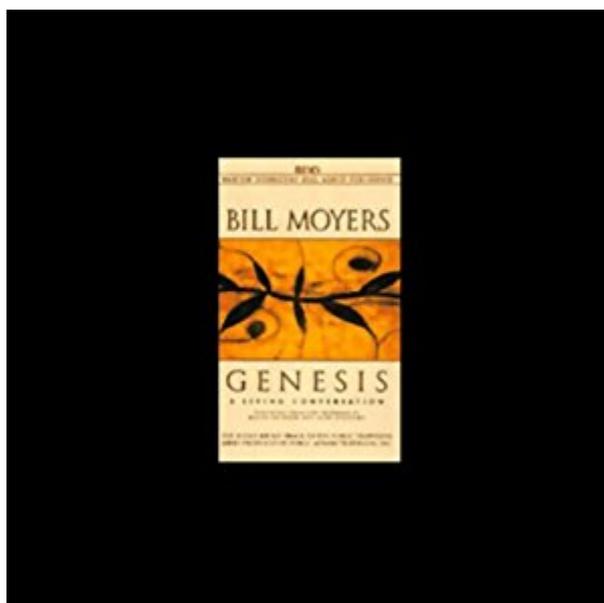


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# Genesis: A Living Conversation



## Synopsis

People need stories to make sense of the world--to hold their lives together, and to fasten on to those values that last. The greatest stories are found in the Bible, enduring through the centuries. In Genesis, acclaimed television journalist Bill Moyers brings together some of the world's liveliest minds for spirited round-table discussions of the ageless stories from the Bible's first, towering book. Creation, temptation, murder, exile, and family strife--these emerge from every page of Genesis and speak to us today. Genesis invites readers into a lively and accessible discussion of the manifold meanings of these stories, and engages us in a fascinating exploration of the relationship between interpreter and text. Among the scores of writers, theologians, artists, and thinkers in the series are Mary Gordon, Phyllis Trible, John Barth, Faye Kellerman, Samuel Proctor, Aviva Zornberg, Walter Brueggemann, Robert Alter, Oscar Hijuelos, Charles Johnson, Stephen Mitchell, Leon Kass, Elaine Pagels, Bharati Mukherjee, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Elizabeth Swados, Renita Weems--all in a dazzling, multi-layered chorus of voices. With the same interplay of text, photographs, and art that made *The Power of Myth and Healing and the Mind* so dynamic and unforgettable, Genesis has the capacity to enrich people's lives intellectually and spiritually. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Still an excellent way to listen to the Genesis stories in a new way, exploring them from many viewpoints - artists, businessmen, parents, Christians of all kinds, Jews, Muslims, and a variety of ethnicities. Excellent teaching tool.

Genesis with Bill Moyers and others is such a thought-provoking book. It looks at stories with new eyes, daring to say things I thought only I believed. Discussions do not vary from the biblical text, but until Ishmael and Jacob split, the same history is common to Hebrew, Islam, and Christianity, and those from Islam are part of discussions. It arrived long before I dared to hope for its delivery. It was in better shape than are many new books I get.

I found this to be a wonderful and encouraging book. Reading the conversations between these scholars, artists, ministers, rabbis, etc., breathed new life into the Genesis stories for me. I especially enjoyed the multiplicity of perspectives of various Christians, Jews, Muslims, at least one Hindu, and agnostics.

This was the first out of the box (former Christian Fundamentalist) book I read that helped me start thinking in broader terms. I checked this out in audio at the library years ago and had to return to it again. It was still a fun ride all over again!!

The book is in prime condition. Frankly, I'm delighted.

Another reviewer reports correctly that "the people in Genesis are all exposed as being very human, with fractured families." So far, so good. That is true, and it is precisely the point of all the stories in the Torah: people are human, and G-d has given them free will. They often make mistakes, from which mankind is supposed to learn. But the discussions of Genesis in Moyers' book, are otherwise hopelessly inconsistent with Jewish thinking. And since Genesis is, after all, the first book in the Jewish Torah, or Five Books of Moses, it's somewhat incomprehensible that Bill Moyers would consult just one Jewish authority, Rabbi Burton Visotzky. Then again, I once heard Moyers dismiss Judaism as the product of an "angry G-d," which was repaired by the coming of Christ. So it's not surprising that Moyers presents by and large extremely negative views of the Genesis stories, making all those people sound devilish. Consider for example Moyers' take on the story of Abraham and Isaac. According to him, G-d is angry and unforgiving. Moyers furthermore condemns Abraham as a mere trickster hiding "behind his wife's skirts" and resorting to cunning. There are, however, many other rabbinical interpretations of Abraham and Isaac story in Genesis, Chapter 22. One of the best, to my mind, is offered by W. Gunther Plaut in his 1981 English-opening edition of *The Torah: A Modern Commentary* and *The Torah: Genesis*. Plaut correctly notes that the first

command to Abraham "issued by Elohim---the generic term for G-d or gods---and the command is one that other elohim could and did make" during Abraham's era. However, when Abraham is about to perform the sacrifice, "it is Abraham's G-d, Adonai, who stays his hand." In other words, the G-d of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob "not only rejects the sacrifice of a son by a father, but rejects, as well, its use as a theological theme. This is in stark contrast to Eastern religions...in which a father's sacrificial gift of his son plays an important role." Thus, Plaut concludes that the G-d of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob rejected the contemporary norms of Biblical times, together with any and all acts of child sacrifice. Plaut's interpretation makes eminent sense, whereas Moyers attempts to discredit the lessons embedded in Genesis, particularly that of Abraham and Isaac. Whereas Moyers constructs a vindictive, dead conversation on Genesis, Plaut genuinely reflects living Judaism. While individual rabbinical scholars may disagree over varied interpretations of Biblical passages, for millennia Jewish sages such as Rashi and Maimonides have agreed that Torah is open to interpretation. Indeed, they encourage interpretation, teaching that the faithful should deeply question holy texts. The goal, over time: for each person to reach fuller and deeper understanding of HaShem (literally, "The Name" [of G-d]). In large measure, thus has the living, loving Jewish faith --- always in pursuit of truth, peace and justice --- evolved. It's a terrible shame that Rabbi Visotzky allowed Moyers to get away with this nonsense. The book has nice art work, though. --- Alyssa A. Lappen

Perhaps if you haven't read these since childhood Sunday school, you still think these are simple stories. These compact stories all have deep issues about life and what it means to be human. I was surprised by the feeling that God may be wrestling with what it means to be God and allow humans freedom. There almost seems to be a trial and error approach to creation. The people in Genesis are all exposed as being very human, with fractured families. The people on the video are also very human, and at times the discussions are very personal, like sitting in with an old friend. This book and videos offered an amazing number of views, and one shouldn't view them as dogma. I was particularly surprised by feminist and Koran views. I hope to read further by Burton Visotzky who was a participant. For an example of unique reading of Abraham and Isaac see Kierkegaard's "Fear and Trembling".

Joseph Campbell, renowned professor of world mythology, has said that the three great religions--Judaism, Islam, and Christianity--are at loggerheads with one another while forgetting their common roots. The Book of Genesis is that common ground. And in this dialogue hosted by

television journalist Bill Moyers representatives from these three traditions join each other in illuminating their audience as to the nature of God, of man, ethics, worship, and religion. Rabbis, ministers, Muslims, writers, artists, scholars, and educators discuss the stories of Genesis and to provide us with a myriad of perspectives and interpretations. With such a cornucopia of viewpoints it is easy to side with one and reject the others. Yet in the end, the question to ask is not 'Who is right?', rather 'What can we learn from the other?' Truth, as the participants urge us, has many faces. Although the printed (book) edition offers some parts unavailable in the audio format, the cassette version is the better choice since it certainly captures the full flavor of this unmoderated and lively discussion. Package includes ten cassettes, and a leaflet containing photos and biographies of the participants.[...]

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