

GENESIS

INTRODUCTION

Author. Moses was the author/compiler of the book. This is suggested in the Pentateuch itself and stated in later works. The Pentateuch describes him, in passing, as being ordered to write and actually writing historical facts (Exodus 17:14; Numbers 33:2), laws (Exodus 24:4; 34:27f.), and one poem (Deuteronomy 31:22). Later books of the post-exilic period (such as Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel) often draw upon the Pentateuch as an inspired source, referring to it as the “book of Moses.” Although some updating must have occurred (cf. 14:14, the anachronistic reference to “Dan”; and 36:31, the phrase “before any Israelite king reigned”), there is no reason to doubt Mosaic authorship.

Date. 1 Kings 6:1 says that the fourth year of Solomon’s reign (966 B.C.) was 480 years after the exodus, thus placing the exodus at 1446 B.C. If we allow 40 years for the wilderness wanderings, the book must have been written somewhere between 1446 and 1406 B.C., depending upon whether Moses intended the book for the generation coming out of Egypt or for the one entering the land of promise.

Audience. The nation was, presumably, about to enter the land and needed to understand her roots. Therefore, Moses introduced the nation to her heritage and to her obligation to the promises of God by narrating the beginnings of the world and God’s relationship to the patriarchs.

Message. Although mankind continuously attempts to defy and complicate the plan of God, it is clear that God’s program will prevail. Throughout the book of Genesis, it is God’s word which not only created but also will reclaim the creation from the effects of sin. Thus the message of this book seems to be that *God’s word of election causes conflict with the evil one as He separates a seed to Himself through whom He will bless.*

Structure. The book of Genesis is divided into 12 sections by the 11 occurrences of the phrase “this is the account of” (NIV, 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 36:9; and 37:2). The phrase might also be translated in several passages as “this is what became of.” The first six sections (1:1 – 11:26) cover the salient theological points of history from Adam to Abraham. In this broad scheme of things, the first section presents the dilemma of man. Adam sins and thereby forfeits his rule over the earth and spawns an unbelieving race. Their sin results in a downward spiral of moral degradation and judgment through the first 11 chapters. There is a promise of a seed who will crush the serpent (3:15), and there are a few glimmers of hope as God preserves the righteous, but no substantial progress toward that promise appears until the story of Abraham. When Abraham appears, God makes specific promises, and a definite progression toward fulfilling the original promise occurs in chapter 12. Thus, the first 11 chapters present the dilemma of man and the last 39 present the promise of the solution.

ARGUMENT

Section 1 Primeval Prologue

1:11--11:26

1A God's Word Produces the Heavens and the Earth as God's Good Gift to Man 1:1-2:3

This section repeatedly emphasizes the action of God's Word. By His omnipotence, God simply *speaks* the creation into existence. These chapters not only answer man's questions concerning the origin of the universe but also, more importantly, lay the foundation for man's faith in the Word of God. God's Word is seen here as powerful and sure, something in which one can place confidence. In the remainder of the book, it is this same Word of God which comes to the patriarchs in the form of promises. Though Israel did not yet see the fulfillment, she could see that the Word of God, once spoken, would indeed issue in the intended result. God's Word which spoke the worlds into existence would surely succeed in selecting and blessing through the promised seed.

The order of creation is also significant. The earth, light, plant life, and animal life are all eclipsed in light of the climax—the creation of man. The material universe was intended to serve and meet the needs of man. He was to be lord of all. By all of this, Israel would come to know something of who God was, namely the Creator who deserved worship and complete obedience.

1B *God's Word Creates the Heavens and the Earth* 1:1-2
This sentence records the first work of creation—the heavens and the earth. It was not a complete creation, however, because the earth needed to be formed and filled.

2B *God's Word Produces Light On The First Day* 1:3-5
At this time, light came from a source other than the sun. This should have given Israel confidence that it was God rather than the material universe that provided warmth and light. This truth should have been a powerful polemic against the heliolatry of Egypt. Only at the end of time in Revelation 22 will mankind enjoy a light source other than the sun.

3B *God's Word Separates the Waters on the Second Day* 1:6-8
Although it was not a creative act, God here separates the waters to reveal the presence of dry land.

4B *God's Word Produces Plant Life on the Third Day* 1:9-13
Plant life, upon which Israel's agrarian economy depended, flourishes here by God's design apart from the "natural" resource of the sun.

5B *God's Word Produces Sun and Moon on the Fourth Day* 1:14-19
These heavenly lights demonstrate the glory of God.

6B *God's Word Produces Marine and Avian Life on the Fifth Day* 1:20-23
Although sometimes worshipped as dragons and monsters by the ancients, Israel would know that all marine life was merely another part of God's creation to appreciate.

7B *God's Word Produces Land Animals and Man on the Sixth Day* 1:24-31
The zenith of God's creative work occurs on the last day.

1C The creation of animal life 1:24-25
The break in the narrative after 1:25 demonstrates the uniqueness of man when compared to animal life.

2C The creation of human life 1:26-31
The emphasis of this passage is positive as man is uniquely created in the image of God, provided for, and given the additional responsibility of ruling over the creation in God's place. As a testimony to the perfection of creation, God's summarizes this day's work as

“very good” (1:31).

8B *God's Rest: The Completeness of the Work* 2:1-3

God's rest demonstrates the completeness of the creation. Nothing else was necessary to make the creation ideal.

2A **God's Word of Election and Judgment Through the Chosen Seed Answers the Creation's Evil Challenge** 2:4 – 4:26

Although God had created the world perfect, evil soon distorted his work. God's answer to Satan's attack came in the form of a promise that would restore the original design. The promise that a seed would be selected which would do battle and conquer the evil one forms the basis for the outworking of the rest of the book and of God's plan as well. That God's promise is sure is demonstrated as early as the end of this section in the lives of the immediate *seed* of Adam and Eve.

1B *The Word of God Orders Creation* 2:4-25

This passage details the creation and blessings of man as a backdrop to the intrusion of evil. God provides for man's every need. First, God gives him a beautiful garden in which to live. Then, God outlines his duties and warns him of the consequences of evil. Finally, God gives him a mate to complete him, and man dwells with her in creaturely holiness.

2B *The Word of the Evil One Challenges the Word of God, Which Introduces Conflict Met by a Word of Judgment and Promise* 3:1-24

Until now, the Word of God has been the dominant influence. At this point, however, the word of Satan enters to tempt Adam and Eve and to challenge the Word of God. Adam and Eve choose evil over good, and God quickly answers their sin and the work of Satan with His own word of promise and judgment.

The essence of the promise is that God will bring forth a seed from the woman that will conquer the evil one. Before that ultimate victory occurs, however, there will be constant conflict between the offspring of the woman and the offspring of the evil one. The promise of a seed of the woman is spoken as a word of judgment to the serpent (rather than as a promise of relief to the couple) because as the threat in Eden was directed ultimately toward God and His rule, so also God's response answers primarily toward His rule. Thus, he does not introduce this seed or Messiah as the answer to the salvation of man *per se* but as the conqueror of evil who will destroy the threat to God's government. This all-important section then introduces that Word and promise of God which He progressively and faithfully works to fulfill in the outworking of human history as recorded in Genesis. God will indeed answer this threat with a seed whom He will select and through whom He will bless. The rest of history records how this promise is realized.

3B *The Word of God is Fulfilled in the First Generation of the Seeds* 4:1-26

1C The growing conflict caused by the evil seed 4:1-24

As God promised, conflict would arise between those who shared the nature of their father the devil and those through whom God would bless. Cain demonstrated his heritage by his response to God and by murdering his righteous brother. By this, Eve's wish that she had given birth to a deliverer was proven untrue. Cain was not the one who would conquer evil but was himself conquered by evil. In His grace, however, God counseled and protected Cain, but no amount of kindness would change his nature.

Cain's son not only imitated his father but boastfully sunk to lower depths of sin. Lamech, conquered and mastered by evil, confronted God and acted in haughty anger and pride. He boasted that even though God protected his father, Cain, he (Lamech) could protect himself better than God could. Furthermore, while Cain murdered only one time and out of anger, Lamech gloated that he *delighted* in taking life.

- 2C The preservation of the righteous seed 4:25-26
 Although men were overcome, by evil God was faithful to his promise by raising up a seed in each generation through whom He would bless. This section notes that God did not leave Himself without a testimony through men who called upon Him. Godly men have always recognized their dependence upon God.
- 3A **God's Word of Election Selects One in Each Generation as His Seed in the Progressive Conflict with Evil** 5:1 – 6:8
 Having seen the introduction of evil and its initial development, it is now necessary to trace the promise of God in selecting and preserving the godly seed.
- 1B *The Election of the Godly Seed From Adam* 5:1-32
 Adam (who believed) and Seth (in whose days men called on God) are the men who represent the godly line, the seed of the woman. And yet each of these men dies without conquering the evil one, thus producing a sense, not of defeat, but of expectancy, waiting for the seed who will overcome. Moses dramatizes this hope through the prophecy of the godly Lamech (5:29) who stated that Noah would be the one to give rest from the curse. Although Noah was not the ultimate seed, he prefigured the seed and was the instrument through which God brought some rest from the conflict with evil in Noah's generation.
- 2B *The Conflict Deepens the Breakdown in the Created Order* 6:1-8
 Unfortunately, the godly seed was not the only (nor even the dominant) seed upon the earth at this time. The wickedness of this generation sets the stage for supernatural intervention to preserve and advance the promise of 3:15. The reference to the Nephilim, most likely offspring of the sons of men and daughters of God, is not necessarily an attack upon the godly line. It could be a breakdown in the created order, a super-human race. If these were wicked beings, they would also no doubt dominate others.
- 4A **God's Word Brings Judgment on Evil and Delivers Righteous Noah Through the Flood to Introduce a New World Order** 6:9 – 9:28
 Lest evil completely overcome the godly line, God spoke a word of judgment upon the earth through flood, thus destroying evil and preserving the godly seed. After this catastrophe, a new order of life is introduced.
- 1B *God's Word of Preparation* 6:9 – 7:5
 Noah receives his highest commendation at the beginning of this narrative, which is unlike the last view of him as a man overcome by wine.
- 2B *God's Act of Judgment* 7:6 – 8:19
 The flood clearly shows God as judge of His creation. In order to preserve holiness on the earth, God sacrifices everything else. This judgment should encourage Israel, who would realize that men cannot live their lives in immoral abandon apart from God and not pay the price. As God delivered the recipients of his grace through waters of judgment, so also He would deliver Israel from Egypt through the waters of the Red Sea.
- 3B *The New Order of Life* 9:1-17
 Following the pattern of His original creation, God also separates the waters from the dry land and commissions man to be fruitful and multiply and to have dominion over the animals. This time, however, his dominion will not be total because the animals will be afraid of man rather than obedient to him. Additionally, God gives new laws designed to protect life and promises that this kind of destruction would not happen again.
- 4B *God's Word Through Noah Separates Shem from Canaan* 9:18-29
 In the original creation, God planted a garden for Adam; here, Noah must plant his own. Unfortunately, he is not able to control himself with the fruit of the garden and, unlike Adam in the original state, shames himself by his nakedness. Although his character was stated as

blameless before, Noah demonstrates here that he is not the final seed to come. The cursing of Canaan demonstrates that the blessing of God would come through Shem rather than Ham or Canaan. This record also sets the foreign policy of Israel against the Canaanites in Deuteronomy 20:16-18.

5A God's Word of Judgment Comes Upon the Families Which Settle in the New World in Order to Thwart Corporate Rebellion 10:1 – 11:9

As soon as the sons of Noah repopulated the earth, all of mankind joined together in a unified defiance of God. In order to preserve His promised seed, God thwarted corporate rebellion by dividing the world into separate nations by languages.

1B *The Descendants Of Those Who Were Cursed And Those Who Were Blessed* 10:1-32

Moses apparently used this ancient table of nations to clarify which of Noah's descendants would experience blessing and which would experience cursing. Although this information appears before the record of the division of languages (chapter 11), the genealogical lines are traced all the way down to the nations which came from each of Noah's sons, a clear result of chapter 11. Unlike other genealogical records in Genesis, much of the material in this section deals with the geographical and political distributions of the nations (cf. 10:5; 20, 31). Of particular interest to Moses was the record of the Canaanites, material which would have been useful in Holy War.

2B *Their Unified Defiance* 11:1-4

The apparent goal of mankind was to outwit God through corporate defiance. They desired to deify themselves (11:4) by means of a corporate will. Ironically and justly, what they feared most—scattering—came upon them. The satanic goal was to have a kingdom without God.

3B *The Judgment of Diversified Human Languages* 11:5-9

This narrative provides a fitting conclusion for this section of the book; it describes the families of the earth scattered throughout the world without hope or promise. This sets the stage for God to choose one of these families through whom He will bless and will one day reunify the world under one pure language (Zephaniah 3:9-11). The miracle at Pentecost was merely a foretaste of this future event.

6A God's Word of Election Continues to Select One of Each Generation as His Seed Until Abram 11:10-26

In distinction to 10:1-32, which concerns the political and geographical boundaries of the descendants of Noah's sons (cf. 10:5, 20, 31), this section is purely genealogical. Faithful to the promise of Genesis 3:15, God preserves a representative of his promise of a godly seed in each generation. This section traces and narrows the line from Shem to Abram.

Section 2 Patriarchal History

11:27--50:26

1A God's Promise to Abram Separates him from All Natural Resources and Blesses him in Dependence on and Obedience to God Alone 11:27 – 25:11

This section propels the promise of 3:15 forward by showing the progressive unfolding of the promise and further selection of the line of the promised seed. Although the author has quite deliberately traced the line of the seed in the book, the promise to Abram represents the first major advancement of the promise since Adam.

The promise to Abram comes at the end of a downward spiral of human degeneration and divine judgment. God has judged the wickedness of man through the flood and through Babel. And although God has worked sovereignly, irrupting into history to restrain evil, evil has not been overcome. Even the elect seeds of Genesis 1-11 have been overcome by evil rather than vice versa. The one man who was considered righteous (Enoch) was taken by God and thus could not be the deliverer. Although Noah appeared as a kind of deliverer, he himself is overcome by evil after the

flood. Thus, the question in the mind of the reader at this point is simply, “Is God finished with men? Has His patience with man come to an end after Babel? Will He respond in grace to fulfill His promise?” By calling Abram, persistently being gracious, and selecting His seed, God answers these questions and confirms the promise of 3:15. Thus, 12-50 extend and expand the original promise.

In this section God first calls and separates Abram from his natural resources. He then confirms His promise to him through a series of events and finally transfers the promises from Abram to his promised son, Isaac.

1B *God Separates Abram from His Natural Resources* 11:27 – 14:24

This section demonstrates the hand of God working to separate and protect Abram in spite of his lack of faith. Although Abram is often slack and compromising in his obedience, God is faithful as He actively advances His promise in this generation.

1C Background 11:27-32

This section contributes several necessary facts to the story. First, it demonstrates that Abram did not leave his father’s household as God commanded in 12:1. Only after Terah died did Abram “leave” his father as God commanded, and even then he did not leave his household and his people. Nevertheless, God worked providentially to help Abram leave his country and family. Second, the section adds that Sarai was unable to have children, thus providing the backdrop of impossibility for the promise of the seed. Third, it confirms the tracing of the elect seed from Terah to Abram.

2C God issues a call to Abram 12:1-9

This call and blessing magnify and specify the original promise. The seven-fold aspect of the promise is the new basis of hope for those looking for God to reestablish His rule. God promised, “I will:

- 1) make you a great nation
- 2) bless you
- 3) make your name great
- 4) make you a blessing
- 5) bless those who bless you
- 6) curse those who curse you
- 7) bless all people through you.”

God also promised the *land* to Abraham in 12:7, a clause not originally included in the promise.

3C God protects Abram in Egypt 12:10-20

This is a practical demonstration of the promises which God gave to Abram. In spite of how Abram disobeyed by leaving the land and how his careless and selfish treatment of Sarai endangered the one through whom the seed would come, God supernaturally protected Abraham and cursed Pharaoh, who had unconsciously cursed Abraham by taking his wife. In this experience, Abram is a type of the nation who would go down to Egypt only to be supernaturally delivered by God.

4C God separates Abram and Lot and subsequently blesses them 13:1-18

Once Abram is back in the land, God continues to fulfill His promise for him.

1D God separates Abram 13:1-13

Just as God had to fulfill the command of “Go and leave your father” etc., for Abram with the death of his father, so now Abram fails to disenfranchise himself from his nephew, so that God had to accomplish the command providentially using the conflict between the herdsmen of the two men.

- 2D God reiterates His promise of the land and expands His promise of the seed 13:14-18
While the land promise was not implicit in 12:1-3, the seed promise was. When God promised to make from Abram a “great nation,” implicit in that promise was a host of descendants. In this section, the land and descendants are coupled together. Possessing the land would be meaningless without offspring to fill and enjoy it. This promise is even more a matter of faith because of Sarai’s barrenness.
- 5C God uses Abram to deliver and bless 14:1-24
In fulfillment of His promise to Abram, God works through him to deliver.
- 1D God delivers Lot 14:1-16
In this experience, the reader can see in a microcosm how God will deliver his people through Abram’s seed.
- 2D Abram trusts God 14:17-24
Abram refuses any kind of reward from Sodom, evidently in faith that God will bless Him.

This section shows that although Abram will act as the deliverer and foreshadow his ultimate descendant in doing so, there is a necessary function—priest—which Abram himself does not perform. In this regard, Abram provides an incomplete prefiguring of his ultimate Descendant.
- 2B *God Confirms His Commitment to Bless and Give Descendants* 15:1 – 22:19
Although sometimes failing, Abram’s faith is tested and matures as God confirms His promise to him.
- 1C God restates and expands the promise 15:1-21
God clarifies the significance of the promise to Abraham by telling him that the *seed* will be from his own body. Abram responds in faith, so God rewards and assures this faith by the covenant of the animals, emphasizing the unilateral nature of this promise. Moses gives specificity to the promise by giving the boundaries of the land (15:18-21).
- 2C God’s promise to Abram conflicts with human culture and human effort 16:1-15
After God clarified that Abram’s seed would come through his own body, Abram attempts to achieve the fulfillment through human machinations. This results in immediate conflict with Sarai (16:5, 6) and eventual conflict between Ishmael and all his brothers (16:12). Thus, Abram must be separated from his old way of thinking to full faith in God.
- 3C God commands a sign of the promise and expands the promise 17:1-27
In this appearance to Abram, God further expands on the promise by stating that *kings* would issue from him and that this people would have a special relation to God. The sign of circumcision was an obligatory sign of faith in the promise to Abram and his descendants.

God further specifies Sarai as the mother of Abram’s son who, along with some of his descendants, will receive the promised blessings of God.
- 4C God separates a seed from the world 18:1 – 19:29
In an act of intimate fellowship, God comes in person to specify the fulfillment of the promise of Abraham and Sarah’s son. He informs Abraham that the promise will be fulfilled one year later. After this promise, the LORD judges the wickedness of Sodom. The contrast of the hospitality afforded by Abraham and by the Sodomites to their visitors demonstrates the differences in their hearts. The last story in this section records the wicked results in Lot’s family because he does not separate from the world, thus

Comment: Do you want to signal here that their names are changing?

highlighting the necessity for and wisdom of God's plan.

- 5C God preserves Sarah for the sake of the promise 20:1-18
God providentially protects His people in this story by guarding the purity of Sarah, who would bear the promised son.
- 6C God's promises to bless and give descendants partly fulfilled in Abraham's generation 21:1-34
While not fulfilled ultimately in Abraham's lifetime, God's promises are given form in Abraham's life as his wife gives birth to a son, conflict arises between the promised son and his brother, and the people of the land recognize God's hand upon Abraham and seek peace with him.
- 7C God confirms Abraham's faith in the promises 22:1-19
Through a test with his son, Abraham's faith in God's promise to provide a seed is confirmed. Even though Abraham had faltered at the promise by his compromise with Hagar, he now understood that God would either raise up another seed or raise this seed back to life if he died on the altar.
- 3B *The Promises Transition to Isaac through Faithful Abraham* 22:20 – 25:11
The promises did not die with Abraham; they were passed on to his heir. This section records the transition of the promises from one generation to the next.
- 1C The birth of Isaac's wife 22:20-24
All-important to the continuation of the godly line was the provision of a wife for Isaac.
- 2C The death of Isaac's mother 23:1-20
The narrative here points to Abraham's status as a stranger in the land and to the stark reality that the promises are yet unfulfilled. Although the heir of all, Abraham does not control the land at all. In this episode, he is, in effect, swindled and abused by the inhabitants of the land when he looks for a burial plot for his wife. The reader is encouraged thereby to anticipate the time when the seed will inherit all the land.
- 3C The marriage of Isaac 24:1-67
The key element in this story is how God providentially works through His faithful servants. Though at any point Eleazar's plans could have failed, God caused him to enjoy success in attaining the mother of the seed in this generation.
- 4C The death of Isaac's father 25:1-11
Before Abraham's death, another fulfillment of God's promise (that he would be the father of many nations) is recorded. Abraham, wisely recognizing the potential hazard which his other heirs could cause Isaac, sent his other sons far away from the promised land.
- 2A **God's Account of Ishmael's Sons Trace Those Who Are Not in the Promised Seed** 25:12-18
Ishmael too was a son of Abraham, so God tells what became of his line. This section also records the fulfillment of the prophecies of 21:18 that he would be a great nation (25:16) and also of 16:12 that he would be a hostile person (25:18).
- 3A **God's Promises to Jacob Separate Him From His Natural Deception to Trust in God and Bless Him Although He is Repeatedly Conquered by Self Will** 25:19 – 35:29
More than with any other patriarch, the story of Jacob is the story of the nation. It is by divine design that she shares his name. In his self-will, deception with men, and struggle with God, Jacob's experiences reflect those of the nation. By God's grace, however, his character is changed and Israel, the one who struggles with God, is conquered by God, in whom he finally learns to trust.
- 1B *The Promises Transfer to Jacob Rather Than to Esau* 25:19 – 28:22
While the customary recipient of patriarchal blessing was the eldest male, in this family the

elder would serve the younger. God intended to choose Jacob over Esau, but Jacob's deception and selfishness produced a tangled web of bitterness and compromise. The theme of this section is how Jacob shamefully acquires the blessings from Isaac.

- 1C The foretaste of Jacob's struggle for and eventual inheritance of the blessings 25:19-34
At the outset of these four chapters, Jacob's struggle is foreshadowed by the prophecy given at his birth (that the elder would serve the younger) and by his first deception as he stole Esau's birthright.
- 2C God's blessing evidenced in Isaac's life 26:1-35
That Jacob had reason to desire the blessings of his father is made clear in this section. Isaac clearly had received God's blessings, both verbal and practical. God verbally confirmed His promises to Isaac, protected Isaac's wife as He had protected Abraham's wife, and blessed Isaac and his neighbors through him.
- 3C Esau's unfitness to receive the blessing 26:34-35
Esau's marriage with Canaanite women caused grief for his parents. This demonstrates how foolish Isaac's later attempt to bless him was.
- 4C Jacob's deception for the blessing 27:1-40
In Jacob's and Rebekah's scheming attempt to carry out the plan by human effort, they hopelessly complicated the issue until all parties were alienated from each other. Isaac and Esau are angry with Rebekah and Jacob. Rebekah never again sees her beloved son, and the relationship between Jacob and Esau is so strained that Jacob had to flee for his life.
- 5C Patriarchal confirmation of the blessing: Jacob's flight to safety 27:41 – 28:9
Isaac willingly confirmed the blessing he had given to Jacob and sent him on his way to find a wife from among his father's family, as Isaac's father had done for him.
- 6C Divine confirmation of Jacob's inheritance of the promised blessing 28:10-22
While Jacob was traveling to Paddan Aram, God spoke to him in a dream to confirm His presence with him and His blessing on him. This blessing and promise to return Jacob to the land culminate in Jacob's life in chapter 35 when he returns to Bethel. However, Jacob seems to respond as an unregenerate by vowing to serve God if God first keeps His promises.
- 2B *God's Blessings Evidenced on Jacob Even While He Sojourns in a Foreign Land* 29:1 – 32:32
God used Jacob's time of sojourning to hone his character and humble his pride. Through a series of hard lessons and undeserved blessings, God confirms His promises to be with Jacob and to prosper him.
- 1C God disciplines Jacob 29:1-30
One of the main instruments of education that God used in Jacob's life was Laban, who deceived Jacob as Jacob had deceived others.
- 2C God blesses Jacob 29:31 – 30:43
God gives life in spite of human efforts. God blessed Jacob both with a large family and with large herds. In both cases, people attempted to manipulate the outcome; nevertheless, the prosperous results were from the hand of God rather than man. God chose Leah, the despised mother, to be the mother of Judah and Levi. In spite of Jacob's lack of faith, God faithfully blessed him in his sojourning. God is clearly the hero of this story.
- 3C God protects Jacob as he returns to the land of promise 31:1-55
Even though it was God's will for Jacob to leave, the whole affair was tangled and desperately complicated by Jacob's self-will. When he deceptively left his father-in-law, Laban's evil intentions were thwarted by a direct warning from God. Sadly, Jacob's

deception was reproduced in his family when Rachel not only stole her father's household idols but also lied about her theft. This protection of Jacob as he returned should have encouraged Israel while fleeing her enemies and moving toward the land of promise.

4C Jacob prepares to meet Esau 32:1-32

Jacob's preparation to meet Esau is a strange mixture of fear and faith. God assures Jacob of divine protection by the presence of angels. Like in the passage describing his dream at Bethel when he departed from the land (28:10-22), this passages use the term "angels of God" (the only occurrences in the OT), and Jacob interprets what he sees and then names the spot. In fear Jacob attempts to save himself by sending gifts to pacify his brother. He also offers a prayer for safety to God wisely based upon the promises of God to him.

The climax of this section, however is Jacob's struggle with God. Jacob, the deceitful fighter, was crippled by a supernatural blow. He had struggled all his life with God to obtain His blessings and now God crippled his human strength. The touch of God dislocated his thigh, the strongest part of the wrestler. Jacob had to learn that his carnal weapons were useless; he could not enter the promised land on his own strength. He had to admit and reveal his character (heel-catcher, or deceiver) before he could obtain his blessing. This lesson should have taught Israel as well that her victories over the nations would not come by natural means such as armies but by humble submission to her God.

3B *Jacob Returns to the Land Filled with Danger and Corruption* 33:1 – 35:29

Jacob's return to the land is full of danger from family and foe alike. God preserves him through it all, however, and Jacob responds in true worship at the place where God first spoke to him when he fled from the land at Bethel. At the end of this section, the deaths of three prominent figures (Rebekah's nurse, Rachel, and Isaac) and the birth of Joseph signal the transition from one generation to another.

1C Jacob reconciles with Esau 33:1-17

Due to God's work in his heart, Esau was eager to be reconciled to his brother. God protected Jacob in this even though both before and after Jacob attempted to manipulate events for his own preservation. When meeting Esau, Jacob placed his family before him to win Esau's favor. After the meeting, Jacob agreed to reconvene at a particular spot with Esau but instead went deceptively in the opposite direction.

2C Danger of corruption in the land: Dinah is defiled 34:1-31

Israel would learn the costly lesson of mixing with the Canaanites in the story of Dinah's defilement. She would also learn however the seriousness of breaking one's covenant even when made with people of the land. Simeon and Levi were later passed over in the blessing with the birthright for their deceptive actions here (49:5-7). Sadly, Jacob's character is reflected in his children as well as in his wife.

3C Jacob returns to Bethel 35:1-15

Jacob's concern with purity and return to worship God indicates his growing appreciation of the God he serves. God in turn responds to this act of true worship by confirming the promises to Jacob. Also significant in this section is the mention of the death of Rebekah's nurse. This is the beginning of the end of Jacob's generation; the focus of the story now moves to his sons.

4C Completion of the youngest and corruption of the eldest 35:16-22

The birth of Joseph and the death of Rachel also indicate the passing of a generation. Connected to the mention of Joseph, the seed chosen to rule in this generation, Reuben's unfitness for that role is seen in his sin with his father's concubine. Whether this was due to simple lust or a more calculated design to usurp his father's role of leader, he shows himself unfit for the leadership role which will fall to his youngest brother, Joseph.

- 5C Summary of the twelve sons 35:23-26
 Since the focus of the story now moves to the twelve sons who collectively are the *seed* in this generation, their genealogy of sorts is now listed.
- 6C Death of Isaac 35:27-29
 This, the third death in the section, signals the end of the story of Isaac and his immediate family.
- 4A **God's Account of Esau Traces Those Who Are Not in the Promised Seed** 36:1-8
 This account stresses that, contrary to God's plan for his brother and father, Esau took Canaanite wives and goods. The motif of God separating Abram and Lot (cf. 13:6 and 36:7, 8— "Their possessions were too great for them to remain together . . . so Esau settled") is repeated here, emphasizing that God has separated the chosen seed for the land.
- 5A **God's Account of Esau, the Father of Edomites, Traces Those Who Did Not Inherit the Promises** 36:9 – 37:1
 Just as Isaac was the father of a great nation, Esau was also the father of many chiefs who prospered in their land. The contrast, however, was that Esau's descendants did not dwell in the land promised to Abraham but dwelled in Edom. They did not inherit the promises that Isaac and his descendants did. The final word in this section notes that Jacob did live in the land of promise (37:1).
- 6A **God's Word of Election to Jacob's Family Results in Joseph's Conflict with the Evil One and in His Deliverance of His Family for Blessing** 37:2 – 50:26
- 1B *Joseph's Position in the Family Separates Him from His Brothers* 37:2-36
 God's selection of Joseph from his brothers is one of role among the chosen sons. The rest of his brothers are also chosen seed but do not play the part of the deliverer as Joseph would for his brothers. From the beginning, his brothers were jealous of the divine privilege accorded to him. Reuben, the eldest, who should have been responsible, was unable to restrain his brothers from selling Joseph; Judah, who became the *de facto* leader, orchestrated the sale. Judah's role with Joseph and later with Benjamin is a significant barometer of the brothers' attitude toward the sons and husband of Rachel.
- 2B *Joseph's Character Separates Him from His Brothers and to the LORD* 38:1 – 39:23
 The character of Judah, the natural leader of the group (as demonstrated by his dealings with Joseph, the Midianites, and Benjamin) is deliberately contrasted with the character of Joseph to demonstrate why God chose the younger over the elder.
- 1C The wickedness of Judah 38:1-30
 Judah's treachery of not giving his youngest son to Tamar and his engagement with a supposed prostitute illustrate his lack of principle.
- 2C The integrity of Joseph 39:1-23
 Jacob's continual righteousness in the face of a temptation similar to Judah's exemplifies godly character and a complete contrast with Judah, the leader of his brothers. Four times in this chapter, the author mentions that Joseph was successful because God was with him.
- 3B *Joseph's Position in Egypt Enables him to Deliver his Family and Separate Them for Blessing* 40:11 – 50:26
 As the leader of the chosen seed in this generation, Joseph's righteous behavior allows him to overcome evil and typify the ultimate seed to come as God uses him to deliver his family from themselves and from extinction. In the future, the seed (Jesus) will test (in the tribulation) his brothers (Israel) to bring about repentance that they might not make the same mistake of rejecting their brother (Jesus) again and rather accept him.
- 1C God's selection of Joseph demonstrated in his providential rise to leadership 40:1 – 41:57
 Although failed by men who forgot him, Joseph is extracted from prison by God who

enables him to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. Pharaoh recognizes God's blessing on Joseph and elevates him to the second position in the kingdom. God uses Joseph in this position to bless not only Egypt and her Pharaoh but also other nations as they came to Egypt to find relief from the famine. In this generation, Joseph is a seed through whom God blessed all nations of the earth in partial yet faithful fulfillment of His promise to Abraham.

- 2C Joseph tests his brothers to purge their hearts of deception and scheming to repentance toward God and love for their father 42:1 – 44:34

Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. Although he could immediately deliver them from the famine, he intended to test them to see if their hearts had changed since they despised their father by selling their brother. The best test which he could arrange was a duplication of the first test. Joseph placed another of Rachel's sons, Benjamin, the delight of his father's heart, in jeopardy to see if the brothers would "sell" him by putting their interests first (as they had Joseph) or protect him by subordinating their interests to his.

Significantly, Judah, who had administered Joseph's sale, again took leadership, but this time in a positive manner. When Judah offered to sacrifice his own well-being, Joseph could see that Judah's heart had indeed changed and that forgiveness based upon his brothers' repentance was at last possible.

Interestingly, the text notes twice (46:34 and 43:32) that both Israel's identity (Hebrews) and occupation (shepherding) were detestable to the Egyptians; God would providentially use both of those to keep his nation separate in Egypt.

- 3C Joseph forgives and receives his brothers and family 45:1 – 47:12

Joseph forgave his brothers and was used by God to provide for them in Egypt. God worked in the heart of Pharaoh to accept those who were generally unacceptable to Egypt and to provide the best environment for them. Joseph is reunited with his father, to the delight of both people.

- 4C Jacob and Pharaoh are blessed through Joseph 47:13-27

God continued to bless through Joseph and to provide for His own.

- 5C The provision for the continuation of the promised blessing 47:28 – 50:26

At the end of the book, though deliverance has come through Joseph, the blessing is passed on to the twelve sons from Jacob. He issues a double blessing, normally reserved for the eldest, to Joseph by giving him a double inheritance. Both of his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, become equal heads of tribes along with their uncles. As with the three previous generations (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), the younger (Ephraim) was chosen ahead of the older (Manasseh).

The rest of Jacob's sons are blessed according to their character. Judah, who proved to be a worthy leader in the end, will be blessed by his position of ruling in Israel.

Finally, both Jacob and Joseph express faith in the promises of God as they die. Jacob desired to be buried in the land of promise, implying that God's promises were incomplete but would be fulfilled. Joseph also commanded that his bones be carried back to the promised land in the Exodus. Hebrews 11:22 selects this as Joseph's great act of faith. Thus the book ends with significant progress toward the fulfillment of God's promise of 3:15 and with expectancy and justified confidence that much more was to come.

