

Genesis 5 — The Book of the Generations of Adam — the Likeness Handed Down, the Drumbeat of the Dying, the One Who Walked and Was Not, and the Son Named for Comfort

Genesis 5: the book of the generations of Adam, the ten-name line from Adam to Noah. God made man in his own likeness, and Adam begets Seth 'in his own likeness, after his image'; then the register runs its solemn cadence — he lived, and he begat, and he died — eight times over, mortality collecting the wages of the Fall generation by generation. In the middle of the list one entry breaks the pattern: Enoch walked with God, and was not, for God took him. Methuselah lives the longest span in scripture, and Lamech names his son Noah, hoping this one will comfort a race worn out on cursed ground. The primeval genealogy that closes the world of Eden and sets up the Flood; read with its Restoration companions Moses 6 and Moses 7, already live on this site.

Genesis 4 ended on a whisper of hope — "then began men to call upon the name of the LORD" (Gen. 4:26), the line of Seth turning back toward God while the line of Cain hardened into Lamech's song of vengeance. Genesis 5 picks that surviving line up by name and carries it, generation by generation, from Adam all the way down to Noah, whose sons will inherit the world after the Flood. On the surface it is the least dramatic chapter we have yet met: a register of names, ages, and burials, the kind of page a modern reader is tempted to skim. Do not skim it. This is the chapter where the Bible first counts the cost of Genesis 3, and it counts it in the only currency the Fall ever pays out — in graves.

Hebrew Word Studies

sepher (H5612) / toledoth (H8435) (סֵפֶר / לְוִיֹּת) — **book, document, written record / generations, genealogy, the account of what is brought forth v. 1.** The chapter's title is *sepher toledoth*, "the book of the generations," and both words repay a second look. *Sepher* is the ordinary word for a written document — a scroll, a deed, a record — and its appearance here is quietly momentous: this is one of the first times the Bible calls attention to itself as a *written* thing, a kept record, a book. The generations of Adam are not left to memory; they are inscribed. *Toledoth* is the richer word. It comes from *yalad*, "to bear, to beget" — the same verb that drums through this chapter as "begat" — so *toledoth* means literally "beget-ings," the account of what a person brings forth. It is the great structural word of Genesis, heading the story again and again ("these are the generations of the heavens and of the earth," Gen. 2:4; "the generations of Noah," Gen. 6:9; "the generations of the sons of Noah," Gen. 10:1), each *toledoth* handing the narrative forward to the next age. And it is the word the New Testament reaches for when it opens with "The book of the generation [*biblos genese*■s] of Jesus Christ" (Matt. 1:1) — Matthew deliberately echoing Genesis 5:1, running his own genealogy from Abraham to the One in whom the whole line of *toledoth* finally arrives. The register of the dying begins with the same phrase that will one day announce the birth of the Deathless.

demuth (H1823) / tselem (H6754) (דְּמוּת / צֶלֶם) — **likeness, resemblance, similitude / image, representative form, that which is fashioned vv. 1, 3.** The two words are *demuth*, "likeness," and *tselem*, "image," and Genesis places them with deliberate care. *Demuth* is the softer, comparative word — a resemblance, a "something like," the word Ezekiel keeps reaching for when he strains to describe the throne of God ("the *likeness* of a throne... the *likeness* as the appearance of a man," Ezek. 1:26). *Tselem* is the harder, more concrete word — a carved or fashioned form, the very word later used, with bitter irony, for the graven *images* Israel was forbidden to make (Num. 33:52; 2 Kgs. 11:18). Set together they say something no single word could: humanity is both *like* God (the resemblance) and a *representation* of God (the fashioned form), a living statue meant to stand for its Maker in the world. Here is the wonder of the chapter's design. Genesis 1:26 uses the pair of God and man; Genesis 5:1 repeats it — "in the likeness of God made he him"; and then Genesis 5:3 hands the identical pair down one more rung, from Adam to Seth, "in his own likeness, after his image." The grammar itself teaches the doctrine: the image of God is not a museum piece left back in Eden but a heritable resemblance, begotten from father to son. And it is precisely this *tselem* that grounds the sanctity of human life after the Flood — "whoso sheddeth man's blood... for in the image [*tselem*] of God made he man" (Gen. 9:6). To carry the image is to carry a worth no fall can cancel, and to be, however faintly, a likeness of the Father even while walking toward the grave.

chayah (H2421 / H2425) / yalad (H3205) (חָיָה / יָלַד) — **to live, to have life, to remain alive / to bear, to beget, to bring forth vv. 3–32.** Two verbs carry the entire chapter, and they are set against a third that is only implied. *Chayah*, "to live," opens nearly every entry — "and Adam *lived*... and Seth *lived*... and Enos *lived*" — the same root behind the name *Chavvah* (Eve), "the mother of all *living*" (Gen. 3:20), and behind the great confessions of the God who is himself alive, "as the LORD

liveth." *Yalad*, "to beget, to bring forth," is the chapter's other engine — the "begat" that appears in nearly every verse and the very root of *toledoth*, "generations," in the title. So the register runs on *life* and *bringing-forth*: men live, and while they live they bring forth more life. But listen for the third word, the one that closes each entry — "and he died." The Hebrew there is *muth*, "to die," the verb of the sentence pronounced in Eden. Genesis 5 is built on the collision of these words: *chayah* and *yalad* driving forward, life and birth, against *muth* pulling every man down at the last. And the chapter quietly records which verb has the longer reach. Every patriarch's *chayah* ends in *muth* — except Enoch's, whose living does not close in dying but in being *taken*. The verbs of life and birth are the human answer to death, generation refusing to let the grave have the final entry; and in one man, the answer is made complete, a life that *lives* (*chayah*) straight through without ever reaching *muth* at all. The whole gospel hope is latent in that one exception to the chapter's grammar.

halak (H1980) / Elohim (H430) (הלך / אֱלֹהִים) — to walk, to go, to conduct one's life / God, the Divine vv. 22, 24. The phrase that breaks the chapter is *hithhallek et-ha'Elohim* — "he walked with God" — and it is worth knowing how unusual the words are as Genesis arranges them. *Halak*, "to walk," is one of the most common verbs in Hebrew, but it is also the Bible's steady metaphor for the moral shape of a life: one "walks" in the law, "walks" in darkness or in light, "walks" uprightly. The form used of Enoch is reflexive and intensive — not merely that he walked to God once, but that he walked back and forth with him, habitually, a settled companionship, day after day in the divine presence. And the partner named is *Elohim*, God — with the little word *et*, "with," making the relationship mutual and near: not walking *before* God (as Abraham is told, Gen. 17:1) or *after* God, but *with* him, side by side. Only two men in Genesis earn this exact phrase — Enoch here and Noah in 6:9 — and both are hinges of the book, one translated out of a doomed world and one carried through its drowning. The Hebrew keeps a quiet secret in the reflexive form: to walk with God is not a single heroic act but a practice, a wearing of the same path smooth by repetition. Enoch did not vault into heaven; he *walked* there, one ordinary day of companionship at a time, until the walking simply did not stop at the grave. Micah will later distill the whole of true religion into this verb — "to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8) — and Enoch is its first and highest example: a man whose daily walk with God became a translation, and whose city learned the same gait and followed him out of the world.

nacham (H5162) (נָחַם) — to comfort, to console; to be moved to relief, to ease sorrow v. 29. Lamech names his son on the strength of this verb — *nacham*, "to comfort" — and it is one of the tenderest and most surprising words in Hebrew. Its root sense is a deep breath, a sigh of relief, the easing of what has weighed on the chest; from there it means to console the grieving, to bring rest to the worn. Lamech reaches for it out of exhaustion: "This same shall *comfort* us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed" — a farmer's prayer that the next generation might find relief from the thorns of Genesis 3. The word will go on to carry the highest consolations in scripture. It is the great imperative of the exile's rescue — "*Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God*" (Isa. 40:1) — and the promise that outlasts every grief, "As one whom his mother *comforteth*, so will I *comfort* you" (Isa. 66:13). The Psalmist leans his whole fear upon it: "thy rod and thy staff they *comfort* me" (Ps. 23:4). There is even a shadow-side to the word — the same root can mean to "repent," to be moved to a change of heart, and it is used with awful weight two verses into the next chapter, when "it *repented* the LORD that he had made man" (Gen. 6:6); the God who is moved to comfort is the God who can be moved to grief. But Lamech's use looks forward to the brighter meaning, and it plants, at the very end of the primeval genealogy, the word for the thing the whole fallen world is waiting on: *comfort*. Noah is the first son in scripture named for it. He will not be the last — for the promised child of Isaiah is "the consolation of Israel" (Lk. 2:25), the *comfort* every Noah before him could only foreshadow.

From the Chapter's Architecture

There is a second, quieter architecture worth naming: the chapter is framed to reach backward and forward at once. It opens by reaching back over the Fall to Genesis 1, re-establishing the image of God and the creation blessing before it records a single death (vv. 1–3); and it closes by reaching forward to the Flood, ending not on a grave but on Noah and his three sons, the seed of the world to come (v. 32). So the register of the dying is bracketed by creation on one end and re-creation on the other — the image of God behind it, the ark before it — and in its center, the one man translated straight to God. Death fills the middle verses, but it does not get the frame, and it does not get Enoch. The Restoration completes the design: Moses 6 unfolds the Enoch the register only names, and Moses 7 shows a whole city learning his walk, so that the single empty grave of Genesis 5:24 becomes an entire Zion "taken up into heaven" (D&C 107:49) — the largest possible answer to the chapter's smallest exception.