

# GENESIS: THE BOOK OF BEGINNINGS

## Introduction to the Old Testament

Pastor Keith E. Gephart

The Old Testament is the revelation of God's Salvation in words and deeds.

*[Briefly review the story of Creation, the Fall, the covenants, the prophets, etc.]*

Divisions of the OT:

- I. LAW [Genesis-Deuteronomy]
- II. PROPHETS
  - A. Early—prophetical books of history (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings)
  - B. Later – books of prediction
    1. Major Prophets – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel
    2. Minor Prophets – Hosea-Malachi
- III. WRITINGS

More subjective in character and more individuality of representation

  - A. Poetical: Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations [spiritual fruit brought to maturity in the faith, thinking, and the life of the righteous]
  - B. Daniel: dreams and visions, prophecy of future history, did not really function as a profit to Israel
  - C. Historical Books: Ruth, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther [Chronicles provides the history of the Davidic government from the viewpoint of the southern kingdom and give special reference to the relation of the kingdom to the Levitical worship of the temple. Ezra-Esther show the fate of the remnant.]

Introduction to the Pentateuch

- I. NAME = 5 Volume, modifies 'book'; properly = "five volume book"

Who divided it into five books? Moses himself – the unity of the plan shows it to be composed that way. The books are separate units yet united in a unified plan. Exodus Leviticus and Numbers all begin with the conjunction "and."

**Genesis:** The book of beginnings – the preparation for the choice of Israel at Sinai.

**Exodus:** The Law and the Tabernacle.

**Leviticus:** ceremonial and sacrificial regulation; notice the first and last verses of the book – a definite unit.

**Numbers:** civil regulations.

**Deuteronomy:** a recapitulation of the law; summary and confirmation of the covenant; exhortations and warnings.
- II. OTHER NAMES [E. J. Young pp. 43-44]
  - A. The Law (Joshua 8:34; Ezra 10:3)

- B. The Book of the Law (Joshua 1:8)
- C. The Book of the Law of Moses (Joshua 8:31; 23:6)
- D. The Book of Moses (Ezra 6:18; Nehemiah 13:1)
- E. The Law of the Lord (Ezra 7:10; I Chronicles 16:40)
- F. The Law of God (Nehemiah 10:28-29)
- G. The Book of the Law of God (Joshua 24:26; Nehemiah 8:18)
- H. The Book of the Law of the Lord (II Chronicles 17:9; 34:14)
- I. The Book of the Law of the Lord Their God (Nehemiah 9:3)
- J. The Law of Moses the Servant of God (Daniel 9:11)

All these names stress:

- its nature – Law
- it's permanent form – book
- it's human author – Moses
- it's divine author – God

III. ORIGIN – the earliest of biblical books; other books presuppose the Pentateuch. We find no trace of either a progressive expansion of or subsequent additions to the statutes of the Law

- A. Times of the Judges – worship by priests at the tabernacle at Shiloh (Judges 18:31).
- B. The priesthood was reorganized by David and Solomon in harmony with the Law.
- C. Jehoshaphat instructed the people according to the law and he reformed the land (II Chronicles 17:7ff, 19:4ff)
- D. The reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah (II Chronicles 29-31; II Kings 23; II Chronicles 34-35)
- E. Even the northern kingdom followed its moral and civil regulations – e.g. teachings of Elijah, Elisha, Hosea, and Amos.
- F. Ezra and Nehemiah adhered to the Law in post-exilic times.
- G. Many references and allusions to the Law occur in the Historical Books.
- H. The authority of the prophets was found in the Law of Moses
  - They judged and reproved the people on the basis of the Law.
  - They resumed its threats and promises.
  - They referred to historical characters.
- I. Old Testament poetry has its roots in the Law and makes many references to it.
- J. No traces of post-Mosaic times and circumstances are found in the law; such traces are misunderstandings of the text or of the Hebrew people and their writing style or are manifestations of doctrinal prejudices – such as the rejection of the supernatural.

IV. AUTHOR – MOSES:

**Internal evidence** found in the Pentateuch

- A. Moses' personal qualifications
  - He was taught as an Egyptian Prince in all the wisdom of Egypt.

- The Pentateuch shows an author who is a contemporary eyewitness of the Exodus and of the wilderness wanderings, and who has a high degree of education and learning, and has great literary skill.
  - Moses had every incentive to write the Pentateuch, and had plenty of time.
- B. Eyewitness details – e.g. Exodus 15:27 (12 fountains of water); the appearance and taste of the manna—Ex. 16.
- C. A thorough acquaintance with Egypt
1. Names: e.g. On=Heliopolis; Pithom, Potipher, Asenath, Moses, Joseph’s name
  2. Egyptian words – more than the rest of the Old Testament
  3. Customs
    - carrying a basket on the head – 40:16
    - shaving one’s beard – 41:14
    - prophesying with a cup – 44:5
    - embalming of the dead – 50:2-3, 26
- D. A foreign or extra-Palestinian viewpoint of Canaan
1. Seasons and weather—cf. Ex. 9:31-32
  2. Flora and fauna – Egyptian and Sinai, not Palestinian (shittim wood—acacia tree; outer skins for the tabernacle, list of animals—some peculiar to that region.
  3. Geography of Egypt and Sinai is familiar; Palestine relatively unfamiliar.
- E. The atmosphere of Exodus-Numbers is that of the desert.  
E.g. a tent is the place of worship; a scapegoat; orders for sanitation; the order of march.
- F. References to customs that are archaic and found only in the second millennium BC.
- G. Archaisms in language-- forms older than other books of the Old Testament [See Keil pp. 17-18]
- H. The unity of arrangement and the magnitude of the work.
- Simplicity and great depth at the same time
  - Magnificent unity

**External Evidence** for Moses’ authorship found throughout Scripture.

- A. Pentateuch Itself (Statements of writing things down)
1. Exodus 17:14 – the command to exterminate Amalek
  2. Exodus 24:3-8 – the book of the covenant
  3. Exodus 34:27 – the words of the renewed covenant
  4. Numbers 33:1-2 – the encampments of the Israelites
  5. Deuteronomy 31:9, 24 – Moses finished writing the whole law.
  6. Deuteronomy 31:22 – the Song of Moses  
Note that three of these are legislative sections and three are historical sections and Moses wrote them all!
  7. References to the entire copy of the law –Dt. 17:18 (with the king); Dt. 28:58, 61; 29:21; 30:10; 31:26 – The Book of the Law. Moses was writing such a book when these statements were made.
  8. The Book of Leviticus – “the Lord spoke unto Moses” (1:1:4:1; 6:1, 8 etc.)

9. Numbers – the same thing as Leviticus

B. The rest of the Old Testament

- Josh. 11:15, 20; 14:2—Joshua acted as the Lord commanded Moses
- Judges 3:4—The Word of the Lord through Moses
- Etc.
- The Prophets refer to the Law (of Moses); see esp. Dan. 9:11-13—the oath written in the Law of Moses; Mal. 4:4—remember the Law of Moses

C. The New Testament

1. The words of Christ: Mt. 8:4; 19:7, 8; 23:2; Mk. 7:10; 10:3-4; Lk. 16:29, 31; 20:37; 24:44; Jn. 3:14; 5:45; 7:19, 22-23.
2. The words of the Apostles: Acts 3:22; 13:39; 15:5-21; 26:22; 28:23; Rom. 10:5, 19; I Cor. 9:9; II Cor. 3:15; Rev. 15:3.
3. Jesus said, “If you believed Moses you would believe me” (Jn. 5:46-47).

V. HISTORICITY OF THE PENTATEUCH

A. The reality of divine revelation, miracles, prophecies—no problem for believers who have experienced the miracle of regeneration.

B. Sources for Moses

- Written sources—art of writing long before time of Moses
- No traces of legendary materials in Pentateuch
- Oral sources—esp. for earliest materials; were later written.
- **Divine Inspiration is the key!** Prevents any adoption of distorted accounts or mistakes on Moses’ part.

C. Liberal Criticism based on different divine names, special linguistic characteristics peculiar to certain “sources”, and so called “doublets” is weak and not convincing.

D. Historical Accuracy of the Records [esp. Mari Tablets, Nuzu tablets: confirms names and customs

- Note the **sublime nature** of the contents.
- The care in recording information
- The care in distinguishing various periods of revelation in succession.
- The sober tone for such exalted revelation.
- The impartiality of recording information both good and bad about people.
- Esp. notice the extreme accuracy and completeness of chronological details—excels all other nations!

CONCLUSION

What an amazing beginning to our Bible! We have an exciting journey ahead as we study Genesis.

*[Next time: Introduction to Genesis]*