

Themes in Genesis (from Harris text and Fox, Everett: *The First Five Books of Moses*):

- Origins
- Order/ Meaning in History
- Chosen Figure / Race who is tested
- Sibling Conflict
- Covenant
- Universal Blessing
- Sin and Punishment
- Sibling Conflict/ Younger is Victor
- Delayed Fulfillment

Structures in Genesis (from Fox, above, who often uses spelling closer to original Hebrew)

1.

Chosen Figure (Noah)
Sibling Conflict with sympathy for youngest (Cain/Abel – Seth)
Family Continuity Threatened (Abel murdered)
Ends with Death (Haran, Terah, Sarah barren)
 Humanity Threatened (Flood)
 Ends Away from Land of Israel (“In Haran”)

2.

Chosen Figure (Abraham)
Sibling Conflict with sympathy for youngest (Ishmael/Isaac)
Family Continuity Threatened (Sarah barren; Isaac almost sacrificed)
Ends with Death (Sarah, Abraham)
 Wife Rivalry (Hagar-Sarah)
 Wife/ sister story (Chs. 12 “J” and 20 “E”) Barren wife (Sarah)
 Ends with Genealogy of Noncovenant Line (Ishmael)

3.

Chosen Figure (Jacob)
Sibling Conflict with sympathy for youngest (Jacob/ Esau)
Family Continuity Threatened (Jacob almost killed)
Ends with Death (Deborah, Rachel, Isaac)
 Wife Rivalry (Rachel/ Lea)
 Wife/ sister story “J” (E believes Isaac is dead?) (Ch. 26)
 Barren wife (Rachel)
 Ends with Genealogy of Noncovenant Line (Esau)

4.

Chosen Figure (Joseph)
Sibling Conflict with sympathy for youngest (Brothers/ Joseph)
Family Continuity Threatened (Juda’s sons die, Joseph almost killed; family almost dies in famine)
Ends with Death (Jacob, Joseph)
 Humanity Threatened (Famine)
 Ends Away from Land of Israel (“In Egypt”)

Theophanies

- “J” anthropomorphic portrayals of God (Sarah, Hagar, Lot “J”, Jacob wrestling at Peni-El “E”, Jacob at Beer-sheba (Ladder inserted by “E”))
- “P” mysterious portrayals of God

Etiologies

- Countries and tribes (Brothers=tribes; Ammonites, Moabites through incest story (“J”))
- Place names
- Practices

Covenants

- Practice of sacrifice or “cutting” the covenant
- God appears among entrails 15 “J” (with redactor insertion)
- circumcision 17 “P”

Three figures; three authors

- Primeval origin stories: P’s creation is orderly, impersonal, and full of sacred numbers; emphasizes the origin of temple practices; urges separation; stresses geneology
- Abraham
 - origins in Haran—pagan (Joshua) or already right-thinking
 - Priest Melchizedek at Salem—pre-existing faith
 - Isaac (“E”) in the context of Child sacrifice (sacrifice averted in Redactor RJE’s version and not in “E”)
 - Sarah and God, Hagar and God (“J” 16:8-14)
- Jacob
 - trickster (Jacob’s blessing “J”, Rachel and the household gods “E”)
 - return to Haran—significance? (Laban speaks a different language)
 - Brother turned providential
 - Jacob and God theophanies
 - Rachel and Leah
 - Dinah “J”
- Joseph and brothers
 - Sojourn in Egypt
 - Pharaoh’s dreams “E”
 - Jacob’s final blessing in verse “J”

J, E, and P in Exodus

Unknown (deuteronomistic?) author: ten commandments (part 1)

- J: In Yahwist version, Moses climbs Mt Sinai; No Aaron; Miriam is unrelated priestess (sister is mentioned but not identified); ancient "Song of Miriam" (Exodus 15), 2nd version of commandments (34:14)
- E: In Elohist version, Moses climbs Mt. Horeb; Aaron and Miriam are siblings but no relation to Moses; stories of child sacrifice, special revelation of God's name (3:9-18); story of plagues (alternates with P); first story of tablets
- P: In Priestly version, Aaron and Moses are siblings; emphasis on covenant and God's constancy; story of plagues (alternates with E); long, dreadful lists of blueprints for the tabernacle
- R: Redactor makes connections and harmonizes when necessary