THE
ILLUSTRATED
FAMILY
BIBLE

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PEOPLE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

PEOPLE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
The first book of the Bible is Genesis. It takes its name from the first word of the original Hebrew text, “bereshith,” which means “In the beginning.” "Genesis" is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word. This book describes the creation of the world, the fall of humankind, and the early history of the nation of Israel. It also establishes important themes that recur throughout the Bible, such as sin, redemption, wrath, and mercy. It provides clues for understanding the rest of the Hebrew texts.

The structure of Genesis
Genesis begins with the Story of Creation, which serves as an introduction to the book and to the Bible as a whole. This is followed by ten sections, each beginning with the words “This is the account of.” Each account tells the story of one or more people and the history of their relationship with God. The ten sections can be arranged into two groups of five. The first group is known as the “prevalent history” (from Adam to Abraham). The second is called the “patriarchal history” (the history of Israel’s forefathers).

The Story of Creation
The accounts of the Creation are contained within two chapters of the Book of Genesis. Some biblical scholars maintain that they derive from two different traditions. Genesis 1 gives an overview of the beginnings of the universe, describing the creation of the heavens and earth, which took place over a period of six days; Genesis 2 focuses more on the creation of humankind and its place within the universe.

Ancient Middle-Eastern myths
Parts of Genesis bear a resemblance to other creation literature from the ancient Middle East. The most common elements are the concepts of the separation of the earth from the sky, and the creation of man from the earth. A Babylonian poem known as “The Akrakhasis” is closest to the Biblical account. The poem describes how man is ordained to toil the earth (Genesis 3) and is then destroyed by a great flood (Genesis 7–9).

The Garden of Eden
Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden, which has come to represent paradise on earth. When the Hebrew text was translated into Greek, the word used for garden was “paradiseos.” This then became “paradise” in the English version.

Reading from the Torah scroll
This Jewish boy is celebrating his Bar Mitzvah. At thirteen, Jewish boys are recognized as adults and read from the Torah scroll at the synagogue for the first time.

The purpose of Genesis
Genesis was initially written to teach the Israelites about their origins, their faith, and their responsibilities as God’s chosen people. Its content was arranged in clearly defined sections to help the readers or listeners to remember God’s instructions. The text contains repetitions and patterns of words and phrases that also reinforce God’s message.
The God of Genesis
There are many words for God in the Bible. In Genesis, God is referred to by at least six different Hebrew names, all of which emphasize a different aspect of his nature. The most important of these is Yahweh (Exodus 3:14), which means “I am who I am.” This name is so sacred to Jewish people that they avoid using it and say “Adonai” instead, which means “Lord.” God is sometimes simply referred to as “El,” which expresses God’s might.

Yahweh
This sacred name is written between the two hands on this 19th-century Moroccan papercut. God’s name is spelled with the four Hebrew letters YHWH. This is referred to as the “Tetragrammaton.”

How does God appear?
In the Bible, only a few people meet with God in person, and on these occasions he is concealed by a bright radiance. God often manifests himself through various forms of nature, such as thunder, lightning, and smoke. Moses warns the Israelites not to look directly at God because they might perish (Exodus 19:21).

God also appears to his people through visions and dreams. The prophet Isaiah received a vision of God enthroned (Isaiah 6:1), and Jacob saw God at the top of a high stairway in a dream (Genesis 28:15).

Authorship of Genesis
The Book of Genesis makes no reference to its author. However, Jewish and Christian traditions credit the first five books of the Bible to Moses. The early material would have been handed down in written or oral form, and then collected and recorded by Moses.

To make sense of the Genesis texts, they should be seen in the context of the time they were written, which was after the Israelites had received Moses’ Law. The Hebrew readers could recognize any references to these laws because they were familiar with them. The laws contained detailed instructions for worship, sacrifices, and civil and moral obligations.

Sacrifices
The Israelites offered animals or other possessions as sacrifices in order to obtain God’s forgiveness for their sins. The first offerings mentioned in the Bible are made by Cain and Abel. God accepts Abel’s sacrifice of his finest firstborn lamb, but rejects Cain’s gift of “fruit from the soil” (Genesis 4:3).

The Book of Leviticus contains detailed requirements for ritual sacrifices. Cain displeased God because he did not offer the best of his crop (23:10).

Clean and unclean
God asked Noah to take seven of every clean and two of every unclean animal onto the ark (Genesis 7:2). Unclean animals include those with cloven hooves that do not chew the cud, fish without fins and scales, birds of prey, winged insects, and some “crawling animals” (Leviticus 11).

Genealogies
Genesis contains many lists of names. One of these traces the descendants of Noah’s sons, Ham, Japheth, and Shem (Genesis 10). The people descended from Shem became known as the Semites. Ham’s descendants are associated with the Hamitic and Canaanite people, whereas Japheth’s are identified with the people of Asia Minor and the Mediterranean islands.
Genesis 1–2

THE STORY OF CREATION

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. 3 And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

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

9 And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.” ... 10 God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good. 11 Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation ... according to their various kinds.” And it was so ... 12 And God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

14 And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years...” And it was so. 15 God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars ... 16 And God saw that it was good. 17 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

In the beginning, the earth was formless, empty, and dark. God creates the sky. Dry ground appears and divides the water. God makes the sun, the moon, and the stars to separate day from night.
20 And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth.” ... 21 And God saw that it was good. 22 God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number...” 23 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

24 And 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. 25 And God saw that it was good. 26 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over... all the earth...” 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number... and fill the earth and subdue it. Rule... every living creature...” 29 Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant... and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food...” And it was so. 31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

1 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. 2 By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. 3 And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

UNDERSTANDING THE STORY

Genesis 1 tells the first account of the creation. It celebrates the unity and perfection of the universe and emphasizes God's grandeur and power. The repetition of key phrases forms a pattern, and reflects the orderly way in which God created the world. The story of creation takes place over seven days, and “seven” has come to represent perfection and completion.

The land teems with animals of every kind

God creates mankind, male and female.

Every type of plant grows

CHAPTER 1 VERSE 14
“Let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years”

The lights appear on the fourth day, which is the midpoint in the seven days. These lights are the sun, moon, and stars. Ancient religious calendars were based on solar and lunar cycles, which set the time for feast days and festivals.

CHAPTER 2 VERSE 3
“God blessed the seventh day”

God's creation set a pattern for people's lives: six days of work, then a day of rest (the Sabbath).
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