

THE
CEB
STUDY BIBLE

— with Apocrypha —

COMMON
ENGLISH
BIBLE

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T H E
C E B
STUDY BIBLE

with Apocrypha

Joel B. Green
General Editor



The CEB Study Bible

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CONTENTS

Editorial Board	ix
Contributors	xi
Introduction	xvii
Preface to the Common English Bible.	xix
Abbreviations, Terms, and Sources	xxiii
Alphabetical List of Books of the Bible and their Abbreviations.	xxv
Measures	xxvii
Hebrew Calendar.	xxix
Index of Sidebar Articles	xxxi
Charts and Illustrations.	xxxix
The Canons of Scripture.	xli

THE OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis	1 OT	Ecclesiastes	1053 OT
Exodus	81 OT	Song of Songs	1073 OT
Leviticus	155 OT	Isaiah	1091 OT
Numbers	201 OT	Jeremiah	1205 OT
Deuteronomy.	259 OT	Lamentations	1301 OT
Joshua.	325 OT	Ezekiel.	1315 OT
Judges.	367 OT	Daniel	1395 OT
Ruth	409 OT	Hosea	1425 OT
1 Samuel	417 OT	Joel	1445 OT
2 Samuel	469 OT	Amos	1453 OT
1 Kings	513 OT	Obadiah	1469 OT
2 Kings	567 OT	Jonah	1475 OT
1 Chronicles	619 OT	Micah	1481 OT
2 Chronicles	667 OT	Nahum	1493 OT
Ezra	723 OT	Habakkuk.	1501 OT
Nehemiah.	739 OT	Zephaniah	1509 OT
Esther	765 OT	Haggai.	1517 OT
Job.	779 OT	Zechariah	1523 OT
Psalms.	837 OT	Malachi	1543 OT
Proverbs.	1005 OT		

THE APOCRYPHAL/ DEUTEROCANONICAL BOOKS

Tobit	5 AP	Bel and the Snake	233 AP
Judith	35 AP	1 Maccabees	239 AP
Esther (Greek)	61 AP	2 Maccabees	289 AP
Wisdom of Solomon	79 AP	1 Esdras	327 AP
Sirach	107 AP	Prayer of Manasseh	349 AP
Baruch	199 AP	Psalm 151	353 AP
Letter of Jeremiah	211 AP	3 Maccabees	357 AP
Prayer of Azariah (and Hymn of the Three Young Men)	219 AP	2 Esdras	377 AP
Susanna	227 AP	4 Maccabees	419 AP

THE NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew	3 NT	1 Timothy	403 NT
Mark	65 NT	2 Timothy	415 NT
Luke	103 NT	Titus	423 NT
John	167 NT	Philemon	429 NT
Acts of the Apostles	215 NT	Hebrews	433 NT
Romans	275 NT	James	453 NT
1 Corinthians	303 NT	1 Peter	461 NT
2 Corinthians	335 NT	2 Peter	469 NT
Galatians	353 NT	1 John	475 NT
Ephesians	363 NT	2 John	485 NT
Philippians	373 NT	3 John	489 NT
Colossians	381 NT	Jude	493 NT
1 Thessalonians	389 NT	Revelation	497 NT
2 Thessalonians	397 NT		

The Authority of Scripture	527
The Bible's Unity	532
How We Got the Bible	538
The Bible and Its Chronology	545
Guidelines for Reading the Bible	551
Concordance	557
Maps	641

SIDEBAR ARTICLES

In Biblical Order

GENESIS

In God's Image	5 OT
Dominion or Dependence?	8 OT
Gender in Genesis	10 OT
Family Conflict in Genesis	12 OT
Israel among the Nations	18 OT
The Promises to the Ancestors	23 OT
The Ancestors in Their Environment	24 OT
The Moral Dilemma of the Sacrifice of Isaac	37 OT

EXODUS

Moses and the Story of Sargon	85 OT
The Divine Name "the LORD"	87 OT
God Tries to Kill Moses	89 OT
Pharaoh's Stubbornness	96 OT
The Reed Sea or the Red Sea?	99 OT
The Festivals of Passover and Unleavened Bread	102 OT
The Sea of Chaos: God's Enemy or Ally?	109 OT
The Sabbath Day of Rest	111 OT
The Amalekites as Israel's Enemy	113 OT
The Covenant	115 OT
The Sabbath, Creation, and Building the Lord's Dwelling	125 OT
The Gold Bull Calf	138 OT

LEVITICUS

Animal Offerings	158 OT
Blood	162 OT
Priests	168 OT
Meat	173 OT
Clean/Unclean	175 OT
Reconciliation/Atonement	181 OT
Sex	184 OT
The Love Commandment	186 OT
Festivals	192 OT
Jubilee	194 OT
Blessings and Curses	197 OT

NUMBERS

Characteristics of Israel's March	206 OT
Divine Anger	221 OT
Holy War	235 OT

DEUTERONOMY

Covenant	270 OT
The Shema	273 OT
The Ban	275 OT
Deuteronomy and the Covenant Code (Exodus 21–23)	283 OT
Land	305 OT

JOSHUA

Moses	328 OT
Instruction Scroll	329 OT
Chest Containing the Covenant	332 OT
Ban: Utterly Wiped Out	336 OT
Women and Property	353 OT
Refuge Cities	358 OT
Jealous God	364 OT

JUDGES

Joshua, Judges, and the Early History of Israel	371 OT
Songs in Stories	379 OT
Women, Gender, and Violence in Judges	391 OT
Holy War and Violence	407 OT

RUTH

Loyal Living	414 OT
------------------------	--------

1 SAMUEL

The Philistines	427 OT
The Lord's Covenant Chest	428 OT
Call and Anointing	433 OT
The Rejection of Saul	444 OT
Early Prophets	451 OT
David and the Sacred Bread	455 OT
David and Prayer	458 OT
Power and Violence	461 OT

2 SAMUEL

Two Kingdoms	478 OT
Jerusalem	480 OT
God's Covenant with David	481 OT
The Two Parts of David's Story	484 OT
Judgment and Confession	487 OT
Remorseful Journey	495 OT

1 KINGS

Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word	521 OT
The Lord's Chest	532 OT
Anger of God	533 OT
Temple and Name	534 OT
David as Example	535 OT
Moses and Joshua, David and Solomon	539 OT
Idolatry	540 OT
Baal	554 OT

2 KINGS

The Mesha Inscription	573 OT
Covenant and Treaty	600 OT

Instruction Scroll	610 OT
The Reform of Josiah	611 OT
Joshua and Josiah.	613 OT
The Ending of Kings.	617 OT

1 CHRONICLES

Genealogy for a Purpose	626 OT
Ethnic Outsiders in the Chronicler's Genealogies.	629 OT
Comparing Two Versions of David Becoming King.	638 OT
God's Response to Prayer in Chronicles . .	649 OT
Satan	653 OT
David's Organization of the Temple Personnel	660 OT
David and Moses	665 OT

2 CHRONICLES

Worship and Music	675 OT
God's People, North or South	683 OT
Only God Brings Security	688 OT
Surprised by Mercy	697 OT
Acceptable Temple Worship	709 OT
Responsibility for Sin	715 OT
God Ends the Exile	721 OT

EZRA

Support from Persia.	725 OT
Free to Worship the Lord.	733 OT

NEHEMIAH

The Lord's Instruction	754 OT
----------------------------------	--------

ESTHER

Eunuchs.	769 OT
Reversals in the Book of Esther	776 OT

JOB

The Lord Has Given; the Lord Has Taken	782 OT
A Cruel World	796 OT
Redeemer.	804 OT
Wisdom.	815 OT
God and Creation	829 OT
God Speaks.	833 OT

PSALMS

True Happiness	840 OT
God's Anointed One.	841 OT
The Enemies	842 OT
God's Faithful Love	845 OT
God the Creator	847 OT
Torah (Instruction): Psalms 15–24	855 OT
The Psalms and Jesus.	863 OT
Music and Singing.	875 OT
Books II–III and the Elohist's Psalter. . . .	886 OT
Psalms 46–48: Jerusalem and God's Kingship	893 OT

The Poor and Needy.	932 OT
Book IV and the Rule of God.	940 OT
Hallelu-yah ("Praise the LORD!") Collections	956 OT
Book V	963 OT
The Pilgrimage Songs	980 OT

PROVERBS

Sheol	1007 OT
The Fool.	1010 OT
Woman Wisdom and the Mysterious Woman	1019 OT
The Wealthy and the Poor	1021 OT
Name as Identity	1032 OT

ECCLESIASTES

Pointless	1056 OT
---------------------	---------

SONG OF SONGS

The Garden of Eden.	1087 OT
-----------------------------	---------

ISAIAH

Social Justice in Isaiah	1100 OT
The Setting of Isaiah 6–9.	1104 OT
Imperial Boasting and Divine Power . . .	1111 OT
Prophetic Oracles about the Nations. . .	1114 OT
Oracles Concerning the Whole Earth. . .	1128 OT
Prophecies during Hezekiah's Reign . . .	1135 OT
Narratives Concerning Hezekiah	1149 OT
Second Isaiah	1155 OT
On God and the Gods.	1162 OT
The Servant and Daughter Zion as Representative Figures	1177 OT
Third Isaiah's Setting and Arrangement . .	1187 OT
Isaiah 60–62.	1194 OT

JEREMIAH

Prophetic Beginnings.	1209 OT
Divine Grief	1214 OT
True and False Worship	1223 OT
The End of the Covenant.	1230 OT
An Assault on Israel's Election Tradition .	1239 OT
A World Under Divine Judgment	1250 OT
Glimmers of Hope.	1251 OT
The New Covenant	1261 OT
God's Word	1265 OT
The Baruch Story	1270 OT
Nebuzaradan.	1274 OT
The End of the Baruch Narrative	1280 OT
Theological Language of Violence.	1293 OT
Bookends	1300 OT

LAMENTATIONS

Daughter Zion	1307 OT
-------------------------	---------

EZEKIEL

The Living Creatures	1319 OT
--------------------------------	---------

The Dates in the Book of Ezekiel 1320 OT
 The Recognition Formula 1326 OT
 Divine Abandonment 1330 OT
 The Lord’s Glory 1332 OT
 Sexual and Marital Metaphors in
 Ezekiel 1341 OT
 Individual Retribution 1343 OT
 The Exile as Exodus 1347 OT
 Oracles Against the Nations 1355 OT
 Death and Afterlife in the Ancient
 Near East 1367 OT
 The Demotion of the King in Ezekiel . . . 1370 OT
 The Temple Plan 1379 OT
 Divisions of the Land 1393 OT

DANIEL

Apocalypse 1403 OT
 The Anti-Messiah 1410 OT
 The Human One in Daniel 1411 OT
 Anointed One 1417 OT
 Resurrection 1422 OT

HOSEA

Hosea and the Book of the Twelve 1431 OT

JOEL

Mourning Customs 1449 OT

OBADIAH

Act and Consequence 1473 OT

JONAH

The Sea, the Fish, and the Underworld . . 1478 OT

MICAH

Sennacherib’s Campaign 1484 OT

NAHUM

The City as a Whore 1498 OT

HABAKKUK

Why Do Bad Things Happen? 1505 OT

ZEPHANIAH

Foreign Nations 1514 OT

ZECHARIAH

The Heart 1526 OT
 Day of the Lord/On That Day 1540 OT

MALACHI

God’s Name 1546 OT

TOBIT

Women 9 AP
 Suffering 13 AP
 The Angel Raphael 17 AP
 Family Values 21 AP
 Prayers 24 AP

JUDITH

Judith’s Genre 39 AP
 Irony 52 AP
 Is Judith Immoral? 55 AP

ESTHER (GREEK)

Religion in Greek Esther 67 AP

WISDOM OF SOLOMON

“What Idiots We Were!” 87 AP
 Wisdom’s Cosmic Significance 89 AP
 Rescued by Wisdom 92 AP
 Balanced Justice 94 AP

SIRACH

The Various Editions of Sirach 112 AP
 Ben Sira and Greek Wisdom 118 AP
 Hellenism 126 AP
 Ben Sira and the “Seven Sages” 153 AP
 The Hellenistic Kingdoms of the North
 and the South 167 AP
 Ben Sira and Egyptian Wisdom 171 AP
 Ben Sira and Women 178 AP
 Another Thanksgiving Psalm Attributed
 to Ben Sira 195 AP
 Wisdom Literature 196 AP

BARUCH

Retribution 203 AP

LETTER OF JEREMIAH

Diaspora Letters 215 AP

PRAYER OF AZARIAH

The Additions to Daniel 223 AP

SUSANNA

The Two Greek Versions of Susanna 230 AP

1 MACCABEES

Successors of Alexander the Great 243 AP
 Keepers of the Law 247 AP
 Dates in Ancient Texts 253 AP
 Fortress 260 AP
 Identifying With Antiquity 279 AP

2 MACCABEES

Authorship of 2 Maccabees 295 AP
 “Appearances” of Divine Intervention . . . 297 AP
 Hellenization 298 AP
 Ancient History Writing 310 AP
 Jerusalem 317 AP

PRAYER OF MANASSEH

God’s Mercy and Grace 352 AP

PSALM 151

More Psalms? 355 AP

3 MACCABEES

Satire in 3 Maccabees	364 AP
Elephants in War	368 AP

2 ESDRAS

Apocalypse as a Literary Form	385 AP
First Jewish Revolt (66–70 CE)	405 AP
Canonical and Noncanonical Jewish Scriptures	411 AP

4 MACCABEES

Ethical Value of the Torah	423 AP
4 Maccabees and the Christian Church	433 AP

MATTHEW

Judea under Foreign Rule	9 NT
The Kingdom of Heaven	10 NT
Israel's Scriptures	14 NT
The Christ	26 NT
Oral Law and Written Law	35 NT
Pharisees and Sadducees	37 NT

MARK

God's Kingdom	72 NT
The Disciples in Mark	75 NT
Secrecy	83 NT
Faith/Trust	90 NT
The Human One in Mark	97 NT

LUKE

Tax Collectors	112 NT
The Human One in Luke	117 NT
Pharisees	118 NT
1st-Century Dinner Parties	124 NT
Masters, Managers, and Servants	138 NT
A Certain Rich Man	146 NT
The Synagogues	154 NT
The Last Supper in Luke	159 NT
"I Am Among You as One Who Serves"	165 NT

JOHN

The Prologue	171 NT
Cleansing the Temple	173 NT
The Stoning That Doesn't Happen	187 NT
Expelled from the Synagogue	191 NT
The Disciple Jesus Loved	199 NT
Jesus' Farewell Speech	202 NT
The Ending of John	212 NT

ACTS

Receiving the Spirit at Pentecost	219 NT
Who Killed Jesus?	228 NT
God's Gift of the Holy Spirit	233 NT
Saul/Paul	243 NT
The Jerusalem Council	249 NT
Paul's Arrests	251 NT
Paul's Defense Speeches	263 NT

Hope in the Resurrection	266 NT
------------------------------------	--------

ROMANS

Righteousness	279 NT
Life/Eternal Life	285 NT
Jews and Gentiles in Christ	292 NT

1 CORINTHIANS

The Source of the Divisions at Corinth	311 NT
Women in Worship	328 NT

2 CORINTHIANS

Moses and Paul	341 NT
The Collection for Jerusalem	346 NT
Paul's Opponents in Corinth	348 NT

GALATIANS

The Allegory of Abraham's Two Sons	360 NT
--	--------

EPHESIANS

The Powers and Authorities	367 NT
The Heavens	368 NT
The Household Code	370 NT

PHILIPPIANS

Worship and Christology	377 NT
Paul and Judaism	378 NT

COLOSSIANS

Christ as New Adam	386 NT
------------------------------	--------

1 THESSALONIANS

The "Rapture"	394 NT
The Day of the Lord	395 NT

2 THESSALONIANS

The Lawless Person	399 NT
What Holds Back Lawlessness?	400 NT

1 TIMOTHY

Prayer	407 NT
Women	409 NT

2 TIMOTHY

God's Gift	416 NT
Scripture	419 NT

TITUS

Leaders	426 NT
Doing Good	427 NT

HEBREWS

Old and New Covenants	443 NT
OT Sacrifices	445 NT

JAMES

Faith and Works	457 NT
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1 PETER

The Use of an Ancient Household Code in
1 Peter 465 NT

2 PETER

Righteousness 473 NT

1 JOHN

Sinning/Not Sinning 479 NT

2 JOHN

The Antichrist 486 NT

3 JOHN

Hospitality 491 NT

JUDE

Ungodly People 495 NT

REVELATION

John as a Student of the OT 505 NT

Symbolic Numbers 508 NT

Symbolic Colors 510 NT

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Joel B. Green
General Editor



GENESIS

Stories about beginnings deal more with the present than the past. The stories of Genesis focus on the present world and the lives of the people who composed them. The authors' aim was to make sense of the world they knew by explaining how it came into being. They came to terms with who they were as a people by explaining their own origins in that world. So these stories describe their people's identity and their particular role in the world. The writers of Genesis explain their own connection to their natural landscape and how that environment shaped their lives. They also explain their place in the larger cultural landscape they occupied as a small ancient kingdom. As a deeply religious people, they showed how their origins were part of God's design for the world and themselves.

Even modern readers sense intuitively how these stories are about the present, including

their own present circumstances. The world that these stories bring into being is still, of course, in many ways, the world in which we all live. As we will see, the world that the authors of Genesis set out to explain was their own small world. They describe their own society in its actual ancient natural and cultural landscape, far removed from the realities of modern readers. Yet, when the particular is described with enough depth and insight, the universal truths of our common humanity can speak through it. Readers of Genesis thus face a decision: when to understand its view of the world as limited by its time and place, and when to understand its view of the world as touching the very roots of our humanity.

To tell this story of themselves and their place in the world, the writers of Genesis used the genealogy list, which is foreign to most modern readers. Modern readers stall when repeatedly



The Large Magellanic Cloud, a satellite galaxy of The Milky Way (Gen 1:16; 15:5)

ESA/NASA/Hubble

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reading that so-and-so became the father of so-and-so. They usually skip these parts of the Bible. But even the well-known stories in Genesis are part of this genealogical design. They explain with detail what happened to key people in genealogies.

For ancient societies, and for traditional societies today, genealogies provide a key way to understand one's identity and relationships with others in the world. These lists of names are actually cultural maps. By identifying their earliest ancestors and their relations to each other, the authors of Genesis tell us (1) who they considered to be within their human "family"; (2) how they were related to others in their family; and (3) what their particular role in the family was. In a genealogy, every person stands not merely for the one historical figure but for all that figure's descendants. For example, the story of Jacob and Esau isn't only the story of the conflict and reconciliation of two brothers, but also the story of the relationship between their descendants, the Israelites and the Edomites.

Readers of Genesis notice that several of the events in the book are told twice. There are two accounts of creation, two records of the generations between creation and the flood, two flood narratives (woven together), three stories of Israel's ancestors presenting their wives as their sisters on foreign soil, two stories of Hagar's exile from Abraham's family, two explanations of how Jacob's name was changed to Israel, and so on. These are all genuine marks that the book of Genesis wasn't written down as a single story by a single author—such as Moses, as tradition has it—but that the book is a collection of multiple traditions of Israel's beginnings from different sources or authors. The book of Genesis itself doesn't identify its authors, and biblical scholars have suggested a number of different proposals for them.

The classic proposal is that there were three authors. None of these figures should be considered authors in the modern sense, but rather skilled communicators who preserved and passed along traditions that had been developed over time by many before them. The two earliest of these are the Yahwist and the Elohist.

The Yahwist, it is believed, lived during the Davidic monarchy, founded around 1025 BCE, an important and influential ancient Near Eastern kingdom (1 and 2 Sam; 1 and 2 Kgs). Scholars gave him his name because he used Israel's personal name of God, "Yahweh," rendered in the CEB as "the LORD," a title traditionally substituted for Yahweh. The Elohist, it is believed, lived during the monarchy as well and has been associated with the northern kingdom of Israel. His name comes from his avoidance of God's personal name in Genesis and his use of the common Hebrew word *elohim*, "God." The third author is the Priestly writer, so called because his contributions to Genesis reflect the practices of Israelite religion, like the Sabbath and circumcision, and his interest in thorough record keeping. He lived either during or after the Babylonian exile, which began in 587 BCE, a time when the Israelites hoped for the restoration of their monarchy and the reconstruction of their temple.

Editors skillfully combined the stories of these three writers into a single account of Israel's beginnings. Genesis, therefore, provides the reader not one but multiple viewpoints on beginnings. The reader will still notice at times the special styles and perspectives of the writers and differences in their traditions. As a result, the reader experiences a richer picture of God, of the world, and of God's people than would be possible from a single ancient writer. At key places in Genesis where details and religious viewpoints differ, the notes will help the reader hear these unique voices more clearly.

The book of Genesis isn't an independent and complete volume in the Bible. It's only the start of the stories of Israel's beginnings found in the first four books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. These books deal with the exodus from Egypt, the revelation of the Instruction at Mount Sinai, and the journey through the desert back to Canaan. As the beginning of this whole story, and as a sacred text in Jewish and Christian scripture, Genesis becomes the starting point for thinking about the nature of the world and of humanity itself. Its power to shape the beliefs and practices of its readers has never ceased.

I. First Age of the World's History (1:1–9:17)

- A. Creation (1:1–3:24)
 - 1. World's creation in seven days (1:1–2:4a)
 - 2. World's creation in the garden (2:4b–3:24)
- B. Life in the world's first age (4:1–6:4)
 - 1. Cain, Abel, and Cain's descendants (4:1–26)
 - 2. Genealogy of the first generations (5:1–32)
 - 3. Ancient heroes (6:1–4)
- C. Great flood (6:5–9:17)
 - 1. Flood and the survival of Noah's family (6:5–8:19)
 - 2. New order established for a new age (8:20–9:17)

II. New Age of the World's History, Its Civilizations, and Israel's Place among Them (9:18–50:26)

- A. Origin of the world's cultures (9:18–11:32)
 - 1. Role of Canaan (9:18–29)
 - 2. Noah's descendants and the world's cultures (10:1–32)
 - 3. Origins of languages and cultures (11:1–9)
 - 4. Israel's lineage in Noah's family and its place in the world's cultures (11:10–32)
- B. Abraham's family: Sarah and Isaac, Hagar and Ishmael (12:1–25:18)
 - 1. Arrival in Canaan, journey to Egypt, and settlement in Hebron (12:1–13:18)
 - 2. Abraham rescues Lot, is blessed by Melchizedek of Salem (14:1–24)
 - 3. Two accounts of God's covenant with Abraham (15:1–21; 17:1–27)
 - 4. Hagar and the Ishmaelites' origin (16:1–16; 21:8–21)
 - 5. Sarah and Isaac's birth (18:1–15; 21:1–7)
 - 6. Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed (18:16–19:38)
 - 7. Abimelech and Beersheba's wells (20:1–18; 21:22–34)

- 8. The binding of Isaac (22:1–24)
- 9. Sarah's burial (23:1–20)
- 10. The engagement of Isaac and Rebekah (24:1–67)
- 11. Abraham's burial and his extended family (25:1–18)
- C. Jacob's family: Leah, Rachel, Zilpah, Bilhah, and their children (25:19–36:43)
 - 1. Jacob's and Esau's births (25:19–34)
 - 2. Isaac, Abimelech, and Beersheba's wells (26:1–35)
 - 3. Isaac's blessing of Jacob and Esau (27:1–46)
 - 4. Jacob's dream at Bethel and departure from Canaan (28:1–22)
 - 5. At Laban's house: Jacob's marriage, children, and flocks (29:1–31:55)
 - 6. Jacob's wrestling with God and reunion with Esau (32:1–33:20)
 - 7. Dinah and the Shechemites (34:1–31)
 - 8. Bethel's altar, and Rachel's and Isaac's burials (35:1–29)
 - 9. Esau's descendants (36:1–43)
- D. Joseph and his family move to Egypt (37:1–50:26)
 - 1. Joseph sold by his brothers (37:1–36)
 - 2. Judah and Tamar (38:1–30)
 - 3. Joseph and Potiphar's wife (39:1–23)
 - 4. Joseph: interpreter of dreams and governor of Egypt (40:1–41:57)
 - 5. Joseph and his brothers reunited in Egypt (42:1–45:15)
 - 6. Jacob's family moves to Egypt (45:16–47:26)
 - 7. Jacob's blessings on Ephraim and Manasseh (47:27–48:22)
 - 8. Jacob's blessings on his 12 sons (49:1–28)
 - 9. Jacob's death and burial (49:29–50:14)
 - 10. Joseph's last days (50:15–26)

Theodore Hiebert

1:1 Neh 9:6;
Job 38:4; Is 42:5;
Jn 1:1; Ac 17:24

1:2 Job 33:4;
Ps 104:30;
Jer 4:23

1:3 Ps 33:6,
Ps 33:9,
Ps 148:5;
Is 45:7; 2Co 4:6

1:4 Gn 1:10,
Gn 1:12,
Gn 1:18,
Gn 1:25,
Gn 1:31

1:5 Gn 1:8,
Gn 1:13,
Gn 1:19,
Gn 1:23,
Gn 1:31

1:6 Gn 1:7,
Gn 1:14,
Gn 1:20;
Ps 19:1;
Jer 10:12

World's creation in seven days

1 When God began to create^a the heavens and the earth—the earth was without shape or form, it was dark over the deep sea, and God's wind swept over the waters—³God said, "Let there be light." And so light appeared. ⁴God saw how good the light was. God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God named the light Day and the darkness Night.

There was evening and there was morning: the first day.

⁶God said, "Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters to separate the waters from each other." ⁷God made the dome and separated the waters under the dome from the waters above the dome. And it happened in that way. ⁸God named the dome Sky.

There was evening and there was morning: the second day.

⁹God said, "Let the waters under the sky come together into one place so that the dry land can appear." And that's what happened. ¹⁰God named the dry land Earth, and he named the gathered waters Seas. God saw how good it was. ¹¹God said, "Let the earth grow plant life: plants yielding seeds and fruit trees bearing fruit with seeds inside it, each according to its kind throughout the earth." And that's what happened. ¹²The earth produced plant life: plants yielding seeds, each according to its kind, and trees bearing fruit with seeds inside it, each according to its kind. God saw how good it was.

^aOr *In the beginning, God created*

1:7 Ps 148:4 **1:8** Gn 1:5, Gn 1:13, Gn 1:19, Gn 1:23, Gn 1:31 **1:9** Job 38:8; Ps 24:2, Ps 95:5; Jer 5:22; 2Pt 3:5 **1:10** Ps 33:7, Ps 95:5 **1:11** Gn 1:12, Gn 1:29, Gn 2:5; Ps 104:14 **1:12** Gn 1:11

1:1–2:4a Genesis gives readers two perspectives on creation: one in Genesis 1:1–2:4a and another in Genesis 2:4b–3:24. This first account is more spacious, taking in the whole world. The following account in Genesis 2 and 3 has a more limited, localized setting, taking place entirely at a garden in Eden. Here in the first account, God creates the world in six days. God then rests on the seventh, establishing the Sabbath as a day of rest and a part of the natural order. God's week of creative work follows a perfectly symmetrical pattern. In the first three days, God marks out three earthly realms: (1) day and night; (2) sky and sea; and (3) land and plants. In the second three days, God populates these three realms with stars and planets, birds and sea creatures, and land animals including humans. God is viewed as high and powerful in this account, creating mostly by command. This creation story was likely written by one of Israel's priests. It connects with several of Israel's religious practices and rituals. This account describes the Sabbath as creation's climax (2:1–3). It refers to the major events of Israel's religious calendar (1:14). It divides the world into the spaces separating clean from unclean animals (1:20–25). Finally, it employs repetition, which may have been intended for liturgical reading. This Priestly writer aimed to describe creation with such harmony and beauty that it would inspire the people of Israel to praise and worship their creator. This text shows how Israel's religious practices connect with the very structure of the world.

1:1–2 The introduction mentions the vast *waters* on the unformed *earth* from which God creates an ordered world.

1:2 The *deep sea* is the great reservoir of water preceding creation, which on the second day of creation (Gen 1:6–7) will be divided. *wind*: translates a Hebrew term whose basic meaning is "air." Depending on its context, it is usually translated either "wind" or "breath." Here both meanings may be intended. In some cases, *God's wind* is connected to God's activity in creation (Ps 104:4). Here God's breath is connected to God's creative activity, since God's commands bring everything into being. The translation "Spirit" used in some English translations (KJV, RSV, NIV) comes from later Greek. Copyright © by Concordia English Bible. All rights reserved.

doesn't divide between spirit and matter as did later Greek thought. Nor is the author referring here to the third member of the Trinity.

1:3 The first day begins, as does each day, with a divine command: *God said*.

1:4 The translation *God saw how good... was* appears here and at each stage of creation (Gen 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). It emphasizes God's approval of creation and better reflects the underlying Hebrew than the usual translation, "God saw that it was good." The English word "good" doesn't adequately capture the full meaning of the Hebrew term, which is usually used for what is beautiful, excellent, valuable, and of high quality. This statement is one of the Bible's clearest and strongest claims that the world of creation has great value on its own terms apart from its usefulness to humans, who won't be created until the sixth day.

1:5 The phrase *evening... morning* closes each day. It probably reflects the idea that night (between evening and morning) ends the day. A new day thus begins at dawn, when each new creative act takes place. Some texts indicate this practice of beginning days at sunrise (Lev 7:15), while others lay the framework for the current Jewish practice of beginning days at sunset (Lev 23:32).

1:6–8 On the *second day* of creation, God creates the *Sky* by forming a *dome* to separate the vast waters at the beginning of creation (Gen 1:2) into two great reservoirs, one above the dome or sky and one beneath it. According to ancient Israel's concept of the world's design, this *dome* (sometimes translated "firmament") is a barrier that holds back a great reservoir of water in the sky, the source of rainfall. When the "windows in the skies" are opened (e.g., Gen 7:11), the water in this reservoir falls as rain. The reservoir of water below the sky will become the world's seas when separated from the land on the third day of creation.

1:9–13 On the *third day*, *dry land* and *plants* appear in two creative acts: God separates the waters under the sky from the dry land (1:9–10); and God calls forth plants, earth's first forms of life (1:11–13).

1:11–12 The earth, formed by God's first act on the third day (Gen 1:9–10), now participates in God's creative activity. Copyright © by Concordia English Bible. All rights reserved.

In God's Image How does being formed in God's image make humans unique in creation? Interpreters have answered that question in many different ways. Their answers typically relate to how they themselves view human nature.

Early Christian interpreters believed that having God's image made humans like God spiritually. It gave humans a soul. For example, Augustine believed the image of God referred to the rational soul, placed by God in the human body. Thus God and humans were spiritual beings, while all other life was merely material. However, this division between soul and body, or spirit and matter, is a later development in Greek thought. The idea of a soul isn't shared by OT writers.

A different answer given by interpreters from ancient to modern times is that being made in God's image gives humans special dignity. According to this interpretation, the divine image refers to the worth of all human beings. In this view, all persons carry God's image and are to be treated with equal respect. This understanding of human nature focuses, as Genesis does, on the whole person rather than on the soul alone. It has given powerful support for those who are demeaned, marginalized, and oppressed.

Recent biblical scholars have looked in ancient cultures around Israel to understand better this idea of the image of God in Genesis 1. Egypt and Mesopotamia described reigning kings as the images of particular gods. The phrase designated a ruler as a certain god's special representative on earth. So by adapting this expression, the writer of Genesis 1 identifies human beings as the representatives of divine rule on earth.

This interpretation of humans as representatives of divine rule matches what comes next in Genesis. God says that humanity is made in the image of God *so that* humans can take charge of animals (Gen 1:28). So when read in light of its literary and ancient cultural contexts, the image of God describes humanity's prominent position in the world. It shows humanity's responsibility to rule creation as God's representative. Human beings are thus considered mediators of God's presence in the world.

1:13 Gn 1:5

1:14 Gn 8:22; Ps 74:16, Ps 104:19, Ps 136:7; Jer 10:2

1:16 Job 38:7; Ps 8:3, Ps 74:16, Ps 136:8-9

1:18 Jer 31:35

1:19 Gn 1:5

1:20 Gn 2:19

1:21 Job 7:12

1:22 Gn 8:17, Gn 9:1

1:23 Gn 1:5

¹³There was evening and there was morning: the third day.

¹⁴God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will mark events, sacred seasons, days, and years. ¹⁵They will be lights in the dome of the sky to shine on the earth." And that's what happened. ¹⁶God made the stars and two great lights: the larger light to rule over the day and the smaller light to rule over the night. ¹⁷God put them in the dome of the sky to shine on the earth, ¹⁸to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. God saw how good it was.

¹⁹There was evening and there was morning: the fourth day.

²⁰God said, "Let the waters swarm with living things, and let birds fly above the earth up in the dome of the sky." ²¹God created the great sea animals and all the tiny living things that swarm in the waters, each according to its kind, and all the winged birds, each according to its kind. God saw how good it was. ²²Then God blessed them: "Be fertile and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth."

²³There was evening and there was morning: the fifth day.

text carefully observed and classified the world. Here, the writer divided vegetation into the two kinds of plants cultivated by Israelite farmers. The first, *plants yielding seeds*, may also be translated "grains yielding seed." It refers to wheat and barley, whose seed is plainly visible on the stalk. These grains were the primary crops of Israelite agriculture. The second kind of plant life, *trees bearing fruit*, are the tree crops, primarily olives, whose seeds are hidden inside the fruit (*with seeds inside it*). Israelite farmers used fruit to supplement grain production. God gives these two kinds of plants to human beings as their food later in this story (Gen 1:29). The term "kind" is the closest ancient equivalent of the modern scientific term "species," since it indicates a distinct form of life that reproduces.

1:14-19 On the *fourth day*, God begins filling the world's spaces created on the first three days by populating the realms of day and night with the heavenly bodies that inhabit and regulate these realms.

1:14-15 The heavenly bodies have two purposes: to provide light for

marking out its significant periods. *days and years*: the basic units of time. *sacred seasons*: the primary periods in Israel's liturgical year, that is, its major religious festivals (see Lev 23).

1:20-23 God divides the animal world into three categories: (1) the animals in the sea, created on the *fifth day*; (2) the birds in the sky, also created on the *fifth day*; and (3) the land animals, created on the sixth day. These are the three categories used by Israel's priests to classify animals when they make distinctions between clean (edible) and unclean (inedible) animals in Leviticus 11:1-19.

1:20-21 The *swarm of living things* refers here to all of the animal life that inhabits seas and rivers (Lev 11:10, 46). The *great sea animals* are probably the largest sea creatures (KJV "whales"), as this same Hebrew term is used for "crocodile" in Ezekiel 29:3 and "sea monster" in Ezekiel 32:2. See also the note on Exodus 7:8-13.

1:22 God's blessing gives animals the ability to reproduce. In ancient times, the mysterious nature of conception was called "miraculous" (Gen 1:20). All rights reserved.

1:24 Gn 2:19,
Gn 7:14

1:25 Jer 27:5

1:26 Gn 5:1,
Gn 9:2, Gn 9:6;
1Co 11:7; Jas 3:9

1:27 Gn 1:26,
Gn 5:2; Mt 19:4;
Mk 10:6;
1Co 11:7

1:28 Gn 9:1,
Gn 9:7; Ps 8:6

1:29 Gn 9:3;
Ps 104:14,
Ps 136:25,
Ps 145:15

1:30 Ps 104:14,
Ps 145:15-16,
Ps 147:9

1:31 Gn 1:5;
Ps 104:24;
1Ti 4:4

2:1 Dt 4:19

2:2 Ex 20:11,
Ex 31:17;
Heb 4:4

2:3 Ex 16:23,
Ex 20:11,
Ex 23:12,
Ex 35:2;
Neh 9:14

2:4 Gn 1:1

²⁴God said, “Let the earth produce every kind of living thing: livestock, crawling things, and wildlife.” And that’s what happened. ²⁵God made every kind of wildlife, every kind of livestock, and every kind of creature that crawls on the ground. God saw how good it was. ²⁶Then God said, “Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth.”

²⁷God created humanity in God’s own image, in the divine image God created them,^b male and female God created them.

²⁸God blessed them and said to them, “Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and master it. Take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, and everything crawling on the ground.” ²⁹Then God said, “I now give to you all the plants on the earth that yield seeds and all the trees whose fruit produces its seeds within it. These will be your food. ³⁰To all wildlife, to all the birds in the sky, and to everything crawling on the ground—to everything that breathes—I give all the green grasses for food.” And that’s what happened. ³¹God saw everything he had made: it was supremely good.

There was evening and there was morning: the sixth day.

2 The heavens and the earth and all who live in them were completed. ²On the sixth^c day God completed all the work that he had done, and on the seventh day God rested from all the work that he had done. ³God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all the work of creation. ⁴This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

^bHeb has singular *him*, referring to *humanity*. ^cLXX, Sam, Syr; MT *seventh* ^dOr *from all his work, which God created to do*

1:24-31 On the *sixth day*, God populates the earth with land animals, including human beings.

1:24-25 As on the third day, the earth participates in God’s creative activity. This time, the earth produces the land’s animals. The earth and its animals are also closely linked in the second creation story, where animals are made from the soil of the earth itself (Gen 2:19). The word translated *livestock* can refer both to the larger animals on a typical Israelite farm and to all large animals (Gen 6:20; Lev 11:1-8). These animals contrast with the *crawling things*, that is, the smaller creatures.

1:26-31 Human beings are created on the sixth day with the other animals, but they are given a unique place among all living things. Humans alone are made in God’s image, and they are commanded to *Take charge* of the other animals (see sidebars, “In God’s Image” at Gen 1; “Dominion or Dependence?” at Gen 2).

1:26 When God uses the word “us” here and in Genesis 11:7, God is addressing the divine council, the assembly of heavenly beings believed to assist God in governing the world and communicating with the human race (Gen 1:16; 16:7; 1 Kgs 22:19-23; Job 1:6-7; Jer 23:18, 22). *humanity*: translates the Hebrew word *adam*. Later, this word is used as the name of the first man, Adam (e.g., Gen 5:1). Here, it is used more generally for *humanity*, since it is defined in the following phrase as including both *male and female* (see sidebar, “Gender in Genesis” at Gen 3).

1:29 Here humans were vegetarians before the flood. They were given food from the two traditional Mediterranean crops, grains and fruits, created on the third day of creation (Gen 1:11-12).

2:1-4a The first creation account comes to its climax when the seventh day of the week is designated as a sacred day of rest, modeled on God’s own behavior at creation (cf. Exod 20:8-11). As seen clearly in the

structure and rhythms of the world itself.

2:2 A number of ancient translations identified in translation note c preserve the original designation *sixth* as the day when God finished creating. “LXX” refers to the Septuagint, an ancient Greek translation. “Sam” refers to the Samaritan Pentateuch. “Syr” refers to the Syriac (also called the Peshitta). Our current Hebrew text is called the Masoretic Text. It is abbreviated MT in translation note c. The MT contains the alternative “seventh.” Because this word differs from many other ancient translations and contradicts the aim of rest on the seventh day, it is likely an error made by scribes who copied ancient manuscripts by hand. The Hebrew terms for *rested* and “Sabbath” are different forms of the same Hebrew word.

2:4 The word “account” translates a Hebrew term that usually means “an account of a man and his descendants.” So this word introduces part of a larger genealogy. In the case of Genesis, the word appears 13 times, dividing the book’s genealogical framework into major sections (Gen 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; etc.). Here the writer uses it to say that creation itself is the very beginning of the genealogical record of the world’s people.

2:4b-3:24 Here in the second account of creation, the world comes into existence by God’s acts and purposes. The same was true of the first account of creation (Gen 1:1-2:4a). Yet the reader will notice a number of differences between this story and the previous story of creation. Here the scene is limited to a garden, and there is no mention of the time it took God to create the world. Further, the order of creation is different from the first account: Here the first human being is made before anything else. In this story, God is closer and more personal, planting and shaping things on the ground rather than commanding from above. This second account of creation is more repetitive, repetitive style of the

World's creation in the garden

On the day the LORD God made earth and sky—⁵before any wild plants appeared on the earth, and before any field crops grew, because the LORD God hadn't yet sent rain on the earth and there was still no human being^e to farm the fertile land, ⁶though a stream rose from the earth and watered all of the fertile land—⁷the LORD God formed the human^f from the topsoil of the fertile land^g and blew life's breath into his nostrils. The human came to life. ⁸The LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east and put there the human he had formed. ⁹In the fertile land, the LORD God grew every beautiful tree with edible fruit, and also he grew the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰A river flows from Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides into four headwaters. ¹¹The name of the first river is the Pishon. It flows around the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹²That land's gold is pure, and the land also has sweet-smelling resins and gemstones. ^h¹³The name of the second river is the Gihon. It flows around the entire land of Cush. ¹⁴The name of the third river is the Tigris, flowing east of Assyria; and the name of the fourth river is the Euphrates.

^eOr *man* (Heb *adam*) ^fHeb *adam* ^gHeb *adamah* ^hHeb uncertain

2:5 Gn 1:11, Gn 1:12; Ps 65:9; Jer 10:13
2:6 Gn 2:5; 2Pt 2:17
2:7 Gn 3:19, Gn 7:22; Job 27:3, Job 33:4; 1Co 15:45
2:8 Gn 2:15, Gn 3:23; Is 51:3; Eze 28:13; Jl 2:3
2:9 Gn 3:22; Prv 3:18; Eze 47:12; Rv 2:7, Rv 22:2
2:10 Ps 46:4
2:11 Gn 10:7, Gn 25:18
2:12 Nm 11:7; Eze 28:13
2:13 Gn 10:6
2:14 Gn 10:11, Gn 15:18; Dt 11:24; Dn 10:4

first account, this dramatic story features interacting characters and a different vocabulary for creation. The Israelite name of God is introduced for the first time. Probably pronounced “Yahweh,” it is represented by the word “LORD” (in capital and small capital letters; Gen 2:4b, 5, 7, etc.), following an old tradition that regarded the name as too holy to read aloud. Because this writer uses the divine name “Yahweh,” he has been called the Yahwist. These differences in the style, the details, and the portraits and names of God in the two stories of creation in Genesis reflect the distinct views of their writers. They show that Israel valued and honored a variety of voices and their unique historical and religious perspectives. The special aim of the Eden story is to explain the Israelites’ relationship to their landscape (2:4b-15; 3:14, 17-19); to God (2:16-17; 3:1-13, 20-24); and to each other (2:18-25; 3:16).

2:4b-15 The opening of this creation story describes its setting in the garden. The aim of this description is to explain the relationship of humans to creation itself, their natural environment. The details of creation in this setting, as in the first story (Gen 1:1–2:4a), are drawn from the concrete realities of the agricultural landscape in the highlands east of the Mediterranean Sea, which was home to ancient Israel.

2:4b The first creation story spoke of “the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1; 2:1, 4). The second story reverses these words and speaks of *earth and sky*, which points to this story’s stronger earthly focus. The center of the story is, in fact, the garden’s fertile land.

2:5 The phrase *before any wild plants appeared* doesn’t describe nothingness or a dry wasteland. Rather, it refers to the time before the actual realities of the audience’s agricultural landscape had appeared. *wild plants*: likely the low bushes and dwarf shrubs just beyond Israel’s cultivated fields that were used as pasture for farm animals. *field crops*: the grains, wheat and barley, that Israelite farmers cultivated. *rain*: mentioned because Israelite agriculture was dependent on direct rainfall rather than irrigation systems.

2:6 The *stream* (sometimes translated “mist”) rising from the ground must refer to a spring, a common phenomenon of the biblical landscape. A spring without the rainfall to feed it (Gen 2:5) made sense for the common English

who imagined a large and permanent reservoir of water under the earth (cf. Gen 1:2, 6-7).

2:7 God’s first act of creation in this second story is to form a human being out of topsoil. Usually translated “dust” (KJV, NRSV, NIV), this is the best soil lying on the surface of the *fertile land* from which the first human was made. As translation notes *f* and *g* indicate, the Hebrew words for *human* (*adam*) and *fertile land* (*adamah*) sound alike and emphasize the connection between human beings and their land. Such a story makes sense of the world for an ancient agricultural society in which its members’ livelihood and survival were linked closely to the soil. The fertile land was the source of the food that sustained their lives, and it shaped their identity as farmers. The Hebrew term for the first human created in this account, *adam*, can mean “a man” or “a human being,” as translation note *e* in Genesis 2:5 indicates. The ancient listener would probably have heard both meanings in this term (see sidebar, “Gender in Genesis” at Gen 3). *life’s breath*: the capacity to breathe shared by all animals (Gen 7:22). God gives and sustains this ability in everything that breathes (Ps 104:29-30).

2:8 The name *Eden* is taken from a Hebrew term meaning “fertility” and reflects the garden’s abundant plant life. The details of the garden’s landscape don’t match typical Israelite farmland. The description of Eden better matches Jordan Valley oases (like Jericho) and the temple gardens in Jerusalem, which were both irrigated by springs, like Eden. Cultures often connect creation with the site of their temple.

2:9 God creates the garden’s plants from the same *fertile land* from which God created human beings. The *tree of life* and *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil* introduced here play important roles later when the writer explains the relationships between God and humans (see notes on Gen 2:16-17 and 3:22-23).

2:10-14 Scholars have been unsuccessful in connecting all these rivers with actual waterways in the Middle East. They have therefore never agreed on the actual location of Eden. The *Pishon* can’t be identified, nor can *Havilah*, the land where it flows, but the mention of *gold*, *resins*, and *gemstones* points to the Arabian Peninsula, as does the later mention in Genesis of the Ishmaelites in Havilah (Gen 25:18). The name of the spring that is

2:15 Gn 2:8

2:16 Gn 3:1

2:17 Gn 3:1,
Gn 3:3, Gn 3:17;
Ro 5:12, Ro 6:232:18 Prv 18:22;
1Co 11:92:19 Gn 1:20,
Gn 1:24,
Gn 1:26,
Gn 2:20,
Gn 2:23

2:20 Gn 2:18-19

2:21 Gn 15:12;
1Sa 26:12

2:22 1Ti 2:13

2:23 Gn 29:14;
1Co 11:8;
Eph 5:28

Dominion or Dependence? Humanity is increasingly endangering its environment. How, then, should we understand God's giving humanity power over creation in Genesis 1:26, 28? These verses have been interpreted by some as granting humans unlimited power and license to exploit nature for their own use.

"Take charge of" (Gen 1:26; KJV, NRSV: "have dominion") translates the Hebrew word for "rule." It's used elsewhere for the authority of masters over servants (Lev 25:43) and kings over subjects (Ps 72:8). So it does grant humanity power and authority over the animal world. But the word doesn't in itself define the way power is exercised, since power can be used for either caring or harsh rule. In the context of Genesis 1, humans are viewed as God's representatives in creation (see sidebar, "In God's Image" at Gen 1). So, "taking charge" must be understood as exercising the same kind of authority God would exercise in the natural world.

An entirely different picture of the human place in nature is present in Genesis 2:4b-3:24. Here, the first human is made out of the "topsoil" of the earth's "fertile land" and given the command to "farm" it (Gen 2:5, 7, 15). The word translated "farm" in the CEB almost always means "serve." It expresses the service of servants to masters (Gen 12:6); of one people to another (Exod 5:9); and of people to God (Exod 4:23). So human beings are created specifically to serve the fertile soil. Humans in this account depend on nature rather than exert dominion over it.

These two different images of the human as ruler and as servant point to universally acknowledged realities: Humanity has the unique power to alter the world, but we are ultimately dependent on the earth and its life for survival.

¹⁵The LORD God took the human and settled him in the garden of Eden to farm it and to take care of it. ¹⁶The LORD God commanded the human, "Eat your fill from all of the garden's trees; ¹⁷but don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because on the day you eat from it, you will die!" ¹⁸Then the LORD God said, "It's not good that the human is alone. I will make him a helper that is perfect for him." ¹⁹So the LORD God formed from the fertile land all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky and brought them to the human to see what he would name them. The human gave each living being its name. ²⁰The human named all the livestock, all the birds in the sky, and all the wild animals. But a helper perfect for him was nowhere to be found.

²¹So the LORD God put the human into a deep and heavy sleep, and took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh over it. ²²With the rib taken from the human, the LORD God fashioned a woman and brought her to the human being. ²³The humanⁱ said,

ⁱOr *man* (Heb *adam*)

Jerusalem's primary source of water, though its association with *Cush* (probably in northwest Arabia or south of Egypt) here is unclear. If the author locates creation and Eden at the site of the temple in Jerusalem, then the *Gihon* fits this context nicely (while the other rivers don't; see the note for Gen 2:8). The *Tigris* and *Euphrates* are the major rivers of the Mesopotamian river valley, where Israel's ancestors originated (Gen 11:28, 31; 15:7). Perhaps the author saw the important rivers of his time all springing from the same underground reservoir that fed Eden's spring.

2:15 God put Israel's first ancestor in the garden to do the typical work of Israel's ancient agricultural society: to farm the land and to take care of it. "Farm" translates a Hebrew verb used for cultivating land. It can also mean "serve" (see sidebar, "Dominion or Dependence?" at Gen 2). The Hebrew word for *take care of* also means to "protect" or "watch carefully."

2:16-17 Once the landscape of creation is brought to life and the human relationship to it is described (Gen 2:4b-15), the story's two plotlines begin. One starts here when God commands the first human not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It continues in the second half of the Eden story in Genesis 3:1-24. Its aim is to explain humanity's relationship to God. The fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is the human being as a woman, and

self-consciousness that gives humans the ability to make moral choices.

2:18-25 This creation story's other plotline begins in Genesis 2:18, when God recognizes that the first human being is alone. It concludes when a second human being is created and the human family begins. Its aim is to describe the basic relationships of humans to each other in ancient Israelite society.

2:18 *perfect for him*: translates a difficult Hebrew expression that can also be rendered "like himself" or "corresponding to him."

2:19 God creates the animals from the same *fertile land* out of which the first human was made (Gen 2:7). Naming the animals is an act of recognition, identification, and relationship to them. It doesn't necessarily express human power over them (cf. Gen 16:13).

2:20 The animals God created were, in fact, helpers on the Israelite farm, but none were like the first human, corresponding to him, or *perfect for him*. In other words, none were suitable partners to begin the human family.

2:21-22 While customarily translated "rib," the part of the body out of which the second human is made is in fact uncertain, since the Hebrew term is used nowhere else of the human body.

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“This one finally is bone from my bones
and flesh from my flesh.
She will be called a woman^j
because from a man^k she was taken.”

²⁴This is the reason that a man leaves his father and mother and embraces his wife, and they become one flesh. ²⁵The two of them were naked, the man and his wife, but they weren't embarrassed.

Knowledge, not eternal life

3 The snake was the most intelligent^l of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say that you shouldn't eat from any tree in the garden?”

²The woman said to the snake, “We may eat the fruit of the garden's trees ³but not the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden. God said, ‘Don't eat from it, and don't touch it, or you will die.’”

⁴The snake said to the woman, “You won't die! ⁵God knows that on the day you eat from it, you will see clearly and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ⁶The woman saw that the tree was beautiful with delicious food and that the tree would provide wisdom, so she took some of its fruit and ate it, and also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷Then they both saw clearly and knew that they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together and made garments for themselves.

⁸During that day's cool evening breeze, they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden; and the man and his wife hid themselves from the LORD God in the middle of the garden's trees. ⁹The LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”

¹⁰The man^m replied, “I heard your sound in the garden; I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself.”

¹¹He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree, which I commanded you not to eat?”

¹²The man said, “The woman you gave me, she gave me some fruitⁿ from the tree, and I ate.”

¹³The LORD God said to the woman, “What have you done?!”

And the woman said, “The snake tricked me, and I ate.”

¹⁴The LORD God said to the snake,
“Because you did this,
you are the one cursed

2:24 Mt 19:5; Mk 10:7; 1Co 6:16; 1Co 7:10; Eph 5:31
2:25 Gn 3:7, Gn 3:10
3:1 Mt 10:16; 2Co 11:3; Rev 12:9; Rev 20:2
3:2 Gn 2:16
3:3 Gn 2:17
3:4 Gn 3:5; Jn 8:44; 2Co 11:3
3:5 Gn 3:4; Gn 3:6; Is 14:14; Eze 28:2
3:6 Ro 5:12; 2Co 11:3; 1Ti 2:14; Jas 1:14; 1Jn 2:16
3:7 Gn 2:25
3:8 Lv 26:12; Dt 23:14; Job 31:33; Jer 23:24
3:9 Gn 4:9; Gn 18:9
3:10 Gn 2:25; Gn 3:7; Ex 20:18
3:11 Gn 2:17; Gn 3:12; Gn 4:10; Ro 5:12
3:12 Job 31:33; Prv 28:13
3:13 Gn 4:10; Ex 32:22; 2Co 11:3; 1Ti 2:14
3:14 Gn 3:1; Is 65:25; Mi 7:17

^jOr wife (Heb *ishshah*) ^kOr husband (Heb *ish*) ^lHeb sounds like *naked*. ^mOr He ⁿHeb lacks *some fruit*.

to link man and woman together, two new Hebrew terms are introduced into the story: *ishshah*, which means “woman” or “wife” (see translation note j); and *ish*, which means “man” or “husband” (see translation note k). The play on words in the Hebrew emphasizes their likeness and compatibility with each other. (See sidebar, “Gender in Genesis” at Gen 3.) These two words identify both biological roles (*man/woman*) and social roles (“husband/wife”).

2:24 *one flesh*: identifies both biological and social roles. Biologically, it refers to the physical union in marriage that produces children. Socially, it describes how different families are joined together in marriage.

2:25 Only after gaining self-consciousness by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil do humans recognize their nakedness (Gen 3:6-7).

3:1-24 The Eden creation story now shifts back to the other plotline that began in Genesis 2:16-17. It focuses on the two trees with divine fruit (Gen 2:9, 16-17). As the chapter heading in the CEB states, humans gain knowledge from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. However, they will be denied the tree of life, thus never gaining eternal life (Gen 3:22-23). Humans thus share God's knowledge but not God's immortality.

3:1 *snake*: In the ancient world, snakes were considered

thought to have sacred qualities, including immortality, because they shed their skins annually.

3:4-5 The *snake* was right. When the couple ate the fruit, they didn't *die* immediately, and they became *like God, knowing good and evil* (3:4). God must have changed God's mind after saying “on the day you eat from it, you will die!” (Gen 2:17; cf. Gen 6:6). The people died not as a punishment for eating the fruit but because they were created mortal (Gen 2:7; 3:19); and God denied them the immortality from the life-giving tree (Gen 3:22).

3:6 The *woman* actively debates with the snake. As a result, some readers emphasize her guilt. Others point to her initiative and intelligence. (See sidebar, “Gender in Genesis.”)

3:8-11 The couple recognize that they are *naked* because they have gained self-consciousness from eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge.

3:12-13 When confronted with their disobedience, the people pass the blame instead of accepting responsibility. The man even blames God indirectly (*The woman you gave me*).

3:14-15 God punishes the *snake* with a curse that explains why snakes have no legs. This curse also explains human contempt for them: Snakes attack humans by striking at them by striking their heads.

3:15 Is 7:14;
Ro 16:20;
Ga 4:4; Heb 2:14;
Rev 12:17

3:16 Gn 4:7;
1Co 11:3;
1Co 14:34;
Eph 5:22; 1Pt 3:1

Gender in Genesis Creation stories in Genesis have been used throughout history both to blame women for the origin of sin and to give women lower status than men. This is especially true of the story of creation at the garden in Eden. To support this way of reading Genesis, interpreters point out that the woman ate the forbidden fruit first and then gave some to her husband (Gen 3:6). She is punished by being placed under her husband's authority (Gen 3:16). This interpretation is reinforced by understanding the first human as male (Gen 2:7), and then seeing the woman as derived from the man and made to be his helper (Gen 2:20-23).

Modern interpreters have challenged the negative view of women in this traditional reading of Genesis 1–3. They point out that in the first creation story both “male and female” are created at the same time in God’s image (Gen 1:27). They note that even if the woman was created after the man in the second creation story (Gen 2:23), this ordering doesn’t necessarily make her inferior. After all, humanity isn’t inferior by virtue of being created after many other things in Genesis 1. While the woman fills the role of “helper” in the second creation story (Gen 2:18, 20), this title doesn’t necessarily mean she is inferior. In fact, God is often called a “helper” (e.g., Ps 30:10). Furthermore, the woman and the man *both* disobey in the second story. Interestingly, the woman here is the more active, thoughtful person, engaging the questions and issues raised by the snake. The man, by contrast, is entirely passive and unreflective (Gen 3:1-6). Finally, interpreters argue, the subordination of women to men isn’t a part of the ideal world God created in the garden. It’s one of the consequences of human sin (Gen 3:16). Thus Genesis 2–3 actually presents an ideal of sexual equality in human society.

At the same time, the picture of Israelite society that emerges from Genesis and the OT as a whole isn’t one where the sexes have equal status. It’s rather a society that has some powerful women, but gives authority to men. Men hold positions of institutional power (1) as head of the Israelite family (called the “father’s household,” Gen 12:1); (2) as leaders of Israelite society (kings, 2 Sam 7:11-14); and (3) as religious leaders (priests, Exod 28:1; and prophets, Gen 20:7). Furthermore, Israelite society is structured around men. Genealogies figure descent through men and usually omit the names of women (Gen 5:3-32). Property is owned and passed down through males (Gen 27:1-4). The family resides in the man’s house (Gen 24:5-9, 57-61). Even the second story of creation in the garden reflects aspects of Israel’s male-centered society. The man represents the woman in the writer’s narrative (Gen 3:22, 24) and when speaking with God (Gen 2:16-17; 3:9-10). He names his wife (Gen 2:23; 3:20) and holds authority over her (Gen 3:16).

While biblical women don’t possess institutional authority, they are often powerful and influential figures, especially in the family setting of the stories in Genesis. Sarah, Rebekah, Leah, Rachel, and Tamar are all strong characters. They take the lead in order to direct male-centered structures toward their own goals. They often subvert male-centered authority and exert more influence over the outcome of events than their husbands. Furthermore, what women want often aligns with what God intends (e.g., see Gen 25:23; 27:5-10). Thus the stories of Genesis both recognize the male-centered structure of Israelite society and undermine its power and authority.

out of all the farm animals,
out of all the wild animals.
On your belly you will crawl,
and dust you will eat
every day of your life.

¹⁵I will put contempt
between you and the woman,
between your offspring and hers.
They will strike your head,
but you will strike at their heels.”

¹⁶To the woman he said,
“I will make your pregnancy very painful;
in pain you will bear children.
You will desire your husband,
but he will rule over you.”

3:16 God punishes the woman by increasing the difficulty of her primary role in the Israelite family: bearing children. By associating *pain* both with *pregnancy* and with *bear[ing] children*, punishment includes the anxieties, difficulties, and dangers of conceiving, carrying, and giving birth to children (cf. Gen 16:1). Copyright © by Common English Bible. All rights reserved.

part of the punishment guarantees male authority in the family. *desire*: translates a Hebrew term that also includes an element of power or persuasion, as it does when used in the story of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:7). The underlying Hebrew could also be translated “entice.” See sidebar, “Gen-