

Themes of Genesis and Its Structure

brothers rightful heirs primogeniture exile
bracha versus *bechora*

deception: Adam, Eve, serpent, God; God, Abraham, Isaac in *Akedah*;
Jacob and Rebecca versus Esau and Isaac; Laban versus Jacob; Joseph and his brothers;
life-propagation-survival-offspring-fertility-continuity (*toldot*: generations, begettings,
birthings)

God as the subverter of the given order. Jews as subverters of the given order. Example:
overturning of the firstborn rights, basic theme in Genesis, replayed by every family.

Seven themes of Genesis are discussed by Fox in his introduction: (i) origins, (ii) order/meaning in history, (iii) blessing, (iv) covenant, (v) God punishes evil-doing, (vi) sibling conflict, with the younger usually emerging the victor, (vii) testing. Superseding these important themes is the dominant one of continuity, represented by the unifying word in Genesis, *toldot* (“begetting”). The word appears eleven times, often accompanied by long genealogical lists. Ironically, however, the undercurrent in Genesis points not to life and its continuation, but rather to its threatened extinction. The stress on continuity and discontinuity has one purpose: to make clear that God is in control of history. The result is a book which abounds in tension. By the end of the book many of the tensions have been resolved, except for God's promise of the land of Canaan, a land inhabited by someone else and in which the Children of Israel own only a burial site.

Structure of Genesis.	Primeval history	Ch. 1–11
	Abraham	12:1–25:18
	Akedah	Ch. 22
	Jacob	25:19–36:43
	Joseph	Ch. 37–50

Structure of Jacob cycle.	oracle and birth	25:19–25:26
	Jacob get <i>bechora</i>	25:27–25:34
	Isaac in Gerar	Ch. 26
	Jacob gets <i>bracha</i>	27:1–28:9
	dream in Bet-El	28:10–28:22
	Jacob and Laban	Ch. 29–31
	Jacob wrestles with angel	Ch. 32
	Jacob and Esau	Ch. 33
	Dinah	Ch. 34
	Jacob home, Isaac dies	Ch. 35
	Begettings of Esau	Ch. 36