



# GENESIS

*See Our Story Begin*

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Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.  
Carol Stream, Illinois

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*NLT Study Series: Genesis*

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ISBN 978-1-4143-2199-8 Softcover

Printed in the United States of America

15 14 13 12 11 10 09  
7 6 5 4 3 2 1

## SERIES FOREWORD

The purpose of the *NLT Study Series* is to call individuals and groups into serious conversation with God and engagement with his word.

We have designed these studies to provide you and your group with a complete, new Bible study experience. Our aim has been to help you engage seriously with the Bible's content, interacting with it in a meaningful and deeply personal way, not just regurgitating rote answers to fill-in-the-blank questions or producing purely subjective opinions. We also hope to encourage true community study, with the honest sharing of different perspectives and experiences. Most of all, we want to help foster your direct communication with God, encouraging you to tell God what is on your mind and heart. We want to help you understand what God is teaching you and apply it to the realities of personal and community life.

To this end, each study in the *NLT Study Series* includes twelve weeks of individual and group studies focusing on understanding the meaning of the text of Scripture, reflecting on it personally and with others, and responding actively to what God is saying to you through it.

Each volume of the *NLT Study Series* can be used by itself, with no other resources, but you can also use it with your Bible of choice. Each volume of the *NLT Study Series* includes, along with the twelve-week study, one book of the *NLT Study Bible*, with both the text of Scripture and all of the study aids alongside it. The *NLT Study Bible* was designed to open up the world of the Bible and to make the meaning and significance of Scripture clear, so it makes a great personal and small-group study resource.

It is our hope and prayer that these studies will help you and those in your group to understand God's word more clearly, to walk with God more fully, and to grow with one another in relationship with our God.

*Open my eyes to see*

*the wonderful truths in your instructions.* PSALM 119:18

*Come . . . let us walk in the light of the LORD!* ISAIAH 2:5

*Sean A. Harrison*  
General Editor

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE Genesis Study

GENESIS IS THE FOUNDATION of the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. Thus, it is also the foundation of the whole Old Testament. Indeed, we will see that it is pivotal to understanding the New Testament as well.

The following study, used along with the *NLT Study Bible*, will guide the reader into a deeper understanding of the book of Genesis and its marvelous and life-changing themes. This study intends to help you uncover the important themes of Genesis and to consider how the teaching of Genesis helps us understand ourselves better today.

The study is divided into twelve parts. The study in week 1 covers the creation (Gen 1–2), while weeks 2-3 focus on the Fall and other stories of sin, judgment, and grace that follow it (Gen 3–11). Weeks 4-6 then follow Abraham's journey of faith and invite the readers to reflect on their own journeys of faith. In week 7, attention turns to Abraham's promised son, Isaac, whose story really serves as a bridge between his father and his son, Jacob. Weeks 8-9 then follow Jacob's life, and we observe how the deceiver himself gets deceived and grows in maturity through the process. Finally, weeks 10-12 are devoted to the story of Joseph and how God providentially guides his life through suffering for the salvation of the family of God.

As you read through Genesis using this study guide, keep an eye on the central theme of blessing. God created Adam and Eve and blessed them greatly in the Garden. When they forfeited that blessing through their rebellion, God immediately pursued them with the desire to restore his relationship with them and bless them once again. He chooses Abraham in order to bless him along with the whole world. The blessing theme reverberates through the rest of Genesis.

May God bring blessing into your life as you seek to know him better through the study of his word.

*Tremper Longman III*  
Santa Barbara, California  
March 2009

# How to Use This Study

THE PRIMARY WAY we recommend using this Bible study guide is for personal daily meditation and study, along with weekly fellowship and discussion.

The introductory session (p. A13) is designed to launch the group study. Group participants need not prepare for this session, but the leader is encouraged to work through it in advance in order to be able to guide the group effectively. The introductory session provides orientation to the book of Genesis, and gives a taste of what the daily and weekly study will be like for the following twelve weeks.

Each week there are five personal daily studies plus a group session. You can use the daily study guide for your personal daily conversation with God, or you can use it around the table with your family.

You don't need to participate in a weekly group meeting in order to use this study guide. For instance, you can just do the study individually, working through the daily studies and then using the weekly group session as a time of reflection.

Similarly, you don't have to use the study on a daily basis in order to benefit from using it in a group setting. You can just do the study with the group each week by reading the passages, thinking about the discussion questions, and participating in the group discussion.

Ultimately, it's between you and God how you use this study. The more you put into it, the more you will get out of it. If you are meeting with a group, we encourage you to decide together what your level of commitment will be, and then encourage each other to stick with it. Then keep up your part of your commitment to the group.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DAILY STUDY

Each daily study is designed to be completed within 15 minutes, but optional "Further Study" is usually provided for those who want to go into greater depth.

Start the daily study by reading the passage recommended for each day. Reflect on what it means, and write down your questions and thoughts about it.

You can use the space provided in the book to write thoughts and answers to questions. If you find that you need more space, we recommend purchasing a small blank book with lined paper to use as a Bible study journal. Use the journal to write your answers to the reflection questions, your own thoughts about the passage, what you think God is saying to you, and your prayers to God about what you have studied.

The NLT Study Series is designed to be used with the *NLT Study Bible*. The book of Genesis from the *NLT Study Bible* is included for your reading and study. You can also use the *NLT Study Bible* itself, either the print edition or the online version at [www.nltstudybible.com](http://www.nltstudybible.com). Please note that the included section of the *NLT Study Bible* retains its page numbering, so the study guide can be used to refer to either the included section or the *NLT Study Bible* itself.

It can be helpful to highlight or mark the Bible text and study materials where they answer your questions or speak to you in some way. You can:

- underline, circle, or highlight significant words and phrases,
- put brackets around sections of text,
- write keywords in the margin to indicate a topic,
- write page numbers cross-referencing the study guide,
- write dates cross-referencing your journal entries.

Finally, talk with God about what you are learning and how you are responding to it, but also take time to listen to him and hear what he might be saying to you through it. Cultivate your relationship with God day by day.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GROUP STUDY

When the group comes together, read the entire passage for the week together, then spend some time letting each person share their own dialogue with God and the Bible that week: insights they've gained, questions they have, and so on.

Then use the discussion questions to stimulate the discussion for that week. You don't have to do all of the questions—you can pick just one.

When the discussion is winding down, spend some time reflecting on what God is saying to you as a group, and how you are going to respond to what God is saying. Spend some time praying together about these things.

Finally, take a look at the passage for the coming week, and make sure everyone understands what they will be doing in preparation for the next meeting of the group.

## INTRODUCTORY SESSION

# Orientation to Genesis

### SESSION GOALS

- Get oriented to the book of Genesis.
- Discuss what members hope to learn and how they hope to grow in this study.
- Introduce how we are going to be studying together.
- Answer any questions about how to begin.
- Commit ourselves to the Lord and to each other, to participate to the best of our ability.

### GETTING ORIENTED TO GENESIS

*Answer the following questions, either individually, or in discussion together with your group.*

What do you know about the book of Genesis?

What interests you about the book of Genesis? What do you hope to learn?

What questions do you have about Genesis and its meaning that you would like to answer during this study?

How do you hope to grow—spiritually, personally, in relationship to God and others—through this study?

### GENESIS INTRODUCTION

Look at the Genesis Introduction, pp. 14-19.

Read the first paragraph on p. 14, which gives a brief overview of what Genesis is all about. What strikes you as significant about Genesis?

Does the quotation in the margin on p. 17 surprise you? How does it affect your perceptions of Genesis and the people in it?



### READING: GENESIS 1:1–2:3

Read this passage aloud; if you're in a group, choose one reader. Read slowly, clearly, thoughtfully. What questions or observations do you have after reading this passage? Write them down.

### STUDY: GENESIS 1:1-2

What does it mean that God *created* (Gen 1:1)?

In Gen 1:1, the Hebrew word *bara'* is translated "created." Read the other verses where this word is used (Gen 1:27; 2:3; 6:7; Ps 51:10; 148:5; Eccl 12:1; Isa 40:28; 43:15; 65:17; Mal 2:10). What similarities in usage do you see? How would you summarize the meaning of the word *bara'*?

Read the study note on Gen 1:1. What is the significance of the word *bara'* in Gen 1:1?

Read the first section of the study note on Gen 1:1. What is the message of Gen 1:1?

What is the significance of the background state being "formless and empty," and as the study note on 1:2 describes it, "inhospitable chaos"?

### REFLECTION

What is Gen 1:1-2 saying to you? What might God be saying to you through this passage?

### QUESTIONS

Do you have questions about doing the daily study or preparing for the next meeting?

### PRAYER

Take turns praying about this Bible study and the next twelve weeks. You can tell God what your thoughts and questions are, and ask him for his help, strength, and insight. You can thank him for this Bible study and for the Bible itself. You can ask him to speak to you and to the others in the group. The leader, in closing, can also commit this study to God.

WEEK

**ONE**

*Creation*

GENESIS

1:1-2:25

OUTLINE



DAY 1 ... Genesis Introduction

DAY 2 ... Genesis 1:1-23

DAY 3 ... Genesis 1:24-2:3

DAY 4 ... Genesis 2:4-17

DAY 5 ... Genesis 2:18-25

Group Session

## DAY 1 ♦ Genesis Introduction

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### READING: GENESIS INTRODUCTION (pp. 14-19)

Begin with prayer, asking God to give you insight, understanding, and an open heart to listen to and follow his word.

Read the Genesis Introduction. You can shorten the reading by reading only the Overview (the first paragraph on p. 14), “Setting,” “Summary,” and “Meaning and Message.”

### STUDY

Read the “Setting,” p. 14. What similarities, if any, are there between your situation and the situation of the children of Israel when Genesis was written? What similarities are there between your needs and theirs?

Read the “Summary,” pp. 15-16. How would you summarize the structure of Genesis?

Read the “Meaning and Message,” pp. 18-19. What is the message of Genesis for ancient Israel?

### FURTHER STUDY (Optional)

Read “Authorship,” p. 16. According to the *NLT Study Bible*, who was the human author of Genesis? What do you think?

Read “Composition,” pp. 16-17. How does the *NLT Study Bible* account for information in Genesis that was known only later in history? Does this explanation make sense to you? Why or why not?

### REFLECTION

What questions does the Genesis Introduction answer for you? What questions does it raise?

## PRAYER

Talk to God about what you have read, any questions or concerns you might have, and what you think he might be saying to you today. You can write your prayer here if you wish.

## DAY 2 ♦ Genesis 1:1-23

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### READING: GENESIS 1:1-23

Begin with prayer, asking God to give you insight, understanding, and an open heart to listen to and follow his word.

Gen 1 presents a beautiful picture of God's creation of the whole universe. God first creates the "formless and empty" earth and then over the next six days he shaped and filled it and made it ready for human habitation.

### STUDY

Read the study note on 1:1–2:3, then look at "The Structure of the Creation Account" on p. 21, and read the caption. Also read the study notes on 1:3-13, 1:6-8, and 1:14-31. Describe the structure of Gen 1:1–2:3 in your own words.

Read the study notes on 1:4, 1:5, 1:9-10, 1:16, and 1:21. According to Gen 1, what is God's relationship to the created order? How does this perspective contrast with perspectives in our world today?

### FURTHER STUDY (Optional)

Read "The Creation" on p. 20. How does this article impact your understanding of the creation account?

### REFLECTION

What questions does Gen 1:1-23 answer for you? What questions does it raise?

What do you think God is saying to you through your study of Gen 1:1-23?

#### PRAYER

Talk to God about what you have read, any questions or concerns you might have, and what you think he might be saying to you today. You can write your prayer here if you wish.

### DAY 3 ♦ Genesis 1:24–2:3

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#### READING: GENESIS 1:24–2:3

Begin with prayer, asking God to give you insight, understanding, and an open heart to listen to and follow his word.

After the stage is set in the first five days, God creates the animals and also creates finally human beings in his own image. On the seventh day God rests, introducing the Sabbath as a fundamental principle of life in his creation.

#### STUDY

Read the study note on 1:27. Why does the NLT translate the Hebrew term *'adam* as “human beings”?

Read the first part of the study note on 1:28. In what ways has God blessed humankind? What does that blessing mean to you?

Read the rest of the study note on 1:28. What are the implications of God giving human beings the job of governing creation?

#### FURTHER STUDY (Optional)

Read “Human Sexuality” on p. 23. The article mentions “those who commit their sexuality to Christ.” What are the practical outworkings of doing this?

## REFLECTION

What questions does Gen 1:24–2:3 answer for you? What questions does it raise?

What do you think God is saying to you through your study of Gen 1:24–2:3?

## PRAYER

Talk to God about what you have read, any questions or concerns you might have, and what you think he might be saying to you today. You can write your prayer here if you wish.

## DAY 4 ♦ Genesis 2:4-17

---

### READING: GENESIS 2:4-17

Begin with prayer, asking God to give you insight, understanding, and an open heart to listen to and follow his word.

Gen 2 is a further expansion on the creation story, this time with a focus on the creation of the first man and woman. Gen 2:4-17 describes the creation of Adam and his first days in the Garden of Eden.

### STUDY

Read the study notes on 2:5 and 2:15. What are the implications for work today?

Read the study note on 2:7. What is the significance of the fact that humans were created from the “dust of the ground” and the “breath” of God?

Read the study note on 2:9. What do the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil represent? Why does God prohibit Adam from eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?

### FURTHER STUDY (Optional)

Read the study notes on 2:8 and 2:13 and “The Location of Eden” on p. 25. Where was Eden located? Do you think it was a real place, or does it describe an earlier state of innocence, or both? Why do you think so?

Read the study note on 2:17. Was there law in the Garden of Eden? Does this surprise you? Why or why not?

### REFLECTION

What do you think was the message of Gen 2:4-17 for the people of Israel? What do you think the message of Gen 2:4-17 is for you?

### PRAYER

Talk to God about what you have read, any questions or concerns you might have, and what you think he might be saying to you today. You can write your prayer here if you wish.

## DAY 5 ♦ Genesis 2:18-25

---

### READING: GENESIS 2:18-25

Begin with prayer, asking God to give you insight, understanding, and an open heart to listen to and follow his word.

In response to Adam’s loneliness, God creates Eve and institutes marriage.

### STUDY

Read the study note on 2:19-20. What does the naming of the animals tell us about human beings’ relationship with the animals? How then should we treat them?

Read the study notes on 2:21 and 2:23. What do we learn about women from the way Eve’s creation is described?

### FURTHER STUDY (Optional)

Read “Biblical Marriage” on p. 24 and the study note on 2:24. If you are married, think about the ways your marriage reflects the description in Gen 2:18-25. If you are single, read the study note on 2:18-23 and think about legitimate ways you can fulfill the divinely instilled desire for human intimacy.

What does Gen 2:18-25 teach about the relationship between men and women today?

### REFLECTION

What does God seem to be saying to you through what you have studied today?

### PRAYER

Talk to God about what you have read, any questions or concerns you might have, and what you think he might be saying to you today. You can write your prayer here if you wish.

## GROUP SESSION

### READING: GENESIS 1:1–2:25

Read the passage together as a group.

### DISCUSSION

*You can use the following questions to guide what you share in the discussion. Give each person at least one opportunity to share with the others.*

What did you learn from Gen 1:1–2:25? What was one thing that stood out to you as you studied this passage? How did Gen 1:1–2:25 surprise you? Do you have questions about this passage or the study materials that haven't been answered? What does God seem to be saying to you through what you have studied?



## TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

*You can choose from among these topics to generate a discussion among the members of your group, or you can write your thoughts about one or more of these topics if you're studying solo.*

1. Gen 1 teaches that God alone is the only Creator and sovereign King of the universe. What are the implications today? What questions does it raise? What changes of worldview or lifestyle does it imply?
2. Gen 1:26-28 and 2:15-20 teach that God gave humankind the role of governing creation. Is this government still effective, or was it broken by the Fall? What are the implications today?
3. Gen 2:18-25 tells of the creation of woman and the beginning of the first human family. What was the original purpose of the marriage relationship? Is that purpose being fulfilled by most marriages? Is it being fulfilled among those in your family? How can marriages that are not fulfilling God's original purpose be restored?

## GROUP REFLECTION

What is God saying to us as a group through Gen 1:1–2:25?

## ACTION

What are we going to do, individually or as a group, in response to what God is saying to us?

## PRAYER

How should we pray for each other in response to God's message to us in this passage?

Take turns talking to God about this passage and about what he is saying.

**NEXT: GENESIS 3:1–5:32 (The Fall and Its Aftermath)**

# THE BOOK OF GENESIS

Genesis is the book of beginnings—of the universe and of humanity, of sin and its catastrophic effects, and of God’s plan to restore blessing to the world through his chosen people. God began his plan when he called Abraham and made a covenant with him. Genesis traces God’s promised blessings from generation to generation, to the time of bondage and the need for redemption from Egypt. It lays the foundation for God’s subsequent revelation, and most other books of the Bible draw on its contents. Genesis is a source of instruction, comfort, and edification.

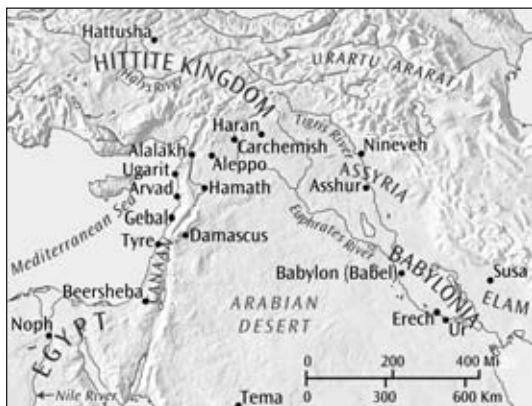
## SETTING

When Genesis was written, the children of Israel had been slaves in Egypt for 400 years. They had recently been released from bondage and guided through the desert to meet the Lord at Mount Sinai, where he had established his covenant relationship with them and had given them his law through Moses. Israel was now poised to enter the Promised Land and receive the inheritance that God had promised Abraham.

While enslaved in Egypt, the Israelites had adopted many pagan ideas and customs from their Egyptian masters (e.g., Exod 32:1-4). They were influenced by false concepts of God, the world, and human nature (e.g., Exod 32), and were reduced to being slaves rather than owners and managers of the land. Perhaps they had forgotten the great promises that God had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or perhaps they had concluded that the promises would never be fulfilled.

Before entering the Promised Land, the Israelites needed to understand the nature of God, his world, and their place in it more clearly. They needed to embrace their identity as descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Genesis provided the needed understanding.



◀ The Ancient Near East, about 2100 BC. Humanity spread out from the mountains of URARTU (ARARAT) and populated the early centers of civilization. By the time of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), many of the cities were ancient.

ASSHUR 2:14; 10:22; 25:3; 25:18

ASSYRIA 10:11

BABYLON (BABEL), BABYLONIA 10:9-10; 11:1-9; 14:1, 9

CANAAN 9:18-27; 10:18-19; 12:5-10

DAMASCUS 14:15; 15:2

EGYPT 12:10-13:1; 15:18; 37:28-36; 39:1-50:26

ELAM 10:22; 14:1, 9

ERECH 10:10; Ezra 4:9

HAMATH 10:18; 2 Sam 8:9-10; 2 Kgs 14:28; 23:33

HARAN 11:26-32; 12:4-5; 27:43; 28:10; 29:4; Acts 7:2-4

SUSA Ezra 4:9; Neh 1:1; Esth 1:2; Dan 8:2

UR 11:28, 31; 15:7; Neh 9:7

URARTU (ARARAT) 8:4

## SUMMARY

Genesis traces God's work to overcome with blessing the curse that came on humankind because of sin. The book arranges family traditions, genealogies, historical events, and editorial comments into a single, sustained argument.

Every section but the first has the heading, "This is the account" (or *These are the generations*; Hebrew *toledoth*); each of the *toledoth* sections explains

## OUTLINE

1:1–2:3

*Creation*

2:4–4:26

*What Happened to the Creation*

5:1–6:8

*The Account of Adam's Descendants*

6:9–9:29

*The Account of Noah's Family*

10:1–11:9

*The Account of Noah's Sons*

11:10–26

*The Account of Shem's Descendants*

11:27–25:11

*The Account of Terah's Descendants*

25:12–18

*The Account of Ishmael's Descendants*

25:19–35:29

*The Account of Isaac's Descendants*

36:1–37:1

*The Account of Esau's Descendants*

37:2–50:26

*The Account of Jacob's Descendants*

the history of a line of descent. In each case, a deterioration of well-being is followed by an increasing focus on God's plan to bless the world. This plan is the basis for God's covenant with his people; as the blessing develops, the covenant is clarified. By the end of the book, the reader is ready for the fulfillment of the promises in Israel's redemption from bondage (see Exodus).

The first section (1:1–2:3) does not have the *toledoth* heading, and logically so—it is the account of creation "in the beginning" (1:1). The work of creation is wrapped in God's approval and blessing as he fulfills his plan.

The next section (2:4–4:26) focuses on the creation of human life (2:4–25) and traces what became of God's creation because of Adam's and Eve's sin (3:1–13), the curse on their sin (3:14–24), and the extension of sin to their descendants (4:1–24). Humanity no longer enjoyed God's rest; instead, they experienced guilt and fear. So they fled from God and developed a proud civilization.

Independence from God resulted in the downward drift of human life (5:1–6:8). The genealogy of 5:1–32 begins by recalling that human beings were made in God's image and were blessed by him (5:1–2). As the genealogy is traced, the death of each generation reminds the reader of the curse, with Enoch providing a ray of hope that the curse is not final. In 6:1–8, we learn that God regretted having made humans and decided to judge the earth. Noah, however, received God's favor and provided a source of hope (5:29; 6:8).

The next section (6:9–9:29) brings the curse of judgment through the flood followed by

blessing in a new beginning. A renewed creation began, purged of the abominable evil that had invaded and ruined the human race.

The world's population expanded into various nations (10:1–11:9) whose people were bent on disobedience. The population of the earth by Shem,

## TIMELINE

2166 / 1990 BC\*  
*Abraham is born*

2091 / 1915 BC  
*Abraham moves to Canaan*

2080 / 1904 BC  
*Ishmael is born*

2066 / 1890 BC  
*Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed, Isaac is born*

2006 / 1830 BC  
*Jacob and Esau are born*

1898 / 1722 BC  
*Joseph is sold into slavery*

1885 / 1709 BC  
*Joseph begins governing Egypt*

1876 / 1661 BC  
*Jacob moves to Egypt*

1446 / 1270 BC  
*Israel leaves Egypt (the Exodus), moves to Mount Sinai*

1406 / 1230 BC  
*Israel enters Canaan*

\* The two dates harmonize with the traditional "early" chronology and a more recent "late" chronology of the Exodus. All dates are approximate. Please see "Chronology: Abraham to Joshua," p. 118.

Ham, and Japheth seemed fruitful (10:1-32), but the nations were divided by languages and boundaries (10:5, 20, 31). Because of their rebellion, God dispersed them to prevent greater wickedness (11:1-9).

After the chaos of the scattered nations, 11:10-26 brings the focus to Abram, through whom God chose to bring blessing to all. The rest of the book (11:27–50:26) tells of God’s blessing Abram and his descendants. God first made a covenant with Abram (11:27–25:11), promising him a great nation, land, and name. As time went on, God made the specific terms of the covenant clearer, and Abram’s faith grew deeper.

In each generation, Genesis gives a brief account of the families that are not Israel’s ancestors before turning to the line of Israel. After briefly reporting what became of Ishmael (25:12-18), Genesis traces in detail what happened to Isaac and his family (25:19–35:29).

True to the pattern of the book, Esau’s line (Edom) is dealt with briefly (36:1–37:1) before the chosen line of Jacob the heir. The final section (37:2–50:26) concerns Jacob’s family, centering on the life of Joseph. In the land of Canaan, the family became corrupt under Canaanite influence to the point of beginning to merge with them (ch 38). To preserve the line of blessing, God sent the family into Egypt where they could flourish, remain separate (43:32; 46:34), and become a great nation. The book closes with the promise of the Lord’s coming to rescue his people from Egypt (50:24-26).

*“God rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. And he blessed the seventh day. . . .” And we ourselves will be a “seventh day” when we shall be filled with his blessing and remade by his sanctification. . . . Only when we are remade by God and perfected by a greater grace shall we have the eternal stillness of that rest in which we shall see that he is God.*

ST. AUGUSTINE  
City of God, sec. 22.30

**AUTHORSHIP**

Both Scripture and tradition attribute the Pentateuch (Genesis—Deuteronomy) to Moses. No one was better qualified than Moses to have written this book. Since he was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22), he had the literary skills to collect and edit Israel’s traditions and records and to compose this theological treatise. His unique communion with God gave him the spiritual illumination, understanding, and inspiration needed to guide him. He had good reason to write this work—to provide Israel with the theological and historical foundation for the Exodus and the covenant at Sinai, and to establish the new nation in accord with the promises made to their ancestors.

Most scholars, however, do not accept that Moses wrote Genesis. The prevailing critical view, called the *Documentary Hypothesis*, is that Genesis was compiled from various sources by different groups of people. In such approaches, there is seldom a word about divine revelation or inspiration. For those who understand the Bible as God’s inspired word, such theories often seem unnecessarily complicated and conjectural. Genesis can be understood much more straightforwardly as the product of Moses’ genius under God’s inspiration with later editorial adjustments. (See further “Introduction to the Pentateuch: Authorship,” p. 12).

**COMPOSITION**

Biblical scholars of all stripes have always acknowledged that various sources were used in writing Genesis and other historical texts in the Bible (such as Kings and Luke). Moses used collections of family records, oral traditions, ancient accounts of primeval events, and genealogies to write Genesis. Those sources could have been incorporated as received, or the author may have changed their style and wording, stitching them together with additional material for the particular purpose of tracing the foundations of Israelite faith.

Genesis also includes passages and expressions that are obviously later editorial glosses. Some sections (such as the list of Edomite kings, 36:31-43) could have been added during the early days of the monarchy. There is no conflict in saying that Genesis was authored by Moses and augmented by subsequent editors whose work was guided by the Holy Spirit. Given these considerations, conservative scholars find it plausible that the biblical material accurately records actual events.

### LITERARY CHARACTER

Genesis includes various types of literature. Several suggestions have been made as to the nature of the materials.

*Myth.* Mythological literature explains the origins of things symbolically through the deeds of gods and supernatural creatures. For ancient peoples, myths were beliefs that explained life and reality. Whole systems of ritual activities were developed to ensure that the forces of fertility, life, and death would continue year by year. Some of these rituals gave rise to cult prostitution (see 38:15, 21-22).

It would be very difficult to classify the material in Genesis as myth. Israel had one God, not a multitude. The nation of Israel had a beginning, a history, and a future hope. They saw God, rather than gods and other supernatural creatures, as the primary actor in the world. Their worship was not cosmic, magical, or superstitious, but a reenactment of their own rescue from Egypt and a celebration of God's factual intervention in history and their hope in his promises.

If Genesis uses elements of mythological language, it is to display a deliberate contrast with pagan concepts and to show that the Lord God is sovereign over such ideas. For example, the ancients worshiped the sun as a god, but in Genesis the sun serves the Creator's wishes (1:14-18). The book of Genesis is a cemetery for lifeless myths and dead gods. Genesis is not myth.

*Etiology.* A number of scholars describe the Genesis narratives as *etiologies*, stories that explain the causes of factual reality or traditional beliefs. The implication is that such stories were made up for explanatory purposes and do not describe historical events. For example, if one says that the story of Cain and Abel was made up to explain why shepherds and farmers do not get along, the account loses its integrity as factual history.

Etiological elements certainly occur in Genesis, because the book gives the foundation and rationale for almost everything that Israel would later do. For example, the creation account of Gen 2 ends with the explanation, "This explains why a man leaves his father and mother. . . ." The event as it happened explains why marriage was conducted the way it was, but to say that a story explains something is quite different from saying that the story was fabricated to explain it. The stories of Genesis are not fictional tales invented to explain later customs and beliefs.

*History.* Many scholars object to regarding Genesis as history, for two basic reasons: (1) Genesis explains events as caused by God, and the inclusion of the supernatural is regarded as proof that the material is theological reflection and thus not historically reliable; and (2) the events in Genesis cannot be validated from outside sources; no other records have demonstrated that Abraham existed or that any of his family history occurred.

*Genesis is not interested in parading Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as examples of morality. Therefore, it does not moralize on them. [Genesis] is bringing together the promises of God to the patriarchs and the faithfulness of God in keeping those promises.*

VICTOR P. HAMILTON  
*The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, p. 46

Modern philosophies of history exclude the supernatural as an explanation of historical events, but there is no reason to do so arbitrarily. If God exists and is able to act, then he might very well be the ultimate cause of all historical events and the immediate cause of specific historical events. The Israelites were not as distrustful of supernatural events as are modern critics; they experienced such events frequently as God acted among them to fulfill the promises recorded in Genesis.

It is true that no direct evidence of the patriarchs or the events in Genesis has been found, but archaeology confirms the plausibility of Genesis by showing that the historical situation in that era (Middle Bronze I, 2000–1800 BC) corresponds closely to what Genesis portrays. It is unlikely that this would be so if Genesis were not an accurate record of the facts. When all the archaeological and historical data are assembled around the events, they fit perfectly within the setting, and the details of the narratives make perfectly good sense.

*Theological Interpretation.* Genesis was not intended as a chronicle of the lives of the patriarchs, a history for history’s sake, or a complete biography. It is clearly a theological interpretation of selected records of the nation’s ancestors, but this does not destroy its historicity. Interpretations of an event can differ, but the offering of interpretations is a good witness to the actuality of the events. The author retold the events in his own way, but he did not invent them.

*Tradition.* What was thus committed to writing is tradition in the reverent care of literary genius. Scholars prefer words such as “traditions” or even “sagas” to describe these narratives. Doing so only makes the claim that the stories preserve the memory of the people of Israel; it makes no claim that the events themselves are historical. The biblical understanding, however, is that these stories were recorded under divine inspiration and are therefore historically true and reliable.

In all probability, Abram brought the primeval accounts and the family genealogies from Mesopotamia, and stories about the family were added to these collections. Joseph could easily have preserved all the traditions, both written and oral, in Egypt with his own records. Moses could then have compiled the works substantially in their present form while adding his editorial comments. Since he worked under God’s inspiration and guidance, the narratives record exactly what God wanted written and correspond precisely to reality.

*Instructional Literature.* Since Genesis is the first book of the Pentateuch (the “Torah” or Law), it may be best to classify it as “Torah Literature” (Hebrew *torah*, “instruction, law”). Genesis is instructional literature that lays the foundation for the Law. It is theological interpretation of the historical traditions standing behind the covenant at Sinai. In the way it is written, one may discern that Moses was preparing his readers to receive God’s law and the fulfillment of the promises made to their forefathers. Genesis is therefore a unique work. Theology, history, and tradition come together to instruct God’s people and prepare them for blessing.

**MEANING AND MESSAGE**

Israel’s most important questions were answered by the Genesis narratives. Life and death, the possession of the land of Canaan, and how Israel ended up in Egypt are explained as God’s providential working in history. Israel was part of God’s plan in this world. His plan had



a starting point at creation and will have an end point in the future when the promises are completely fulfilled.

*Israel, the Chosen People.* The central theme of Genesis is that God made a covenant with Abraham and his descendants. He promised to make them his own people, heirs of the land of Canaan, and a blessing to the world. Genesis gave Israel the theological and historical basis for its existence as God's chosen people.

Israel could trace its ancestry to the patriarch Abraham and its destiny to God's promises (12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-8). Because the promise of a great nation was crucial, much of Genesis is devoted to family concerns of the patriarchs and their wives, their sons and heirs, and their birthrights and blessings. The record shows how God preserved and protected the chosen line through the patriarchs. Israel thus knew that they had become the great nation promised to Abraham. Their future was certainly not in slavery to the Egyptians, but in Canaan, where they would live as a free nation and as the people of the living God, and where they could mediate God's blessings to the people of the world.

*Blessing and Curse.* The entire message of Genesis turns on the motifs of blessing and cursing. The promised blessing would give the patriarchs innumerable descendants and give the descendants the land of promise; the blessing would make them famous in the earth, enable them to flourish and prosper, and appoint them to bring others into the covenant blessings. The curse, meanwhile, would alienate, deprive, and disinherit people from the blessings. The effects of the curse are felt by the whole race as death and pain and as God's judgment on the world.

These motifs continue throughout the Bible. Prophets and priests spoke of even greater blessings in the future and an even greater curse for those who refuse God's gift of salvation and its blessings. The Bible reminds God's people not to fear human beings, but to fear God, who has the power to bless and to curse.

*Good and Evil.* In Genesis, that which is good is blessed by God: It produces, enhances, preserves, and harmonizes with life. That which is evil is cursed: It causes pain, diverts from what is good, and impedes or destroys life. Genesis traces the perpetual struggle between good and evil that characterizes our fallen human race. God will bring about the greater good, build the faith of his people, and ultimately triumph over all evil (cp. Rom 8:28).

*God's Plan.* Genesis begins with the presupposition that God exists and that he has revealed himself in word and deed to Israel's ancestors. It does not argue for the existence of God; it simply begins with God and shows how everything falls into place when the sovereign God works out his plan to establish Israel as the means of restoring blessing to the whole world.

*God's Rule.* Genesis is the fitting introduction to the founding of theocracy, the rule of God over all creation that was to be established through his chosen people. Genesis lays down the initial revelation of God's sovereignty. He is the Lord of the universe who will move heaven and earth to bring about his plan. He desires to bless people, but he will not tolerate rebellion and unbelief. His promises are great, and he is fully able to bring them to fruition. To participate in his plan has always required faith, for without faith it is impossible to please him (Heb 11:6).

#### FURTHER READING

VICTOR P. HAMILTON  
*The Book of Genesis* (1990)

DEREK KIDNER  
*Genesis* (1967)

KENNETH A. MATHEWS  
*Genesis* (1996)

ALLEN P. ROSS  
*Creation and Blessing* (1988)  
*Genesis in Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, vol. 1 (2008)

GORDON WENHAM  
*Genesis 1-15* (1987)  
*Genesis 16-50* (1994)

**1. CREATION (1:1–2:3)**

*In the Beginning (1:1–2)*

**1** In the beginning God <sup>a</sup>created the <sup>b</sup>heavens and the <sup>c</sup>earth. <sup>2</sup>The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the <sup>d</sup>Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

*Six Days of Creation (1:3–31)*

*Day One: Light, Darkness*

<sup>3</sup>Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. <sup>4</sup>And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light “day” and the darkness “night.” And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day.

*Day Two: Sky, Waters*

<sup>6</sup>Then God said, “Let there be a space between the waters, to separate the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth.” <sup>7</sup>And that is what happened. God made this space to separate the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens. <sup>8</sup>God called the space “sky.” And evening passed and morning came, marking the second day.

*Day Three: Land, Sea, Vegetation*

<sup>9</sup>Then God said, “Let the waters beneath the sky flow together into one place, so dry ground may appear.” And that is what happened. <sup>10</sup>God called the dry ground “land” and the waters “seas.”

1:1  
Ps 89:11; 102:25  
Isa 42:5; 48:13  
John 1:1–2  
<sup>a</sup>bara<sup>1</sup> (1254)  
<sup>b</sup>Gen 1:27  
<sup>c</sup>shamayim (8064)  
<sup>d</sup>Exod 16:4  
<sup>e</sup>erets (0776)  
<sup>f</sup>Gen 9:11

1:2  
Isa 45:18  
<sup>g</sup>ruakh (7307)  
<sup>h</sup>Gen 45:27

1:3  
Isa 45:7  
2 Cor 4:6

1:6  
Job 26:10  
Ps 136:5–6

1:9  
Ps 95:5  
Prov 8:29  
Jer 5:22  
2 Pet 3:5

**The Creation (1:1–2:3)**

Ps 33:6–9  
Prov 3:19; 8:22–31  
Isa 40:26–28; 45:11–12, 18–19  
Jer 10:11–16  
John 1:1–4  
Rom 8:18–25  
2 Cor 5:17  
Col 1:15–20  
Rev 4:11; 21:1–5

The creation account in Genesis is foundational to the message of the entire Bible, not just of Genesis or the Pentateuch. Understanding the early chapters of Genesis is thus crucial to forming a biblical worldview.

This part of Genesis deals with fundamental questions: Who created the world, and for what purpose? Why is the world in its present condition? Genesis answers these questions, dispelling the idolatry that Israel had acquired from their pagan masters in Egypt. In the Promised Land, they would also be surrounded by people who believed in many false gods and worshiped created things rather than the Creator. Genesis taught Israel that the one true God created and has absolute authority over all things; he alone is worthy of worship.

Every worldview attempts to explain where the world came from, what is wrong with the world, and how it can be set right again. The creation account in Genesis teaches that as God made the world, it was “very good” (1:31). Through creation, God turned disorder into restful order and emptiness into the fullness of abundant life. In this environment, humans enjoyed unbroken fellowship with their Creator until their rebellion severed that fellowship and implanted evil in human hearts (ch 3; see chs 4–6). The world’s evil does not come from some defect in creation; God put the world under a curse because of human rebellion.

Since that first rebellion, humans have been alienated from the Creator and no longer recognize his presence and authority. This alienation results in shame, fractured relationships with God and other humans, estrangement from the rest of creation, and death (3:7–19). Since that time, God has been working purposefully in history to restore humans to fellowship with him, which he is doing through Jesus Christ. Restored humans are a new creation (Gal 6:15); through Jesus, eternal life is open to all and God will one day renew all things (see Isa 65:17–25; Rom 8:19–22). The whole cosmos will be made new (Rev 21:1).

**1:1–2:3** These verses introduce the Pentateuch (Genesis—Deuteronomy) and teach Israel that the world was created, ordered, and populated by the one true God and not by the gods of surrounding nations. • God blessed three specific things: animal life (1:22–25), human life (1:27), and the Sabbath day (2:3). This trilogy of blessings highlights the Creator’s plan: Humankind was made in God’s image to enjoy sovereign dominion over the creatures of the earth and to participate in God’s Sabbath rest.

**1:1** *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth* (or *In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, . . .* or *When God began to cre-*

*ate the heavens and the earth, . . .*): This statement summarizes the entire creation account (1:3–2:3). Already a key question—Who created the world?—is answered (see also Prov 8:22–31; John 1:1–3). Although the modern naturalistic mindset rejects this question and that of creation’s purpose, Genesis affirms God’s role and purpose in creation.

• The common name for *God* (Hebrew *’elohim*) emphasizes his grand supremacy. The word *’elohim* is plural, but the verbs used with it are usually singular, reflecting the consistent scriptural proclamation of a single, all-powerful God. • *created* (Hebrew *bara*): In the OT, God is always the agent of creation

expressed by this verb. It describes the making of something fresh and new—notably the cosmos (1:1, 21; 2:3), humankind (1:27), the Israelite nation (Isa 43:1), and the future new creation (Isa 65:17). • *The heavens and the earth* are the entire ordered cosmos.

**1:2** This verse gives the background for the summary in 1:1 and the detailed description in 1:3–2:3. God’s creative utterances bring order to the chaotic state of the universe. • *formless . . . empty* (Hebrew *tohu . . . bohu*): This terse idiom means something like “wild and waste.” It sets a stark contrast to the final ordered state of the heavens and the earth (1:1). • *deep waters*



1:10  
Ps 33:7; 95:5  
1:11  
Gen 2:9  
Ps 104:14  
Matt 6:30  
1:14  
Ps 74:16; 104:19  
1:15  
Gen 1:5  
1:16  
Ps 8:3; 19:1-6;  
136:8-9  
1 Cor 15:41  
1:18  
Jer 33:20, 25  
1:20  
Gen 2:19  
Ps 146:6  
\**nepesh* (5315)  
‣ Gen 2:7  
1:21  
Ps 104:25-28

And God saw that it was good. <sup>11</sup>Then God said, "Let the land sprout with vegetation—every sort of seed-bearing plant, and trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. These seeds will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came." And that is what happened. <sup>12</sup>The land produced vegetation—all sorts of seed-bearing plants, and trees with seed-bearing fruit. Their seeds produced plants and trees of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup>And evening passed and morning came, marking the third day.

*Day Four: Sun, Moon, Stars*

<sup>14</sup>Then God said, "Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons,

days, and years. <sup>15</sup>Let these lights in the sky shine down on the earth." And that is what happened. <sup>16</sup>God made two great lights—the larger one to govern the day, and the smaller one to govern the night. He also made the stars. <sup>17</sup>God set these lights in the sky to light the earth, <sup>18</sup>to govern the day and night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup>And evening passed and morning came, marking the fourth day.

*Day Five: Birds, Fish*

<sup>20</sup>Then God said, "Let the waters swarm with fish and other <sup>e</sup>life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind." <sup>21</sup>So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that scurries and

Formless	CHAOS	Empty
DAY 1 (1:3-5) Light, Dark	HEAVENS	DAY 4 (1:14-19) Sun, Moon, Stars
DAY 2 (1:6-8) Water, Sky	WATER & SKY	DAY 5 (1:20-23) Birds, Fish
DAY 3 (1:9-13) Sea, Land	EARTH	DAY 6 (1:24-31) Animals, Humans
Formed	COSMOS	Filled
	DAY 7 (2:2-3) Rest	

◀ **The Structure of the Creation Account** (1:1–2:3). God transformed chaos into the present cosmos. In the first three days, he transformed the formless void into the structured universe—the HEAVENS (outer space), the WATER and SKY, and the EARTH (cp. Exod 20:11; Ps 135:6). In the second three days, he populated each empty realm. The seventh day (2:1-3) stands apart: As God’s day of rest, it provides the weekly pattern for human activity (Exod 20:8-11; 31:12-17) and speaks of the rest that God promised to those who live by faith in him (see Heb 3:7–4:11).

two collections of water (cp. Job 37:18; Ezek 1:22). In the ancient Near East, the cosmos was understood as a three-tier system, with rain originating from the outermost tier (see 7:11-12 and note). **1:9-10** *Let the waters . . . flow together*: Other ancient cultures viewed the sea as a hostile force. Genesis shows God as further restraining chaos (see note on 1:2) by prescribing specific boundaries for the sea. The flood—an act of God’s judgment (6:7)—undid these boundaries and returned the earth to chaos (7:1-24). **1:14-31** On days 4–6, God filled the domains that had been formed during days 1–3 (1:3-13). **1:14** *Let them . . . mark the seasons, days, and years*: The movement of the heavenly bodies defined Israel’s liturgical calendar, whose roots in creation gave a sacred timing to Israel’s festivals and celebrations (see Exod 23:15; Lev 23:4).

(Hebrew *tehom*): Some scholars say this alludes to the Mesopotamian goddess Tiamat (representing chaos), but Genesis views *tehom* as inhospitable chaos, not as a deity or goddess that God engaged in cosmic battle. • *the Spirit of God*: God directly superintended the creation process.

**1:3-13** In the first three days, God formed the chaos into a habitable world.

**1:3** *Then God said*: Nothing in Gen 1 is created apart from God’s powerful word (cp. Ps 33:6, 9). • *“Let there be . . . ,” and there was*: God’s command enacted his will to create the world. God is not a part of creation or limited by it; he is the supreme ruler over everything (cp. Neh 9:6).

**1:4** *Light* is antithetical to chaotic *darkness* (1:2); the light is declared *good* but the darkness is not (cp. John 1:5). God is the source of this light (cp. 1:14-19). God *separated* the light, as he did water

(cp. 1:6-8), by his creative word. Light is associated with life and blessing (Job 38:19-20; Ps 19:1-6; 97:11; 104:19-20; Isa 60:19-20) and sets a boundary on the darkness that would destroy cosmic order. Darkness often typifies terror, death, and evil (see 15:12; Job 18:6, 18; Ps 88:12; Eph 5:11-12; 1 Jn 1:5).

**1:5** *God called* (or *named*): To name something is to exercise authority over it (see also 2:19-20). • *day*: The Hebrew *yom* can refer to daylight (1:5a), to a 24-hour period (1:5b), or to an unspecified time period (2:4b, “When,” literally *in the day*; cp. Exod 20:8-11). • *evening* . . . *morning*: The Hebrew day began at sundown, just as the first day began with darkness and brought the first morning light.

**1:6-8** The creation account describes the appearance of things from a human perspective. The *sky* is viewed as a shiny dome that is a buffer between

**1:16** In the surrounding pagan cultures, the *two great lights* were worshiped as deities, but in Genesis they serve God and humanity (see Ps 136:7-9; Jer 31:35). The sun and moon are not named; they are simply called *the larger one* and *the smaller one*. Not including their names may have reminded Israel that they were not gods. • *govern*: Cp. 1:26, 28; Ps 136:9. • *the stars*: The starry heavens testify to God’s creative power as they proclaim his glory (Ps 19:1; 148:3). They do not predict the future, as Israel’s neighbors believed (see Jer 10:2).

**1:21** Contrary to the pagan idea that the *great sea creatures* were co-eternal with God, Genesis states that *God created* them and is sovereign over them. The Hebrew word *tanninim* (“*creatures*”) elsewhere refers to crocodiles (Ezek 29:3), powerful monsters (Jer 51:34), or the sea creature, Leviathan (Isa 27:1; cp. Job 41:1-34).

swarms in the water, and every sort of bird—each producing offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup>Then God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply. Let the fish fill the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.”

<sup>23</sup>And evening passed and morning came, marking the fifth day.

*Day Six: Animals, Humankind*

<sup>24</sup>Then God said, “Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of the same kind—livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals.” And that is what happened. <sup>25</sup>God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup>Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

<sup>27</sup> So God <sup>f</sup>created human beings in his own image.

In the image of God he <sup>f</sup>created them;  
male and female he <sup>f</sup>created them.

<sup>28</sup>Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”  
<sup>29</sup>Then God said, “Look! I have given you every seed-bearing plant throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food. <sup>30</sup>And I have given every green plant as food for all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—everything that has life.” And that is what happened.

<sup>31</sup>Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!  
And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day.

*Sabbath Rest (2:1-3)*

**2** So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. <sup>2</sup>On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work. <sup>3</sup>And God <sup>g</sup>blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of <sup>h</sup>creation.

1:24  
Gen 2:19  
1:26  
Gen 5:1; 9:6  
Ps 8:6-8  
Acts 17:28-29

1:27  
\*Matt 19:4  
\*Mark 10:6  
\*bara' (1254)  
† Gen 2:3

1:29  
Gen 9:3  
Ps 104:13; 136:25

1:30  
Ps 104:14; 145:15

1:31  
Ps 104:24

2:1  
Deut 4:19; 17:3  
Ps 104:2  
Isa 45:12

2:2  
Exod 20:11; 31:17  
\*Heb 4:4

2:3  
Isa 58:13  
\*barak (1288)  
† Gen 12:2  
\*bara' (1254)  
† Gen 6:7

2:4  
Gen 1:3-31  
Job 38:4-11

**1:22** *God blessed them:* God’s blessing commissions and enables the fulfillment of what God has spoken (see “Blessing” at 48:8-20, p. 113). • *Let the fish . . . let the birds:* These directives define the blessing. The fish and birds are fertile by God’s command, not by pagan ritual, as some of Israel’s neighbors thought.

**1:26** *Let us make* is more personal than the remote “Let there be” (e.g., 1:3, 6). • The plural *us* has inspired several explanations: (1) the Trinity; (2) the plural to denote majesty; (3) a plural to show deliberation with the self; and (4) God speaking with his heavenly court of angels. The concept of the Trinity—one true God who exists eternally in three distinct persons—was revealed at a later stage in redemptive history, making it unlikely that the human author intended that here. Hebrew scholars generally dismiss the plural of majesty view because the grammar does not clearly support it (the plural of majesty has not been demonstrated to be communicated purely through a plural verb). The plural of self-deliberation also lacks evidence; the only clear examples refer to Israel as a corporate unity (e.g., 2 Sam 24:14). God’s speaking to the heavenly court, however, is

well-attested in the OT (see 3:22; 11:7; 1 Kgs 22:19-22; Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6; 38:7; Ps 89:5-6; Isa 6:1-8; Dan 10:12-13).

• *human beings:* Or *man*; Hebrew reads *’adam*. • *The descriptors in our image and like us* are virtually synonymous in Hebrew. Humans enjoy a unique relationship with God. • *They will reign:* Humans represent the Creator as his ambassadors, vice-regents, and administrators on earth.

**1:27** The first poetry of Genesis reflectively celebrates God’s climactic feat in creating humankind. • *human beings (Or the man;* Hebrew reads *ha-’adam*): This term is often used to denote humanity collectively (see 6:1, 5-7; 9:5-6). Though traditionally translated “man,” gender is not at issue here; both *male and female* are included.

**1:28** *God blessed them:* See note on 1:22; see also 17:16; 48:16; Deut 7:13. • *said:* God’s message to humankind is direct and intimate; we are stewards of his delegated authority. • *govern. . . . Reign:* As God’s vice-regents, humans are entrusted with the care and management of the world God created (see also 9:2; Ps 8:5-8).

**1:29-30** These verses highlight the extent (*throughout the earth*) and variety (*every seed-bearing plant . . .*

*all the fruit trees*) of God’s provision for humans, *animals*, and *birds*.

**1:31** The Creator declares his work *good* seven times in ch 1; following the creation of human beings, God declares it *all very good*.

**2:1-3** Humankind is the high point of God’s creative acts (1:26-31), while day 7 is the climax of the creation week. When God *rested* (or *ceased*), he endorsed all of creation—there was nothing more to do! This seven-day framework structured Israel’s week, with the *seventh day* as the precedent for their weekly Sabbath. The Sabbath was intended to celebrate God’s finished work; the seventh day would be set apart as *holy* and dedicated to the Creator, who also rested (see Exod 20:8-11; 31:12-17; cp. Matt 12:1-8; Rom 14:5-6; Col 2:16-17; Heb 4:1-11).

**2:3** The first six days of creation involved separation (light from darkness, day from night, water from dry land). The last act of creation separated what is ordinary from what is *holy*, thus laying the foundation for Israel’s worship. It also anticipated a coming age of rest (Heb 4:1-11; 12:2; 13:14). • The absence of the usual “morning and evening” reflects the Creator’s willingness to enter into unending fellowship with humankind.

2:5  
Gen 1:11  
2:7  
Gen 3:19  
Job 33:4  
Ps 103:14  
Ezek 37:5  
Zech 12:1  
John 20:22  
\*1 Cor 15:45  
*ʾnepesh* (5315)  
Deut 12:23

## 2. WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CREATION (2:4–4:26)

### *Superscription (2:4a)*

<sup>4</sup>This is the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth.

### *Creation of Man and Woman (2:4b-25)* *Creation of the Man*

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, <sup>5</sup>neither wild plants nor grains

were growing on the earth. For the LORD God had not yet sent rain to water the earth, and there were no people to cultivate the soil. <sup>6</sup>Instead, springs came up from the ground and watered all the land. <sup>7</sup>Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living <sup>i</sup>person.

## Human Sexuality (1:27-28)

When God created the first human beings in his own image, he created them as sexual beings, male and female (1:27). Through their sexuality, they were to fill and govern the world (1:28) and provide intimate companionship for one another in marriage (2:18-25). Male and female sexuality is central to what it means to be human.

Sexual intimacy united the first man and woman as one being, an effect that sexual intimacy continues to have. Since biblical sexuality is not just physical but has the total person in view, it validates sexual relations only as part of the partners' mutual commitment to each other's ultimate good. The Bible speaks of engaging in sexual intercourse as literally "knowing" another person intimately (see note on 4:1). Since creation, the purpose of sexuality has been to join people in an intimate union of marriage—a permanent and loving heterosexual commitment—that God blesses and calls "very good" (1:27-28, 31). The sexual relationship cements the marriage bond in an intimacy that continues even when reproduction is no longer possible.

Although sexuality was created before sin, it did not emerge unscathed from human rebellion. Sexuality is a powerful force that is easily corrupted if not carefully channeled (see Lev 18; 1 Thes 4:3-8). Sexual intimacy apart from marital commitment perverts the order that God intended for creation. Incest, for example, violates sexual boundaries (see Lev 18:7-14), collapses family structures (see 19:30-38), and fragments the community. Whereas perverted sexuality tears the community down (see 38:1-30; 39:7-9; Judg 19:1–20:48) and exalts the individual (see 2 Sam 13:11-14), biblical sexuality builds up the sexual partners and the community.

Our sexual identity has been damaged through our fall into sin (ch 3), but God has redeemed it through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (see 1 Cor 6:12-20; Eph 5:31-33). He restores sexual wholeness in those who trust his work in their lives by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:9-11, 15-20; 1 Thes 4:1-5). Those who commit their sexuality to Christ can testify to God's love for his people (Eph 5:25-33).

Gen 2:18-25  
Lev 18:1-30  
Deut 22:13-29  
Ruth 4:11-13  
2 Sam 11:2-27  
Ps 127:3-5  
Ecc 2:8-11  
Song 1–8  
Mal 2:15-16  
Matt 19:3-12  
1 Cor 6:12–7:40  
Eph 5:31-33  
1 Thes 4:3-8

**2:4–4:26** This account (see note on 2:4) of the heavens and the earth is not a second creation account; rather, it is a theological and historical expansion on 1:1–2:3. The focus is now on what the cosmos produced rather than on its creation. Special attention is given to the first man and woman. As the story progresses, it is colored by contrasts of good and evil, knowledge and ignorance, life and death, harmony and discord.

**2:4** *This is the account* (literally *These are the generations*): This or a similar phrase is repeated throughout Genesis, creating an internal outline for the book. In other occurrences, it introduces the genealogy or story of a key personality (5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 37:2). • Some have argued that the first half of 2:4 belongs with 1:1–2:3, but it is more likely the

introduction to the account that follows.

• **LORD God** (Hebrew *Yahweh Elohim*) is the second name used for God in the early chapters of Genesis. *Elohim* (1:1–2:3) describes the all-powerful creator God. *Yahweh Elohim* speaks of the eternal God who formed a lasting covenant with Israel (Exod 3:6, 13-15). Accordingly, 2:4-25 focuses on God as provider more than as creator. The three themes of sexuality, dominion, and food in ch 1 are now addressed in reverse order (food, 2:8-17; dominion, 2:18-20; sexuality, 2:21-25).

**2:5** *cultivate*: Work does not result from sin; it was part of the original structure of creation and is directly tied to human identity and purpose (1:28; 2:15).

**2:6** *springs* (Or *mist*, as traditionally rendered): The word refers to subterranean springs that rose to the surface of the ground.

**2:7** In 1:1–2:3, creation happens at a distance, by divine command ("Let there be . . . and that is what happened"). In this account, the creative act is much more intimate (see also 2:8-9, 21-22). • **from the dust of the ground**: In Hebrew, *'adamah* ("ground") forms a wordplay with *'adam* ("man"). The earth remains the definitive reference point for humans, who in death return to dust (3:17-19; 4:11; Job 4:19; 10:8-9; Isa 29:16). • **breathed . . . into the man's nostrils**: God's *breath* is not imparted to other animals; only humans are formed in God's image (1:27) and enjoy dialogue with their Creator (2:16-17; 3:8-13). They alone have spiritual awareness and moral conscience (see Job 32:8).

# INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW LIVING TRANSLATION

## *Translation Philosophy and Methodology*

English Bible translations tend to be governed by one of two general translation theories. The first theory has been called “formal-equivalence,” “literal,” or “word-for-word” translation. According to this theory, the translator attempts to render each word of the original language into English and seeks to preserve the original syntax and sentence structure as much as possible in translation. The second theory has been called “dynamic-equivalence,” “functional-equivalence,” or “thought-for-thought” translation. The goal of this translation theory is to produce in English the closest natural equivalent of the message expressed by the original-language text, both in meaning and in style.

Both of these translation theories have their strengths. A formal-equivalence translation preserves aspects of the original text—including ancient idioms, term consistency, and original-language syntax—that are valuable for scholars and professional study. It allows a reader to trace formal elements of the original-language text through the English translation. A dynamic-equivalence translation, on the other hand, focuses on translating the message of the original-language text. It ensures that the meaning of the text is readily apparent to the contemporary reader. This allows the message to come through with immediacy, without requiring the reader to struggle with foreign idioms and awkward syntax. It also facilitates serious study of the text’s message and clarity in both devotional and public reading.

The pure application of either of these translation philosophies would create translations at oppo-

site ends of the translation spectrum. But in reality, all translations contain a mixture of these two philosophies. A purely formal-equivalence translation would be unintelligible in English, and a purely dynamic-equivalence translation would risk being unfaithful to the original. That is why translations shaped by dynamic-equivalence theory are usually quite literal when the original text is relatively clear, and the translations shaped by formal-equivalence theory are sometimes quite dynamic when the original text is obscure.

The translators of the New Living Translation set out to render the message of the original texts of Scripture into clear, contemporary English. As they did so, they kept the concerns of both formal-equivalence and dynamic-equivalence in mind. On the one hand, they translated as simply and literally as possible when that approach yielded an accurate, clear, and natural English text. Many words and phrases were rendered literally and consistently into English, preserving essential literary and rhetorical devices, ancient metaphors, and word choices that give structure to the text and provide echoes of meaning from one passage to the next.

On the other hand, the translators rendered the message more dynamically when the literal rendering was hard to understand, was misleading, or yielded archaic or foreign wording. They clarified difficult metaphors and terms to aid in the reader’s understanding. The translators first struggled with the meaning of the words and phrases in the ancient context; then they rendered the message into clear, natural English. Their goal was to be both faithful to the ancient texts

and eminently readable. The result is a translation that is both exegetically accurate and idiomatically powerful.

## *Translation Process and Team*

To produce an accurate translation of the Bible into contemporary English, the translation team needed the skills necessary to enter into the thought patterns of the ancient authors and then to render their ideas, connotations, and effects into clear, contemporary English. To begin this process, qualified biblical scholars were needed to interpret the meaning of the original text and to check it against our base English translation. In order to guard against personal and theological biases, the scholars needed to represent a diverse group of evangelicals who would employ the best exegetical tools. Then to work alongside the scholars, skilled English stylists were needed to shape the text into clear, contemporary English.

With these concerns in mind, the Bible Translation Committee recruited teams of scholars that represented a broad spectrum of denominations, theological perspectives, and backgrounds within the worldwide evangelical community. (These scholars are listed at the end of this introduction.) Each book of the Bible was assigned to three different scholars with proven expertise in the book or group of books to be reviewed. Each of these scholars made a thorough review of a base translation and submitted suggested revisions to the appropriate Senior Translator. The Senior Translator then reviewed and summarized these suggestions and proposed a first-draft revision of the base text. This draft served as the basis for several additional phases of exegetical and

stylistic committee review. Then the Bible Translation Committee jointly reviewed and approved every verse of the final translation.

Throughout the translation and editing process, the Senior Translators and their scholar teams were given a chance to review the editing done by the team of stylists. This ensured that exegetical errors would not be introduced late in the process and that the entire Bible Translation Committee was happy with the final result. By choosing a team of qualified scholars and skilled stylists and by setting up a process that allowed their interaction throughout the process, the New Living Translation has been refined to preserve the essential formal elements of the original biblical texts, while also creating a clear, understandable English text.

The New Living Translation was first published in 1996. Shortly after its initial publication, the Bible Translation Committee began a process of further committee review and translation refinement. The purpose of this continued revision was to increase the level of precision without sacrificing the text's easy-to-understand quality. This second-edition text was completed in 2004, and an additional update with minor changes was subsequently introduced in 2007. This printing of the New Living Translation reflects the updated 2007 text.

*Written to Be Read Aloud*

It is evident in Scripture that the biblical documents were written to be read aloud, often in public worship (see Nehemiah 8; Luke 4:16-20; 1 Timothy 4:13; Revelation 1:3). It is still the case today that more people will hear the Bible read aloud in church than are likely to read it for themselves. Therefore, a new translation must communicate with clarity and power when it is read publicly. Clarity was a primary goal for the NLT translators, not only to facilitate private reading and understanding, but also to ensure that it would be excellent for public reading and make an immediate and powerful impact on any listener.

*The Texts behind the New Living Translation*

The Old Testament translators used the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew

Bible as represented in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977), with its extensive system of textual notes; this is an update of Rudolf Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* (Stuttgart, 1937). The translators also further compared the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint and other Greek manuscripts, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Syriac Peshitta, the Latin Vulgate, and any other versions or manuscripts that shed light on the meaning of difficult passages.

The New Testament translators used the two standard editions of the Greek New Testament: the *Greek New Testament*, published by the United Bible Societies (UBS, fourth revised edition, 1993), and *Novum Testamentum Graece*, edited by Nestle and Aland (NA, twenty-seventh edition, 1993). These two editions, which have the same text but differ in punctuation and textual notes, represent, for the most part, the best in modern textual scholarship. However, in cases where strong textual or other scholarly evidence supported the decision, the translators sometimes chose to differ from the UBS and NA Greek texts and followed variant readings found in other ancient witnesses. Significant textual variants of this sort are always noted in the textual notes of the New Living Translation.

*Translation Issues*

The translators have made a conscious effort to provide a text that can be easily understood by the typical reader of modern English. To this end, we sought to use only vocabulary and language structures in common use today. We avoided using language likely to become quickly dated or that reflects only a narrow subdialect of English, with the goal of making the New Living Translation as broadly useful and timeless as possible.

But our concern for readability goes beyond the concerns of vocabulary and sentence structure. We are also concerned about historical and cultural barriers to understanding the Bible, and we have sought to translate terms shrouded in history and culture in ways that can be immediately understood. To this end:

- We have converted ancient weights and measures (for

example, "ephah" [a unit of dry volume] or "cubit" [a unit of length]) to modern English (American) equivalents, since the ancient measures are not generally meaningful to today's readers. Then in the textual footnotes we offer the literal Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek measures, along with modern metric equivalents.

- Instead of translating ancient currency values literally, we have expressed them in common terms that communicate the message. For example, in the Old Testament, "ten shekels of silver" becomes "ten pieces of silver" to convey the intended message. In the New Testament, we have often translated the "denarius" as "the normal daily wage" to facilitate understanding. Then a footnote offers: "Greek a *denarius*, the payment for a full day's wage." In general, we give a clear English rendering and then state the literal Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek in a textual footnote.
- Since the names of Hebrew months are unknown to most contemporary readers, and since the Hebrew lunar calendar fluctuates from year to year in relation to the solar calendar used today, we have looked for clear ways to communicate the time of year the Hebrew months (such as Abib) refer to. When an expanded or interpretive rendering is given in the text, a textual note gives the literal rendering. Where it is possible to define a specific ancient date in terms of our modern calendar, we use modern dates in the text. A textual footnote then gives the literal Hebrew date and states the rationale for our rendering. For example, Ezra 6:15 pinpoints the date when the postexilic Temple was completed in Jerusalem: "the third day of the month Adar." This was during the sixth year of King Darius's reign (that is, 515 B.C.). We have translated that date as March 12, with a footnote giving the Hebrew and identifying the year as 515 B.C.
- Since ancient references to the time of day differ from our modern methods of denoting time, we have used renderings that are instantly understandable to the



modern reader. Accordingly, we have rendered specific times of day by using approximate equivalents in terms of our common “o’clock” system. On occasion, translations such as “at dawn the next morning” or “as the sun was setting” have been used when the biblical reference is more general.

- When the meaning of a proper name (or a wordplay inherent in a proper name) is relevant to the message of the text, its meaning is often illuminated with a textual footnote. For example, in Exodus 2:10 the text reads: “The princess named him Moses, for she explained, ‘I lifted him out of the water.’” The accompanying footnote reads: “*Moses* sounds like a Hebrew term that means ‘to lift out.’”

Sometimes, when the actual meaning of a name is clear, that meaning is included in parentheses within the text itself. For example, the text at Genesis 16:11 reads: “You are to name him Ishmael (*which means ‘God hears’*), for the LORD has heard your cry of distress.” Since the original hearers and readers would have instantly understood the meaning of the name “Ishmael,” we have provided modern readers with the same information so they can experience the text in a similar way.

- Many words and phrases carry a great deal of cultural meaning that was obvious to the original readers but needs explanation in our own culture. For example, the phrase “they beat their breasts” (Luke 23:48) in ancient times meant that people were very upset, often in mourning. In our translation we chose to translate this phrase dynamically for clarity: “They went home *in deep sorrow*.” Then we included a footnote with the literal Greek, which reads: “Greek *went home beating their breasts*.” In other similar cases, however, we have sometimes chosen to illuminate the existing literal expression to make it immediately understandable. For example, here we might have expanded the literal Greek phrase to read: “They went home beating their breasts *in sorrow*.” If we had done this,

we would not have included a textual footnote, since the literal Greek clearly appears in translation.

- Metaphorical language is sometimes difficult for contemporary readers to understand, so at times we have chosen to translate or illuminate the meaning of a metaphor. For example, the ancient poet writes, “Your neck is *like* the tower of David” (Song of Songs 4:4). We have rendered it “Your neck is *as beautiful as* the tower of David” to clarify the intended positive meaning of the simile. Another example comes in Ecclesiastes 12:3, which can be literally rendered: “Remember him . . . when the grinding women cease because they are few, and the women who look through the windows see dimly.” We have rendered it: “Remember him before your teeth—your few remaining servants—stop grinding; and before your eyes—the women looking through the windows—see dimly.” We clarified such metaphors only when we believed a typical reader might be confused by the literal text.
- When the content of the original language text is poetic in character, we have rendered it in English poetic form. We sought to break lines in ways that clarify and highlight the relationships between phrases of the text. Hebrew poetry often uses parallelism, a literary form where a second phrase (or in some instances a third or fourth) echoes the initial phrase in some way. In Hebrew parallelism, the subsequent parallel phrases continue, while also furthering and sharpening, the thought expressed in the initial line or phrase. Whenever possible, we sought to represent these parallel phrases in natural poetic English.
- The Greek term *hoi Ioudaioi* is literally translated “the Jews” in many English translations. In the Gospel of John, however, this term doesn’t always refer to the Jewish people generally. In some contexts, it refers more particularly to the Jewish religious leaders. We have attempted to capture the meaning in these different contexts by using terms such as “the people” (with a

footnote: Greek *the Jewish people*) or “the religious leaders,” where appropriate.

- One challenge we faced was how to translate accurately the ancient biblical text that was originally written in a context where male-oriented terms were used to refer to humanity generally. We needed to respect the nature of the ancient context while also trying to make the translation clear to a modern audience that tends to read male-oriented language as applying only to males. Often the original text, though using masculine nouns and pronouns, clearly intends that the message be applied to both men and women. A typical example is found in the New Testament letters, where the believers are called “brothers” (*adelphoi*). Yet it is clear from the content of these letters that they were addressed to all the believers—male and female. Thus, we have usually translated this Greek word as “brothers and sisters” in order to represent the historical situation more accurately.

We have also been sensitive to passages where the text applies generally to human beings or to the human condition. In some instances we have used plural pronouns (they, them) in place of the masculine singular (he, him). For example, a traditional rendering of Proverbs 22:6 is: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” We have rendered it: “Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it.” At times, we have also replaced third person pronouns with the second person to ensure clarity. A traditional rendering of Proverbs 26:27 is: “He who digs a pit will fall into it, and he who rolls a stone, it will come back on him.” We have rendered it: “If you set a trap for others, you will get caught in it yourself. If you roll a boulder down on others, it will crush you instead.”

We should emphasize, however, that all masculine nouns and pronouns used to represent God (for example, “Father”) have been maintained without

exception. All decisions of this kind have been driven by the concern to reflect accurately the intended meaning of the original texts of Scripture.

*Lexical Consistency in Terminology*

For the sake of clarity, we have translated certain original-language terms consistently, especially within synoptic passages and for commonly repeated rhetorical phrases, and within certain word categories such as divine names and non-theological technical terminology (e.g., liturgical, legal, cultural, zoological, and botanical terms). For theological terms, we have allowed a greater semantic range of acceptable English words or phrases for a single Hebrew or Greek word. We have avoided some theological terms that are not readily understood by many modern readers. For example, we avoided using words such as “justification” and “sanctification,” which are carryovers from Latin translations. In place of these words, we have provided renderings such as “made right with God” and “made holy.”

*The Spelling of Proper Names*

Many individuals in the Bible, especially the Old Testament, are known by more than one name (e.g., Uzziah/Azariah). For the sake of clarity, we have tried to use a single spelling for any one individual, footnoting the literal spelling whenever we differ from it. This is especially helpful in delineating the kings of Israel and Judah. King Joash/Jehoash of Israel has been consistently called Jehoash, while King Joash/Jehoash of Judah is called Joash. A similar distinction has been used to distinguish between Joram/Jehoram of Israel and Joram/Jehoram of Judah. All such decisions were made with the goal of clarifying the text for the reader. When the ancient biblical writers clearly had a theological purpose in their choice of a variant name (e.g., Esh-baal/Ishbosheth), the different names have been maintained with an explanatory footnote.

For the names Jacob and Israel, which are used interchangeably for both the individual patriarch and the nation, we generally render it

“Israel” when it refers to the nation and “Jacob” when it refers to the individual. When our rendering of the name differs from the underlying Hebrew text, we provide a textual footnote, which includes this explanation: “The names ‘Jacob’ and ‘Israel’ are often interchanged throughout the Old Testament, referring sometimes to the individual patriarch and sometimes to the nation.”

*The Rendering of Divine Names*

All appearances of *’el*, *’elohim*, or *’eloah* have been translated “God,” except where the context demands the translation “god(s).” We have generally rendered the tetragrammaton (YHWH) consistently as “the LORD,” utilizing a form with small capitals that is common among English translations. This will distinguish it from the name *’adonai*, which we render “Lord.” When *’adonai* and YHWH appear together, we have rendered it “Sovereign LORD.” This also distinguishes *’adonai* YHWH from cases where YHWH appears with *’elohim*, which is rendered “LORD God.” When YH (the short form of YHWH) and YHWH appear together, we have rendered it “LORD GOD.” When YHWH appears with the term *tseba’oth*, we have rendered it “LORD of Heaven’s Armies” to translate the meaning of the name. In a few cases, we have utilized the transliteration, *Yahweh*, when the personal character of the name is being invoked in contrast to another divine name or the name of some other god (for example, see Exodus 3:15; 6:2-3).

In the New Testament, the Greek word *christos* has been translated as “Messiah” when the context assumes a Jewish audience. When a Gentile audience can be assumed, *christos* has been translated as “Christ.” The Greek word *kurios* is consistently translated “Lord,” except that it is translated “LORD” wherever the New Testament text explicitly quotes from the Old Testament, and the text there has it in small capitals.

*Textual Footnotes*

The New Living Translation provides several kinds of textual footnotes, all included within the study notes in this edition:

- When for the sake of clarity the NLT renders a difficult or potentially confusing phrase dynamically, we generally give the literal rendering in a textual footnote. This allows the reader to see the literal source of our dynamic rendering and how our translation relates to other more literal translations. These notes are prefaced with “literally.” For example, in Acts 2:42 we translated the literal “breaking of bread” (from the Greek) as “the Lord’s Supper” to clarify that this verse refers to the ceremonial practice of the church rather than just an ordinary meal. Then we attached a footnote to “the Lord’s Supper,” which reads: “Literally *the breaking of bread*.”
- Textual footnotes are also used to show alternative renderings, prefaced with the word “Or.” These normally occur for passages where an aspect of the meaning is debated. On occasion, we also provide notes on words or phrases that represent a departure from long-standing tradition. These notes are prefaced with “Traditionally rendered.” For example, the footnote to the translation “serious skin disease” at Leviticus 13:2 says: “Traditionally rendered *leprosy*. The Hebrew word used throughout this passage is used to describe various skin diseases.”
- When our translators follow a textual variant that differs significantly from our standard Hebrew or Greek texts (listed earlier), we document that difference with a footnote. We also footnote cases when the NLT excludes a passage that is included in the Greek text known as the *Textus Receptus* (and familiar to readers through its translation in the King James Version). In such cases, we offer a translation of the excluded text in a footnote, even though it is generally recognized as a later addition to the Greek text and not part of the original Greek New Testament.
- All Old Testament passages that are quoted in the New Testament are identified by a textual footnote at the New Testament location. When the New Testament clearly quotes from the Greek translation of the Old Testament,

and when it differs significantly in wording from the Hebrew text, we also place a textual footnote at the Old Testament location.

This note includes a rendering of the Greek version, along with a cross-reference to the New Testament passage(s) where it is cited (for example, see notes on Proverbs 3:12; Psalms 8:2; 53:3).

- Some textual footnotes provide cultural and historical information on places, things, and people in the Bible that are probably obscure to modern readers. Such notes should aid the reader in understanding the message of the text. For example, in Acts 12:1, “King Herod” is named in this translation as “King Herod Agrippa” and is identified in a footnote as being “the nephew of Herod Antipas and a grandson of Herod the Great.”
- When the meaning of a proper name (or a wordplay inherent in a proper name) is relevant to the meaning of the text, it is either illuminated with a textual footnote or included within parentheses in the text itself. For example, the footnote concerning the name “Eve” at Genesis

3:20 reads: “*Eve* sounds like a Hebrew term that means ‘to give life.’” This wordplay in the Hebrew illuminates the meaning of the text, which goes on to say that Eve “would be the mother of all who live.”

*Cross-References*

There are a number of different cross-referencing tools that appear in New Living Translation Bibles, and they offer different levels of help in this regard. All straight-text Bibles include the standard set of textual footnotes that include cross-references connecting New Testament texts to their related Old Testament sources. (See more on this above.)

Many NLT Bibles include an additional short cross-reference system that sets key cross-references at the end of paragraphs and then marks the associated verses with a cross symbol. This space-efficient system, while not being obtrusive, offers many important key connections between passages. Larger study editions include a full-column cross-reference system. This system allows space for a more comprehensive listing of cross-references.

AS WE SUBMIT this translation for publication, we recognize that any translation of the Scriptures is subject to limitations and imperfections. Anyone who has attempted to communicate the richness of God’s Word into another language will realize it is impossible to make a perfect translation. Recognizing these limitations, we sought God’s guidance and wisdom throughout this project. Now we pray that he will accept our efforts and use this translation for the benefit of the church and of all people.

We pray that the New Living Translation will overcome some of the barriers of history, culture, and language that have kept people from reading and understanding God’s Word. We hope that readers unfamiliar with the Bible will find the words clear and easy to understand and that readers well versed in the Scriptures will gain a fresh perspective. We pray that readers will gain insight and wisdom for living, but most of all that they will meet the God of the Bible and be forever changed by knowing him.

THE BIBLE TRANSLATION COMMITTEE, October 2007

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in the creation of this study Bible,  
and most of all to the Lord of heaven and earth,  
who gave us his word and Spirit so generously.*