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STUDY BIBLE

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The purpose and passion of International Bible Society is to faithfully translate, publish and reach out with God's Word so that people around the world may become disciples of Jesus Christ and members of his Body.

Genesis

OVERVIEW

The first book of the Bible, Genesis, covers the period from God's creation of the heavens and the earth through the Israelites' entrance into Egypt.

The first Hebrew word of this book means "beginning," and Genesis records a number of beginnings—that of the universe, the earth, plants, animals, humankind, sin, judgment, redemption and more. While women many times are listed as secondary players in the drama of Genesis, they actually play key roles in this book of beginnings and often shed light on the humanness of God's chosen people.

Adam and Eve failed the test of obedience to God, and each one incurred different consequences. God told Adam that the ground would be cursed because of his actions. And God announced to Eve that she would have pain in childbearing. Both consequences are just as evident today as they were then!

The Hebrew nation began with the call of Abram (see Ge 12), who was later renamed Abraham (see Ge 17). His wife, Sarai, renamed Sarah, served as the matriarch of the Hebrew race. It was through the Hebrews that God would introduce salvation to humanity.

God rewarded the elderly Abraham's faith with the birth of his promised son, Isaac. Sarah was overjoyed and laughed with delight (see Ge 21:6). Isaac grew up and married Rebekah. After a struggle with infertility, God blessed the couple with twin sons—Jacob and Esau. God selected the younger twin, Jacob (later renamed Israel), to become the progenitor of the covenant people—the Israelites. Jacob and his wives, Leah and Rachel, and their servants, Zilpah and Bilhah, had a total of 12 sons and one daughter. The book climaxes with Israel and his family in Egypt, where God used Israel's son Joseph to provide for their survival; from this family came the 12 tribes of Israel.



OUTLINE:

The phrase “the generations of,” repeated 11 times, points us to the outline of the book of Genesis. This phrase can be understood as the “record” or “story of.”

- I. The Story of Creation (Gen. 1—2:3)
- II. The Story of Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:4—4)
- III. The Story of Adam’s Descendants (Gen. 5—6:8)
- IV. The Story of Noah (Gen. 6:9—9:17)
- V. The Story of Noah’s Sons (9:18—11:9)
- VI. The Story of Shem’s Descendants (Gen. 11:10-26)
- VI. The Story of Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 11:27—25:11)
- VII. The Story of Ishmael, Hagar’s son (Gen. 25:12-18)
- VIII. The Story of Isaac and Rebekah (Gen. 25:19—27:40)
- IX. The Story of Esau, Jacob, Leah and Rachel (Gen. 27:41—33:20)
- X. The Story of Dinah and the Shechemites (Gen. 34:1-31)
- XI. The Story of Jacob, Esau and Joseph continued (Gen. 35—37:36)
- XII. The Story of Judah and Tamar (Gen. 38:1-30)
- XIII. The Completion of the story of Joseph (Gen. 39-50)

SCANNABLE FACTS:

Author: Moses

Time written: 1446 to 1406 B.C.

Key Themes: Creation, Flood, Beginning of the Hebrew Nation

Key Women: Eve, Sarah, Hagar, Rebekah, Rachel, Leah

The Beginning

1:1
a Jn 1:1–2
b Isa 42:5;
44:24; 45:12,18

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

1:3
c Ps 33:6,9
d Co 4:6*

³And God said,^e “Let there be light,” and there was light.^d 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.”^e And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

1:5
e Ps 74:16

1:6
f Jer 10:12

⁶And God said, “Let there be an expanse^f between the waters to separate water from water.” ⁷So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it.^g And it was so. ⁸God called the expanse “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

1:7
g Ps 148:4

⁹And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place,^h 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.

1:9
h Ps 104:6–9;
Jer 5:22; 2Pe 3:5

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.” 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.

1:14
i Ps 74:16
j Ps 104:19

¹⁴And God said, “Let there be lightsⁱ in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons^j and days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so. ¹⁶God made two great lights—the greater light to govern^k the day and the lesser light to govern^l the night. He also made the stars.^m ¹⁷God set them in the expanse

1:16
k Ps 136:8
l Ps 136:9
m Ps 8:3;
Isa 40:26

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 expanse of the sky.” ²¹So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, 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: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and 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 man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth,^b and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and femaleⁿ he created them.

1:27
n Ge 5:2;
Mt 19:4*;
Mk 10:6*

²⁸God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth^o and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

1:28
o Ge 9:1,7;
Lev 26:9

²⁹Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has

1:29
p Ps 104:14

1:30
q Ps 145:15
1:31
r Ps 104:24

2:2
s Ex 20:11;
Heb 4:4*

fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.^b ³⁰And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.^q” And it was so.

³¹God saw all that he had made,^r and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

²By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested^s from all his work.^s

³And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Adam and Eve

⁴This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens—⁵and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth^b and no plant of the field had yet sprung up,^t for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth^b and there was no man to work the ground,⁶ but streams^c came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground—⁷the LORD God formed the man^d from the dust^u of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.^v

⁸Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life^w and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. ¹¹The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land

2:5
t Ge 1:11

2:7 u Ge 3:19
v 1Co 15:45*

2:9
w Ge 3:22,24;
Rev 2:7;
22:2,14,19

^a2 Or *ceased*; also in verse 3 ^b5 Or *land*; also in verse 6 ^c6 Or *mist* ^d7 The Hebrew for *man (adam)* sounds like and may be related to the Hebrew for *ground (adamah)*; it is also the name *Adam* (see Gen. 2:20).

The African Presence

Genesis 2:8

The earliest remains of humankind were found in Tanzania; it is believed that humankind began here and migrated up the Nile River to other parts of the world. Before recent discoveries of humankind’s origin in Africa, archaeological academics suggested Mesopotamia as the most likely location for the Garden of Eden. The etymology of the word *eden* strongly indicates that it is derived from the Sumerian word for “plain,” “steppe” or “fertile plain.” There are scholars (such as J. G. Jackson and James G. Frazer) who claim that the early Sumerians originated from Africa (Ethiopia) and migrated to Mesopotamia. The Sumerians are described as “black-headed ones.” It is debated whether this refers to their hair color (*Yamauchi*) or their hair and skin color (*Copher*).

Also, according to African scholar Cheikh Anta Diop, a noted but sometimes controversial historian, and George Rawlinson, another historian and author of many books on ancient history, the Sumerian people originally settled in Mesopotamia around 5000 to 2500 B.C. These two scholars also claim that the Sumerians migrated to Mesopotamia from Africa. Rawlinson reports that inscriptions, dialect and tradition all point to these early inhabitants as being originally from Africa.

Inspire



THE CREATION OF WOMAN

When God created woman, he created her equal to man, not inferior or superior. She was created for a purpose and for greatness! How was the woman created? It began with God putting Adam into a deep sleep, taking out one of his ribs, and closing the place up with flesh (see Ge 2:21–24). The word “flesh” represents life itself—created life. God had to remove something “out of” Adam to create and make room for what he was bringing back to him—another life: woman.

God created the woman from the rib of man. In Hebrew, the language of the Old Testament, the word for *rib* signifies the side of something—more often the side of a building than of a person. Therefore, the woman is at the man’s side: as his confidante, encourager and inward strength. She is his “helper” (see v. 20), the one most appropriate for his life. The word “helper” does not imply inferiority. It describes a function and not worth. Women do not lose their worth when they assume the role of a helper. Adam expressed Eve’s purpose when he said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Ge 2:23). He was saying that the woman was literally a part of him.

When God brought the woman to Adam, God brought into Adam’s life a trusted friend and a wife. She became something that nothing else or no one else could be to him. When Adam said, “She shall be called ‘woman’ ” (Ge 2:23), he was declaring her existence. Adam was also praising and celebrating her creation. The woman became Adam’s spiritual partner in the task of obedience to God, dominion over the earth and procreation of the generations.

Adam represents all humanity, and the woman was named Eve because she was the mother of all humanity (see Ge 3:20). She was created with life, to bring life, to nurture life and to be an example of life. Every human life has received a woman’s touch.

Woman was fearfully and wonderfully made (see Ps 139:14), purposefully saved (see Jn 15:16), gifted for greatness (see 1Co 12:4–7), empowered to accomplish God’s will (see Eph 1:17–21), assigned to do great things (see Mt 28:1–10). She is a crown of glory (see Pr 12:4; Isa 62:3) and the Lord’s own treasured possession (see Mal 3:17). The woman was created for greatness!

—G. LONDON

read

Genesis 1:27–28; 2:18–24.

SEE ALSO

the Women of the Bible Note “Eve: The First African Woman,” and the Inspire Note “Marriage.”

WOMAN *of* COLOR

Do you honestly believe you were created for greatness? Are you living like God’s gifted and great creation? What will you do today to live as God has created you to live?

of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹²(The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin^d and onyx are also there.) ¹³The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush.^b ¹⁴The name of the third river is the Tigris;^x it runs along the east side of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

2:14
x Da10:4

¹⁵The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”^y

2:17
y Ro5:12; 6:23

¹⁸The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

¹⁹Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living crea-

ture, that was its name. ²⁰So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field.

But for Adam^c no suitable helper was found. ²¹So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs^d and closed up the place with flesh. ²²Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib^e he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³The man said,

“This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;^z she shall be called ‘woman,’^z for she was taken out of man.”

2:23
z Eph5:28–30

²⁴For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.^a

²⁵The man and his wife were both naked,^b and they felt no shame.

2:24
a Mt19:5*;
Mk 10:7–8*;
1Co 6:16*;
Eph 5:31*
2:25
b Ge 3:7,10–11

^a12 Or *good*; *pearls* ^b13 Possibly southeast Mesopotamia ^c20 Or *the man* ^d21 Or *took part of the man’s side* ^e22 Or *part*
^f23 The Hebrew for *woman* sounds like the Hebrew for *man*.

The African Presence

Genesis 2:10–14

Archaeological evidence points to the African continent as the place where human life began and from where people migrated to other parts of the earth. Thus, Africa would be the location of the Garden of Eden—but how do we reconcile the descriptions of the rivers related to the garden? In Genesis 2:10–14 we read that a river went out of Eden and parted into four heads: the Pishon, the Gihon, the Tigris and the Euphrates. Most scholars place the Tigris and Euphrates in Mesopotamia, where the rivers still exist today. However, the other descriptions make locating the Garden of Eden there difficult (for example, relating the four rivers to a single river that flowed through Eden, implying that all four rivers shared a common source).

It is possible that the geographic descriptions have been marred by time. And it is indeed possible that the garden was located in Africa. Recent aerial photographs of North Africa indicate ancient riverbeds buried beneath the earth’s surface. If these were the Pishon and the Gihon, and a common source of the four rivers can be determined in Africa, the African location of the Garden of Eden would indeed be possible, given the other anthropological and archaeological evidence that points to Africa as the birthplace of humanity.

Eve

The First African Woman

The story of Eve is relevant to women of color for several reasons. It is no secret that women of color have reigned throughout history as the first women to do many things in God's world. The creation of Eve, the first woman of color, occurred on the sixth day of creation.

In the first chapters of Genesis, the story of the creation of Eve demonstrates the importance of men and women complementing one another, supporting one another and empowering one another. When women of color develop and nurture relationships—whether intimate, professional, familial or social—we must remember the importance of embracing and empowering through our role as “helper” (Ge 2:20). I define helper not only in the sense of a husband-wife team or a male-female relationship, but also inclusively from a Biblical stance: women helping women, women helping men, women helping children, women helping the community and women helping others who may or may not be like them.

Eve's story also shows the challenge of listening and hearing God when God speaks to us. When we fail to hear God's voice, we move in the wrong direction, and we commit sin. Eve first sinned when she listened to the serpent instead of God (see Ge 3:1–8). There will be times when we listen to the wrong voice, but it's important to remember that we can always go to God and seek forgiveness. There is no need to hide from God. God wants us to confess our wrongs to him. In fact, in Genesis 3:9 God asked Adam and Eve, “Where are you?” The question “Where are we in our relationship to God?” should be ever before us.

The story of Eve should remind women of color that God has created each of us in his image. We know that God has empowered and inspired many women of color to be pioneers, to be helpers and to be women who listen to the voice of God.

—P. WILLIAMS



reflection

Where are you in your relationship with God?

Whose voice are you listening to?

read

Read: Genesis 1:27; 2:18—4:25; Romans 5:18–19; 2 Corinthians 11:3.

SEE ALSO

the Inspire Notes “The Creation of Woman” and “The Image of God and the Beauty of the Heart.”

The Fall of Man

3:1
c 2Co 11:3;
Rev 12:9; 20:2

3 Now the serpent^c was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”

²The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

⁴“You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. ⁵“For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

⁶When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.^a ⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

3:6
d 1Ti 2:14



Lord,

I'm stuck. I'm falling into temptation that I can't handle. I need escape and relief. I need the assurance that you know and understand how I'm feeling. Since you have been tempted just as I'm now being tempted, I know that your compassion for me will bring your love and power to bear in my life today, right now. In the name of Jesus, the overcomer,

Amen.

GENESIS 3:1-7



⁸Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid^e from the LORD God among the trees of

3:8
e Job 31:33

the garden. ⁹But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”

¹⁰He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

¹¹And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

¹²The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

¹³Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

¹⁴So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this,

“Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.

¹⁵And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring^{a,f} and hers; he will crush^b your head,^g and you will strike his heel.”

3:15
f 1Jn 3:8
g Ro 16:20

¹⁶To the woman he said,

“I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children.

Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”

¹⁷To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’

“Cursed^h is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.ⁱ

¹⁸It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.

¹⁹By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”^j

3:17
h Ro 8:20-22
i Ecc 2:23

3:19
j Ge 2:7; Ps 90:3;
Ecc 12:7

^a15 Or seed ^b15 Or strike