

# The Book of Genesis

## Introducing the Story Creation

Wednesday 26 May 2021

6:30 PM-8:00 PM

**Opening Prayer**

**Reading Assignment – Genesis Chapters 1 and 2**

**Background**

All cultures have stories they develop to explain to themselves and to their children how the world came into existence and how their people came to be. Genesis is one such story among many throughout the earth. It is the story of God's creation of the world and all that is in it, that is, as told by the Hebrew people. It is also a story of the development of the Hebrew society and the persistent presence and spread of sin among the people.

Centuries later, Christians took this story as our own. While Jews today understand their story told in Genesis as foundation myth used to explain the human condition, some Christians proclaim that it is historical fact. They say that all things recorded in the story actually occurred in the way they are described. This position is challenging to accept.

The Torah, the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers was compiled after the Babylonian exile, between 538 BCE and 250 BCE according to accepted biblical scholarship. That would mean that the Torah could have come into being as late as only 250 years before the birth of Jesus. Yet, it describes things that would have occurred thousands of years earlier. There were no records kept of these events from the past. Stories were passed down by word of mouth from

generation to generation. But that is not history. That is at best legend. In addition, there are no other outside sources that give support to the story of Genesis as historical fact. There is no historical evidence, but it cannot be ruled out as factual.

While there is no evidence that the story of Genesis is based on historical facts, it remains a powerful and engaging story. It attempts to address our desire to know how the world came to be, why we are here, why is life often so difficult, why is there suffering, why we must die, and why we seem unable to escape sin. It does not do so perfectly, since we continue to ask these questions, but it makes a good attempt.

Genesis is actually three stories with a couple of detours thrown in. The first story is that of creation and the primeval world, Chapters 1-11. The second is the story of Abraham and his family, Chapters 12-36. The final story is about the adventures of Joseph, Chapters 37-50. Let's now see what this three-part story can tell us.

### **Questions to Consider**

1. What stories did your parents tell that you know are myth or legend?
2. Why does Genesis hold such appeal for the modern reader?
3. How does understanding Genesis as a story rather than history affect you?
4. There are many creation stories, some of them similar to Genesis. Water, dark, light, and snakes are common themes. Why might they be similar?
5. Should we use Genesis Chapters 1 and 2 to determine our view of women?
6. Does science conflict with the Genesis story? If so, how?
7. "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion..." Genesis 1:26 What does made in the "image" of God mean? What does "dominion" mean in this case?

### **Closing Prayer**

