

Vocabulary for Unit 2

allegory: A literary form in which something is said to be like something else; often used to communicate a hidden or symbolic meaning.

covenant: A solemn agreement between human beings or between God and human beings in which mutual commitments are recognized. The word comes from the Hebrew for “a cutting,” referring to the sacrifice offered to seal the oath. In the Book of Genesis, God makes Covenants with Noah and Abraham. *Testament* is a synonym for *covenant*.

Creation accounts: Genesis, the first book of the Bible, presents two different accounts of God’s Creation of all things (see 1:1—2:4, 2:4—3:24). Although different in their details, both accounts present Creation as a divine action that affirms the goodness of all creatures; in particular, humans were created in the image of God (see Gn 1:27) and called to live in mutual and life-giving friendships (see 2:18–22).

historical genre: A retelling of events paying particular attention to the details, like names, dates, and places. Histories can use characters and events to communicate deeper meanings, but their primary purpose is to give an account of the development of a community and their identity.

matriarch: A title given to a woman married to the chief of an Israelite family, in particular, a woman who dedicated her life to the Covenant made with Abraham.

mythical genre: Stories passed down over generations, often told orally, to convey a moral or religious truth, not facts. Myths use symbol and allegory (comparison) to illustrate their message or truth. The first eleven chapters of Genesis illustrate the mythical genre, sometimes called *prehistory*.

oral tradition: The handing on of the message of God’s saving plan through words and deeds.

patriarch: This word, from the Greek for “chief” or “head of a family,” is a title given to the fathers of the Old Testament, such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who were divinely selected to guide the Chosen People.

sacrifice: In the Old Testament, an offering made to God. Israelites often sacrificed animals to God in adoration, repentance, gratitude and honor, and as atonement for infractions of the Law in order to reconcile their covenant relationship with God.

sin: “Missing the mark;” falling short of God’s will for human life. In the Old Testament, primarily portrayed as disobedience to God, to his Covenant and Commandments. A decision that separates us from, or damages, a loving relationship with God.

vocation: A calling from God to fulfill a particular purpose or mission in life.

