers to identify with his spiritual and philosophical struggles. Like a counselor to those who suffer, the writer of Job vividly illustrates the inadequacy of human logic to explain the reality and nature of evil in the world.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN JOB:

Consider carefully the various voices found throughout the book. Job's friends, for example, make profound statements — but they also make some classic errors in judgment. Also watch for the wide range of literary techniques used in this book: dialogue, poetry, proverbs, riddles, laments, curses and word pictures. Some parts read like court proceedings, as if Job were on trial. As you read keep in mind the context of the book as a whole. The voice of the narrator (chs. 1–2; 42) allows us to know things that Job and his friends did not.

WHEN DID THESE THINGS HAPPEN?

2200 BC 2100 2000 1900 1800 1700 1600 1500 1400

CREATION, FALL, FLOOD

ABRAHAM'S LIFE (C. 2166–1991 BC)

ISAAC'S LIFE (C. 2066–1886 BC)

JACOB'S LIFE (C. 2006–1859 BC)

JOSEPH'S LIFE (C. 1915–1805 BC)

HISTORICAL SETTING OF JOB (C. 1900–1700 BC)

MOSES' LIFE (C. 1526–1406 BC)

Prologue

1 In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. ²He had seven sons and three daughters, ³and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East.

⁴His sons used to hold feasts in their homes on their birthdays, and they would invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. ⁵When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would make arrangements for them to be purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular custom.

⁶One day the angels^a came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan^b also came with them. ⁷The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?"

Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it."

⁸Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."

⁹"Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. ¹⁰"Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. ¹¹But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."

¹²The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger."

Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

¹³One day when Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, ¹⁴a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, ¹⁵and the Sabeans attacked and made off with them. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

¹⁶While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The fire of God fell from the heavens and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

¹⁷While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and made off with them. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

¹⁸While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, "Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, ¹⁹when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they

WHERE WAS THE LAND OF UZ? (1:1)
A region east of Canaan, probably the land east and south of the Dead Sea — some of which was eventually called Edom.

LOCATION OF UZ (1:1)



WHAT WAS THE EAST? (1:3)

The East refers to the region east of Canaan, often called the Near East. This area includes the modern-day countries of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraq and Iran.

CAN WE REPENT FOR SOMEONE ELSE? (1:5)

No. In the ancient times of the patriarchs, (the setting of the book of Job), the father acted as priest for his family. Here Job served as a priest by offering sacrifices on behalf of his children.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT HEAVENLY COUNCILS? (1:6)

Not much, though there are other examples in the Bible (e.g., 1Ki 22:19; Ps 89:5; Jer 23:18,22). Some think this may be figurative language using images from ancient culture to describe spiritual realities in terms that humans can understand: God is King and all spiritual beings answer to him. See *Why did Satan mingle with God's angels?* (2:1; p. 734).

WHY DID GOD DRAW SATAN'S ATTENTION TO JOB? (1:8)

The text does not reveal why, but it is clear that God held up Job as an example of a blameless servant.

WAS GOD GIVING SATAN PERMISSION TO HURT JOB? (1:12)

Not Job's physical body but anything Job had. God allowed Satan to destroy Job's wealth, family and health. But God set limits on what Satan could destroy, thus demonstrating his sovereign control. It isn't until 2:4–6 that God allowed Satan to hurt Job himself (but even then Satan was not allowed to take Job's life).

WHY WOULD GOD DO THIS? (1:12)

Perhaps God was giving Job a greater opportunity to honor him with his allegiance. If so, the testing of God's servant was also a greater opportunity for God to prove his faithfulness.

^a 6 Hebrew the sons of God ^b 6 Hebrew satan means adversary.

- ¹³Why does the wicked man revile God?
Why does he say to himself,
"He won't call me to account?"
- ¹⁴But you, God, see the trouble of the afflicted;
you consider their grief and take it in hand.
The victims commit themselves to you;
you are the helper of the fatherless.
- ¹⁵Break the arm of the wicked man;
call the evildoer to account for his wickedness
that would not otherwise be found out.
- ¹⁶The LORD is King for ever and ever;
the nations will perish from his land.
- ¹⁷You, LORD, hear the desire of the afflicted;
you encourage them, and you listen to their cry,
¹⁸defending the fatherless and the oppressed,
so that mere earthly mortals
will never again strike terror.

Psalm 11

For the director of music. Of David.

- ¹In the LORD I take refuge.
How then can you say to me:
"Flee like a bird to your mountain."
- ²For look, the wicked bend their bows;
they set their arrows against the strings
to shoot from the shadows
at the upright in heart.
- ³When the foundations are being destroyed,
what can the righteous do?"
- ⁴The LORD is in his holy temple;
the LORD is on his heavenly throne.
He observes everyone on earth;
his eyes examine them.
- ⁵The LORD examines the righteous,
but the wicked, those who love violence,
he hates with a passion.
- ⁶On the wicked he will rain
fiery coals and burning sulfur;
a scorching wind will be their lot.
- ⁷For the LORD is righteous,
he loves justice;
the upright will see his face.

Psalm 12^aFor the director of music. According to
sheminith.^b A psalm of David.

- ¹Help, LORD, for no one is faithful anymore;
those who are loyal have vanished from the human
race.
- ²Everyone lies to their neighbor;
they flatter with their lips
but harbor deception in their hearts.

^a In Hebrew texts 12:3-8 is numbered 12:2-9.^b Title: Probably a musical term.WHAT DID ISRAELITE SOCIETY DO
FOR THE FATHERLESS AND THE
OPPRESSED? (10:18)

God has always commanded his people to care for the poor, the orphaned and the oppressed. The Israelites were to reflect God's own deep concern for the marginalized of society (Dt 15:7-11; Pr 14:31; 19:17). But the Israelites did not always live up to God's commands. The prophets of Israel frequently called the people to task for neglecting God's clear commands about caring for the underprivileged (Am 5:11-12).

WHO ADVISED DAVID TO FLEE? (11:1)
We don't know who gave this advice to David or why it was given. There were times David did flee like a bird—from Saul (1Sa 21:10) and later from his own son Absalom (2Sa 15:14). In this case, however, it seems David was rejecting advice to flee because he was determined to trust in God no matter how risky his advisers thought things were.

WHAT FOUNDATIONS WERE BEING
DESTROYED? (11:3)

The moral foundations of a society based on God's law. Some feared that increasing rebellion and the growing aggressiveness of the wicked threatened these foundations. This powerful increase of evil made the righteous fear that they could no longer count on a society in which good triumphed over evil.

HOW CAN A GOD OF LOVE HATE THE
WICKED? (11:5)

See the article *Is the God of love also a God of hate?* (5:5; p. 787).

WHAT DOES FIERY COALS AND
BURNING SULFUR REFER TO? (11:6)

This could refer to (1) God's destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Ge 19:24), (2) God's coming judgment on the whole world (see a similar reference to burning sulfur in Rev 14:10) or (3) a desert dweller's worst nightmare of punishment.

WHY WERE THERE NO FAITHFUL
PEOPLE LEFT? (12:1)

There were still faithful people, but David was exaggerating for emphasis (a figure of speech known as hyperbole). David felt as though there was no one left who was faithful and would stand with him.

- ¹May the LORD silence all flattering lips
and every boastful tongue—
- ²those who say,
"By our tongues we will prevail;
our own lips will defend us—who is lord over us?"
- ³"Because the poor are plundered and the needy groan,
I will now arise," says the LORD.
"I will protect them from those who malign them."
- ⁴And the words of the LORD are flawless,
like silver purified in a crucible,
like gold^a refined seven times.
- ⁵You, LORD, will keep the needy safe
and will protect us forever from the wicked,
⁶who freely strut about
when what is vile is honored by the human race.

Psalm 13^b

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

- ¹How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
- ²How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?
How long will my enemy triumph over me?
- ³Look on me and answer, LORD my God.
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,
⁴and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.
- ⁵But I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.
- ⁶I will sing the LORD's praise,
for he has been good to me.

Psalm 14

For the director of music. Of David.

- ¹The fool^c says in his heart,
"There is no God."

^a 6 Probable reading of the original Hebrew text; Masoretic Text earth.^b In Hebrew texts 13:1-6 is numbered 13:2-6. ^c 1 The Hebrew words rendered fool in Psalms denote one who is morally deficient.DIDN'T THEY HAVE A RIGHT TO
FREEDOM OF SPEECH? (12:3-4)

Yes, but their speech revealed the proud attitudes that motivated them. By announcing their freedom to say what they wanted, these people showed their desire to do what they wanted. Their loose lips revealed their rebellious hearts.

WHO WAS MALIGNING WHOM?
(12:5)

The rich and powerful were verbally attacking the oppressed and weak. Perhaps they wanted to justify their own lack of compassion and failure to help the poor. It may have been that they unfairly blamed the poor for their own problems, accusing them of laziness.

WHAT VILE THINGS WERE PEOPLE
HONORING? (12:8)

The wealthy were apparently arrogantly parading their riches around while neglecting the poor. God was displeased with their pompous self-centeredness and desire to use their wealth to court people's favor.

DOES GOD HAVE A PHYSICAL BODY?
(12:1)

No. When David wrote of God hiding his face, he was writing figuratively to describe his feelings of abandonment by God. Biblical poetry frequently illustrates God's personality or spiritual characteristics by referring to God's hands, arms, eyes and ears (31:2; 77:15).

HOW CAN SOMEONE WHO
TRUSTS GOD HAVE SUCH NEGATIVE
THOUGHTS? (13:1-2)

When tragedy strikes, emotions such as doubt, fear and pain often consume us. David reminds us that since God promises to resolve difficult matters with his gracious justice, we have a right to call on him to act. Painful times should lead us to, not away from, prayer, even if our words sound harsh and angry.

WHAT KIND OF LIGHT WAS DAVID
ASKING FOR? (13:3)

Light is associated with life; darkness, with death. David was perhaps asking for restoration from a serious illness. He may also have been seeking God's help for a military victory.

IS EVERY ATHEIST A FOOL? (14:1)

Such a person is foolish in terms of what God has revealed concerning our eternal destiny. We have no hope if we assume there is no

WHY WERE DAVID'S EMOTIONS SO ERRATIC? 13:1-6

Within five verses David moved from spiritual despair to hope; from gut-wrenching, internal wrestling to complete trust; from deep sorrow to rejoicing. What caused these dramatic changes?

One explanation may be that David's psalms are simply snapshots of his feelings. As he gradually worked through issues, his confidence in God returned. But the changes may have occurred more slowly than it appears from reading the compressed account in these few verses.

Another explanation may be that David knew how to express feelings and faith simultaneously. Perhaps David revealed his emotions on one level but expressed his core beliefs on another level.

David's mood changes reflect the feelings of normal people struggling with their faith. Perhaps that's why so many people can identify with Psalms.