

THE TOLEDOT FORMULA

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The toledot formula & Scripture’s unfolding search for the promised seed

Toledot is an important Hebrew word that occurs throughout Genesis, and it means “generations,” or “descendants.” This word often occurs as a part of a formulaic introduction: “These are the generations,” or “These are the family records.”

How is the toledot formula used?

Toledot has at least two distinct functions:

1. When toledot occurs prior to a list of names, it indicates a genealogical development.
2. When toledot precedes a narrative section, it introduces a story that provides some explanation for how a family or people’s history has progressed.

Where are some of the places the toledot formula appears?

Genesis 2:4
Genesis 5:1
Genesis 6:9
Genesis 10:1
Genesis 10:32
Genesis 11:27
Genesis 25:12
Genesis 25:19
Genesis 36:1
Genesis 36:9
Genesis 37:2

Why does it matter?

The story of Genesis—and the story of Scripture—is the story of the search for the promised “seed” of Genesis 3:15, the One who would crush the head of the serpent. Through the generations, or descendants, the search begins to narrow, from Adam himself, to Noah, to Shem, to Terah, and then to Abram, the one through whose offspring God promises all the nations will be blessed (Gen. 12:3).

