

Creation, Sin and Reconciliation

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*Reading Primordial
and Patriarchal Narrative
in the Book of Genesis*

By

Robert Ignatius Letellier

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Fig. 1. Frontispiece: Creation, Sin and the Flood (Meister Bertram von Minden: Grabow Altar, 1375-83)

18 I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; 20 for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; 21 because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; 23 and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. (Rom 8:18-25)

17 Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. 18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. (2 Cor 5: 17-19)

28 We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brothers. (Rom 8:28-29)

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LIST OF BIBLICAL ABBREVIATIONS

The Old Testament

Am	Amos	Josh	Joshua
1 Chron	1 Chronicles	Judg	Judges
2 Chron	2 Chronicles	1 Kgs	1 Kings
Dan	Daniel	2 Kgs	2 Kings
Deut	Deuteronomy	Lam	Lamentations
Eccles	Ecclesiastes (Qoheleth)	Lev	Leviticus
Est	Esther	Mal	Malachi
Ex	Exodus	Mic	Micah
Ezk	Ezekiel	Nah	Nahum
Ezr	Ezra	Neh	Nehemiah
Gen	Genesis	Num	Numbers
Hab	Habakkuk	Obad	Obadiah
Hag	Haggai	Prov	Proverbs
Hos	Hosea	Ps (pl. Pss)	Psalms
Is	Isaiah	Ruth	Ruth
Jer	Jeremiah	1 Sam	1 Samuel
Job	Job	2 Sam	2 Samuel
Joel	Joel	Song	Song of Songs
Jon	Jonah	Zech	Zechariah
		Zeph	Zephaniah

The Deutero-Canonical Books

Bar	Baruch
Ecclus	Ecclesiasticus (=Sirach)
Jud	Judith
1 Macc	1 Maccabees
2 Macc	2 Maccabees
Sir	Sirach (=Ecclesiasticus)
Tob	Tobit
Wis	Wisdom (=Wisdom of Solomon)

Apocrypha

1 Esd	1 Esdras
2 Esd	2 Esdras

The New Testament

Acts	Acts of the Apostles
Apoc	Apocalypse (=Revelation)
Col	Colossians
1 Cor	1 Corinthians
2 Cor	2 Corinthians
Eph	Ephesians
Gal	Galatians
Heb	Hebrews
Jas	James
Jn	John (Gospel)
1 Jn	1 John (Epistle)
2 Jn	2 John (Epistle)
3 Jn	3 John (Epistle)
Jude	Jude
Lk	Luke
Mk	Mark
Mt	Matthew
1 Pet	1 Peter
2 Pet	2 Peter
Philm	Philemon
Phil	Philippians
Rev	Revelation (=Apocalypse)
Rom	Romans
1 Thess	1 Thessalonians
2 Thess	2 Thessalonians
1 Tim	1 Timothy
2 Tim	2 Timothy
Tit	Titus

All citations from Scripture, unless otherwise stated, are from the Revised Standard Version (1881).

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FOREWORD

The world is increasingly taken up with the endless wonders of the universe. Photographs of Pluto and constant new discoveries have brought the mysteries of the cosmos and of creation to the fore in human consciousness. On the beautiful Earth, gloriously green and blue and fresh from outer space, the threats of global warming, overpopulation, ecological disaster and human conflict grow every day. War and hatred and the flight of migrants clamour for our attention. The need for peace, for human reconciliation, has never been greater.

The enigma of creation, the mystery of the origins of life, the paradoxes of humanity and the human condition, are the subject of the Book of Genesis, and the wonderful stories that make up its content have intrigued us for centuries as in every generation we grapple with the fundamentals of our origins and behaviour as men and women living in a huge and complex global society.

This study considers how to read Genesis and how to interpret its ageless stories. Every generation through the ages has interpreted these differently, and found new meanings in the endless riches of its ageless fables.

This study is an act of exploration and comparison. It looks at reading the beginning middle and end of Genesis closely, and then placing these various elements in theological, mythic and historical contexts. It also brings modern ideas to bear, including, science, ecology, and psychology.

But this study is also an act of remembrance, recalling the seminars and lectures held at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome in the 1980s, and the inspiring classes of Jean-Louis Ska SJ. It is a tribute to him and his teaching, and to the memory of other mentors and colleagues, especially those who were known and loved then, and have died and gone before us, especially Fabrizio Foresti OCD and Sister Rosemary Ngoma.

Robert Ignatius Letellier
Cambridge
15 August 2015

INTRODUCTION

THE BIBLE: NARRATIVE AND SYMBOLISM

The power of narrative as an instructive and entertaining factor in life is overwhelming. Folk tales and the closely aligned fairy tales provide the most fundamental examples of such universal story-telling. These tales touch on something very deep; they provide a link with elements of the great universal unconscious that shapes human experience and expectations. Only if a fairy tale met the conscious and unconscious requirements of many people was it repeatedly retold, and listened to with great interest. The same applies to the endlessly fascinating and perplexing topic of dreams. No dream of a person could arouse much persistent interest unless it was worked into a myth, as was the story of the Pharaoh's dreams as interpreted by Joseph in the Bible (Gen 41).

The Bible, and other examples of religious literature, are said to contain the answers to our questions about life. Why was I born? Where do I come from? Where am I going, especially after death? Is there life after death? What is the purpose of my life, with all its perplexities and disappointments, all its sorrows and transient joys? As long as parents fully believed that Biblical stories solved the riddle of our existence and its purpose, it was easy to make a child feel secure. The Bible is supposed to contain the answers to all pressing questions. But whatever the richness of the Bible stories, not even during the most religious of times were these stories understood to be sufficient for meeting the psychic needs of man. And this is partly because while the Old and New Testaments and the histories of the saints have provided answers to the crucial questions of how to live the good life, they did not offer solutions for the problems posed by the darker and unresolved/irresolvable sides of our personalities.

Explicitly and implicitly the Bible speaks to us of God, our relationship with him, of God's demands on man. All the Scriptures speak of God's love for mankind, and his desire to save us. And while we are told that there is greater rejoicing about a sinner who reformed than about a man who never erred (Lk 15:7), the message is still that we ought to live the

good life. We should never, for example, take cruel revenge on those who have done us wrong, or on those whom we hate. As the story of Cain and Abel shows, there is no sympathy in the Bible for the agonies of sibling rivalry—only a warning that acting on it has devastating consequences (Gen 4:1-17). Children, however, need support for their still very tenuous belief that through growing up, working hard, and maturing, they will succeed in the end, even if there are sad and difficult experiences of pain or injustice. If present sufferings are to find compensation in the future, there is no need to act on the jealousy of the moment, the way Cain did. Like Bible stories and myths, fairy tales became a part of the literature which helped and edified everybody—children and adults alike—for nearly all of man's existence. And apart from the fact that God is central, many Bible stories can be recognized as sharing a number of the concerns and patterns of fairy tales.

The Bible is a collection of ancient texts put together over hundreds of years. How these books—all so different, by many different authors writing many different types of literature, from such various historical and social backgrounds—come to be together in this unique collection is a mystery of selection made over great stretches of time and informed by enduring and cherished traditions. What makes this process—the formation of the canon—so very special is the resultant interrelation of the 73 books with one another. All Bibles have a series of footnotes that indicate the great pattern of allusion that weaves the disparate books into an extraordinary relationship with one another, from the beginning of the created world in Genesis, to the advent of the new heaven and new earth in Revelation. The array of characters and events are placed in dynamic interaction determined by a series of recurring concepts and symbols that reinforce the underlying sense of kinship even more powerfully. Here are some of them: creation, wholeness/unity, Spirit, Word, wind/breath, light, darkness, cloud, water, life, name, day, time, food, eat, death, obedience, disobedience, temptation, disruption, sin, evil, suffering, illness, healing, judgement, punishment, conflict, betrayal, murder, rescue, redemption, sacrifice, thanksgiving, Sabbath, election, promise, prayer, song, covenant, testament, ark, circumcision, good news, mountain, holiness, glory, star, love, hope, marriage, justice, law, commandment, righteousness, wandering, the path (right or wrong), exodus, exile, shrine, promised land, wilderness, holy place, tabernacle, temple, holy city, pilgrimage, mission, ministry, scroll, seal, political leadership, discipleship, prophet, priest, king, crown, sceptre, sword, throne, wisdom, banquet, baptism, wheat, bread, vine, wine, fruit, oil, fish, lamb, sheep, shepherd, afterlife, heart,

servant, family, virgin, harlot, dove, sparrow, eagle, deer, locust, scorpion, olive, fig, cedar, gold, frankincense, myrrh, lily, weeds (tares), thorn, hyssop, heart, horse, horseman, chariot, ox, ass, camel. Imaginative energy has flowed from the variety and disposition of these rich semantic fields to other creative minds over the centuries, with so many literary perceptions and thought patterns of Western literature moulded by Biblical language.¹

Once all these mutually informing signs and symbols have been recognized, understood and placed in a dynamic relationship with one another across both the divides of divergent genre and historical origin, a peculiarly integrated literary work emerges. How does one best appreciate the inexhaustible linguistic treasures of the Bible? How are words used? How is their meaning determined? What happens when their meaning changes? What difference does it make when the Old and New Testaments are read in English when they were respectively written in Hebrew and Greek? Some words are not intended to be taken at face values, and particular problems can arise when non-literal language is used to give an interpretation and a value to historical events.²

How the text is read and interpreted is, of course, the key issue confronting the Bible and its continued place in society. The dangers of intransigent fanaticism, religious extremism, and a fundamentalist worship of sacred texts, have revealed themselves as enemies of tolerance, and even of civilized values. So how to read and understand the Bible is of immense importance. Given the incalculable role the Bible has played and continues to play in shaping the moral and value systems of so many in the world, the importance of an effective reading and interpretation cannot be overemphasized.

This study considers various aspects of the text of the Book of Genesis. As the first book of the Torah, and hence of the whole Bible, its position is unique, especially in its provision of the foundational stories of Creation, the emergence of humanity and the beginning of human society. The most direct and immediate way of reading the Bible is to confront the text as it is given, as it stands before one, and to read and engage with it as story or poem (the forms it most often comes to us in). There is a continuing lack of sufficient attention to the literary dimension of Biblical studies. While source criticism should play an integral role in literary interpretation, the final form of the text is crucial in this respect. The stories in Genesis reflect on issues of chosenness, nature and culture through patterns of

¹ See Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1981, 1982).

² See G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (London: Duckworth, 1980).

discriminations between those who receive the call and promise of election and those who do not.³ Sharpening one's reactions to the implications of story-telling can help to lead one into the text in the most complete and satisfying way: discerning the narrative patterns, structures and the use of words that determine story-telling can bring a whole new dimension to stories, even those that are very famous and perhaps even hackneyed.⁴

The Book of Genesis

Origins

Genesis, meaning "origin" (genealogical), covers the time from creation to the descent of Jacob and his sons into Egypt. The book is divided into a **Primeval History** focusing on all of humanity (Gen 1—11) and an **Ancestral History** focusing on the origins of Israel in Abraham and his descendants (Gen 12—50).

The **Primeval History** is made up of two major sections that parallel each other:

- 1) the Creation of the cosmos and stories of the first humans (1.1—6.4);
- 2) the Flood and dispersal of postdiluvian humanity (6.5—11.9).

The traditions in this section are similar to myths in other cultures, particularly in the Ancient Near East and Greece. The Mesopotamian *Atrahasis* epic was possibly written hundreds of years before Gen 1—11, and it parallels numerous elements of the biblical narrative: the creation of the world, a flood, and the vow of the gods not to destroy life with a flood again.

The **Ancestral History** grows out of the Primeval History, and narrates the story of God's choice of Abraham and the transmission of the divine promise (12:1-3) on to the Twelve Sons of Jacob/Israel, the progenitors of the people of Israel. These stories have strong affinity with oral folklore, and it is more difficult to find ancient textual parallels to Gen 12—50.

³ See Robert Kawashima, "Literary Analysis" in Craig Evans; Joel N. Lohr; and David L. Petersen (eds). *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

⁴ The classic discussion of this area of Biblical studies is provided by Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981).

Recent scholarship has nonetheless found similarities between Israelite tales about the Matriarchs and Patriarchs, and modern legends told in oral cultures. Certain individual narrative patterns or motifs can be discerned, especially in sections with a diversity of action (like the interwoven stories that make up Gen 18—19). There are recurrent motifs that are found in many folklores, like the depiction of the favouring of, and/or clever deceptions by, the younger brother over the elder brother: Ishmael and Isaac, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his Brothers, Ephraim and Manasseh (e.g., Gen 25:27-34; 27:1-45). These motifs parallel the celebration of wily “tricksters” in Native American, African and other traditions.⁵

Structure

Genesis is structured by a series of narrative pillars recounting the emergence of humanity and of the chosen family in the recurrence of genealogies, sets of **toledot** (“descendants”) headings that divide and unite the book, each guiding the reader to the major focus of the section that follows it (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1, 9; 37:2). These genealogies lead from a focus on the Primal World as a whole to the final focus on the Twelve Sons of Jacob. Other patterns also characterize these genealogically-defined sections, like the parallels between the antediluvian and postdiluvian stories of Gen 1—11.

These guides help to shape Genesis as follows.

- 1) The narrative opens with the **Primeval History**, creation and its aftermath (including Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel): 2.4—6.8.
- 2) It then moves to the **Flood and post-diluvian primeval history**, the re-creation of the world and replay of destructive patterns from before the Flood (Noah and his sons, the Tower of Babel): Gen 6.9—11.9.
- 3) Then follows a **genealogical bridge** to the ancestral history: 11.10-26.
- 4) The longest part of the narrative is the **Ancestral History**, the giving of the promise to the sons of Jacob/Israel: 11.28—50.26. This is in four parts:
 - 5) First, the bestowal of **the Promise to Abraham and divine election of Isaac** (not Ishmael) as heir of the promise (11.28—25.11);

⁵ See Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton University Press, 1948, 1967), p. 196 (Krishna as World Magician, the African Edshu, the Polynesian Maui).

- 6) Second, the divergent destinies of the descendants of Ishmael (25.12-18) and Isaac (**Esau and Jacob** in Gen 25.19—35.29);
- 7) Third, the divergent destinies of the **descendants of Esau** (36.1-43); and
- 8) Fourth, the sons of Jacob/Israel (**Joseph and his Brothers**) (Gen 37.1—50.26).

Theories of authorship

Genesis has been a **major focus of study** for almost every approach in biblical scholarship. Over 300 years of historical-critical scholarship, a consensus of opinion has proposed that Genesis was written over a long period of time, using oral and written traditions.

The work of Karl H. Graf in the 1860s and Julius Wellhausen in the 1870s suggested that the earliest origins of Genesis are probably to be found in secular or non-priestly material. There is still debate, however, about the history of the formation of that material. Over the last hundred years the theory arose that the bulk of this Non-Priestly source of Genesis was formed out of the combination of materials from two hypothesized Pentateuchal sources:

- a “Yahwistic” document (J) (using the ineffable name of God YHWH) written in the South during the reign of King David or King Solomon, and
- an “Elohistic” document (E) (using the form of God’s name ‘Elohim’) written one or two centuries later in the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

More recently, crucial elements of the hypothetical Yahwistic document are thought to date from four hundred years later, from the time of the Exile.

Most scholars now recognize that Genesis is a Post-Exilic combination of two bodies of material:

- 1) The **Priestly editorial layer or source** beginning with the seven-day creation account Gen 1.1—2.3. The **Priestly layer** encompasses most of the genealogies in Genesis, a version of the Flood Narrative that culminated in the Noah or Rainbow Covenant of Gen 9:7-17, the Covenant of Circumcision with Abraham in Gen 17:1-27, and related promise texts in Gen 26:34-35; 27:46-28.9;

35:9-15; and 48:3-6.⁶

- 2) The **Non-Priestly source** beginning with the Garden of Eden story in 2.4-3.24. This layer encompasses almost everything else.

By an editorial process of interweaving, the Priestly layer has been related to the Non-Priestly material integrally, and forms a framework for much of it. Debate continues as to the exact relationship between the Priestly and Non-Priestly material, and whether a large portion of the present Priestly layer in Genesis once may originally have been part of a Priestly source independent of the Non-Priestly material, and may perhaps have even been designed to replace it. The historical study of Genesis, going back as far as Ibn Ezra⁷, had already observed problems with the Priestly chronological notices that characteristically span Genesis.

Some specialists working with Genesis also no longer think there was an Elohist source. Rather than Non-Priestly material being formed out of interwoven Yahwistic and Elohist documents, perhaps the earliest written origins of the Non-Priestly material are to be found in a possibly Pre-Exilic independent document focusing on different parts of the story: a separate Primeval History (in the mode of the Babylonian *Atrahasis*) or the separate collections of the Abraham, Jacob and Joseph stories. Some think that the traditions of Genesis were added to the Moses story at a very late point.⁸ The early history of the written formation of Genesis and other books of the Torah remains an unresolved issue in Pentateuchal research.

Jean-Louis Ska provides a clear overview of the history of the source-critical hypotheses and why they are currently under attack. There is no longer unanimity about source criticism of the Pentateuch, and he shows how over the past 35 years the situation has become fragmented. Nothing can be taken for granted by anyone—not J, not P, not a Solomonic source or even an Exilic one for that matter (like his view on

⁶Cf. Jean-Louis Ska, “The Yahwist, a Hero With a Thousand Faces. A Chapter in the History of Modern Exegesis” in Jan Christian Gertz; Konrad Schmid; and Markus Witte (eds). *Abschied von Jahwisten. Die Komposition des Hexateuchs in der jüngsten Diskussionen* (Berlin and New York, 2002).

⁷Rabbi Abraham Ben Meir Ibn Ezra (Hebrew: עזרא אבן אברהם, Arabic: ابن عزرا; also known as *Abenezra*) (1089–1164) was born at *Tudela, Navarre* (now in Spain) in 1089, and died c. 1167, apparently in *Calahorra*. He was one of the most distinguished Jewish men of letters and writers of the *Middle Ages*. Ibn Ezra excelled in *philosophy, astronomy/astrology, mathematics, poetry, linguistics, and exegesis*; he was called *The Wise, The Great* and *The Admirable Doctor*.

⁸ See Konrad Schmid, “Genesis in the Pentateuch” in Craig Evans; Joel N. Lohr; and David L. Petersen (eds.). *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

Persian Imperial Authorization—the idea is that the Torah was the approved constitution of Yehud under the Persian Empire).⁹

Contexts: Genesis and the Pentateuch

As with all aspects of the Bible, some sense of context for this book and its themes is essential. The inner contexts emerge from analysis, but the relation of Genesis to the rest of the Pentateuch is particularly important. In *The Theme of the Pentateuch* (1978) David Clines took up the question of a unifying factor for these five books. For him the overall theme is “the partial fulfilment of the promise to or blessing of the Patriarchs” (‘partial’ because at the end of Deuteronomy the people are still outside the land of Canaan so integral to the special promise). The divine promise does indeed unite the Patriarchal cycles, but it is probably more productive to focus on the Abraham Cycle, the Jacob Cycle, and the Joseph Cycle, and the special contributions of the Yahwist and Priestly sources. The challenge lies in finding a way to unite the Patriarchal theme of divine promise to the stories of Genesis 1—11, the primeval history, or the primeval cycle, with the theme of God’s continuing mercy in the face of man’s sinful nature. One solution is to see the Patriarchal stories as resulting from God’s decision not to remain alienated from mankind: God creates the world and mankind, mankind rebels, and God “elects” (or chooses) Abraham, with beneficent implications, not only for the Chosen People of his family and race, but for the whole of humanity.

To this basic plot (originating with the Yahwist) the Priestly Writer has added a series of covenants dividing history into stages, each with its own distinctive symbol or sign. The first covenant is between God and all living creatures (Gen 9), and is marked by the sign of the rainbow; the second is with the descendants of Abraham (Ishmaelites and others as well as Israelites), and its sign is circumcision (Gen 17); and the third, in the book of Exodus, is with Israel alone, and the sign here is the Law underpinned by the Sabbath (Ex 20). Each covenant is mediated by a great leader (Noah, Abraham, Moses), and at each stage God progressively reveals himself by variation in his name (Elohim with Noah, El Shaddai with Abraham, YHWH with Moses).

⁹See Jean-Louis Ska, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch* (Eisenbrauns, 2006).

Genesis Today

In recent years other approaches to reading Genesis have emerged, particularly

- literary studies of Genesis in its present form and
- feminist re-readings of the many narratives in Genesis featuring women.

Some scholars have questioned whether the Garden of Eden story in Gen 2:4—3:24 is as critical of women as it has traditionally been thought to be. Others have highlighted the crucial role of Matriarchs as actors in the Genesis drama, especially as determiners of which son will inherit the promise (e.g., Sarah and Rebekah), or as influencing the levels of privilege among brothers (e.g., Rachel).

Because of the mythic and legendary character of much material in Genesis, it is no longer regarded as a fully reliable source of historical information. But because of its long process of formation, the Book of Genesis is able to address people of varying cultures and times. It is not just a collection of stories about a bygone age. It distils Israel's most fervent beliefs and hopes through the vectors of genealogy and vivid narrative that still resonate across the ages.¹⁰

¹⁰ For a full account of perspectives on the textual development and historical dating of the early chapters of Genesis, see Walter Buhrer, *Am Anfang ...: Untersuchungen zur Textgenese und zur Relativ-Chronologischen Einordnung von Gen 1-3* (Vandhoeck & Rupprecht, 2014).

A. PRIMORDIAL NARRATIVE: THE CREATION OF THE WORLD AND OF HUMANKIND

CREATION: GENESIS 1—2

- 1 Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, thou art very great! Thou art clothed with honor and majesty,*
- 2 who coverest thyself with light as with a garment, who hast stretched out the heavens like a tent,*
- 3 who hast laid the beams of thy chambers on the waters, who makest the clouds thy chariot, who ridest on the wings of the wind,*
- 4 who makest the winds thy messengers, fire and flame thy ministers.*
- 5 Thou didst set the earth on its foundations, so that it should never be shaken.*
- 6 Thou didst cover it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains.*
- 7 At thy rebuke they fled; at the sound of thy thunder they took to flight.*
- 8 The mountains rose, the valleys sank down to the place which thou didst appoint for them.*
- 9 Thou didst set a bound which they should not pass, so that they might not again cover the earth. (Psalm 104:1-9)*

1. GENESIS 1—2: THE BOOK OF BEGINNINGS

The nature of the book

Genesis, “the Book of Beginnings”, is the essential introduction to the entire Bible, the foundation of revealed truth. The book takes its name from the title given to it in the Septuagint, derived from the headings of its ten parts, *he biblos genesos* (2:4, 5:1, 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:11 37:2).

Genesis provides the record of nine beginnings:

1. The beginning of the earth as man’s habitation (1:1—2:3)
2. The beginning of the human race (2:4-25)
3. The beginning of human sin (3:1-7)
4. The beginning of redemptive revelation (3:8-24)
5. The beginning of the human family (4:1-15)
6. The beginning of godless civilization (4:16—9:29)
7. The beginning of the nations (10:1-32)
8. The beginning of human languages (11:1-9)
9. The beginning of the Hebrew race (the Covenant People) (11:10—50:26)

Genesis records ten family histories:

1. The generations of the heavenly posterity and the earthly seed (1:1-4:26)
2. The generations of Adam (5:1—6:8)
3. The generations of Noah (6:9-9:29)
4. The generations of Noah’s sons (10:1—11:9)
5. The generations of Shem (11:10-26)
6. The generations of Terah (11:27—25: 11)
7. The generations of Ishmael (25:12-18)
8. The generations of Isaac (25:19—35:29)
9. The generations of Esau (36:1—37:1)