

CHIASTIC STRUCTURE OF GENESIS 1-EXODUS 19

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A **PRIMEVAL HISTORY: Yahweh's power in Creation and the Flood (Genesis 1-11)**

- Yahweh's mighty power over the sea (*yam*) in Creation and Flood stories
- God uses wind (*rûah*) over waters to begin Creation and to dry the land from Flood
- God creates "dry land" (*yabbāšâ*; *ybš*) in the midst of the sea in Creation, Flood stories
- God drowns wicked and saves chosen from water in Flood story
- God provides food for his people in the Garden and during and after the Flood
- Creation of Sabbath (Gen 2:1-3); (*šābat*, "rest"; *qdš*, "holy"; *yôm šibî`î*, "seventh day")

B **ABRAHAM: Yahweh promises numerous descendants, future exodus (Gen 12:1-21:7)**

- Abraham in Egypt, because of famine; Sarah wrongfully retained by Pharaoh
- God sends great plagues on Pharaoh's house; Pharaoh lets her go; leave enriched
- Prediction of 400-year sojourn in foreign land, enslavement, punishment of that nation, and exodus "with great possessions" (Gen 15:13-14)
- Promise that Abraham's descendants will be numerous (12:2; 13:16; 15:5)
- Circumcision of Abraham and sons (Genesis 17)
- God punishes Sodom and Gomorrah by natural disasters, sparing righteous

C **ISAAC: Strife between brothers; triumph of younger (Gen 21:8-28:4)**

- Strife between Ishmael/Isaac; Esau/Jacob; younger chosen by God
- Strife ends with expulsion of Ishmael, Jacob
- Younger son (Isaac; Jacob) gets blessing, birthright, unexpectedly
- Elder son, Esau, marries Canaanite women
- First use of cave of Machpelah: Abraham buys it, buries Sarah in it

D. CENTER: **JACOB** and birth of 12 tribes of Israel (Gen 28:5-37:1)

C' **JOSEPH: Strife between brothers; triumph of younger (Gen 37:2-50:26)**

- Strife between Joseph and older brothers; Joseph chosen by God
- Strife ends with expulsion of young brother, Joseph
- Younger son (Joseph) gets blessing, birthright, unexpectedly
- Elder son, Judah, marries Canaanite woman
- Final use of cave of Machpelah: Joseph buries Jacob in it

B' **EXODUS: Yahweh increases Israel, delivers them from Egypt (Exod 1:1-13:16)**

- Israel in Egypt, because of famine, is wrongfully retained by Pharaoh
- God sends great plagues on Egypt; Pharaoh lets them go; leave enriched
- 400 year sojourn; enslavement, punishment of Egypt; exodus, enrichment
- Israel becomes numerous; population grows from 70 to 600,000 men
- Circumcision of Moses and son [?] (Exodus 4)
- God punishes Egypt by natural disasters, sparing his people

A' **WILDERNESS JOURNEY: Yahweh's power in the desert (Exod 13:17-19:2)**

- Yahweh demonstrates his mighty power over the sea (*yam*) in the Suph Sea crossing
- God uses wind (*rûah*) over waters to dry the Suph Sea so Israel can cross
- God creates "dry land" (*yabbāšâ*; *ybš*) in the midst of the Suph Sea
- God drowns Egyptians and saves Israelites from water in the Suph Sea story
- God provides food for his people in the wilderness
- First use of Sabbath (Exodus 16); (*šābat*, "rest"; *qdš*, "holy"; *yôm šibî`î*, "seventh day")

PARALLEL STRUCTURE OF GENESIS 1-11

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- 1 **The Creation: God creates the world and humanity**; a beginning (1:1-2:3)
 - Dry land appears out of the watery chaos
 - Animals: “every living thing,” “birds,” “every animal that creeps (*rm*_) on the ground”; “male and female” (*zākār ûneqēbâ*), “after their kind” (*lemîn*)
 - Divine blessing on animals: “. . . be fruitful and multiply upon the earth”
 - Yahweh blesses the first people: “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth”
 - Instructions regarding food that man may eat (plants)

- 2 **Mankind's degeneration: Sin and scattering of first people** (Adam and Eve; Cain); non-chosen line of Adam through Cain (2:4-4:26)
 - Stories about humanity’s sins
 - God deliberates over man’s sin in 1st person plural (3:22)
 - Punishment by banishing, scattering sinful man

- 3 **Ten generations**, from Adam to Noah (5:1-6:8)

- 1’ **The Flood: God destroys the world and humanity**; a new beginning (6:9-9:29)
 - Dry land appears out of the watery chaos
 - Animals: “every living thing,” “birds,” “every animal that creeps (*rmš*) on the ground”; “male and female” (*zākār ûneqēbâ*), “after their kind” (*lemîn*)
 - Divine blessing on animals: “. . . be fruitful and multiply upon the earth”
 - Yahweh blesses the new first people: “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth”
 - Instructions regarding food that man may eat (now they may eat animals)

- 2’ **Mankind's degeneration: Sin and scattering of new first people** (Noah’s descendants); non-chosen lines of Noah’s sons (10:1-11:9)
 - Story about humanity’s sin
 - God deliberates over man’s sin in 1st person plural (11:7)
 - Punishment by banishing, scattering sinful man

- 3’ **Ten generations**, from Shem to Abraham (11:10-26)

- 4’ **CONCLUSION: Abraham** (11:27-32)

CHIASTIC STRUCTURE OF THE ABRAHAM STORY (GENESIS 12:1-21:7)

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- 1 **Introduction:** Journey to Canaan and the promise of descendants (12:1-9)
- 2 **Abram lies about Sarah** in Egypt; God protects her in foreign king's court (12:10-20)
- 3 **Lot** settles in *Sodom* (and Abram settles in Hebron) (chap 13)
- 4 **Abram intercedes for Lot and Sodom**, militarily (chap 14)
- 5 **Promise** of a son: from Abram himself (chap 15)
- 6 **Ishmael's birth**; promise to him (chap 16)
- 7 **CENTER: YAHWEH'S COVENANT**
Abram and Sarai's names changed; circumcision instituted;
promise of a son reiterated (17:1-21)
- 6' **Ishmael and Abraham circumcised** (promise to Ishmael) (17:22-27; cf. 8, 20)
- 5' **Promise** of a son: from Sarah herself (18:1-15)
- 4' **Abraham intercedes for Sodom and Lot**, in prayer (18:16-33)
- 3' **Lot** flees *Sodom*, which God destroys; settles in Moab (chap 19)
- 2' **Abraham lies about Sarah** in Gerar; God protects her in foreign king's court (chap 20)
- 1' **Conclusion: Birth of Isaac** (and tension resolved) (21:1-7)

CHIASTIC STRUCTURE OF THE JACOB STORY (GENESIS 28:1-37:1)

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- 1 **Jacob's exile begins:** Jacob leaves for Paddan Aram, sent off by father Isaac (28:5)
- 2 **Esau's family** (28:6-9)
- 3 **Stop at Bethel;** God appears to Jacob; his promise to Jacob (28:10-22)
 - *Sets up memorial stone* to commemorate God's appearance
 - Names the place "El-Bethel"—"God of the house of God"
- 4 **Departure from Canaan and arrival at Paddan-aram;** Laban's treachery with marriage agreement (29:1-30)
 - Deceitful reassurance: "You are my bone and my flesh!"
 - Jacob "loves" (*'hb*) Rachel; willing to pay any price
- 5 **Jacob's family becomes large;** tension between elder and younger wife finally resolved (29:31-30:24)
- 6 **Jacob's scheming,** involving positioning of flocks and "angel of God"; use of his name "Jacob" (30:25-43)
 - Result: gains many flocks
- 7 **TURNING POINT: Yahweh enables Jacob to escape** and departs for home (chap 31)
- 6' **Jacob's scheming,** positioning of flocks and wrestling with divine being, who changes Jacob's name; "angels of God" (32:1) (chap 32)
 - Result: loses many flocks
- 5' **Jacob introduces his large family** to Esau; tension between him (younger) and Esau (elder) finally resolved (33:1-17)
- 4' **Arrival back in Canaan, from Paddan-aram;** sons' treachery in marriage agreement at Shechem (33:18-34:31)
 - Deceitful reassurance: "We . . . will be one people!"
 - Shechem "loves" (*'hb*) Dinah; willing to pay any price
- 3' **Stop at Bethel;** God appears to Jacob; he kept his promise! (chap 35)
 - *Sets up memorial stone* to commemorate God's appearance
 - Names the place "El-Bethel"—"God of the house of God"
- 2' **Esau's family** (chap 36)
- 1' **Jacob's exile ends:** Jacob settles "where his father had lived, in . . . Canaan" (37:1)

PAIRING IN JOSEPH STORY (GENESIS 37-50)

- 1 **Trouble between Joseph and his brothers, I:** they hate him (37:2-11)
1' **Trouble between Joseph and his brothers, II:** they dispose of him (37:12-36)
- 2 **Sexual temptation story, I:** Tamar successfully entices Judah to have sex with her; she keeps his ring and staff to produce as condemning evidence later (chap 38)
2' **Sexual temptation story, II:** Potiphar's wife unsuccessfully tries to seduce Joseph; she keeps his cloak to produce as condemning evidence later (chap 39)
- 3 **Joseph interprets two dreams, I:** dreams of two prison mates (chap 40)
3' **Joseph interprets two dreams, II:** dreams of Pharaoh (chap 41)
- 4 **Brothers come to Egypt for food, I:** they bow to Joseph; Joseph fills sacks with grain, money; Reuben offers his sons as surety for Benjamin (chap 42)
4' **Brothers come to Egypt for food, II:** they bow to Joseph; Joseph fills sacks with grain, money; Judah offers himself as surety for Benjamin (43:1-44:3)
- 5 **Joseph has his family brought to him, I:** including all his brothers; weeping; joyful reunion (44:4-45:15)
5' **Joseph has his family brought to him, II:** including all his brothers, their families and his father; weeping; joyful reunion (45:16-47:12)
- 6 **Prospering in Egypt, I:** Joseph prospers in his rule over all Egypt; Egyptians are impoverished and enslaved to him; Joseph gives Egyptians provisions (47:13-26)
6' **Prospering in Egypt, II:** Joseph's family prospers and flourishes (cf. 47:27); Jacob's blessings upon sons (47:27-49:32)
- 7 **Death of patriarch, I:** Jacob dies (49:33-50:14)
7' **Death of patriarch, II:** Joseph dies (50:15-26)

WEAKNESSES AND FAILURES OF THE PATRIARCHS

1. Abraham married his paternal half-sister—strictly forbidden later in Leviticus 18:9, 11; Deuteronomy 27:22 (“Cursed is he who . . .”).
2. Abraham and Sarah were old, and Sarah was barren.
3. Abraham’s deceit and cowardice when lying about Sarah (in Egypt; at Gerar).
4. Isaac’s deceit and cowardice when lying about Rebecca.
5. Rebecca was barren (25:21).
6. Jacob married two sisters simultaneously; forbidden later in Leviticus 18:18.
7. Jacob’s deceitfulness and shameful behavior with Esau and Isaac.
8. Deceitfulness of Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah.
9. Rachel and Leah were barren.
10. Shameful behavior of Judah, involving incest and sexual promiscuity (Gen 38).
11. Violence and deceitfulness of Jacob's sons against Joseph (Gen 37).
12. Reuben's sexual promiscuity with Jacob's concubine (forbidden in Lev 18).
13. Violent and deceitful behavior of Levi and Simeon (Gen 34).
14. Jacob, Judah switched position of firstborn; forbidden later in Deuteronomy 21:15.

CHIASTIC ARRANGEMENT OF THE EXODUS STORY

EXODUS 1:1-13:16

1. **Enslavement and attempted decimation of Israelites in Egypt; Pharaoh's plot to kill Israelite male babies, etc., to control population; new king "arose" (*wayyāqom*) (chap 1)**
 - Small total number of Israelites who came down to Egypt: 70 people
2. **Moses, an Israelite firstborn son, escapes death from Pharaoh, Moses grows up (*gdl*) as a son in Pharaoh's house (2:1-10)**
3. **Egyptian strikes an Israelite; Moses strikes down Egyptian (2:11-22)**
4. **Call of Moses: standing on holy ground (3:1-4:17); distinction between holy and common: ground (*'adāmā*) Moses stands on (*'md 'al*) is holy**
 - References to sign (*'ôt*) (3:12), Israel's three-day journey (3:18)
5. **Moses returns to Egypt: "bridegroom of blood" (4:18-31)**
6. **Brief encounter with Pharaoh; Moses, Aaron spurned (5:1-5)**
7. **CENTER: Commissioning of Moses and Aaron; promise to deliver Israel from Egypt with mighty hand (*yad*) and "mighty acts of judgment"; people doubt Moses (5:6-6:13)**
- 7'. **CENTER: Commissioning of Moses and Aaron; promise to deliver Israel from Egypt by his hand (*yad*) and "mighty acts of judgment"; Moses' self-doubts (6:14-7:7)**
- 6'. **Brief encounter with Pharaoh; Moses, Aaron spurned (7:8-13)**
- 5'. **First cycle of plagues: Nile turned to blood (7:14-8:19)**
- 4'. **Second cycle of plagues: Yahweh distinguishes between his holy people and Egyptians; afflicts one, not other! (8:20-9:12); begins with God distinguishing between Egyptians and Israelites (cf. flies, plague on livestock), not afflicting land "on which you stand" (*'md 'al*), only land (*'adāmā*) of the Egyptians (8:21-23)**
 - References to sign (*'ôt*) (8:23), Israel's three-day journey, which is mentioned only here among plagues (8:27)
- 3'. **Third cycle of plagues: Egyptians are struck down! (9:13-10:29)**
 - Cycle begins with God warning that he has not yet "struck" (*nkh*) Egyptians themselves, but now he will "strike" (*nkh*) them (9:14-15); hail strikes down (*nkh*) Egyptians, flocks, crops (9:25-33)
- 2'. **Yahweh will kill Egypt's firstborn males; Moses, who has become great (*gdl*) in Egypt, announces that Yahweh will kill all firstborn Egyptian sons, including Pharaoh's; only Israelite firstborn will escape being killed (chap 11)**
- 1'. **Freedom of Israelites from Egyptian slavery and increased population; Yahweh decimates Egyptian population; Yahweh kills Egyptian firstborn males; Pharaoh "arises" (*qûm*) to mourn decimation of Egyptian people (12:1-13:16)**
 - Large total number of Israelites leaving Egypt: 600,000 men

SOME NOTES ON THE EXODUS STORY

A. Plagues

1. Literary Cycles

Three cycles of three plagues, plus the final plague.

- a. Public warning (## 1, 4, 7)
- b. Private warning (## 2, 5, 8)
- c. No warning (## 3, 6, 9)

2. Progression

- a. Nile, Egypt's very life (## 1, 2: made unusable (blood); too much life (frogs; cf. Hequet)
- b. Plagues of irritating insects (## 3, 4: gnats, flies)
- c. Illnesses and diseases on animal, humans (## 5, 6: diseases on animals, boils on animals, humans)
- d. Destruction of crops (## 7, 8: locusts, hail)
- e. Sun! (Re/Amon) (# 9)
- f. Life and death (#10)

3. Purpose

- a. To display Yahweh's supremacy over all earthly powers and false gods
- b. To display Yahweh's patience (cf. not one, but a series of de-creative acts [cf. the Great Flood], which increase in intensity and scope (cf. Amos 5; Rev 8-9)
- c. To harden Pharaoh's heart (i.e., his resolve; heart = mind)
- d. To ultimately set the Israelites free from Egyptian bondage.

B. Memorialization

Institution of three perpetual reminders of God's rescue of Israel from slavery in Egypt:

1. New calendar (12:2)
2. Yearly Passover observance (12:21-27, 42)
3. Redemption of 1st born (13:11-16)

C. Themes

1. Israel's helplessness in Egyptian slavery
2. Yahweh's protection and blessing during the Sojourn (chap 1)
3. Yahweh's initiative in the rescue from beginning to end
4. Yahweh's power over Egypt and all other powers