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The Generations of the [Heavens](heaven.html) and of the Earth

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## Introduction

Sefer Bereshit, the Book of Genesis, is a foundational book which forms the pattern of history. Nowhere is this clearer than in the Toldot, the genealogies. In this [study](study.html), I would like to examine the structure of Bereshit and the Messianic significance of the Toldot.

Most folks skip quickly over the Toldot found in Torah. They say that these Toldot are boring and devoid of meaning. I believe that [HaShem](hashem.html) did this intentionally to hide the truth from the foolish so that He could make it available to the wise.

In Sefer Bereshit, the Toldot form the framework of this book. Before every major person, and their contribution, we have a Toldot, a genealogy. As we shall see, these Toldot form the framework that will reveal the [secrets](sod.html) of this book.

Let’s start by examining what this word, Toldot, means. Strong’s defines it as:

8435 towledah, to-led-aw'; or toledah, to-led-aw'; from 3205; (plur. only) descent, i.e. family; ([fig](bethphag.html).) history:-[birth](birth.html), generations.

----------------- Dictionary Trace ---------------

3205 yalad, yaw-lad'; a prim. root; to bear young;

Toldah is the singular, Toldot is the plural. Strong’s indicates that we never find the singular in Torah, only the plural – Toldot. Further, we see that this word is derived from *ylad*, which is a child. *Toldot*, therefore, means ‘children of …’.

## The Structure of Bereshit

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| [**HaShem**](hashem.html) **Deals With Man** | |
| **Genesis**  **Chapter** | **Topic** |
| 1:1 – 2:3 | The story of the [seven](seven.html) days of [creation](bara.html). |
| 2:4 | The **Toldot** of the [heaven](heaven.html) and the earth. |
| 2:4 – 3:15 | The [Garden of Eden](eden.html). The [first](one.html) [Adam](adam.html). |
| 3:16 – 4:26 | Man [sins](sin.html) and is expelled from the [Garden of Eden](eden.html). |
|  |  |
| 5:1 | **Toldot** [Adam](adam.html) |
| 5:1-31 | The generations from [Adam](adam.html) to [Noach](noach.html). |
| 5:32 – 6:8 | Man [sins](sin.html) and is to be expelled from the earth. |
|  |  |
| 6:9 | **Toldot** [Noach](noach.html) |
| 6:9 – 8:14 | The flood expels [wickedness](wicked.html) from the earth. |
| 8:15 – 9:17 | The story of man after the flood – the [rainbow covenant](covenant.html) with Man. |
| 9:18-29 | The [sin](sin.html) of Ham and the blessing of Shem. |
|  |  |
| 10:1-32 | **Toldot** Sons of [Noach](noach.html) – The [seventy](seventy.html) [nations](nations.html). |
| 11:1-4 | Sixty-[nine](nine.html) [nations](nations.html) [sin](sin.html) at the tower of [Bavel](bavel.html). Man makes a [name](name.html) for himself. |
| 11:5-9 | Man is expelled from [Bavel](bavel.html) by the confusion of language. The family of Shem does not have [their language](file:///D:\Word\DOC1\hebrew.html) confused. |

This section ends with the scattering of all the people who rebelled against [HaShem](hashem.html). As we shall see, [HaShem](hashem.html) will [gather](gather.html) the ones He loves.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| [**HaShem**](hashem.html) **Deals With a Family** | |
| **Genesis**  **Chapter** | **Topic** |
| 11:10-26 | **Toldot** Shem ([Name](name.html)) – The big picture – Man calls on the [name](name.html) of [HaShem](hashem.html) (The [Name](name.html)). |
| 11:27-32 | **Toldot** Terach – The picture focuses on [Abraham](avraham.html) |
| 12:1- 18:33 | [Abraham](avraham.html). |
| 19::1-38 | Lot |
| 20:1 – 23:20 | [Abraham](avraham.html) |
| 24:1-67 | Rebecca and [Yitzchak](isaac.html) |
| 25:1-11 | [Abraham](avraham.html) |
|  |  |
| 25:12-18 | **Toldot** Ishmael |
| 25:19 – 35:29 | **Toldot** [Yitzchak](isaac.html) – the story of [Yitzchak](isaac.html) and [Yaaqob](jacob.html) |
| 36:1-43 | **Toldot** [Esau](edom.html) |
|  |  |
| 37:1 | [Yaaqob](jacob.html) |
| 37:2 – 50:26 | **Toldot** [Yaaqob](jacob.html) – [Joseph](joseph.html). The life of [Joseph](joseph.html). |
|  |  |
| [Exodus](exodus.html) 1 | The descendants of [Yaaqob](jacob.html). |

The [first](one.html) verse in each pair introduces some [type](types.html) of genealogical LIST; each is the background to the highlighting of the chosen individual ([Noach](noach.html), [Yitzchak](isaac.html), [Yaaqob](jacob.html)) and to the STORY of his descendants. The stories of the "Toldot" of [Noach](noach.html), [Yitzchak](isaac.html) and [Yaaqob](jacob.html) are the antithesis of the genealogical lists that precede them.

From this point on, all of Torah concerns itself with the family of [Yaaqob](jacob.html), the Sons of Israel. Human history will culminate in the [salvation](salvation.html) of the Sons of Israel and the [second Adam](adam.html) – [His Majesty](yeshua.html) King [Yeshua](yeshua.html).

This structure also contain many other poignant points. We notice that whenever the Torah lists just the names without their story, that [HaShem](hashem.html) is not intervening in their history. We also can see that [HaShem](hashem.html) is rejecting them. It is well [known](daat.html) that when we elaborate on the story of a person’s life, that we are fond of that person. So, too, with [HaShem](hashem.html). He demonstrates His love for these folks by telling their stories.

## In The Beginning

The [first](one.html) place in Torah that we find this word, *Toldot*, is in:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 2:4*** *These [are] the generations* (Toldot) *of the* [*heavens*](heaven.html) *and of the earth when they were* [*created*](file:///D:\Word\DOC1\bara.html)*, in the day that* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *God made the earth and the* [*heavens*](heaven.html)*,*

In this introductory verse, we see that the [first](one.html) things which are going to have children, are the [heavens](heaven.html) and the earth. How strange! How do the [heavens](heaven.html) and the earth bear children? The Torah gives us the answer:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 2:7*** *And* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *God formed man [of] the* [*dust*](rock.html) *of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*

So, from the earth, [HaShem](hashem.html) created [Adam](adam.html) HaRishon. the [first](one.html) [Adam](adam.html).

Notice also that [Adam](adam.html) was [physically](physical.html) formed from the earth, and then [HaShem](hashem.html) took a part of [heaven](heaven.html) and breathed it into the [physical](physical.html) in order to create a living (earth) soul ([heaven](heaven.html)).

## In the [End of Days](lastdays.html)

Well, now we [know](daat.html) how the earth could have Toldot, but how can [heaven](heaven.html) have Toldot? Again the Torah provides us with an answer:

***Yochanan (John) 3:13*** *And no man hath ascended up to* [*heaven*](heaven.html)*, but he that came down from* [*heaven*](heaven.html)*, [even] the Son of man which is in* [*heaven*](heaven.html)*.*

From the above verse we can see that the Son of Man, the last [Adam](adam.html), came from [Heaven](heaven.html). If this is correct, then we would expect that the Son of Man would also be introduced with a Toldot that [connects](connection.html) Him with [Adam](adam.html). [Yeshua](yeshua.html)’s Toldot begins in:

***Luqas (***[***Luke***](luke.html)***) 3:23*** *And* [*Yeshua*](yeshua.html) *himself began to be about* [*thirty*](thirty.html) *years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of* [*Joseph*](joseph.html)*, which was [the son] of Heli,*

[Yeshua](yeshua.html)’s Toldot finishes with these words:

***Luqas (***[***Luke***](luke.html)***) 3:38*** *Which was [the son] of Enos, which was [the son] of Seth, which was [the son] of* [*Adam*](adam.html)*, which was [the son] of God.*

From this Toldot, we span from the [first](one.html) [Adam](adam.html) to the last [Adam](adam.html). This last [Adam](adam.html) was also the product of the earth:

***Luqas (***[***Luke***](luke.html)***) 1 30-35*** *But the* [*angel*](angels.html) *said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give* [*birth*](birth.html) *to a son, and you are to give him the* [*name*](name.html)[*Yeshua*](yeshua.html)*. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father* [*David*](file:///D:\Word\DOC1\fathers.html)*, And he will reign over the* [*house of Yaaqob*](jacob.html) *forever; his kingdom will never end." "How will this be," Mary asked the* [*angel*](angels.html)*, "since I am a* [*virgin*](virgin.html)*?" The* [*angel*](angels.html) *answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy* [*one*](one.html) *to be born will be called the Son of God.*

From these verses we can see that this heavenly soul was put into a [body](body.html) formed from the earth.

The heavenly nature of [Yeshua](yeshua.html) is also illustrated in the His second Toldot found in Matthew 1:1-17. This passage gives the Toldot between [Abraham](avraham.html) and [Yeshua](yeshua.html). This immediately [connects](connection.html) [Yeshua](yeshua.html) with the family of [Abraham](avraham.html) which had previously been chosen as the family which would be the chosen [nation](nations.html).

The Nazarean Codicil then puts the picture together for us:

***1 Corinthians 15:45-49*** *And so it is written, The* [*first*](one.html) *man* [*Adam*](adam.html) *was made a living soul;*

*the last* [*Adam*](adam.html) *[was made] a quickening spirit. Howbeit that [was] not* [*first*](one.html) *which is* [*spiritual*](physical.html)*, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is* [*spiritual*](physical.html)*. The* [*first*](one.html) *man [is] of the earth, earthy: the second man [is] the Lord from* [*heaven*](heaven.html)*. As [is] the earthy, such [are] they also that are earthy: and as [is] the heavenly, such [are] they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.*

From this we can see that the [first](one.html) [Adam](adam.html) came from the earth and represents a living soul. The last [Adam](adam.html) came from [heaven](heaven.html) and represents a quickening spirit.

Just as the kingdoms of this earth came through the [first](one.html) [Adam](adam.html), so the kingdom of [heaven](heaven.html) will come through the last [Adam](adam.html).

## Shemot – Names

The book of Shemot (Names), [Exodus](exodus.html), begins with the names of the chosen people:

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 1:1-5*** *These are the names of the sons of Israel* [*who went to Egypt*](file:///D:\Word\DOC1\thebirth.html) *with* [*Yaaqob*](jacob.html)*, each with his family:*

*Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah;*

*Issachar, Zebulun and* [*Benjamin*](benyamin.html)*;*

*Dan and Naphtali; Gad and Asher.*

*The descendants of* [*Yaaqob*](jacob.html) *numbered* [*seventy*](seventy.html) *in all;* [*Joseph*](joseph.html) *was already in Egypt.*

This Toldot [connects](connection.html) us back to Genesis 48:8 where the “names” of those who went down to Egypt are mentioned. Shemot, then, is a continuation of Bereshit. In this book we see that the family of [Yaaqob](jacob.html) has become the Sons of Israel.

## Toldot and the [Midrash](orallaw.html)

[***Midrash***](orallaw.html) ***Rabbah - Genesis XII:6*** *GENERATIONS (TOLDOTH). All Toldot found in Scripture are defective, except* [*two*](two.html)*, viz. These are the Toldot (generations) of Perez (*[*Ruth*](ruth.html) *IV, 18), and the present instance. And why are they defective? R. Judan said in R. Abun's* [*name*](name.html)*: The* [*six*](six.html) *[which they lack][[1]](#footnote-1) corresponds to the* [*six*](six.html) *things which were taken away from* [*Adam*](adam.html)*, viz., his lustre, his immortality [lit. ‘life’], his height, the fruit of the earth, the fruit of trees, and the luminaries.[[2]](#footnote-2) Whence do we* [*know*](daat.html) *this of his lustre?--Thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away (Job XIV, 20). His immortality?--For* [*dust*](rock.html) *thou art, and unto* [*dust*](rock.html) *shalt thou return (Gen. III, 19). His height? --For it says, And the man and his wife hid themselves (ib. 8).5 R. Aibu said: His height was cut down and reduced to* [*one*](one.html) *hundred cubits. The fruit of the earth and the fruit of the tree?-Cursed is the ground for thy sake, etc. (ib. 17). Luminaries?--R. Simeon b. Judah said: Though the luminaries were cursed on the eve of the* [*Sabbath*](sabbath.html)*, they were not smitten until the termination of the* [*Sabbath*](sabbath.html)*. This agrees with the Rabbis but not with R. Assi, who maintained:* [*Adam*](adam.html) *did not retain his glory for a night. What is the proof? But* [*Adam*](adam.html) *passeth not the night in glory (Ps. XLIX, 13). The Rabbis maintain: He passed the night in his glory, but at the termination of the* [*Sabbath*](sabbath.html) *He deprived him of his splendour and expelled him from the* [*Garden of Eden*](eden.html)*, as it is written, ’Thou changest his countenance, and sendest Him away’ (Job XIV, 20). As soon as the* [*sun*](hachama.html) *set on the night of the* [*Sabbath*](sabbath.html)*, the Holy* [*One*](one.html)*, blessed be He, wished to hide the light, but He showed honour to the* [*Sabbath*](sabbath.html)*; hence it is written, And God blessed the* [*seventh*](seven.html) *day, etc. (Gen. II, 3): wherewith did He bless it? with light. When the* [*sun*](hachama.html) *set on the night of the* [*Sabbath*](sabbath.html)*, the light continued to function, whereupon all began praising, as it is written, Under the whole* [*heaven*](heaven.html) *they shine praises to Him (Job XXXVII, 3); wherefore? Because His light [reaches] unto the ends of the earth (ib.). R. Levi said in the* [*name*](name.html) *of the son of Nezirah: That light functioned* [*thirty-six*](thirtysix.html) *hours,* [*twelve*](twelve.html) *on the eve of the* [*Sabbath*](sabbath.html) *[i.e. Friday],* [*twelve*](twelve.html) *during the night of the* [*Sabbath*](sabbath.html)*, and* [*twelve*](twelve.html) *on the* [*Sabbath*](sabbath.html) *[day]. When the* [*sun*](hachama.html) *sank at the termination of the* [*Sabbath*](sabbath.html)*, darkness began to set in.* [*Adam*](adam.html) *was terrified, [thinking,] Surely indeed the darkness shall bruise [E.V. ’envelop’] me (Ps. CXXXIX, 11): shall he of whom it was written, He shall bruise thy* [*head*](body.html) *(Gen. III, 15) now come to* [*attack*](attacks.html) *me! What did the Lord do for him? He made him find* [*two*](two.html) *flints which he struck against each other; light came forth and he uttered a blessing over it; hence it is written, But the night was light about me-ba'adeni (Ps. loc. cit.), i.e. the night was light in my Eden (be-’edni). This agrees with Samuel, for Samuel said: Why do we recite a blessing over a lamp [*[*fire*](fire.html)*] at the termination of the* [*Sabbath*](sabbath.html)*? Because it was then created for the* [*first*](one.html)[*time*](time.html)*. R. Huna in Rab's* [*name*](name.html)*, and R. Abbahu in R. Johanan's* [*name*](name.html) *said: At the termination of the Day of* [*Atonement*](kippur.html)*, too, we recite a blessing over it, because the* [*fire*](fire.html) *rested the whole day.1 R. Berekiah said in the* [*name*](name.html) *of R. Samuel b. Nahman: Though these things were created in their fullness,[[3]](#footnote-3) yet when* [*Adam*](adam.html) *sinned they were spoiled, and they will not again return to their perfection until the son of Perez [viz.* [*Messiah*](mashiach.html)*] comes; [for in the verse] ’These are the Toldot (generations) of Perez ‘, Toldot is spelled fully, with a vav.*

[***Midrash Rabbah***](orallaw.html) ***- Genesis XIV:6*** *[THEN THE LORD God FORMED] THE MAN: for the sake of* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*.[[4]](#footnote-4) R. Levi said: It is written, The greatest man among the Anakim (Josh. XlV, 15): ‘man ' means* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*, and why is he called the greatest man? Because he was worthy of being created before* [*Adam*](adam.html)*,[[5]](#footnote-5) but the Holy* [*One*](one.html)*, blessed be He, reasoned: ‘He may* [*sin*](sin.html) *and there will be none to set it right. Hence I will create* [*Adam*](adam.html)[*first*](one.html)*, so that if he* [*sins*](sin.html)*,* [*Abraham*](avraham.html) *may come and set things right.’ R. Abba b. Kahana said: In general practice, when a man joints a pair of beams [so that they meet] at a slope,[[6]](#footnote-6) where does he place them? Surely in the middle of the chamber, so that they may support the beams in front and behind. Even so, why did the Lord create* [*Abraham*](avraham.html) *in the middle of generations? In order that he might bear the generations before and after him. R. Levi said: You bring a virtuous woman into the house of a corrupt* [*one*](one.html)*,[[7]](#footnote-7) but you do not bring a corrupt woman into the house of a virtuous* [*one*](one.html)*.*

[***Midrash***](orallaw.html) ***Rabbah -*** [***Exodus***](exodus.html) ***XXX:3*** *… On the other* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *we read: Now these are (we-eleh) the generations of Ishmael,* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*'s son (ib. XXV, 12), thus adding to those that preceded. Who are these?[[8]](#footnote-8)- Those mentioned just before: And she bore him Zimran, and Jokshan (ib. 2).[[9]](#footnote-9) So here too: ' Now these are (we-eleh) the generations of Ishmael,* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*'s son’... the firstborn of Ishmael, Nebaioth (ib. 12 f)-they were* [*wicked*](wicked.html) *like the others. Similarly, Now these are (we-eleh) the generations of* [*Yitzchak*](isaac.html)*,* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*'s son (ib. 19), also adds to those which preceded, namely the children of Ishmael. Who were these?[[10]](#footnote-10)-*[*Esau*](edom.html)*, [and his sons,] who was the son of* [*Yitzchak*](isaac.html)*. This being so,* [*one*](one.html) *might perhaps say that since it says ’And these are (we-eleh) the generations’ that it would include also* [*Yaaqob*](jacob.html) *with* [*Esau*](edom.html) *in the ’generations of* [*Yitzchak*](isaac.html) *‘?[[11]](#footnote-11) But you will find, with the exception of* [*two*](two.html) *places-’ These are the generations of the* [*heaven*](heaven.html) *and the earth’ (Gen. II, 4) and Now these are the generations of Perez (*[*Ruth*](ruth.html) *IV, 18)- the word ’ Toldot ' whenever it occurs in the Bible is spelt defectively,[[12]](#footnote-12) and for a very significant reason. Thus the word is spelt fully [with a waw] in the case of ’ These are the generations of the* [*heaven*](heaven.html) *and the earth’, because when* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *created His* [*world*](worlds.html)*, there was no* [*Angel*](angels.html) *of Death in the* [*world*](worlds.html)*, and on this account is it spelt fully[[13]](#footnote-13); but as soon as* [*Adam*](adam.html) *and Eve sinned,* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *made defective all the ’Toldot’ mentioned in the Bible.[[14]](#footnote-14) But when Perez arose, his ’generations’ were spelt fully again, because from him* [*Messiah*](mashiach.html) *would arise, and in his days God would cause death to be swallowed up, as it says, He will swallow up death for ever (Isa.XXV, 8); on this account is the ‘Toldot’ of ’ The* [*heaven*](heaven.html) *and the earth’ and of Perez spelt fully. For a similar reason the ’Toldot’ of* [*Yitzchak*](isaac.html) *is spelt defectively, to exclude* [*Yaaqob*](jacob.html) *from the category of the* [*wicked*](wicked.html)*.[[15]](#footnote-15)Another example: These are (eleh) the generations of* [*Yaaqob*](jacob.html) *(Gen. XXXVII, 2)-to disqualify the princes of* [*Esau*](edom.html)*; whereas, And these are (we-eleh) the names of the sons of Israel (Ex. I, 1) adds to those preceding. Who are those recorded previously?-The sons of Reuben and Simeon.[[16]](#footnote-16) Another example: Now these are (we-eleh) the generations of Aaron (Num. III, 1) adding to those that preceded. Who are they? Those mentioned before: These are those that were numbered which Moses and Aaron numbered (ib. I, 44). Just as the* [*first*](one.html) *were righteous, so were these righteous. Likewise in our case, Now “these are (we-eleh) the ordinances” adds to those that preceded, viz to what is written above: There He made for them a statute and an ordinance (Ex. XV, 25).[[17]](#footnote-17)*

**\* \* \***

The Mabul (the Flood) and Migdal [Bavel](bavel.html) (the Tower of [Babel](bavel.html)) are undoubtedly the [two](two.html) primary stories in this week's Parsha. However, each is preceded by a list of genealogies which appear to be rather irrelevant. Why does Sefer Bereshit dedicate so much attention to "Sifrei Toldot" (list of genealogies)?

This shiur explains how the "Sifrei Toldot" of Sefer Bereshit help to form its structure and to develop its theme.

**INTRODUCTION**

The following table, which shows the flow of parashiot from the end of [Parshat Bereshit](file:///D:\Word\DOC1\annual.html) until the end of [Parshat Noach](noach.html), will help clarify our opening question.

Note how the major stories are 'introduced' by Toldot:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **PSUKIM** | **TOPIC** |
|  |  |
| 5:1-32 | Toldot [Adam](adam.html) - The genealogy from [Adam](adam.html) until [Noach](noach.html) |
| 6:1-9:29 | ha'mabul - The story of the Flood |
| 10:1-32 | Toldot Bne [Noach](noach.html) - The genealogy of [Shem](file:///D:\Word\DOC1\priests.html), Cham & Yafet |
| 11:1-9 | Migdal [Bavel](bavel.html) - The story of the Tower of [Babel](bavel.html) |
| 11:10-27 | Toldot Shem - The genealogy from Shem until Terach |
| 11:27-12:3 | [HaShem's](hashem.html) choice of [Avraham](avraham.html) Abinu |

Clearly, Torah must tell us about the Mabul, Migdal, [Bavel](bavel.html), and [Avraham](avraham.html) Abinu, for these [events](feasts.html) change the course of history. Why, however, must Torah list the genealogies which appear to have little prophetic significance?

THE STRUCTURE of SEFER BERESHIT

To answer the above question, we must [first](one.html) explain the overall structure of Sefer Bereshit.

Although it is rarely noticed, the Sifrei Toldot actually create the framework of Sefer Bereshit! The Toldot introduce every story in the sefer from cover to cover. Let's explain:

"Toldot" is derived from the [Hebrew](hebrew.html) word "vlad", child. Therefore, "ayleh Toldot" should be translated "these are the children of".

For example: "eyleh Toldot [Adam](adam.html)" (5:1) means - "these are the children of [Adam](adam.html)" - and thus introduces the story of [Adam](adam.html)'s children, i.e. Shet, Enosh, Keinan, etc. Similarly, "eyleh Toldot [Noach](noach.html)" introduces the story of [Noach](noach.html)'s children - Shem, Cham, and Yafet.[[18]](#footnote-18)

Some of the "Toldot" in Sefer Bereshit are very short; they simply state that the person lived, married, had children and died (e.g. the generations from [Adam](adam.html) to [Noach](noach.html)). Other "Toldot" are very detailed, e.g. those of [Noach](noach.html), Terach, [Yitzchak](isaac.html), and [Yaaqob](jacob.html). However, every story in Sefer Bereshit is an integral part of someone's "Toldot".

Let's use a table, once again, to show how all the stories of Sefer Bereshit are introduced by Sifrei Toldot. They form the 'skeleton' of Bereshit, linking its various sections together:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **PEREK** | **Toldot** | **THE ENSUING STORY** |
|  |  |  |
| 1 | (none) | The [creation](bara.html) of shamayim V'aretz |
| 2-4 | shamayim V'aretz | [Adam](adam.html) (Man) in [Gan Eden](eden.html) & his banishment |
| 5 | [Adam](adam.html) | The generations from [Adam](adam.html) until [Noach](noach.html) |
| 6-9 | [Noach](noach.html) | [Noach](noach.html)'s family saved from the Mabul |
| 10 | Bne [Noach](noach.html) | Migdal [Bavel](bavel.html)/ dispersing into 70 [nations](nations.html) |
| 11 | Shem | The generations from [Shem](file:///D:\Word\DOC1\priests.html) until Terach |
| 11-25 | Terach | Life of [Avraham](avraham.html), Haran (Lot), and Nachor |
| 25 | Yishmael | The children of Yishmael |
| 25-35 | [Yitzchak](isaac.html) | [Yaaqob](jacob.html) and [Esau](edom.html) (their rivalry) |
| 36 | [Esav](edom.html) | The children of [Esau](edom.html) |
| 37-50 | [Yaaqob](jacob.html) | The story of [Yosef](joseph.html) and his brothers |

The [first](one.html) "Toldot" of Sefer Bereshit - Toldot shamayim v'aretz - is interesting and meaningful.

Recall that the [first](one.html) chapter of Bereshit explains that God created shamayim v'aretz ([heavens](heaven.html) and earth). In the next chapter, we find the [first](one.html) use of "eyleh Toldot: "eyleh Toldot ha'shamayim v'ha'aretz b'hibaram..." (2:4)

What are the Toldot of shamayim and aretz - what are the children of [heaven](heaven.html) and earth? If we follow the progressive pattern of Sefer Bereshit, as shown by the above table, then "Toldot shamayim v'aretz" Must be referring to [Adam HaRishon](adam.html). In other words, even though there appears to be a clear division between shamayim and aretz in the [first](one.html) [six](six.html) days of [Creation](bara.html) [better [known](daat.html) as "[Rakia](file:///D:\Word\DOC1\heaven.html)", see 1:6], it seems as though man in [Gan Eden](eden.html) reflects the ability to connect between them. This interpretation could help explain the significance of the pasuk which describes man's [creation](bara.html) in perek bet:

"And [HaShem](hashem.html) Elohim took formed man from the [dust](rock.html) of the earth and blew into his nostrils nishmat chayim- the breath of life." (2:7) This second ingredient may reflect the aspect of man which comes from (or at least returns to) [heaven](heaven.html).

The next set of Toldot are the children of [Adam](adam.html) until [Noach](noach.html), followed by the Toldot of [Noach](noach.html), etc. This pattern continues until the very end of Sefer Bereshit.

These "Sifrei Toldot" do more than 'keep the sefer together'; they also help develop the theme of Sefer Bereshit. The simple (short) Toldot, which mention the person's [name](name.html) and that he had children, reflect the natural development of mankind, while the detailed (and usually lengthy) stories within these Toldot explain [HaShem’s](hashem.html) intervention in the history of mankind. This is an important Biblical theme, for it [teaches](teacher.html) us that we are to find the [hand](fourteen.html) of [HaShem](hashem.html) in the development of civilization, especially with regard to important [events](feasts.html).

THE [TWO](two.html) SECTIONS OF SEFER BERESHIT

Despite this successive nature of the Toldot in Sefer Bereshit, they are clearly divided into [two](two.html) distinct sections.

Section [one](one.html) (chapters 1-11), deals with mankind as a whole, (sort of a universalistic approach), for no special [nation](nations.html) has yet to be chosen. We do find special detail about [Noach](noach.html), however; it is not because he is designated to become a special [nation](nations.html). Rather, it is because through him mankind will be preserved. Furthermore, the [seventy](seventy.html) [nations](nations.html) (chapter 10), representing all of mankind, evolve from his children.

We do find that Shem and Yafet receive special blessings, but the concept of a special [nation](nations.html) is not mentioned.

Section [two](two.html) (chapters 11-50), begins the story of am Yisrael, [HaShem's](hashem.html) special [nation](nations.html). In this section, Sefer Bereshit is no longer universalistic, rather it becomes particularistic, for it focuses on [HaShem](hashem.html)'s choice of a special [nation](nations.html).

Chapter 11, Toldot Shem, introduces [Avraham](avraham.html) Abinu, whom [HaShem](hashem.html) chooses in chapter 12 to become the forefather of His special [nation](nations.html). The remainder of Sefer Bereshit explains which of [Avraham](avraham.html)'s offspring are chosen [=bechira, e.g. [Yitzchak](isaac.html) and [Yaaqob](jacob.html)], and which are rejected [=DCHIYA, e.g. Yishmael and [Esau](edom.html)].

This section concludes when this bechira process is completed, i.e. all [twelve](twelve.html) sons of [Yaaqob](jacob.html) are chosen. They are to become the [twelve](twelve.html) [tribes](tribes.html) of Israel; none of their children can be rejected.

The following table summarizes (and compares) these [two](two.html) sections of Sefer Bereshit:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **I. universalistic (1-11)** | **II. particularistic (11-50)** |
|  |  |
| Toldot: | Toldot: |
|  |  |
| shamayim va'aretz  [[Adam](adam.html) in [Gan Eden](eden.html)] | [Shem](file:///D:\Word\DOC1\priests.html) to Terach  Terach (3 sons) |
| [Adam](adam.html) to [Noach](noach.html)  [Noach](noach.html), [three](three.html) sons  [the mabul] | [[Avraham](avraham.html) chosen] |
| Children of [Bnei Noach](noach.html)  [the 70 [nations](nations.html)] | [Yishmael rejected] |
| Migdal [Bavel](bavel.html)  the 70 [nations](nations.html) disperse | [Yitzchak](isaac.html) chosen |
|  | [[Esau](edom.html) rejected] |
|  | [Yaaqob](jacob.html) chosen |
|  | [Yosef](joseph.html) and his brothers  70 "nefesh" [go down to Egypt](file:///D:\Word\DOC1\thebirth.html) |

This sequence of "Toldot" continues until this "bechira" & "dchiya" process ends. Thus, the last "ayleh Toldot..." found in Sefer Bereshit is that of [Yaaqob](jacob.html) Abinu (37:2), as all [twelve](twelve.html) of his sons are chosen and none are rejected. [This may be the significance of his [name](name.html) change to Yisrael, with the help of [Heaven](heaven.html), we will deal with this concept in later shiur.]

**WHY IS** [**Avraham**](avraham.html) **Abinu chosen?**

What is the thematic significance of these [two](two.html) sections? Why does Sefer Bereshit suddenly change its focus from all mankind to [one](one.html) special [nation](nations.html)? To answer this question, we must look for a [connection](connection.html) between the last story of the [first](one.html) section - Migdal [Bavel](bavel.html), and the [first](one.html) story of the second section - bechirat [Avraham](avraham.html). We can safely assume that a careful analysis of the story of Migdal [Bavel](bavel.html) should help us explain the reason for this transition, and [HaShem](hashem.html)'s choice of [Avraham](avraham.html) Abinu.

**Migdal** [**Bavel**](bavel.html)

When reading the [first](one.html) [four](four.html) pesukim of the story of "Migdal [Bavel](bavel.html)", it is hard to pinpoint [one](one.html) specific [sin](sin.html): [Note, however, the significant usage of the [first](one.html)-person plural.]

"Everyone on earth had the same language and the same words. And as they traveled from the [east](east.html), they came upon a valley in the land of Shinar and settled there. They said to [one](one.html) another: Come, let us make bricks and burn them hard. Brick became their stone, and bitumen their mortar. And they said, “Come let us build us a [city](city.html) and a tower with its top in the sky, and we will make a [name](name.html) for ourselves, lest we shall be scattered all over the [world](worlds.html).” (11:1-4)

From a cursory reading, it is not clear exactly what was so terrible about this generation. After all, is not achieving 'achdut' (unity) a positive goal? Likewise, the use of human ingenuity to initiate an industrial revolution, developing man-made building materials, i.e. bricks from clay etc., seems to be a positive advancement of society. Furthermore, there appears to be nothing wrong with simply building a [city](city.html) and a tower. Why was [HaShem](hashem.html) so angered that He decided to stop this construction and disperse mankind? Chazal focus their criticism of this generation on their antagonistic attitude towards [HaShem](hashem.html) (see Rashi 11:1). [One](one.html) key phrase in the Torah's explanation of the purpose for the tower reflects the egocentric nature of this generation:

"v'naase lanu Shem" [we shall make a [name](name.html) for ourselves] (11:4)[[19]](#footnote-19)

Instead of devoting themselves to the [name](name.html) of [HaShem](hashem.html), this generation removes Him from the picture altogether. The builders of the tower united for the sake of an unholy end. Their undertaking emphasized man's dominion and strength.

Although this generation appears to be better behaved than dor ha'mabul, [HaShem](hashem.html) was still disappointed, for they established an anthropocentric society instead of a theocentric [one](one.html). Their primary aim was self-aggrandizement, to 'make a [name](name.html)' for themselves.

Migdal [Bavel](bavel.html) should not be seen as just another story about mankind, nor simply as the history of the development of language. This story sets the stage for God's choice of [Avraham](avraham.html) Abinu.

It is the destiny of [Avraham](avraham.html), the primary descendent for "Toldot Shem", to bring [HaShem](hashem.html)'s [Name](name.html) ("shem") into the history of civilization; to fix ("[tikkun](tikkun.html)") the error of mankind at Migdal [Bavel](bavel.html). How and why.

In light of our discussion, we can better appreciate a puzzling statement made by Ben Azai: "Zeh Sefer Toldot ha'[Adam](adam.html)...

It is [taught](teacher.html) - Rebbe Akiva says, "v'ahavta l'ray'acha kamocha" – Love your neighbor as yourself - klal Gadol ba'Torah - This is a great principle of the Torah. Ben Azai says, "zeh sefer Toldot ha'[Adam](adam.html)" (5:1) - klal Gadol m'zeh - is an even greater principle.

(Yerushalmi Nedarim 9:4)

How could [one](one.html) suggest that the very technical list of the genealogies from [Adam](adam.html) to [Noach](noach.html) found in Bereshit 5:1-32 constitutes even a principle, let alone [one](one.html) more important than the famous dictum that [one](one.html) should love his neighbor as himself!?

[One](one.html) could suggest that Ben Azai's statement is not referring specifically to the genealogies, but rather to the overall structure of Sefer Bereshit as formed by the Toldot, and thus its theme. Although it is very important to 'love thy neighbor', the theme of Sefer Bereshit - that [Am Yisrael](file:///D:\Word\DOC1\gen-jew.html) must lead all mankind to a theocentric existence - is an even greater tenet of our faith.

\* \* \*

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1. ‘The vav as a numeral is six. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. These were reduced, the earth and trees having originally produced fruit in one day, and the light of the luminaries being much greater than now, as explained in the text. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The fact that TOLEDOTH is spelled here fully, with a waw, intimates that they were created with their full power. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. He interprets the def. art: THE MAN, i.e., the outstanding man, viz., Abraham; cf. supra, XII, 9; infra, XV, 4; Ex. R. XXVIII, 1 et passim. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. V. Eccl. R. on Ch. III, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Thus giving them greater strength than if they were laid flat. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. For the latter to learn from her. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. That are like the sons of Ishmael that he adds to them. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Cf. Gen. R. LXI, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Who of Yitzchak's descendants are a fitting addition to the children of Ishmael? [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. In the same sense. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Without a second waw. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Denoting that life was to be full, never to be terminated by death. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Henceforth it would be deficient, since death would end it. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. For otherwise it should have been spelt in full, since the Messiah can be traced back to Yitzchak's generations (‘E.J.) [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Denoting that those enumerated here were righteous, like those enumerated above. The only additions actually are [Joseph](file:///D:\Word\DOC1\joseph.html) and his children, and the [Midrash](file:///D:\Word\DOC1\orallaw.html) means that though they had come under the influence of Pharaoh's court they were nevertheless righteous (‘E.J.). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Just as those were stated at Marah (V.XV, 23 seq.), so were these. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. See Rashbam 37:2 for a more complete explanation. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Sanhedrin 109a [↑](#footnote-ref-19)