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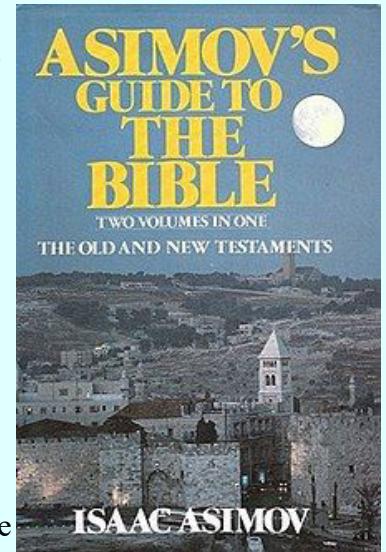
The First Two Books of the Old Testament: Genesis and Exodus

Source materials for the project

Various source materials have been used in the writing of this project. First, obviously, is the Bible itself. Then there are others. One is *Asimov's Guide to the Bible*, a tome of about 1300 pages in length. Isaac Asimov (1920 – 1992) was a biochemist and science fiction writer. He was also an *atheist*!

However, unlike the 'New Atheist' Richard Dawkins types, Asimov's aim is not to refute the Bible but to *honestly* understand the impact it has had over the centuries on those who believe it is true. And to some extent, this is preferable to more dogmatic religious writers who often literally accept everything that is written in the Bible.

Other sources found on the Internet have also been used. A list of such websites used are listed in the appendix and will be referred to throughout the text. For example, refer to Website #2 is the link to Asimov's book.



Theme of the Bible

While the Bible chronicles tribal history, it keeps returning to a very specific theme: *a record of God's relationship to man*. The early chapters of Genesis establish God's superiority over man. In the later chapters, particularly in the stories of Abraham and Isaac, the Bible establishes the principle that *God cares and that man's devotion and obedience to God must be total*. Contrast this with the ancient Greek outlook – the gods want what they want, and we humans want what we want. Sometimes these things coincide and sometimes they conflict, and that's just life. The message of the Bible is that no such leeway is permitted.

Various sides to the Bible

In Asimov's book, the historical, geographical and biographical aspects of the events described in the Old and New Testaments are explored. He attempts to illuminate the Bible's many obscure, mysterious passages and will prove absorbing reading for anyone interested in religion and history. The Bible, as well as having *ethical* and *spiritual* teachings, also has a *secular* side, too. It is a history book covering the first 4000 years or so of human civilisation.

How were stories in the Bible passed on?

For many centuries in ancient times, tales – reflecting actual events or even made up – were passed down by *word of mouth*. A problem with this is that the tales/stories can change as they are passed down.

Many of the tales in the Bible, particularly in the first few books of the Old Testament are not unlike this, as the stories were passed down over the centuries.

Written versions, of anything, including the Bible, have less of a problem than oral transmission.

Game – Passing on a message orally

Chinese whispers (name used in some Commonwealth English) or *Telephone* (US and Canada).

A word, phrase or sentence is whispered from person to person in a circle to see how the original changes as it reaches the last person. You may have played this game. If not, try it and see if the original message changes.

And perhaps refer to Website #7.



Passing on a message orally

When was the Bible written?

The first Biblical stories were passed down orally and only written down much later by various authors. Before that, the stories were mostly memorised and passed down by oral tradition, much as were the works of the Greek Homer (which were first written down at about the same time as the first books of the Bible).

Genesis was first book of the Bible to be written down (though not in its final form we have today). This could have happened initially in the 15th Century BC, around 1450 BC to 1400 BC. But the Bible was not *definitively* written down until the 6th Century BC.

Different versions of the written Bible

There are several early written versions of the Bible. They have the initials **J**, **E**, **D** and **P**.

These written versions did not appear until the united country of Israel split into two kingdoms after King Solomon's death in around 930 BC.

The kingdom split into a *northern* kingdom, which retained the name **Israel**, and a *southern* kingdom called **Judah**, named after the tribe of Judah that dominated the new kingdom. The map here shows the two kingdoms as they would have been around 800 BC.



1 The **J** document appeared in written form perhaps in the 9th Century BC in the *southern* kingdom of **Judah**. It is also called '**J**' because of its characteristic use of '*Jehovah*' in connection with God (though '*Yahveh*' is the *Hebrew* word used for God in the Bible). Modern scholars believe '*Yahveh*' is the more accurate presentation and pronunciation and name of 'God' than the word '*Jehovah*' which is almost universally accepted by English speakers as the manner of *pronouncing* '*Yahveh*'.)

Note: In Exodus 6:3, the *King James Version* of Genesis uses the word '*Jehovah*'. But the modern New International Version (NIV) for the same verse, rather than using '*Jehovah*', uses the name '*Lord*'.

2 The **E** document was put into written form a century later in the *northern* kingdom of Israel. The

dominant tribe in the northern kingdom was **E**phraim and that was *sometimes* used as a poetic synonym for Israel. It is called '**E**' for its use of the Hebrew word *Elohim* which means *God*.

Ephraim was a son of Joseph (but more about this later). In Hebrew, *-im* is plural, so Elohim actually means *gods*, but by social convention was taken to be singular when the ancient Hebrews became monotheistic (that is, believing in one God):

Genesis 3:22 *Behold, the man is become as one of us,.. ('us' meaning 'us gods').*

The use of 'us' is because early beliefs were always **polytheistic**, and **monotheism** was a later development.

Note on J and E: The **J** document can also stand for Judah as well as Jehovah, and the **E** document for Ephraim as well as Elohim.

The **northern** kingdom (called Israel) was destroyed toward the end of the 8th Century BC (721 BC) by the *Assyrians* so the priests of Judah, the **southern** kingdom, incorporated E into their own J tradition to give a combined **JE** version.

3 The **D** version refers to the core or all of the book of *Deuteronomy*, the fifth book in the Old Testament. By the end of the 7th Century BC, Assyria had been replaced by a new imperial power, Babylon. In the 6th Century BC (586 BC) the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, and exiled many of its people in Babylon. The trauma of this led to much theological reflection on the meaning of the tragedy, and the explanation for this was written as the book of Deuteronomy (with one or two minor changes later). Note: *deutero-* = second + *nomo-* = law. So Deuteronomy = *second law*. The 'first law' was the Ten Commandments given to Moses by God (see Page 43).

4 **P** refers to **Priests** (6th Century BC). During the time of exile of inhabitants of Judah in Babylon following the capture of Judah by the Babylonians in the 6th Century, the priesthood took the combined **JE** version and added material of their own to give the **P** version.

After the 70 years of Babylonian exile, in 516 BC, when the exiled people returned to Judah, other books continued to be added to eventually give the Old Testament as we have it now.

The Torah

The combined **P** version word for the first *five* books of the Old Testament is called the '**Torah**', which is the *Hebrew* word for *law*. The *Greek* word for these first five books is **Pentateuch** (meaning 'five books'). The **Septuagint** is a 3rd Century BC *Greek translation* of the Pentateuch. In addition, there is also the **Hexateuch** (meaning 'six scrolls') which is the first six books of the Hebrew Bible, that is, the Torah (Pentateuch) and the book of Joshua. All rather complicated!

The English Bible

The English Bible has reached us, to a large extent, from the Hebrew, first via translation into Greek, then from Greek into Latin. Therefore many of the original Hebrew names/words reach us in Graeco-Latin form.

The first *printed* English Bible was the Gutenberg Bible, printed in Mainz in



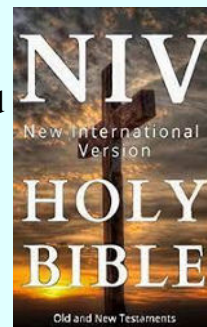
The Gutenberg press

1455 AD by Johann Gutenberg and his associates. Only 48 copies are known to have survived. It was the first mass-produced Bible using the printing press invented by Gutenberg (which I have seen!). The picture on the previous page shows a *reproduction* of Gutenberg's printing press in Mainz, Germany (the original has long gone).

The first printed *English* translation of the whole Bible was produced in 1535 AD directly from Hebrew, Greek and Latin texts. Furthermore, it was the first English biblical translation that was mass-produced as a result of new advances in the art of printing.

The King James Version (KJV), also called the Authorised Version or King James Bible, is an English translation of the Bible, published in 1611 AD under the auspices of King James I of England. It tended to return to the *original* Hebrew in contrast to the earlier English translations.

In the 20th Century, a number of other English versions of the Bible appeared. One I tend to use when viewing online, is the New International Version (NIV). It was produced by more than 100 scholars working from the best available Hebrew, Greek and *Aramaic* texts. The NIV Bible was first published in 1973 AD, with revisions in 1978 AD and 1983 AD.



Aramaic

This was once a language used in many Middle East countries. It is still spoken in small communities in parts of Iraq, Turkey, Iran, Armenia, Georgia and Syria. It was widely used in Palestine during the first century AD. Jesus spoke Aramaic (and *not* Hebrew).

During a visit to the Holy Land by Pope Francis in 2014, the then Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Jesus spoke *Hebrew*. The Pope corrected him! For more on this, refer to the Website #27 in the appendix. The picture here comes from the interview between the Pope and Netanyahu.



The Pope corrects the Prime Minister of Israel

Geography of the Bible

Since earliest times, geography has played a significant role in shaping the course of human history. Geography directs where populations congregate, where peoples migrate and where geopolitical boundaries and civilisations are established.

For this reason, geography is also paramount to understanding the **Torah**, which records events taking place in real locations.

The lands involved in the biblical story are part of the **Fertile Crescent** – the bow shaped region, shown in green on the map on the next page, known for its fertility and abundance of water provided by the two great rivers, the *Tigris* and the *Euphrates*. The Euphrates is referred to in the Bible as ‘The Great River’ (Genesis 15:18). It was the perfect place for civilisations to form and to intersect.

Archaeology has revealed that on the banks of the Euphrates River there arose one of the earliest (if not the earliest) of civilisations. And by 3000 BC, powerful cities dotted the banks of the Euphrates. The map

below shows some of these, for example Ur and Babylon (locate these on the map). Writing had been invented by then and, in general, man as a civilised being was in existence.

The map shows the Fertile Crescent with the names of places in ancient times. (This map will be referred to in the subsequent discussion.)



Ancient map of Mesopotamia and the Fertile Crescent

Places of interest on the map include: Sumer (also known as **Sumeria**), Canaan, Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia and Arabia. Find these places on the map as we will be referring to them later. The region *between* the Tigris and Euphrates rivers is known as *Mesopotamia*. from the Greek *meso-* = between plus *-potomas* = river.

For more on the Fertile Crescent, refer to Website #12.

Sumeria was the first great civilisation, springing up among the farmers of Mesopotamia around 4000 BC and creating a surprisingly sophisticated culture. Abraham was a Sumerian and so the Hebrews are an offshoot of this original civilisation. Sumeria flourished until about 1750 BC.

The land of *Canaan* is found in Egyptian inscriptions dating back to 1800 BC.

People would move around the region along the fertile crescent. Travelling east or west directly was shorter, but would involve crossing the hot, dry Arabian desert and so was avoided.

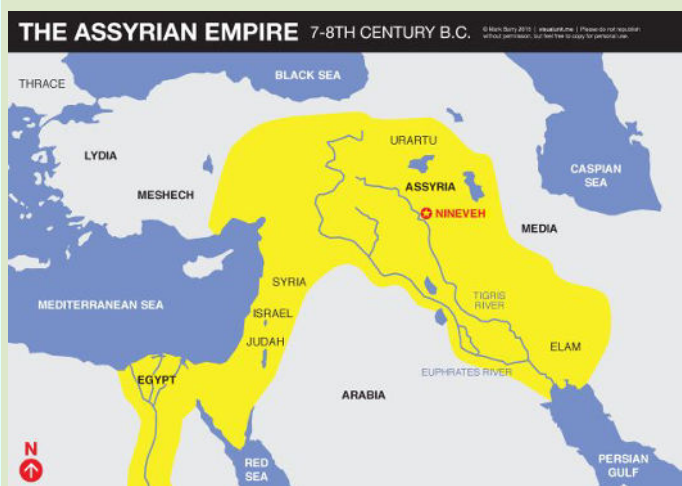
Biblical interest is centred primarily on developments that impinged upon the people dwelling in Canaan, which was just the small section of Asia bordering on the Mediterranean Sea. This area of Canaan makes only a small mark on the history of early civilisation.

Some notes related to the map

1. Sumer and Sumeria are generally used interchangeably. The word 'Sumeria' refers to all the lands controlled by the ancient Sumerians following their conquest of Mesopotamia, while Sumer often

refers to their *civilisation* as a whole.

2. The word Mesopotamia is *not* the word used in ancient times. Similarly, what we know as the *Mediterranean Sea* was then known as *The Great Sea*.
3. *Assyria* is the Greek form of the Hebrew 'Asshur/Ashur/Assur,' which applied not only to the nation, but to its original/first capital city of the Assyrian Empire. The later capital was Nineveh, located north of Assur (see above map). The map *below* shows the Assyrian Empire at its greatest extent ca. 680 – 627 BC. (This was the period when Assyria conquered the *northern* kingdom of Israel in 721 BC mentioned earlier.)
4. *Babylonia* (in the south-east of the Fertile Crescent) was established in about 1895 BC and collapsed in about 539 BC. The map, below right, shows the Babylonian Empire at its greatest extent, under Nebuchadnezzar II (597 – 581 BC). Babylonia captured the *southern* kingdom of Judea in 586 BC, as mentioned earlier on Page 3. As the Babylonian empire collapsed in about 539 BC, the exiles from Judea were only in captivity for a few years. Note that both the Assyrian and Babylonian empires are located in the Fertile Crescent.
5. Land of the *Amorites*. The Amorites were located in the north-west of the Arabian desert in what was to become Syria by the 3rd Century BC. They were also the pre-Israelite inhabitants of the land of Canaan. From about 1200 BC, the Amorites disappeared from the pages of history.



The Assyrian Empire at its greatest extent (7th - 8th Century BC)



The Babylonian Empire at its greatest extent (ca. 600 BC)

Overview of the origins of the Biblical people

The origin of the Biblical story begins in **Sumer(ia)**. Thousands of years ago, stories arose regarding such events as the creation of the world and a giant flood. Such stories were originally passed down orally from person to person.

Later, in about 1800 BC, **Abraham** (a quasi-historical person), the first of the biblical 'patriarchs', appeared on the scene in the town of Ur. When living in Ur became difficult due to the declining fortunes of the Sumerian civilisation, Abraham with his wife Sarah (and presumably other people as well) migrated around the Fertile Crescent to the land known as **Canaan** where they settled down.

Joseph, the great-grandson of Abraham, was sold by his brothers and taken to **Egypt**. His brothers and their father, **Jacob** (who was renamed as *Israel*), later also went to Egypt. They and their descendents lived in Egypt for many years, where they prospered but eventually became slaves. More on this later.

Moses, a later descendant, was born in Egypt and eventually led all the 'Children of Israel' (that is, descendants of Israel, the renamed Jacob) out of Egypt and back to Canaan where they settled down.

The Book of Genesis

The first book of the Bible begins, perhaps appropriately, with the story of the creation of the world and ends with the death of Joseph in Egypt.

The Book of Exodus

The second book of the Bible deals, as the title suggests, with the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt on their way to Canaan, though it ends before they actually get back into Canaan. As will be shown later, this exodus probably began about 1447 BC. Note: The name 'Israelites' refers to the descendants of Jacob/Israel.

So the travels of the Israelites in these two books over a period of several hundred years involved, according to the Bible: Sumeria (start) → Canaan → Egypt → Canaan (end).

Fact of fiction?

Although the narratives described in Genesis and Exodus were written down centuries after they occurred (ca. 6th Century BC), people have argued to what extent the narratives are historical or are just myths. Some have argued that they are indeed an accurate reflection of the conditions of the 2nd millennium BC and that Abraham and others mentioned above were actual historical individuals. Others, however, have argued that the characters and events are primarily myths rather than historical facts.

Most scholars today consider Genesis and Exodus to be primarily mythological rather than historical. (But I suppose, the jury may still be out regarding who is correct.)

Note on the term myth

The term myth is used here in its *academic* sense, meaning 'a traditional story consisting of events that are ostensibly historical, though often supernatural, explaining the origins of a cultural practice or natural phenomenon.' It is *not* being used to mean something that is 'false'.

We now look in greater detail at the book of Genesis.

Genesis

Tradition credits Moses as the author of Genesis, as well as the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and most of Deuteronomy. However, modern scholars are convinced this is not tenable and that the early books of the Bible are not the *single* work of any one man nor, as mentioned earlier, were they originally *written* down but arose orally.

We now look at the narratives described in the book of **Genesis**. The name Genesis is from the Latin Vulgate, in turn borrowed or transliterated from Greek Γένεσις, meaning ‘origin’; Biblical Hebrew: בְּרֵאשִׁית, romanised: Bərēšīt, ‘**In [the] beginning**’. The term ‘Vulgate’ comes from the Latin *editio vulgata*, ‘common version’ and was a late 4th Century AD Latin translation of the Bible.

Genesis is based on very ancient traditions, but these traditions were only reduced to writing in about the **9th** Century BC at the earliest. Some strands of the book were not even written until several centuries later than this and the whole was not unified and put together into the form we now have until about 516 BC following the return of the captives from Babylon (see earlier Page 3). The geographical references in Genesis must therefore refer to the situation as it was, not in very ancient times, but from the **9th** to the **5th** Centuries BC (that is, the Assyrian period and somewhat later) if they were to have meaning to the reader. (See the area of *Assyria* in the maps shown on Pages 5 and 6.)

Genesis is divisible into two periods – the **primeval** period and the **patriarchal** period.

The Primeval Period (Genesis, Chapters 1 – 11)

This is the earliest time in history; *prime-* = first, or coming into being. The primeval period in the Bible is from Adam and the beginning of the world, to Noah and the flood and then to Terah (the father of Abraham) and ends at about 2000 – 1800 BC. It is covered in Chapters 1 – 11 of Genesis. It tells how God creates the world, the story of Adam and Eve to Noah and the flood (and the end of the world!) then how a new humanity that descends from Noah’s sons and spreads throughout the world.

Some scholars believe that this primeval history, including the flood narrative, may even have been composed and added as late as the **3rd** Century BC.

Most of the persons, places and stories in the primeval history are never mentioned anywhere else in the Bible. Also, it is very far-fetched to speak of its narratives as historical at all. Numerous Mesopotamian myths (and one Egyptian myth) are reflected in the Biblical primeval history, for example, a Babylonian creation myth as well as a very old flood myth similar to the biblical flood. The Genesis flood narrative (Chapters 6 – 9 of the Book of Genesis) is probably the Hebrew version of a *universal* flood myth.

The Patriarchal Period (Genesis, Chapters 12 – 50)

The word ‘patriarchal’ comes from *pater-* = father.

So a patriarch was a man (never a woman!) in a position of dominance and privilege. The patriarchal age is the era of the *three* biblical patriarchs, **Abraham**, **Isaac** and **Jacob** according to the mythology of Genesis 12 – 50. (Joseph is *not* one of the patriarchs.) The patriarchal period lasts from the birth of Abraham, *possibly* about 1813 BC, to the death of his grandson Jacob, and is covered in Chapters 12 – 50 of Genesis.

Some scholars have asserted that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were *actual* [historical](#) individuals. Later, there was a major shift in biblical scholarship and archaeology, which gradually led scholars to no longer consider the patriarchal narratives as historical. By the beginning of the 21st Century, archaeologists had given up hope of recovering any context that would make Abraham, Isaac or Jacob credible historical figures. Refer to Website #26 for more on this issue.

On Page 48, a '**Family tree for Genesis and Exodus**' is shown covering Genesis and Exodus and the people involved. The reader should continually refer to this family tree as the discussion below unfolds. In fact, look at it now to get an overview of (1) the primeval and patriarchal periods, (2) the people involved, and (3) events that occur in the books of Genesis and Exodus.

The Beginning – Creation

The creation story in the Bible is believed to be an offshoot of an earlier Sumerian and/or Babylonian polytheistic tradition coming from Ur ca. 1800 BC, about the time of Abraham.

The Bible centres on God, and God is brought into the tale immediately in the *first* verse of Genesis, that is, the first verse in the Bible:

Genesis 1:1 *In the beginning God ['Elohim'] created the heaven and the earth.*

The Hebrew word, translated here as *God*, is '[Elohim](#)' and that is a plural form which would ordinarily be translated '[gods](#)' which suggests polytheistic (that is, many gods) origins as we saw on Page 3. As far as we know, in the history of religion *outside* the Bible, early beliefs were always *polytheistic* and *monotheism* was a late development in the history of ideas. It is possible that in the very earliest traditions on which the Bible is based, the creation was indeed the work of a plurality of gods.

The first 34 verses of the Bible tell the story of creation.

[Six](#) acts of creation are described as taking place on [six](#) successive days. Then:

Genesis 2:2 *And on the [seventh](#) day God ended his work . . .and . . . rested . . .*

Genesis 2:3 *And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it*

The seventh day is also referred to as the [Sabbath](#) (meaning to rest). The role played by the Sabbath was quite small at first, and enormous later. The dividing line comes at one of the great watersheds in Jewish history – the Babylonian Exile (6th Century BC). In times *before* the exile in Babylon, the Sabbath is barely mentioned and seems to have been of little consequence among the Israelites. But in the times *after* the exile, its observance was of the greatest importance and people died rather than violate its observance.

It is widely accepted now that the creation tale received its *present* shape *after* the Babylonian Exile and was, in fact, a version of a Babylonian creation *myth*, possibly related to earlier oral stories passed down in ancient Mesopotamia. The creation tale is typical of those portions of the first few books of the Bible that were put into *final* form by priestly hands soon after the time of the Exile (the [P](#) version).



Creation – Adam and Eve

(KJV) Genesis 2:19. . . .*the Lord God formed every beast . . . and every fowl . . . and brought them unto Adam* ...

The word ‘Adam’ is a Hebrew word meaning ‘man’ which is a general expression rather akin to what we mean when we say ‘mankind’. Note: The KJV version uses the word ‘adam’. Modern translations use the more correct term ‘man’.

(NIV) Genesis 2:19 ... *the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man* ...

The ancient Israelites believed creation to have taken place at roughly 4000 BC by modern dating convention. Clearly this is a myth and not scientific reckoning which tells us the world was created billions of years ago.

After forming man, God breathes life into him, a reminder that in primitive times, the breath was often equated with life for what seemed obvious reasons.

Eve: Having formed man, God creates a woman as a companion for Adam, forming her out of the man's rib (see Genesis 2:21 – 24).

Eve's name: The names of the men and women in the earliest traditions were often not in Hebrew and, therefore, were not of clear significance. The Biblical writers, searching for the meaning they felt ought to be in all names, would spot a resemblance to some Hebrew word or phrase and invent an explanation around it. Thus the Hebrew name equivalent to our own Eve is *Hawah*, which has a similarity of sound to *hayah*, meaning ‘to live’. Since Eve is regarded as the mother of the human race, it is tempting to equate *Hawah* and *hayah* and say that she received the name because she was the mother of all living people. This is an example of [folk etymology](#) in which the Bible abounds. The real meaning of *Hawah* or Eve is, of course, unknown.

[[Etymology](#) = the study of the origin of words and the way their meanings have changed throughout history.]

The Garden of Eden

Everybody knows that Adam and Eve dwelt in the Garden of Eden which the Bible makes the original home of the human race.

Genesis 2:8 *And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden* ...

But where is Eden?

The Bible tells us that quite plainly. It refers to Eden several times, not as a mystical primeval site of a garden in which Adam and Eve roamed, but as a *prosaic everyday land* possibly in the vicinity of Ur, where the Sumerian civilisation was formed. See the small **red** area on the map on Page 5 (though in ancient times it was not under water as it is now as shown on the map). In the [Sumerian](#) language, the word *eden* means ‘plain’ (that is, an area of flat land with few trees).

In the [Hebrew](#) language, *eden* means ‘delight’ or ‘enjoyment’, which seems appropriate for the garden, but this is, in all likelihood, is merely a fortunate etymological accident since Hebrew and Sumerian are

not related languages. So perhaps Eden *might* be a mystical term without actual geographic meaning and that the place originally inhabited by mankind was merely ‘the garden of delight’ with no place name at all.

The serpent

After Adam settles in the garden of Eden, God grants him the right to full enjoyment of its delights, with one exception. He says:

Genesis 2:16 – 7 *And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”*

So to placate Adam, God creates a woman as a companion for Adam, forming her out of one of his ribs. Presumably the two might have lived in the garden in eternal happiness as long as they respected God's prohibition. There was, however, a spoiler in the garden:

Genesis 3:1 *Now the **serpent** 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’?”*

Talking animals are rare in the Hebrew scriptures. The tale is quite likely extremely primitive and represents a remnant of a nature myth. The serpent's evil is motiveless or, at best, arises out of mere delight in mischief. The people of post-Babylon times (6th Century, remember) made this seem more reasonable, however, by equating the serpent with Satan who is the spirit of Evil as God is the spirit of Good. This idea actually came from *Persian* religious thought. So the ancients were quite willing to borrow from other traditions if it suited them!

In this account, evil is introduced into the world and is the traditional story of **original sin**. This seems to fit well with human psychology where original sin becomes the tendency for human beings to 'give in' when tempted by the prevailing evils of the society around them.

For more on Original Sin, refer to Website #25.



An artist's impression of the serpent in the Garden of Eden

Expulsion: Because of their sin, Adam and Eve may no longer live in ‘paradise’ easily gathering food but are kicked out of the garden and condemned to the heavy labour of agriculture in order to live.

When were animals created?

Genesis 1:24-27 plainly indicates that man was created *after* the animals, but critics claim that Genesis 2:18-19 teaches that man was created *before* animals. Read these verses in Genesis and perhaps refer to the link in Website #13 on the creation of animals. Then you decide!

Agriculture

Agriculture originated in a few small hubs around the world, but probably first in the *Fertile Crescent*. The evidence for full-blown agriculture there – crops, livestock, tools for food preparation, and villages –

dates back about 11 000 years. Agriculture gave man a more plentiful and dependable food supply and made possible a large increase in population in those areas where it was practised. Because crops were immobile and had to be cared for, farmers had to remain in one place. For mutual protection, they gathered in villages which gradually became cities and thus arose ‘civilisation’ (from the Latin word *civis* meaning *city-dweller*).

Free-wandering nomadic hunter-gatherers might have viewed agriculture as slavery. Does the expulsion from Eden include a dim memory of the unfavourable aspects of the changeover from hunter-gatherers, as Adam and Eve would have been, to agriculture?

This change from wanderer-nomads to settled agriculturists was a social revolution (probably the first one) and was perhaps the single biggest step in the ascent of man.

Agriculture and civilisation

The move to agriculture was the beginning also of what we call *civilisation*. However, civilisation is more than a town; it has an advanced stage of organisation with things such as **laws**, rulers, food sources, protection and a common language.

The move to agriculture and civilisation

For comments on the change from being hunter gatherers to living a settled life in villages during the neolithic age, refer to Pages 8 – 9 of an earlier project of mine entitled *The Ascent of Man*. You can access this using Website #3.

What the creation story omits

Most religions and mythologies have a story similar to the Garden of Eden. The stories of giants, mighty men and epic heroes are stories of mankind’s potential for greatness. However, the Bible’s concern is the *opposite*; it is interested in **keeping man in his place**:

Genesis 3:22 ...*Behold, the man is become as one of **us***, . [‘us’ meaning ‘gods’]

The point here was to prevent man from becoming ‘as one of us’, from attaining equality with the gods. Compare this with Greek mythology where it was common for a hero who performs great deeds to be made into a demigod.

The Bible’s exclusive, almost single-minded focus is on ensuring man’s *subordination* to God.

The Biblical Family Tree for Genesis and Exodus

Now that Adam and Eve have been created, the biblical Family Tree starts (look again at the diagram on Page 48). Adam and Eve have three sons: Cain, Abel and Seth (no mention of daughters!). But see:

Genesis 5:3 – 4 *When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth. After Seth was born, Adam lived 800 years and had other sons **and daughters**.*

According to some other religious traditions (for example, Muslim), both Cain and Abel had **twin** sisters. This would make them the first female humans to be born naturally.

But on a more scientific basis, geneticists, by tracing the DNA patterns found in people throughout the

world, have now identified lineages descended from women who lived about 45 000 years ago, one or more of whom could have been a daughter of Adam and Eve! Refer to Website #1 on 10 ‘Adams and 18 Eves’.

Cain and Abel

Genesis 4:1 – 2 *Adam ... Eve gave birth to Cain. She said, “With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man.” Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.*

Cain seems to represent the [agriculturist/farmer/settled person](#) while Abel is the [herdsman](#) (or nomad). As the early histories were written from the standpoint of the farmers, the settled city-men, and in them the free-wandering nomads (such as Abel!) are viewed as barbaric raiders, ruthless and bloodthirsty. Any wonder Cain, the settled man, wanted to get rid of Abel.

It was the settled farmers who multiplied and through them civilisation spread. The tale is told in Genesis (briefly and obscurely told) of how Cain grew jealous of Abel and killed him. This may be, in part, a remnant of some nomadic lament over the all-encroaching tentacles of settled civilisation. The very name Abel (*Hebel* in Hebrew) means ‘a puff of air’ seeming to imply the briefness and instability of the nomadic way of life against the steady push of the settled farmer. (Asimov gives an example from American history toward the end of the 19th Century when the nomadic ‘cowboy’ of the West had to give way, at last, to the plodding farmer and his barbed-wire fences. See Page 34 of Asimov’s book.)

After Cain murders Abel, he is driven away to the land of Nod, located somewhere to the east of Eden. If Eden is taken to be Sumeria, then the region ‘east of Eden’ would be that known as [Elam](#), located in what is now south-western Iran. (See the map again on Page 5.)

The Hebrew word *Nod* is related to the term meaning *wanderer*; therefore to dwell in the land of Nod is taken to mean that one takes up a wandering life and becomes a nomad.

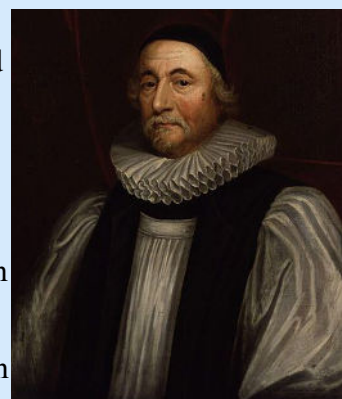
Is it possible, then, that the story of Cain and Abel might be a combination of a villainous country of Elam attacking a blameless Sumeria (as told by the Sumerians) or a villainous farmer attacking a blameless nomad (as told by the nomads)?

The third son of Adam and Eve was Seth. Seven generations from Seth and we end up with Noah. (Refer to the Family Tree.)

Dating of Biblical times

Christian theologians have come up with a variety of dates for the creation and other Biblical stories. The most familiar of these is one worked out by James Ussher (1581 – 1656), an Anglican archbishop in Ireland. In 1654, he decided that the creation had taken place in 4004 BC.

Actually this isn't a bad date for the establishment of historic times. Man began to have a history in the proper sense only after writing had been invented, and writing was invented a little before 3000 BC. However, the first cities had been organised as early as 8000 BC and prehistoric man (or creatures recognisably similar to man) have left remains that are millions of years old.



James Ussher (1581 - 1656)

Ages of Old Testament characters

Throughout the Old Testament, the writers kept steadily reducing the ages attained by the chief figures in the tales though even at the end these were still boasting life spans somewhat in excess of a hundred years. Several, including Adam himself, lived nearly about 930 years. The record holder is Methuselah (whose name has become a byword for age) who attained the age of 969 years (Refer to Genesis 5:27).

Noah and the Flood

Again, probably nearly everyone has heard of Noah and the Flood and his Ark. Noah was supposedly born in about 3000 BC (accepting Ussher's figures!). When he was 600 years old, that is, in about 2400 BC, there came the Flood. According to the Bible, this was a deluge that covered the *whole* Earth, but there is no record of any such phenomenon either locally in Sumeria and certainly not affecting the whole Earth. An account of the biblical flood is given in Genesis Chapters 6 – 8.

In 1929 AD, the English archaeologist Sir Charles Leonard Woolley reported finding water-deposited layers as much as ten feet thick in his excavations near the Euphrates river. Such deposits were *not* found everywhere in the region. The evidence suggests that somewhere about 3000 BC there were indeed drastic floods of at least a *local* nature in the area of Sumeria. These may have been produced by unusually heavy rains in the region.



Noah's ark at a Hong Kong theme park!

With time, as the story is told and retold, it is dramatically inevitable that a flood which spreads out over parts of Sumeria and neighbouring regions with great loss of life will be said to have covered 'all the world', meaning the entire region/known world rather than the actual whole world.

Alternative flood stories

1 Tidal wave + rain: Some people suspect the flood to have been too serious to be accounted for by rain alone and think there may have been a sudden rise in the water level of the Persian Gulf due to a tidal wave, leading to a disastrous influx from the sea up through Sumeria.

In another related account, the ark came to rest in 'the land of Ararat', which is the modern country of Armenia some 600 miles north-west of Sumeria. The tradition is that the ark came to rest in Ararat and again speaks in favour of a *tidal-wave theory* of a flood from the Persian Gulf that swept objects upstream (including the ark!!) – north-westward towards Ararat.

2 The Black Sea flood: The Sumerian version above may have been a distorted record of an ancient flood which occurred when the Mediterranean Sea, backed by the Atlantic Ocean, partially emptied into the Black Sea in about 5600 BC which then overflowed onto lands in the region.

3 The Mesopotamian Epic of Gilgamesh was composed perhaps about 2000 BC, some 800 years after his reign. Gilgamesh was an historical king of the Sumerian city-state of Uruk/Erech (north-west of Ur – see map for Uruk). This story is very similar to the Noah story in Genesis which may be based on this earlier Gilgamesh tale. In his travels around the world, Gilgamesh seeks out a wise man whose claim to fame is that he built an ark, filled it with animals, and survived a great flood sent by the gods as a kind of punishment for man's wickedness by riding it out in his ark. The picture, right, is a representation of Gilgamesh.



Gilgamesh

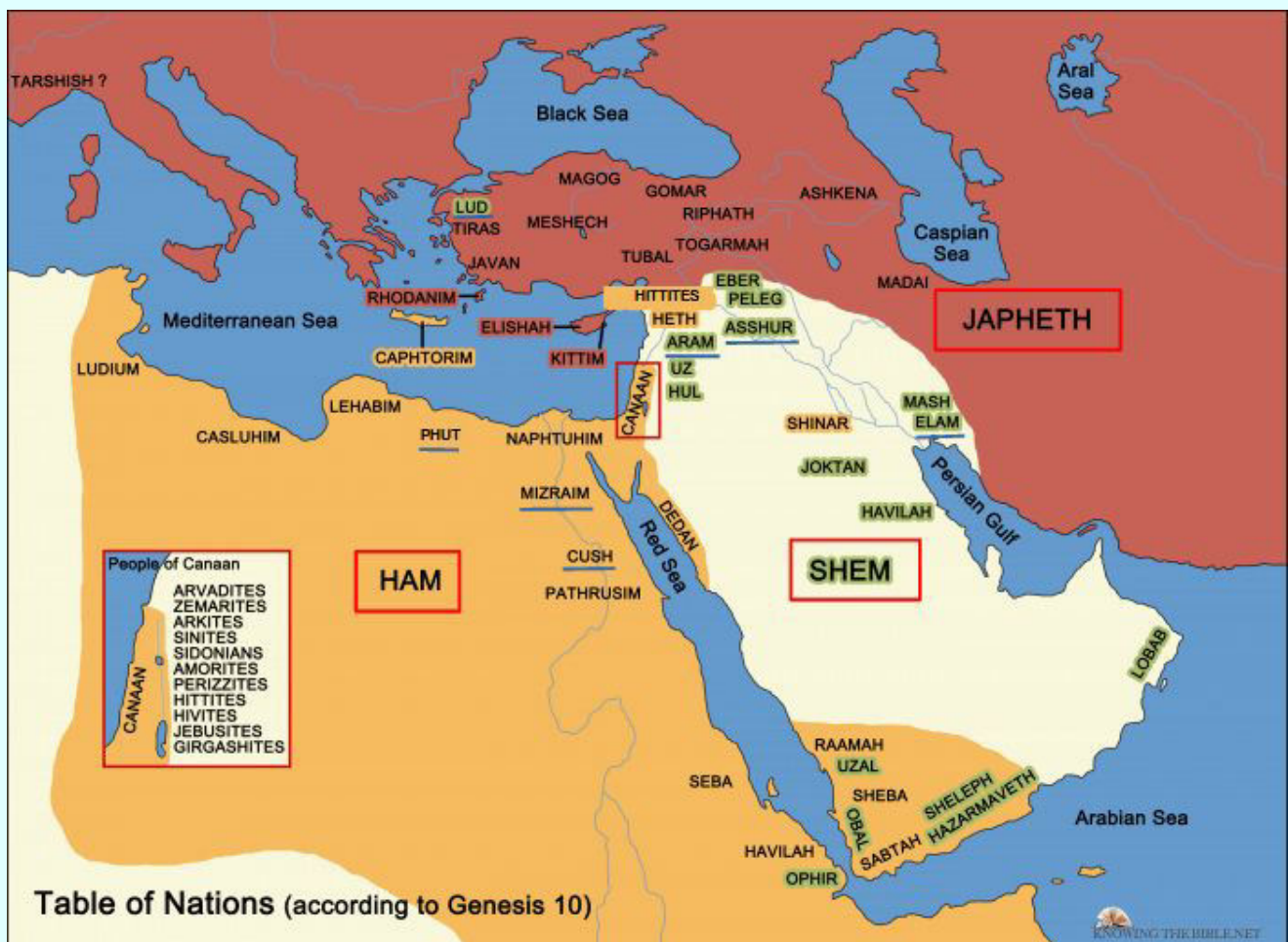
...The flood story in Genesis 6 – 8 follows the Gilgamesh flood myth point by point and in the same order so closely that few doubt that it derives from this Mesopotamian account by Gilgamesh.

More on the flood stories of Gilgamesh and the Black Sea flood: Refer to Website #13.

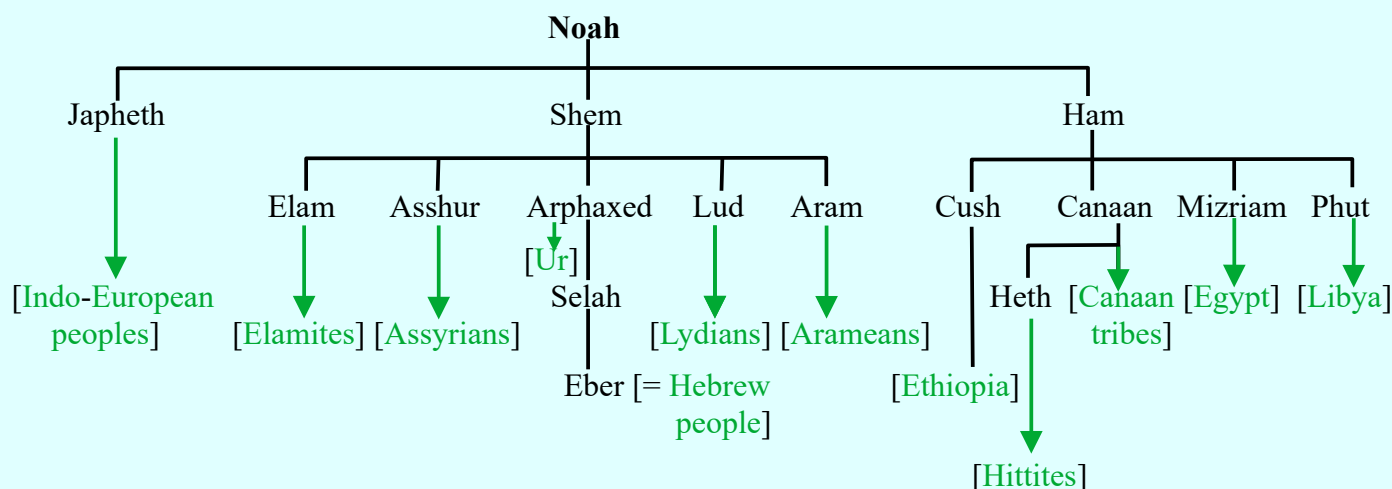
Noah's sons and origins of ancient peoples

Noah had three sons – **Shem, Japheth** and **Ham** (see again the Family Tree of Genesis and Exodus). The three sons represent the divisions of the peoples known to the ancient writers of the Bible.

The map below shows the *regions* inhabited by the descendants of Shem, Japheth and Ham (according to Genesis 10).



Part of the Family Tree showing just the three sons of Noah and the specific peoples the Bible says descended from them is shown below. Match the names in this ‘tree’ with the locations on the map on the previous page.



Shem

In general, the descendants of Shem are portrayed as occupying the Arabian peninsula and the regions adjoining it to the north, including the Tigris-Euphrates region, which is the centre of interest in the early portions of Genesis. Since this includes the Hebrews themselves, Shem is given the post of honour and is made the eldest son of Noah. At least, he is mentioned first!

Shem and Semitic languages

The languages of the people dwelling in the region of Shem are referred to as ‘**Semitic**’. (‘Sem’ in Semitic is the Graeco-Latin form of Shem.) These Semitic languages are named after Shem’s five sons – Arphaxad, Asshur, Aram, Elam and Lud.

These Semitic languages include:

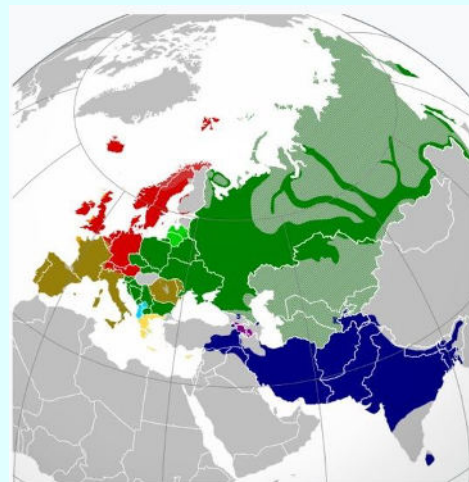
- Hebrew (from Arphaxad*).
- Assyrian (from Asshur).
- Aramaic/Aramaean tribes (from Aram) in the ancient region of Northern Arabia and Syria – the land of the Amorites).
- Lydian (from Lud). Lydia is located in western Anatolia/Turkey.
- Elam (from Elam). Note: The Elamites are considered Semites by the Hebrews (as Elam was a son of Shem) but their language was *not* actually one of the Semitic languages.

*Actually, looking at the Family Tree, Hebrew comes from Eber, the *grandson* of Arphaxad. From the word *eber* we get the word *Hebrew*. Arphaxad is also honoured as the father of the language spoken in Ur as the tree shows.

Japheth

The parts of the then known world – what we call Greece (a rising power in the Mediterranean at the time the Bible was written), are considered, at least in Biblical terms, to be among the descendants of Japheth. Iapetus (a Greek word identified as Japheth) was considered by the Greeks to be the ancestor of mankind; and, to the Hebrews, Japheth was the ancestor of that part of the world to which the Greeks belonged.

Another son of Japheth, Madai (= Medes; *not* shown in the Family Tree) is considered to be the ancestor of many areas from Asia to Europe and the so-called ‘**Indo-European**’ languages. The map, right, shows in colours the present-day distribution of Indo-European languages. Note that English is an Indo-European language.



For more on Indo-European languages, refer to Website #16.

Ham

The descendants of Ham are described as inhabiting chiefly the corner of Africa adjacent to Asia, except for his son Canaan, who is the ancestor of the Canaanites, where Abraham will later settle down. Refer to Ham’s sons and grandsons in the Family Tree and the ‘Table of Nations’ map (Page 15). And:

Genesis 10:6 *And the sons of Ham; Cush, and Mizraim, and Phut, and Canaan.*

Cush means the **Ethiopians**, south of Egypt (though north of present-day Ethiopia), Phut represents the **Libyans** west of Egypt, while Mizraim is the Hebrew word for **Egypt**. If such translations were done now, Genesis 10:6 might read: "*And the sons of Ham; Ethiopia, and Egypt, and Libya, and Canaan,*" which would accurately reflect the area dominated by Egypt in the days of her greatness.

Further, Heth, the son of Canaan and grandson of Ham is the ancestor of the Hittites, who lived north of the land of Canaan, in the south-west of modern Turkey (refer again to the map on Page 15).

The curse of Ham

The curse of Ham is described in the Book of Genesis as imposed by Noah upon Ham's son Canaan due to Ham seeing his drunk father naked and telling his brothers.

For details refer to:

- 1 Genesis Chapter 9.
2. Website #14.

Some people today seem to think that Ham also represents the Negro peoples and that this chapter in Genesis can be used to justify Negro slavery. This is the purest piffle. Neither Ham, Canaan, nor any of their named descendants were viewed as Negroes by the Biblical writers.

Canaan (son of Ham)

Genesis 9:18 goes out of its way to specify that ‘*Ham is the father of Canaan*’. The reason for this is a simple one (I hope!). Some three centuries prior to the Hebrew occupation of Canaan, the land had been conquered by Egyptian armies and for a long time formed part of the Egyptian Empire. Since Egypt, according to Genesis, came from Mizraim, Ham’s son, it seemed reasonable, according to the standards of the time, to describe Canaan as a son of Ham. This is how the Canaan tribes are shown in the Family Tree in this project.

Note: The people inhabiting the land of Canaan (descendants of Ham and his son Canaan) later spoke a *Semitic* language. So the Canaanites were regarded as *Semites* (from ‘Shem’) though they were *ethnically* from Ham, Shem’s brother. But this is the Bible, not precise history!!

Abraham

Several generations after Eber, we come to Abraham, the first of the three Hebrew patriarchs. Genesis makes Abraham and the other patriarchs sound historical whether they are or not. But to be strictly 'historical' requires independent verification, which the Bible does not provide.

Note: Abraham was originally named [Abram](#) but God altered this to the now better-known [Abraham](#), Why? To symbolise his destiny as the patriarch of God's chosen people (that is, the Israelites). Genesis 17:4 – 5 tells us this:

Genesis 17:4 – 5 *As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called [Abram](#); your name will be [Abraham](#), for I have made you a father of many nations.*

And the Family Tree of Genesis and Exodus certainly indicates this 'father of *many* nations'.

From here on in this project, we shall use only the name Abraham.

Details about Abraham's life are provided in the Book of Genesis, primarily in Chapters 11 to 25.

Ur was a Sumerian city, founded no later than 3500 BC and possibly much earlier. By 2500 BC, centuries before Abraham was born, the [Sumerians](#) had already passed their peak. New tribes from the north, the [Akkadians](#), took over. (See map on Page 5 for Sumer/Sumeria and Akkad, which gives [Akkadians](#).) So the Sumerians were now a conquered people.

Ur is taken to be the home of Abraham's family, and the birthplace of Abraham himself though [Haran](#) *might* have been his birthplace. Ur, however, is firmly embedded in *tradition* as his birthplace. Abraham possibly lived in Ur about 2000 – 1800 BC.

[Haran](#): This town is located further north and east of Ur, located nowadays in south-east Turkey just north of the Syrian border. Find it on the map on Page 5.

By the time of Abraham's youth, Ur, being part of Sumeria, had seen better times. It is not surprising, then, that Abraham's family (including his wife Sarah and his father Terah) could see little future in remaining in Ur and so left Sumeria altogether (Genesis 11:31) and went to Haran and lived there for several years (assuming he was not born in Haran and so would already have been there!) with his brother Nahor who lived there. In doing this, the family would have followed the normal trade routes from Sumeria along the Fertile Crescent.

It may be that emigrants from Ur, with Abraham prominent among them, brought tales of the flood to Canaan, where they entered the traditional story of early man and remained there. Other Sumerian legends, such as that of the Garden of Eden, of Cain and Abel, of the Tower of Babel (not discussed in this project), may also have arrived with them.

Notes

1. In the 'Table of Nations' map on Page 15, Haran is in the area shown as 'Aram'. (Find Aram.) Aram is a son of Shem and so they are Arameans and spoke Aramaic. It is probable then that Nahor, Abraham's brother, spoke Aramaic. As Aramaic and Abraham's language of *Hebrew* are both similar Semitic languages, Abraham and his relations in Haran probably had no difficulties communicating.

2. Ur continued to exist throughout Old Testament times and it is mentioned in documents as late as 324 BC. However, by the time Genesis was being written, Ur was nothing but a decayed and obscure village.

Migration to Canaan

Abraham's father Terah, died in Haran and it was time for Abraham to move on. Genesis 12:5 tells us that Abraham took **Sarah** his wife and **Lot** his brother's son (that is, his nephew) and headed down to Canaan. And according to legends which do *not* appear in the Bible, Abraham publicly abandoned the worship of idols at this time (idol worship was common in Sumeria) and became a staunch monotheist. (The legends also say that his father, Terah, was a manufacturer of idols and that Abraham broke them in anger.)

By the time of Abraham's arrival, Canaan already had a long history of civilisation and was occupied by a mixture of peoples, lumped together in the Bible as the 'Canaanites'. The people spoke a *Semitic* language that had entered Canaan as early as 3000 BC. Further, most Canaanites not only spoke a Semitic language, they actually spoke the *Hebrew* language.

While Abraham had gone on a 1000-mile (1600-kilometre) journey (from Ur to Haran to Canaan), he had, in a sense, never left home, for the culture that had originated in Sumeria had already filled all the Fertile Crescent in his day. Canaan, however, represented the western limit of that Sumerian culture.

On to Egypt

Genesis 12:10 *Now there was a famine in the land [Canaan], and Abram went down to Egypt for a while because the famine was severe.*

Genesis 12:4 *So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him.*

Notes: Egypt at that time extended up to north of **Sidon** (in modern Lebanon) – see the map below.



Egypt and Canaan during the time of Abraham

While in Egypt, the Pharaoh of the time covets Abraham's wife Sarah. (Read Genesis 12:10 – 20 to find out what happened.)

In Egypt, Abraham, who had stayed long enough to become rich and had many herds, returns to Canaan. So many possessions that he shares them with Lot who chooses to go to plain of Jordan (the **Sodom** area on the lower eastern side of the Dead Sea as shown in the above map). Abraham settles in the less fertile region of **Hebron** (west of the Dead Sea 20 miles south of the present Jerusalem and one of the oldest towns in Canaan (see above map again for the locations of Sodom and Hebron).

Note: The name Dead Sea is not used in the KJV of the Bible – it uses 'salt sea', for example, in Genesis 14:3.

Abraham vs Elam

At this time, Elam (south-west of modern Iran – see map on Page 5 again) was the constant enemy of Sumeria and having conquered some of the region near it, was now reaching westward for the rest of the Fertile Crescent, including where Lot lived. The Biblical story (Genesis 14) has Chedorlaomer (or Kedorlaomer) of Elam leading an element of a military coalition. Biblical chronology places the events of Genesis 14 sometime during the start of the second millennium BC, around the 19th Century (2000 – 1800 BC). Historians debate the precise dating and chronology relating to this event. However, it is known from historical records that in the period 2000 – 1700 BC (which is close to the date in Genesis 14) Elam did intervene extensively in the politics of Mesopotamia – with its armies. So the events described in Genesis 14 do fit squarely within what is recognised as the '*Elamite Conquest*' period. According to conventional chronology, around 2000 BC it was Elam who sacked Ur and effectively ended the dominance of the Sumerian empire and precipitated Abraham's departure.

Anyway, Abraham vs Elam is one of the most fascinating and gripping stories in the book of Genesis. It is also the earliest account of warfare in the Bible – the true '**World War I**'.

Now back to Chedorlaomer/Kedorlaomer of Elam mentioned just above. His army turned to the southern flank of the Dead Sea region, fell upon the forces of the cities there, and defeated them. The city of Sodom was sacked. **Lot**, Abraham's nephew, was carried off to enslavement.

Abraham, now a powerful desert sheik, on hearing of this, we are told, gathered his men and set off in pursuit (he went as far north as Damascus – see location on above map). He defeated a contingent of the army of Elam, slew Chedorlaomer/



An artistic impression of Abraham making the enemies flee who hold his nephew Lot

Kedorlaomer, and liberated Lot together with much of the taken loot, according to the Genesis account.

For more on the battle against Elam, refer to Website #5.

Abraham gets a son, but not an heir: **Ishmael**

Abraham, though married to Sarah, lacks a son and heir, a terrible situation in a family-centred tribal

society. Nevertheless, God promises Abraham a son and also promises him that his descendants shall inherit the land of Canaan and that the people there, or soon to be living in the land, shall be displaced.

Tough on those already living there!!! But Bible stories do not worry about this sort of thing!!

At the suggestion of his wife, Sarah, Abraham takes her Egyptian servant, Hagar, as his concubine:

Genesis 16:15 *So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name **Ishmael** to the son she had borne.*

Ishmael however, is *not* the son and heir God promised Abraham.

More on Sarai and the Ishmaelites

Sarah or Sarai? Website #32. Ishmaelites. Website #17.

Gomorrah: **Lot**

But while Abraham awaits his promised son, the focus in Genesis shifts. Abraham learns that the cities of the plain – the flat area just to the east of the Dead Sea of which the cities of **Sodom** and **Gomorrah** were the most important – are to be destroyed in a great catastrophe because of their sin. Lot, Abraham's nephew, as mentioned above, had settled in Sodom. (See Genesis 19.)

The description of the catastrophe could match that of a *volcanic* eruption, combined with an earthquake; or, conceivably, a large *meteorite* strike. Such events have occurred in recent times. In 1883, a volcanic eruption on the island of Krakatoa in the strait between the Indonesian islands of Java and Sumatra killed 36 000 people in Java.

Note: No extra-Biblical evidence of such a catastrophe as the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is known. But then, these are legends of the time, not necessarily historical facts!



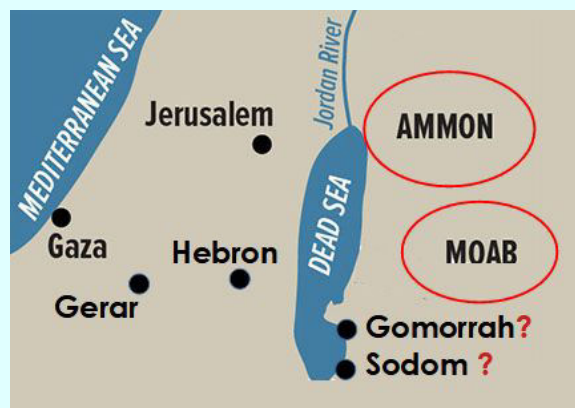
An artist's impression of the destruction of Sodom

Lot's wife and two daughters escaped with him from the destruction of Sodom. While hiding in a cave, the daughters are convinced that the destruction had been universal. Feeling themselves to be the only possible mothers of any future humanity, they made use of the only man available – their father! After making him drunk, they ‘slept’ with him and became pregnant. Each bore a son.

Another great kiddies story!

The names of the sons were **Moab** and **Ammon**. Their descendents were known as the **Moabites** and the **Ammonites** respectively and dwelt in the lands of Moab and Ammon (see map, right).

Moab is located on the eastern side of the Dead Sea (in the region of Sodom and Gomorrah). Ammon is just north of Moab on the eastern side of the river Jordan.



The locations of Moab and Ammon

The actual historical origins of the names Moab and Ammon are not known, but they can be twisted to imply incestuous origin. 'Moab' may mean 'from father'. 'Ammon' may mean 'from [my own] father'. Later, the peoples of both Moab and Ammon remained perennial enemies of the Israelites and the writers of Genesis were probably only too pleased to record the folk tale of their scandalous origin!

The Genesis story of Sodom and Gomorrah

Read the story in Genesis 19:30 – 36.

After the destruction of Sodom, Abraham apparently felt the need of moving away from unpleasant associations and of making a new start. He sojourned in **Gerar** about 40 miles west of **Hebron**, where he had been living. (See map on previous page for the location of these two cities.)

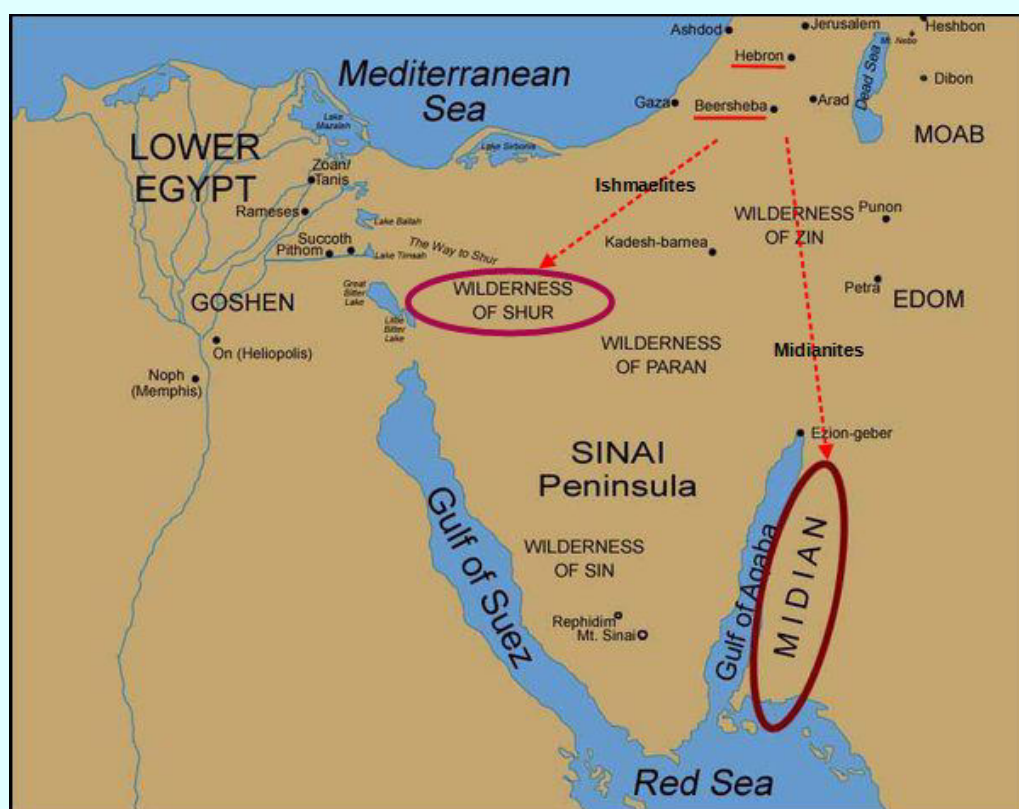
Abraham finally gets a son and heir: **Isaac**

A son is finally born to Abraham and his wife, Sarah, and he was named **Isaac**.

In order that there might be no confusion as to who was to be Abraham's heir, **Hagar**, Abraham's **concubine**, and her son, **Ishmael**, were, at Sarah's insistence, cast out.

Hagar and Ishmael departed and lived for a while in a wilderness area south of Hebron (in a place now known as Beersheba – see map below). They are then believed to have settled in an area near the eastern border of Egypt known as Shur or The wilderness of Shur (again see this map). His mother Hagar (who was Egyptian) took him a wife out of the land of Egypt (Genesis 21:21). So Ishmael had an Egyptian mother and now an Egyptian wife. Eventually, a group of tribes, the descendents of Ishmael, collectively known as **Ishmaelites** in the Bible, dwelt in that area.

Genesis 25:18 *His **descendants** settled in the area from Havilah to **Shur**, near the eastern border of Egypt, as you go toward Ashur. And they lived in hostility toward all the tribes related to them.*



*The areas where the **Ishmaelites** and the **Midianites** settled*

It was through the descent from a concubine that indicated the view (from the standpoint of the writers of Genesis) that the Ishmaelites were of *subordinate* importance in the scheme of things.

Another concubine – **Keturah**

Before Genesis turns to a consideration of Isaac's descendants, however, it clears up the matter of the various Abrahamic lines through concubines. In Genesis 25, Abraham takes a second concubine – **Keturah**. (Men were often polygamous in those days and it was an accepted custom of the times.)

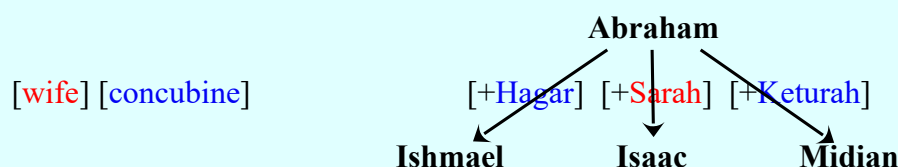
Keturah bore Abraham six sons, the descendents of who became various Arabian tribes, of whom **Midian** is by far the best known. Note: The 'Family Tree' *only* shows Midian and *not* the other sons. The descendents of Midian were known as the **Midianites**. They too migrated to another area in the region, known as the **Land of Midian**.

The land of Midian, where the Midianites lived, is usually marked on the maps as occupying the north-west corner of Arabia, separated from the Sinai Peninsula by a narrow arm of the sea – the Gulf of Aqaba – and thus not too far from the area occupied by the Ishmaelites in the Wilderness of Shur (see above map). Indeed, the names Midianites and Ishmaelites are sometimes used, confusingly, with the same meaning in the Bible due to an unclear passage in Genesis 27:28 that refers to the traders to whom Joseph was sold by his brothers as both Midianites and Ishmaelites.

Genesis 27:28 *So when the **Midianite** merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the **Ishmaelites**, who took him to Egypt.*

[See later for the story of Joseph being sold and taken to Egypt – Page 31.]

Summary of Abraham and his sons



This diagram is taken from the full 'Family Tree'; look at the complete tree to put this diagram in context.

Isaac

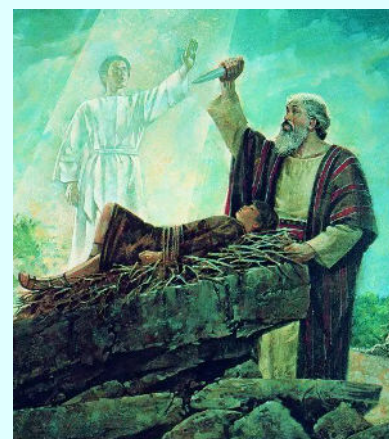
We now return to the story of Isaac, the son of Abraham and the second Hebrew patriarch.

Abraham's promised son: A human sacrifice

In gratitude to God, Abraham intends to offer his son, Isaac – his long-awaited son and heir – as a human sacrifice at God's order in the land of Moriah. It is not known where this land is. At the last minute, however, Abraham is held back from the deed, and a ram is sacrificed in Isaac's place.

Account of sacrifice: Genesis 22:1 – 16. (Look this up in your Bible or an online Bible.)

Another horrible story; possibly the worst story in the Bible. It is about a



An artist's depiction of Moses about to sacrifice Isaac.

god who would demand the murder of a child. But in context, human sacrifice, and specifically sacrifice of children, was commonplace in the ancient Near East.

The ancient Middle East in those days was a very rough and nasty place. It was civilisation at the bare bones level. They had cities – but not civilisation in the higher meaning.

This story relinquished the demand for *literal* human sacrifice, but did so in order to establish the *principle* of sacrifice. This is why the Israelites began to sacrifice animals as blood offerings to God.

Some time later, Sarah died at a time when she and Abraham were living in **Hebron** once more (they must have moved back to Hebron from Gerar; see Page 22). Refer to Genesis 23:1.

Isaac gets a wife and (eventually) twin sons

Abraham gets a wife for Isaac from Haran where his brother Nahor still lived. She was Rebekah, who was the granddaughter of Nahor, Abraham's brother in Haran. See the Family Tree.

Note: Isaac was monogamous – Rebekah was his one and only wife. And he had no concubines either.

No intermarriage

Why send Isaac all the way to Haran to get a wife? Weren't there plenty of eligible girls in the Hebron area? Yes, but the Israelites were instructed very clearly to avoid any intermarriage with, or absorption into, the native culture of the Canaanites, the other non-Israelite tribes living in Canaan. This is why Isaac – and later *his* son Jacob – had to travel to back to Haran to take wives from Abraham's family.

Genesis 24:3 (Abraham speaking to his servant) ... *you will not get a wife for my son [Isaac] from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living.*

And as if to emphasise this, Abraham says the same thing again in Genesis 24:37 and Genesis 28:1. Many other verses in the Bible say the same thing though not all intermarriages were prohibited, for example, Esau (Isaac's son) married Canaanite – non-Israelite women (see next page).

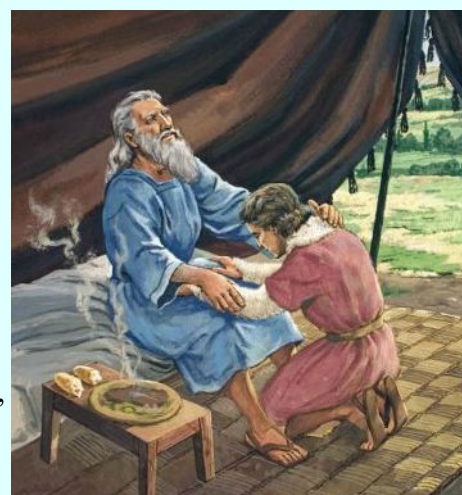
But like Sarah his mother, Isaac's wife Rebekah was unable at first to conceive.

A common theme throughout the early parts of Genesis is the inability of the Patriarchs to conceive. Scripture tells us that Rebekah, the wife of Isaac, was barren and unable to conceive. So Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was childless (Genesis 25:21).

Eventually Isaac and Rebekah have twin sons, **Jacob** and **Esau** (the latter also called *Edom*). Esau was the elder by a few minutes. Isaac favoured Esau, a rough hunter who loved the outdoors. Rebekah favoured Jacob, a quiet man who spent more time at home.

Jacob's deceit

Esau, the elder by a few minutes, was entitled to the birthright, that is, to the inheritance of the main portion of his father's property. He was also entitled to a father's blessing as his chief heir and such a blessing had great legalistic value in the society of that time.



*An artist's impression of **Jacob** receiving his father's blessing*

Jacob managed however, to outmanoeuvre his (slightly) older brother. At one point, when Esau was returning faint and weary from a hunt, he asked for some of the soup of **red** lentils which Jacob was preparing. Jacob allowed him to eat but only after demanding the cession of his birthright in exchange, and receiving it. Note: In Genesis 25:30 we see that Esau is given the alternative name of *Edom*, which means '**red**'. More about this 'Edom' below.

Isaac at this stage, now blind and awaiting death, decided to give Esau the final blessing. To forestall this, Jacob dressed himself in Esau's clothes and put goatskins on his arms to imitate Esau's hairiness, and, pretending to be Esau, obtained his father's blessing.

Jacob's name was changed to **Israel** (see later on Page 29). His descendents were the **Israelites**.

The wrong stage: The episode surrounding Isaac's blessing to his sons in Genesis 27:27 – 9 and 39 – 40 has all the elements of a great novel: inheritance; an old, blind father that can be easily manipulated; a mother who prefers one child over his twin brother; hunter versus shepherd; dressing up; cheating. It all looks so real, if only it weren't being played on the wrong stage!

Esau moves to Seir

While still living with Isaac and Jacob, Esau took three wives from the women of Canaan, that is from the non-Israelites in Canaan. (One of them – Adah – is named in the Family Tree diagram. His other wives are *not* shown in the Family Tree.)

(From Genesis 36 6 – 8) Esau then decided to move away from Jacob. He took all his wives and children, as well as his livestock and goods he had acquired in Canaan, and moved to the hill country of Seir, south-east of Canaan (see map on next page).

The wives of Esau

Genesis 26 & 28, and later in Chapter 36 are inconsistent about the wives of Esau. Refer to the online link in Website #9.

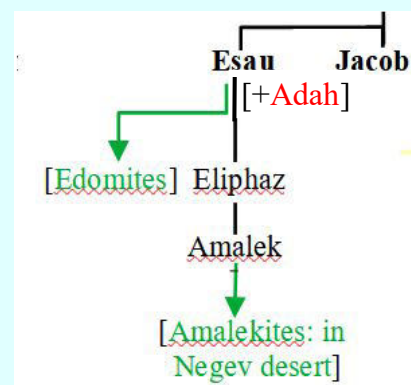
The descendents of Esau

Look again at the Family Tree of Genesis and Exodus (or the clip on the right). It shows that people later called the **Edomites** were descendents of Esau, Jacob's brother. The Family Tree also shows that with Adah, Esau had a son Eliphaz, who in turn had a son called Amalek who was the forefather of the **Amalekites**.

So the *Edomites* were the descendents of Esau himself while the *Amalekites* were the descendants of Amalek, Esau's *grandson* (that is, Esau → Eliphaz → Amalek). That makes the Amalekites a subset of the Edomites.

Now, where did these descendents, the Edomites and the *Amalekites*, live later? Refer to the next map.

The Edomites: The Edomites remained close to Seir, where Esau lived, in the country that eventually bore the name **Edom** (see map). (Some sources say that Seir and Edom are the same place, but this is



probably incorrect.)

The Amelekites: The Amalekites moved to [Kadesh-barnea](#) which is *believed* to be at the western edge of the Negev desert. (The Negev is the triangular desert region extending from Canaan south to the Gulf of Aqaba. Negev is a Hebrew word for ‘south’).

What is the difference between the Edomites and the Amalekites?

Refer to the online link in Website #8.



Map of the Negev region

Throughout Old Testament times, there was continuing enmity between the Israelites (descendents of Jacob) and the Edomites and Amalekites (both the descendents of Esau). (See box below.)

So, history repeating itself! There was also enmity between the Israelites and, as mentioned earlier, the Ishmaelites, the Midianites, the Moabites and the Ammonites.

Genesis certainly does not try to whitewash the relations between the sons of the three patriarchs and their descendents!

Troubles galore for Esau's descendents, the Amalekites and the Edomites

1 Amalekites:

First, Joshua attacked the Amalekites (see later on Page 43).

King Saul (11th Century BC) completely destroyed the Amalekites (read 1 Samuel 15).

1 Samuel 15:3 *Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.*

Another gruesome Bible story.

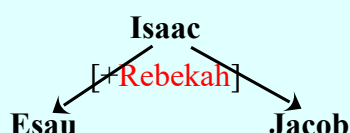
2 Edomites:

History records that the Edomites were ravaged by the Babylonian armies in the early 6th Century BC, and that near the end of the 6th Century BC/early 5th Century BC, a people called the **Nabateans** defeated the Edomites and removed them from Petra, a prominent city in southern Edom. The Edomites were forced to move south-east into an area of the Negev that would become known as Idumea which is **a Greek name for Edom** (and which today is part of Jordan). Many people in Jordan and Israel today are Edomite by descent.

Note: The Nabateans were an ancient Arab people who inhabited the desert area east and south of Edom. As early as the 4th Century BC (much later than the Genesis years) they might have settled in Petra what became the capital city of their kingdom. The picture, right, shows **The Monastery**, Petra's largest monument, carved out of rock and which dates from the 1st century BC.



Summary of Isaac and his sons



Esau's descendents were the Edomites and the Amelekites. Jacob's descendents were to be known as the Children of Israel.

Jacob

Jacob sent to Haran get a wife

To prevent the possible murder of Jacob by Esau, a naturally resentful older brother, Rebekah decided to send her younger son (and favourite, despite his deceit) away, at least temporarily. She persuaded Isaac to order him to Haran to get a wife for himself from the descendants of Abraham's brother Nahor (as had been done in the case of Isaac himself to get his wife as intermarriage was not allowed, remember!)

Jacob's first dream: On the way to Haran, at Bethel, 11 miles north of Jerusalem, Jacob has a dream of a

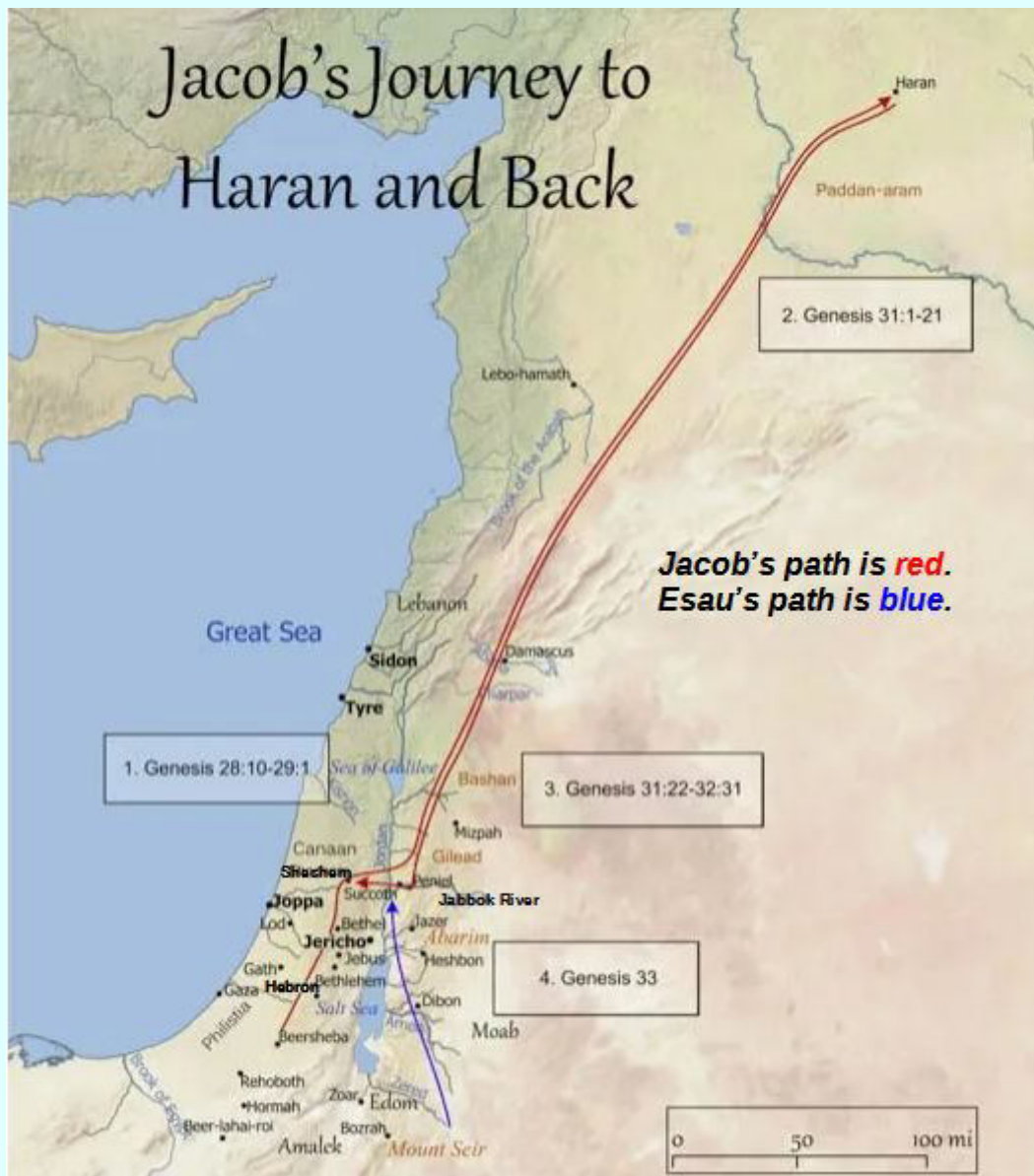


A ziggurat, found in cities mainly in ancient Mesopotamia.

ladder extending to heaven with angels ascending and descending. He determined this to be a vision of God's dwelling place and decided that the ground on which he was standing was holy. The Anchor Bible suggests that the vision of a ladder was really that of a ziggurat, which is built with steps working up along its outer walls, like that shown in the picture (left). Jacob then called the place **Bethel**, which means 'house of God' a reference to a temple, or even a ziggurat, which may have stood on the site quite early in ancient times. (Genesis 28:10 – 22.)

The diagram (next page) shows Jacob's journey to Haran and back (path is **red**). Note: Don't confuse

Haran, the town, and Haran, the name of Abraham's brother and Lot's father (see the Family Tree).



Jacob gets not one wife but two plus many children

Jacob reached Haran safely and obtained not one wife, but two: **Leah** and **Rachel**, the daughters of Laban (Rebekah's brother and both grandchildren of Nahor – see the Family Tree to sort out the relationships). The girls were therefore Jacob's first cousins. Jacob had to work for his uncle in order to get a wife. He was given Leah first as she was older, then, as he really wanted Rachel, had to work for several more years. All told, Jacob stayed about 20 years in Haran working as a shepherd for his uncle Laban.

While there, he had many children, including Joseph.

Of Jacob's 13 children (12 sons and one daughter Dinah), 12 were born during the stay with Laban in Haran. Benjamin, the youngest child was born after Jacob's return to Canaan.

His wife **Leah** gave birth to **six** of the sons plus the daughter Dinah. **Rachel** gave birth to **two** sons – Joseph and Benjamin. Jacob had **four** of his 12 sons with two concubines, **Zilpah** and **Bilhah**.

Rachel did not survive the birth of Benjamin. She was buried in Ephrath, which is **Bethlehem** – this is the first mention of Bethlehem in the Bible.

The names of the 12 sons and one *daughter* of Jacob are taken from the Family Tree and shown below:

[+Zilpah]	[+Billah]	[+Leah]				[+Rachel]	
Gad Asher	Dan Naphtali	Zebulun	Levi	Judah	Simeon	Reuben	Issachar <i>Dinah</i> Benjamin Joseph

A note on Levi: Levi, one of the 12 sons of Jacob born to Leah, was to play a special role in Israel. His descendants, known as the **Levites**, were to become a special **priestly** caste. Moses and Aaron, the great grandsons of Levi (see the Family Tree again), were the first important Levites.

Jacob returns from Haran

We return to Jacob's journey to Haran and back.

After the 20 years and long-drawn-out quarrelling with his father-in-law, Laban, Jacob left with his wives, his children, his cattle, and his goods (he had become quite rich as had his grandfather Abraham when sojourning in Egypt; look back at Page 20). His next problem was to face his estranged brother, Esau. By this time, as mentioned earlier, Esau was living in the land of Seir, the country of Edom.

Genesis 32:3 *And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of **Edom**.*

Esau came to meet Jacob and the two approached each other east of the Jordan in the Jabbok River area. (The Jabbok River is a tributary of the Jordan, flowing into it from the east at a point about 20 miles north of the Dead Sea. It is shown on the map but not clearly.)

Esau's path to meet with Jacob is shown by the **blue** line on the above map.

Jacob's **second dream:** After the crossing of the river Jabbok, Jacob had his second dream (Genesis 32:22 – 32) in which he struggles a man until the breaking of the day. In the morning, Jacob's adversary – who was actually God – said:

Genesis 32:28. . . . *Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but **Israel**...*

Israel, the new name for Jacob, is the Hebrew name *Yisra'el*, meaning 'God contends', or 'one who struggles with God'. Later, Israel is the name given to Jacob's offspring and to the nation that they eventually form. The descendants of Jacob are regularly called '*the Children of Israel*' in the Bible.

The descendants of the 12 sons became the **twelve tribes of Israel**. Note: While members of all 12 tribes are Israelites (because 'Israel' = Jacob), it is the members of the tribe of Judah only that are, strictly speaking, Judeans, or Jews.

Jacob then reconciles (sort of) with Esau who seemed to hold no grudge against him, despite Jacob having stolen his (Esau's) rightful inheritance. Esau returns to Seir and Jacob settled down in Canaan in **Shechem** (about 30 miles north of Jerusalem and considerably further north than Hebron where Abraham and Isaac (his father) dwelt. It was also more than 100 miles north of Seir, where Esau lived, so Jacob felt that this was the sort of comfortable distance he wanted between himself and Esau. (The map above shows Shechem and Hebron.)

Jacob's journey to Haran

1. Refer to Genesis and the online link in Website #19.

2. Genesis 28:10-22. Recall three versions of the Torah: **J**, **P** and **E**. Each version gives a *different* route of Jacob's journey to Haran. So read these verses with care!

The rape of Dinah

(Genesis 34:1 – 2) Dinah, Jacob's only daughter, is raped by a man called Shechem (possibly). Shechem wanted to marry Dinah after the rape, but the sons of Jacob agreed to permit this only if Shechem and all the males of his city would agree to be circumcised. After the circumcision, while they were recovering, some of Dinah's brothers (that is, Jacob's sons) then killed all these males to avenge the rape!

Another great children's story!! And from the Bible too!!

It is possible that this is *not* an actual story but has more to do with feuding *tribes*. Even Shechem, the rapist, is the name of a town and area in Canaan (look at any map of Canaan to see Shechem).

Another (almost) rape

After the above troubles at Shechem, Jacob and family travel south. Rachel gives birth to Benjamin at a place now known as Bethlehem. Rachel did not survive, as mentioned earlier (on map, Bethlehem is just east of Hebron).

While Jacob and his family dwelt in the region between Bethlehem and Hebron, still another variety of unpleasantness took place.

Reuben (son of Leah, Jacob's wife) lay with Bilhah (one of Jacob's two **concubines** and son to two of his 13 children):

Genesis 35:22. *While Israel was living in that region, Reuben went in and slept with his father's concubine Bilhah, and Israel heard of it.*

Nothing further is said, as though the writers of Genesis found the matter too repulsive to pursue.

However, this incident may also reflect early tribal history. Instead of a rape by an individual, it could actually refer to tribal history. One of the methods by which a usurper attempted to dramatise and legitimise his position in Old Testament times was to take over the herem of his predecessor.

Joseph

Genesis now enters its last section and deals with the story of Joseph, who is described as Jacob's favourite son and who is more than a little spoiled by the fact. He earns the hatred of his brothers by acting as a talebearer against them and by the telling of dreams he has had which seem to foreshadow a day when he will be supreme over his family.

Genesis 37:3 *Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many **colours**.*

Joseph and his technicolour dream-coat

Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dream-coat is a musical with lyrics based on the story of Joseph from the Bible's Book of Genesis.

• A Narrator opens the show by introducing Joseph, the dreamer ('Prologue'). Joseph sings an inspiring,

but seemingly meaningless song to the audience ('Any Dream Will Do').

- The Narrator then draws the audience's attention to Joseph's father Jacob and his 12 sons ('Jacob and Sons').
- Jacob favours Joseph over his other sons, and he gives Joseph a multi-coloured coat to show his affection for him. Joseph is ecstatic about this gift ('Joseph's Coat'), while his brothers look on with jealousy.

Two online links of this story are given in Website #20.



*An artist's rendition of
Joseph's coat*

Joseph sent to Egypt

One day, Jacob is sent Joseph to inquire after the welfare of his brothers, who were grazing the family's flocks in the neighbourhood of Shechem where they lived. His jealous brothers think of killing him but then decide to sell him to some Midianite nomads passing through on their way to Egypt. The Midianites then sell him as a slave in Egypt. [Remember: Midian, the son of Keturah, a concubine of Jacob's grandfather Abraham – see the Family Tree again.]

[For more details on this episode, read Genesis 37.]

Genesis 37:31 – 32 *Then they got Joseph's robe, slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. They took the ornate robe back to their father and said, "We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son's robe".*

And verse 36: *And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard.*

Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams

However, Joseph prospers in Egypt, due to his dreaming ability. This is related in Genesis 41:1 – 40.

The pharaoh of Egypt first dreamed that seven fat cows emerged from the river, but that seven lean cows emerged after them, ate the fat cows but remained as lean as before.

In a second dream, seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk. But another seven other heads of grain sprouted, all thin and scorched by the east wind. The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads.

The seven fat cows, Joseph said, meant seven prosperous years, while the seven lean cows and seven bad ears of grain represented seven years of famine to follow, years of famine that would consume the land. The grain of the good years should therefore be carefully preserved and stored against the bad years to come. This turned out, according to the Genesis account, to have been correct. So when the famine came, Egypt was prepared.

Note: Except for the short episode of Abraham's stay in Egypt (see Pages 19 – 20, this is the first appearance of Egypt as the scene of the Biblical story.

Who was the Pharaoh?

The question is, then, who was this Pharaoh who was so favourable to a Hebrew slave?

The Hyksos: It is speculated that the Pharaoh was possibly a Hyksos ruler, and not a true Egyptian. ‘Hyksos’ is derived from Egyptian words meaning ‘*foreign kings*’.

The Bible makes no mention of the Hyksos as such.

The Hyksos were possibly a Semitic tribe in the area of Canaan as was Joseph. So Joseph and his tribe could somehow be related to the Hyksos.

The Hyksos *may* have invaded and taken over, *not all of Egypt*, but just the *Nile Delta* area. Travellers between Canaan and this region would therefore be able to move freely if related to the Hyksos, so when the Midianites purchased Joseph in Canaan it was easy for them to sell him as a slave in ‘Egypt’. Note: From now on, most of the time, instead of using ‘Nile Delta’ we will still use the more convenient name of ‘Egypt’.

The map, right, shows Nile Delta region and Avaris, the Hyksos capital.

Other sources speculate that the Hyksos takeover of the region may have been the result of an *immigrant uprising of some sort*, rather than a hostile outside invasion. We don’t know for sure.

Time of the Hyksos: According to various sources, the Hyksos might have entered the Nile Delta region sometime in the 18th Century BC (that is, in the **1700s** BC) at a time of internal crisis that allowed them to conquer the government of the country where they formed a dynasty and may have remained there until about **1530** BC when they were overthrown. Further, on Page 34, we see that the date of entry of Israelites (through Jacob) into Egypt could have been about **1662** BC, which fits into the years the Hyksos were in Egypt.



The Nile Delta and its capital Avaris

Much of the above is conjecture, of course, though it is reasonable conjecture.

Now back to Joseph.

Joseph prospered in Egypt and attained a high official position. This would also make sense if the Hyksos and the Israelites were somehow related. Joseph was given a ‘high-born’ wife. With her, he had two sons, **Manasseh** and **Ephraim**. Since Genesis names no other wife and no other children, it appears that Joseph, like his grandfather Isaac, may have been monogamous.

For more on Joseph, the Hyksos and the Egyptian pharaohs, have a look at Websites #21 and #22.

A family reunion then deaths

There was also a famine in Canaan – the same famine that came to Egypt – and Joseph’s brothers (except Benjamin) came to Egypt to buy grain. Joseph met them but did not at this stage reveal himself to his brothers. He treated them rather harshly and demanded they bring Benjamin with them (whom Jacob had

solicitously kept at home) and return for the grain they wanted. This, they reluctantly did.

On their return to Egypt, Joseph finally revealed himself and there was a grand reconciliation. And as Joseph was a powerful figure in Egypt, he then invited his father Jacob and other close relatives, such as the sons of his brothers, about 70 in all, to come as well and settle down and live in Egypt.

After 17 years dwelling in Egypt, as Jacob was dying, Joseph brought his young Egyptian sons (Ephraim and Manasseh) for their grandfather's blessing, and Jacob adopted them as his own.

Jacob died at the age of 147 (supposedly), and his body was taken back by his sons to Canaan that he might be buried where were already buried his grandparents, Abraham and Sarah, his parents, Isaac and Rebekah, and one of his wives, Leah. The sons then returned to Egypt and lived there.

Genesis 49:29 to 50:14 gives more details on the death of Jacob.

About half a century later, Joseph died too, at the age of 110 (again supposedly – Genesis 50:22). They embalmed his body and placed it in a coffin in *Egypt*. In Exodus, we are told that Moses took Joseph's bones with him when he left Egypt (or after so many years what remained of the bones in the coffin).

And with the death of Joseph the Book of Genesis comes to an end.

Problems with numbers of years

When Genesis closes, there is now a span of about 430 years, the length of time that the descendents of Joseph remain in Egypt until the time of Moses, yet the Bible glosses over those centuries in a few sentences!! This 430 years is mentioned in the Book of Exodus:

Exodus 12:40 *Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years.*

As we will see soon, the person who led the Israelites out of Egypt was Moses. The '430' years cannot be correct as there only **four** generations from Jacob to Moses, viz., Jacob → Levi → Kohath → Amran → Moses!! (see the Family Tree again). The span of just four generations is far too short to bridge a period of 430 years. So the period of Israelite habitation in Egypt must be far less than 430 years.

But how long was it?

Other versions of the Old Testament give **Exodus 12:40 differently**. For example, the Septuagint (LXX) version of the Bible:

Exodus 12:40: *And the sojourning of the children of Israel, while they sojourned in the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan, was 430 years.*

And not just the Old Testament. Consider the following from the Book of Galatians in the *New* Testament:

Galatians 3.16-17: *Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring... the law, which came 430 years later.*

The '430' in these references is more likely then to be the time from when the covenant between God and Abraham went into effect when Abraham left Ur to go to Canaan, and down to the time of Moses and the exodus from Egypt.

Further, sources have shown that the period between Abraham's call to **enter** Canaan and the entrance of

the Israelites ([through Jacob](#)) into Biblical Egypt is **215** years, calculated from the ages of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (which I have not included here!).

So, 430 (the total time from Abraham to Moses) minus 215 (the time from Abraham to the entry into Egypt) also equals **215** (the *same* number!!). Is it a coincidence that ‘215’ occurs twice instead of two different numbers?

This second 215 years then would correspond to the [actual number of years the Israelites spent in Egypt before the exodus](#). But even scholars who do not even agree with the 215-year view have to admit that to fit four generations into a 215-year period is much more reasonable than a 430-year span. (And especially if we consider how the Old Testament tends to inflate the ages of people.)

When did the Israelites enter Egypt?

As discussed just above, the length of time in Egypt was supposedly 215 years. On Page 35 below, we see that the year of the Exodus from Egypt when the Israelites left Egypt was **1447** BC. That suggests that the date of entry of Israelites ([through Jacob](#)) into Egypt = $1447 + 215 = \mathbf{1662}$ BC.

This date of **1662** BC fits nicely into the years the Hyksos were in Egypt.

Summarising the years from the Exodus [back](#) to Abraham

All these dates may be a bit confusing. So, perhaps the following may help in understanding:

Year of the Exodus when Israelites leave Egypt =	1447 BC
+ (first) 215 years spent in Egypt	↓
Year Israelites came to Egypt from Canaan =	1662 BC
+ (second) 215 years	↓
Covenant between God and Abraham in Ur =	1877 BC

On Page 18, we say that Abraham possibly lived in Ur sometime between 2000 BC and 1800 BC. So **1877** BC as the year of the covenant with God fits very nicely into the years Abraham was in Ur.

How long did the Israelites sojourn in Egypt?

The online link in Website #18 gives more details about the ‘430’ and the ‘215’.

For more on Joseph, the Hyksos and the Egyptian pharaohs, have a look at Websites #21 and #22.

This ends the account given in the Book of Genesis. We now turn to the Book of Exodus.

Exodus

The Book of Exodus narrates the escape of the Israelites from oppression and slavery in Egypt, under the leadership of Moses, and back to the *border* of Canaan, the land of their ancestors. Notice that it is only to the *border* with Canaan. In the Book of Exodus, that is as far as they get. The actual crossing into Canaan is narrated in the Book of Joshua, the sixth book in the Old Testament,

Caveat: The events related in the Book of Exodus may or may not be historical fact. There is no record outside the Bible of Israelites in Egypt, of their enslavement, and of their escape. In particular, none of the events in Exodus are to be found anywhere in the Egyptian records uncovered by modern archaeologists. Also, the pyramids – oddly enough – are nowhere mentioned in the Bible (which were built a thousand years before Joseph entered Egypt). Still, we now look at events assuming a *possible* exodus.

When did the Exodus occur?

As with many events in the Old Testament, chronology is always a problem with different experts giving different dates. Dating the Exodus is no exception. But one *Biblical* source, that helps to give a reasonably accurate date is *not* found in the book of Exodus but in the book of first book of Kings.

1 Kings 6:1 *In the 480th year after the Israelites came out of Egypt, in the 4th year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, the second month, he **began** to build the temple of the Lord.*

Most sources agree that Solomon reigned about 971 – 931 BC. Let us take these dates.

So, the 4th year of Solomon's reign = began to build the temple = 967 BC.

Therefore exodus (480 years earlier) = $967 + 480 = 1447$ BC.

This is the year of the Exodus used in this project. For more on Solomon's reign and the date of the Exodus – lots more – refer to Website #34.

Slavery and Oppression in Egypt

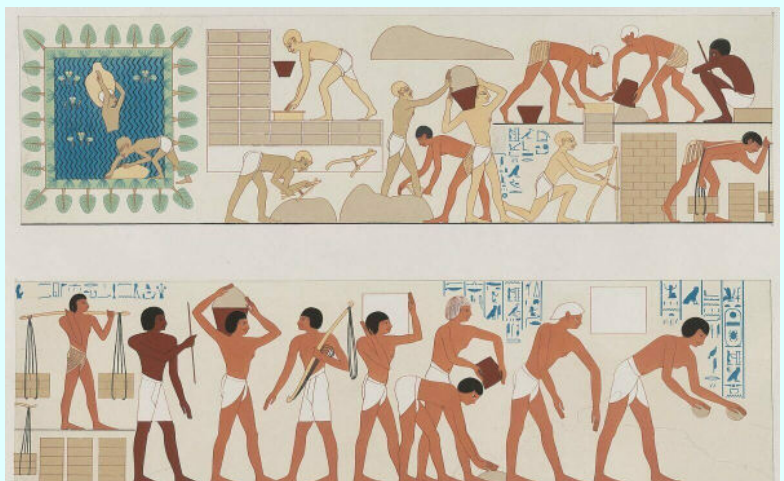
After the deaths of Joseph and his brothers in Egypt, the Israelites prospered, multiplied, and grew numerous under in the Nile Delta area controlled by the Hyksos (we will assume).

But, eventually, the Hyksos were overthrown. And then:

Exodus 1:8. ... *there arose up a **new** king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.* [Or more probably, who knew not the descendents of Joseph as Joseph would have been dead for some time by then.]

The Israelites were then **oppressed and enslaved** by the new king (or kings) until the exodus.

The snapshot, right, depicts Israelite/Semitic 'slavery' in Egypt and shows brick-making as described in Exodus 5, in the tomb art at Thebes of an Egyptian noble/vizier named Rekhmire.



A tomb art wall depiction of Semitic slaves in Egypt making bricks

What is the dating for this tomb art? Around the middle of the 15th Century BC (that is, 1500 – 1400 BC, which fits in well with the exodus which we date in about 1447 BC. See also online link for Rekhmire in Website #30. And for Slavery in Egypt, Website #33.

Pharaoh(s) of the **Oppression** and the **Exodus**

But who was this new king (or kings) of the slavery and oppression? Different kings have been mentioned by different sources. We need to consider kings/pharaohs from the time the Hyksos were overthrown. We saw on Page 32 that the Hyksos were probably overthrown in about 1530 BC.

Ahmose I and his descendents

Ahmose I is a possible king/pharaoh of the oppression. He was the first pharaoh of the new 18th Egyptian dynasty. In *about* 1550 BC, he *possibly* came to power in Thebes about 500 miles up the Nile ('up' = 'upstream' away from the delta) and launched a firm attack against the Hyksos, now complacent and rather decadent, and eventually defeated them and expelled them. (So the year of 1550 BC fits in well with the demise of the Hyksos in 1530 BC.

The picture, right, shows a bust of Ahmose I.

Note: The period of the reign of Ahmose I is disputed, with its start as far back as 1570 BC and its end in 1514 BC when he died. Oh dear – problems with Egyptian chronology again!



A fragmentary statue of Ahmose I

The Israelites were then treated as second-class citizens and as objects of suspicion. The particular Pharaoh under whom Israelite enslavement and oppression reached its peak was termed the '**Pharaoh of the Oppression**'.

Perhaps Ahmose I was the Pharaoh of the Oppression, or at least the first Pharaoh of the Oppression. But he was *not* the Pharaoh of the Oppression when the Exodus occurred in 1447 BC. Following his death in 1514 BC and before the Exodus 1447 BC, his *descendents* would continue the oppression.

Thutmose III and Amenhotep II

There are two other possible Pharaohs of the Oppression before the Exodus occurs depending on chronology. They are Thutmose III or his son Amenhotep II.

Thutmose III

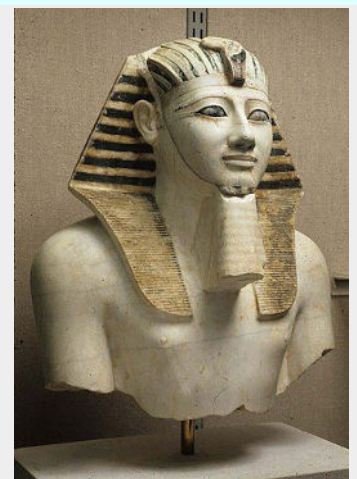
Thutmose III also reigned in the 18th dynasty as did Ahmose I. The picture, right, shows the upper part of a statue of Thutmose III.

Three dates for his *reign* are given:

- '**high**' date 1504 – 1450 BC;
- '**middle**' date 1490 – 1436 BC;
- '**low**' date 1479 – 1425 BC.

All three dates put him on the throne for about 50 years.

The '**high**' date suggest that Thutmose III could be the Pharaoh of the



Oppression *before* but *not* during the Exodus, which was in 1447 BC.

However, with the Exodus being in 1447 BC, the '*middle*' and '*low*' dates mean that Thutmose III would be:

- Pharaoh *before* the Exodus, and so Pharaoh of the Oppression.
- Pharaoh *during* the Exodus.
- Pharaoh *after* the Exodus.

During the time of Thutmose III, Egyptian armies scoured the area from Egypt through the Nile Delta and right up the western half of the Fertile Crescent. And in about 1457 or 1458 BC (though some sources say 1479 BC), he won a great battle at Megiddo, a city in Canaan, about 50 miles north of Jerusalem. With that, Canaan and all the land northward, nearly to the Euphrates, became Egyptian for a time. (For more on the battle, refer to Website #6.)

This suggests that the escaping Israelites would be entering a Canaan made Egyptian by Thutmose III. However, this may not actually be as bad as it seems. When the Israelites crossed the 'Red' Sea during their escape, the Pharaoh's army pursued them but were drowned when the waters that had parted flowed back again. So, with a depleted Egyptian army, the Israelites could escape towards Canaan without too much interference from Egypt. For more on Thutmose III, refer to Website #37.

Amenhotep II

We now consider the '*high*' date for the reign of Thutmose III, that is 1504 – 1450 BC.

When Thutmose III died in 1450 BC, his son, Amenhotep II took over and reigned from 1450 BC to 1419 BC (or 1400 BC depending on the source!).

So, if the 'high' date is correct, **Amenhotep II** rather than his father Thutmose III would be:

- Pharaoh *before* the Exodus and so Pharaoh of the Oppression.
- Pharaoh *during* the Exodus.
- Pharaoh *after* the Exodus.



The head of Amenhotep II

The picture, right, shows a bust of Amenhotep II.

Amenhotep II is also known to have maliciously denigrated Semites and so would indeed also qualify as a Pharaoh of the Oppression.

For more (a lot more!) information on the year and Pharaoh of the Exodus, refer to the links given Website #11, and for Amenhotep Website #28.

Another (improbable) Pharaoh of the Oppression and the Exodus

Asimov and others believe that the pharaoh of the time *was* Rameses II, who reigned from 1279 BC to 1213 BC. But if the Exodus occurred in 1447 BC, **the pharaoh of the Oppression and the Exodus could not have been Rameses II.** (Note: Rameses is also spelt Ramses or Ramesses.)

One of the pieces of evidence Asimov et al. use to point to Rameses II as the Pharaoh of the Oppression is

contained in the nature of the work done by the Israelite slaves:

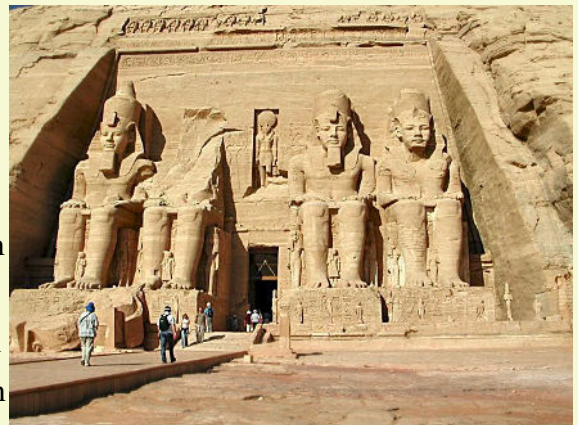
Exodus 1:11. . . . *And they built for Pharaoh store cities, **Pithom** and **Rameses**.*

Pithom and Rameses are two ancient cities of Egypt in the Nile Delta region. ‘Store cities’ were places in which provisions were stored for the use of armies. The two cities were located 12 – 15 miles west of what is now the Suez Canal.

But as Ramses II was an interesting character, I have included some information about him.

Rameses I and II: Under **Rameses I**, the first pharaoh of the 19th dynasty, in 1304 BC, the Egyptian Empire experienced a new period of vigour. This dynasty reached its peak under **Rameses II** (‘Rameses the Great’), whose long reign stretched from 1290 to 1223 BC or perhaps 1279 – 1213 BC (that is, nearly 70 years!). Rameses II was the most famous of all the Pharaohs.

The picture, right, is one of the many temples and monuments Ramses II created to glorify himself! Note: This is *my* photograph, as I have visited this site at Abu Simbel in southern Egypt.



The Great Temple of Rameses II at Abu Simbel, southern Egypt

The reign of Rameses II is followed by a decline in Egyptian influence. What's more, the decline does not reverse itself. Consequently, Asimov says, the Israelites could have broken out of Egypt during this time. Egypt does not enter Asia with renewed power so that the Israelites can conquer and occupy Canaan without interference from Egypt.

Moses

Now back to the time of Moses *before* the Exodus.

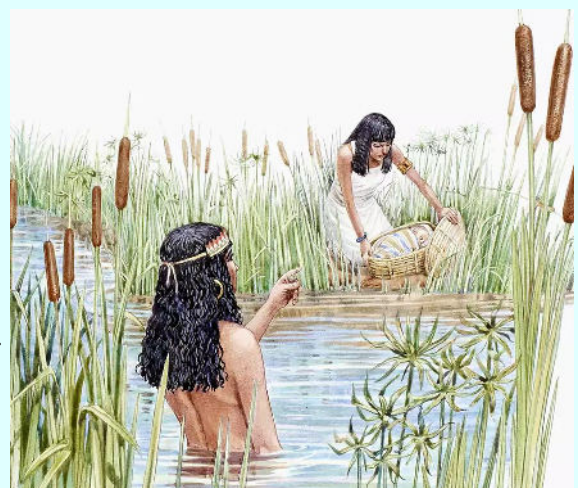
The Israelite people in Egypt increased and became more numerous in spite of oppression. But eventually they were able to escape from this oppression and leave Egypt. The leader of the Exodus was Moses and we now look at his life and fortunes.

The birth of Moses

The pharaoh before the time of the Exodus, who is not named in the *Bible* (but might have been Thutmose III or Amenhotep II), according to the quite well-known story, commanded all Israelite boy babies to be drowned because he feared that they might become too powerful. See Exodus Chapter 1. And also:

Exodus 1:22 *Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: “Every Hebrew boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live.”*

As a result, the mother of a baby son tried to save him by



Moses in a basket among the bulrushes

placing him in a small basket made of bulrushes, daubed with pitch to make it waterproof, and setting that afloat on the River Nile. The small basket containing the baby was discovered:

The full story of the birth of Moses is related in **Exodus 2:1 – 10**.

Exodus 2:5 *Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and ...saw the basket among the reeds* .

The picture on the previous page shows Pharaoh's daughter bathing in the Nile and the mother of Moses with the basket holding the baby Moses.

Who Pharaoh's daughter might be is, of course, not known. She too is not named in the Bible. She names him '**Moses**' which means 'son' in *Egyptian*. But according to the Torah, the name 'Moses' actually comes from the *Hebrew* verb, meaning 'to pull out/draw out' [of water], and the infant Moses was given this name by Pharaoh's daughter after she rescued him from the Nile [see Exodus 2:10].

Moses was brought up in the house of the Pharaoh essentially as an Egyptian.

The legend surrounding Moses' infancy seems no more plausible than the Hebrew derivation of his name. Ancient legends are full of tales of children cast away for some reason or other who are miraculously saved and go on to become people of great importance, for example, in the Persian legends, with Cyrus.

Pharaoh and Herod

The Exodus story of Pharaoh ordering the slaughter of all the Israelite baby boys in Egypt has a parallel in the New Testament book of Matthew (and only in Matthew) in which King Herod, worried that a newborn child may threaten his kingdom, orders the slaughter of all baby boys in the vicinity of Bethlehem at the time of the birth of Jesus. And just as Moses escaped Pharaoh's slaughter, so Jesus escaped Herod's slaughter. Read Matthew 2:16. (More is said about this in the project on the New Testament gospels.)

Moses in exile in Midian

As a grown man, Moses found himself sympathising with the Israelite slaves, presumably out of humanity and probably because he had learned of his own real origins.

One day, Moses sees an Egyptian overseer beating a Hebrew, one of his own people (Exodus 2:11 – 12). Moses kills the overseer and flees to **Midian** (Exodus 2:15). Midian represents the shortest distance Moses could have travelled to place himself safely outside the boundaries of Imperial Egypt. (See Page 22 map again for the location of Midian – just east of the Gulf of Aqaba.)

While Moses was in Midian, he married a Midianite woman named Zipporah and they had two sons. This is probably *not* an example of the 'forbidden' intermarriage as the Midianites were the descendents of Midian, the brother of Isaac and son of Abraham (with the concubine Keturah).

While Moses was still in exile in Midian, there is the incident of a burning bush that is not consumed (read Exodus 3). Moses approaches and a voice, which he believes to be that of God,



An artist's depiction of Moses and the Burning Bush

speaking to him out of the bush, commands him to return to Egypt and to lead the Israelites out of slavery.

Moses returns to Egypt – the 10 plagues

While Moses was in Midian, a crucial change took place in Egypt:

Exodus 2:23 *During that long period, the king of Egypt died.*

Moses and Aaron (his brother, who suddenly appears in the account from nowhere!) return to Egypt with Zipporah and their two sons. Moses is to work with Aaron who is a more eloquent speaker.

Note: The sons of Moses are not part of the Exodus proper. While still in Egypt, Moses sends them off together with their mother Zipporah to their maternal grandfather Jethro back in Midian. After the Exodus, they joined their father in the desert (Exodus 18:1 – 6). This is the last mention of them in the *Torah*. (But they are mentioned later in Chronicles 23:14 – 17. They then disappear from history.)



Moses turns rods into serpents in front of Pharaoh

Back in Egypt, Moses and Aaron approach Pharaoh and try to impress him by turning rods into serpents (probably some sort of magic trick). Pharaoh however, scorns what he considers a parlour trick and calls his own magicians to duplicate it, which they duly do. Moses however still demands from Pharaoh ‘*Let my people go*’.

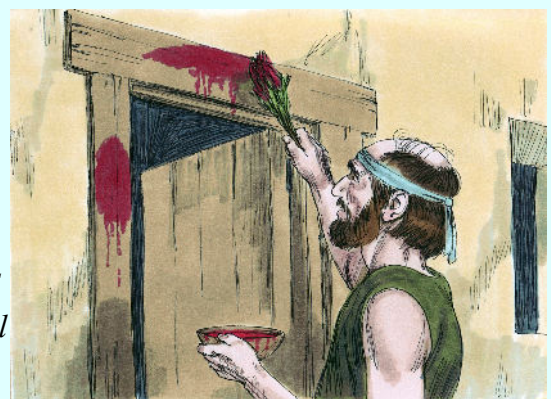
The Egyptian pharaoh – we are still not sure who this may be! (Thutmose III or Amenhotep II?) – sharpens the **oppression** so that the Israelites themselves, who had first hailed Moses, turn against him.

With Pharaoh scorning the first demonstration, Moses and Aaron bring, in swift succession, a series of disasters upon Egypt. These, involving visitations of frogs and insects, various pestilences, unusual weather such as hail or darkness, are generally referred to as ‘**the 10 plagues of Egypt**’.

Although these plagues, *if* they took place as described in the Bible, must have loomed large in any contemporary records or in later histories, no reference to them is found in any source outside the Bible.

The 10th plague was the crucial one. In its course, the first-born male of every house in Egypt was slain by divine action. The Israelites were spared by placing the blood of a lamb on the door of the house:

Exodus 12:23 *When the Lord goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the door-frame and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down.*



Placing blood on the door of a house

Another gruesome event!

The Exodus and Wilderness Wanderings

As mentioned earlier, the Pharaoh of the Exodus was possibly Thutmose III or his son Amenhotep II. The Exodus – remember – may have occurred in 1447 BC.

Crossing the Red Sea

After the 10th plague, Pharaoh's resistance broke and he agreed to allow the Israelites to leave the land. First, they are supposed to have crossed the Red Sea with Pharaoh's army in hot pursuit.

We can eliminate the main body of the Red Sea at once. To imagine that the Israelites crossed the Red Sea proper, passing over 150 miles or so of emptied sea bottom which, in places, is something like a mile and a half deep, is just impossible.

The *Hebrew* name for the body of water that was crossed is *yam suph*. The phrase is translated as 'Red Sea', but its *literal* meaning is '[the sea of reeds](#)' which is north of the Red Sea.

Moses stretches his hand to part the water in the sea to allow the fleeing Israelites to safely cross. Once they have passed over the Red ([Reed](#)) Sea, he stretches out his hand, and the water that had divided to allow the Israelites to cross, flows back over the Egyptian military who were pursuing the Israelites, supposedly drowning them all.



Moses parting the Red Sea



Pharaoh's army engulfed by the 'Red' Sea, painting by Frederick Arthur Bridgman (1900)

Read the full story of the crossing in Exodus Chapters 13 to 17.

Other problems with the story

1 There are *no* records outside the Bible which indicate that any Pharaoh drowned in the 'Red' ([Reed](#)) Sea.

2. Direction taken:

Exodus 13:17. *When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the [Philistine](#) country, though that was shorter.*

The shortest route to Canaan was north-east, along the Mediterranean coast. But, as the above verse says, this would have supposedly led them into Philistine territory. The Philistines were part of mass migrations of peoples from south-eastern Europe who are hypothesised to have landed in many places in the Levant and also along the coasts of Egypt. To the Egyptians, they were the '[Peoples of the Sea](#)'. Some also invaded Canaan and established themselves as the Philistines on its southern coast.

However, these migrations occurred in the 13th Century BC (that is [1300](#) – [1200](#) BC)! And if the exodus occurred in about [1447](#) BC, these migrations had not yet occurred!

Wandering in the wilderness

Once in the desert, it was to be **40** years before the Israelites entered the *promised* land of Canaan, under the leadership, *not* of Moses, but of Joshua. This 40 years was their punishment for disobedience to God:

Joshua 5:6 *The Israelites had moved about in the wilderness 40 years until all the men who were of military age when they left Egypt had died, since they had not obeyed the Lord. For the Lord had sworn to them that they would not see the land he had solemnly promised their ancestors to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey.*

Note: While referred to as the ‘**promised land**’ of Canaan, it was not the *land* that was promised as the Israelites came to Egypt from Canaan. The promise probably referred to the Israelites being able to *re-inherit* their land.

The map below shows a possible route the Israelites took during their wilderness journey.



After the crossing of the ‘Red’ Sea, the Israelites headed south for Mt Sinai, and the situation now changes radically. A weakened Egypt has been left behind and will not play a role as an adversary of the Israelites for fully three centuries. In its place are new enemies, the Semitic peoples (that is the tribal relatives of the Israelites) who had, within the previous century, settled down in the areas surrounding Canaan, displacing the earlier inhabitants. These, naturally, resisted this later influx of the Israelites.

Amalek

Exodus 17:8 *The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites...*

The first of these new enemies mentioned in the book of Exodus as encountering the Israelites were the

Amalekites (presumably somewhere in Sinai, though if so, the Amalekites are a long way from their home area of Kadesh-barnea – see above map).

Or perhaps the story is displaced and the battle with Amalek did not take place en route to Mount Sinai but later when the Israelites had left the mountain and were indeed in the region of Kadesh-barnea south of Canaan where the Amalekites lived – see the map again, which shows the route passing through Kadesh-barnea. This could fit in with an account of the time, where the Egyptian pharaoh subdued some Canaan tribes while Moses was at Kadesh-Barnea, suggesting that the tribe was indeed the Amalekites, which we have seen, were hostile to the Israelites.

Joshua: In this first battle with the Amalekites, a new *military* leader makes his appearance. His name is *Joshua* and is introduced into the story without any warning! Joshua was a descendant from the tribe of *Ephraim*, one of Joseph's sons (refer to 'Family Tree' again), and he remained Moses' military aide throughout the Exodus and eventually succeeded Moses as leader of the Israelites. This is the first indication of the military pre-eminence of the tribe of Ephraim, a pre-eminence they were to hold once in Canaan.

Mount Sinai, the laws, the temple and the golden calf

After the battle with the Amalekites, if it occurred at Kadesh-barnea, the Israelites reached Mount Sinai (which is not the route shown in the above map – but this is the Bible, not precise history!).



At the top of the traditional Mt Sinai where Moses received the Ten Commandments from God

There Moses ascended the mountain to receive instructions concerning various moral laws (including, but not limited to, the **Ten Commandments**). And what is the essence of the new laws? A bunch of ideas borrowed from the *Egyptian* religion!

The 10 Commandments (from Exodus 20) summarised:

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not make for yourself any graven images. ...
3. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God ...
4. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. ...
5. Honour your father and your mother. ...
6. You shall not murder. ...
7. You shall not commit adultery. ...
8. Thou shalt not steal.
9. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.
10. You shall not covet

In addition, Moses was given extremely detailed instructions for the construction of a **temple** to be built for the worship of God. Its most sacred area was to be the **holy of holies** where God's presence appeared,

a place that could be approached only by the head priest. God also instructed Moses how to construct an ‘**Ark of the Covenant**’ to be placed in this holy of holies. And interestingly, even though Exodus 25 gives these detailed instructions on how the temple is to be constructed, it is exactly the same as the design of the *Egyptian* temples, which, of course, is Moses’ background! (So how much did God actually ‘tell’ Moses and how much was he drawing on from his Egyptian background?)



Painting of Moses and Joshua bowing before the Ark of the Covenant (Painted in 1900)

The laws: Laws against murder and theft, and the establishment of a government bureaucracy are included but are not particularly distinctive. The Mesopotamians had them, and pretty much every civilisation has some version. But the law brought down by Moses went well beyond these topics. Among the ideas borrowed from the Egyptians were various dietary restrictions and distinctions between the clean and unclean.

The law takes up a good part of the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy (though much of this is repetition).

Monotheism: The first of the Ten Commandments cements Judaism’s monotheism: *You shall have no other gods before me*. There might *be* other gods, but they don’t come before the Hebrew god, **Yahveh**, ‘for I am a jealous god’ (part of the second commandment; Exodus 20, verse 5: *You shall not bow down to them or worship them*).

The polytheistic *origins* of the Jewish religion goes through a long period of transition to a belief that Yahveh was above other gods then to a full denial of other gods.

A priestly caste: A central purpose of Moses’ law is to establish the authority and prerogatives of the Levites as a priestly caste. These Levites descended from Levi, one of the 12 sons of Jacob (refer back at Page 29) During the patriarchal period of Genesis (that is, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), there is no mention of priests. God spoke by occasionally appearing to the tribal patriarchs. A good example is ‘Jacob’s Ladder’ from Genesis, Chapter 28 (look back at Page 27.) But now God can be met in the holy of holies in the temple, but *only* by the priests. This idea was clearly borrowed from the Egyptians. In place of the informal religion of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – remember?), Moses establishes an *Egyptian*-style hierarchy.

The golden calf: Moses’ stay on Mount Sinai to commune with God continued for so long – **40** days – that the Israelites back in the camp began to fear that he might never return. This encouraged those among them who felt uncomfortable with an invisible God. It is very common to desire some visible manifestation of the deity (nowadays as well as in ancient times) and the pressure increased on Aaron to supply one, so he made a golden calf



Painting of Israelites dancing around a Golden Calf

using gold earrings that the people were wearing (Exodus 32:2 – 4).

Animal worship has, in one way or another, attracted man throughout history. This practice gives rise to the well-known phrase ‘sacred cow’ for any belief rigidly held beyond reason.

In ancient times, animal worship was most widespread in Egypt. Many peoples believed that the souls of men might be reborn in animal form. Because of their time in Egypt, the Israelites were not at all likely to see anything strange in bull worship, and the ‘calf’ Aaron formed was undoubtedly a young bull. *Anyway, worship of bulls, etc. was **not** prohibited **before** the Ten Commandments came into force.*

While the Israelites were celebrating the young bull, Moses descended from the mountain. A brief ‘reign of terror’ followed. Moses tells the sons of Levi (the Levite priests) to slay the ringleaders, their brothers, companions and neighbours among the bull worshippers and to reaffirm Moses' authority.

The Levites killed about 3000 who worshipped the Golden Calf!

Another gruesome story from the Bible!

A repeat 40 days: Moses spent 40 days on Mt. Sinai. Actually he did so *twice* because he broke the first set of the tablets of stone in fury after returning from the mountain the first time and seeing what the people were up to (Exodus 32: 19). He then had to ascend the mountain again to get a new set of tablets (Exodus 34).

The **Prophet** of the **Oppression**

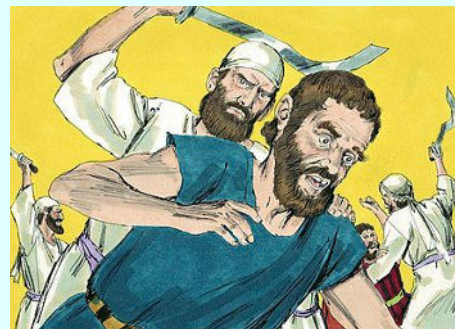
All of this violence meted out by Moses on his return from the first visit to the mountain is attributed *not* to men but to *God*. The clear implication is that **dissent is not welcome and that challenges to Moses’ rule will be put down with bloodshed.**

Moses sets himself up as a **theocratic dictator** over his *own* people. So now, instead of the *Pharaoh of the Oppression*, which they just have escaped from, Moses installs himself as the **Prophet of the Oppression!** But the oppression of Moses did *not* begin in the desert. While still in Egypt, his rule began with the 10 plagues and the mass *slaughter* of the Egyptians.

And later, after the wanderings in the desert (see below), it ends with Moses finally leading the Israelites to the borders of Canaan, where they begin to conquer the existing inhabitants by force, killing most of them!

Several times in this article, we have commented on what we might condemn today as genocide or ‘ethnic cleansing’. However, it was just the law of war back then. But suffice to say that the Israelites and their religion did not rise above the brutal standards of their time.

For more on the Prophet of the Oppression, look at Website #29.



The punishment for worshipping the golden calf



Moses breaks the stone tablets containing the 10 commandments

Notes on the Ten Commandments and animal worship

The traditional version of the Ten Commandments as given above was actually a *later* invention created no earlier than the 7th Century BC. Refer to Website #35.

The use of the bull as a manifestation of God continued in the [northern kingdom of Israel](#) to the end of its history. However, it never obtained a foothold in the [southern kingdom of Judah](#), and it is from the [southern](#) kingdom that the history of later Judaism and Christianity descends.

Further wanderings in the desert

Following these incidents at Mt. Sinai, the Israelites continue to wander until they are about to enter Canaan. But this is *not* part of the book of Exodus. The Israelite's invasion of Canaan is found in the book of Joshua, which relates how they cross the Jordan river and enter into their promised land.

The map on Page 42 shows the wilderness journey following the Exodus from Egypt up to entry into the 'promised land'. Note: Many maps of this journey are available but they do not all agree!

The Moabites and Ammonites again

The map shows the point at which the Israelites cross into their promised land. This is right where the lands of Moab and Ammon are. We saw earlier how the tribes of Moab and Ammon, the descendents of Lot, formed lands on the eastern side of the Dead Sea and how they were also enemies of the Israelites, their relatives (Pages 21 – 22).

According to the Hebrew Bible, the Moabites and Ammonites opposed Joshua and the Israelite invasion to enter Canaan.

Why did the Israelites spend 40 years in the wilderness

It should have only taken a few *days* to cross from Egypt to the Promised Land, yet the Israelites are portrayed as taking 40 years to reach their destination.

Part of the explanation is to be found in the Book of [Numbers](#) 14:33 – 34. For grumbling and disobedience and even wanting to return to Egypt, God says the Israelites are doomed to wander for 40 years. And further, the whole generation of the Exodus would *not* be allowed to enter the promised land. It would be their *children* who would possess the land. Only Joshua and one other man from the Exodus generation were permitted to go into the promised land after the time of wandering.

Numbers 20:12 *But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in me enough to honour me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them."*

[And that included Moses himself](#). Moses ascended Mount Nebo (see map again for location) in the land of Moab, and from there he saw the Land of Canaan (the Promised Land), which God had said he would not enter; Moses then died there.



Mt Nebo, from which Moses viewed the Promised Land – then died!

So it was to be Joshua who led the new generation in the promised land.

Exodus from an Egyptian point of view

The Egyptians also, perhaps surprisingly, had a detailed record of the exodus event. To find out more, see Website #10.

The Exodus – fact or fiction?

Many modern historians say the Israelites were never in Egypt and never had to conquer the Canaanite cities after an Exodus – that the Israelites were simply a breakaway group of *native* Canaanites who left the region of the rich *coastal* cities to settle in the hitherto sparsely populated hill country of the Canaanite hinterland just west of the River Jordan in the region of **Hebron** early in the 13th Century BC.

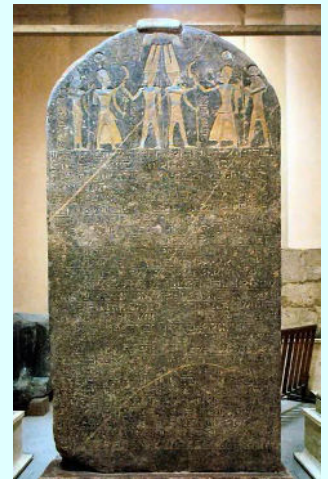
Then long after they had forgotten their *real* origins, the Canaanites began to wonder where their ancestors had come from, and created myths and legends about a fabulous ‘Promised Land’ that just happened to be where they were living! There was no divine promise and no Israelite invasion.

The Israelites were certainly in Canaan, although not in large numbers, when the Egyptian Pharaoh **Merneptah** (who reigned 1213 – 1203 BC) arrived to put down a revolt by Canaanite cities in about 1208 BC. (But given these dates, Merneptah, of course, was *not* the Pharaoh during the Exodus.)

The name ‘Israel’

The first *known* use of the ethnic name ‘Israel’ is on a *Victory stele* erected by Merneptah in about 1208 BC to celebrate his military victories, which included suppression of a revolt by Canaanite cities and the supposed annihilation of the Israelites in Canaan. This suggests that *if* any Exodus occurred, it must have taken place earlier than the 13th Century BC of Merneptah, such as in **1447 BC** as mentioned earlier.

Note: A stele is a stone or wooden slab erected in the ancient world as a monument. For more on the Merneptah stele, refer to Website #23.

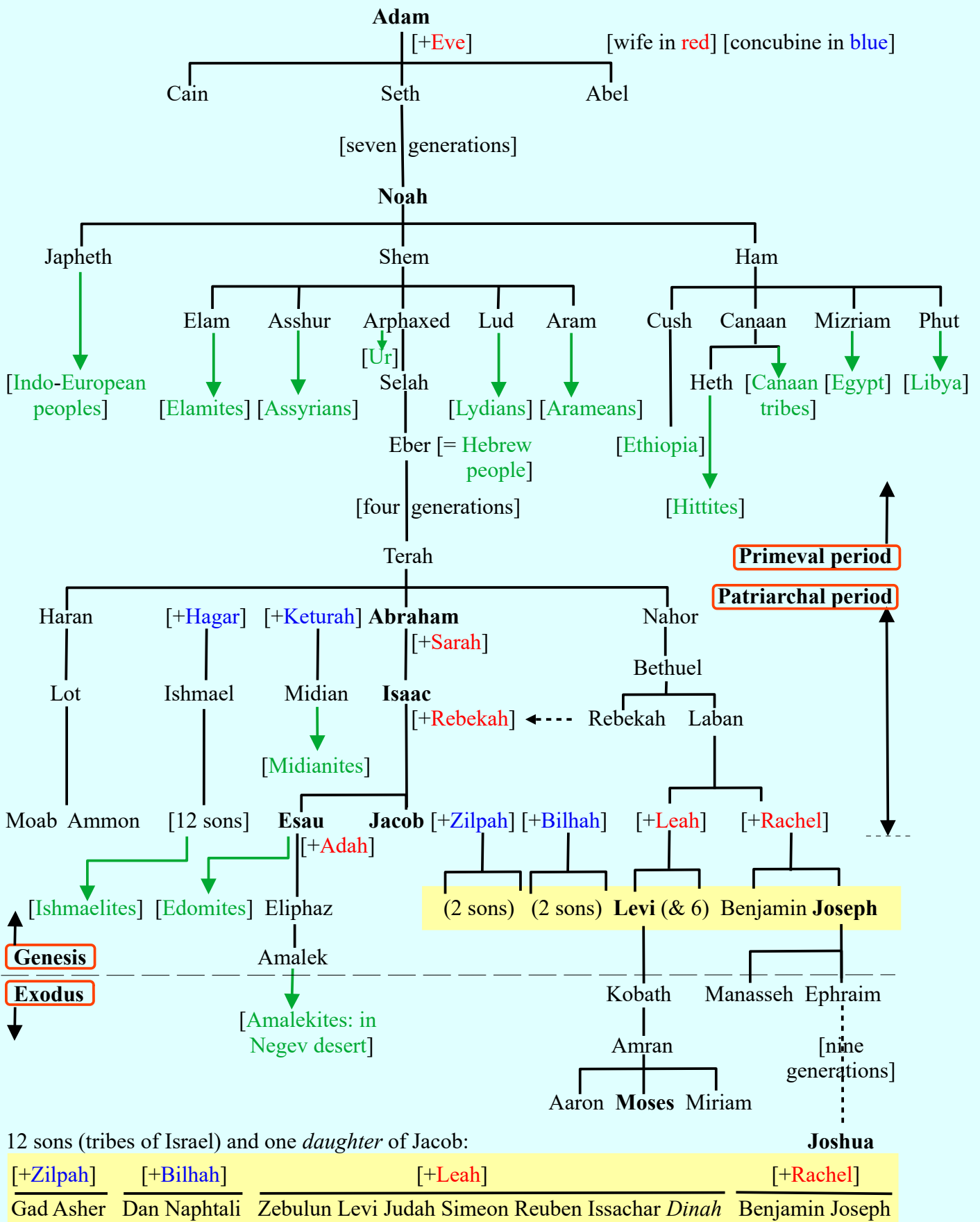


Stele of Merenptah

Final note: If you would like to learn more about the history of Israel, have a look at Website #15.

Here endeth the lesson on Genesis and Exodus.

Family Tree for Genesis and Exodus



Summary: Main Points

A summary is included as it can be difficult to recall accurately the main points when there is so much information – and that includes me too, and I wrote the article!

Genesis and Exodus: an introduction

- While the Bible chronicles tribal history, it keeps returning to a very specific theme: a record of God's relationship to man.
- The first Biblical stories were passed down orally and only written down much later by various authors. The Bible was not definitively written down until the 6th Century BC.
- There are different early written versions of the Bible. They have the initials J, E, D and P. Later, in the 6th Century BC, the J and E versions were combined to give the JE version. Shortly after this, material was added to the JE version to give the P version.
- The word for the combined P version word for the first five books of the Old Testament is the 'Torah'.
- The first printed English translation of the whole Bible was produced in 1535 AD directly from Hebrew, Greek and Latin texts.
- The lands involved in the biblical story are part of the Fertile Crescent. The first great civilisation in the region was Sumer(ia). The Hebrews are an offshoot of this original civilisation.

Overview of the origins of the Biblical people

- The origin of the Biblical story begins in Sumer(ia). Abraham was born in Ur in Sumeria. He and his wife with others migrated from Ur to Canaan and settled there.
- Genesis begins with the story of the creation of the world and ends with the death of Joseph in Egypt.
- Exodus deals with the escape of the Israelites from Egypt under the leadership of Moses on their way to their land of Canaan. The exodus probably began about 1447 BC.
- Most scholars today consider the narratives in Genesis and Exodus to be myths rather than historical.

The Book of Genesis

- Tradition credits Moses as the author of Genesis, as well as the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and most of Deuteronomy.
- The name Genesis means 'In the beginning'. Genesis is divisible into two periods – the primeval period and the patriarchal period.

The Primeval and Patriarchal periods

- The primeval period is covered in Genesis, Chapters 1 – 11.
- The primeval period is from Adam and the beginning of the world, to Noah and the flood and then to Terah (the father of Abraham). It ends at about 2000 – 1800 BC.
- Most of the persons, places and stories in the primeval period are never mentioned anywhere else in the Bible. Many are probably based on Mesopotamian myths.
- The patriarchal period is covered in Genesis, Chapters 12 – 50. There are three biblical patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. There is argument as to whether they are historical individuals or not.

The Beginning – Creation (the first 34 verses of the Bible)

- The creation story is believed to be an offshoot of a previous Sumerian and/or Babylonian polytheistic

tradition, coming from the time of Abraham in Ur ~1800 BC.

- Creation took six days. On the seventh day – the Sabbath – God rested.
- In times before the exile in Babylon, the Sabbath is barely mentioned and seems to have been of little consequence among the Israelites. In the times after the exile, its observance was of the greatest importance.

Creation – Adam and Eve

- After creating Adam, God creates a woman – Eve – as a companion for him. They dwelt in the Garden of Eden, which the Bible makes the original home of the human race.
- The Garden of Eden was possibly located in the vicinity of Ur.
- A serpent in the garden tempts Adam and Eve to do what God had forbade them from doing. This is the traditional story of original sin.
- As a result, Adam and Eve are expelled from ‘paradise’ and condemned to the heavy labour of agriculture in order to live.
- The move to agriculture was the beginning too of what we call civilisation.
- Adam and Eve have two sons, Cain and Abel. Cain seems to represent the agriculturist/farmer while Abel is a herdsman (or nomad).
- Cain grew jealous of Abel and killed him and is then expelled to the land of Nod.
- The third son of Adam and Eve was Seth. Seven generations after Seth we end up with Noah.

Noah and the Flood

- According to the Bible, this was a deluge that covered the whole Earth, but there is no record of any such phenomenon.
- Evidence exists that in some place about 3000 BC there were indeed drastic floods of at least a local nature in the area of Sumeria. These may have been produced by unusually heavy rains on the region.
- Alternative flood stories include (1) a tidal wave from the Persian Gulf plus heavy rain, (2) a Black Sea flood, (3) the Mesopotamian Epic of Gigamesh, composed about 2000 BC that is similar to the Genesis story and which includes an ark.

Noah's sons and origins of ancient peoples

- Noah had three sons – Shem, Japheth and Ham. Each brother or his descendents are supposed to represent different regions of the world known to the ancient writers of the Bible.
- The descendants of Shem are pictured as occupying the Arabian peninsula and the regions adjoining it to the north, including the Tigris-Euphrates region.
- The languages of the people dwelling in this region of Shem are referred to as ‘Semitic’. Hebrew and Aramaic are examples of Semitic languages.
- The descendents of Japheth are the Indo-European peoples, from Asia to and including Europe.
- The descendants of Ham are described as inhabiting chiefly the corner of Africa adjacent to Asia, except for his son Canaan, for example Cush = Ethiopia, Mirziam = Egypt, Phut = Libya.
- His son Canaan is the ancestor of the Canaanites, where Abraham will later settle down. Canaan's son Heth is the ancestor of the Hittites.

Abraham

- Abraham was the first of the three Biblical patriarchs. Genesis says he will be the father of many

nations.

- Ur is usually taken to be the home of Abraham's family.
- As Ur had seen better times, Abraham's family (including his wife Sarah and his father Terah) left Ur and travelled to Haran where his brother lived.
- After Terah died, Abraham took Sarah his wife and Lot his brother's son and headed down to Canaan.
- Shortly after arriving, there was a famine in Canaan, and Abraham and his nephew Lot went down to Egypt for a while. While there, he became rich and had many herds, then returned to Canaan and settled in the region of Hebron. Lot chose to live in the Sodom area.
- Abraham defeated invaders from Elam who had kidnapped Lot.
- Abraham has his first son, Ishmael, not with Sarah his wife but with Hagar, Sarah's servant.
- The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed, because of the sin of the people. Lot, his wife and two daughters escaped.
- Lot's daughters become pregnant with their father. Each bore a son, named Moab and Ammon whose descendents occupied lands bearing the same name.
- Abraham finally gets a son and heir with Sarah: Isaac.
- Hagar, Abraham's concubine, and her son, Ishmael, were, at Sarah's insistence, cast out. They move to the region of Shur, an area near the eastern border of Egypt.
- With another concubine, Keturah, Abraham has more sons, of whom Midian is best known, whose descendents are known as the Midianites. and who settled in a region east of the Gulf of Aqaba.

Isaac

- In gratitude to God, Abraham intends to offer his son, Isaac as a human sacrifice, a common practice in those ancient times. At the last minute, Abraham is held back and a ram is sacrificed in Isaac's place.
- Isaac travels to Haran where Abraham's brother Nahor still lived and got a wife, Rebekah.
- They have twin sons, Jacob and Esau (older by a few minutes).
- When grown up, Jacob tricks his father Isaac, now old and blind, to give him his blessing and birthright which Esau, as the older, was entitled to.
- Esau then decided to move away from Jacob to the region of Seir, with his several wives.
- Esau's descendents were the Edomites and the Amelekites. The Edomites remained close to Seir. The Amalekites settled in an area in the Negev desert.
- Jacob's descendents were to be known as the Children of Israel.

Jacob

- Jacob, like his father, travels to Haran to get a wife.
- On his way he has a dream of a ladder extending to heaven with angels ascending and descending.
- In Haran, Jacob obtains not one wife, but two: Leah and Rachel.
- Jacob remains there 20 years and has six sons and one daughter with Leah and one son, Joseph, with Rachel. (Rachel's other son, Benjamin, is born on their return to Canaan.) He also has four sons with two concubines. So all told, 12 sons.
- On their return to Canaan, Jacob has a second dream in which he wrestled a man (God). In the morning, God changes Jacob's name to *Israel*.
- Then he meets his estranged brother, Esau, and they reconcile (sort of).
- The descendents of Jacob's 12 sons became the twelve tribes of Israel.

Joseph

- Joseph is a dreamer and a spoilt son. His brothers become jealous of Joseph.
- The brothers capture Joseph and sell him to some Midianite nomads passing through on their way to Egypt where he is sold as a slave.
- The 'Egyptians' may actually have been the 'Hyksos', a Semitic tribe in the area of Canaan as was Joseph and living in the Nile Delta region and not the rest of Egypt.
- In Egypt, the dreamer Joseph interprets the Pharaoh's dreams which turn out to be correct.
- Joseph prospers in Egypt and attains a high official position. He has two sons – Manasseh and Ephraim.
- Due to a famine in Canaan, Joseph's brothers (except Benjamin) came to Egypt to buy grain. They meet Joseph who does not reveal who he is. Joseph demands that his brothers first bring Benjamin to Egypt, which they do.
- On their return, Joseph reveals himself. His father Jacob and other relatives are invited to come and live in Egypt.
- After 17 years, Jacob dies and his body returned to Canaan. The rest of the family dwell in Egypt. The Israelites may have spent 215 years in Egypt.
- With the death of Joseph many years later, the Book of Genesis comes to an end.

The Book of Exodus

- The book of Exodus narrates the migration of the Israelites, enslaved in Egypt, out of Egypt and back to the Canaan, the land of their ancestors.
- The exodus may have occurred in 1447 BC.
- After the deaths of Joseph and his brothers, the Israelites prospered, multiplied, and grew numerous.
- After the death of the (Hyksos) pharaoh, the Israelites are enslaved under the rule of a new pharaoh described as the 'Pharaoh of the Oppression'.
- This pharaoh was possibly Ahmose I who overthrew the Hyksos and enslaved the Israelites. Other possible pharaohs of the oppression are Thutmose III or his son Amenhotep II, who was known to have maliciously denigrated Semites.

Moses

- Moses is the person who led the enslaved Israelites out of Egypt.
- At the time of Moses' birth, the pharaoh of the time commanded all Israelite baby boys to be drowned. His mother hid him in a small basket made of bulrushes.
- The basket was discovered by the pharaoh's daughter. Moses was brought up in the house of the pharaoh essentially as an Egyptian.
- As a grown man, Moses found himself sympathising with the Israelite slaves. He probably also learnt of his own real origins.
- Moses killed an Egyptian overseer then fled to Midian. In Midian, he married a Midianite woman named Zipporah and they had two sons.
- There is the incident of a burning bush that is not consumed. From the bush, God commands Moses to return to Egypt and to lead the Israelites out of slavery.

Moses and the ten plagues

- Moses returns to Egypt, with Aaron his brother, and demands that people let his enslaved people go. The pharaoh refuses.
- Moses and Aaron bring, in swift succession, a series of disasters upon Egypt referred to as ‘the 10 plagues of Egypt’.
- The 10th plague was the crucial one. The first-born male of every house in Egypt was slain by divine action. The Israelites were spared by placing the blood of a lamb on the door of the house.

The exodus and wilderness wanderings

- The pharaoh relents and the Children of Israel, under the leadership of Moses, leave Egypt.
- The exodus may have occurred in 1447 BC.
- The pharaoh of the exodus could have been Thutmose III or his son Amenhotep II.
- The Israelites possibly left the Nile Delta region by crossing the Reed Sea (not the Red Sea). The pursuing Egyptian army is supposedly drowned when the water, which Moses had parted, flow back.
- Once in the desert, it was to be 40 years before the Israelites entered the promised land of Canaan.
- Their first stop is the Mt Sinai area having first fought off an attack by the Amalekites (relatives of the Israelites, remember!). Joshua becomes the military leader of the Israelites.
- Moses receives the 10 commandments from God on Mt Sinai and instruction on how to construct a temple for the worship of God. The temple was to contain an ‘ark of the covenant’.
- While waiting for Moses to come down (he was there 40 days), the Israelites began to worship a golden calf, a common practice in Egypt where the people had come from.
- When Moses descended and found out what was happening he smashed the tablets containing the 10 commandments and launched a brief ‘reign of terror’ against his people.
- Moses then had to go up Mt Sinai again (and for another 40 days) to get a new set of tablets.
- Moses now sets himself up as a theocratic dictator.
- Although it should only have taken a few days to cross the desert to Canaan, because of the people’s grumbling and disobedience, God dooms them to wander for 40 years.
- Further, none of the generation of the exodus, including Moses (but excluding Joshua) were allowed to enter the promised land.
- It was Joshua who led the new generation into the promised land.

Glossary

Here is a list of difficult or specialised words used in this project together with their definitions or meanings, in alphabetical order.

Atheist: A person who denies or disbelieves the existence of a supreme being.

Chronology: The dates and the sequence of past events.

Civilisation: (From the Latin word *civis* meaning *city-dweller*.) The social process whereby societies achieve an advanced stage of development and organisation.

Deuteronomy: (From *deutero-* = second + *nomo-* = law.) Deuteronomy refers to the 'second law'. The 'first law' was the Ten Commandments given to Moses by God

Elohim: A name for God in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. Note: Elohim is plural and so actually means 'gods' but was taken to be singular when the ancient Hebrews became monotheistic.

Etymology: The study of the origin of words and the way their meanings have changed throughout history.

Genesis: 'In [the] beginning'. (From the Latin Vulgate, in turn borrowed or transliterated from Greek Γένεσις, meaning 'origin'; Biblical Hebrew: בְּרֵאשִׁית, romanised: Bərēšīṭ.)

Legend: A popular story handed down from earlier times whose historical truth has not been ascertained.

Mesopotamia: The land between the rivers (Tigris and Euphrates). From the Greek *meso-* = between plus *-potomas* = river.

Monotheism: The doctrine of or belief in only one God. (From the Greek *mono-* meaning one or single plus *-theos* meaning god.)

Myth: A traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining a natural or social phenomenon, and typically involving supernatural beings or events.

Nomad: A member of a group of people who have no fixed home and move according to the seasons from place to place in search of food, water, and grazing land.

Patriarch: A *man* who rules a family, clan, or tribe. The Old Testament has just three patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. From *pater-* = father.

Pentateuch: (From Greek *penta-* meaning five + *teukhos* meaning tool, vessel, scroll case.) The first five books of the Old Testament regarded as a unity, cf. Torah.

Primeval: (From the Latin *prime-* meaning first or *coming into being*.) Belonging to the first or earliest times in history.

Polytheism: The worship of or belief in more than one god. (From the Greek *poly-* meaning many plus *-theos* meaning god.)

Semite: A member of any of the peoples speaking a Semitic language. The Bible defines a Semite as a descendent of Shem.

Semitic (language): Of or relating to the Semites or their languages or cultures. it includes Arabic, Hebrew, and Aramaic.

Septuagint: The principal Greek version of the Old Testament, including the Apocrypha, believed to have been translated by about 70 scholars in the 3rd Century BC. (From the Latin: *septuaginta*, meaning 'seventy')

Stele: A stone or wooden slab erected in the ancient world as a monument.

Sin: A transgression of a religious or moral law (from God), especially when deliberate.

Torah: (From the Hebrew word for *law*.) The first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament).

Website References

The following is a list of websites that I referred to for ideas, text, diagrams or all of these in the preparation for this project. Some of the websites are very good, others marginally so. Some of the websites are not too difficult to understand; others unfortunately, are very difficult. There are many other websites available on the Internet for most of the topics discussed in the project, but while some of these may be very good and have been missed, it is just too time consuming to have to search through so many. The website headings are listed in alphabetical order.

1 Adams and Eves

<https://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/02/science/the-human-family-tree-10-adams-and-18-eves.html>

2 Asimov's Guide to the Bible

[https://ia801307.us.archive.org/21/items/AsimovsGuideToTheBibleTheOldAndNewTestaments2Vols.IsaacAsimov/Asimov%27s%20Guide%20to%20the%20Bible_%20The%20Old%20and%20New%20Testaments%20\(2%20Vols.\)%20-%20Isaac%20Asimov.pdf](https://ia801307.us.archive.org/21/items/AsimovsGuideToTheBibleTheOldAndNewTestaments2Vols.IsaacAsimov/Asimov%27s%20Guide%20to%20the%20Bible_%20The%20Old%20and%20New%20Testaments%20(2%20Vols.)%20-%20Isaac%20Asimov.pdf)

<https://www.holybooks.com/wp-content/uploads/Asimovs-Guide-to-the-Bible-The-Old-and-New-Testaments.pdf>

3 Agriculture and civilisation: the Ascent of Man

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1axX7iGvVhfvxcI9M73sLNtwb8BoesyrI/view>

4 Bible – how old?

<https://bigthink.com/thinking/how-old-is-the-bible/>

5 Battle of Abraham against Elam

<https://armstronginstitute.org/299-uncovering-the-battle-that-changed-the-world>

6 Battle of Megiddo

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Megiddo_\(15th_century_BC\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Megiddo_(15th_century_BC))

<https://www.archaeology.org/issues/262-1707/features/5627-jaffa-egypt-canaan-colony>

https://www.archaeology.org/issues/262-1707/features/5627-jaffa-egypt-canaan-colony#art_page2

7 Chinese whispers/Telephone game

<https://icebreakerideas.com/telephone-game/>

8 Edomites and Amalekites – what is the difference?

<https://www.quora.com/What-is-the-difference-between-the-Edomites-and-the-Amalekites>

9 Esau' wives

https://jbqnew.jewishbible.org/assets/Uploads/424/jbq_424_Kleinwivesofesau.pdf

10 Exodus – from an Egyptian point of view

<https://armstronginstitute.org/692-youve-heard-israels-version-of-the-exodus-have-you-heard-egypts>

11 Exodus – Year and Pharaoh

<https://armstronginstitute.org/238-evidence-of-the-exodus>

<https://biblearchaeology.org/research/exodus-from-egypt/3147-amenhotep-ii-and-the-historicity-of-the-exodus-pharaoh>

<https://biblearchaeology.org/research/exodus-from-egypt/2455-amenhotep-ii-as-pharaoh-of-the-exodus>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thutmose_III

<https://www.bible.ca/archeology/bible-archeology-exodus-date-1440bc.htm> [Thutmose III]

<https://www.cmog.org/audio/king-amenhotep-ii-121> [1450 – 1400]

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amenhotep_II [Uses low date for Thutmose III]

12 Fertile crescent– ancient and modern maps

<https://www.mpoweruk.com/figs/Mesopotamia.htm>

13 Flood stories

The Gilgamesh story:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noah>

The Black Sea flood:

<https://www.romanianhistoryandculture.com/theblackseaflood.htm>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Sea_deluge_hypothesis [but does NOT mention the Atlantic]

The creation of animals:

<https://apologeticspress.org/did-god-create-animals-or-man-first-643/>

14 Ham and the curse of Ham

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curse_of_Ham

15 History of Israel

<https://www.worldhistory.org/israel/>

16 Indo-European languages

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-European_languages

17 Ishmaelites

<https://amazingbibletimeline.com/blog/arab-nations/>

18 Israelites sojourn in Egypt – how long?

<https://apologeticspress.org/how-long-was-the-israelites-egyptian-sojourn-1356/>

19 Jacob’s journey to Haran

<https://www.thetorah.com/article/where-do-isaac-and-rebecca-live-when-jacob-leaves-home>

20 Joseph and his coat of many colours

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/manual/old-testament-seminary-student-study-guide/the-books-of-genesis-moses-and-abraham/genesis-36-37-joseph-and-the-coat-of-many-colors?lang=eng>

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21 Joseph, the Hyksos and the Egyptian Pharaohs

https://www.biblewise.com/bible_study/characters/egyptian-pharaohs.php

22 Joseph, the saviour of Egypt

https://www.agapebiblestudy.com/Genesis/Lesson_17.htm

23 Merneptah stele

<https://armstronginstitute.org/122-merneptah-stele-proving-israels-3200-year-existence>

24 Moab

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25 Original sin

https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/beliefs/originalsin_1.shtml

26 Patriarchal Age

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27 Pope corrects the Prime Minister of Israel on the language Jesus spoke

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/05/27/what-language-did-jesus-speak-the-pope-and-israels-prime-minister-disagree/>

<https://time.com/118522/pope-corrects-israeli-leader-actually-jesus-did-not-speak-hebrew/>

28 Pharaoh of the Oppression

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29 Prophet of the Oppression

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30 Rekhmire

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/losttemples/obelisk/explore/sansrekhmire.html>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rekhmire>

31 Sacrifice in Judaism

<https://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Projects/Reln91/Sacrifice/sacpage2.htm>

32 Sarah or Sarai?

<https://amazingbibletimeline.com/blog/sarah-or-sarai/>

33 Slavery in Egypt

<https://armstronginstitute.org/33-uncovering-the-bibles-buried-civilizations-the-egyptians>

34 Solomon's reign and date of exodus

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<https://bible.ucg.org/bible-commentary/1-Kings/Solomon-builds-the-temple/>

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35 Ten commandments and animal worship

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36 The Ur-source

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38 What is the Bible?

<https://tracinskiletter.com/2013/03/09/what-is-the-bible/>