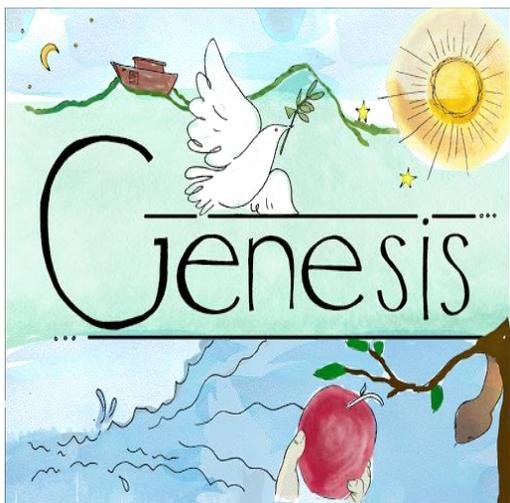


WOOLHAMPTON PARISH

'THE GOD WHO SPEAKS' – YEAR OF THE BIBLE

BRIEF GUIDE TO BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

GENESIS



In the *Hebrew* Bible, this book is named after the first words *breshit*,

“in the beginning”.

“Genesis” comes from the Greek for “origin”.

The first eleven chapters of the book contain stories that **explain the world as it is. It is the creation of an all-powerful God, who has fashioned human beings in his own image to master and care for the world.**

The stories explain how human failure and its dreadful consequences come to be in the world, though the *loving God is always ready to forgive*. The imagery is very similar to that of Babylonian legends of origin, but the picture of God and the position of human beings in the world is very different. Like

many myths of origin, these stories are historical in form; however, crucially they guide the reader to an understanding of the present state of affairs.

There follows a folk history, the story of the origin of the family of nomads who would later become the nucleus of the Israelites, bringing God’s blessing to all nations. It is **an epic story of three heroes, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob**, comprised of family adventures, heroic and unheroic episodes and incidents explaining names and customs. Through it all runs the thread of the promise to Abraham of numberless descendants and a land that they would possess as their own. Finally comes the epic story **of Joseph, the hero who brought his family down to Egypt**, where they would settle for hundreds of years.

The stories of Abraham and his family were handed down from generation to generation before finally being recorded, perhaps as late as fourth century BC. Three sets of characteristics can be discerned. Two are easily distinguished; the writer known as the Yahwist uses the name “Yahweh” or “the LORD” for God and presents a warm and affectionate image of God. The Elohist uses the common word “Elohim” for God and shows a God more distant and concerned with morality. The priestly author supplements these two with stories about the rituals and religious customs of the Jews.

(from *The Bible – A Reader’s Guide*, by Henry Wansborough)

Now Read chapter 1 or chapter 12

For previous leaflets visit www.douaiparish.org.uk, or contact the Parish Office.