

Introducing the Pentateuch and Genesis 1-11

The Pentateuch	
Also Known As	The word Pentateuch comes from two Greek words: penta, meaning “five;” and teukhos, meaning “scrolls.” In Hebrew, it’s referred to as “Torah.” It’s also referred to, particularly in the NT, as “the Law” or “the Law of Moses.”
Centerpieces	In the NT, the Gospels are the centerpieces for the rest of the information that follows. The same is true for the “Five-Scrolls.” Genesis-Deuteronomy are the centerpieces for all of the prophets, wisdom, and writing that follows.
Titles	The five scrolls of the Pentateuch are named appropriately: (1) Genesis – beginnings; (2) Exodus – departure from Egypt; (3) Leviticus – pertaining to the Levites; (4) Numbers – census; (5) Deuteronomy – second law.
Structure	When we use words like “law,” we are inclined to think of: do this...don’t do this. The five scrolls, however, are framed as two continuous narratives. Genesis 1-11 forms one narrative and Genesis 12-Deuteronomy 34 forms the other narrative.
Narrative 1	Is called “protohistory,” the contents of which you are familiar. It’s best to think of it as (1) what God created; (2) what went wrong; (3) and what He’s going to do about what went wrong. We get a glimpse of what He’s going to do about what went wrong through the story of Noah, who believed God and was saved by faith.
Narrative 2	Narrative 2 continues with the story of what God was going to do about what went wrong. It begins with the patriarchs (Genesis), then moves to the circumstances by which the “seed” of those patriarchs found themselves in bondage in Egypt (first part Exodus), then moves to a journey out of Egypt to the Promised Land but taking a detour to Mt. Sinai to receive the law (second part of Exodus, all of Leviticus, first chapters of Numbers), then pulling up tent stakes, taking a census for abled body warriors, walking towards the Promised Land, but wandering in rebellion for years (most of Numbers). It continues with Moses giving the law again on the Plains of Moab to the second generation who will enter the Promised Land.
The Book of Genesis	
Title	Our Bibles have the title “Genesis” as the name of the first book of the Bible. This is a Greek word we have borrowed from the Septuagint (the Greek Translation of the OT in circa 300 BC). It means “origins” or “beginnings.” In the Hebrew Bible, Genesis is called <i>beresheit</i> . It’s the first word of the book and translates to “in the beginning.”
Authorship	Authorship of Genesis is a bit tricky and slippery. It’s not like the prophets in the OT and the entirety of the NT. It’s important to remember that Moses didn’t live during the time of Genesis 1-11 and the patriarchs in 12-50. So even though we refer to Genesis-Deuteronomy as the Law of Moses, Moses didn’t have first-hand access to this information (nor did he write about his own death in Deuteronomy). Who wrote it down? Some speculate Noah in Genesis 1-11. But we have no way of knowing. The same is true about his death in Deuteronomy 34.
Protohistory	Genesis 1-11 is protohistory. By protohistory, we mean before civilization had materialized. There is a gap between ch. 11 of Genesis and ch. 12. We can see elements of life in the nomadic patriarchs (Abraham in particular) that are consistent with life in the Middle East in the 2 millennia BC (2000 BC). But not in Genesis 1-11. It’s the beginning of all things.
Structure of 1-11 Protohistory	Creation (chs. 1-2) – Fall (ch. 3) – Cain and Abel (ch. 4) – Adam to Noah (ch. 5) – Noah, the Father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth (ch. 6-9) – Be fruitful and multiply/table of nations (ch. 10) – The tower of Babel and the beginning of the blessing of restoration for the world through the descendants of Noah’s son “Shem.” (ch. 11) He is where we get the term “Semite,” meaning “Hebrews/Jews.” Abraham is a descendant of Shem and forms the link between Genesis 1-11 and 12-50.

Creation (Ch. 1-2)	
Answers	What God Has Done
Ex Nihilo Imago Dei	<i>27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them (1:27).</i>
Significance	Created in the Image of God (Imago Dei) from nothing (Ex Nihilo) is a unique truth claim today, but especially in ancient times. Plenty of cultures had creation stories (Gilgamesh Epic). Most are polytheistic. Monotheism was not prevalent in ancient times. And the idea of one God who created us in his image was unheard of. But it’s true.

Fall (Ch. 3)	
Answers	What Went Wrong with Creation

Led to Banishment	²³ So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. ²⁴ After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. (3:23-24)
Significance	Creation prevented access from (a) Fellowship and Presence; and (c) Tree of Life

Cain and Abel (Ch. 4)	
Answers	What Went Wrong Gets Worse
First Murder	⁸ Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. (4:8)
Significance	Garden was created for life. Sin in the Garden produced death instead.

From Adam to Noah (Ch. 5)	
Answers	What Went Wrong Gets Worse <u>and</u> Gives Us A Glimpse of What God Will Do About It
What Went Wrong Gets Worse	³ When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth. ⁴ After Seth was born, Adam lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. ⁵ Altogether, Adam lived a total of 930 years, and <u>then he died.</u> (5:3-5) *Death now extends through generations
Glimpse of What God Will Do About It	³² After Noah was 500 years old, he became the father of <u>Shem</u> , Ham and Japheth. **Shem is the son of Noah whom God chose to – ultimately – be his instrument of restoration to the world.

Noah Narratives (Ch. 6-9)	
Answers	What Went Wrong (Wickedness Contaminates) // What God Will Do About It (Covenant Relationship)
What Went Wrong	⁵ The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. (6:5)
What God Will Do About It	⁸ Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: ⁹ "I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you. . . (9:8-9) **Covenants now become the basis for how restoration will work. It still works that way.

Be Fruitful and Multiply (Ch. 10)	
Answers	What God Has Done But is Not Finished With: Recreation
Three Sons of Noah Important	¹⁸ The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) ¹⁹ These were the three sons of Noah, and from them came the people who were scattered over the whole earth. **Symbolizes general graces extended to all of creation because Ham and Japheth come from the ark. But Shem's gracious relationship is special and unique.
Significance	Descendants of Ham: Egypt, Certain Canaanites (i.e., Philistines) Descendants of Japheth: Non-Canaanite and Non-Egyptian Gentiles Descendants of Shem (i.e., Abraham): Jews (Isaac); Ishmaelites (Palestinians; Arabs)

Tower of Babel (Ch. 11)	
Answers	Even Though God Has Acted and Recreated, Something Is Still Wrong.
Nothing Has Changed with Creation	⁴ Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth." (11:4)
But God Has a Restoration Plan Now Through Covenant Relationship.	³¹ Terah took his <u>son Abram</u> , his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there. (11:31)