

THE BLESSING-COMMISSION, THE PROMISED OFFSPRING,
AND THE TOLEDOT STRUCTURE OF GENESIS

JASON S. DEROUCHIE*

The most prominent structural feature in Genesis is the formula אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת (‘ēlleh tōləḏōt), which occurs 10 (11) times in the book and is often translated, “this is the account of” or “these are the generations of” (Gen 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1, [9]; 37:2).¹ Its recurring placement suggests that the author used it as a shaping device for his work.² While scholars have generally affirmed this point,³ the narrowing focus to Abraham and his offspring in chapter 12 has led

* Jason DeRouchie is associate professor of OT at Bethlehem College and Seminary, 720 13th Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55415.

¹ I write 10(11) because the pattern in 36:9 seems secondary to the overall structure of the book, even though it appears to separate a preliminary list of Esau’s descendants birthed in Canaan (36:1–8) from a more complete list of Esau’s offspring, including those birthed in Edom (36:9–43; so T. David Andersen, “Genealogical Prominence and the Structure of Genesis,” in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics* [ed. Robert D. Bergen; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995] 263). The short narratives in 36:6–8 and 37:1 are transitional and may be compared to the use of narratives at the end of other genealogical sections to set the stage for what follows (e.g. 6:4–8; 11:1–9; 25:17–18; *ibid.* 262). Duane Garrett suggests that the formula in 36:9 simply repeats 36:1 and serves as an *inclusio* around the unit, much like the added use of אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת (tōləḏōt) in 10:32 (*Rethinking Genesis: The Sources and Authorship of the First Book of the Pentateuch* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991] 96 n. 15, 97). However, the shift from “Canaan” in 36:5 to “the hill country of Seir (36:8, 9) suggests that the same material is not being addressed in each unit (i.e. not an *inclusio*). Garrett’s connection with the use of אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת in 10:32 is nonetheless intriguing, for the term itself is used twice only in the *toledot* of Noah’s sons (10:1, 32), the *toledot* of Ishmael in 25:12, 13 (as a double title), and the *toledot* of Esau in 36:1, 9, which happen to be the only segmented genealogical *toledot* in the book (as observed by Matthew A. Thomas, *These Are the Generations: Identity, Covenant, and the toledot Formula* [LHBOTS 551; New York: T&T Clark, 2011] 75; note: segmented genealogies are those that trace descent through numerous children and not one son; for more, see below).

² Historically, scholars have focused on this phrase in order to establish pre-Genesis sources. This trajectory was set most definitively by Karl Budde in two essays: “Ellätoledoth,” *ZAW* 34 (1914) 241–53; and “Noch einmal ‘Ellätoledoth,’” *ZAW* 36 (1916) 1–7. These works were followed by the highly influential study by Gerhard von Rad, *Die Priesterschrift im Hexateuch: Literarisch Untersucht und Theologisch Gewertet* (BZWANT; Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1934) 33–40. For a brief overview of the function of the *toledot* in past scholarship, see Thomas, *These Are the Generations* 25–31. In contrast, while the present study will interact in a minimal way with such wristlings, the principal goal is to consider how the nature and present placement of the *toledot* statements give clarity to and serve the author’s intended outline and communicative purpose. As for source analysis, R. W. L. Moberly is certainly correct that “Critical conjectures that depend on reading between the lines are always more persuasive if combined with a cogent reading of the lines themselves” (*The Old Testament of the Old Testament: Patriarchal Narratives and Mosaic Yahwism* [OBT; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992] 85 n. 4). Source analysis can be useful, but it is best handled in the service of a final form reading and only when literary units are treated as whole, self-contained entities and not deconstructed based on arbitrary presuppositions. For a very useful example of such an approach, see Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis*; cf. R. N. Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch: A Methodological Study* (JSOTSS; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987).

³ An exception is John Sailhamer, who attaches no structural significance to the *toledot* formula. This is partly because he cannot explain why intentional shaping would not have included a *toledot* of Abra(ha)m and partly because his attempt to read the Pentateuch as a whole does not allow him to view Genesis as a unit to itself (“Genesis,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* [rev. ed.; Grand Rapids:

most to distinguish two macro-divisions for the book—the Primeval and Patriarchal Histories.⁴ Still others like Gary Rendsburg have used stylistic analysis to propose large-scale parallelisms and chiasms in the subsections of the book, though often without considering a comprehensive structure for the whole.⁵ Finally, through employing composition and form criticism, scholars like Isaac Kikawada, Arthur Quinn, and Duane Garrett have suggested that the book’s structure mimics that of ancient ancestor epics such as *Atrabasis*, which established the setting, developed through three threats, and then found resolution.⁶ Significantly, none of

Zondervan, 2008] 24 n. 1). For a response to the former issue, see note 23. As for the latter, while it is true that the narrative plot of Genesis is somewhat open-ended, calling for Exodus and beyond (see Exod 1:1–7 and the waw at the beginning of the book), the direct focus on Israel in general and Moses in particular that dominates both the narrative of Exodus–Numbers and the constitution-like material in Deuteronomy presupposes the kingdom prologue material bound up in Genesis. Furthermore, cleft sentences like the one in Exodus 1:1 often lie on the boundaries of text units, which suggests that Exodus is indeed the beginning of a major block of material (cf. Robert E. Longacre, “Building for the Worship of God: Exodus 25:1–30:10,” in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature* [ed. W. R. Bodine; SBLSS; Atlanta: Scholars, 1995] 29–30; Jason S. DeRouchie, *A Call to Covenant Love: Text Grammar and Literary Structure in Deuteronomy 5–11* [GD30/BS2; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2007] 50–51). D. Crystal observes that cleft structure is evident whenever “a single clause has been divided into two sections, each with its own verb, one of which appears in a dependent wh-clause (relative clause)” (*A Dictionary of Linguistics & Phonetics* [5th ed.; Oxford: Blackwell, 2003] 75).

⁴ The legitimacy of this proposal will be assessed below, but the result is that each “half” of Genesis includes five *toledot*.

⁵ Gary A. Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1986). Rendsburg masterfully identified a number of theme- or catchwords that shape matched parallel or chiasmic units throughout the book; his work was built off of the following studies: Umberto Cassuto, *From Noah to Abraham* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1964) 296; Nahum M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1966) 160–61; Michael Fishbane, “Composition and Structure in the Jacob Cycle (Gen. 25:19–35:22),” *JSS* 26 (1975) 15–38, repr. with some changes in idem, *Text and Texture* (New York: Schocken, 1979) 40–62; Jack M. Sasson, “The ‘Tower of Babel’ as a Clue to the Redactional Structuring of the Primeval History (Gen. 1–11:9),” in *The Bible World: Essays in Honor of Cyrus H. Gordon* (ed. Gary A. Rendsburg; New York: Ktav, 1980) 211–19; cf. Bruce T. Dahlberg, “On Recognizing the Unity of Genesis,” *TD* 24 (1977) 360–67. While such works have exposed the remarkable literary artistry that is evident in Genesis, they too often fail to give clarity to the structure of the whole book. As Duane Garrett observed in his extended critique of Rendsburg’s work, “The redactor . . . , who is said to have been profoundly concerned to include verbal clues to the chiasmic or parallel intertwining of each major section, was totally indifferent to the structure of the whole and merely lined up the major narratives in chronological sequence” (*Rethinking Genesis* 111–21, quote from p. 121). Furthermore, most of the proposed large-scale parallelisms and chiasms unjustly allow features of creativity operating below the surface of the text to take precedence over more conspicuous features like the *toledot* that point in an alternative direction (cf. *ibid.* 113–15). This latter critique aligns with the first objective criteria Craig A. Smith offers for determining true chiasms (“Criteria for Biblical Chiasms: Objective Means for Distinguishing Chiasm of Design for Accidental and False Chiasm” [Ph.D. diss., University of Bristol, 2009]): (1) coherence with other clear structures; (2) significant correspondence with its parallel counterpart (verbal, syntactic, form, scene/setting, conceptual, phonetic); (3) significant symmetrical balance within the chiasm (arrangement of units, macro-balance between panels, micro-balance between units, symmetrical distribution of verbal elements); (4) discernible function; (5) discernible authorial affinity. One recent, though in my opinion weak, proposal for an overarching chiasmic structure to Genesis that generally follows the *toledot* framework is Thomas, *These Are the Generations* 105–22.

⁶ Isaac M. Kikawada and Arthur Quinn, *Before Abraham Was: A Provocative Challenge to the Documentary Hypothesis* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987) 36–53; Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis* 119–23. The Babylonian myth of origins *Atrabasis* follows the following pattern: *Creation* of mankind → three *threats* to human survival,

these works adequately accounts for the governing role of the *toledot* formulae in the overall organization of Genesis.

When attempting to craft a macro-outline for a biblical book, one’s interpretive conclusions will be most substantiated when formal features in the text’s surface structure are appreciated alongside a detailed assessment of content. Grammar at the phrase, clause, and text levels assists in the delivery of meaning and should be used to validate or caution against intuitive interpretations developing at the semantic level.⁷ Semantic-level rhetorical analysis alone is inadequate to establish a book’s literary macrostructure, for the seers, sages, and songwriters who gave us the Scrip-

the second containing two-parts and the third a flood →*resolution*, wherein the gods place limits on human population growth while assuring the preservation of mankind. Kikawada and Quinn observed a similar pattern in Genesis 1–11, and Garrett developed their proposal to cover the entire book (see table and comment below).

Kikawada and Quinn, <i>Before Abraham Was</i>, 47–48, 60		
Prologue	Creation	1:1–2:3
Transition	Genealogy: Heaven and Earth	2:4
Threat 1	Adam and Eve	2:5–3:24
Transition	Genealogy: Eve’s sons	4:1–2
Threat 2a	Cain and Abel	4:3–16
Transition	Genealogy: Cain’s Line	4:17–22
Threat 2b	Lamech’s Taunt	4:23–24, 25–26 ⁷
Transition	Genealogy: Adam/Seth’s Line	5:1–32
Threat 3	Noah’s Flood	6:1–9:29
Transition	Genealogy: Table of Nations	10:1–32
Resolution	Dispersion from Babel	10:1–32
	Genealogy: Shem’s Line	11:10–26
	Abram’s Departure from Ur	11:27–32
Garrett, <i>Rethinking Genesis</i>, 119–122		
Prologue	Primeval History	1:1–11:26
Transition	Genealogy: Terah/Abram’s Line	11:27–32
Threat 1	Abrahamic Cycle	12:1–25:11
Transition	Genealogy: Ishmael	25:12–18
Threat 2	Jacob Cycle	25:19–35:22b
Transition	Genealogy: Jacob and Esau	35:22c–36:43
Threat 3	Joseph Cycle	37:1–46:7
Transition	Genealogy: Jacob	46:8–27
Resolution	Settlement in Egypt	46:28–50:26

In response, neither of these studies adequately accounts for the whole *toledot* structure of the book. There is no *toledot* heading in 4:1–2, 17, where Kikawada and Quinn add a major break, and their model bypasses the *toledot* of 6:9. Garrett’s model fails to address these issues and does not adequately deal with the *toledot* superscripts of Esau (36:1) or Jacob (37:2); it also adds breaks at the end not connected with the *toledot* structure.

⁷ DeRouchie, *Call to Covenant Love* 26–27.

ture used linguistic signals to help guide a proper understanding of their communicative purpose.

The goal of this study is to establish on the basis of a form-meaning composite the literary macrostructure of Genesis and to consider the theological implications of this framework for the book's lasting message. None of the features of grammar or content that are identified have been unnoticed by other scholars. The contribution of this article, however, is in applying all these observations to an assessment of the book's overall flow of thought and theological message.

I. THE *TOLEDOT* AS TRANSITIONAL HEADINGS, NOT COLOPHONS

We must first address the question of whether the *toledot* formulae serve as superscriptions for what follows or as subscriptions for what precedes. The predominance of this pattern in Genesis suggests that each of the 10 *toledot* should be read alike—all as headings pointing forward or all as colophons referring backward.

Fig. 1: The Ten *toledot* of Genesis as Colophons vs. Headings

The <i>toledot</i> as Colophons	The <i>toledot</i> as Headings
The <i>toledot</i> of the Heavens and the Earth (1:1–2:4)	Preface (1:1–2:3)
The <i>toledot</i> of Adam (2:5–5:2)	The <i>toledot</i> of the Heavens and the Earth (2:4–4:26)
The <i>toledot</i> of Noah (5:3–6:9a)	The <i>toledot</i> of Adam (5:1–6:8)
The <i>toledot</i> of Noah's Sons (6:9b–10:1)	The <i>toledot</i> of Noah (6:9–9:29)
The <i>toledot</i> of Shem (10:2–11:10a)	The <i>toledot</i> of Noah's Sons (10:1–11:9)
The <i>toledot</i> of Terah (11:10b–27a)	The <i>toledot</i> of Shem (11:10–11:26)
The <i>toledot</i> of Ishmael (11:27b–25:12)	The <i>toledot</i> of Terah (11:27–25:11)
The <i>toledot</i> of Isaac (25:13–19a)	The <i>toledot</i> of Ishmael (25:12–18)
The <i>toledot</i> of Esau (25:19b–36:1; 36:2–9)	The <i>toledot</i> of Isaac (25:19–35:29)
The <i>toledot</i> of Jacob (36:10–37:2a)	The <i>toledot</i> of Esau (36:1–8; 36:9–37:1)
Appendix: The Joseph Story (37:2b–50:26)	The <i>toledot</i> of Jacob (37:2–50:26)

1. *The toledot as colophons.* The majority of classic source critics have read the *toledot* of the heavens and the earth in Genesis 2:4a as a subscript to the supposed “priestly” material of 1:1–2:3 that precedes, thus distinguishing it from the new source material that begins in 2:4b, signaled by the title “Yahweh God.”⁸ A number of conservatives have also read the *toledot* statements throughout the entire book as subscripts. For example, based on supposed parallels with Mesopotamian cuneiform tablets, P. J. Wiseman in 1936 argued that every occurrence of the *toledot* for-

⁸ See Julius Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuches und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments* (2d ed.; Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1889) 3, 5; Otto Eissfeldt, *Die Genesis der Genesis: vom Werdegang des ersten Buches der Bibel* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1958) 13–14; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (rev. ed., trans. John H. Marks; OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972) 63; Peter Weimar, “Die *Toledot*-Formel in der priesterschriftlichen Geschichtsdarstellung,” *BZ* 18 (1974) 73–75. For an overview of the history of interpretation on this point, including medieval Jewish commentators, see Benno Jacob, *Der erste Buch der Tora: Genesis* (Berlin: Schocken, 1934) 71–72; and Terje Stordalen, “Genesis 2, 4: Restudying a *locus classicus*,” *ZAW* 104 (1992) 161–77, both cited by Thomas, *These Are the Generations*, 39–40 n. 65.

mula in Genesis was a colophon.⁹ Years later, R. K. Harrison vigorously defended his case.¹⁰ In this model, the sources behind the first 36 chapters of Genesis were 11 tablets, each ending with a *toledot* subscript that signaled the unit conclusion.¹¹ The author who put the tablets together then added chapters 37–50, perhaps on the basis of oral tradition.

2. *The toledot as headings.* In response, a number of reasons call for the rejection of the colophon theory and for viewing all the *toledot* formulae as superscripts or titles to what follows. First, while the *toledot* of the heavens and the earth (Gen 2:4), the *toledot* of Adam (5:1), and the *toledot* of Jacob (37:2) could be understood to refer to the narrative accounts that precede, it is very difficult to understand how the Abrahamic Cycle in 11:28–25:11 could be cataloged as “the *toledot* of Ishmael” (25:12)! Not only this, the most natural reading of 25:12 is to view it as a superscript to the overview of names and journeys of the Ishmaelite clans in 25:13–18. But the theory states that this unit is actually “the *toledot* of Isaac” (25:19)! The same problem arises in the handling of the *toledot* of Esau in 36:1, which clearly serves as a heading for what follows and not a colophon for what precedes.

In light of the fact that all five instances of the formula that front a genealogy are most naturally read with what follows (5:1; 10:1; 11:10; 25:12; 36:1), Dale DeWitt modified the Wiseman-Harrison hypothesis, suggesting that the *toledot* statements refer both to the material that precedes and to the genealogies that follow.¹² However, DeWitt was unable to generate any ancient Near Eastern support for his hypothetical tablet structure, and his theory requires a number of arbitrary decisions that call into question his entire proposal.¹³

Second, outside Genesis, the two occurrences of the same *toledot* pattern support reading the instances in Genesis as headings to what follows (Num 3:1; Ruth 4:18; cf. 1 Chr 1:29; Matt 1:1). In Num 3:1, the *toledot* of Aaron and Moses introduces the high priest’s lineage (3:2–4) and the overview of the Levitical duties (3:5–4:49), none of which were included in the census list of Numbers 1. The inclusion of Moses appears to anticipate the central role he will play in the narrative to follow. Similarly, Ruth 4:18 includes the *toledot* of Perez, which heads a 10-person genealogy that moves from Judah’s son Perez to David. The structure is identical to the type of pattern we see five times in Genesis, when the *toledot* formula comes before a genealogy.

⁹ P. J. Wiseman, *New Discoveries in Babylonia about Genesis* (London: Marsh, Morgan, & Scott, 1936); repr. *Ancient Records and the Structure of Genesis* (Nashville: Nelson, 1985).

¹⁰ R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969) 543–53; idem, “Genesis,” in ISBE 435–38.

¹¹ The number 11 comes because both Wiseman and Harrison take Gen 36:9 as its own *toledot* marker.

¹² Dale S. DeWitt, “The Generations of Genesis,” *EvQ* 48 (1976) 196–211.

¹³ For example, DeWitt treats 2:7a as a title and arbitrarily divides 12:1–25:11 into the “Ishmael” (chs. 12–16) and “Isaac” (chs. 17:1–25:11) tablets. Furthermore, he struggles to handle units that do not actually align with his proposal, as in his treatment of 6:1–9:18. For evaluations of the Wiseman-Harrison hypothesis that interact with DeWitt’s modifications, see Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) 8–10; Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis* 94–96.

Third, as Gordon J. Wenham has observed, in the clause “these are the *toledot* of X,” the very meaning of תולדות (*tôlēdôt*) requires that the statement point to that which X produces and not to X’s origins.¹⁴ תולדות derives from the Hiphil verb (תוליד [hōlîd]) of the root ילד (*ylḏ*), meaning “to beget, bear.”¹⁵ For this reason a text such as Gen 2:4, “These are the *toledot* of the heavens and the earth,” cannot refer backwards to the description of the heaven and earth’s beginnings. Rather, it must point ahead to that which immediately derived from the heavens and the earth—that is, humanity, shaped out the ground and by the breath of God (Gen 2:7); a crafty serpent as a personification of all that is evil and created by God (3:1); toil, growing out of a world cursed by its Creator due to sin (3:17–19; cf. Rom 8:20–21); and a human offspring of hope, considered a gift of God and a sure sign that the promised deliverer would come (Gen 4:25; cf. 3:15; 4:1).¹⁶ Similarly, the *toledot* of Adam (5:1) describes through genealogy that which came forth from the first man, and the *toledot* of Jacob (37:1) recounts through narrative what came of Jacob’s immediate descendants.

Fourth, linguistic analysis suggests the *toledot* are best read as titles rather than colophons. The common pattern of the *toledot* formula is seen in Gen 11:10: אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת שֵׁם (*’ēlleh tôlēdôt šēm*), “These are the *toledot* of Shem.” A demonstrative pronoun (“these”) is followed by the term *toledot* in construct with a proper name, the latter of which operates as the progenitor of the *toledot* itself.

All the *toledot* formulae in Genesis are verbless clauses with a definite subject and predicate. Francis I. Andersen tagged all such structures “clauses of identification.”¹⁷ He also observed that when this clause type occurs with demonstrative pronouns (הֵן, אֵלֶּה, אֵלֶּה [zeh, zōt, ’ēlleh]), as here in Genesis, it characteristically serves as a title, referring “forward to something not yet mentioned” (e.g. Deut 1:1; 4:44–45), though it occasionally can be a colophon (e.g. Gen 10:32; Num 36:13).¹⁸

Further linguistic support that the *toledot* in Genesis are titles comes from the perspective of informational structure. In assessing a sentence, linguists often attempt to distinguish information that is already known or presupposed (*theme*) from

¹⁴ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (WBC 1; Dallas: Word, 1987) 56; cf. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, “Genesis,” in *The Pentateuch* (3 vols. in one; trans. James Martin; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986, repr.; orig. German) 1:70; J. Skinner, *Genesis* (2d ed., ICC; Edinburgh: Clark, 1930) 41; Hamilton, *Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17* 10.

¹⁵ HALOT 1699.

¹⁶ With respect to the source-critical handling of Gen 2:4a, Brevard S. Childs has asserted (*Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* [London: SCM, 1979] 149–50): “To read [Gen 1:1–2:4a and 2:4b–3:24] as has usually been done disregards the essential effect of the canonical shaping which has assigned the chapters different roles within the new context of the book of Genesis . . . Mankind is the vehicle of the *toledot*. Thus in spite of the partial overlapping in the description of creation, ch. 2 performs a basically different role from ch. 1 unfolding the history of mankind as the intended offspring of the creation of the heavens and the earth . . . By continuing to speak of the ‘two creation accounts of Genesis’ the interpreter disregards the canonical shaping and threatens its role both as literature and as scripture.”

¹⁷ Francis I. Andersen, *The Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch* (JBLMS 14; Nashville: Abingdon, 1970) 32, 39.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 40, cf. 52–54; idem, *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew* (JLSP 231; New York: Mouton, 1974) 53–54.

information that is new or asserted (*rheme*).¹⁹ In the pattern “demonstrative pronoun + *toledot* in construct with a named progenitor,” the progenitor is already known and therefore rarely described (= *theme*).²⁰ In contrast, the *toledot* is asserted as new information that points ahead to what follows (= *rheme*).²¹

3. *Significance for structure and message.*

a. *The toledot are transitional headings that progressively direct the reader's focus from progenitor to progeny and narrow the reader's focus from all the world to Israel, through whom all families of the earth will be blessed.* Kenneth Mathews has rightly identified the *toledot* in Genesis as transitional headings, “echoing from the preceding material a person's name or literary motif and at the same time anticipating the focus subject of the next.”²² By their very nature, the *toledot* address what is produced from a progenitor and not the progenitor itself.²³ In the words of Victor Hamilton, “[They] suggest

¹⁹ Susan A. Groom notes, “Sentences typically contain some lexical or grammatical indication of the information which is assumed to be already activated in the reader's mind, as a basis of point of departure for the new information to be added” (*Linguistic Analysis and Biblical Hebrew* [Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003] 141). The known information is the theme, whereas the new information is the rheme. For a further discussion of informational structure and the Prague School of Linguistics, wherein it was developed, see Crystal, *Dictionary of Linguistics & Phonetics* 234, 365, 400, 463.

²⁰ An exception is Gen 6:9 where Noah, though already known to the reader, is characterized as a righteous man.

²¹ For more on this, see Thomas, *These Are the Generations* 31–37. Stephen W. Kempf insists that the *toledot* formulae are not titles but only text-dividers because the named member is not always the subject of what follows (“A Discourse Analysis of Genesis 2:4b–3:24 with Implications for Interpretation and Bible Translation” [PhD diss., University Laval, Quebec, 1995] 975–77; his extended discussion of the *toledot* is found on pp. 912–95). However, he fails to appreciate enough that it is the combination of demonstrative pronoun + *toledot* and not the named progenitor that shapes the topic for what follows. I am grateful to Peter Gentry for directing me to Kempf's work.

²² Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26* (NAC; Nashville: B&H, 1996) 33–34. In two extended studies, Stephen W. Kempf and Catherine L. Beckerleg have both stressed the hinge-nature of the *toledot* formulae. Kempf writes (“Discourse Analysis of Genesis 2:4b–3:24” 978): “The formula functions like a turnbuckle: coupling two adjacent section [sic] of the narrative together. The repetition of information contributes to the cohesive effect. In some cases the repeated information forms a chiasm with the תולדות as the center. The תולדות formula functions like a literary seam joining two sections of the narrative together.” Similarly, Beckerleg argues extensively for the placement of the *toledot* often in the center of chiasms and writes, “[The *toledot* formulae] have a specific janus function in that they work in two directions simultaneously: they summarize previous information while introducing new material” (“The ‘Image of God’ in Eden: The Creation of Mankind in Genesis 2:5–3:24 in Light of the *mšpšpšpš* and *wpt-r* Rituals of Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt” [Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2009] 36–47, quote from p. 45). My response to Kempf is in the previous footnote. As for Beckerleg, while she is correct in seeing recapitulation of previous information in many *toledot* headings, her conclusion that the *toledot* formulae are both superscripts and subscripts fails to account for the lexical meaning of *toledot* and for what she has recognized as the catchphrase's consistent function “in the Hebrew Bible as an introduction to what follows, not as a conclusion to what precedes” (p. 36). I believe, therefore, it is still best to view the formulae in Genesis as transitional headings.

²³ Allen P. Ross notes, “The person named after *tôledôt* is usually not the central character in the narrative but the person of origin” (*Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996] 73). This may explain why Abraham does not get a *toledot*, for “the Abraham title would have had to introduce the Isaac story, but the bulk of this (ch. 26) has been incorporated into the Jacob story” (Rolf Rendtorff, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* [trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986] 138). In contrast, one notes that much of the Noah *toledot* is devoted to unpacking Noah's walking with God and to discussing God's covenant with creation, of which Noah

movement from a starting point to a finishing point, from a cause to an effect, from a progenitor to a progeny.”²⁴ More than this, as Joseph Blenkinsopp has recognized, when Genesis is taken as a whole, the *toledot* witness an intentional narrowing of focus, beginning with the whole world and ending with “the descendants of Abraham in the direct line as sole claimants to the land of Canaan.”²⁵ The book, therefore, helps place Israel and her mission within the context of the whole world, a fact adding to the book’s missional thrust. More will be said about this shortly.

b. *Genesis 1:1–2:3 provides the prefatory lens into the toledot units, with the blessing-commission of 1:28 playing a central role in understanding the development and narrowing in the book.* Grasping properly the intended role of the *toledot* units will likely only be accomplished when they are interpreted in light of the book’s preface, which climaxes in the blessing-commission of Gen 1:28.²⁶ In the beginning, God’s call was not simply for humanity’s growth and oversight in the world. These activities were to be performed by *divine image bearers*. It was those that resemble, reflect, and represent their father God (see Gen 5:1–3) that were to be fruitful, multiply, and fill,

serves as the mediator. Nevertheless, even here it is ultimately Shem who is set apart in relation to the blessing of God (Gen 9:26–27) and highlighted through reverse ordering in the segmented genealogy of the Table of Nations. Robert B. Robinson clarifies the latter observation as follows (“Literary Functions of the Genealogies of Genesis,” *CBQ* 48 [1986] 602–3): “The genealogy [in chapter 10] now begins, contrary to custom, with youngest son, Japhet, and works in reverse order until it concludes with the offspring of Shem, Noah’s first son. The unusual sequence spotlights Shem.” Another potential explanation for the absence of an Abraham *toledot* is literary suspense. As highlighted by Thomas (*These Are the Generations* 50–51): “If there had been a *toledot* of Abraham, the tension in the text regarding the provision of an heir for Abraham and Sarah would have been undermined from the beginning. The reader would be tipped off from the beginning of the story how it would turn out.” Cf. Andersen, “Genealogical Prominence and the Structure of Genesis” 262. For an extended discussion of the various explanations for the conspicuous absence of a *toledot* for Abraham, see pp. 49–51 of Thomas’s work.

²⁴ Hamilton, *Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17* 10; cf. M. H. Woudstra, “The *Toledot* of the Book of Genesis and Their Redemptive-Historical Significance,” *CTJ* 5 (1970) 184–89.

²⁵ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch: An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1992) 109. Cf. Thomas, *These Are the Generations* 73; David M. Carr, “βίβλος γενέσεως Revisited: A Synchronic Analysis of Pattern in Genesis as Part of the Torah,” *ZAW* 110 (1998) 159–72, 327–47. Kempf writes that the *toledot* formulae from Genesis 5 forward “signals a transition in progressive stages of the narrative, not only linking one section to the next, but having the cumulative effect of advancing the narrative toward the climax of the work as a whole” (“A Discourse Analysis of Genesis 2:4b–3:24” 987).

²⁶ For more on Genesis 1 as preface, see Ian Hart, “Genesis 1:1–2:3 as a Prologue to the Book of Genesis,” *TynBul* 46 (1995) 315–36. The author of Genesis 1 used a number of techniques to direct the readers’ attention to day 6, in which God created humanity and defined his relationship with them. Of all the days in the creation week, day 6 gets the most literary space and includes the longest speeches. Only after this day does God declare creation “very good” (Gen 1:31), and only on this day is the definite article “the” added to the day-ending formula. While not made clear in most contemporary translations, the NASB rightly highlights that the text actually reads, “a first day, a second day, a third day, a fourth day, a fifth day, the sixth day.” Intriguingly, while the human reader finds his purpose defined in day 6, here the spotlight is immediately taken off mankind and placed on God. Whereas all other living creatures were created “according to their kinds” (1:21, 24–25), humanity was created in *God’s image*, after his likeness (1:26–27; cf. 5:1–3). The purpose of an image is to point to what is imaged, and like a telescope that magnifies and clarifies the glories of a distant moon, so too humans are called to display God’s greatness and worth for the world to see. Our distinction and value as humans comes in our capacity and responsibility to resemble, reflect, and represent God.

subdue, and have dominion over the earth (1:26–28; cf. 9:1, 7).²⁷ The commission was about God's greatness being put on display in all places and from generation to generation. This fact suggests that the developing *toledot* in Genesis have something to do with clarifying how this vision of spreading a global passion for God's supremacy would be accomplished, especially in light of humanity's proneness to sin.²⁸

The commission was also about radical God-dependence, as is suggested in the compound speech-frame, "And God blessed them, and God said to them" (1:28). At the end of last century, Cynthia Miller observed that introductory speech frames will often include an additional finite verb before the primary verb of saying in order to characterize the type of speech that is made.²⁹ Here, the commission to fill and oversee the earth is framed as a divine blessing, which throughout Scripture is always dependent on *God* to fulfill.³⁰ Those truly engaged in God's kingdom-building purposes will be characterized not only by productivity and authority but also by a persevering trust and a disposition that declares God as both the fuel and goal of one's existence.

Already it should be apparent that the *toledot* of Genesis do *not* all relate to the blessing-commission of Gen 1:28 in the same way. The storyline progresses and narrows focus only through juxtaposing two competing genealogical lines, the rejected and the chosen (e.g. 15:4; 17:18–19; 21:10–13; 27:26–40), the wicked and the righteous (6:5–8), those that bring death and those that portray the hope of life (4:25–26). It is only the godly line that carries forward the primeval blessing-commission.³¹

²⁷ For a helpful discussion of the meaning of divine image bearing as royal sonship expressed through kinship, kingship, and cult, see Beckerleg, "Image of God" in Eden," esp. 161–244, 289–92; cf. Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Overland Park, KS: Two Ages, 2000) 45–46. For more on the fact that "offspring/seed" in Genesis "implies a resemblance between the 'seed' and the one who has produced it," see Alexander, "Genealogies, Seed and the Compositional Unity of Genesis" 265.

²⁸ See G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (NSBT; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004) 81–167.

²⁹ Cynthia L. Miller, *The Representation of Speech in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: A Linguistic Analysis* (HSMM 55; Atlanta: Scholars, 1996) 51–52; cf. 186, 192–94; cf. idem, "Discourse Functions of Quotative Frames in Biblical Hebrew Narrative," in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature: What It Is and What It Offers* (ed. W. R. Bodine, SBLSS; Atlanta: Scholars, 1995) 155–82. For a summary of her proposal, see DeRouchie, *Call to Covenant Love*, 205–12; Duane A. Garrett and Jason S. DeRouchie, *A Modern Grammar for Biblical Hebrew* (Nashville: B&H, 2009) 323–27. That the charge in 1:28 itself is the content of the blessing and not a second activity of God is further suggested by the comparable wording 1:22, only there the second verb of saying is in the form of an infinitive construct (לְאָמַר *lēmōr*), following the finite verb בָּרַךְ (בָּרַךְ "to bless"): "And God blessed them, saying . . ." Cf. Carol M. Kaminski, *From Noah to Israel: Realization of the Primeval Blessing after the Flood* (JSOTSup 413; New York: T&T Clark, 2004) 26–27.

³⁰ Michael L. Brown writes ("בָּרַךְ," in *NIDOTTE* [5 vols.; ed. Willem VanGemeren; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997] 1:758, 761, 764): "The blessing of God has content; it actualizes and enables . . . The power of the blessing was directly tied to the willingness and ability of the Lord to grant it . . . God blesses people by conferring good on them."

³¹ An exceptional volume supporting this thesis is Carol M. Kaminski's *From Noah to Israel: Realization of the Primeval Blessing after the Flood* (see note 29). Her conclusions stand against the majority of

Most foundationally, this distinction appears to be grounded in the divine promise of 3:15, which contrasts the serpent and his offspring with the offspring of the woman. At the very least, two alternative lines of descent are here declared to flow from the Garden—those identified with the evil, self-exalting, God-diminishing ways of the serpent and those characterized by the opposite, namely, what is good, God-exalting, and mission-minded.³² More, however, can likely be said.

That the author of Genesis was able to specify a collective sense to “seed/offspring” is clear from 17:9, where God commissions Abraham and his offspring to keep the covenant “through *their* generations,” using the 3mp suffix. As such, the explicit statement to the serpent in 3:15 that “*he* [i.e. the offspring of the woman] shall bruise your head and you shall bruise *his* heel,” using the 3ms pronoun and suffix, most likely points to a single, male curse-overcoming deliverer, in whom all those truly participating in the divine blessing-commission would hope.³³ This future longing and persevering trust is highlighted in numerous ways throughout the rest of the book:

- When Adam named Eve “the mother of all the living” (3:20), he was confident, in light of the gospel promise of 3:15 and the declaration of painful childbirth in 3:16, that life and a line of offspring identified with it would overcome the death-judgment of the curse.
- Eve praised God for a male child when Cain was born (4:1) and then celebrated in Seth that an offspring was given to replace Abel, whom Cain killed; by this Cain proved that he was not of the offspring of the woman but of the serpent (4:25; 1 John 3:12, 15; cf. John 8:33, 39–44).³⁴

critical scholarship, which has failed to appreciate this point. Claus Westermann, for example, links the blessing-commission of Gen 1:28 with all the genealogies of the book (*Genesis 1–11*, trans. John J. Scullion [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984] 17): “P relates the genealogies very clearly to the work of God in the blessing and its commission: ‘Be fruitful and multiply,’ 1.28. The effect of the blessing is described in the genealogies The creator made humans with the potentiality to increase their kind; this god-given dynamism is effective in the succession of new births which the genealogies report. It is the blessing that actualizes the potentiality, that makes possible the succession of births.” Similarly, Robert Alter asserted: “Representing the origins of nations as a genealogical scheme preserves a thematic continuity with the divine injunction after Creation to be fruitful and multiply and sets the stage for the history of the one people whose propagation is repeatedly promised but continually threatened” (*Genesis: Translation and Commentary* [New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1996] 42). See also Kikawada and Quinn (*Before Abraham Was* 61), who fail to observe the distinct role played by linear and segmented genealogies and thus view all of them as giving “substance to the blessing/command of 1:28—‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.’ The ‘begats’ embody the blessings.” Cf. Robinson, “Literary Functions of the Genealogies of Genesis” 600–1.

³² So, too, Kempf, “Discourse Analysis of Genesis 2:4b–3:24” 974–75.

³³ For more on this, see Jason S. DeRouchie and Jason C. Meyer, “Christ or Family as the ‘Seed’ of Promise? An Evaluation of N. T. Wright on Galatians 3:16” *SBJT* 14/3 (2010) 36–48; cf. Jack Collins, “A Syntactical Note (Genesis 3:15): Is the Woman’s Seed Singular or Plural?” *TynBul* 48 (1997) 139–48; T. Desmond Alexander, “Further Observations on the Term ‘Seed’ in Genesis,” *TynBul* 48 (1997) 363–67; John C. Collins, “Galatians 3:16: What Kind of Exegete Was Paul?” *TynBul* 54 (2003) 75–86.

³⁴ In this regard, Robinson writes, “Within the broader theological significance given to theological succession in Genesis, Cain’s bringing his brother’s line to an end is an offense against the design of creation” (“Literary Functions of the Genealogies of Genesis” 602).

- Lamech declared in optimism that his son would serve as a curse-overcomer, thus anticipating the complete fulfillment of Gen 3:15 (Gen 5:29; cf. 8:21–22).
- Abra(ha)m’s faith that was counted as righteousness (15:6) is depicted not simply as counting on God to do for him what he could not do on his own (18:14; cf. Rom 4:18–22) but also as trusting God to make his own offspring his heir (Gen 15:3–4), a reminder to the reader of the pledge in Gen 3:15.
- God promised Abra(ha)m that all families of the earth would be blessed in him (12:3) and that he would be a father of a multitude of nations (17:5); God then later added that Israel’s enemies would be overcome and global blessing realized specifically through a single, male descendant (22:17b–18; cf. 24:60).
- The fear of God exhibited by Abraham in his willingness to sacrifice Isaac was directly related to the offspring promise (20:12) and the patriarch’s absolute confidence in God’s kingdom purposes through him and his son (22:5; cf. Heb 11:17–19).
- Finally, God declared that a king would rise from Judah who would render the obedience of all peoples (Gen 49:10).³⁵

It is through this combination lens of blessing-commission and the juxtaposition of family trees that we now make a more detailed assessment of Genesis’s structure and message.

II. THE *TOLEDOT* HEADINGS FRONTED WITH AND WITHOUT *WAW*

One linguistic feature of the *toledot* headings that commentators and translators rarely consider is the presence or absence of frontal connection. Of the ten *toledot* structures, five are asyndetic, lacking any conjunction (usually *וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת*, Gen 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 11:10; 37:2), whereas five begin with *waw* (= *וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת*, 10:1; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 36:9). The literary breakdown in the flow of the *toledot* patterns is shown in Figure 2. The fact that formal shifts often signal differences in meaning causes one to consider whether the alteration between asyndeton and *waw* is at all significant in understanding the author’s intended divisions of the book.

³⁵ For an overview of many of these points, see DeRouchie and Meyer, “Christ or Family as the ‘Seed’ of Promise?” 36–48.

Fig. 2: Frontal Connection in the *toledot* of Genesis³⁶

	Preface (1:1–2:3)
Ø	These are the <i>toledot</i> of the Heavens and the Earth (2:4–4:26)
Ø	This is the book of the <i>toledot</i> of Adam (5:1–6:8)
Ø	These are the <i>toledot</i> of Noah (6:9–9:29)
<i>waw</i>	<u>And</u> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Noah's Sons (10:1–11:9)
Ø	These are the <i>toledot</i> of Shem (11:10–11:26)
<i>waw</i>	<u>And</u> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Terah (11:27–25:11)
<i>waw</i>	<u>And</u> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Ishmael (25:12–18)
<i>waw</i>	<u>And</u> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Isaac (25:19–35:29)
<i>waw</i>	<u>And</u> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Esau (36:1–8; 36:9–37:1)
Ø	These are the <i>toledot</i> of Jacob (37:2–50:26)

1. *The macrostructuring role of waw and asyndeton.* For years, the majority of Hebraists have treated the presence of *waw* in the biblical text as insignificant due to its apparent multivalent or ambiguous application and its suspected multiple senses.³⁷ For example, after assessing the function of *waw* in Genesis, E. A. Speiser asserted, “At the beginning of a sentence, and particularly of a paragraph, section, or book, the translation equivalent of *wa* is zero.”³⁸ In contrast, Robert Alter chose to render “every ‘and’ and every element of parataxis” in translation, being convinced that the ubiquitous *waw* was intended to be heard and serves “an important role in creating the rhythm of the story, in phonetically punctuating the forward-driving movement of the prose.”³⁹ Figure 3 highlights the way a number of translations vary in their handling of the presence or absence of *waw* at the head of the *toledot* catchphrases of Genesis.

³⁶ Within the Samaritan Pentateuch, the *toledot* formula in 25:12 is not extant, and the *waw* is absent at the head of the formula in 11:27; all other structures are identical to the MT. The twenty-four manuscripts of Genesis found among the Dead Sea Scrolls are all quite fragmentary and together preserve elements of only thirty-two chapters of the book. Among the *toledot* headings, only 36:1, 9 (4QGen-Exoda; SdeirGen) and 37:2 (4QGene) are extant, but in each case they align with the MT exactly. This follows the pattern of all the witnesses of this book to be “generally very close to the traditional Hebrew text” (Martin Abegg Jr., Peter Flint, and Eugene Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible* [New York: Harper-SanFrancisco, 1999] 4).

³⁷ For example, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, edited by D. J. A. Clines, has over fifteen meanings and sub-meanings for *waw* (8 vols.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993–2011) 2:596–98. For an overview of the history of interpretation of the meaning of *waw*, see R. C. Steiner, “Does the Biblical Hebrew Conjunction -w Have Many Meanings, One Meaning, or No Meaning at All?” *JBL* 119 (2000) 249–67.

³⁸ E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* (AB 1; New York: Doubleday, 1969) lxvii.

³⁹ Alter, *Genesis* xx. He further states that “the general practice of modern English translators of suppressing the ‘and’ when it is attached to a verb has the effect of changing the tempo, rhythm, and construction of events in biblical narrative” (p. xix).

Fig. 3: Translational Handling of Connection in the *toledot* Headings of Genesis

	2:4 Ø	5:1 Ø	6:9 Ø	10:1 <i>waw</i>	11:10 Ø	11:27 <i>waw</i>	25:12 <i>waw</i>	25:19 <i>waw</i>	36:1 <i>waw</i>	36:9 <i>waw</i>	37:2 Ø
LXX			δέ	δέ	καί	δέ	δέ	καί	δέ	δέ	δέ
NASB, NASU				Now		Now	Now	Now	Now	Then	
ASV, KJV				Now		Now	Now	And	Now	And	
Alter				And		And	And	And	And	And	
NKJV				Now			Now		Now	And	
JPS						Now				then	then
Wenham						Now	And				
RSV, NRSV, ESV, von Rad						Now					
Leupold								And			
REB											And
Speiser											then
NIV, NET, NIV11, NAB, NCV, NJB, NLT, HCSB, CEB, Westerman, Hamilton, Waltke											

At the turn of the millennium, Richard Steiner cogently argued that the biblical Hebrew *waw* always retains a single meaning of logical connection (“and”), even though at times its semantic force is bleached.⁴⁰ In the early 1970s, Francis Ander-

⁴⁰ Steiner, “Biblical Hebrew Conjunction” 249–67. First, he argues that some clauses with *waw* are contrastive due not to the connector but to the inverted word order in the connecting clauses (V_ / _V) (257–60)—what Stephen G. Dempster termed “contrastive matching” (“Linguistic Features of Hebrew Narrative: A Discourse Analysis of Narrative from the Classical Period” [PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1985] 84–87) and M. O’Connor called “chiastic matching” (*Hebrew Verse Structure* [2d ed.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997] 392). Second, when a clause beginning with *waw* clearly corresponds temporally to the action in a previous clause, resulting in the translation of the connector as “while,” Steiner sees word order and not connector type triggering the circumstantial relationship (Steiner, “Biblical Hebrew Conjunction” 260). Here Steiner appears to be referring to instances where two non-verb-first clauses are linked (_V / _V)—Dempster’s “identical matching” (“Linguistic Features of Hebrew Narrative” 84–85, 87–88) and O’Connor’s “achiastic matching” (*Hebrew Verse Structure* 392). Third, as for clauses where *waw* seems equivalent to וְ “or,” Steiner argues that the logical structure of the adjacent clauses is actually “if p, then r, and if q, then r.” He writes: “Consolidation of the two clauses through deletion of redundant elements and rearrangement makes it look as though the verse were derived from the logically equivalent if p or q, then r” (Steiner, “Biblical Hebrew Conjunction” 261). In all reality, however, the *waw* is functioning normally as a coordinating “and.” Fourth, the common use of “*waw* of apodosis” to express the consequence (“then”) in a conditional construction has two possible explanations, both of which allow for the normal use of *waw*. (1) The semantic value of *waw* may be emptied to the extent that it operates merely as an optional clause boundary marker. (2) Steiner proposes that the pattern “if p, then q” is equivalent to “if p, then p and q,” which is often expressed in both English and Hebrew as “if p, then also q” (cf. Lev 6:21 with Jer 31:37; 33:20–21; Zech 3:7; p. 264). Fifth, with reference to what has traditionally been called the *waw* explicativum, Steiner states that it is “the phrase [or clause] that is explanatory but the -1 is not” (pp. 264–65). Instead, the *waw* has become semantically

sen concluded similarly, asserting that a *waw* at the head of a Hebrew clause links one clause in sequence to another with a *default* interpretation of coordination; clauses without any connection *mark* some level of discontinuity, usually signaling “apposition.”⁴¹ More recently, building off conclusions made in 1985 by Stephen Dempster, I argued that *waw* links units of equal syntactic value (i.e. phrases to phrases, clauses to clauses, sentences to sentences, etc.), thus creating a coordinated chain whose parts are to be read together.⁴² A structure fronted with *waw* would not be expected to occur at an absolute beginning because an initial structure does not stand in grammatical coordination with another construction. Moreover, the two places where *waw* is consistently absent are at fresh starts and in explication. That is, the most common contexts for asyndeton (the absence of any connection) are (1) at the beginning of new text units (e.g., at the front of reported speech); and (2) at the head of an embedded, explanatory, or parenthetical unit within the primary unit.⁴³

The implications of this perspective for the structure of Genesis should be clear. While the five *toledot* units beginning without an explicit connector stand grammatically independent from the preceding material, the five *toledot* units fronted with the coordinate conjunction are intentionally linked to the *toledot* units that

empty, having no lexical meaning. This same explanation clarifies its use after fronted pendent constructions, often referred to as *casus pendens*, and its presence in clauses where one would expect other connectors like ו (cf. Gen 42:10 with 42:12; 47:6 with 2 Kgs 5:8; Ps 144:3 with 8:5) or perhaps even וְשָׁרָא (cf. Gen 11:4; p. 265). For an expanded summary of Steiner’s work, see DeRouchie, *A Call to Covenant Love* 108–10.

⁴¹ Andersen, *Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch* 28; idem, *Sentence in Biblical Hebrew* 27. Andersen further notes (*Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*, 27): “An apposition sentence can be an alternative surface realization of a coordination relationship, and a coordination sentence can be an alternative relationship of an apposition relationship. Hence, in classifying such sentences, attention must be paid to the deep relationships as well as to the surface features.” For more on the view that various deep structure clause-type realities can be expressed in the surface structure in different ways, see *ibid.* 186–91 and the discussion of Generative-Transformational Grammar in Crystal, *Dictionary of Linguistics & Phonetics* 199–200, 471–73. For the foundational studies on deep structure, see N. Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (JLMS 4; New York: Mouton, 1957); idem, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1965).

⁴² DeRouchie, *Call to Covenant Love* 107–20, 225; idem, “Wa and Asyndeton as Guides to Macrostructure in the Reported Speech of Deuteronomy” (paper presented at the annual meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society and the Society of Biblical Literature, Boston, MA, November 2008); cf. Garrett and DeRouchie, *Modern Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*, 284–85; Dempster, “Linguistic Features of Hebrew Narrative” 40–41.

⁴³ DeRouchie, *Call to Covenant Love* 120–32; cf. Dempster, “Linguistic Features of Hebrew Narrative” 42–47. From a cross-linguistic perspective, Stephen H. Levinsohn has observed that in the non-narrative texts of the Greek NT, asyndeton occurs in comparable contexts: (1) “when there is a close connection between the information concerned” (i.e., the information belongs together in the same unit, whether for restatement or association); and (2) “when there is no direct connection between the information concerned” (i.e., the information belongs to different units with the asyndetic clause orienting the reader to a new direction) (*Discourse Features of New Testament Greek: A Coursebook on the Information Structure of New Testament Greek* [2d ed.; SIL International, 2000] §7.2). In personal conversation with Dr. Levinsohn, he stated regarding biblical Hebrew: “I consider *waw* to be default for texts that are chronologically organized (narratives and procedures) and marked (associative) for those that are not. Conversely, I consider asyndeton to be marked for texts that are chronologically organized, whereas juxtaposition (asyndeton?) is default for those that are not.”

precede, thus creating five, not ten, sections in the book (i–v). These five divisions are highlighted in Figure 4.

Fig. 4: The Five *toledot* Divisions of Genesis

		Preface (1:1–2:3)
i	Ø	These are the <i>toledot</i> of the Heavens and the Earth (2:4–4:26)
ii	Ø	This is the book of the <i>toledot</i> of Adam (5:1–6:8)
iii	Ø	These are the <i>toledot</i> of Noah (6:9–9:29)
	<i>waw</i>	<u>And</u> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Noah's sons (10:1–11:9)
iv	Ø	These are the <i>toledot</i> of Shem (11:10–11:26)
	<i>waw</i>	<u>And</u> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Terah (11:27–25:11)
	<i>waw</i>	<u>And</u> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Ishmael (25:12–18)
	<i>waw</i>	<u>And</u> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Isaac (25:19–35:29)
	<i>waw</i>	<u>And</u> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Esau (36:1–8; 36:9–37:1)
v	Ø	These are the <i>toledot</i> of Jacob (37:2–50:26)

2. *Other scholarship supporting these macrostructural findings.* While few scholars have accounted at all for the role of *waw* and asyndeton in the *toledot* headings, those that have deserve mention. First, in his excellent, unfinished commentary on Genesis from the 1960s, Umberto Cassuto interacted with the presence of coordination in the *toledot* of Noah's sons in 10:1. He wrote: "The *Wāw* of אָוָּה [in 10:1] serves as a link with the end of the preceding narrative of this section ... In the *preceding section* and in the *next section*, the superscription comes to indicate a new theme, and it contains the words אָוָּה תּוֹלְדֵיהֶם without *Wāw*."⁴⁴

Similarly, in his significant 1974 article, Peter Weimar argued that most *toledot* with *waw* are closely linked to previous units, for they re-present information in narrative already known to the reader (= Gen 11:27; 25:12, 19; 36:1–2a), whereas the *toledot* superscriptions without *waw* tend to mark major section breaks in the book by introducing new information about the past into the immediate context (= 6:9; 37:2).⁴⁵ Weimar's arguments were contingent on an interpretation that combined syntax and the narrative content that directly followed each *toledot* formula, but his conclusions did not account effectively for all the data.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, he helpfully treated as significant the shift from asyndeton to *waw* in the *toledot*.

Finally, in early 2011, after the main thesis and bulk of the present study was already completed, Matthew Thomas published a full monograph devoted to dis-

⁴⁴ Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (2 vols., trans. Israel Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961, 1964) 2:188. While Cassuto was never able to complete his work, he is the only commentator of whom I am aware that has taken any thought to the specific role of *waw* at the front of the *toledot* superscriptions.

⁴⁵ Weimar, "Die *Toledot*-Formel in der priesterschriftlichen Geschichtsdarstellung" 65–93, esp. 81–84 for his summary.

⁴⁶ See Thomas's recent English synthesis and evaluation of Weimar's argument in *These Are the Generations* 65–69.

cerning the significance of the *toledot* pattern in Genesis and beyond. While our works depart at key points, he builds his entire interpretation on the identification of the same five main sections in Genesis based on the distinction of *waw* and asyndeton. He writes: “The *toledot* clauses which have a coordinate function are connected to their contexts in a sequential fashion, while those which are independent are not bound in the same way to their textual environment. This leads to a difference in how we understand these two types of *toledot* clauses.”⁴⁷

3. *Significance for structure and message.*

a. *The length of the various toledot divisions created by the use of waw and asyndeton gives prominence to the account of God’s covenant with the Patriarchs.* The most extended literary grouping (809 out of 1,533 verses = 52.77% of the book) is devoted to Yahweh’s gracious covenantal interactions with the fathers of Israel—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen 11:10–37:1).⁴⁸ The sheer narrative weight given to this section suggests that the covenantal promises, divine charges, and plot development related to the Patriarchs highly contributes to the overall message of Genesis.

b. *The Shem toledot serves to introduce the Patriarchal Cycles rather than to close what has been termed the Primeval History.* Along with identifying the ten-fold *toledot* structure of Genesis, scholars have traditionally distinguished two main divisions for the book, with the break coming between chapters 11 and 12. This distinction is not fully without merit for the narrative pacing slows drastically at chapter 12 and the last four-fifths of the book show a marked shift in content focus, as is highlighted in Figure 5.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 71–72, quote from 71. For two reviews of Thomas’s work, see Mark McEntire, *RBL* 12 (2011), found at <http://www.bookreviews.org/bookdetail.asp?TitleId=8155>; and Jason S. DeRouchie, *BBR* 22 (2013) 412–15. My review includes a developed evaluation of his case. Strikingly, in a volume devoted to the meaning and structural significance of the *toledot*, Thomas fails to interact at all with the Wiseman-Harrison hypothesis or the major works on the organization of Genesis by Rendsburg, Kikawada, and Quinn, or Garrett. He also does not interact with Kempf or Beckerleg’s extended discussions of the *toledot*. On all of these, see my discussion above.

⁴⁸ Childs offers some helpful reflection on why the *toledot* of Jacob is set apart from the extended unit running from 11:10–37:1 (*Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* 156–57): “Joseph is clearly set apart from the earlier patriarchs. He does not form part of the triad to whom the promise of land and posterity is given, rather he becomes the first (Gen. 50.24) to whom the promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is reiterated Joseph became the means of preserving the family in a foreign country (50.20), but also the means by which a new threat to the promise of the land was realized. Conversely, Judah demonstrated an unfaithfulness which threatened to destroy the promise of posterity, which was only restored by the faithfulness of a Canaanite wife. In such, the final section of the book of Genesis turns on the issue of the threat to the promise which leads inevitably to the book of Exodus.”

Fig. 5: General Contrasts between the Proposed
Primeval and Patriarchal Histories⁴⁹

Primeval History (Genesis 1–11)	Patriarchal History (Genesis 12–50)
Addresses universal history	Addresses the history of Israel's beginnings
Details a universal covenant	Details a covenant with one family
Shows mankind's sin problem and need for blessing	Overviews the provision for universal blessing
Speaks of people having land but losing it	Speaks of a nomadic people expecting their own land
Takes place in Babylonia	Takes place in Palestine (chs. 12–36) and Egypt (chs. 37–50)

Notwithstanding these observations, the presence of *naw* at the front of the *toledot* of Terah in Gen 11:27 suggests that chapter 12 does not begin a major division in the book, though a major narrative portion does start here. Instead, the genealogy that shapes the *toledot* of Shem in 11:10–26 is introductory, focusing on one key member of each generation from Shem, son of Noah, to Abra(ha)m, son of Terah.⁵⁰ This forward-pointing role of the Shem *toledot* thus distinguishes it from the earlier Shem genealogy in 10:21–31, which was part of the Table of Nations and appears to have been designed to help place the mission of Israel within the context of the peoples of the entire world.⁵¹

c. *The five major toledot divisions witness a progressive narrowing that places focus on the line of promise and the centrality of Israel in God's kingdom-building program.* As already noted, the plot's progression in Genesis includes a narrowing of focus toward Israel. What can now be observed is that the major shifts in this development are marked at the non-coordinate *toledot* units, whether narrative or genealogy. As Matthew Thomas has helpfully established, the shift from the heavens and earth (Gen 2:4) to Adam (5:1) to Noah (6:9) to Shem (11:10) and to Jacob (37:2) witnesses the movement from (1) all creation to (2) humanity in general to (3) all living humanity (after the execution of the rest) to (4) a subset of living humanity (through a shift in genealogical focus) and finally to (5) Israel.⁵² The mission of God's chosen line is therefore placed within its global context. We now turn to a more detailed assessment of the narrative-genealogy pattern in Genesis to consider whether the overall outline and message can be developed even further.

⁴⁹ See Hamilton, *Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17* 10–11; John Walton, *Genesis* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001) 37, 39.

⁵⁰ David J. A. Clines called Genesis 11:10–26 a “hinge” between the two histories (*The Theme of the Pentateuch* [JSOTSup; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1978] 78).

⁵¹ This distinction holds true, even if, as Duane Garrett has hypothesized, the two genealogical texts derived from “a single original, which was used in two different ways in the two passages” (*Rethinking Genesis* 103). Walton asserts that in Genesis 10:21–31, “the focus was on the representative tribes of Moses' time who could trace their ancestry back to Shem,” whereas “in 11:10–26 the intention is to trace the genealogical line from Noah to Abram as a means of establishing continuity from the blessed line of Shem to the forefather of the Hebrews” (Genesis 379). Cf. Hamilton's discussion of the book's “geographical design” in *Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17* 10.

⁵² Thomas, *These Are the Generations* 73; cf. Carr, “βίβλος γενέσεως Revisited” 159–72, 327–47.

III. GENEALOGIES AND NARRATIVES OF THE LINE OF PROMISE WITHIN THEIR MISSIONAL CONTEXT

1. *The sources of Genesis and the makeup of the toledot.* The formalized nature of the *toledot* superscripts suggests that they may have originally been titles to pre-Genesis sources.⁵³ However, as Duane Garrett has noted, in light of the vast disparity in length and nature between the present *toledot* units,⁵⁴ it seems likely that the original *toledot* sources “did not necessarily contain all the material from one *toledoth* catchline to the subsequent use of the word *toledoth*.”⁵⁵ This means that much of Genesis as we have it was crafted from non-*toledot* sources and that the author of the book was not random in his shaping of the whole.

Garrett himself legitimately argues that the original *toledot* sources were all genealogical in nature⁵⁶ and that these lists of kinship relations (perhaps also including clan movements and the ages of key figures at death) were at times split by and/or supplemented with narrative.⁵⁷ The result is that in Genesis we now have five *toledot* titles that front narrative material (heavens and the earth, Noah, Terah, Isaac, Jacob) and five that introduce genealogies (Adam, sons of Noah, Shem, Ishmael, Esau).⁵⁸ Figure 6 shows the relationship of narrative to genealogy in the literary flow of Genesis. The alternation of narrative-genealogy-narrative-genealogy-etc. gives a sense of continuity to the whole.⁵⁹

⁵³ See note 2. M. H. Woudstra asserted, “The *toledot* formulas have not been subsequently added to an already existing text, but are the very fabric around which the whole of Genesis has been constructed” (“*Toledot* of the Book of Genesis” 188–89).

⁵⁴ For example, the *toledot* of Ishmael is only 7 verses (Gen 25:12–18) whereas the *toledot* of Terah is more than 13 chapters (11:27–25:11).

⁵⁵ Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis* 97.

⁵⁶ Richard S. Hess has helpfully defined a genealogy as “notices of kinship relations which occur more than once in a predictable pattern” (“The Genealogies of Genesis 1–11 and Comparative Literature,” *Bib* 70 [1989] 242).

⁵⁷ Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis* 97–100; cf. von Rad, *Genesis* 70. Garrett argues for the genealogical nature of the original *toledot* sources based on the fact that all 26 instances of תולדות outside Genesis refer to “the lineal descendants of an individual or to members of an eponymous clan” and after noting that in the 12 occurrences in the census list of Numbers 1 the term appears to be used for a “genealogical registration” (p. 93). Examples of potential redactional editing are as follows: Genesis 2:4 is an instance where a *toledot* title was added for purely literary purposes “in deliberate imitation of the *toledoth* sources” (p. 99). The unit that stretches from 2:4–4:26, therefore, was *not* a true *toledot* source. With respect to the Noah *toledot*, the narrative account required the splitting of the original *toledot* source, which “probably included notice of the names of [Noah’s] sons (6:10; 9:18–19), his age at the beginning (7:6) and end of the flood (9:28), and his age at death (9:29)” (p. 99). Finally, in the Jacob Cycle, “the *toledoth* title line was separated from its contents, 46:8–27, and the Joseph narrative was inserted between the two ... to explain how the sons of Israel, including the two sons of Joseph, came to be in Egypt and had their national beginnings there” (p. 100).

⁵⁸ The categories of “narrative” and “genealogy” are not fully distinct, for most genealogies include narrative notes (especially at the conclusion for transition) and most narratives include genealogical data, all due to the editorial work of the final author.

⁵⁹ So J. Severino Croatto, “De la creación al Sinaí: Periodización de la historia en el Pentateuco,” *RevistB* 47 (1985) 48, as highlighted by Thomas, *These Are the Generations* 59.

Fig. 6: Narrative and Genealogy in the *toledot* of Genesis

	Preface (1:1–2:3)	
i	These are the <i>toledot</i> of the Heavens and the Earth (2:4–4:26)	N (+GL/S)
ii	This is the book of the <i>toledot</i> of Adam (5:1–6:8)	GL (+N)
iii	These are the <i>toledot</i> of Noah (6:9–9:29) <i>And</i> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Noah's sons (10:1–11:9)	N GS (+N)
iv	These are the <i>toledot</i> of Shem (11:10–11:26) <i>And</i> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Terah (11:27–25:11) <i>And</i> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Ishmael (25:12–18) <i>And</i> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Isaac (25:19–35:29) <i>And</i> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Esau (36:1–8; 36:9–37:1)	GL N (+GS) GS N GS (+N+GS)
v	These are the <i>toledot</i> of Jacob (37:2–50:26)	N (+GS+N)

KEY: N = Narrative; GL = Linear Genealogy; GS = Segmented Genealogy

2. *Linear vs. segmented genealogies.* As is clear from the chart, two distinct genres of genealogy are identified. The genealogies covered under the *toledot* of Adam (Genesis 5) and the *toledot* of Shem (ch. 11) are mainly *linear*, in that they focus on a single descendent in each succeeding generation through the tenth (or ninth in the MT of ch. 11), after which three sons are distinguished, the first gaining focus in the ensuing narrative (*Shem*, Ham, and Japheth [5:32]; *Abra(ha)m*, Nahor, and Haran [11:26]).⁶⁰ In contrast, the genealogies headed by the *toledot* of Noah's sons (also

⁶⁰ Whereas Genesis 5 contains a *ten* generation linear genealogy before the single segmented generation of three sons, the MT of 11:10–26 has only *nine* generations of linear genealogy before the segmented generation. This structure places Abra(ha)m in the tenth generation from Shem and the twentieth from Adam. It also places Abra(ha)m as the seventh generation from "Eber," the eponymous ancestor of the Hebrews, who himself is the fourteenth generation (7x2) from Adam. In contrast, the LXX of 11:12–13 adds Kainan as the son of Arpachshad and father of Shelah (also in 10:24 and Luke 3:36 but not in 1 Chr 1:18, 24 [but see below]), thus extending the ancestor list to ten generations and making the basic structure of chapters 5 and 11 completely parallel. While placing Shelah rather than Eber in the fourteenth generation after Adam, this numbering retains the seven generations from Eber to Abra(ha)m and makes the patriarch the twenty-first generation (7x3) from Adam. For more on these and other patterns, see Jack M. Sasson, "A Genealogical 'Conversion' in Biblical Chronography," *ZAW* 90 (1978) 171–85, esp. 176–77. For a critique of Sasson, which notes some methodological weaknesses to his approach, see David T. Bryan, "A Reevaluation of Genesis 4 and 5 in Light of Recent Studies in Genealogical Fluidity," *ZAW* 99 (1987) 180–88. In my view, the mere fact that new "significant" patterns arise with and without the inclusion of Kainan gives caution to positing much literary license in the author's crafting of the original list, whichever it is. Furthermore, if the MT is original, the mere fact that the linear genealogies in chapter 5 and 11 are not identical in structure should guard one from seeing aesthetic purpose as the primary guide in their formation. For a discussion of the numerical challenges related to the textual tradition of Gen 11:10–26 in the MT, LXX, and SamP, see R. W. Klein, "Archaic Chronologies and the Textual History of the OT," *HTR* 67 (1974) 255–63 and Gerhard Larsson, "The Chronology of the Pentateuch: A Comparison of the MT and LXX," *JBL* 102 (1983) 401–9. Klein argues that the ancestor lists of the MT, LXX, and SamP are all different attempts to solve chronological difficulties in an original common tradition that has now been lost. In contrast, Larsson argues that the LXX is an intentional attempt to overcome numerical difficulties perceived in the original MT (esp. 401–4). If the MT listing is original, however, one must reconcile the inclusion of Kainan in Jesus' genealogy from Luke 3:36, which clearly follows the LXX. For a recent response to the proposed "difficulties" of the MT, a discussion of how one should interpret the genealogies with respect to historicity and

called the Table of Nations, ch. 10), the *toledot* of Ishmael (ch. 25), and the *toledot* of Esau (ch. 36) are all *segmented*, identifying all descendants in each succeeding generation.⁶¹

3. *Restriction and rejection in the toledot.* Over a generation ago, Joseph Scharbert recognized that one way Genesis increasingly narrows focus toward a particular line of promise is by using some *toledot* to exclude certain groups and other *toledot* to carry ahead the hope for blessing.⁶² The “exclusion-*toledot*” (*Ausscheidungstoledot*) were connected with individuals like Ishmael and Esau, who enjoyed earlier blessings but were not part of the chosen line itself, whereas the “promise-*toledot*” (*Verheißungstoledot*) highlighted figures like Isaac and Jacob, who received and carried forward hopes for blessing and of serving as agents of blessing.⁶³

While Scharbert’s categories were more theological than formal, later scholars helpfully developed his conclusions, adding to them a formal basis. Brevard Childs, for example, noted, “The function of the vertical [i.e. linear] genealogies is to trace an unbroken line of descendants from Adam to Jacob, and at the same time provide a framework in which to incorporate the narrative traditions of the patriarchs The three segmented genealogies (10.1; 25.12; 36.1) are placed in their proper sequential order, but remain tangential to the one chosen line which is pursued by means of narratives and vertical genealogies.”⁶⁴

In a similar fashion but with focus on the role of all the *toledot* units in Genesis and not just those controlled by genealogies, Sven Tengström designated seven *toledot* as “narrating” (*erzählerische*) and three as “enumerating” (*aufzählende*). The seven are those *toledot* that trace Israel’s ancestry—i.e., the narratives and the linear

proposed gaps, and a strong argument in favor of the MT and for viewing the inclusion of Kainan in Luke 3:36 as non-original, see Travis R. Freeman, “Do the Genesis 5 and 11 Genealogies Contain Gaps?” in *Coming to Grips with Genesis: Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth* (ed. Terry Mortenson and Thane H. Ury; Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2008) 283–313; cf. idem, “A New Look at the Genesis 5 and 11 Fluidity Problem,” *AUSS* 42 (2004) 259–86; idem, “The Genesis 5 and 11 Fluidity Questions,” *TJ* 19/2 (2004) 83–90.

⁶¹ Linear genealogies take the form: A gave birth to B, who gave birth to C, who gave birth to D. In contrast, segmented genealogies take the form: A gave birth to B, C, and D; B gave birth to E, F, and G; C gave birth to H, I, and J; D gave birth to K, L, and M. The contemporary study of biblical genealogy finds its basis in Robert R. Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977). He distinguished the categories of linear and segmented (9, 19–20; cf. idem, “The Old Testament Genealogies in Recent Research,” *JBL* 94 [1975] 179; repr. in “*I Studied Inscriptions Before the Flood*”: *Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11* [SBT54; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994]). Childs spoke of *vertical vs. horizontal* genealogies with the same definitions (*Introduction to the Old Testament* 145–46).

⁶² Joseph Scharbert, “Der Sinn der *Toledot*-Formel in der Priesterschrift,” in *Wort, Gebot, Glaube. Beiträge zur Theologie des Alten Testaments. Walter Eichrodt zum 80. Geburtstag* (ed. Hans Joachim Stobe et al.; ATANT 59; Zürich: Zwingli, 1970) 45–56.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 46, 56.

⁶⁴ Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* 146. Accordingly, T. Desmond Alexander has stated, “To ensure that the main line of descent in Genesis is clearly established, segmented genealogies are never used in relation to it; only linear genealogies are employed (5:1–32; 11:10–26)” (“Genealogies, Seed and the Compositional Unity of Genesis,” *TynBul* 44 [1993] 259). Cf. Devora Steinmetz, *From Father to Son: Kinship, Conflict, and Continuity in Genesis* (LCBI; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991) 143.

genealogies (Gen 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 11:10; 11:27; 25:19; 37:2), whereas the three, embodying the segmented genealogies (= “tribal trees” [*Stammtafeln*]), detail Israel’s relationship to her neighbors (10:1; 25:12; 36:1).⁶⁵ That is, the segmented genealogies help fit Israel within their missional environment.

Stephen Kempf has observed how the patterns of clause predication in the genealogies provide further support for setting apart the segmented genealogies and for grouping the linear genealogies with the narratives. Specifically, whereas the segmented genealogies are most commonly simple lists of descendants expressed through verbless clauses, the linear genealogies progress through a succession of *wayyiqtol* verbs, the default predication pattern for historical narrative (e.g., Hiphil וַיִּבְרָא [wayyôlel] “and he fathered...”).⁶⁶ In a manner similar to Tengström, therefore, Kempf treats the linear genealogies as a sub-category of historical discourse, while considering the segmented genealogies descriptive discourse.⁶⁷

4. *Alternation of pacing and the mission of Israel in the toledot.* The pace of the overall storyline in Genesis is drastically altered depending on whether the genealogy is linear or segmented.⁶⁸ By use of the linear genealogies in chapters 5 and 11, the author moves the reader smoothly and rapidly beginning with the *toledot* progenitor (Adam or Shem) through successive descendants, one per generation, to the final generation, which is segmented and includes three sons, one of whom is in the line of promise. Matthew Thomas offers this perspective: “By covering large amounts of time with a brief list ... the author/redactor is able to move the narrative to those points more salient to the message of the author.”⁶⁹ More specifically, Umberto Cassuto noted that the shift in chapters 5 and 11 from a linear genealogy

⁶⁵ Sven Tengström, *Die Toledotformel und die literarische Struktur der priesterlichen Erweiterungsschichtim Pentateuch* (CBOTS 17; Uppsala: CWK Gleerup, 1981) 19–32; cf. Thomas, *These Are the Generations*, 92. Grouping the Genesis material this way does not deny the fact that the narratives themselves are “inherently messy” and “reach a relative closure and approximate moral balance” only after they “take account of much that is problematic and contingent” (Robinson, “Literary Functions of the Genealogies of Genesis” 598, cf. 605). What it affirms is that “the narrowness and predetermined fixity of each generation in the linear genealogy develops into the underlying logic of the narrative of promise” (ibid. 604). This is seen most directly in the way the narrative plot of Genesis repeatedly subverts the principle of birthright, thus bringing focus to the single chosen line of promise: Isaac is given preference over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, Joseph and Judah over their brothers, Ephraim over Manasseh, and Perez, ancestor of David, over Zerah (cf. Blenkinsopp, *Pentateuch* 109). As such, Andersen was correct when he observed (“Genealogical Prominence and the Structure of Genesis” 263): “Genealogies and stories work together in a complementary way to indicate who the most important participants are The more crucial opposition in Genesis is that between rejection and blessing rather than between genealogy and narrative. For ... both genealogy and story can expound the rejected line and both can expound the chosen line.” For a similar approach to Tengström’s with different higher-critical conclusions, see Bernard Renaud, “Les genealogies et la structure de l’histoire sacerdotale dans le livre de la Genèse,” *RB* (1990) 5–30.

⁶⁶ Kempf, “Discourse Analysis of Genesis 2:4b–3:24” 945, 966–68.

⁶⁷ Ibid. For an overview of the distinctions between historical and descriptive discourse, see Garrett and DeRouchie, *A Modern Grammar for Biblical Hebrew* 291–93, 296–301, 314–18.

⁶⁸ Thomas, *These Are the Generations* 86–88.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 88. In this regard, Robinson noted, “The genealogies exhibit movement, the measured pace of generation on generation, but it is only in retrospect that the last member of a line emerges as the de facto goal of the genealogy” (“Literary Functions of the Genealogies in Genesis” 595).

to a segmented generation emphasizes that the final “generation is not just an ordinary link in the genealogical chain, like the preceding generations, but one of intrinsic and outstanding significance.”⁷⁰

The driving, in-motion nature of the linear genealogies identifies them with the book’s forward-looking, hope-filled theme of progressive productivity under the blessing of God. Even in the wake of sin, God is working out his blessing-commission through a select group of image-bearers in each generation—specifically those who call on his name (Gen 4:26), walk with God (5:22, 24), believe in his promises (15:6), fear God (22:12), and find their hearts encouraged by the hope of the coming deliverer (3:15; 22:17b–18; 49:10).

In contrast to the linear genealogies, segmented genealogies by nature slow the overall storyline, creating disjunction and forcing the reader to pause longer on the figures. We must therefore ask: Why would the author of Genesis slow the reader down in order to consider those peoples and nations that are excluded from the line of promise?⁷¹

You will recall that Tengström concluded that the segmented genealogies help place Israel within the context of their world.⁷² Thomas limits their purpose to a memorial, in that the segmented genealogies preserve the memory of those who are not Israel, allowing the reader “to set aside concern for other nations, so we may focus on the next part of the story—Israel.”⁷³ But why must Israel preserve the memory of the rejected, and how does this relate the overall purpose of the book?

Within Genesis, the seven *toledot* units made up of linear genealogies and narrative work hand-in-hand to disclose how, through a particular line of descent climaxing in Israel, God preserved his blessing-commission and the hope for a curse-defeating, regel offspring. In contrast, the three segmented *toledot* serve to place Israel within their missional context. It is the narratives and linear genealogies alone that highlight the ancestry of Israel as the chosen line of promise, but the segmented genealogies are retained in order to give ever-present reminders to Israelite readers that their image-bearing purpose is for the sake of the nations and that their

⁷⁰ Cassuto, *Commentary on the Book of Genesis* 2:266–67; cf. Thomas, *These Are the Generations* 91.

⁷¹ Thomas writes (*These Are the Generations* 87): “The pacing of the segmented genealogies causes the reader to linger on a single generation or on just a couple generations. This slowing of the narrative pace—or at least not speeding it up as much as in a linear genealogy—shows evidence of the author’s/redactor’s interest in having the reader attend to these people, but the purpose of this pause is as yet unknown.”

⁷² Tengström, *Toledotformel* 19–32.

⁷³ Thomas, *These Are the Generations* 92. More fully, he writes: “The function of the vertical [i.e., linear] ... genealogies is to move the story along, as opposed to the segmented genealogies, which have a preservative function” (p. 55). “The segmented genealogies function as repositories for those family lines that will not be the narrative focus (secondary lines). By being recorded, they are preserved and honored, yet remain outside of the main narrative thread” (p. 83). “While the function of the narrating (and linear) type of genealogical formula is to provide continuity between past and future, the enumerative (and segmented) type is used to define other people groups as distinct from Israel and preserve them before moving on The Table of Nations thus allows us to set aside concern for other nations, so we may focus on the next part of the story—Israel” (p. 92).

longed-for deliver would be the agent of blessing to all the families of the earth (12:3; 22:17b–18).⁷⁴ The world was not created for Israel but she for the world.⁷⁵

That the segmented genealogies are clearly designed to highlight Israel's mission field is emphasized by an apparent intentional link between these genealogies and the commission of Abra(ha)m. Somewhat conspicuous in Gen 12:2 is the linking of Abra(ha)m's future with nationhood, for throughout Scripture the geopolitical term **גַּו** "nation" is most commonly associated with Israel's neighbors, whereas the more familial term **עַם** "people" is applied to Israel.⁷⁶ In contrast, in 12:3 and 28:14, which form an inclusio around Abraham's life, those that are to be blessed in Abra(ha)m are not called "nations" but **מִשְׁפְּחוֹת** "families/clans/kinship groups," which is one of the titles associated with the members of the *toledot* of Noah's sons in Genesis 10 (= the Table of Nations) and of the *toledot* of Esau in Genesis 36.⁷⁷ Specifically, in the former, the world's peoples are portrayed as spreading out "each with his own language, by their clan (**לְמִשְׁפַּחֵיהֶם**), in their nations" (10:5; cf. vv. 18, 20, 31, 32). Similarly, in the summary statement regarding Esau's family line, we are told that the names of the chiefs were given "according to their clans (**לְמִשְׁפַּחֵיהֶם**) and their dwelling places" (36:40). The author's use of **גַּו** and **מִשְׁפְּחוֹת** in 12:2–3 seems to emphasize the elevated place that the kingdom God builds through Abra(ha)m will have in relation to the other kingdoms of the

⁷⁴ I do not fully agree, therefore, with the following assertion by Thomas (*These Are the Generations* 89): "Whereas the linear genealogies function to move the narrative from one key figure in the *toledot* scheme to another, their segmented counterparts are mainly concerned with figures that are not key to the narratives at all."

⁷⁵ One additional element in Genesis that adds to the book's missional thrust is what Hamilton has identified as the book's geographical design. He writes (Hamilton, *Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–11* 10): "The crucial center section of Genesis (chs. 12–36) is bracketed geographically by two sections of the Near Eastern world with whose history that of Israel would be constantly interlocked. The impact created by these broad geographical contours is that Genesis is a book about world history The ultimate reason for the election of Abraham is that the nations of the earth (such as those falling within the geographical boundaries of chs. 1–11 and 37–50) might find the knowledge of God and his blessing."

⁷⁶ Generally stated, while **עַם** is a people or ethnic community brought together by blood relationship, **גַּו** is a people brought together by political affiliation (Daniel I. Block, "Nations/Nationality," in *NIDOTTE* [5 vols.; ed. Willem VanGemeren; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997] 4:966; Ronald E. Clements and G. Johannes Botterweck, "**גַּו**," in *TDOT* 2:426). On my count, of the 504 instances of **גַּו** in the Hebrew Bible, only 53 refer to Israel (= 10.52%; see Gen 12:2; 18:18; 35:11; 46:3; Exod 19:6; 33:13; Deut 26:5; 32:28; Josh 3:17; 5:6, 8; 10:13; Judg 2:20; 2 Sam 7:23; Isa 1:4; 9:3; 10:6; 26:2, 15; 49:7; 58:2; Jer 2:11; 5:9, 29; 7:28; 9:8[9]; 31:36; 33:24; Ezek 2:3; 36:13–14; 37:22; Mic 4:7; Zeph 2:1, 9; Hag 2:14; Mal 3:9; Pss 33:12; 43:1; 83:4; 106:5; 1 Chr 17:21; 2 Chr 15:6). If one only treats the 108 singular instances, 52 point to Israel (48.15%). Ezekiel 2:3 is the only occurrence of plural "nations" referring to Israel, unless the plural references in the Abrahamic promises also point only to Israel and not the Gentiles (see Gen 17:4–6, 16; 35:11; 48:19), which seems unlikely in light of the contrast of Israel with the "nations" in these contexts (see 18:18; 22:18; 26:4).

⁷⁷ The term **מִשְׁפָּחָה** occurs 224 times in the OT and 120 times in the Pentateuch. Only 12 of these occurrences are in Genesis, wherein the term identifies the groupings by which animals left the ark (8:19), the members of the segmented genealogies (10:5, 18, 20, 31, 32; 36:40), the mission field of Abra(ha)m and his offspring (12:3; 28:14), and the broader kinship group of Abraham from whom Isaac was to find a wife (24:38, 40–41).

world.⁷⁸ Furthermore, it highlights that the very peoples listed in the segmented genealogies are indeed the ones to whom Israel must serve an agent of blessing.

5. *Significance for structure and message.*

a. *The narrative-genealogy pattern gives further support for treating the linear Shem genealogy that begins in 11:10 as introductory to what follows.* In accordance with what was already highlighted regarding the introductory nature of the Shem *toledot* (Gen 11:10), the narrative-genealogy-narrative-genealogy configuration adds additional support for not making 11:27 a major break in the book. Note the pattern shift in the alternation between narrative and genealogy in 11:10; it is the only place where two genealogies fall side-by-side. This oscillation led J. Severino Croatto to suggest that the transition to the Patriarchal material actually occurs at the end of the Tower of Babel episode in 11:1–9, thus making the *toledot* of Shem a theological preface to what follows.⁷⁹ Similarly, after observing the *toledot* pattern from 11:10 forward (genealogy-narrative-genealogy-narrative-genealogy-narrative), Gordon Wenham suggested that the Shem *toledot* goes with what follows, now serving “as a preface to the story of Abraham in the overall pattern of Genesis.”⁸⁰

b. *The similar placement, nature, and purpose of the linear Adam toledot and Shem toledot suggest that together they introduce two parallel panels (A: 5:1–11:9; B: 11:10–50:26) that are set apart from the introductory toledot of the heavens and earth (2:4–4:26).* Beyond the five major divisions signaled by asyndeton, two literary features in the overall flow of Genesis suggest that the author of the book intended the reader to view Genesis 5 and 11 as the beginnings of two parallel sections. First, after the initial *toledot* of the heavens and the earth (Gen 2:4–4:26), there are only two times in the book where *toledot* units that address the chosen line of promise stand side by side—the *toledot* of Adam stands adjacent to the *toledot* of Noah, and the *toledot* of Shem leads into the *toledot* of Terah.⁸¹ Second, the asyndetic *toledot* of Adam and Shem that front these groupings are the only linear genealogies among the *toledot* and both bear a similar function, the first moving the line of promise rapidly forward from Adam to Noah and his three sons (5:1–6:8) and the second moving it swiftly from Noah’s son Shem to Terah and his three sons (11:10–26).⁸²

⁷⁸ So too Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012) 244.

⁷⁹ Croatto, “De la creación al Sinaí” 46.

⁸⁰ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* 248. The shift in pattern at 11:10, wherein two genealogical *toledot* stand substantially back to back, calls into question the proposal of Klaus Koch, who distinguished the narrative or “epochal-*toledot*” (= “Epochen-*Toledot*”) from the genealogical or “generational-*toledot*” (= “Generationen-*Toledot*”); “Die *Toledot*-Formeln als Strukturprinzip des Buches Genesis,” in *Recht und Ethos im Alten Testament—Gestalt und Wirkung: Festschrift für Horst Seebass zum 65. Geburtstag* [ed. Stefan Beyerle et al.; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1999] 183–91). According to Koch, the narrative portions introduce the book’s five main divisions, are self-contained, and overview discrete epochs that bear effects beyond their end; the genealogical portions in contrast usually bring epochs to a close and consist of lists of descendants from the primary head (pp. 186–87).

⁸¹ As observed by Andersen, “Genealogical Prominence and the Structure of Genesis” 255.

⁸² Westermann (*Genesis 1–11* 14) rightly identifies that the linear nature of chapter 5 is not exactly the same as that of chapter 11, for the latter does not include mention of the lifespan and death. Nevertheless, “both of them form a steady, monotonous succession of generations that stretches from Adam,

The parallel placement, nature, and purpose of these linear genealogies suggest they initiate two parallel panels within the book, each containing two of the five macro-divisions. The first runs from Adam through the Table of Nations and Tower of Babel episode (A: 5:1–11:9), and the second moves from Shem through the death of Jacob (B: 11:10–50:26). The placement of these macro-sections after the preface of 1:1–2:3 and after the initial *toledot* of the heavens and the earth, suggests that the body of the work will properly be understood only in light of the blessing-commission of 1:28 and the overview of mankind’s rebellion, God’s seed-promise, and the curse in 2:4–4:26. Figure 7 overviews my proposed macrostructure for the whole of Genesis.

Fig. 7: The Structural Role of Narrative and Genealogy in the *toledot* of Genesis

		Preface (1:1–2:3)	
1	i	These are the <i>toledot</i> of the Heavens and the Earth (2:4–4:26)	N (+GL/S)
2A	ii	This is the book of the <i>toledot</i> of Adam (5:1–6:8)	GL (+N)
	iii	These are the <i>toledot</i> of Noah (6:9–9:29) <i>And</i> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Noah’s Sons (10:1–11:9)	N GS (+N)
2B	iv	These are the <i>toledot</i> of Shem (11:10–11:26)	GL
		<i>And</i> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Terah (11:27–25:11)	N (+GS)
		<i>And</i> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Ishmael (25:12–18)	GS
		<i>And</i> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Isaac (25:19–35:29)	N
		<i>And</i> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Esau (36:1–8; 36:9–37:1)	GS (+N+GS)
	v	These are the <i>toledot</i> of Jacob (37:2–50:26)	N (+GS+N)

KEY: N = Narrative; GL = Linear Genealogy; GS = Segmented Genealogy

The likelihood that 5:1 indeed begins this major unit is supported by two observations. First, the *toledot* formula related to the heavens and the earth in 2:4 is the only *toledot* catchphrase in all of Scripture wherein the progenitor of the *toledot* is something other than a named human person. Genesis 2:4–4:26, therefore, stands out by its distinction in this regard.

Second, the *toledot* heading in 5:1 is itself unique in its wording, for only here is the pattern “אֱלֹהֵי תוֹלְדוֹת + named progenitor” substituted with זֶה סֵפֶר תוֹלְדוֹת אָדָם (zeh sēper tōlēdōt ādām “This is the book of the *toledot* of Adam”).⁸³ Long ago Gerhard von Rad concluded from this distinct phrasing that there was an original “*toledot* book (‘Tōledōt-Buch’),” of which 5:1 was the original introduction.⁸⁴ One

through Noah and one of his three sons to Terah and his three sons, 11:26, one of whom is the starting point of a new history.”

⁸³ The LXX renders 2:4 in the same pattern as 5:1: Αὕτη ἡ βίβλος γενέσεως... (*Hautē hē biblos gene-seōs*... “This is the book of the origins of...”). Both Aquila and Symmachus, however, retain in 2:4 Αὕται αἱ γενέσεις... (*Hautai de hai genesis*, “These are the origins of...”), which is the pattern found in all other *toledot* formulae in the book. Cf. Neh 7:5.

⁸⁴ von Rad, *Priesterschrift im Hexateuch* 33–40; cf. Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973) 301.

does not have to affirm von Rad's conclusions regarding the proposed P-document to gain benefit from his formal observation.

Furthermore, if, as Duane Garrett has suggested, the pre-Genesis *toledot* sources were all genealogical in nature,⁸⁵ then he would also most likely be correct that the narrative in 2:4–4:26 was not part of the original *toledot* sources but that a *toledot* heading was given to the material “in deliberate imitation of the *toledot* sources.”⁸⁶ What this means is that the 9(10) *toledot* headings from 5:1 to the end of the book were originally united together and that only in the final form were they expanded through the introduction of the *toledot* of the heavens and the earth (2:4).

c. *Following the worldview-shaping preface in 1:1–2:3, the macro-structure of Genesis includes two major units: the introductory section that established the world's need for divine blessing (2:4–4:26) and an extended discussion in two parts on the hope for blessing (5:1–11:9 and 11:10–50:26).* The book of Genesis is framed in the context of divine blessing, wherein the divine image-bearers were commissioned to reflect, resemble, and represent God on a global scale, all through radical God-glorifying dependence (Gen 1:26–28). When viewed through this worldview-shaping prefatory lens, the ten *toledot* units in the rest of the book appear to clarify how the original *blessing-commission* was carried forward, rejected, and preserved, and how it would ultimately be realized in this fallen world.⁸⁷

Genesis 2:4–4:26 (the *toledot* of the heavens and the earth) highlights humanity's *need for blessing* by recording the account of mankind's rebellion. Clearly, the fulfillment of God's global mission will only be realized where merciful divine enablement meets human dependence and trust.

With this, it is striking that even before his just judgment on the first couple for their sin, the Lord announced that two distinct lines of spiritual descent would come from the Garden. He also noted that from the chosen line a single, male descendant would arise who would definitively put an end to the serpent's kingdom-destroying schemes (3:15). Thus the hope for God's blessing that colors the rest of the book is given focus in the curse-overcoming deliverer.

The remaining *toledot* units in Genesis (5:1–50:26) unpack this hope for blessing, detailing the initial growth and interrelationship of the chosen and rejected lines. The former is highlighted in the linear genealogies and narratives and is recognized by their enjoyment of divine grace, devotion to God, and hope in his promised deliverer. The latter is addressed primarily in the segmented genealogies and is characterized by self-exaltation and hostility to God and his ways. This group provides the principal object of Israel's mission.

⁸⁵ Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis* 97; cf. von Rad, Genesis 70.

⁸⁶ Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis* 99; cf. Skinner, Genesis 41; von Rad, Genesis 63; Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* 147.

⁸⁷ Hamilton writes (*Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17* 11): “After the series of sorry examples presented in chs. 1–11, we are meant to read chs. 12ff. (patriarchal history) as the solution to this problem Genesis is moving us progressively from generation (chs. 1–2), to degeneration (chs. 3–11), to regeneration (chs. 12–50).”

The section on hope is divided into two parts, which address humanity's merciful preservation and provision for kingdom blessing. The first opens with a linear genealogy followed by a brief narrative, which together report the perpetuation of kingdom hope from Adam through Noah, all in the context of threat (5:1–6:8). Then through a mixture of narrative and segmented genealogies, we learn of how, in the context of judgment, God protected the promised line and mercifully renewed humanity's kingdom purpose (6:9–11:9).

The second part also opens with a linear genealogy and then includes a number of narratives interspersed with segmented genealogies. Together they highlight the perpetuation of kingdom hope from Shem through Terah and God's merciful provision for universal kingdom blessing through Abraham and his offspring, climaxing in a single redeemer (11:10–37:1). The unit closes with an extended narrative that recounts the promised line's preservation while also stressing the developing kingdom hope for a royal deliverer (37:2–50:26).

IV. SUMMARY AND SYNTHESIS

The final step in this study of Genesis is to summarize the conclusions and to provide a succinct statement of the book's message in light of its overall structure. Section 1 argues that the ten *toledot* formulae are transitional headings (not colophons) that progressively direct the reader's focus from progenitor to progeny and narrow the reader's focus from all the world to Israel, through whom all families of the earth will be blessed. The treatment of the *toledot* as superscripts also makes Gen 1:1–2:3 the prefatory lens into the rest of the book. As such, it seems likely that the development and narrowing that takes place through the book's *toledot* units will be properly understood only in light of the climactic blessing-commission of 1:28, wherein the divine imagers are called upon to fill and oversee the earth for the fame of God's name and in the context of dependence. It is also likely that this commission works hand in hand with 3:15, which tells of two spiritual lines of descent and promises a male curse-overcoming deliverer.

Section 2 considers the structural significance of five of the *toledot* formulae beginning with the conjunction *way* and the other five standing independent without coordination. The distinction suggests that the five coordinate *toledot* divisions are linked to the *toledot* divisions that precede, thus creating five, not ten, macro-sections in the book. The largest chain of *toledot* units runs from 11:10–37:1, suggesting that the account of God's covenant with the Patriarchs is most central to the book's overarching message. The structure also suggests that the Shem *toledot* beginning in 11:10 is intended to introduce the Patriarchal Cycle that follows rather than to conclude what has generally been termed the Primeval History. Finally, the progressive narrowing evidenced in the *toledot* is directly linked to the points of transition from one of the five major *toledot* sections to the next: all creation (heavens and earth, 2:4) to humanity in general (Adam, 5:1) to all living humanity (after the execution of the rest; Noah, 6:9) to a subset of living humanity (through a shift in genealogical focus; Shem, 11:10) to Israel (Jacob, 37:2). Increased focus, there-

fore, is given to the line of promise as the ancestors of Israel, all in fulfillment of God's kingdom-building plan.

Section 3 reflects on the structural and rhetorical role played by the various narratives and genealogies that flow out of the *toledot* headings. The five *toledot* with narratives (heavens and earth, Noah, Terah, Isaac, Jacob) and two *toledot* with linear genealogies (Adam, Shem) focus on the chosen line of promise and carry forward the blessing-commission and hope for the curse-overcoming deliverer, whereas the three segmented genealogies principally highlight the rejected lines and provide a lasting reminder to Israel of their mission field. The break at 11:10 in the narrative-genealogy-narrative-genealogy pattern gives added support to reading the Shem *toledot* as introductory to what follows. Furthermore, the similar placement, nature, and purpose of the linear genealogies in chapters 5 and 11 (the *toledot* of Adam and Shem) suggest that together they introduce two parallel panels (A: 5:1–11:9; B: 11:10–50:26) that are set apart from the introductory *toledot* of the heavens and the earth (2:4–4:26). With this structure in mind, the following general outline was proposed:

1. Preface: The Blessing Commission (1:1–2:3)
2. The Need for Blessing: Humanity's Perversion and the Merciful Kingdom Promise of a Curse-Overcoming Seed (2:4–4:26)
3. The Hope for Blessing: Humanity's Merciful Preservation & Provision for Kingdom Blessing (5:1–50:26)

Figure 8 provides my synthesis of the book's structure and message. While some may adjust the wording or emphases in the exegetical outline's interpretive headings, the structural shape of the outline itself grows directly out of the formal and literary features of the book itself.

Fig. 8: Genesis at a Glance

		<i>toledot Structure</i>	<i>Genre</i>
		Preface. Biblical Worldview Foundations (1:1–2:3)	
1	i	These are the <i>toledot</i> of the H and E (2:4–4:26)	N (+GL/S)
2A	ii	This is the book of the <i>toledot</i> of Adam (5:1–6:8)	GL (+N)
	iii	These are the <i>toledot</i> of Noah (6:9–9:29) <i>And</i> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Noah's Sons (10:1–11:9)	N GS (+N)
2B	iv	These are the <i>toledot</i> of Shem (11:10–11:26)	GL
		<i>And</i> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Terah (11:27–25:11)	N (+GS)
		<i>And</i> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Ishmael (25:12–18)	GS
		<i>And</i> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Isaac (25:19–35:29)	N
	<i>And</i> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Esau (36:1–8; 36:9–37:1)	GS (+N+GS)	
v	These are the <i>toledot</i> of Jacob (37:2–50:26)	N (+GS+N)	
KEY: N = Narrative; GL = Linear Genealogy; GS = Segmented Genealogy			

<i>Main Theme</i>
The means by which God's blessing-commission of kingdom advancement will be fulfilled in a cursed and perverted world is through an ever-expanding God-oriented, hope-filled, mission-minded community, climaxing in a single king in the line of promise who will perfectly reflect, resemble, and represent God and who will definitively overcome all evil, thus restoring right order to God's kingdom for the fame of his name.
<i>Outline</i>
<p>I. Preface. <i>The Blessing-Commission: Humanity's Productive Kingdom-Purpose as God-Imagers</i> (1:1–2:3)</p> <p>II. <i>The Need for Blessing: Humanity's Perversion & the Merciful Kingdom Promise of a Curse-Overcoming Seed</i> (2:4–4:26)</p> <p>III. <i>The Hope for Blessing: Humanity's Merciful Preservation & Provision for Kingdom Blessing</i> (5:1–50:26)</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">A. <i>The Missional Blessing Renewed</i> (5:1–11:9)</p> <p style="padding-left: 4em;">1. The Perpetuation of Kingdom Hope from Adam through Noah in the Context of Threat (5:1–6:8)</p> <p style="padding-left: 4em;">2. The Promised Line's Protection & the Merciful Restoration of Humanity's Kingdom Purpose in the Context of Judgment (6:9–11:9)</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">B. <i>The Agency for Blessing Declared</i> (11:10–50:26)</p> <p style="padding-left: 4em;">1. The Perpetuation of Kingdom Hope from Shem through Terah & the Merciful Provision for Universal Kingdom Blessing through Abraham & His Seed (11:10–37:1)</p> <p style="padding-left: 4em;">2. The Promised Line's Preservation & the Developing Kingdom Hope for a Royal Deliverer (37:2–50:26)</p>

As was noted, the bulk of the literary weight in Genesis is given to the large unit in 11:10–37:1 that opens with the *toledot* of Shem and addresses the agency by which God's global kingdom purposes will be realized. In this light, I offer the following as the main theme of Genesis: the means by which God's blessing-commission of kingdom advancement will be fulfilled in a cursed and perverted world is through an ever-expanding God-oriented, hope-filled, mission-minded community, climaxing in a single king in the line of promise who will perfectly reflect, resemble, and represent God and who will definitively overcome all evil, thus restoring right order to God's kingdom for the fame of his name.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ An earlier draft of this paper was presented on November 17, 2011, at the Evangelical Theological Society's annual meeting in San Francisco, CA. I would like to thank all who offered constructive feedback, and I also thank my colleagues at Bethlehem College and Seminary for interacting with this piece.