

## The *Toledot* Structure of Genesis

*Tentative notes, based on:*

*Jason S. Derouchie: The Blessing-Commission, the Promised Offspring, and the Toledot Structure of Genesis. JETS 56/2 (2013) 219-47.*

The above-mentioned article is worthwhile reading. Here, I focus on a few points made in it.

Derouchie writes:

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.”<sup>1</sup>

Derouchie continues:

Of the ten *toledot* structures, five are asyndetic, lacking any conjunction ..., whereas five begin with *waw* ... 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 precede, thus creating five, not ten, sections in the book ...

I represent his outline in a minimally adapted form in the table below.

<b>Table: The Five <i>toledot</i> Divisions of Genesis</b>			
<i>According to Derouchie</i>			
		1:1 – 2:3	Preface
<b>i</b>	∅	2:4 – 4:26	These are the <i>toledot</i> of the Heavens and the Earth
<b>ii</b>	∅	5:1 – 6:8	This is the book of the <i>toledot</i> of Adam
<b>iii</b>	∅	6:9 – 9:29	These are the <i>toledot</i> of Noah
	<i>waw</i>	10:1 – 11:9	<u>And</u> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Noah’s sons
<b>iv</b>	∅	11:10-26	These are the <i>toledot</i> of Shem
	<i>waw</i>	11:27 – 25:11	<u>And</u> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Terah
	<i>waw</i>	25:12-18	<u>And</u> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Ishmael
	<i>waw</i>	25:19 – 35:29	<u>And</u> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Isaac
	<i>waw</i>	36:1-8; 36:9 – 37:1	<u>And</u> these are the <i>toledot</i> of Esau
<b>v</b>	∅	37:2 – 50:26	These are the <i>toledot</i> of Jacob

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth A. Mathews: Genesis 1–11:26. NAC. B & H, 1996, pp. 33-34.

Derouchie 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.

He also says:

..., the presence of *waw* 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 majority narrative portion does start here.

And further:

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.

## Translation

If the above analysis is correct, we may suggest to present the outline of a translation of Genesis accordingly. In contrast to the usual outlines, this will mainly mean inserting a major section break at 11:10 instead of at 11:27 or 12:1.

This is not to say that we should not use further section headings in between. Many of the *toledot* units are large units of text and will need to be broken up anyway. Also, the *toledot* formulas by themselves do not reveal much *thematically*.

But they are a cohesive device, and the original structure should be made transparent. If breaks at the occurrences of the word *toledot* are not enough, a comment in the book introduction could help.