

# Bible History 1



**Genesis thru Deuteronomy**

*Richard Rogers*

SUNSET BIBLE STUDY LIBRARY

# Bible History 1

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by Richard Rogers



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# *Bible History I*

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**This book is dedicated to**

**Cline Rex Paden**

**Orininator and Directory of Sunset School of  
Preaching for 32 years, who had enough  
confidence in a young preacher to entrust to him  
the task of training other preachers**

## Special Acknowledgement

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# Preface to the Sunset Bible Study Library

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Since 1962 Sunset International Bible Institute has been a leader in teaching God's Word, training local church leaders and preparing preachers and missionaries for effective ministry. Developed in the laboratory of preacher training and proven in the crucible of practical ministry, the Sunset curriculum has grown to forty core courses used both in our resident school and distance learning applications. In 1989 the Sunset Video Studio was inaugurated to record each course of study in a professional format. Those courses, each with a companion study guide, have been used to teach thousands of individual students and develop a world-wide network of video satellite schools in local congregations and mission fields.

Now in printed form that same library of trusted Bible study material is available through Sunset Institute Press for an even wider circle of Bible students, thanks to a benevolent God, an excellent editorial staff and a number of faithful supporters who believed in the project.

This book is the result of a multi-step process which began with a videotaped course. The voice track of the videotape was first transcribed then formatted and edited from spoken to written style. The goal of the editorial process has been to produce a readable document while protecting the course content and the style and personality of the teacher. We believe the goal has been achieved and that each of the forty books planned for the Sunset Bible Study Library will likewise achieve that goal.

Special gratitude must be expressed to Cline Paden and Truman Scott who began the video course series in 1989, to Bob Martin, who directed Sunset Video Studio, to Virgil Yocham and the staff of Sunset External Studies Division who wrote the study guides, and to the staff of Sunset Translation



Center who edited the manuscripts and to each faculty member of Sunset International Bible Institute who took extra time to prepare and present these courses in the studio.

In addition to the English version, this book and its companion volumes are being translated into the major languages of the world to produce a Bible study library which can be used on the mission fields of the world to mature Christians, train church leaders and grow churches that plant other churches.

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# WHY STUDY THE OLD TESTAMENT

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## **Introduction**

Welcome to the Sunset International Bible Institute's study of Old Testament Bible History. This study will deal with the history of the Hebrew family, and in a future study we will look at the history of the Hebrew nation.

The question is often asked, "Why should we study the Old Testament and in particular, Old Testament History?" There seems to be a reluctance to study the Old Testament because the Law has ceased to be in effect. But the Old Testament is much more than the Law. It is the history of God dealing with His creation. It is the history of the creation itself and then the sovereign providence of God as He works with man and the creation called the earth.

## **Seven Reasons For Studying Old Testament History**

To begin, let us look at seven reasons for studying Old Testament history. In this way we will know from the beginning that our study has purpose and that we have goals we are trying to reach. There will also be presented a three point outline of the entire history of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments. Then, chapter by chapter, we will progress through the Old Testament time-line, along with the providence of the purpose of God. But why should we study the Old Testament? And in particular, why should we study Old Testament history? There are seven good reasons that make it absolutely essential that we study Old Testament history.

### **To Gain Wisdom and Equipment For Every Good Work**

Reason number one is to gain wisdom and equipment for every good work. In 2 Timothy 3 is found the first reason for studying Old Testament history. Here is Paul's charge to Timothy, his son in the gospel. Beginning in verse 10, he says:

*You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings-what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.*

Notice that Paul told Timothy “you know.” Timothy had already learned several things from Paul: his teaching, the way he lived, his purpose, the faith he had, and patience. He also knew that knowing about Christ and wanting to live for Christ resulted in persecution. There was an alternative, however, which was being wicked, and going from worse to worse. In 3:14-15 Paul stresses Timothy’s knowledge of the Old Testament as being sufficient and necessary to make him wise unto salvation:

*But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures . . .*

When Paul wrote this epistle most of the New Testament had not been written. The Holy Scripture that Timothy had known from infancy was what we call the Old Testament scriptures. Notice Paul saying, “. . . from infancy you have

*known the holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*” (2 Timothy 3:15) Stop for a moment and think about what he said. Paul said that if Timothy knew the Old Testament scriptures, then those Old Testament scriptures were able to make him wise unto salvation. The Old Testament scriptures are able to make us wise to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. It is the gospel and the rest of the New Testament that give us faith in Jesus. So a knowledge of the Old Testament, coupled with the faith that the New Testament generates, is able to make Timothy, and therefore me and you, wise to salvation. The “why” of this is found in 3:16-17 where Paul says,

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

In 1 Timothy 5, Paul spoke of the elders being worthy of double honor. Paul says that we are supposed to support the elders that labor in word and teaching because the scripture says, *“Do no not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.”* (Deuteronomy 25:4) Jesus said, *“. . . the worker deserves his wages.”* (Luke 10:7) In 1 Timothy 5, Paul makes scripture work together, both Deuteronomy and the gospel of Luke, which had begun to be circulated by the time Paul wrote 1 Timothy. So the scripture that is God-breathed is both the Old and the New Testament.

The idea that scripture is God-breathed is not that God breathed on it, or that God breathed into it, but it is that God breathed it out. The scripture is God's breath. It is His expiration, and it is Old Testament scripture and New Testament scripture combined that can make us wise unto salvation and thoroughly equipped unto every good work. We are not equipped for all the good work that God wants us to do if all that we know is the New Testament. We must also know

the Old Testament. That is why we study Old Testament history.

### **It is the Background For the Study and Understanding of the New Testament**

The second reason is that the Old Testament is the background for the study and the understanding of the New Testament. In Acts 3:20-24 it says,

*. . . and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. For Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people. Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days.’*

All of the Old Testament prophets, from Samuel through all of the men that heard God, spoke for God and wrote for God, told of these days.

You cannot understand the New Testament without understanding the Old Testament, for the New is the completion of the Old. It is the fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies. It is the reality of all of the Old Testament shadows. It is the explanation of all the Old Testament incompletions, and it is the answer to all Old Testament questions. The New Testament is based on the Old.

### **It Points To Christ**

The third reason is that the Old Testament points to Christ. The Old Testament scripture is a finger that is pointing out that someone is coming down the line. In John 5:39, Jesus is in an

argument with the Sadducees and other Jews about His right to say that He is God's Son, that He is the Son of man, that He is the Messiah and that He is the one they've been looking for. John records that Jesus says, "*You diligently study the Scriptures (or, as a command "study the Scriptures") because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me.*"

What "scriptures" is He talking about? The only ones that existed in John 5 were the Old Testament scriptures. Jesus is saying that the Old Testament scriptures speak of Him. They speak about Him in type, in need, in song, in proverbs and in prophecy. All the Old Testament scriptures speak of Jesus. In Acts 8, a eunuch from Ethiopia had been to worship as best as he could in Jerusalem, and on his way home he was reading from a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. As he read, he began wondering about who the prophet was talking about. Phillip came and joined the eunuch, and from that scripture in Isaiah, he preached to him about Jesus. It would not have mattered what scripture the eunuch was reading. Any scripture in the Old Testament points to Christ. And whatever he had been reading he would have been wondering what it spoke about because it was not yet fulfilled. But Phillip began from that scripture and preached to him about Jesus. So we need to study the Old Testament to learn all the pointers, all the predictions and all the prophecies about Christ

### **It Is the Only Reliable History For That Period of Time**

The fourth reason is not a real biblical reason, but an important reason nonetheless. The Old Testament history is the only reliable history of that period of time. Will S. Durant, a historian and a philosopher, along with his wife Ariel, wrote a set of books called "*The Philosophy of Civilization.*" In the first volume of that book, called *Our Oriental Heritage*, which Will S. Durant wrote by himself, he discusses an ancient empire called Sumer. He says that the only accurate history of this

period of time is found in the Old Testament scriptures of the Bible. At that time, the man was not even a true believer. He was searching, but he did not yet believe in God. He was not an atheist, but he was an agnostic who did not believe in God. Yet he said that the Old Testament is the only reliable history that we have of that period of time.

It is interesting that this shows that God recorded history when no one else did. God speaks of the Hittite nation when no one else did. He spoke of the Sumerian when no one else did. He told of things of which we have found archaeological evidence. Every single statement of Old Testament history has been proven, not only to be correct, but to be in the right chronological and historical order. The Bible is the only reliable history for the old times.

### **To Gain Both Good and Bad Examples – How To Live and How Not To Live**

The fifth reason that we need to study the Old Testament is to gain examples on how to live and how not to live. In James 5, James urges Christians to look to the prophets as an example of how to live. James 5:10-11 says,

*Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.*

James says that we are to use the prophets as an example of how to endure trials, persecution, suffering and ridicule. He indicates that they have heard of Job's patience. I have heard of Job's patience all my life, but I always thought that meant that he was a man who lived without complaining. I always thought that he just put up with whatever came to him stoically, that he had the ability to bear things without trying to justify himself

and with no accusation of God. Then one day I read the book of Job, and I was surprised.

Here was a person that complained about his circumstance in life. He was a leper sitting on a trash heap. He didn't deserve to be there, and he complained to God: "Where are you God? I look for you and I can't find you. You fill me full of your arrows. I complain to you. I just wish you would come so you and I could debate this thing out, and I would present my case."

All of a sudden I said, "This is patience?" But then I saw the rest of the story as James says here. "You've seen the end of the story. You've seen the final outcome." The final outcome is that Job finally turns it over to God. He says, "Lord, I don't understand this. I'm on this ash heap, and I don't think I deserve to be here, but I've got faith in you so I'm just going to sit here and wait for your answer." As soon as Job makes that reply and repents of his sin of questioning God, God turned his case. He prayed for the friends that had ridiculed him and rebuked him, and he was rich twice over. He had twice as much at the end as he had at the beginning.

Therefore, when trials come and you feel like complaining, take your complaint to God. Complain to God, not about God. Persevere. Keep your faith in God. See how the Old Testament is really a life principle. It deals with how to work with the circumstances of life. In 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, Paul went into even a larger and longer discussion about this idea of the Old Testament being our example. He writes,

*For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert.*



*Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.*

Paul gave us a negative example, whereas James gave us a positive example of the prophets and Job. Paul is exhibiting the Jews as a negative example, that we should not do what they did in the wilderness. What did they do?

**Number 1:** *Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: ‘The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry.’*

**Number 2:** *We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died.*

**Number 3:** *We should not test the Lord, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes.*

**Number 4:** *And do not grumble, as some of them did – and were killed by the destroying angel.*  
(1 Corinthians 10:7-10)

Paul says, “Do not be idolaters; do not be sexually immoral; do not test or try the Lord, and do not grumble about what the Lord is doing in your life. Learn from them not to do those things.” *“These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.”* (1 Corinthians 10:11)

History is not written down for the people that it happened to. It is written down for the people that will follow. “We need to study Old Testament history,” James says, “to learn how to persevere and be patient, just as the prophets and Job were.” And Paul says not to sin as they sinned. We need to study the Old Testament history to gain examples, both good and bad.

### **For Learning Patience, Comfort and Hope**

Reason number 6 is for learning patience, comfort and hope. In Romans 15:4 Paul makes a blanket statement about what everything in the Old Testament was written to teach us. He writes, *“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”* (NASB) Notice the word “. . . whatever . . .” One version says, “All of the things,” and another says, “Everything.” Every single thing that was written in the Old Testament, whatever was written, was written for our learning. The Old Testament was not written for the Old Testament people. The Old Testament was written for us. That is what Paul said. Now what is it supposed to do for us? It is supposed to give us patience, comfort and hope. How does it do that? It does that by presenting God’s blessings upon Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It does that by letting us look for a long time at the nations of Israel and Judah to see that every time they did good and right, God blessed them, and every time they did evil, God cursed them. It does that so that we can have hope that God, if He disciplines us with judgements, will do it only out of His love and to bring us to repentance. David is as an example of what God does for a repenting sinner. Over and over again we are going to see people who enable us to hang in there even when everything else has let go. When it looks like God does not love us and is not for us, the Old Testament will tell us about other people who God worked for in their lives. If we were taken away, snatched away from our family into a foreign land, we have the example of Daniel, Esther and others in captivity who were used greatly by God and fulfilled the work and the purpose of God. We will learn in the sacrificial system how all those things pointed to the death of Christ.

We will see in the prophecies, even when they were predicting Israel and Judah's destruction, that there was a promise that God is still there and working on their behalf. The Messiah will come. No matter how black the night – joy comes

in the morning. That is what the Old Testament was written to say. “Every single thing in the Old Testament,” Paul says, “was written for our example, our learning, our comfort and our patience.”

### **As A Bright Light Shining In A Dark Day**

The seventh reason is that the Old Testament shines like a bright light in a dark day. In 2 Peter 1:16-18 we read,

*We did not follow cleverly invented stories (myths) when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.*

Notice that Peter said that he and the other apostles were firsthand witnesses. They saw Him; they heard Him, and they touched Him. This is a good witness, an eye-witness. 2 Peter 1:19a says, “*And we have the word of the prophets made more certain . . .*”

What is the word that is “. . . made more certain . . .?” It is the Old Testament-fulfilled prophetic word, more certain than if we had seen it and heard it. He says that we have an eyewitness and an ear-witness, but we have a more certain witness than that; the word of the prophets. Peter says,

*. . . and you will do well to pay attention to it (the prophetic word) as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but*

*men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:19b-21)*

That is one of the most interesting sections of scripture in all the Bible, because to be an eye-witness is to see Jesus as He healed the sick. To have an ear witness as He preached the great Sermon on the Mount must have been above all the most fabulous experience of one's life, and it would be an experience perhaps beyond that. But I have a more sure witness than that. I have a more sure testimony to Jesus than if I had seen Him and heard Him, and that is the fulfilled word of God. The main reason I study the Old Testament is to have the better witness about Christ and the more sure witness about Jesus that becomes a light in a dark day.

Have you ever been somewhere where it was really dark, like down deep in a cavern or a cave or in a big huge forest where the trees keep even the moon and the stars from shining upon you? You just have a small light with you, but it all seems so big. I was in that situation one time, and the batteries for my light went dead. I stumbled and fell because I was without light. People are stumbling and falling in the world today because they do not have the light from God. That is why we are going to study Old Testament history.

Old Testament history divides itself biblically into several categories; first of all there is a **Prologue**: Genesis 1 to Genesis 11:9. There is a revelation of the fact that there is a divine redeeming purpose. Then there is **Act One**: Genesis 11:10 to Malachi 4:6 which shows the unfolding of divine redemption as God calls from Abraham a divine family. He makes that family into the divine nation, and that nation becomes a divine remnant when they come out of captivity. Then there is **Act Two**: the New Testament from Matthew through Jude that is the unfolding of divine redemption. The introduction of redemption is in the gospels as we look at Christ and the progress of it in the book of Acts. Then finally Revelation gives a consummation of divine redemption. There is a vision of

grace—Christ is Lord of the church. There is a vision of government—Christ is Lord of the earth. There is a vision of glory, as Christ is Lord of eternity. History is His story. It is the story of Christ as we will see in every chapter of our study of Old Testament history. God bless you.

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## FROM THE CREATION TO THE FALL

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**(Genesis 1:1-3:24)**

### Creation of the Cosmos

In our second chapter of the history of the Hebrew family, we are in a period called the Prologue. This chapter will cover Genesis 1 through 3. This is the story of creation, but it's more than that. It is also the story of the fall of man. Let us look first of all at Genesis 1:1 through 2:3 which is the creation of the cosmos. This is the beginning of all things, and the place to start any discussion is always at the beginning.

Genesis 1:1-5 says,

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, (This will be said again and again because creation is by God's spoken word. It is creation by fiat, by commandment.) 'Let there be light' and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light 'day' and the darkness he called 'night.' And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.*

We would say that there is day and night, morning and evening. However, the Hebrew day started at 6 o'clock in the afternoon and ended the next day at 6 o'clock in the afternoon. This is a Hebrew day that we are discussing here. This is not God's day because that could be a thousand years. This is the

Hebrew day that was 24 hours. There was evening, 12 hours, and there was morning, 12 hours, on the first day. These are 24 hour days.

*And God said, 'Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water.' So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. God called the expanse 'sky.' And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. And God said, 'Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry land appear.' And it was so. God called the dry ground 'land,' and the gathered waters he called 'seas.' And God saw that it was good. Then God said, 'Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, (notice the fruit was created with the seed already in it) according to their various kinds.' And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day. And God said, 'Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth.' And it was so. God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars (notice that there is already light, but now He is making light bearers). God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day. And God said,*

*'Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.' So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.' And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day. And God said, 'Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind.' And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good (notice that they were made after their own kind, not evolved into their kind). Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them (that is the male and the female) and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.' Then God said, 'I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.'*



*And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. This is the account of heaven and earth when they were created . . .*  
(Genesis 1:6-2:4a).

### **Creation Refutes Six Erroneous Doctrines**

That is a long reading, but it is very comprehensive. Everything that now exists on earth existed on earth the first day. This section of scripture refutes every attempt of man to explain how things got here. Creation says that matter isn't eternal, so it refutes the idea of the **eternity of matter**. What is here hasn't always been here. God is the only one who has always been here. In the beginning God created. There was a beginning, but before there was a beginning there was a God. Creation also refutes the idea of **polytheism** because it says God created, not gods.

Creation refutes the idea of **agnosticism** which says that there is no plan. Agnosticism says that this is just a senseless globe spinning around with senseless people upon it. However, because this creation was planned, it was not without cause.

Creation refutes **fatalism** which says that things happen just because they happen. It is just our fate. But this is not true, either, because here we have God's will, purpose and progression expressed in creation.

Creation refutes **pantheism** which says that all things are a god and that God is all things. However, God existed before anything else existed.

Creation also refutes **evolution**, because in six days God created all things. Notice the order of creation. God created the

heavens and the earth, and then He created the things that live on the heaven and the earth. On the first three days He created the things that will be occupied by the things created on the second three days.

### **The Advent of Mankind**

In Genesis 2:4-25, we find that the creation of man occurred sometime during the sixth day. This is a long reading, but a lot of our study in future chapters is going to come out of this foundation. This is a beginning, and we need to begin well if we are going to have a well traveled journey. Genesis 2:4-7 is the **Production of Man**:

*This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created. When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens—and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no man to work the ground, but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground—the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.*

Try to imagine this. God reached down and formed man. Man is breathing and standing before God, naked in all of his innocence and tall in all of his strident glory. He is the very image of God standing there, the one who is going to control and subdue all that God has created. He is the intimate friend of God. Genesis 2:8-15 tells us about man being put into God's creation.

*Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the*

*ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. (That was Ethiopia.) The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.*

This is God's **Provision for Man**. He gives man the work to do. But there is also a **Probation on Man**. With work comes the responsibility of doing the work. Genesis 2:16-17 says,

*And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'*

In the probation, he was allowed the maximum and forbidden only the minimum.

In Genesis 2:18-20, we have the **Progression of Man** as he progresses to be reproductive. We read,

*The LORD God said, 'It is not good (this is the only time that God looked at the creation and said that it was not good) for the man to be alone. (He did not say that man wasn't good; He just said it wasn't good for man to be alone.) I will make a helper suitable for him.' Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of*

*the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. (Adam was intelligent.) So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found.*

Why did God do this? He did it to teach man that there is nothing in the lower creation that meets the need of his heart. They are good and lovely creatures, but they are to be subdued by man. They are partners with man. Man is to take none of them as his helper or as his slave. Yes, these creatures can be his servants and co-workers but not as the helper that is suited for him. So man now knows that nothing in all of God's creation meets the unanswered ache of his heart. So God must meet that need. This He does in 2:21-23:

*So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman out of the rib he had taken from the man, and he brought her to the man. (Why did He do that? The man knew why He did that.) The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called "woman,"' (which means 'from man') for she was taken out of man.'*

This was the only time that anything came from the "womb" of man. Woman is from the womb of man. She came from the inside of man. He did not take her from his head so she would rule over him or he over her. He did not take her from his feet so that he would stomp on her and be her lord. But He took her from his side where she will always walk and be that co-helper, that help meet, that helper that is suited for him. *"For this reason (because this is bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh) a man will leave his*

*father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.*” (Genesis 2:24)

The older version says that he will leave and will cleave, because it rhymes. He will leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they will be one flesh. That is, they will be united in their heart and soul. There is a mystery in this that I will never understand, just as Paul says in Ephesians 5. But there is a joy in it that I fully appreciate. *“The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.”* (Genesis 2:25) They are innocent and innocence feels no shame. Have you ever seen a little bitty boy or girl get out of the bath tub and run through without any clothes on at all? They would run outside, and if the Lord Christ was there they would run and jump in his lap and kiss Him. They have absolutely no shame because they are totally innocent. I wish that I was that way. I wish I didn’t know what I know about sin. God didn’t want Adam and Eve to know about sin either. There was a tree there called the “tree of knowledge of good and evil.” Until they eat of that tree, they will be innocent. They know it’s wrong not to keep the garden, and they know it’s wrong to eat of that tree. But they won’t do that because they will live in innocence before God.

Man has a four-fold dominion in what we have read. He has dominion over the universe, the multiplication of species, subjugation of the creation and cultivation of the earth. He is lord, not Lord of heaven and earth, but lord of the earth. He is to keep it for God.

## The Temptation and the Fall

In Genesis 3 Satan comes into the garden in the form of a serpent and approaches the woman. Why does he approach the woman? He approaches her because her emotions are more susceptible to his temptation, and she holds the key of getting to the man, Adam. He says to the woman, “God has said you can’t eat of any tree of the garden.” She says, “Oh no, you’re wrong. We can eat of any tree we want to. The only tree we

can't eat of is this one." "Why doesn't God want you to eat that one? God knows that when you eat that tree, you're going to be like Him, and He's jealous of what He knows. He doesn't want you to eat of that tree because He doesn't want you to be like Him." This is not so, but she believes it. She looks at the tree. This doesn't mean that she hasn't glanced at it before. But this time she looks at it closely. She stares at it. She contemplates the tree. She sees that it is good for food, that it is a delight to the eyes. It is beautiful, and it is desired to make one wise. This is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. She took of the tree and ate it. She gave to the man that was with her. Adam was standing there through this whole thing. She gave to the man that was with her, and he took of the tree and ate it. Now both of their eyes are opened, and they see that they are naked. They have been naked for a while, but they were innocent up until now. Now that they know good and evil; they see evil, and they see nakedness. They see the evil of nakedness. So they take fig leaves and try to cover themselves. They can't do an adequate job of covering themselves because sinful man can't do an adequate job of anything.

God came into the garden in the cool of the evening as was His custom, and He said, "Adam, where are you?" He wasn't asking for information. "*The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good.*" (Proverbs 15:3) He knew where Adam was. He wanted Adam to know where he was. If Adam had been honest he would have said, "In sin," because that's really where he was. God got the three of them in front of Him, and He began with Adam. He then said to him, "*What is this you have done?*" (Genesis 3:13) Adam said, "*The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.*" (Genesis 3:12) I used to think he was blaming the woman, but I really think he was blaming God. God turned to the woman. And the woman said, "*The serpent deceived me, and I ate.*" (Genesis 3:13b) I think she was also blaming God. He didn't even give Satan an opportunity to answer. But He said in 3:15, "*And I will put enmity between*

*you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, you will strike his heel.”* He told Satan that from then on he would be cursed and would struggle with good people.

God told the woman, *“I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children.”* (Genesis 3:16b) To the man He said,

*To Adam he said, ‘Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, “You must not eat of it,” Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.’* (Genesis 3:17-19)

God then made them clothes out of the skins of animals to cover their nakedness, cast them from the garden and put cherubim at the gate with blazing swords in their hands to keep them from coming back into the garden lest they eat of the tree of life and live forever. That was judgment; but it was more than judgment, it was also mercy.

There is a good lesson to learn as we look at the Devil’s tricks with the woman. He introduced doubt into her mind with the statement that God did not want her to know. He ignored the covenant, or he tried to get her to ignore the covenant that she and Adam had made with God. He denied that there was any connection between sin and punishment, because he said that in the day that they were to eat from that tree, they would not die. He challenged the divine statement, saying, “God knows better than to tell you that you are going to die.” He charged God with jealousy, saying that God didn’t want man to acquire the knowledge that only He had. He appealed to the

pride and the ambition of the woman to be knowledgeable as God is knowledgeable.

Satan is still using those wily ways on people today as he tries to get them to believe that God is not interested in satisfying their human fleshly needs and desires. He convinces them that they need the things that are beautiful and attractive to them and that they need to have the intelligence to rule other people and to rule the world as only God should rule the world. The woman's downfall was simply that she let herself be tricked into an unguarded conversation and that she never talked to God. Whenever you are tempted, talk to God. Listen to Him in His word, talk to Him in prayer, and you will not fall.

When Eve fell, there was a two-fold consequence. She had the pain of child-bearing, and she would from then on be in submission to man. When man fell there was a four-fold result. **Number one** was the loss of innocence. They knew that they were naked. **Number two** was shame. They attempted to cover the result of their sin. **Number three**, there was fear as they hid from God when they used to walk and talk with Him. And **number four**, there was death. There was separation from the tree of life and spiritual death.

We see the Lord God manifested twice in what we studied in chapter three. He is manifested in judgment as He came and sought the guilty pair. He is manifested in judgment as He spoke to the guilty pair and made them admit to the sin that they were involved in, and He is manifested in judgment when He sentenced all who were involved. He sentenced the serpent to be crushed, the woman to suffer, and the man to sweat and work all of his life in toil.

God is also manifested in grace. Redemption is really the key in Genesis 3, and the rest of the Bible tells the story that Genesis 3 introduces. Redemption is promised here, in that there are two seed-lines promised: The seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. Victory is promised to the seed of the woman. Redemption is apprehended here because Adam names his wife Eve which means "the mother of all living." He knows



that from her will come the one who is to win the battle. Redemption is typified as God has to kill animals to make clothes from their skins. The killing of animals also foreshadows the fact that one day the Lamb of God will die that all men might be covered from their sin. Redemption is made possible by the death and life cycle. If Adam had not died there would be no Christ. If all the other men had not lived and died and had children, then there would be no Christ. The struggle is between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. I am the seed of the woman, and you are the seed of the woman. We are interested in knowing how, where, and why we win in the battle for our souls. I can hardly wait to discuss the seed of the serpent being bruised by the seed of the woman, as we will see in our next chapter.

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## THE MOTHER PROMISE AND REDEMPTION

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**(Genesis 3:16-17)**

In this chapter we will study one of the most important verses in all the Bible. It is called “The Mother Promise” by many scholars. Everything that the Bible discusses and everything that Jesus became is found in this verse.

We noticed in our last chapter how the devil approached the woman and deceived her. “The man was not deceived,” Paul said, “but rather, he sinned by knowing what he was doing” (cf. 1 Timothy 2:14). The woman was deceived, and she ate of the fruit. She then gave it to the man and he ate. God then came and cursed everybody involved: the serpent, the woman and the man. In cursing the serpent, notice what the Lord said in Genesis 14-15:

*So the LORD God said to the serpent, ‘Because you have done this, “Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he (not a plural offspring, but a singular masculine one), will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”’*

This refers to Christ because He is the seed of the woman in the book of Galatians (3:16), and He is the seed of the woman as described by John in Revelation 12:1-6. In Genesis 3:15, there is both a prediction and a promise. The prediction is

of a conflict between Satan's seed and the woman's seed; the promise is victory for the woman's seed.

## Definition of Key Words and Terms

Let us look at Genesis 3:15 and define some terms that are used so that we will understand what we are looking at. God says *"And I will put enmity between you and the woman,"* What does *"enmity"* mean? It means ill-will, hatred and strife. It implies warfare, ill-will and hatred between the godly and the ungodly. He said, "I will put that enmity between your seed and her seed." *"Seed"* is the idea of posterity or offspring, which are children. God then says that he (the serpent) will crush, or bruise, the seed of the woman. The seed of the woman will crush or bruise the head of the serpent, and the serpent will crush or bruise His heel. The word *"bruise"* means to trample down, and implied in that word is the idea of lying in wait to trample someone down. It is not an honest warfare that is looked at here. It is someone lying in wait in order to jump upon someone else in order to crush or trample them down. It says that the seed of the woman will do that to the head of the seed of the serpent. The head is the superior position, signifying the object of power, control and authority. Jesus says that He is the King of kings and Lord of lords, and that all authority has been given to Him. He is called the head of the Church in Colossians 1:18. So there is the idea of rulership or authority, but then it says that Satan will bruise the heel of the seed of the woman. The heel is a much lesser position. If my head is crushed, I'm dead. If my heel is crushed, I'm crippled. Being crippled is better than being dead, so all that Satan will be able to do to the seed of the woman is temporarily cripple Him. All that he will do is kill the Lord, but the Lord will come out from the grave. The only thing he can do is kill us, but we also will come up from the grave. He can only bruise the inferior position part of the seed of the woman, while his life will be taken from him.

### **The Nature of Redemption**

The aim of this chapter is to become aware of three things. First, we are to become aware of the viciousness of Satan and his intent to harm that seed. Second, we are to become aware of a power that we possess, that we are helped by, and that is greater than the power of Satan. And, third, we are to understand that God's purpose will be providentially carried out and will stop Satan's progress toward his goal. Satan is challenged to a warfare by God. God says, "I'm going to put a war, enmity, ill-will, hatred, and strife between you and this woman, between your seed and her seed. He will bruise your head, and you will bruise His heel." Satan knows that one child from this woman is who he must beat. One day there will be a child from this woman, and if Satan does not beat Him then he is lost eternally in this struggle.

### **The Historical Development of the Conflict Cain and Abel**

Satan is not omniscient; he does not know everything, and so he does not know which child of this woman will be the one with whom he must deal. So, immediately he begins to attack the two children that Adam and Eve have, Cain and Abel. Abel was a righteous man, and Cain a profane man. They both brought a sacrifice to God, sacrifices that they thought were acceptable. The attitude in which they brought their sacrifices caused one to be acceptable, while the other was not. Abel's offering, according to Hebrews 11:4, was done by faith while Cain's was not. Cain's sacrifice was done evidently to merely keep the rules, being offered by legalism and not by faith. God honored Abel's sacrifice but did not honor Cain's. That made Cain angry and jealous. So Cain killed his brother Abel and buried him in the soil. Hell was laughing because Abel, the righteous son, has been killed and Cain, the profane and wicked son, was the only one left alive. Hell laughed too quickly, though, because God began to tell a story that He would tell throughout the rest of the Bible. I like to call that story "Saved

By One,” because God will always raise up one person that will save that seed line so that the seed of the woman will come and bruise the head of the devil. Remember the story; Adam and Eve had another son, Seth. Seth was a righteous son, and Cain was still a profane son.

### **Daughters of Men and Sons of God**

For a long while, the godly line of Seth and the ungodly line of Cain were separate. We will discuss this separation in the next chapter on Genesis 10. However, these men were separated for a long while. But we finally read (Genesis 6:1-8) that the sons of God took for themselves wives from among the daughters of men. It is not known if that means inter-marriage or inter-marriage and polygamy. But they took for themselves wives of whomsoever they chose, and the thought of every man’s heart became only evil, and that evil was continual. So God said that He would destroy every living soul that breathes. Isn’t it interesting that when the godly indiscriminately marry the ungodly that the ungodly win out? The dirty dominates over cleanliness. For example, outside of Innerlocin, Switzerland, there are two little streams that flow side by side. One of those rivers is clear, beautiful and lucid, while the other one is brown, muddy and turbid. Down the way they come together and form one river. For a while there is a clear demarcation between the clean water on one side and the muddy water on the other side. But before long the whole river is what? Clear and lucid? Not at all. The water is brown, muddy and turbid. *“Do not be misled. Bad company corrupts good character.”* (1 Corinthians 15:33)

There are only three things that you can do with evil companions; become like them, convert them or leave them alone. But in the case of the sons of God and the daughters of men, they have not been left alone. There has been an indiscriminate mixture of the good and the bad, and so the thought of every man’s heart has become evil continually. So God determines that He will destroy the world with a flood. But

one man, Noah, found favor in the sight of God. This is well known. He built an ark and saved the world. One man saved the world from prevailing wickedness and saved the seed line until the one would come who would bruise the serpent's head. Noah's ark rested on Mount Ararat, on sinless ground. Noah walked off the ark and planted a vineyard. From the vineyard came the grape, from the grape came the wine, and from the wine came the drunk. That is always the order it follows, and the drunk is Noah. So here is the righteous man, now unrighteous again. The wickedness that was in the pre-flood world is now in the post-flood world.

### **Barren Womb and Abundant Promise**

Ten generations go by and a man named Abraham, or Abram, is born. God appears to Abram at his homeland near the Chaldees, and later at Heron, north of the Chaldees. He tells him that He will bless all the world through his seed. That seed is the one who is going to bruise the devil's head as God had said would happen in Genesis 3:15. This is the woman's seed who is now the seed of Abraham. Abraham must have the child through whom the serpent's head will be bruised, or through whom the one will come that is to bruise the serpent's head. But Abraham makes a mistake. He is married to a barren woman. There is no way that Sarai, or Sarah, his wife, can have a child. They pray; they struggle; they plan, but they had no children. Abraham is 99 years old, and Sarah is 89, and if she had ever had the ability to bear children, she has lost it. Has the devil won? There is laughter in hell. God has made a mistake. He had one through whom the seed was to come to bear through a barren woman, and now it will take a double miracle: she has be cured of her barrenness, and she has to be able to bear again. If she ever had the ability to bear she's too old to bear now. Whatever it takes for God to fulfill His purpose, that is what God will do. Sarah does have a child. They call his name Isaac which means "laughter." Hell's laughter is over, and now heaven and earth are laughing because the seed line continues. A barren womb cannot thwart or stop the purpose of God.

### **Famine and Family**

Abraham's family becomes seventy-five souls at which time they are moved into Egypt. Joseph is already down in Egypt. Then a famine occurs around the entire world, and it would have killed the seed line except for the fact that Joseph, who is down in Egypt, has become the Prime Minister of all of Egypt. The seed line is preserved there. But then the seed line is doomed by Pharaoh's decree that every male child would be destroyed. However, that seed line is preserved by one who lives in Pharaoh's daughter's house, a man named Moses. I can imagine Pharaoh as he comes in from a hard day of killing Hebrews and saying, "I'm tired. I've killed Hebrews all day long. Bring my grandson, Moses, and let me bounce him on my knee." Pharaoh is actually raising the very one who will not only destroy the nation of Egypt by means of the ten plagues, but will also save the seed line. The beat goes on until finally, out of all of the tribes of Jacob, the tribe of Judah in Genesis 49:8-12 is chosen to be the seed line tribe.

### **Evil Attempts to Kill David**

Of all the families in Judah, the family of David is chosen to be the seed line family, and finally David becomes the king of the world. Satan tries to kill him first through Goliath, then by Saul and then by Absalom. But God preserves David's life so that the seed line will come through him. Then God promises him in 2 Samuel 7:12-13 that his line will be the line through whom the Messiah will be traced. Because of that promise, David's seed line comes to be called the "Royal Seed." Then the nations divide into Judah in the south, and Israel in the north. David's line rules in Judah and nine ungodly kings rule in Israel. One of those lines is the line of Omri and the chief in Omri's nation is Ahab. He marries a wicked woman named Jezebel, and they have a wicked daughter named Athaliah. Then Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram, marries. Jehoshaphat is the King of Judah, a righteous king. The righteous king's son marries Athaliah, the second most wicked woman who ever lived.

### **Devilish Woman and the Royal Seed**

Athaliah brings the worship of the fertility god, Baal, into the very House of God in Jerusalem. Her son, Ahaziah, is killed on the field of battle by Jehu, the fast chariot driver. The text says in 2 Kings 11 that Queen Athaliah slew all the seed royal. This is a period when hell is still laughing and there is no bruising of the devil's head. She slew all the royal seed except Joash, whom the king and queen's servant, Jehosheba, took and hid, being one year old. Had Athaliah killed just one more child, had she just killed this little one year old baby, Satan would have won and Christ's head, and therefore God's head, would be bruised. God would have lost, but God cannot lose. Satan did everything, but what he really had to do. He had to kill this boy, yet he couldn't because God preserved him. God's purpose cannot be thwarted by an evil woman's plot.

### **Death and Hezekiah**

Over a period of time, Hezekiah becomes the king of Judah. Hezekiah is a righteous man, but he must die. In 2 Kings 20 he has a sickness, and so God sends Isaiah, the prophet, to tell Hezekiah to set his house in order for he will die. Hezekiah does what seems at first a rather strange thing. He turns his face to the wall and prays to live. Why is he praying to live? "To die and go be with Christ is better by far," Paul said in Philippians 1:23. Why is he praying to live? God tells him he can live. Isaiah goes back to Hezekiah and tells him that he will live fifteen more years. When he dies it is revealed why God did all of this. There is no seed line. When Hezekiah dies, Manasseh, his son, takes the throne at the age of twelve. Hezekiah is not praying for himself; he's praying for the seed line. He is praying for the woman's seed to come and bruise the head of the serpent. God's purpose cannot be thwarted by illness.

### **Wicked Haman and the Jewish Remnant**

Israel goes into Assyrian captivity in 722 B.C., and Judah goes into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C.. Finally, the Persian



empire takes over Judah from the Babylonian empire, and there is a king of Persia called Xerxes in their language, who in the Bible, is called Ahauserus. Ahauserus fights against the Spartans and fights to a tie at Thermopylae. He comes home, and he and his generals are depressed. They give a great feast to overcome their depression. They all get drunk, and Ahauserus calls for his beautiful wife, Vashti, to come and dance before him, but she refuses. So he banishes her from the empire in a fit of drunken rage. When he sobers up, he misses Vashti for he loved her. He had hundreds of wives and concubines, but he loved this Vashti. After going around the palace sad for a while, one of his counselors suggested having a beauty contest to find another woman who the king could love. By the counsel of God, he has a counselor named Mordecai who has a niece or cousin named Esther, who he enters into the contest. By the providence of God, this Hebrew maiden, Esther, becomes the queen of Persia.

Haman is a wicked man, and he is second-in-command in all of Persia. He has a chariot, and he rides through the streets of Shushan saying, "Everybody bow before the king's honored." Everybody does except one stiff-backed Jew named Mordecai who will bow before no god but Jehovah and will bow before no man. Haman's pride consumes him. He must have Mordecai slain! However, he can't just honestly kill him because Mordecai is an honored counselor of the king. So he conceives an evil plot. He goes to the king and says that there are people in the land who do not honor the king, nor do they honor the gods. They honor another God. "They are numerous," Haman says, ". . . and if our enemies come, they might ally against us, and we will be defeated. We have got to kill them." The king agrees, and a law is passed that on a certain day all the Jews will die. It is sealed with the king's ring and sent quickly through all of the provinces of Persia. Every Jew in Persia is going to die on that day.

Mordecai learns of the decree and goes to Esther, who is the queen. Mordecai tells Esther that she must go and plead

with her husband, or their people will die. She says, "If I go plead to my husband and he doesn't extend the scepter, he'll kill me." Mordecai tells her, "Whether it be you or someone else, one will be raised up to save the people." Mordecai didn't need to be inspired to know that. He just needed to have studied history in order to know that every single time that it looked like Satan was going to win, God didn't raise up an army, he raised up one single person who would save the seed line.

Esther acknowledges that Mordecai is right. She agrees to go and talk to the king and if she dies, then she dies. She goes and says to the king, "I want to give a feast tomorrow night for just you and for Haman." God put in her mind what to say. That night her husband, the king, cannot sleep, so he calls for some of the nations history to be read to him. As they are reading along, they read that there was a plot to kill the king, yet Mordecai uncovered the plot and had the men who were plotting to kill the king executed. The king cannot sleep. He asks if anything had been done to honor Mordecai, and the answer is no. Mordecai doesn't need honor; he serves the king.

At that very moment Haman walks into the antechamber. The king asks Haman what should be done for a person who had served the king with honor. What should be done? Haman believes that it is him who the king is talking about, so he says, "I would put the king's ring on his finger, put the king's robe on his back, then put him on the king's horse and let the second best man in all the empire lead him through the streets, saying, 'Everybody bow before the king's honored.'" The king says, "That is a good idea; as a matter of fact, since you thought of it, you can lead the horse. You put the ring on Mordecai's finger, put the robe on Mordecai's back, put Mordecai on my horse and lead him through the street, telling everybody to bow down before the king's honored." Haman does it, but he doesn't like it. At the end of the day, he builds a gallows forty-five feet tall. He wants everybody to see Mordecai swing. That night, Esther gives the feast and unfolds his plot. Ahasuerus, who can remember Haman's dire face, is told about the gallows. He has

Haman hung on his own gallows. He goes on to tell Esther that the Jews can still be killed on that day. However, the Jews will be forewarned about the attack and will be allowed to protect themselves. Every year since then the Jews have observed a feast called the Feast of Purim that honors the salvation of the nation by Esther, but what it really honors is the seed line. It was preserved by this one woman so that the Christ would come. On and on the story goes.

### **Christ is Born and Herod Slaughters the Infants; Satan and Jesus**

Finally, a woman is pregnant, having never known a man. A virgin is going to have a child. Satan knows this is the one, this is the one whom he must kill. He tried to kill Him in Bethlehem, and Joseph carried Him to Egypt. He tried to get Him to sin in the wilderness, and God preserved Him as He quoted the word of God. Over and over again the devil tempted Him, and finally he made His back look like hamburger meat with a whip, made His head a pin cushion with the thorns, made the blood and spittle equally mixed flow down His face and hung Him on a cross between heaven and earth as if He were not fit for either one of them. God finally forsook Him; the sky blackened, and Satan had his day. Death and Satan tried their best, or their worst, to get Jesus to sin from that tree, yet all He said was, "Father, forgive them. It is finished. Into your hands I commend my spirit." He bowed his head on His chest and hell quit laughing because,

*Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. (Hebrews 2:14-15)*

By dying, Jesus conquered death and took away the power of Satan. He bruised Satan's head, but the fact goes on. In Romans 16:19-20 God says to us,

*Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.*

By our godly life and godly death we too are bruising the serpent's head. The aftermath of all of this will be discussed in the next chapter. We haven't talked about the consequences of this. So many times we think too little of the devil's power, and as we come into temptation, we don't even know that he is there and he defeats us. But equally dangerous is to think too much of the devil's power. He that is in you is greater than he that is in the world, and we have victory over Satan. In the next chapter we will discuss Jesus' victory over Satan more fully. We will discuss the church's victory over Satan more fully, because we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us. Don't ignore the devil, he walks about roaring as a lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). The next verse says, "... *standing firm in the faith* ... " I can defeat the devil, and you can defeat the devil, and the victory that overcomes the world is our faith. The one who overcomes the devil is Jesus. With Jesus, we will meet the devil in hand-to-hand combat day-by-day. As we do, his head will be bruised again and again and again as faithful men and women die and go to sing redemption song in heaven's sweet city. In our next chapter we will discuss Jesus' and our victory over Satan.

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# THE AFTERMATH OF CONFLICT

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(Genesis 4:1-8:14)

## Review

Welcome back to the study of Old Testament history. Let us begin by reviewing some of the last chapter so that we can get into the latter part of that which we didn't quite finish. The "Mother Promise," the prophecy of all prophecies, is found in Genesis 3:15. God is speaking to the serpent, who is actually the devil personified. God said to him, "*And I will put enmity (warfare, ill-will) between you and the woman (Eve), and between your offspring (seed) and hers (her seed).*"

You may think of the seed as plural, and rightly so, but it is basically singular because it says He, her seed, is going to be one man. "He shall bruise your head, and you will bruise His heel." Jesus in His death and resurrection took away the devil's power, but in that He Himself was hurt temporarily. "...*he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*" (Genesis 3:15)

We saw through our journey through the Old Testament that this was the story of the Old Testament. The devil tried to destroy this woman's seed, and God always raised up one individual to keep that from happening. Cain killed Abel, and God raised up Seth. The whole world became wicked, and God raised up Noah. The whole world became idolatrous, and God raised up Abraham. Israel went away into Egypt, and God raised up Moses. God chose Judah as the tribe through whom He would bless the world and then raised up David's family. Goliath tried to destroy David's family; Saul tried to destroy it; Absalom tried to destroy it; Athaliah tried to destroy it, yet God triumphed in every case. In captivity, Haman, the wicked

second-in-command in the Persian empire, tried to destroy Israel, but God raised up Esther to preserve the seed. During the period of 400 years of biblical silence, the Seluecid empire tried to destroy the seed, and God raised up a man named Judas Maccabee, also known as “The Hammer,” to save Israel. The feast of dedication today in Israel honors the struggles of Judas Maccabee. Finally the virgin had a child without any logical explanation. No man’s seed was in her, yet Jesus was born. He fights the devil even when He is an infant. Satan tries to destroy Jesus and so Joseph, his father, carries Him away to Egypt. Satan meets Him in the wilderness of temptation and three times Jesus drives the devil away with the spoken and quoted word. For three and a half years, the devil tries through Jewish hypocrisy and Roman brutality to destroy and overcome Jesus. Jesus conquers them all on the cross and proves it by being raised from the dead. Paul tells the church at Rome in Romans 16:19-20, *“Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.”* So precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. For with Jesus’ death, as with every saint’s death, Satan’s head is bruised again. That is what we learned in our last chapter.

## **The Aftermath of Conflict**

### **The Savior’s Power is Seen in His Claims**

There is one other point that must be made on the discussion of Genesis 3:15, and that is the aftermath of the conflict between Jesus and Satan. The Savior’s power is seen in some claims that He makes. In Luke 11 Jesus makes some claims to be more powerful than the devil and because of that to be able to defeat him. In Luke 11:14 Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon left, the man who had been dumb spoke, and the crowd was amazed.

*But some of them said, 'By Beelzebub, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons.' Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven. Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: 'Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall. If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebub. Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom (Matthew says "the spirit of God") of God has come to you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils. He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters.' (Luke 11:15-23)*

Jesus says, "The aftermath of this struggle that I am having with the devil today is that I am going to bruise his head and prove that I am stronger than he. I am able to spoil his goods. I am able to completely plunder his house. I can enter into his house and completely and absolutely destroy his things. I can bind him and tie him up to prove that he has absolutely no power over me or anybody that is connected with Me." That is the aftermath of this struggle. If Jesus bruises the devil's head, then the devil has absolutely no power over Jesus or anybody who belongs to Jesus. And, of course, He bruised the devil's power by not only dying on the cross but by also being raised from the dead. In John 14:30, Jesus says, "...for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me." The devil has absolutely no power over Jesus. Jesus' sinless life negated the devil's plot. Jesus said in John 10:17-18,

*The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.*

So the cross was God's plan, not merely the devil's plot. It was the devil's plot, but God used the devil's plot in defeating him on his own battlefield—the battlefield of death and the battlefield of sin. He went into the strong man's house. That strong man was fully armed and guarded his own courts, yet Jesus went into his home base. He went in with him having all the home field advantage, and He defeated him by living a sinless life and being raised from the dead. He totally defeated Satan. Hebrews 2:14-15 says,

*Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy (bring to naught, to nothing, to zero) him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

In Revelation 1:17-18 the picture of Jesus is magnificent. He holds seven stars in His right hand, which is just a fabulous picture. John, seeing all of what Jesus is in this heavenly vision, falls on his face before God. But Jesus puts His right hand on him and says, *“Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.”* That is what makes Jesus unique—not simply His life, not simply the fabulous teaching He did in the Sermon on the Mount and in the parables, and the remarkable love that He had for the poor and the downtrodden. The thing that makes Jesus unique is that He is the only one who can say, *“. . . I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.”* The devil's head has been bruised. The serpent has



been crushed and destroyed. Jesus holds all power over the dominion that Satan once held.

### **The Savior's Power Is Seen In His Cross**

Jesus' power is portrayed by the resurrection, but it is also seen in the cross. It is because of Jesus and Him crucified that we have victory over the devil. *"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."* (1 Corinthians 1:18) When Jesus was raised from the dead, it confirmed all that He had done on the cross. It burst open the gates of the grave. Death could not possibly hold Him. He had wrestled the devil's power from him, and now He is the conqueror and victor of death.

### **The Doctrinal Significance of the Conflict**

So what? That is the question you have a right to ask. Jesus overcame. Jesus won. What does that mean to me? What is the doctrinal significance of all of this? We will study this again and again in our study of Old Testament history. But here at the beginning, let us notice a three fold doctrinal significance to this conflict. What does it mean to me personally? What power does it bring to my life? It brings to my life three things.

### **The Promise of God Can Be Relied On**

**Number one**, the promise of God can be relied on. In the garden of Eden, at the dawn of history, God says that the serpent's head will be bruised by the seed of the woman. And in spite of all the combined efforts of earth and hell to see that was not done, the promise of God was fulfilled. You can rely on the fact that if God promises something then it is going to come to pass.

### **The Providence of God Will Protect His People**

**Second**, the providence of God will protect His people. Not only can we rely on His promise, we can also rely on His providential working and His providential hand. He will protect

us. He says, "I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. Not in any sense of the word will I forsake you." So with good courage we can say that the Lord is our helper. What can we fear? What can man do unto us? The answer to that question is found in Hebrews 13:5-6. God promised in Eden's garden, step-by-step, day-by-day, year-by-year, in every way, that He would work providentially in the life of His people and protect them.

### **The Purpose of God Will Always Stand**

**Third**, the purpose of God will always stand. If God purposes a thing, it is eternal. That is what we speak of when we talk about the eternal purpose of God. This conflict with Satan goes on continually. We need to continue to be faithful to Jesus so that we can bruise Satan's head too. We can rely on God's promise that it will occur. We can rely on God's providence in our life to see that we can rely on God's purpose to work it out in our individual lives.

## **From the Fall to the Flood**

### **The Historical Account of Cain and Abel**

Let us go back to the book of Genesis 4 and continue the story from the fall to the flood. Genesis 4:1-8:14 covers the time from Adam and Eve's sin to Noah and the flood. To begin with, there is the historical incident of Cain and Abel. Genesis 4 is a very interesting chapter due to the fact that immediately the devil has begun his conflict with the woman's seed. Adam and Eve have two children mentioned, Cain and Abel. They both bring an offering to God. Cain brings his offering from the fruit of the field because he is a farmer, and Abel brings his from the flock because he is a shepherd. When God ordered sacrifices in the law of Moses, He honored both the sacrifice of the field and the sacrifice of the flock. The problem here is not with what they are bringing. They are both bringing what they need to bring, the fruit of their hands and the fruit of their labor

unto God, but God accepts Abel's offering and does not accept Cain's (Genesis 4:4-7). How God accepted the sacrifice, the text doesn't say. So Cain's sacrifice is not accepted by God, but Abel's is. The writer of Hebrews says, "*By faith Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain did.*" (Hebrews 11:4a) Not by kind, not by quantity, not even by quality, but by the faith that he had in God was his offering accepted.

### **God's Divine Judgment On Cain**

Immediately sin enters the picture through Cain who is a profane man. Profane means worldly which doesn't mean that he was necessarily an evil doer, although he was; it just means that he was a worldly man. He was worldly in the fact that he was jealous that Abel's sacrifice was accepted and his was not, so he murdered his brother and then buried him beneath the soil. The first step after sin is to try to hide it. It was true with his father and mother, and its true with Cain. He is trying to hide the fact that he has slaughtered Abel. God comes in judgement and speaks to Cain: "*Where is your brother Abel?*" (Genesis 4:9a) Does God not know where Abel is? Of course He knows. But He is asking the question in order to make Cain reply and consider the wickedness that he's done. "*Where is your brother Abel?*" Cain makes this statement in question form, as many people have. "*Am I my brother's keeper?*" (Genesis 4:9b) Why are you asking me about him? I don't know where my brother is, Cain says. God says, "*What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.*" (Genesis 4:10) The writer of Hebrews uses that statement when he says that the blood of Jesus speaks louder and better than that of Abel. Here is an innocent Abel's blood, at least innocent in this case. Innocent Abel's blood is crying out for vindication. Here is innocent Jesus' blood vindicating us. One cries for vindication, the other a vindicating cry. Jesus' cry speaks better than that of Abel. Nevertheless, Cain stands here to be judged because he has murdered his brother, Abel.

Notice God's divine judgement on Cain in Genesis 4:10. *The LORD said, 'What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.'*

There is Cain's curse. He will not find a place where he can raise a good crop, and he will be a nomad, a wanderer all of his life. Watch Cain's cry to the Lord in Genesis 4:13-14,

*Cain said to the LORD, 'My punishment is more than I can bear. Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.'*

In response to Cain's objection, the Lord said that someone killing him would put him out of his misery, yet that is not what God wanted. Genesis 4:15-16:

*But the LORD said to him, 'Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over.' Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. So Cain went out from the LORD's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.*

### **The Genealogies of Cain and Seth**

Cain's family line begins to be mentioned in verses Genesis 4:16-24. He is really the father of what we would call "more modern living" than Seth's line, who replaced Abel. As a matter of fact in verses 16-17 his people are city dwellers. They build great metropolitan cities of that day. His seed, in

verses 18-20, make it clear that he is a polygamist. They not only become city dwellers, but they begin to become sexually oriented as many times cities become. In verse 21 there are players on instruments of music and workers in fine things, so they are given to culture. Finally, in verses 22-24 they even become workers of iron as they give the world the first industrial push. So Cain and his seed are profane. They dwell in cities; they are polygamists; they are culturally refined and industrially diligent. They are worldly people not ungodly people. Some are ungodly, but they are people of this world.

Adam and Eve have sexual relations, and Seth is born. Immediately, Seth begins to call upon the name of Jehovah. He has Abel's spiritual mind. He is a shepherd, doing his work out in the open, and he is close to God. The family tree of Seth is mentioned in chapter 5 and there are mentioned ten generations from Adam to Noah. These generations are godly on the whole. There are people like Enoch who went to be with God because he walked with God. There is Methuselah who lived 969 years, and that is all we know about him. But if you take a careful chronological look at chapter five, Methuselah seemed to die the same year of the flood. It is not stated, but if you take when the child was born and how long he lived before another child was born and add those together, Methuselah died the year of the flood. Perhaps he died in the flood. The world was becoming wicked during these ten generations.

### **Great Apostasy and the Following Judgment**

In Genesis 6:1 begins the story of the apostasy and the following judgement. When men began to increase in number on the earth, and daughters were born to them, the sons of God, that is the godly line of Seth, saw that the daughters of men, that is the ungodly line of Cain, were beautiful and married any of them they chose. *"Then the Lord said, 'My spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal, his days will be a hundred and twenty years.'"* (Genesis 6:3) God is not talking about how long man will live because they live longer than that.

He is talking about how long it will be from that moment till He destroys the entire world with a flood. Righteous Noah is going to have 120 years to preach to this ungodly line before God destroys them. But notice the blending of the seeds. The seeds are being blended, and the godly line is marrying the ungodly line, and that ends up in an evil situation. There is the divine warning, "I will not contend with man forever."

Notice in Genesis 6:4 the Nephilim, which literally means "the giants." The giants were on the earth in those days and also after those days when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown. Now notice the divine judgement in Genesis 6:5,

*The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that **every** inclination of the thoughts of his heart was **only** evil **all** the time. The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. So the LORD said, 'I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth-men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air-for I am grieved that I have made them' But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.*

Noah was a righteous man and blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. So there is the divine response. God would totally destroy the entire world but there was a godly remnant, Noah, who found favor with God. Noah was a righteous man. Noah was blameless among the people of his day, and he walked with God. There is a good description of a godly man. Let us all strive for that. He was righteous, which means that he followed the law. He was blameless, which means he strove to be righteous. He walked with God which showed his humility. He had three sons; Shem, Ham and Japheth, and so God said in Genesis 6:11,

*Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah, 'I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth.'*

God then begins to talk to Noah about building the ark. The ark was to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. He tells Noah about the doors and rooms and talks about all of the details of building of the ark. Then, He tells him in Genesis 7 to take his family and go into that ark. And the Lord shut him in. After Noah and his family got into the ark the Lord shut the door and sealed it. And for forty days and forty nights it rained upon the earth. The fountains of water underneath the earth erupted, which is where most of the water came from. The world was not flooded by rain as much as it was by the eruption of all this water that was under the earth. The fountains of the deep gave forth their water, and the whole earth was covered with water deep enough to float the ark. For a full year they were on that ark; and then, finally, at the end of that year, they began to send out the birds to find out how things were. The birds always came back. Finally, they sent out a bird which did not return, and so they knew that the flood was over.

The ark rested on the mountains of Ararat, and finally the Lord opened the door and they could go out and stand on sinless ground. Have you ever thought of the beautiful possibility of starting life all over again, of starting to live in a sinless condition, ready to start afresh? The problem with that is wherever we are, sin is there. We are sinners, and eight godly people, but still sinners, walked off that ark. Noah later planted a vineyard, and from the vineyard came the grape, and from the grape came the wine, and from the wine came the drunk, and sin started all over again, and the struggle with the devil continued. From the flood, let us learn that a new start is simply a start to walk with God again, not a walk with sinlessness.

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# FROM THE FLOOD TO BABEL AND THE OLD TESTAMENT WORLD

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**(Genesis 8:15-11:9)**

## Review and Introduction

This is chapter number five in our study of Bible History One. At the end of our last chapter we quickly surveyed all of Noah's life. We studied his life in some detail up to the time of the flood. We did that on purpose so we could see his life up until the time that the flood occurred. The flood had come and Noah and his family are ready to disembark from the ark. The Bible says that the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat (plural) which would indicate the mountain range of Ararat, not necessarily the main mountain. Now let us go back and pick up where the ark rests on the earth and Noah begins life again. In Genesis 8:15 we read,

*Then God said to Noah, 'Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives. Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you—the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground—so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number upon it.' So Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives. All the animals and all the creatures that move along the ground and all the birds—everything that moves on the earth—came out of the ark, one kind after another.*



## From the Flood to Babel – the Old Testament World

### Noah and His Family

There is the magnificent emergence, the momentous emergence as Noah, the righteous seed and all of the innocent animals of the world come out of the ark to repopulate the world. There are some people that believe that this was only a local flood. But if that were true then there would have been no reason for the ark. Noah and the others could have just gone up to a mountain in another part of the world to wait for the flood to cease. This was a worldwide flood with the intent of destruction of all the wicked so that there could be a brand new start.

Noah is out of the ark, so let us watch his character and see the first thing that he did. Would that not indicate the character of a man, the first thing he did? We see what the first thing was that he did in Genesis 8:20,

*Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: ‘Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done. (There had been a lot of local floods so this wasn’t a local flood because God said, “I’ll never do this again.”) ‘As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.’*

God is satisfied with the fact that man will remember this momentous judgement and that He will not have to do something like this again. This is God’s divine intention. He never intends to destroy the world by a flood again. In Genesis

9:1 God announces a new era, a new eon of life. It says, “*Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.’*”

Until that time man had been friends with the animals and the animals friends with them, but we read in Genesis 9:2,

*The fear and dread of you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air, upon every creature that moves along the ground, and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hands. Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything.*

Up until that time, man had been a vegetarian, he had only eaten the green things. But now God gives him the animals to eat also but with a prohibition. God, when He grants the maximum, always forbids the minimum. He says in Genesis 9:4-7,

*But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it. And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man. As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it.*

Notice the era that starts here. Man is now a flesh eater. Up until that time, like all the animals, they had simply been eaters of vegetation. Now they also can eat the animal but not the blood because the life is in the blood. Notice also that in regard to mankind it is different. You can shed animal's blood and eat the meat, but whoever sheds man's blood, by man will his

blood be shed. That starts, as a law, capital punishment. I want you remember that capital punishment is of God, and it was an order of God as soon as the ark had rested on sinless soil. Now watch, if you will, the covenant that is made in Genesis 9:8-11:

*Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: 'I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you-the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you-every living creature on earth. I establish my covenant with you: (Here it is) Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.'*

Again that makes the flood universal and not just a local flood because there had been local floods before this time. God said that this would never happen again. So God makes a covenant, "I will be with you, I will never again destroy all living creatures." Now watch the sign of the covenant in 9:12-17:

*And God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.'* So God said to

*Noah, 'This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.'*

This passage simply says that God will never again bring the kind of flood He brought in Noah's day. It was a worldwide flood. Noah and seven other human beings were all who escaped the judgement of the flood. Two of every kind of animal and seven of every clean kind of animal went with them on the ark. Peter makes reference to this in 1 Peter 3:21 when he says, "*... and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God.*"

In verse 17 the world is a brand new place, and the people are living in a sinless environment. But that doesn't last long. In Genesis 9:18-19, we read,

*The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) These were the three sons of Noah, and from them came the people who were scattered over the earth.*

Every person today comes from Shem, Ham or Japheth. Noah was a man of the soil, and he proceeded to plant a vineyard. When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside. It doesn't state it here, but later, it does state that he laughed. Ham was laughing at his father's drunken nakedness. But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders. Then they walked backwards and covered their father's nakedness. Their faces were turned the other way so they would not see their father's nakedness. They not only wouldn't laugh at his nakedness, but they wouldn't even look at him. They were honoring their father even when he had done a dishonorable thing. Even though he was not really worthy of honor at that

moment, they were honoring him because he was their father. He was a man of God who had walked with God in righteousness although here he was in sin. *“When Noah woke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him he said, ‘Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will be to his brothers.’”* (Genesis 9:24-25) He didn’t say, “Cursed be Ham.” He went beyond Ham to Canaan who would be father of the Canaanites who would be the tribes that served Israel when they entered the promised land.

*He also said, ‘Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem! May Canaan be the slave of Shem. May God extend the territory of Japheth; may Japheth live in the tents of Shem and may Canaan be his slave.’* (Genesis 9:26-27)

It is interesting and necessary to know that Shem is the father of all the people we call Semitic: the Jews and the Arabs. Ham is the father of those who we call Negroid, those that are not necessarily black but those in Egypt and in that part of the world. Japheth is European. I don’t see where the Asian people came from, probably from a mixture of these. But the world is covered by these three sons. Genesis 9:28-29 says, *“After the flood Noah lived 350 years. Altogether, Noah lived 950 years, and then he died.”*

### **Special Note**

Noah lived 350 years beyond the flood. Adam lived 243 years in the life of Methuselah. If Adam knew him, then he had 243 years to teach Methuselah the story of creation and the fall. Methuselah died the year of the flood, so he had 600 years to teach Noah about the fall, and Noah had 350 years after the flood to teach other people. Shem, Noah’s son, will live into the lifetime of Jacob. They really don’t need a written revelation in those days. Word of mouth assured that the story was told in those days, and that is why there is no written revelation.

That is just a point of interest, and maybe we will have time to discuss that later, but is something that we need to learn here. That is, that even with righteous men, evil crouches at the door. Sin is a persistent thing. The devil is still trying to destroy the seed of the woman by destroying this family of Noah, but he's not able to do it.

### **The Spread of the Nation**

In chapter 10 there is the table of nations. The sons of Japheth, Ham and Shem are listed here. From their sons come all of the nations of the world in ancient times. As far as that is concerned today, many of them are still wearing the name that they wore from this period of time. Japheth had seven sons, and they are mentioned in Genesis 10:2-5. Those sons are Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech and Tiras. Not much is known about Tubal, Meshech and Tiras. They are probably the beginning of some European nations. But Gomer is the father of the people we call Celts or Kelts. That is the Franks and the German people. Magog is father of the Scythian people who were known for their development of the spear and their use of horses. Madai is the father of the Medes who along with the Persians will be a world wide empire near the close of the Old Testament day. Javan is the father of the Greeks and everybody who came from the Greeks, which would be a lot of the European people. So Japheth is a strong, powerful empire before much time passes, an empire of empires, of all of the people who will inhabit what we will later call Europe.

Ham had four sons. They are mentioned beginning in Genesis 10:6-16: Cush, Mizraim, Phut and Canaan. He is always said to be the father of Canaan, but he had three other sons. Cush is Ethiopia. They were one of the most powerful nations of the world in ancient times and are some of the most beautiful and stately people that we see today. Every time that you see Egypt in your Old Testament you see the word Mizraim which is the Hebrew word for Egypt. Mizraim is Egypt, and

there was a time when it ruled the entire world. Phut is Libya, which is the northern part of Africa, and Canaan is Palestine. Canaan is the only weakling in all of Ham's children. That is why the curse is upon Canaan and not upon Ham. Ethiopia, Egypt and Libya are never to be seen as cursed people in ancient times. These are kingly, regal and royal people. So the curse is not upon Ham. It's not upon the Negroid race. It is only upon Canaan, Ham's son.

Shem had five sons. A nation comes from each of them. His five sons are Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud and Aram. Elam is the Elamites who were one of the powerful ruling people where the Tigris and Euphrates river come together. Asshur is the father of the Assyrian people, the ruling nation in the 8th century. Arphaxad is the father of the Chaldeans or the Babylonians who were another ruling people in the 8th century. The father of the Jews, Abraham, was a Chaldean. Lud is the father of Nibia and Aram the father of the Syrians. These are all powerful people in Old Testament history.

### **The Building of Babel**

The people were told by God that they were to scatter out. They were to multiply and replenish the earth. However, they did not do that. They decided instead that they wanted to stay together, and so they started building a rallying point, a big tower whose height nearly reached under the heavens. It was called the Tower of Babel. Their reason for building the tower was to stay together as a people. God looked at this and said that if something was not done about the building of this tower, then there would not be anything that man could not do. You see, unity is always powerful, but it is not always good. So God confused their tongues so that they began to talk to each other in languages that they did not understand. That is all it took to scatter the people. The people did not want to scatter, and even though it was against their will, they did what God's will was and scattered. From there they began to multiply and replenish

the earth. Since man is now involved in this activity of repopulating the earth, we need to see the geography of the Old Testament world.<sup>1</sup>

We have a map here that we are going to look at several times. On this map we are going to put 33 facts. First of all, look at the bodies of water that are on the earth. In the north and to the east is the Caspian sea where Tehran, the capital of Iran, is today. It is the largest body of water completely surrounded by land. Coming down the map to the south and to the east is the Persian gulf which is, as you know, a point of numerous conflicts. This is where civilization will center because into that gulf flow the Tigris and Euphrates rivers which are the cradle of civilization. Then, toward the center is the Red Sea. The Red sea has two gulfs, the Gulf of Suez or, as it is often times called today, the Suez canal, which connects the Red sea to the Mediterranean sea, and also the Gulf of Aqaba. Across the Gulf of Aqaba is where Israel will march on dry land and the Egyptian army will be destroyed. On the other side of the Gulf of Aqaba is Mount Sinai where God will speak the law to Moses. The Mediterranean sea is the large sea in the middle of the map which today is known by the same name, but which in the Old Testament is primarily called the Great Sea. Around this sea many interesting things, both in the Old and New Testament, will be depicted. And finally, there is a small, but very significant sea, the Dead Sea which is located at the bottom of the Jordan river. It is a sea that is 1,292 feet below the level of the sea and has a 1,300 foot depth. The bottom of that sea is 2,600 feet below the level of the sea. We will talk more about the Jordan River and the Dead Sea later.

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<sup>1</sup>In order to follow along with this section of the chapter, turn to the map that is on page 23 of the accompanying study guide titled, "Bible History 1: A Study of Genesis Through Joshua," by Richard Rogers (Lubbock, TX: Sunset International Bible Institute, 1995).



There are six rivers that we want to notice on this map. The first is the Araxes River in the far north. It is the northern most river and forms the northern border of the biblical land. The Tigris River is the river on the east and north of the Mesopotamia area, and the Euphrates River, its sister, is the one to the west and south. Those are the two great rivers of the ancient world, so much so that in the Bible, the Euphrates River is always referred to as “The River.” The Orontes River is at the northern part of that land extension just before it curves and goes west to form the shore of the Mediterranean Sea in modern Lebanon. It is a river that flows north and then east into the Great Sea. It will not be of much importance in the Old Testament but will become very important in the New Testament. The Nile River is in Egypt. It is the most unusual river in the world, and we will study it in more detail when we study Egypt. It has developed into such a great force that it will flow for 1,500 miles into the Mediterranean Sea without any tributary at all. The Jordan River is a river that flows into what is called the Great Rift. It starts at Mount Herman and Mount Lebanon and runs all the way to the Transvaal in South Africa. It is the longest rift on earth. We will study the Jordan river in detail when we begin the study of the history of Israel.

There are six mountains that we want to put on this map. Mount Ararat, which is in the northern part and near the Araxes river, forms the northern boundary of the Old Testament world. The Caspian Range is just south of the Caspian Sea. The Zagros Range is on the south of that and provides a buffer between Mesopotamia and the rest of the world. The Taurus Range, which is where Saul of Tarsus was born, is located on the north shore of the Great sea. Then there is the Lebanon and the anti-Lebanon ranges which run on each side of the Jordan River. The Lebanon Range is on the west side and the anti-Lebanon is on the east.

The primary thing that we are interested in is the countries. I want us to see these countries in three different divisions, so

to speak. First of all, there are the countries of the three mountain systems that we talked about; Ararat, Caspian and Zagros. In the Ararat mountain range is the country of Armenia. It is not too important biblically although it does come up now and then. Down in the Caspian range is the country of Media which is a very important country. They help form the Medo-Persian empire later in the Old Testament. Down in the Zagros range is the country of Persia, which is modern day Iran. This is one of the most powerful nations of the world, so we will be studying about Persia throughout our study. Where the Tigris and Euphrates rivers come together, the countries of the Mesopotamian area begin. First, is Sumer. While not that important biblically, it is the most ancient empire known to man. Then, there is Chaldea or Babylonia (Babylon), which is also the name of the city. It is a powerful empire which is where Abraham is born. Then moving on up the rivers, we come to Assyria with its capital of Nineveh. This is also a very powerful empire. On the eastern side of the Tigris River, is the country of Elam. The Elamites are a powerful people. All of the area between the rivers is called Mesopotamia which literally means "between the rivers." From that area of Mesopotamia all the way to Palestine is the Arabian desert, of the country Arabia. Nobody crosses that desert except the Arabians until Alexander does so in order to defeat the Persian empire.

Next are the countries surrounding the eastern Mediterranean. Up on the eastern and northern border, which in New Testament days was called Asia Minor and today is called Turkey, is the nation of the Hittites. In the extreme north of that part of the world that comes down the Jordan river is the country of Syria with its capital, Damascus. It is famous for making steel and iron. Along the coast are three countries: Phoenicia, Philistia and Canaan, or Palestine. Phoenicia is above the hump in the sea; Philistia is below the hump in the sea, and Canaan is between the river Jordan and the Great Sea.

And then all the way down in the south is Egypt that is watered and made fruitful by the Nile.

This is a great deal of material to cover in such a short time, but look at the map, and then draw it. There is a place in your outline where you can draw this map for yourself, and label those 33 places<sup>2</sup>. Please do that so that when we talk about these places we will know where they are, because geography is important to history. We will return to our study of the Bible in our next chapter. God bless you as you study His word.

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<sup>2</sup>The blank map is found on page 25 of the study guide.

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## ABRAHAM'S JOURNEY – OLD TESTAMENT PALESTINE

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**(Genesis 11:10-12:8)**

This is chapter six of the study of Bible History in the Old Testament. Turn to the outline on chapter six because we need to look at a map there<sup>3</sup>. If you have an outline just follow along because there are some geographical things that are important in the study of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the others that follow. So on your outline, notice that we have the first point, the map of Old Testament Palestine. Old Testament Palestine can be divided into four geographical sections that will not change no matter who rules the land.

### **Palestine and Abraham**

#### **Map of Old Testament Palestine: Natural Divisions of the Land**

The first geographical section is the coastal plain. On the coast of the Mediterranean Sea from south to north is the plain of Philistia down at the bottom. The Philistines who lived there in the plain of Philistia are going to be a constant thorn in Israel's side. Above the plain of Philistia and right up to that hump in the sea, which is Mount Carmel, you have the plain of Sharon. Very beautiful vegetation grows there. The lily-of-the-valley or the rose of Sharon grows there. It is not really a rose

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<sup>3</sup>This map is on page 30 of the study guide.

but a beautiful red and pink flower. At the hump in the sea coming down into the middle of the country, on an angle, is the valley of Jezreel or the Plain of Ezdralon. This is where Megiddo and Armageddon are. It is the great battlefield in the Old Testament, and today in Israel, it is a beautiful orange grove area. The Shephelah is a little row of hills between the coastal plain and the central mountain range that forms a buffer state between the two nations that will live there.

When you leave the coastal plain, you come to a mountain range called the Central Range that runs all the way down Palestine. It is called this because it is halfway between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. It divides itself into the upper Galilean range which is north, the lower Galilean range which is between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea, the hill country of Ephraim which is right on the border between Israel and Judah, and then Judea and the Negev. This mountain range encompasses the mountains of Galilee, the mountains of Ephraim, the mountains of Judea and then outside the mountains, the south country, which is what Negev means. The Jordan valley then is the valley through which the Jordan river flows and in which there are three lakes; the waters of Miriam, the sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. The Jordan River is a very interesting river. We could talk for days about that river. It is only about 135 miles long, but when you trace all of the river bed, it is over 225 miles long. Between the sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea, it winds like a serpent and most of the days of the year, if you were flying over it, you would see that winding serpent. However, for about two months of the year, that river flows from one bank to the other bank, a rushing torrent from the sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. The Jordan River would flow all the way to the Red Sea except for the big hole at the bottom of it called the Dead Sea.

There are three waters on that river, and two of them are extremely important for our study, and one of them is fairly important. The first is Lake Hula or the waters of Merom. This is where there is a city called Hazor. Several times there will be

the gathering of the tribes of the land in Hazor to make a confederacy against the people of God. It will be a place of gathering for the enemies of God. Then there is the sea of Galilee, or as it is sometimes called, Chinnereth. It is an interesting body of water in and of itself, but it is a part of the life blood of Galilee because it is a great fishing place and many fisherman have made their living there from the dawn of time. The water is 685 feet below the level of the sea. The lake is 9 miles long and about 7 miles across and it has never been fished out. It is a beautiful, clear and commercially beneficial lake. The Jordan river flows out of it, bigger than when it flows into it. The Jordan River flows down to the Dead Sea which in the Bible is also called the Salt Sea. The surface of that Dead sea is 1,292 feet below the level of the sea. The sea at its deepest point is 1,300 feet deep plus. That means that the hole that this lake or sea is in is 2,600 feet below the level of the sea. No water flows out of that sea, so that is why it is called the Dead Sea. Its water is salty because the only way any water gets out is by evaporation. Through the centuries of evaporation, the sea has become over 25 percent solid. If you were to take a pint jar of Dead sea water and sit it upon a shelf and leave it there for a while, before long 25 percent of that bottle of water would be absolutely solid. Of course, it had been that way all along, but it would have settled to the bottom. They mine millions of tons of pot ash out of that lake every year, and it still stays the same height. There is no way you could drown in that sea unless you intended to because you can lay flat on your back and float. Even if you don't want to float, you float because it's a quarter percent solid. Below the Dead sea, the rift that the river has flown in continues. Except for the hole, the Jordan river would keep on flowing. That rift goes all the way down to the Red Sea, underneath the Gulf of Aqaba's wing of the Red Sea, out on the other side, down through the Sudan and down through Kenya. It is the most magnificent geographical fault in all the world. It was as if something or someone just ripped open the

earth at that spot. It is most likely a result of the flood. That's the Jordan valley.

On the other side of the Jordan valley is the Eastern Range or what is called the Table land. There you have only a few mountains, but there are three basic geographical and national borders. Down in the south, parallel to the Dead Sea, is found the country of Moab. Moab, as we'll study later on, is a result of an incestuous relationship between Lot and one of his daughters, so this is a kinsman to Israel. Gilead is the territory between the Dead Sea and just above the sea of Galilee. It's a geographical designation, and many nations live in the country of Gilead. There are many beautiful springs and mud in Gilead because the springs are mineral springs. The mud has healing qualities and that explains the song "Is There No Balm In Gilead? Is there no physician there?" Then above Gilead is the geographical section of Bashan. It is actually for political reasons that Bashan is mentioned, but the Bible gives it a geographical name, and many nations will live there. They raise the finest of cows and steers. The country is a beautiful farming country, and the grain grows over the head of the animals. Fat cows and fat bulls are grown in Bashan so it's another very economically important area.

On the outline many mountains are listed. Mountains are significant in the Bible because many times God brings a person up onto a mountain to offer a sacrifice or to hear from Him, or a man seemingly goes to a high place because God is high and lifted up. Man wants to go to a high and lifted up place to approach God in prayer, to recommit himself and to sacrifice. Starting on the west side of the Jordan between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, is found the Central Range. Way up in the north is a mountain very important in many of the political discussions today, Mount Lebanon. There the cedars grow that Solomon used to build his house and much of the temple. Just south of that is Mount Meiron. It doesn't really have any definite or great Old Testament significance, but one battle will be fought there. Coming on down to the

northern end of the sea of Galilee, about halfway between the sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean ocean, are the "Horns of Hattin," a mountain with two peaks. This is probably the Beatitude mountain, where Jesus spoke the Beatitudes.

Coming on down to the southern end of the sea of Galilee and a little bit closer to the sea of Galilee rather than the Mediterranean sea is Mount Tabor. This is where many of Israel's armies will gather to fight against their enemies. Then, just below that are the hills of Moreh which is also known as Little Hermon. This is the mountain that is thought to be the place where Abraham will offer Isaac. Going inward a bit is Mount Gilboa. There is a valley formed between Mount Tabor and Mount Gilboa where many battles are fought. Then go to the hump in the sea, and there you have Mount Carmel. It is from that mountain that Elijah will look out and finally prophesy about a great rain to come. It is on that mountain that he defeats the prophets of Baal, killing 450 of them. It is an important mountain in the Bible. Going south, just before you get to the northern end of the Dead Sea, there are two mountains, Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. They are in the hill country of Ephraim. That is the Mount of Cursing (Ebal) and the Mount of Blessing (Gerizim). These mountains are called by these names because they are where Moses was given the covenant of blessing and cursing in Deuteronomy 28-30. He read the covenant to Israel when they got to the Promised Land as the people stood in the valley below. Mountains and valleys make natural auditoriums, and so Moses and the priests read the blessings from Gerizim, and the people would say, "Amen." They would read the curses from Ebal, and the people would say, "Amen."

Around Jerusalem are two important mountains of the Old Testament: Mount Zion inside the walls of the city, and the Mount of Olives just outside the walls. Jerusalem is just below the northern end of the Dead Sea about 20 miles inland. Going south about two-thirds of the way down the Dead Sea you have Mount Hebron. This is the mountain that Abraham will live near and is one of the mountains that Samson will dwell upon. It is a very important Biblical mountain.



Those are the twelve mountains west of the Jordan river. On the east, there are only three mountains of significance. Again, going from the north to the south, in the north is Mount Hermon. It will be more important in the New Testament than in the Old, but there will be several important incidents that occur there. Then, there is Mount Gilead, which is about halfway between the sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea, right on the edge of the desert. This is an important place primarily because it makes a barrier between Israel and its enemies. Then, Mount Nebo is just east of the northern end of the Dead Sea. It is from here that Moses will view the Promised Land.

Geography in and of itself is not very interesting, but this is the geography upon which most of the Old Testament history occurred. Geography many times determines much of what happens, so, as we study, we will refer to these geographical facts, and that will help us understand what is being said in the Bible. Study that map; get familiar with it so that as we move around Palestine with Abraham and the other heroes, we will know where they are and why it says sometimes that “they went up to” and why sometimes “they went down to.” We’ll know why it is that sometimes they are victorious over their enemies and sometimes they are defeated, either because their enemies possessed this mountain stronghold or they did not possess this particular mountain stronghold. As far as I know, that is all the geography that we are going to study for a while. We will not look at any more geography until we get to the history of God’s people in Egypt. Then it will be necessary to talk about the geography and history of Egypt.

### **The Ten Generations of Shem**

Genesis 11 begins a study of history that this geography supports. In the last chapter we studied the story of the tower of Babel. The people, instead of scattering and replenishing the earth as God wanted them to, consolidated and decided that they were going to stay in one place. They were going to build a tower that they thought would extend into heaven itself in

order to keep themselves as one nation and as a united people. They did not want to scatter as God wanted them to. God looked down from heaven and said, *"If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them."* (Genesis 11:6) God had to get them to not be united. So He confused their language, and they began to speak in different languages and couldn't understand one another.

So they scattered throughout all of the world. A genealogy is given in Genesis 11:10. This is very important to see, because it shows where Abram came from. In Genesis 5 we found the first ten generations of the earth, from Adam to Noah. Two years after the flood the genealogy resumes and takes it ten more generations to arrive at Abram. This is the genealogical account of Shem.

We will mention the fathers, their sons, and how long they lived. Two years after the flood, when Shem was 100 years old, he became the father of Arphaxad. After he became the father of Arphaxad, Shem lived 500 years and had other sons and daughters. So Shem lived for 600 years. Arphaxad at 35 bore Salah and lived 438 years. Salah became the father of Eber and lived 433 years. Eber became the father of Peleg and lived 464 years. Peleg became the father of Reu and lived 239 years. Notice the drop in the number of years that men were living. They had been living 900 years before the flood. Shem lived 600 years; he was a flood person. Then it dropped down to 400 and then to 200. Reu became the father of Serug and lived 239 years. Serug became the father of Nahor and lived 230 years. Nahor became the father of Terah and lived 148 years. There is another drop in the number of years. Terah lived 70 years and became the father Abram, Nahor and Haran.

That is the account of Shem. Ten generations are covered from Shem to Terah. An interesting thing is that Shem is still alive. Through all of this time he is still alive even when Terah dies. He lives into the life of Jacob. Shem lived for 13 generations of people, and he could tell those 13 generations

what he had heard directly from Methuselah, who had heard directly from Adam. They told the story of the fall, the story of sin, the story of the flood, etc. History was being repeated by eye witnesses or by those who talked to the eye witness.

Now Abram's life begins. In Genesis 11:27, the prime character in the story is the son of one of those men whose generation we are talking about. The son is the prime star in the father's generation, and Genesis 11:27 says, "*This is the account of Terah.*" This account will go all of the way through chapter 25, but the main point is that the account is the story of Abram. On the outline of the map of the Old Testament world, notice the map of Old Testament Palestine where Abram will spend the majority of his significant life. He starts out in the Ur of the Chaldeans. Ur is on the map. It is where the Tigris and Euphrates rivers come together in Mesopotamia, on the Euphrates just up from where the rivers join. Ur has been excavated, and it has been discovered that it was a city way beyond its time. In fact, it was the most modern city of its day. They not only lived in houses, when most of the world lived in tents, but they also had running water in those houses, and most of them even had a way to heat that water. They had hot and cold running water. Each person had a bedroom or at least many people had many bedrooms in each house which was not normally the case either. In those days, when a house was built, it was normally one big room where they ate, slept, and played. They did everything in that one single room. So Abram was born in a city beyond its time, and he was a rich person because he had many flocks, servants and slaves. So when we talk about Abram, we're not talking about some little farmer or little shepherd. We are talking about a sheik, a person who rules a large household.

### **Abram's Journey**

We are going to look quickly at the first four places in Abram's journey and then study the fifth location in the next chapter. Abram starts out in the Ur of the Chaldeans where he

was born. The statement is made that Terah lived 70 years and became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran. In reading that you would think that Abram was the oldest, but if you read further his father was going to live 205 years and die when Abram was 75 years old. So Abram was born in Terah's 130th year. Why is he named first then? Because he is what the Bible calls "first born." He is the preeminent son of Terah. In Ur there are only two things that really need to be remembered. It is here where Abram was born and where the first call by God to Abram took place. In Genesis, this first call is not mentioned. It only says that he, his father, Lot and some others moved from Ur all the way up to Haran in northern Mesopotamia. However, in Acts 7:2-3 the text says that God appeared to Abram there and said "*Leave your country and your people . . .*" So his father went with him, but Abram had to wait until his father died to go on to Canaan. Why? Why he had to wait is seen in the book of Joshua. In the book of Joshua, the people are to choose whom they are going to serve, whether it be the gods their fathers served beyond the Euphrates or God (Abram's fathers were idolaters. That is why Abram had to get out from among them otherwise there would be a repetition of the flood). Godly people mixed with evil people end up evil. We don't want that to happen, so Abram has to be separated and carried to a desert land in order not to have the same thing happen that happened in Genesis 6. In Haran there are simply two things to remember: Abram's father died at the age of 205 (Genesis 11:32), and in Genesis 12:4 we read that Abram was 75 and had a second call—to go to the land that God had chosen for him to go.

When God called him to go, Abram didn't know where he was going, why he was going, nor when he would get there until God told him, "*To your offspring I will give this land*" (Genesis 12:7). This is where God wanted him to be. That is faith. He got up and went to a land that he knew nothing about and having no assurance of the future except that God said, "I'm going to go with you." We are going to study in our next chapter a deal called the two-fold promise that God makes here.

He makes a physical promise to Abram, that He will be with his nation, and He makes to Abram a spiritual promise, that He will bless all the nations of the earth. Abram travels into Canaan and comes to a place called Shechem which is right between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. It is here that Abram begins to do something that he does every time as soon as he arrives at a place. He builds an altar and calls upon God.

There is not enough pasture land there for his sheep, so he moves on and comes to a place called Bethel. It isn't called Bethel until later. When Abram got there it was called Luz which means "light." Later on, it will be called Bethel which means "House of God" because it is here that God will appear to Jacob and give him the vision of the angels going up and down on the ladder. Abram is in the land now, and he comes to Bethel. He does the two things; he builds an altar, and he calls on God. But he can't stay there long either. Why? He has many sheep to pasture, and there isn't much pasture land there. So he has to move on, and the text says that he moves on toward the Negev. Think for a moment about Abram's mind set. What is Abram thinking? He might be thinking, "What are you doing, God? You took me from my home, from a settled community, and from a fine house. Now I am living in tents, don't have anything to feed my sheep, and you said you were going to bless me. Where is that blessing that you offered me?" Maybe Abram didn't say that, because he was building an altar and calling on the Lord. There is a lesson here. When you don't know what the Lord is doing and when times are difficult, build your altar, call upon God and wait by faith.

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## ABRAHAM'S JOURNEY (2)

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**(Genesis 12:1-14:16)**

### Introduction

Welcome back to our study of Old Testament history. We are studying the life of Abraham. In our last chapter we looked at the first four stations in what we are calling Abraham's journey. All of the patriarchs journeyed. They lived in tents and never had a stable place to live. Abram (as he was called at this time), started out in Ur of the Chaldees which is near modern Babylon. It is an ancient city. When digging it up, as we noticed in our last chapter, it was found to be a very modern city, advanced beyond the norm. So Abram left a stable house, a place with his own bedroom, a place with hot and cold running water with many servants, to live the rest of his life in tents. He and his family journeyed to Haran where his father died. He was called out of Ur of the Chaldeans; he stopped in Haran until his father, Terah, died, and then he went on to Palestine.

### The Two-Fold Promise Made To Abraham

#### **The Call In Ur**

When God called Abram both from the Ur of the Chaldees and into Haran, He made a statement of a two-fold promise in the midst of that call. Before we move to Egypt for our study, I want us to take a look at this two-fold promise that God made in the midst of the call to Abram. In Genesis 12:1 we read, "*The LORD had said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.'*"

The name Abram means “exalted father.” Later on, God will change his name to Abraham, which means “exalted father of a multitude.” The reason he is going to be called Abraham is because from him will come an entire nation, and that is what God is about to promise. God said “If you will just do what I tell you and go to a land that I will show you . . .” Notice that God didn’t give Abram a map. He didn’t say, “Now here’s where you’re going to go.” He just said, “If you have the faith to get up and head in the direction I want you to head and not stop until I tell you to stop, then I’m going to bless you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you. I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I’ll bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you, I will curse, and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

### **The Two-Fold Promise**

Here is the promise: I will make you a great nation that no one will be able to curse, and you and your seed will bless all the nations of the earth. Abram doesn’t know it yet, but he has been chosen out of all the people of the earth for the seed promise of Genesis 3:15. Of all of the families that have been mothered on the earth since Noah’s ark rested, ten generations before, of all those families, God has chosen the family of Abram, and through his family He is going to multiply its seed. God will later say that they will be multiplied as the stars of the heavens, but here is a promise with two sides to it or a two-fold promise made to Abram. It is a promise concerning a nation and a promise concerning a seed. Abram’s nation will be great, numerous and powerful, and his seed will bless all the nations of the earth. The rest of the Old Testament will be based on this promise. This is the promise of a nation, and from that nation will come a tribe, and from that tribe a family, and from that family a person who is going to bless all the nations of the earth.

### **The Journey South—to the Negev**

Abram left the country and went into Palestine. As we saw last time, he stopped in Shechem but only for a short time because there wasn't enough grain there to sustain his great herds of sheep and cattle. He then came to Bethel, but there wasn't much time spent there either for the same reason. There was not enough pasture for all of his animals. So in Genesis 12:9 we read, *"Then Abram set out and continued towards the Negev."* Other versions may read *"... toward the south"* which is what the word Negev means. The Negev is the desert region below Palestine, between Palestine and Egypt. Why is he going into the Negev? He can't find pasture there. He knows that. However, just on the other side of the Negev is a land that will have pasture when no other land has pasture. It is the land of Egypt. Egypt will have grain in spite of the fact that it is in the desert because the great Nile river flows through Egypt. They can get water from the Nile and spread it out over the desert land. They are able to grow beautiful crops. It is much like irrigated lands in the world there today.

In Genesis 12:10 we read of Abram's experiences in Egypt: *"Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe."* Later on, when there is a famine, Abram's grandson, Jacob, will send his children to Egypt to get grain. There is always grain in Egypt because of the Nile.

Now watch Abram in 12:11-13, and see that his faith, though mature, is not perfect:

*As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, 'I know what a beautiful woman you are. When the Egyptians see you, they will say, "This is his wife." Then they will kill me but will let you live. Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you.'*



Our first temptation is to criticize Abram because he is treating Sarai as if he were more important than her. That is very culturally true in his century; women were not treated with the importance and significance that they are today. But God has told him, "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless all the world through you." If he dies, then God is not going to be able to do that. So, in a very human and immature way, Abram tries to help God out of a difficulty. He seems to be saying, "You've got me down here where I'm going to get killed, so I've got to help you out, God. I'm going to plan a way that I can survive my stay down here, and that way is to let the Egyptians believe that this beautiful woman that I've got with me is not really my wife but only my sister."

Abram, in fact, will later defend this statement when he does it again to Abimelech, the Canaanite king. He will say to Abimelech, *"Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not of my mother; and she became my wife"* (Genesis 20:12). Even a lie can be the truth, and the truth can be a lie. Some say that if something is wrong but you don't know it is wrong, then it's not a lie. If you believe this, then you are mistaken. Anything that is told to deceive, whether the thing told is actually truth or not, if it's told to deceive it is a lie because you intend for them to hear something and believe something that is not the truth. When Sarai said, "He is my brother," and when Abram said, "She is my sister," what did Abram want the Egyptians to hear? "She's only my sister. I'm only her brother." He intended for them to believe a lie, and they did.

Notice what happened because of that lie in 12:14, *"When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that she was a very beautiful woman. And when Pharaoh's officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace."* Sarai was not taken to the palace just for dinner. She was going to become a part of his harem, a part of his group of wives, and she was willing to do that for Abram's sake. Pharaoh treated Abram well for her sake, and Abram acquired sheep, cattle, male and female donkeys, menservants, maidservants and

camels. God had promised to bless Abram and despite what he did here, God was fulfilling His promise. Abram left Egypt much richer than when he entered Egypt, because God was with him. In spite of the fact that he was weak in faith, and in spite of the fact that he treated his wife with some disrespect, God was still going to be with Abram because He made a promise, and God keeps His promise.

Abram is a righteous man, we have already read that. So he is not going to continue in this lie. He is not going to continue in this momentary disbelief. Abram is a man of faith. But what is God going to do now? Abram is in the land of Egypt; he is being blessed by Pharaoh, but Sarai is about to be taken as one of Pharaoh's wives. What is God to do? Is God in trouble? Not at all. We read in 12:17,

*But the LORD inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram's wife Sarai. So Pharaoh summoned Abram. 'What have you done to me?' he said. 'Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? Why did you say, "She is my sister," so that I took her to be my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go!'*

Abram is not going to be able to eat Egypt's grain anymore because he lied to Pharaoh. In 12:20 we read, *"Then Pharaoh gave orders about Abram to his men, and they sent him on his way, with his wife and everything he had."* They don't afflict Abram with any persecution. Why? They don't because God has told Pharaoh just what I am sure that He told Abimelech later in chapter 20, "This man is a prophet. This man is my man, and you are in trouble because you are messing with my man, the one that belongs to me." Pharaoh wants him out of the land because he doesn't trust him anymore, but Pharaoh will not harm him because he believes him to be the man of God. This Pharaoh is a good man. He has more than one wife, but he's a

pagan. He is also a good man because he wants to do what the God of heaven wants him to do.

### **At Bethel He Worships God**

Abram must now go back to the land. As he goes back in chapter 13, he goes back to the city of Bethel which is where he had been living prior to going to Egypt. It is where there was an altar and where he could call upon God. It is here that there is trouble between Abram's herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen. Read beginning in Genesis 13:1,

*So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him. Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold. From the Negev he went from place to place until he came to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had been earlier and where he had first built an altar. There Abram called on the name of the LORD.*

Abram must really be confused and searching in his mind. "Am I still in covenant relationship with God? Is all still well? I know I've lied. I know I've sinned. I can't find any grain. Is God going to bless me?" He's getting richer all the time, but riches don't do much good when there's no food. In Genesis 13:5-9,

*Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together. And quarreling arose between Abram's herdsmen and the herdsmen of Lot. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time. So Abram said to Lot, 'Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers. (This doesn't mean that*

they shouldn't disagree, but it means that they shouldn't quarrel.) *Is not the whole land before you? Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left.*'

The best way to solve a problem is to let the other person make the decision about what needs to be done. So he tells Lot to decide which land he wants, and whatever Lot decides Abram will take the other land. In Genesis 13:10-12 we see what that decision was,

*Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan (That's the little lagoon now at the bottom of the Dead Sea, but at that time it was a well watered plain.) was well watered, like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, towards Zoar (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah). So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out towards the east. The two men parted company: Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents . . .*

This version says that Lot pitched his tents near Sodom. That is not correct. Lot lived in Sodom. He may have had his servants tents and his flocks outside of Sodom, but he lived inside the city as we are going to find out later in chapter 19. But in Genesis 13:13 we read, "*Now the men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD.*" Their sin is what is sometimes called today sodomy and homosexuality. It is man making love to man. They did it intensely, and they did it as their way of life. It was a way of living to them. Sodom was an immoral, ungodly city in the midst of the best pasture land in all the world. Lot is going to be in trouble because evil companionship corrupts good morals (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:33).

Abram seems to have gotten the dirty end of this job because all he got was the mountainous region where it is hard to sustain a great number of sheep, goat and cattle. Lot, on the

other hand, has this plain, this flat area that is well watered and well stocked with food and everything that animals need. It looks like Abram's got the bad end of the deal. So the Lord tells him that he does not have it bad at all. In Genesis 13:14, we read, "*The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, 'Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west.'*" From a mountain side or from the top of a mountain, you can see further than you can from the plains. So Abram saw all of what we will call the Promised Land. God said in 13:15-16,

*'All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.'* So Abram moved his tents and went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, (Remember where Mount Hebron was—about half-way down the Dead Sea.) *where he built an altar to the LORD.*

Notice what Abram did immediately. He built an altar to the LORD. In the end he hadn't gotten the bad end of the deal. Lot may have the best single locality, but it is Abram that possesses God's land. It is Abram that possesses God's blessing, and it is Abram, not Lot, that builds an altar to the Lord. Now don't get down on Lot, because in the 2 Peter 2:7, Peter calls Lot a righteous man. He is living in an unrighteous place. He keeps his personal integrity, but later on we will see the price of living among the wicked.

### **Hebron, Trouble From the East**

In Genesis 14 trouble comes from the East, and Abram is going to have to rescue Lot. About this time some kings of Mesopotamia, Arioch, Chedorlaomer and Tidal went to war

against all of the kings of the plains, the king of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim and Bela which is Zoar. The latter kings join forces and fight in the valley of Siddim which the Bible says is the Salt Sea. For 12 years they had been subject to Chedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled. In the fourteenth year, Chedorlaomer came down and defeated their city and carried away all their kings, all their people, all their gold, all their silver and Lot and his family, all of his flocks, all of his gold and all of his silver. These Mesopotamian kings were kings from the area called Mesopotamia. They carried off Abram's nephew, Lot, and his possessions while he was living in Sodom. Lot had pitched his tent near Sodom to begin with, but at this point he is living in Sodom. One person escapes and goes to tell Abram what has happened. Abram gathers together his army to deliver Lot. Beginning in Genesis 14:13 we read,

*One who had escaped came and reported this to Abram the Hebrew. (this is the first time that the word Hebrew is found in the Bible. The word Hebrew means the son of Eber.) Now Abram was living near the great trees of Mamre the Amorite, a brother of Eshcol and Aner, all of whom were allied with Abram. When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trained men born in his household. . .*

Abram has a huge number of servants and a huge household. His slaves have 318 trained men. That means 318 men over 20 years of age trained to fight battles. This is Abram's standing army. This is a good sized battle number. "During the night Abram divided his men to attack them . . ." (Genesis 14:15a)

### **Dan and the Deliverance of Lot**

Abram went to Dan, which is way up in the north near Lake Hula. He marched a 2-3 days hard journey. He came upon

the city at night, divided his men and attacked the place at night. That was unheard of in that day. Abram proved to be a smart military captain.

*. . . he routed them, pursuing them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. (that's another 200 miles) He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people. (Genesis 14:15b-16)*

So Abram has rescued Lot. Trouble came from the east, and Lot was carried away, but now Lot has been rescued from this trouble. God is in control even when man is out of control.

### **Observations**

What is being taught here? Many times we do not take time in reading the Old Testament to just stop and ask, "Why is this recorded? What am I supposed to be learning?" I have noticed several things in our reading today. I have noticed first of all that Abram was blessed when he finally turned things over to God. When he tried to work it out on his own in Egypt, it boiled down to a curse although God blessed him physically. When he came back to the land, he wandered around the south land which is a desert. God made him wander back and forth, trying to find some pasture for his people. When he finally got back to Bethel and the altar where once he called upon God, he called upon God again. Blessings are then given to him. We learn the lesson that when we have messed up, and when trouble has arisen in our life, we need to turn it over to God.

We can learn a lot from Lot already. In looking at this nephew of Abram's, we see a person who is a righteous man but who doesn't have the maturity that Abram has. He doesn't have the altar Abram has. He doesn't have the worshipful dedication to God that Abram has. He is seemingly more interested in his flocks than he is in God. Given a right to choose, he chose the one that would benefit him most

physically and financially. He pitched his tent, his place of dwelling, at the back door of the wicked. He was soon in their livingroom. Abram, on the other hand, was still over there in a rather desolate place. His sheep were not feeding on the rich grasses that Lot's sheep were feeding upon. But he was feeding his soul upon his relationship and fellowship with God. Abram was blessed. There was Lot with everything that the world could desire. He had a good home. I'm sure that he had a good wife. He had good children. He had a fine home in one of the most modern cities of that area. He was living not in a tent, but in a place of mortar, brick and stone. He was no longer dependent upon river streams for his water, but water flowed down the streets of the city where he lived. He could get water from his well and not have to pursue another well. His sheep were being fed on the finest pasture land in all the world, but his soul was beginning to be warped by Sodom's call. He got in trouble. You always get in trouble when you make your tent among the wicked. He ended up having to be delivered. He could not deliver himself; he was helpless.

Abram, in the lesser place, had more people and more power because he was in contact with God. We are going to learn in our next chapter that when Abram is returning from this deliverance of Lot some very significant things happen which point out the character of Abram. Abram may have been lifted up in pride and temptation. He could have been lifted up in pride as he went to deliver his young nephew Lot. He could have been coming back preaching to Lot. "I told you so. You need to be righteous like I am." He could have been a proud individual. We are going to study this the next time, but I want us to preview it here for just a minute.

Abram meets a priest of God on the way back from rescuing Lot. His name is Melchizedek. We will talk about all of the mysteries of Melchizedek later. What we want to see now is that as soon as Abram found this priest of God, the text says that he paid to that priest of God a tenth of all that he possessed. I do not know if that means simply a tenth of all this that he got



from the kings of Mesopotamia, which would be a lot, since that's all the riches of the cities of the Plain, or maybe that Abram has just been storing up that tenth. The tenth belongs to God, and the Bible teaches that from start to finish. Maybe he has been storing up that tenth to find the person, the representative of God, that he is to pay his tithe to. He wants the world to know that Abram serves and trusts God. In all of the victories that he's won against the kings, the kings of Mesopotamia, all of the honor that he has received in battle and in victory, all of his riches and all of his slaves and all of his house, belongs to God. He proves that all things belong to God by giving the first tenth of all that he has to God. Abram, in the middle of our story, here belongs to God. Do you? Do I? That is the question that needs to be answered and which we will next time. God be with you.

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## ABRAHAM'S JOURNEY (3)

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**(Genesis 14:17-15:21)**

### Review and Introduction

This is chapter eight in our study of Old Testament History. We are in the middle of the study of Abraham's life. We noticed in the first place his journey, which we have placed on a map. Abraham's journey has 16 different points. We have seen first of all in the Ur of the Chaldeans, down where the Tigris and the Euphrates join before they enter the Persian Gulf, Abram's place of birth and his first call by God to leave his land, which has the intent of getting Abram into a country where God will make of him a great nation and bless him.

A two-fold promise is made to Abram there. That promise consists of the fact that it is his seed which will become a great nation and will possess the land. Then his seed, that turns out to be a singular seed, will bless all the nations of the earth. So Abram will continue the promise of the seed made to the woman. He leaves Ur with his father, his mother, his wife, his nephew Lot, and Lot's wife. They go to Haran which is on the Euphrates where the city of Nineveh would be in days to come. It is here that his father dies. His father is 205 years old when he dies, and Abram is 75 years old. So Terah was 130 years old when Abram was born.

God calls Abram again, making the same promise: *"I will make you a great nation, and that nation will possess a great land, and your seed will bless all the nations of the earth. Leave this land and go to a land that I will show you."* So Abraham left not knowing where he was going. When he arrived in the land of Canaan, God told him that was the place. So Abram

went to Shechem which is between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. He pitched his tent and built an altar, but there wasn't enough pasture land for his sheep. So he went to Bethel, and the same thing happened. There was not enough pasture land for his sheep. So, finally, he passed through the Negev, the south country, and came to Egypt. There he told for the first time the lie that he would tell twice about Sarah. He said of Sarah, "she is my sister," and she said, "he is my brother." Technically, that was true because they had the same father and different mothers, but they intended to deceive others, so it was a lie. They wanted Egypt and Pharaoh to hear these words, "She is only my sister, and we are not married." Without knowing it, Pharaoh takes her to be one of his wives, and God curses Pharaoh's house until finally Pharaoh concludes that this was wrong and brings in Abram. He says, "Why didn't you tell me she was your sister? Get out of here!"

They are forced to leave Egypt, so they go back to Bethel. This time they are traveling without enough pasture land for the flock. So there is trouble between his herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen about which one of them is greater. So Abram says, "Let there be no strife between me and you." He says, "You choose which one you want." Lot chooses the well watered plain that will become the bottom for the Dead Sea, but at this time it is a very fertile land, and Abram has to raise his sheep in the mountains. It might look like Abram is being cursed, but God sends Abram to Hebron in the south where there will be sufficient pasture land for his sheep, and at the same time he'll be separated from the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Kings come from the east and capture the city of Sodom and Gomorrah, taking all of the people along with Lot, back to Mesopotamia. He made the mistake of living in the wrong city. So Abram gathers his army, 318 men born in his own house, and marches up to Dan which is in the north by the waters of Mirim. He defeats these Assyrian, Babylonian and Mesopotamian kings, and he brings Lot back safely.

## Second Stop At Hebron

### Abram's Meeting With Melchizedek

Abram is now on his way back home. It is here that we pick up our story. On his way back home in Genesis 11, several very significant things happen. We will put them at the ninth point of the journey called Hebron. The first thing to notice is Melchizedek. Let us read about Melchizedek starting in Genesis 14:17-24:

*After Abram returned from defeating Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, . . . '*

Notice that this man is a priest of God, a priest of Abram's God. He blesses Abram. The writer of Hebrews will say, "*And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater.*" (Hebrews 7:7) Melchizedek is a greater man than Abram. He claims that greatness by blessing Abram. Abram admits Melchizedek's greatness by accepting the blessing.

*. . . and he blessed Abram, saying, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.' Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.*

This is all that Genesis says about Melchizedek. The writer of Hebrews will say more. In the book of Hebrews he is called a priest without father and without mother, without genealogy. Of course, he had a father and mother, but the idea is that his priesthood did not depend upon who his father or mother was.

The book of Hebrews says, *“He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek”* (Hebrews 6:20b). Of course, he died because the book of Hebrews calls him a man. But his priesthood was not dependent upon time. He came on the scene as a priest, and he leaves the scene as a priest. “Jesus is a priest,” the writer of Hebrews said, as does Psalms 110:4: *“You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”* It did not depend on who Mary was or who Joseph was. Jesus came into this world a priest, and he leaves this world a priest. Notice that Abram gave to Melchizedek a tenth of everything. I do not know if that means a tenth of everything that he got from Sodom and Gomorrah and is carrying back with him or whether that means a tenth of everything he possesses. Either way, the tenth belongs to God. It belonged to God before the law; it does during the law, and probably does after the law.

Melchizedek is a mystery person. Where did he come from? We don't know. How did he learn about Jehovah? We don't know. When was he called to be a priest? We don't know. When did he die? We don't know. Here is what we do know about him. His name means “king of righteousness.” He is the king of Salem, Salem meaning “peace.” So, he is the king of peace. He lives in the city that later will be called Jerusalem. He is probably a Jebusite, if not a Canaanite, and he is a priest of God in a time that God is calling one man out of an idolatrous world to trace his seedline through. Abram is still not the best man on earth. Melchizedek is a better man. Where is the king of Sodom while all of this is going on? Notice what the king of Sodom says to Abram in Genesis 14:21-24,

*The king of Sodom said to Abram, ‘Give me the people and keep the goods for yourself.’ But Abram said to the king of Sodom, ‘I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, and have taken an oath that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the thong of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, “I made*

*Abram rich." I will accept nothing but what my men have eaten and the share that belongs to the men who went with me—to Aner, Eshcol and Mamre. Let them have their share.'*

These were the men that lived around Hebron and were from Canaanite tribes. Abram is saying, "They deserve their pay. I will take nothing. Let my 318 men eat whatever they need to eat while they travel, and you give these three men their share of all of the things we have taken from the kings that defeated Sodom and Gomorrah." So Abram has given to God a tenth of everything. He has not even eaten of their things. He has 318 men who have been sustained in food by the things of Sodom and Gomorrah, and these three people get their portion. Maybe we need to learn the lesson that we do not prosper off of the wicked. We do not live according to their things and according to their ways. The most important thing in this reading is the application that the writer of Hebrews makes of this to Christ when he writes in Hebrews 7:16, . . . *one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life.*" He also wrote,

*For it is declared, 'You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek'. . . And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him: 'The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: 'You are a priest forever.' (Hebrews 7:17, 20)*

As far as we know, Melchizedek's father was not a priest. As far as we know, his son was not a priest. Jesus has no predecessor and no successor. The main point that the writer of Hebrews makes is that Jesus' priesthood is superior to that of Levi. This is so because Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek being in Abram's loins, when Abram paid tithes to Melchizedek (cf. Hebrews 7:5-6). Therefore, since Abram was inferior to

Melchizedek, then Levi being the great, great grandson still in Abram's loins is much inferior to Melchizedek as well as is the priesthood of Jesus so much superior to that of the law. According to the writer of Hebrews and Genesis, Jesus came on the scene as a priest. Melchizedek came on the scene a priest and leaves the scene still a priest. The most important thing is that they are both King and priest. That is the only two times in all of the Bible that God had both the King of the nation and the priest of the nation in one single person, in Melchizedek and in Christ. That is the typical nature of Melchizedek in this incident.

### **A Blood-Covenant**

In Genesis 15 is found what is perhaps the most important thing that happened in Abram's life. It is important because Abram is going to make a covenant. God is going to make a covenant with Abram on this occasion. Read in Genesis 15:1-3:

*After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield (protector), your very great reward.' But Abram said, 'O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?' And Abram said, 'You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.'*

God had promised him an innumerable seed, but it had been years since that promise. God comes and repeats the promise. "I am your shield and your protection," but Abram said, "If so, where are my children?" The law was that if he had no children, then after he died the steward who had cared for his house all of these years would possess all of the riches that he had cared for and that he had increased. So Abram is saying, "How do I know? You made the promise, but now I am still childless. There is no boy in my household." God's answer to

him is seen in 15:4, *"Then the word of the LORD came to him: 'This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.'"*

Where is the proof that God is going to do that? Just the word of God had been sufficient for Abram in days gone by, but now the test of Abram's faith is coming. In 15:5 we read, *"He took him outside and said, 'Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.'"*

Watch Abram's response in Genesis 15:6, *"Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness."* God is going to do more than this. He is going to give Abram a sign, but Abram believes without a sign. When God said that is the way it is going to be, Abram said, "I believe that." This passage will be quoted in the New Testament as the kind of faith we are to have in order to be justified. The faith that believes because God said it. God is gracious, however, He will not simply leave it there. He is going to make this promise, a covenant, which must be sealed. They must have some token to ratify them. Genesis 15:7-9 says,

*He also said to him, 'I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.' But Abram said, 'O Sovereign LORD, how can I know that I shall gain possession of it? (Abram wants a sign.) So the LORD said to him, 'Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.'*

They are about to shed blood. There is no covenant made in the Bible without bloodshed. Genesis 15:10 says, *"Abram brought all these to him, . . ."* Now Abram can do that. Notice that Abram does what he can do, so God will do what man can't do. So Abram got the heifer, goat, ram, dove and young pigeon, brought them all and,



*. . . cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away (Genesis 15:11-12)*

He is still doing what a man can do. He can gather the sacrifice. He can divide the sacrifice. He can keep the birds of prey away. Genesis 15:12 states,

*As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. Then the LORD said to him, 'Know for certain (Abraham wanted to know.) that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years.'*

They are going to be in captivity, enslaved and mistreated for four hundred years. But God says in Genesis 15:14,

*But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.*

Notice what God has said to Abram, "You are going to die in a good old age and in peace. Your seed will go to a strange land, be afflicted and serve them for four hundred years. After that, in the fourth generation, they will come right back here and inherit this land." Well, why do they not inherit the land now? Because the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. God judges no nation before its time.

Then in 15:17-18:

*When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, 'To your descendants . . .'*

Notice on that day that God made a covenant with Abram. This blazing torch is either God or represents God as it passes between the pieces. In that day when two men made a covenant, they would cut an animal in two and they would stay between that animal and join hands. They would have cut their hands, so they were bleeding. Their blood was blended together, and they would swear their covenant. They would say in effect, "If we do not keep this covenant then what has happened to this animal, let that happen to us." So they were binding themselves for as long as both of them lived to be in covenant with each other. When two men made a blood covenant, each man's friends were the other man's friends, each man's enemies were the other man's enemies, and each man's money was the other's money, and if one of them were to die then the other would take care of that person. Remember that because we will bring it back up when we study a covenant that David made with Jonathan. But this day God makes a covenant with Abram and He says, "Let me be like one of these dead animals if I don't keep this covenant." I believe this covenant is sure because it is impossible for God to lie. *"On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, 'To your descendants I give this land (What land?), from the river of Egypt to the great river (On the map there is a small river in southern Palestine called the River of Egypt or the Wadi el Arish.), the Euphrates—the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.'"* (Genesis 15:18-21)

These are the tribes that inherited and possessed the land at that time, the land that Abram was later to possess.

This is a covenant that God made. God is going to be constantly aware of this covenant. God will keep this covenant. He will keep the covenant even when man does not. God has bound Himself to this covenant. When two men made a blood covenant together, they became more than brothers, they were blood-brothers. David made such a covenant with Jonathan, and Paul made such a covenant with Timothy because they were father and son in the gospel. When such covenants were made they were made for as long as that person lived. Let us illustrate this with David and Jonathan, an illustration that we will bring up again when we study these two men. David had been just a shepherd boy but he was skilled in playing the harp. Saul was the king of Israel, and he had a troubled spirit from Jehovah. He was, we would say, crazy. Therefore, David would come, play his harp, and sing to him, and that would soothe Saul's troubled mind. But Saul was so troubled that he was jealous of David who went to war and made more victories than Saul did, and he tried to kill him several times over. David managed to escape from Saul each time.

Saul had a son named Jonathan whose soul, the text says, was knit with David's soul. So they made a blood covenant. When you do that you cut your right palm, the other man cuts his right palm and then you shake hands. That is where the handshake came from. The handshake was originally a covenant-making thing. When they joined hands their blood would mingle. David's blood became Jonathan's blood, and Jonathan's blood became David's blood. That is why when Saul fought with David, David did not fight back because he had a covenant with Jonathan, Saul's son. That is also why, on two occasions, when he could have killed Saul at night, he did not kill him because Saul was Jonathan's father, and David had a covenant with Jonathan. That was a blood covenant. When Saul and Jonathan were killed on the same day and on the same battlefield and all of their family fled, David sent a war wagon when he found out where Mephibosheth, the crippled son of Jonathan was. He sent a wagon to get him. I can imagine how

Mephibosheth would feel, a crippled boy, crutching along with a handmade crutch from some desert tree, how he felt when that war wagon rolled into the camp because he thought that like all kings did, he was about to be killed. Kings killed the children and the family of the conquered king. But instead of being killed he is carried back to Jerusalem. He is given two servants to care for him. He is washed, cleaned and clothed. He goes and sits at the king's table. He eats the king's food. If someone asked Mephibosheth, "What are you doing here?" he would say, "I don't know." "Aren't you the son of one of the king's enemies?" "Well, I thought I was." "What are you doing here at the table?" He would say, "Ask the king." David would say, if you asked him, "I had a covenant with his father, therefore, I have to take care of him. Down that hallway, you will find a spear, a shield and a robe. They belong to his father, and they are the tokens that he and I have a blood covenant."

That is the kind of covenant God has made with Abram. He will take care of Abram's children when they don't deserve to be taken care of. He will take care of Abram's children when they deserve to be destroyed, all because he has a covenant with Abram. God has such a covenant with me, and if you have been baptized into Jesus and the blood of Jesus has cleansed you, then you have such a covenant with God, and He has such a covenant with you. If we will be faithful to that covenant then God is faithful to His part of the covenant. He will care for us; He will care for our children; He will care for our eternal destiny if we are faithful to Him. But without blood, there is absolutely no covenant. It takes the blood of Jesus, and He died on the cross. It takes my blood. That is why in Romans 12:1, Paul writes that we are to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice. Abram could only offer these dead sacrifices, but since that is what he could do, that is what he did. I can only offer my body. All I can give to God is what I am, but when I give that to God, I have made a blood covenant with Him.

There is much more in Abram's life, but it will all be dependent upon this covenant that God made on this day and on

this covenant that Abram made this day. Abram will keep the covenant. He will lie, and he will express weakness. He will sin, but he will keep the covenant. The unchanging, sinless God will keep him safe in His hand, because he keeps the covenant with God. Make your covenant with God if you have not already done so. If you have done so then keep your covenant with God, for God will keep His covenant. He will bless you if you walk in His way. He will curse you if you do not. With that in mind we will continue the study of Abram's life in our next chapter.

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## ABRAHAM'S JOURNEY (4)

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**(Genesis 16:1-19:38)**

### Review and Introduction

This is chapter nine in the study of Old Testament History and is the fourth study of Abraham's journey. We have reached the ninth station of Abraham's journey. We have seen his nativity in Ur. We have seen his call to go to Canaan from Haran. We have seen Shechem and Bethel, the two places that he pitched his tent for a while and worshiped God, but also had to leave because he was unable to find sufficient pasture for his sheep. We have seen him go to Egypt, where he told the first of two lies about his wife in order to try to preserve his own life so that he could be the seed through whom the promise would come. We saw Abram being driven out of Egypt, although he was much richer than when he went in. He returned to Bethel, where he had trouble with Lot's herdsmen. We saw trouble come from the East when the kings of Mesopotamia came and carried Lot away to Dan. We have seen Abram go to Dan and deliver Lot, and then, returning to the city of Hebron, we found him face-to-face with Melchizedek, giving him one-tenth of all that he possessed. We saw him face-to-face with the king of Sodom, refusing to accept anything from him. Then, in a figurative way, we saw him face-to-face with God as he and God made a covenant together. Abram carried out his end of the covenant process. He went and got the sacrifice, cut the sacrifice, arranged the sacrifice, preserved the sacrifice, and then he went to sleep. That was all that Abram could do. In that deep sleep, God made a covenant with Abram that He would be his shield and protector. God promised that Abram would be his

representative through out all the earth, through out all of time. He promised Abram an unlimited number of seed, as limitless as the stars of the heavens.

## **Abram and Sarai's Faith Wavers**

### **Sarai's Practical Plan**

The years pass by, and we come to chapter 16, which is where our study begins. It begins with the story of Hagar and Ishmael, which is a story of Abram and Sarai's faith wavering. You can have faith, and it wavers. You can have faith, but it can become smaller, and that is exactly what occurs in chapter 16 of Genesis. Read from Genesis 16:1-2:

*Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar; so she said to Abram, 'The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her.'*

All of that sounds like an immoral thing, but in that part of the world it was a custom. If the wife could bear no children then someone else bore children for her. The woman who became pregnant by the husband would stay in the wife's tent until the baby was born. The wife would then come out holding the baby after the period of purification, and although everybody knew what happened everybody would still say it was her child.

So Abram agreed to what Sarai said. How would you like a promise being made to you and ten years later there is no sign that it is going to be fulfilled? That is exactly what was happening to Abram. God had made a promise that Abram would have an unlimited number of offspring, and ten years later he still didn't even have a single child. So he decides that he is going to try to help God out of the difficulty. However, we

always get in trouble when we try to help God out of His difficulty. What Abram needed to do was wait, but as we read in Genesis 16:3, “. . . Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife.” Read that closely. Sarai gave Hagar to her husband to be his wife, and from that time forward Hagar would be called the wife of Abram. He would have two wives, Sarai and Hagar.

After Sarai gives Hagar to Abram we read in Genesis 16:4,

*He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. Then Sarai said to Abram, ‘You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me.’*

Abram has trouble in the house. Abram should have waited. Sarai should have waited. Notice Abram's reply in verse 6, “‘Your servant is in your hands,’ Abram said. ‘Do with her whatever you think best.’ Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.”

### **Hagar's Encounter With Jehovah**

Sarai actually treated Hagar so badly that she drove her away from the camp. But God was watching as we read in Genesis 16:7: “*The angel of the LORD found Hagar . . .*” Notice that the text doesn't say that this was just any angel, it says that this was “*The angel of the LORD . . .*” This is a particular spiritual being, probably the Lord Himself. But verse seven tells us, “*The angel of the LORD found Hagar hear a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur.*” This was down in the south, almost out of the promised land.

The angel of the Lord spoke to Hagar as seen Genesis 16:8-10:



*And he said, 'Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?' 'I'm running away from my mistress Sarai,' she answered. Then the angel of the LORD told her, 'Go back to your mistress and submit to her.' The angel added, 'I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count.'*

All of the tribes of Arabia, all the Arab people today, come from Hagar and her son, Ishmael. But the servant is always to submit to the master even if the master is forward and ungodly. Hagar is told to go back and submit herself to Sarai. God makes a promise to Hagar:

*The angel of the LORD also said to her: 'You are now with child and you will have a son. You shall name him Ishmael (That means "God hears."), for the LORD has heard of your misery. (Hagar is then told what the boy will be like when he grows up.) He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers. (Genesis 16:11-12)*

If there has ever been a prophecy fulfilled, it is this one seeing as how the Arabian tribes throughout all of time have fought against one another. There has been constant hostility in that part of the world.

Hagar, recognizing what just happened and who it was that had been speaking to her, names the place where this took place. In Genesis 16:13 we read, "*She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: 'You are the God who sees me,' for she said, 'I have now seen the One who sees me.'*" The name of the place is *Lahai Roi* which is translated from the Hebrew, "Well of the Living One who sees me." "*That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.*" (Genesis 16:14)

Hagar has been driven all the way out of Abram's land by the anger and by the ill-will of her mistress Sarai, but now God sends her back. In 16:15 we are told, "*So Hagar bore Abram a son, (Notice that she bore Abram a son.) and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.*" Eleven years after he enters promised land, he finally has a son. Sarah and Abram want the seed line of Genesis 15 to be traced through Ishmael because they do not believe that they can have a child. Their faith in God is still there, but it is not as firm as once it was.

## **The Covenant Promise**

### **The Establishment of the Covenant**

In Genesis 17 God makes a second covenant with Abram. This covenant is a sign and a token of the covenant of Genesis 15. After Abraham is dead, his children will come back to this very land that he is in; they will possess the land, rule the land and become a great nation in the land. God had given a sign by the burning up of the sacrifice that Abram had arranged to God. Now God is going to give a continual confirmation to the covenant of Genesis 15. It is called the covenant of circumcision.

### **The Covenant Extended**

Starting in Genesis 17:1 we read, "*When Abram was ninety-nine years old (This means that there is a 13 year time frame between Genesis 16:16 and 17:1.), the LORD appeared to him and said, 'I am God Almighty (from the Hebrew El-Shaddai, which is translated "God, the Breasted One, the Nourisher, the Feeder.')*"; *walk before me and be blameless. I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.*"

God is saying to Abram that He has come to tell him that there is something that he must do and that there is something

that He will do. He is telling Abram that He has come to walk before him. If Abram will just do that then he will be blameless, his sins will be forgiven and God will confirm the covenant.

Abram's response to this encounter with God is seen in Genesis 17:3-4: "*Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, 'As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations.'*" Abram will be the father of not just one great nation (singular), but many nations (plural). Israel, the Arabs, and when he later marries Keturah after Sarai dies, many other nations will come from Abram's loins. "*No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations.*" (Genesis 17:5) The name of the Lord is Jehovah or Yahweh, and part of God's name is put in Abraham's name. He becomes Abra-Ham. God puts His very sacred name in the middle of Abram's name so that he's not only the "exalted father of many nations," he is now the one who is exalted by the name of God. Any time that anyone says, "Abraham," they are pronouncing God's name and saying that he is the man of God.

In Genesis 17:6 God makes another promise to Abraham:

*I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.*

Paul states in the book of Galatians,

*You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ,*

*then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:26-29)*

Because we have been baptized we have put on Christ. "We are not only now saved," Paul said, "we are Abraham's children. We are heirs according to the promise. God is still keeping His covenant, not with the physical seed of Abraham, but with the spiritual seed of Abraham."

In Genesis 17:8 we read, *"The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God."* Abraham is not possessing any of this land when he dies except a cave for a burial place. All of this land will be his according to God's promise in days to come but God now gives the sign of this covenant in 17:9,

*Then God said to Abraham, 'As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you.'*

This wasn't the first time anybody was circumcised, but it was the first time that circumcision had become a covenant. The covenant is that Abraham is to walk with God, and He will walk with Abraham.

Circumcision is the sign of that covenant. Genesis 17:12 says,

*For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring. Whether born in your household or bought with your*

*money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.*

So here is an outward sign. Circumcision is an outward sign of this covenant that God and Abraham have in heart and spirit.

God now speaks to Sarai, and Isaac is promised. Ishmael will not be the son through whom the seed is to be traced. In Genesis 17:15 we read, “*God also said to Abraham, ‘As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah.’*” Notice that God’s sacred name is put into Sarah’s name also. Sarai means “princess,” but Sarah means “God’s princess.” She becomes God’s princess on this occasion.

God makes a promise toward Sarah as well:

*‘I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.’ Abraham fell face down; he laughed and said to himself, ‘Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?’ And Abraham said to God, ‘If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!’ (Genesis 17:16-18)*

Sarah is a barren woman. She has never been able to bear any children. Abraham is 99 years old when this is being said, and Sarah is 89 years old. If she ever had the ability to have children, yet didn’t, it should be obvious that she is not going to start now. It will take a double miracle for this promise to be fulfilled. She will have to be made fertile.

Abraham believes that what the Lord is saying is too hard. It’s impossible. Abraham’s faith wavered a bit again. He did not

believe God this time simply because God said it. He laughed in unbelief, and he said "Oh, that Ishmael might live before you." So God said to him in verse 17:19a, *"Then God said, 'Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac.'"* In the Hebrew language Isaac means "laughter." Every time that they call Isaac to dinner or speak his name, they are going to be saying laughter. Abraham will believe, and Abraham will remember that he laughed in unbelief when he heard that Isaac would be born.

God is going to bless him because He had heard his cry at *Beer Lahai Roi*. God also said in Genesis 17:19b-20,

*'I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation.'*

The seed covenant was still going to be established through Isaac as God reminds Abraham in Genesis 17:21-22:

*'But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year.' When he had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him.*

Isaac has been promised. Ishmael has been promised a blessing, but a son named Isaac has been promised to Abraham, and the covenant will be through him.

Notice in 17:23-27 that Abraham obeys God:

*On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and all those born in his household or bought with his money, every male in his household, and circumcised them, as God told him. Abraham was ninety-nine*

*years old when he was circumcised, and his son Ishmael was thirteen; Abraham and his son Ishmael were both circumcised on that same day. And every male in Abraham's household, including those born in his household or bought from a foreigner, was circumcised with him.*

Abraham's household now has the sign of the covenant that God has made with Abraham.

## The Interceding Patriarch

### **Abraham, The Gracious Host**

In Genesis 18 and 19 we see the great incident of Sodom and Gomorrah. When the words Sodom and Gomorrah are mentioned, the picture of sinfulness and judgment by fire come to the forefront. All of the events in these two chapters occur before Isaac is born.

*The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground. He said, 'If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way-now that you have come to your servant.' 'Very well', they answered, 'do as you say' (Genesis 18:1-5).*

Abraham did not know that he was talking to two angels of the Lord. He thought he was talking to three ordinary men. The writer of Hebrews said, "*Do not forget to entertain strangers,*

*for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it” (Hebrews 13:2). However, Abraham moves quickly:*

*So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. ‘Quick,’ he said, ‘get three seahs of fine flour and knead it and bake some bread.’ Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree. (Genesis 18:6-8)*

### **Sarah's Laughter**

One of the angels says to Abraham, “‘Where is your wife Sarah?’ they asked him. ‘There, in the tent,’ he said” (Genesis 18:9). Abraham could very well have been wondering just how it was that they knew that her name was Sarah.

*Then the LORD said, ‘I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.’ Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, ‘After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?’ Then the LORD said to Abraham, ‘Why did Sarah laugh and say, “Will I really have a child, now that I am old?”’ (Genesis 18:10-13).*

God then asks an important question: “*Is anything too hard for the LORD?*” The answer of course, is “No!” God continues, “‘I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son.’ Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, ‘I did not laugh.’ But he said, ‘Yes, you did laugh!’” (Genesis 18:14-15).



### Abraham, The Intercessor

*When the men got up to leave, they looked down towards Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way. Then the LORD said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.' Then the LORD said, 'The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know.' The men turned away and went towards Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the LORD. Then Abraham approached him and said: 'Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?' . . . 'Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, what if only twenty can be found there?' He said, 'For the sake of twenty, I will not destroy it.' Then he said, 'May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?' He answered, 'For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it.' When the LORD had finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham returned home (Genesis 18:14-25, 31-33).*

### Lot's Last Days

In Genesis 19 we read of the doom that falls upon Sodom and Gomorrah. In 19:1 we read,

*The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city. When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground.*

We read next that Lot asked them to come to his house. They accepted his invitation and went into his house. The text then tells us that the men of Sodom wanted to have sexual relations with Lot's guests. They were what we would call today, Sodomites. They were homosexuals, but Lot, instead of handing over his guests to these men, instead wanted to send out his daughters. Instead, the two angels reached out their hand and blinded all these men, and they staggered away. The angels then said to Lot, you must get out of this city. Rather than move quickly, Lot lingered. Finally, the angels took Lot, his wife and his two daughters and practically dragging them out of the city, told them not to look back at the city. Lot's wife disobeyed that command. She looked back at the city that she was leaving because she was leaving the things that she desired and the things she loved. For her actions she was turned into a pillar of salt.

That night Lot's two daughters began to think that if their father were to die and they were in this wilderness, he would have no seed. Their family line would end. So they got their father drunk, and beginning with the oldest daughter, they went in and slept with him. They both became pregnant and bore sons named Moab (who becomes the father of the Moabites) and Ben-ammi (who becomes the father of the Ammonites). When Israel finally enters the Promised Land, these two nations, the nation of Ammon and the nation of Moab give them the most trouble. Along with the sons of Ishmael and the other sons of Abraham by his other wives, Israel will be mostly troubled by their kinsman.

Abraham still did not have the promised seed. He wished that Ishmael would be the promised seed, but God would not allow it. Isaac is the promised seed. With Lot's departure from Sodom and Gomorrah, we learn the result of living, dealing and mingling with wicked people. We learn that Abraham had the blessing of being separated from that wicked city and dwelling in mountainous country. But Abraham still has no seed. Will God be faithful to His promise? God had said that He would return in one year and that Sarah would have a son. One year and the covenant that He made with Abraham would now be made with his children. We will look to see if God is faithful with that promise in our next chapter. God give you peace in believing in Jesus.

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## ABRAHAM'S JOURNEY (5)

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**(Genesis 20:1-22:19)**

### Review and Introduction

This is chapter ten in our study of Old Testament history. We have reached the mid-point in our study of the life of Abraham. I would like for us to briefly think about the nine stations of life that we have already seen Abraham travel through. There will eventually be 16 stations in his life, but we have just finished the busiest time of Abraham's life, the ninth station.

The first station was Ur, and the thing to remember is that this is where Abram was born. Here is where he reaches maturity. The second station is Heron, and the thing to remember here is that Terah, his father, died and that he was called a second time to go into the promised land, into Palestine, or Canaan, as it is also called. The third station is Shechem. This is his first stop in the promised land between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. Here he pitched his tent, fed his sheep, and built an altar to God. When the pasture ran out, he traveled to Bethel. Bethel is a very important city throughout all of our Bible study. One of the golden calves of Israel's idolatry will be erected there later. But it is here that Abram again pitched his tent, built an altar and fed his sheep. When the pasture ran out, he passed through the south land (the Negev) and traveled on into Egypt. There was always grain in Egypt, so Abram was able to feed his sheep, but it was here that he also told the lie that Sarai was his sister and not his wife. Based on that lie, Pharaoh took Sarah to be his wife, and God cursed him. Pharaoh drove Abram and Sarai out of the land. But he sent him

away with great possessions and Sarai with a hand-maid named Hagar.

They returned to the promised land and dwelt for a time at Bethel. Trouble arose between Lot and Abram's herdsmen. Based on an agreement between the two men, Lot took the good land and Abram took the mountain country and lived in Hebron. Trouble came from the east in the form of five Mediterranean kings. Lot, who was living in Sodom and Gomorrah, was carried captive all the way to Dan in the northern most part of the land near the waters of Miriam. This is the eighth station. Abram went to Dan to deliver Lot, rescued him, and in the process, brought Sodom, all of Sodom's people, and all of Lot's possessions back to the southern part of the promised land, toward Hebron. This is the ninth station where we saw nine things happen, the last two of which were the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the birth of Lot's two sons through his daughters. The incestuous relationship that he had in his drunken state resulted in the countries of Ammon and Moab. That is an important thing because later on in Israel's history, when God sends them into promised land, He really doesn't want them to fight Moab or Ammon because they are brothers.

## **Abraham in the Negev**

### **Gerar-Abraham Lies to Abimelech**

In Genesis 20 we begin the tenth chapter of our study. We might call this the "lying chapter." It's about Abraham lying again, but it is also about the birth of Isaac. In Genesis 20:1 we read, *"Now Abraham moved on from there into the region of the Negev (that is, the south land) and lived between Kadesh and Shur. For a while he stayed in Gerar, . . ."*

Abraham is looking for pasture land. A man that has 318 grown slaves in his own house is a standing militia that would have thousands of people in the household. He probably owns tens of thousands of sheep. It takes a lot of pasture land, and the mountainous country that he lives in doesn't have that much

grain. So he finds pasture on the coast near the Mediterranean in Gerar.

*“And there Abraham said of his wife Sarah, ‘She is my sister’”* (Genesis 20:2a). This is the same lie that Abraham spoke to the Pharaoh. You would think that Abraham would not repeat that mistake. Jesus recognized that people would make mistakes over and over, didn't He? Peter asked Jesus, “How many times shall I forgive my brother if he sins against me, seven times in a day?” Jesus said, “Not seven times in a day but seventy times seven in a day, if he repents.” (cf. Matthew 18:21-22) So even though Abraham acknowledged that he was wrong the first time he lied about Sarah, he repeats the sin.

*“Then Abimelech king of Gerar sent for Sarah and took her.”* (Genesis 20:2b) We must remember that this lady is over ninety years of age. Sarah must have been one attractive lady, which may also suggest that Abimelech was an older king.

*“But God came to Abimelech in a dream one night and said to him, ‘You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman’”* (Genesis 20:3). God is being gracious to Abimelech in letting him know that he is about to commit a grievous sin. The sin is not in getting another wife, the sin is getting another man's wife. She is a married woman. However, we read in Genesis 20:4-5,

*Now Abimelech had not gone near her, so he said,  
‘Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation? Did he not  
say to me, “She is my sister,” and didn't she also say,  
“He is my brother?” I have done this with a clear  
conscience and clean hands.’*

He said, “I'm innocent. I did not know that the woman was married.” *“Then God said to him in the dream, ‘Yes, I know you did this with a clear conscience, and so I have kept you from sinning against me. That is why I did not let you touch her’”* (Genesis 20:6). God spoke to him before he sinned, and in 20:7

God instructs Abimelech on what to do: *“Now return the man’s wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live.”* Isn’t that interesting? Abraham was the one who lied, yet God said, “This is my man.” He lied, but he was still God’s man. He was a prophet, and God would hear his prayer. Abraham was weak, not unbelieving.

*“But if you do not return her, you may be sure that you and all yours will die.”* So he and all of his household would die unless he returns the man’s wife. This fact is not lost on Abimelech. *“Early the next morning Abimelech summoned all his officials, and when he told them all that had happened, they were very much afraid”* (Genesis 20:8).

After speaking with his servants, Abimelech deals with Abraham.

*Then Abimelech called Abraham in and said, ‘What have you done to us? How have I wronged you that you have brought such great guilt upon me and my kingdom? You have done things to me that should not be done.’ And Abimelech asked Abraham, ‘What was your reason for doing this?’* (Genesis 20:9-10)

Abraham replies in a way that lets us know that he still does not have his full trust in God. *“Abraham replied, ‘I said to myself, “There is surely no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife”’”* (Genesis 20:11). He is afraid. Sarah is an attractive woman even though she is an older lady, and Abraham is afraid that some of Abimelech’s people would kill him and take her.

Abraham then tries to justify himself. *“Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not of my mother; and she became my wife”* (Genesis 20:12). He said, “I told you the truth; she is my sister.” But he intended to deceive. And with the intent to deceive, the truth becomes a lie. I may say something that’s wrong because I am ignorant or just wrong. In that case it is not a lie. But anything I tell to somebody, if I

intend to deceive them, then that is a lie. Abraham intended to deceive.

Notice verse 13,

*And when God had me wander from my father's household, I said to her, 'This is how you can show your love to me: Everywhere we go, say of me, "He is my brother."'*

So they told this lie on two occasions. Abraham was using Sarah to protect himself and was seemingly not that concerned about what happened to her. This is in no way intended to make light of Abraham. It is just that we shouldn't make too much of Abraham. He was a man like us, subject to the same foibles, the same temptations and the same weakness. His strength was that he always came back to God. He always repented of the evil that he did.

Watch Abimelech's response in 20:14-15,

*Then Abimelech brought sheep and cattle and male and female slaves and gave them to Abraham, and he returned Sarah his wife to him. And Abimelech said, 'My land is before you; live wherever you like.'*

Abraham is being blessed by God even when he's doing wrong. Again this is not to make light of Abraham. It is to show God's greatness. Isn't God great? He promised Abraham blessings, and here He is fulfilling His covenant even when it appears that Abraham is not. Abraham even gets to choose the place that he will live.

Now Sarah has been wronged, and so some token must be paid to her, ransom paid for the wrong done to her. So in Genesis 20:16 we read,

*To Sarah he said, 'I am giving your brother a thousand shekels of silver (approximately 25 pounds*



of silver). *This is to cover the offense against you before all who are with you; you are completely vindicated.*

God paid to Abraham the dowry that Abimelech would have had to have paid to Abraham had Sarah really been his sister. To cover any shame or any dishonor that he might have brought upon Sarah, Abimelech is willing to pay the price. Abimelech has given Abraham all kinds of riches. He has given the thousand shekels of silver to him, returned Sarah, and announced to all the people that this woman is to be honored.

So now Abraham prays to God.

*Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife and his slave girls so they could have children again, for the LORD had closed up every womb in Abimelech's household because of Abraham's wife Sarah. (Genesis 20:17).*

The women in Abimelech's house will have no children until Sarah is back with Abraham. When we read this part of Abraham's life we may be a little disappointed that he told the lie again. However, we can always be comforted to know that even the friend of God, even the heroes of our Bible, are men who are subject to the same temptations, troubles and trials that we are. We should not be grateful that Abraham lied but we should be grateful that it is recorded that he came back to God and honored Him.

### **The Birth of the Promised Heir**

In Genesis 21, we have the second event that occurs at Gerar. This event is the birth of Isaac who was the promised child of a year ago. In Genesis 21:1-5 we read,

*Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised.*

*Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. Abraham gave the name Isaac (which translated means "laughter" or "to laugh") to the son Sarah bore him. When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.*

We are amazed at that, but remember that Abraham was born when his father, Terah, was 130 years old. Abraham will have six sons after Isaac by his second wife, Keturah, and many sons after this one by the concubines that he will take. So the problem is not Abraham's age or virility. The problem has been Sarah's barrenness. Her barrenness was intended on purpose by God so that the credit and the glory could be given to Him in the birth of Isaac.

Sarah's response is recorded in 21:6,

*Sarah said, 'God has brought me laughter (Isaac), and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.' And she added, 'Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.'*

Notice that one child is called children. She has borne Abraham children.

### **The Expulsion of the Bondwoman and Her Son**

Ishmael does not like the fact that Isaac is now in the family. He is jealous, so he rebels and balks. Therefore he and his mother have to leave Abraham's house. Starting in Genesis 21:8 we read, "*The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast.*" This would probably make Isaac three or four years old. "*But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne*

to Abraham was mocking" (Genesis 21:9). He wasn't just playful. He was mocking Isaac and saying, "You think you're going to be the heir? Well, I am the number one son." We read in Genesis 21:10-14,

*. . . and she said to Abraham, 'Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac.' (Sarah is wanting the competition to Isaac removed.) The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son. But God said to him, 'Do not be so distressed about the boy and your maidservant. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. I will make the son of the maidservant into a nation also, because he is your offspring.' Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy.*

Ishmael was 13 or 14 years old when Isaac was born. He is now 16 or 17 years old. He's not a little baby anymore; he's a teenager. Even at that age, watch what happens as it is recorded in Genesis 21:15-21.

*She went on her way and wandered in the desert of Beersheba. (They are now out of the promised land.) When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. Then she went off and sat down nearby, about a bow-shot away, for she thought, 'I cannot watch the boy die.' And as she sat there nearby, she began to sob. God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, 'What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I*

*will make him into a great nation.' Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink. God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer. While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.*

There is the disinheritance of Ishmael. Ishmael will not inherit with Isaac, but there is a strange thing about all of this. He must still love Abraham because when Abraham dies not only will Isaac bury him but Ishmael will come back as well. Ishmael and Isaac, Abraham's two sons, will bury him. None of the sons of Keturah will be back. None of the sons of the concubines will be back, but this first born son of Abraham along with Isaac will. Not the first born through whom the seed would come but the first child Abraham bore will be back to bury his father. Isaac now has no rival to the inheritance of Abraham. Isaac will be the one through whom the seed of Abraham will be traced. Isaac will be the one through whom the seed of the woman, who will crush the devil's head, will be born.

### **Beersheba—Abraham Makes A Covenant With Abimelech**

A problem still exists between Abraham and Abimelech. Abraham has sinned grievously against Abimelech, but Abimelech told Abraham, that since he was a prophet of God, he could go anywhere that he wanted to in the land and live there. Because of this agreement Abraham and Abimelech make a treaty. They make a covenant. This covenant is found in Genesis 21:22-34. It needs to be paid attention to because it talks about the integrity of the Ammorites and why Abraham's seed cannot have this land at this particular time. The Ammorites are still a righteous people.

We read of the covenant in Genesis 21:22-24,

*At that time, Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his forces said to Abraham, 'God is with you in everything you do. Now swear to me here before God that you will not deal falsely with me or my children or my descendants. Show to me and the country where you are living as an alien the same kindness that I have shown to you.' Abraham said, 'I swear it.'*

Abraham swears that he will do as Abimelech asks. But then Abraham and Abimelech's people begin complaining about a well of water that Abimelech's servants had seized. Abimelech said that he didn't know anything about that, but he put a stop to the arguing. In order to solidify the covenant Abraham brought him seven ewe lambs. Not seven ordinary lambs but seven lambs that could increase his flock. They both offer a sacrifice, pouring blood around the base of the well. They call the well from that time on, Beersheba which means "the well of the oath." It is the southern most city in the promised land. Before Abraham or Abimelech enter into God's land, there is a well there to remind them both that they are in blood covenant together. They are not going to harm each other.

## Moriah—Offering of Isaac: A Test of Abraham's Faith

### **The Divine Command**

In Genesis 22 is found the last point in our chapter which is called Moriah. The event that occurs here is the offering of Isaac. Genesis 22:1-2 says,

*Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, 'Abraham!'* *'Here I am,' he replied. Then God said, 'Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love,*

*and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.'*

### **The Journey**

This is not Mount Moriah in the city of Jerusalem; it's a mountain in the land of Moriah. The land of Moriah is just west of the sea of Galilee, toward the south, and it is probably the hill of Mora which is the highest mountain in that little range that he is going to offer Isaac on. Following God's directive:

*Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, 'Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.' Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, 'Father?' 'Yes, my son?' Abraham replied. 'The fire and wood are here,' Isaac said, 'but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?' Abraham answered, 'God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.' And the two of them went on together. When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood (Genesis 22:3-9).*

### **The Sacrifice of Isaac Averted**

Isaac is a young man. He is not a little boy. He could have resisted this, but he didn't. And so we read next: "Then he

*reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son*" (Genesis 22:10). As far as Abraham is concerned, he sacrificed Isaac. The knife is in his hand, and he is about to cut Isaac's throat. But God intervenes:

*But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, 'Abraham! Abraham!' . . . That is the best news Abraham ever heard, and he is quick to answer. 'Here I am,' he replied. 'Do not lay a hand on the boy,' he said. 'Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son' (Genesis 22:11-12).*

When God says, "*Now I know . . .*" it doesn't mean that God didn't know up until that time because both in the Hebrew and the Septuagint it uses a word that means, "I know for sure." It indicated to God that Abraham would hold nothing back from Him.

God then supplies the sacrifice for Abraham to make. In Genesis 22:13a we read, "*Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns.*" That wasn't luck. Before the foundation of the world, God knew that would happen. Abraham had told Isaac that God would provide the sacrifice, and now God has provided the sacrifice. Abraham knows what to do.

*He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide (Jehovah-jireh). And to this day it is said, 'On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided' (Genesis 22:13b-14).*

### **The Covenant Promise Confirmed**

Abraham has offered a living sacrifice, his son, Isaac. God accepted the ram as a substitute, but Abraham had offered a living sacrifice. I've offered a living sacrifice. You've offered

a living sacrifice. That sacrifice is our own body, and that is because God has provided the sacrifice of the ram on the cross. Now God will renew His covenant beginning in verse 15,

*The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, 'I swear by myself,' declares the LORD, 'that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me' (Genesis 22:15-18).*

The writer of Hebrews will refer to this and say that since God can swear by none greater, then He swore by Himself (cf. Hebrew 6:13). We always swear by somebody greater than we are. There is nobody greater than God. So He has to swear by whom? Himself. He said, "I swear by myself."

There is just one argument with that translation. In the latter part of verse 17 the Hebrew language is singular. It says your *descendant* will take possession of the gates of his enemies. He is not talking about seed, plural, in 17 the latter part and 18. He is talking about seed, singular. That is the seed of the woman who is to crush the devil's head and bless all mankind and through whom all the nations of the earth will be blessed. So God repeats the seed promise of Genesis 3:15 through Isaac: "*Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba*" (Genesis 22:19).

This brings us to a good stopping point for this chapter because Abraham has passed the test, not just an examination, but the test. He has indicated by his willingness to offer Isaac that he will withhold absolutely nothing from God. He has renounced all that he has, and said that it belongs to God and



declared himself a steward not just to the sheep, not just to the slaves, not just to the cattle but of his only son, Isaac. You and I must declare that all that we are and all that we have belong to God, and then the Lord will provide for us. So let us do it.

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## ABRAHAM'S JOURNEY (6)

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(Genesis 22:19-25:18)

### Review and Introduction

This is chapter eleven in our study of Old Testament history. In our last chapter, in studying Abraham's journey, we reached the twelfth station of Abraham's journey. Let us review those other stations so that we know where we are going into this chapter. The first station is Ur, and the thing to remember is that this is the place of Abram's birth. The second station is Haran where he went with his father, mother, Lot and his wife. The thing to remember here is that Terah, his father, dies and Abram receives his second call from God. The third station is Shechem where he fed his sheep, pitched his tent and built an altar to worship God. The fourth station is Bethel where the same things occurred. He made an altar to God, pitched his tent, fed his sheep, but he also ran out of pasture. The fifth station is Egypt. There was always grain in Egypt, but we also remember that it was there that Abram told the first of two lies about Sarai not being his wife. Abram was expelled from the country for this but was given great riches as he left. The sixth station is back at Bethel where there was trouble between his servants and Lot's servants as to which of their masters was the greatest. Abram gave Lot the choice of the land, and Lot chose the well watered pasture land, and Abram was left with the mountainous country, so he moved from Bethel to Hebron where, although there was mountainous country, there was also the best of the grain in the land. That is the seventh station. The eighth station is Dan. The reason that he went to Dan was because the kings of the east had come and conquered Sodom and Gomorrah. But Lot also lived in Sodom, and the kings had carried Lot, his

family and his goods captive back to Mesopotamia. Abram gathered his 318 men, pursued them to Dan, defeated them and brought Lot and his things back toward the south to Sodom. On the way back to Hebron, which will be the ninth station, he met Melchizedek, and God made a covenant with him. A lot of great things happened at Hebron, but the primary thing to remember is the covenant. Then at Gerar, the tenth station, Abraham lied again, this time to Abimelech, the king of the Canaanites. He was again cast out of the land but made rich by Abimelech because Abimelech was afraid of him because he was a servant of God. It was here that Isaac was born. At Beersheba a covenant was made with Abimelech that they would help one another and would not fight or deceive one another. The twelfth station was Moriah, particularly a mountain where Abraham offered his son, Isaac. He didn't have to kill him, but he did offer him. The knife was in his hand, and it was poised at his son's throat. God called to him and pointed him to a ram that was then offered instead of Isaac.

## The Last Days of Abraham

### **The Thirteenth Station—Beersheba, Nahor's Children**

Once the offering of Isaac is done, they return to Beersheba where they are living at the time. This is the thirteenth station. In Genesis 22:19-24 we read that he learns of Nahor having children, one of whom is a woman named Rebekah, and that's important because she will become the wife of Isaac.

### **The Fourteenth Station—Hebron, Death and Burial of Sarah**

Abraham then goes to Hebron, the fourteenth station, which he does because Sarah dies. In Genesis 23:1, we read, "*Sarah lived to be a hundred and twenty-seven years old.*" This means that Sarah died when Isaac was 37 years old. Genesis 23:2 tells us, "*She died at Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the*

*land of Canaan, and Abraham went to mourn for Sarah and to weep over her."*

I do not know why Sarah is in Hebron and Abraham is in Beersheba. It could be that Sarah is now old and cannot travel with Abraham as he hunts for pasture land for his sheep. But whatever the reason may be, after Abraham has mourned for a while over Sarah, he purchases a burial site. This is one of the most interesting examples of Oriental bargaining to be found in any literature. In Genesis 23:3-9 we read,

*Then Abraham rose from beside his dead wife and spoke to the Hittites. He said, 'I am an alien and a stranger among you. Sell me some property for a burial site here so that I can bury my dead.' The Hittites replied to Abraham, 'Sir, listen to us. You are a mighty prince among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will refuse you his tomb for burying your dead.' Then Abraham rose and bowed down before the people of the land, the Hittites. He said to them, 'If you are willing to let me bury my dead, then listen to me and intercede with Ephron son of Zohar on my behalf so he will sell me the cave of Machpelah, which belongs to him and is at the end of his field. Ask him to sell it to me for the full price as a burial site among you.'*

Abraham is too full of sorrow and mourning for Sarah to want to bargain. So he says that he will buy the field and cave for the full price. But for Ephron to just name a price and to take it would be to lose face before the people, for this is a mighty prince. Ephron's reply is stated in 23:10-11,

*Ephron the Hittite was sitting among his people and he replied to Abraham in the hearing of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of his city. 'No, my lord,' he said.*

*'Listen to me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. I give it to you in the presence of my people. Bury your dead.'*

Ephron says that he will simply give the property to Abraham, but if Abraham takes that offer, then he loses face. Ephron is not really wanting to just give the land away; it's just an honorable, pleasant way to reply to a person you count as superior to you.

The negotiation continues in Genesis 23:12-13,

*Again Abraham bowed down before the people of the land and he said to Ephron in their hearing, 'Listen to me, if you will. I will pay the price of the field. Accept it from me so that I can bury my dead there.'*

Abraham is having no part of the gift offer; he wants to pay for this property. However, watch Ephron's reply in 23:14 as he very tactfully names the price: *"Ephron answered Abraham, 'Listen to me, my lord; the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver (ten pounds of silver), but what is that between me and you? Bury your dead.'"*

It sounds as though Ephron is saying again that he doesn't want any money for such a small amount of land. The amount is such a small amount of silver. What is that between two princes like Abraham and Ephron? Go ahead and take the land. However, that is not what Ephron is saying. He is naming the price that Abraham wanted. We know this because in Genesis 23:16-20 it says,

*Abraham agreed to Ephron's terms and weighed out for him the price he had named in the hearing of the Hittites: four hundred shekels of silver, according to the weight current among the merchants. So Ephron's field in Machpelah near Mamre-both the field and the*

*cave in it, and all the trees within the borders of the field-was deeded to Abraham as his property in the presence of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of the city. Afterwards Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave in the field of Machpelah near Mamre (which is at Hebron) in the land of Canaan. So the field and the cave in it were deeded to Abraham by the Hittites as a burial site.*

Both men come out of the negotiation having saved face. Nobody is embarrassed; nobody lost any honor, and Abraham has purchased, at full price, Ephron's field.

This is a wonderful scene of honorable and sensible bargaining. Sarah is then buried there. Later, Abraham will be buried there; Rebekah, Isaac's wife, will be buried there; Isaac will be buried there; Leah, the legitimate and first wife of Jacob, will be buried there, and Jacob will be buried there. This cave will end up containing Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their legitimate wives. Abraham has purchased a family burial cave.

## **Obtaining A Wife For Isaac**

### **Fifteenth Station—Beersheba, Rebekah, and Keturah**

Abraham now recognizes that Isaac needs a wife. Isaac is a grown man. Abraham is old, and it is time for Isaac to be married. The search for Isaac's wife is found in Genesis 24. In Genesis 24:1-2 we read,

*Abraham was now old and well advanced in years, and the LORD had blessed him in every way. He said to the chief servant in his household (Eliezer), the one in charge of all that he had, 'Put your hand under my thigh.'*

The strongest muscle in a man's body is the muscle under his thigh. So, Eliezer is going to swear by Abraham's strength which means that he will be swearing by the Lord. Abraham says in 24:3-4,

*I want you to swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac.*

How does Abraham know that there is a woman there for Isaac to marry? Remember that while he was in Beersheba he had received word about Nahor's children. However, Eliezer has questions of his own as we see in 24:5-7,

*The servant asked him, 'What if the woman is unwilling to come back with me to this land? Shall I then take your son back to the country you came from?' 'Make sure that you do not take my son back there,' Abraham said. 'The LORD, the God of heaven, who brought me out of my father's household and my native land and who spoke to me and promised me on oath, saying, "To your offspring I will give this land"--he will send his angel before you so that you can get a wife for my son from there.'*

Abraham's faith is strong on this occasion. He knows that God will guide Eliezer to just the right person for Isaac to marry. He continues by saying, *"If the woman is unwilling to come back with you, then you will be released from this oath of mine. Only do not take my son back there"* (Genesis 24:8).

Why does Abraham insist so strongly about Isaac not being taken to the land of the Canaanites? We don't find out why until nearly the end of the book of Joshua because Joshua challenges the people to choose whom they will serve, whether it was the

gods their fathers served beyond the Euphrates or the god of the Ammorites among whom they live. Abraham knew that all of his relatives were idolaters and worshiped many gods. For that reason he did not want his son to go back to that land of idolatry.

### Eliezer's Journey and Its Results

The servant shows that he will be obedient to Abraham's instructions as we see in Genesis 24:9-11,

*So the servant put his hand under the thigh of his master Abraham and swore an oath to him concerning this matter. Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and left, taking with him all kinds of good things from his master. He set out for Aram Naharaim and made his way to the town of Nahor. He had the camels kneel down near the well outside the town; it was toward evening, the time the women go out to draw water.*

In Genesis 24:12-14, we see the strength of Eliezer's faith in God.

*Then he prayed, 'O LORD, God of my master Abraham, give me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. May it be that when I say to a girl, "Please let down your jar that I may have a drink," and she says, "Drink, and I'll water your camels too"---let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master.'*



Have you ever seen a camel drink? They drink for a long while. They can drink buckets and buckets of water. So evidently he wanted a woman that would work, a woman that was willing to not only give him a drink but to stay there for the nearly an hour or so it would take to feed and water all those camels. Something happened before he had even finished praying. We read in 24:15-16,

*Before he had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, who was the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor. The girl was very beautiful, a virgin; no man had ever lain with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jar and came up again.*

Eliezer knew what to say; he had just prayed about it.

*The servant hurried to meet her and said, 'Please give me a little water from your jar.' 'Drink, my lord,' she said, and quickly lowered the jar to her hands and gave him a drink. After she had given him a drink, she said, 'I'll draw water for your camels too, until they have finished drinking.' (Genesis 24:17-19)*

Eliezer now watches closely to see if God has answered his prayer. The answer is given as Genesis 24:20-28 tells us:

*So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, ran back to the well to draw more water, and drew enough for all his camels. Without saying a word, the man watched her closely to learn whether or not the LORD had made his journey successful. When the camels had finished drinking, the man took out a gold nose ring weighing a beka and two gold bracelets weighing ten shekels (about one hundred dollars worth of material).*

*Then he asked, 'Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night?' She answered him, 'I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son that Milcah bore to Nahor.' And she added, 'We have plenty of straw and fodder, as well as room for you to spend the night.' Then the man bowed down and worshiped the LORD, saying, 'Praise be to the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness to my master. As for me, the LORD has led me on the journey to the house of my master's relatives.' The girl ran and told her mother's household about these things.*

Eliezer now goes to explain to Laban why he has come to their land and why Rebekah is suddenly wearing a nose ring and two gold bracelets. We read in Genesis 24:29-39,

*Now Rebekah had a brother named Laban, and he hurried out to the man at the spring. As soon as he had seen the nose ring, and the bracelets on his sister's arms, and had heard Rebekah tell what the man said to her, he went out to the man and found him standing by the camels near the spring. 'Come, you who are blessed by the LORD,' he said. 'Why are you standing out here? I have prepared the house and a place for the camels.' So the man went to the house, and the camels were unloaded. Straw and fodder were brought for the camels, and water for him and his men to wash their feet. Then food was set before him, but he said, 'I will not eat until I have told you what I have to say.' 'Then tell us,' Laban said. So he said, 'I am Abraham's servant. The LORD has blessed my master abundantly, and he has become wealthy. He has given him sheep and cattle, silver and gold,*

*menservants and maidservants, and camels and donkeys. My master's wife Sarah has borne him a son in her old age, and he has given him everything he owns. And my master made me swear an oath, and said, 'You must not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live, but go to my father's family and to my own clan, and get a wife for my son.' Then I asked my master, 'What if the woman will not come back with me?'*

Eliezer then goes on to explain that if Rebekah refused to come with him then he would be freed from his oath to Abraham. But he had prayed to God about this as he came to the spring. He then tells Laban what it is that he prayed for. Eliezer then tells Laban the results of that prayer in Genesis 24:45-49,

*Before I finished praying in my heart, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder. She went down to the spring and drew water, and I said to her, 'Please give me a drink.' She quickly lowered her jar from her shoulder and said, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too.' So I drank, and she watered the camels also. I asked her, 'Whose daughter are you?' She said, 'The daughter of Bethuel son of Nahor, whom Milcah bore to him.'*

Eliezer then explains the nose ring and the bracelets. He gave her these things, and now he is asking if she will be the wife of his master, Isaac. In Genesis 24:50-51 it says,

*Laban and Bethuel answered, 'This is from the LORD; we can say nothing to you one way or the other. Here is Rebekah; take her and go, and let her become the wife of your master's son, as the LORD has directed.'*

## Isaac and Rebekah's Marriage

It looks as though Rebekah didn't have much say in this. But in Genesis 24:52-66, Rebekah agrees to go with Eliezer and be Isaac's wife. Isaac sees them coming, and he goes out to meet Rebekah. They see him approaching, and they tell Rebekah that this is the master. Rebekah looked up and got down off her camel. She put on her veil and covered herself. In Genesis 24:67, we see what Isaac's reaction is:

*Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. So she became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.*

This was an ordinary mid-eastern custom. Rebekah really did have very little choice, and even when she is asked if she wants to go, she agrees to go. She and Isaac have never seen each other until this occasion but immediately accept each other as husband and wife. He is comforted over his mother's death. There is an interesting statement in 24:67 that we need to look at again: "*So she became his wife, and he loved her; . . .*"

In the Western culture the normal order is that the man loves the woman, and then she becomes his wife, but the Eastern culture she first became his wife, and then he loved her. This indicates that love is something you can learn. It indicates that marriage is something that you can accept, and within that marriage you can come to love a woman.

Rebekah, as we are going to find out, is a tricky woman. We will see this when trouble comes between her and her husband concerning their two sons. But this is the end of this particular part of the journey. Abraham is about to die, but before his death we read about a second marriage in Genesis 25:1-4. This would be after Sarah has died. We read,

*Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah. Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan; the descendants of Dedan were the Asshurites, the Letushites and the Leummites. The sons of Midian were Ephah, Ephher, Hanoch, Abida and Eldaah. All these were descendants of Keturah.*

However, despite the birth of these six sons we read in Genesis 25:5-6,

*Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac. But while he was still living, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them away from his son Isaac to the land of the east.*

## **The Last Days of Abraham**

### **Sixteenth Station—Hebron and the Burial of Abraham**

The last days of Abraham along with his burial are recorded in Genesis 25:7-11:

*Altogether, Abraham lived a hundred and seventy-five years. Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people. His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite, the field Abraham had bought from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried with his wife Sarah. After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac, who then lived near Beer Lahai Roi.*

We remember that Beer Lahai Roi is the place where Ishmael's mother, Hagar, was comforted, and they both received the water that preserved their life. This place is in the southern most part of what we call the Promised Land. This is where Abraham's journey comes to an end. His life has certainly not been without problems. He was a great man. He traveled from one end of the world, at that time, to the other. He was put in a rather obscure and isolated place so that he could worship the one God that he loved more than he loved life. But now Abraham is dead. His life is over, and we begin the life of Isaac.

### **Abraham's Faith Examined In Hebrews 11:8-19**

In Hebrews 11 there is a writer's testimony in a few brief verses about the greatness of this man's life that we've studied for four chapters. In Hebrews 11:8-19, we read,

*By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith Abraham, even though he was past age and Sarah herself was barren---was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore. All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they*

*were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had the opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, 'It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.' Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.*

This is a quick survey of Abraham's life. Faith goes when it doesn't know where it is going. Faith receives even though it has not yet received. Faith believes even when it's impossible for it to be fulfilled, and faith receives or reasons that God is even able to raise the dead. In a real sense Abraham did receive his son back from the dead.

## **Abraham's Offspring By Ishmael**

In Genesis 25:12-18 we read of the account of Abraham's son, Ishmael, whom Sarah's maidservant Hagar, the Egyptian, bore to Abraham. These are the names of the sons of Ishmael. It reads,

*This is the account of Abraham's son Ishmael, whom Sarah's maidservant, Hagar the Egyptian, bore to Abraham. These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, listed in the order of their birth: Nebaioth the firstborn of Ishmael, Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish and*

*Kedemah. These were the sons of Ishmael, and these are the names of the twelve tribal rulers according to their settlements and camps. Altogether, Ishmael lived a hundred and thirty-seven years. He breathed his last and died, and he was gathered to his people. His descendants settled in the area from Havilah to Shur, near the border of Egypt, as you go towards Asshur. And they lived in hostility towards all their brothers.*

Ishmael will be the father of hostile and warring nations throughout all of time. History has shown this to be true. The Arabs have always lived in that desert, moving around in tribal groups. They have never been a strong nation. At one time they were united, calling themselves the United Arab Republic, but now, as always, they are a scattered people. They are not a settled nation. Isaac will become a settled nation, Israel.

It is good that we learn the lesson of faith. Abraham was a man of faith. Isaac was a man of faith, and therefore they could live in a united condition with God and with mankind. Let us try to find the way to be united in Jesus Christ.



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## ISAAC AND JACOB

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### **Review and Introduction**

This is chapter twelve in our study of Old Testament history. We have just finished the life of Abraham, and what a life it was! What a person Abraham was; what an encouragement he is to the saints. He had a son whose name was “Laughter” (Isaac) to remind Abraham and Sarah that all of their life they had laughed at the promise of God. But God did bring happiness, so in the end it was a good laugh. There is a sense of honor and joy in having this boy. There are some sons and some men that are very aggressive, very loud and very prevalent. Isaac is not that kind of man. Isaac was maybe the original “quiet man.” His life was wrapped up first of all in his relationship and love for his mother, second in his relationship and love for his wife and third in his relationship and love for his children.

### **The Life of Isaac**

#### **The Submissive Son, Devoted Husband, and Indulgent Father**

It appears that there is nothing unique about Isaac. For that reason we usually end up studying about him during the study of Abraham’s life as the submissive son. He is the submissive son as he submits to Abraham’s willingness to offer him as a sacrifice in Genesis 22. He is then seen as the devoted husband in Genesis 24 as Rebekah is brought to him from Paddan Aram. He goes out to meet her; they love one another; they establish their home, and he’s devoted to her. Then he is the indulgent

father in Genesis 25-28 as we read of Esau, his favorite son, and Jacob, Rebekah's favorite.

## Isaac and Abimelech

### Isaac's Migration to Gerar

There is one single incident in which Isaac stands alone, separate from his family, separate from his wife, separate from his children, yet in a way not separate. In Genesis 26 is found the account of Isaac and Abimelech. In 26:1 we read, "*Now there was a famine in the land—besides the earlier famine of Abraham's time—and Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines in Gerar.*"

This is not the same Abimelech that had been alive in Abraham's day. This is his son, a much younger man.

Genesis 26:2-3a says,

*The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, 'Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you.'*

God tells Isaac not to go where Abraham went. He tells him to not make the same mistake that Abraham made. He is to stay in the promised land for a while, and God will bless him. God further said, "*For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham*" (Genesis 26:3b).

God then makes the same covenant with Isaac that He made with Abraham:

*I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because Abraham obeyed me and kept my*

*requirements, my commands, my decrees and my laws*  
(Genesis 26:4-5).

So Isaac stayed in Gerar (Genesis 26:6). He was on his way to Egypt for he could find grain down in Egypt. But God said, “No, you live on what I give you. Do not seek more in Egypt’s land. I have made a covenant with you because I made a covenant with Abraham. I will bless you because Abraham obeyed me.” However, in Genesis 26:7 Isaac made one of the same mistakes that his father made. *“When the men of that place asked him about his wife, he said, ‘She is my sister . . .’”* That is not even true. With Abraham, his statement was true with an intent to deceive, but with Isaac, before Rebekah was his wife, she was his cousin. In no way was she his sister.

*. . . because he was afraid to say, ‘She is my wife.’ He thought, ‘The men of this place might kill me on account of Rebekah, because she is beautiful.’*

Isaac does not have faith in God. At least on this occasion he doesn’t believe the word of God, because God had just told him to stay in that land and that He would bless him. God had said, “I will protect you. I will honor you. Do not make the mistake that Abraham made.” But Isaac makes the mistake in exactly the same place, to the son of the man that Abraham had made the mistake. I believe this Abimelech has heard that story because he doesn’t take Rebekah into his house. In 26:8 we read,

*When Isaac had been there a long time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked down from a window and saw Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah. So Abimelech summoned Isaac and said, ‘She is really your wife! Why did you say, “She is my sister”?’*

Isaac apparently underestimated the morality of these people. He underestimated their character. His answer to Abimelech is seen in 26:9-13 with the result of Abimelech warning his own people regarding Isaac and Rebekah:

*Isaac answered him, 'Because I thought I might lose my life on account of her.' Then Abimelech said, 'What is this you have done to us? One of the men might well have slept with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us.' So Abimelech gave orders to all the people: 'Anyone who molests this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.' Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because the LORD blessed him. The man became rich, and his wealth continued to grow until he became very wealthy.*

Isaac was already wealthy with Abraham's possessions, but now he is very wealthy. Genesis 26:14-18a describes this wealth:

*He had so many flocks and herds and servants that the Philistines envied him. So all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the time of his father Abraham, the Philistines stopped up, filling them with earth. Then Abimelech said to Isaac, 'Move away from us; you have become too powerful for us.' So Isaac moved away from there and encamped in the Valley of Gerar and settled there. Isaac reopened the wells . . .*

Genesis 26:18b-25 talks about the rebuilding that Isaac did throughout all the land until 26:26-31,

*Meanwhile, Abimelech had come to him from Gerar, with Ahuzzath his personal adviser and Phicol the*

*commander of his forces. Isaac asked them, 'Why have you come to me, since you were hostile to me and sent me away?' They answered, 'We saw clearly that the LORD was with you; so we said, "There ought to be a sworn agreement between us"—between us and you. Let us make a treaty with you that you will do us no harm, just as we did not molest you but always treated you well and sent you away in peace. And now you are blessed by the LORD.' Isaac then made a feast for them, and they ate and drank. Early the next morning the men swore an oath to each other. Then Isaac sent them on their way, and they left him in peace.*

## The Troubled Life of Jacob

### **The Birth of the Twins**

Isaac is the blessed man of God, the one with whom the covenant has been made, but he makes the same mistake that his father made in underestimating the morality of the people among whom he lived. Isaac is a quiet man, but he has two sons who are not quiet men. Let us read of that beginning in Genesis 25:19 as we pick up what we are now going to call the life of Jacob.

Abraham was a prominent man, but Isaac, his son, was not. Instead, it is Isaac's son, Jacob, who becomes the prominent man in the story recorded in the book of Genesis. In Genesis 25:19 we read, "*This is the account of Abraham's son Isaac. Abraham became the father of Isaac, . . .*" It is interesting to note that in the book of Genesis each time there is a statement like, "This is the account of," or "This is the generation of a certain man," it is the son who is the prominent person. For example, "These are the generations of Terah," and Abraham is the prominent person. This is the account of the generations of Isaac, and Jacob is the prominent person.

Continuing on in Genesis 25:20-23, we read,

*. . . and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram and sister of Laban the Aramean. Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren.*

This is two men in a row whom God has caused to marry barren women so that He, God, might get the credit for the children, for the seed. He prayed to the Lord,

*The LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, 'Why is this happening to me?' So she went to inquire of the LORD. The LORD said to her, 'Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.'*

Esau never serves Jacob, but later on it is true of the nations. The nation from Esau, Edom, will serve the nation from Jacob, Israel; this is what God said. There will be two nations, two people. One people will be stronger than the other people, and the older people will serve the younger people. That is the prophecy.

Now comes the time for the birth of these children.

*When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau (which means either "hairy" or "red and hairy"). After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob (which literally means "supplanter" or "one who takes the place of another"). Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them (Genesis 25:24-26).*

### **Jacob the Supplanter At Home**

Isaac and Rebekah had been married twenty years without children, and now they have twins. The prediction was that both children would become nations and that the nation that came from the older would serve the nation that came from the younger. There is a prediction even in the color of hair because Esau is going to be a man of the fields, a man who wants to be outdoors, a bloody person. Jacob is going to be the more quiet person, his mother's favorite. Jacob also tries to take his brother's place. In Genesis 25:27-28 we read,

*The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents. Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.*

This does not mean that they have no love for the other son, but there is definitely favoritism shown among the parents. Anytime there is favoritism in a home, there is going to be trouble. Esau was loved by Isaac because he brought in the wild game that his soul desired. Jacob was loved by Rebekah because he was the quiet man of the house.

However, now, we are going to see Jacob in action and come to understand why he was named "the supplanter." Genesis 25:29-31 states, "*Once when Jacob was cooking some stew (which was just beans or lentils), Esau came in from the open country, famished. He said to Jacob, 'Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!'*" (That is why he was also called Edom. [That means "red." He's called both hairy and red]) *Jacob replied, 'First sell me your birthright.'*" The birthright is the right to the double portion. If you have three children, you divide your inheritance four ways, and the one with the birthright gets one-half and the others get one-fourth. If you have two children, as it is here, you divide your inheritance three ways. The one with the birthright gets two-thirds, and the one without the birthright get one-third. Esau

is being told by Jacob to give up 66%, two-thirds, of all of his father's possessions, for a bowl of beans. Isn't this a foolish thing? It is comparable to giving up eternal salvation for something this world would have to offer. Esau is thinking about his hunger, so he says, "*'Look, I am about to die,' Esau said. 'What good is the birthright to me?'*" (Genesis 25:32) Is Esau really about to die? Absolutely not! He could come home and eat whatever his wife has prepared for him, but he is a worldly, lustful man. He feels as though he has to be satisfied at that moment.

*But Jacob said, 'Swear to me first.' So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright (Genesis 25:33-34).*

Esau has just sold his birthright. He sold his birthright, being the father's number one son, for a bowl of red beans. Jacob has begun his supplanting work. He has stolen his brother's birthright. But in Genesis 27 we see that Jacob is not finished with Esau. Now he steals Esau's blessing. The birthright is the double portion, but the blessing is through whom the seed line is traced. The one who supplants is going to supplant his brother's right to the seedline also. Beginning in Genesis 27:1-4 we read,

*When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see, he called for Esau his older son and said to him, 'My son.' 'Here I am,' he answered. Isaac said, 'I am now an old man and don't know the day of my death. Now then, get your weapons — your quiver and bow — and go out to the open country to hunt some wild game for me. Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die.'*



Isaac may be aware enough to know that Jacob is smart enough that if he dies without blessing Esau that Jacob will get the blessing too. However, someone else is listening in on this conversation and is ready to act quickly.

*Now Rebekah was listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau. When Esau left for the open country to hunt game and bring it back, Rebekah said to her son Jacob, 'Look, I overheard your father say to your brother Esau, "Bring me some game and prepare me some tasty food to eat, so that I may give you my blessing in the presence of the LORD before I die." Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you: Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so that I can prepare some tasty food for your father, just the way he likes it. Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies' (Genesis 27:5-10).*

Apparently, Isaac would not be able to tell the difference in how Esau prepared the food and how Rebekah prepared it. This very well could be Rebekah's thought. But Jacob is thinking as well and makes known his concern to his mother. In Genesis 27:11-20 we read,

*Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, 'But my brother Esau is a hairy man, and I'm a man with smooth skin. What if my father touches me? I would appear to be tricking him and would bring down a curse on myself rather than a blessing.' His mother said to him, 'My son, let the curse fall on me. Just do what I say; go and get them for me.' So he went and got them and brought them to his mother, and she prepared some tasty food, just the way his father liked it. Then Rebekah took the best clothes of Esau her older son, which she had in the house, and put them on her*

*younger son Jacob. She also covered his hands and the smooth part of his neck with the goatskins. Then she handed to her son Jacob the tasty food and the bread she had made. He went to his father and said, 'My father.' 'Yes, my son,' he answered. 'Who is it?' Jacob said to his father, 'I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game so that you may give me your blessing.' Isaac asked his son, 'How did you find it so quickly, my son?' 'The LORD your God gave me success,' he replied.*

Notice what Jacob does here. He brings the Lord into his lie by saying that it was the LORD who blessed him. However, Isaac does not seem convinced.

*Then Isaac said to Jacob, 'Come near so I can touch you, my son, to know whether you really are my son Esau or not.' Jacob went close to his father Isaac, who touched him and said, 'The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.' He did not recognize him, for his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; so he blessed him. 'Are you really my son Esau?' 'I am,' he replied. Then he said, 'My son, bring me some of your game to eat, so that I may give you my blessing.' Jacob brought it to him and he ate; and he brought some wine and he drank. Then his father, Isaac said to him, 'Come here, my son, and kiss me.' So he went to him and kissed him. When Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he blessed him and said, 'Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed. May God give you of heaven's dew and of earth's richness—an abundance of grain and new wine. May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down*

*to you. May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed' (Genesis 27:21-29).*

### **Esau's Bitterness and Hatred**

Isaac is fooled, and Jacob has received the birthright with a bowl of beans and the blessing with a bunch of lies. This fact will not soon be lost on both Isaac and Esau as we read in Genesis 27:30-33:

*After Isaac finished blessing him and Jacob had scarcely left his father's presence, his brother Esau came in from hunting. He too prepared some tasty food and brought it to his father. Then he said to him, 'My father, sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing.' His father Isaac asked him, 'Who are you?' 'I am your son,' he answered, 'your firstborn, Esau.' Isaac trembled violently and said, 'Who was it, then, that hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it just before you came and I blessed him—and indeed he will be blessed!'*

Isaac recognizes that he cannot repent and give Esau the blessing for he has already given it to Jacob. Esau knows this as well, and the anguish is obvious as is seen in Genesis 27:34-38:

*When Esau heard his father's words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, 'Bless me—me too, my father!' But he said, 'Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing.' Esau said, 'Isn't he rightly named Jacob? He has deceived me these two times: He took my birthright, and now he's taken my blessing!' Then he asked, 'Haven't you reserved any blessing for me?' Isaac answered Esau, 'I have made him lord over you and have made all his relatives his servants, and I have sustained him with*

*grain and new wine. So what can I possibly do for you, my son?’ Esau said to his father, ‘Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father!’ Then Esau wept aloud.*

But sadly, Isaac cannot bless him, but for Esau’s sake, he does have some words to say to him that will impact the descendants of Esau.

*His father Isaac answered him, ‘Your dwelling will be away from the earth’s richness, away from the dew of heaven above. You will live by the sword and you will serve your brother. But when you grow restless, you will throw his yoke from off your neck.’ (Genesis 27:39-40)*

Genesis 27:41 tells us this,

*Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, ‘The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob.’*

It is understandable why Esau feels this way. Jacob stole his birthright and blessing, but look again at the anger, jealousy and wrath that Esau has. He has devised a plan of his own. He will just wait until his father dies and then kill his brother. It is apparent that Esau has made this threat out loud because word gets back to his mother. Genesis 27:42-46 states,

*When Rebekah was told what her older son Esau had said, she sent for her younger son Jacob and said to him, ‘Your brother Esau is consoling himself with the thought of killing you. Now then, my son, do what I say: Flee at once to my brother Laban in Haran. Stay*

*with him for a while until your brother's fury subsides. When your brother is no longer angry with you and forgets what you did to him, I'll send word for you to come back from there. Why should I lose both of you in one day?' Then Rebekah said to Isaac, 'I'm disgusted with living because of these Hittite women. If Jacob takes a wife from among the women of this land, from Hittite women like these, my life will not be worth living.'*

Rebekah had to come up with a way to get Jacob out of the house, so she tricks Isaac into sending Jacob away to the land of Haran. Isaac seems to agree with Rebekah and as is seen in Genesis 28:1-9 he blesses Jacob and sends him on his way. It may be that Isaac is glad to get rid of Jacob. He said, "Jacob, your mother and I have decided that you need to go back to Laban's house and find for yourself a wife." So Jacob leaves Beersheba and sets out for Haran. He comes to a place where Abraham had lived on three different occasions, Bethel, where he decides to spend the night. He finds a rock for a pillow, lays down, goes to sleep and has a dream. This dream is called, even today by Bible students, "Jacob's dream" or "Jacob's ladder." In this dream there is a ladder going up into heaven, and angels are going up and down on the ladder with the ladder stopping at Jacob. Jacob is being told quite simply by God that he is now the head of the house. God will now recognize him and bless him. God is speaking to Jacob by means of the angels coming up and down the ladder. God will hear Jacob's prayers, which is symbolized by the angels going up the ladder. When Jacob awoke he knew that he had been appointed the patriarch, the father of the house. He said, "*Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it*" (Genesis 28:16). This is an awesome place. This is the very house of God, so he named it Bethel. It had been called Bethel earlier just because that's what it was when Moses wrote the book. But now it's called "the house of God" because Jacob met God there.

Early in the morning Jacob gets up, pours oil and sets up a pillar, or monument to this place, the house of God. He then makes a vow, albeit a subjective one, to God. He says,

*Then Jacob made a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's house, then the LORD will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth' (Genesis 28:20-22).*

The tenth belongs to the Lord. Abraham knew that to be true in Melchizedek's presence, and Jacob knew it in the presence of God. He left a thief, and God teaches him step by step the futility and stupidity of getting by on one's wits rather than by faith. The first lesson that he learns, leaving Beersheba running for his life, is that although he may think that God is not with him, the very first thing that God tells him is "I am with you. I will be with you. I will sustain you where you go, and I'll bring you back here." Jacob says, "If you do that and you will be my God, I will bring the tenth back to you."

In our next chapter we will continue to learn the lessons that God teaches Jacob, the thief, that he might become Israel, the prince of God's house. May God be with us until then.

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# THE SERVANT IN PADAN-ARAM

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**(Genesis 29:1-31:55)**

## Introduction

In this chapter of our study of Old Testament history, we will continue our study of the life of Jacob. We have already seen Jacob, the supplanter, at home as he deceived his brother out of both of his birthright, the double portion of his father's inheritance, and of the blessing, the one who is to be the head of the house and the one through whom the seed is to be traced. It cost Jacob more than the money he spent and more than the lies he told. It cost him twenty plus years spent away from home and away from the parents that he loves. We saw Jacob at Bethel with God showing him the vision of the ladder with angels descending, which symbolized how God will now speak directly to him, and angels ascending on the ladder, which symbolized how God will listen to the needs, prayers, concerns and pleas of Jacob. Now Jacob is on his way to Padan-Aram. The purpose of his journey is to escape Esau's wrath, but it is also for him to find a wife from among his mother's people. So, after studying "the supplanter" at home, let us study "the servant" as he arrives at Padan-Aram. Here he will learn what it is to serve someone who has basically the same tricky and crooked character as he has.

## Jacob In Padan-Aram

### **Jacob's Meeting With Rachel**

In Genesis 29:1-8 we read of his arrival at Padan-Aram.

*Then Jacob continued on his journey and came to the land of the eastern peoples. There he saw a well in the field, with three flocks of sheep lying near it because the flocks were watered from that well. The stone over the mouth of the well was large. When all the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would roll the stone away from the well's mouth and water the sheep. Then they would return the stone to its place over the mouth of the well. Jacob asked the shepherds, 'My brothers, where are you from?' 'We're from Haran,' they replied. He said to them, 'Do you know Laban, Nahor's grandson?' 'Yes, we know him,' they answered. Then Jacob asked them, 'Is he well?' 'Yes, he is,' they said, 'and here comes his daughter Rachel with the sheep.' 'Look,' he said, 'the sun is still high; it is not time for the flocks to be gathered. Water the sheep and take them back to pasture.' 'We can't,' they replied, 'until all the flocks are gathered and the stone has been rolled away from the mouth of the well. Then we will water the sheep.'*

Now we are introduced to Rachel who is obviously a hard working woman.

*While he was still talking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess. When Jacob saw Rachel daughter of Laban, his mother's brother, and Laban's sheep, he went over and rolled the stone away from the mouth of the well and watered his uncle's sheep. Then Jacob kissed Rachel (a greeting of kinsman, not a kiss of sexual love) and began to weep aloud. He had told Rachel that he was a relative of her father and a son of Rebekah. So she ran and told her father. As soon as Laban heard the news about Jacob, his sister's son, he hurried to meet him. He embraced him and kissed him and brought*



*him to his home, and there Jacob told him all these things. Then Laban said to him, 'You are my own flesh and blood' (Genesis 29:9-14).*

## Jacob's Double Marriage

Jacob spends his entire first month in Padan-Aram before he has his first conversation with Laban. And that conversation tells us that Laban had no intention of letting Jacob work for free. Genesis 29:15 states,

*After Jacob had stayed with him for a whole month, Laban said to him, 'Just because you are a relative of mine, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be.'*

Obviously, Jacob has been working for no wage, but work is not all that is on Jacob's mind. He has come to this land to find a wife among these people. Continuing our reading in Genesis 29:16-17,

*Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel was lovely in form, and beautiful. . .*

That word "but" would mean there was something about those weak eyes that made Leah unattractive. Leah was an unattractive person, physically, but Rachel was lovely in form and beautiful in face. Jacob is in love with Rachel. He is acting like a man of the world. He doesn't see below the surface. He only sees the surface of Rachel. So we read in Genesis 29:18, "*Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, 'I'll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel.'*"

We must remember that Jacob did not leave Beersheba with Isaac's possessions. They are still in Isaac's control

because Isaac is still alive. Jacob has no money, so he has nothing to pay as a dowry for this girl. So in order to pay the dowry, he says that he will give seven years of his life for Rachel. Laban says,

‘. . . It’s better that I give her to you than to some other man. Stay here with me.’ So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her. (Genesis 29:20).

In Genesis 29:21, we read that the seven years is over. Jacob has rightly earned Rachel to be his wife. So we read in Genesis 29:21-22,

*Then Jacob said to Laban, ‘Give me my wife. My time is completed, and I want to lie with her.’ So Laban brought together all the people of the place and gave a feast.*

In those days, when they gave a feast they did more than eat, they also drank. The wine flows freely and at the end of the day, Jacob doesn’t see much better than Isaac did, and Isaac was blind. What happens next turns out to be quite a surprise for Jacob.

*But when evening came, he took his daughter Leah (the one who wasn’t that attractive) and gave her to Jacob, and Jacob lay with her. And Laban gave his servant girl Zilpah to his daughter as her maidservant. When morning came, there was Leah! (Notice that exclamation point.) So Jacob said to Laban, ‘What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn’t I? Why have you deceived me?’ (Genesis 29:23-25)*

If Esau would have been there, he would have been laughing. The deceiver is now deceived. Jacob is meeting his match in his mother's brother, Laban. Laban replied, in 29:26-27,

*‘ . . . It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one. Finish this daughter's bridal week; then we will give you the younger one also, in return for another seven years of work. ’*

Jacob is going to have to spend 14 years for two daughters, and Laban is rid of his least attractive. However, because of his love for Rachel, he serves the time. *“And Jacob did so. He finished the week with Leah, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife.”* (Genesis 29:28) Laban trusts Jacob to serve the additional seven years. What is Jacob going to do otherwise? He already served seven years and got Leah. Now he gets Rachel and will serve another seven years for her. Genesis 29:29-30 tells us that Laban follows up on his word.

*Laban gave his servant girl Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maidservant. Jacob lay with Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah. And he worked for Laban another seven years.*

## Jacob's Twelve Sons

Fourteen years for two wives, one he wanted and one he got. Now, he loves Rachel more than he loves Leah, just as Rebekah had loved Jacob more than Esau. Jacob needs a lesson doesn't he? God is going to teach Jacob that he needs to love and that he should not be prejudiced in his love. But Genesis 29:31 tells us that Jacob was prejudiced in his love. *“When the LORD saw that Leah was not loved . . .”* (Genesis 29:31a) That is not literally the way it was. The Bible uses this phrase over and over again to mean “not loved as much.” As a matter of

fact, God says in the book of Malachi, *“Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated”* (Malachi 1:3). This means that God loved Esau, but He loved Jacob more. When God saw Jacob’s lack of love for Leah, *“... he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son.”* (Genesis 29:31b)

A father takes great pride in his sons, and God is trying to get Jacob to take pride in Leah because Leah is going to bear half of Jacob's children and Rachel only two. Genesis 29:32 says, *“Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben (which literally means “the Lord has seen,” or “see a son,” or “see in my misery”), for she said, ‘It is because the LORD has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now.’”* The key word is “see.” Leah seems to be saying to Jacob, “See who is bearing you the son? You may love Rachel more than you love me, but who’s bearing you a son?” She may be talking to Rachel too. Leah could be saying, “See, you may think that you have the love of my husband more than I, but look at who’s bearing the son.”

Leah is not finished giving Jacob sons.

*She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, ‘Because the LORD heard that I am not loved, he gave me this one too.’ So she named him Simeon (which literally means “The LORD has heard” [Genesis 29:33]).*

This again is a word to Jacob and Rachel. Who is the Lord hearing? Who is the Lord blessing? Leah is making it known to Jacob and Rachel that it is she who is blessed by God, not Rachel.

Leah is still not finished.

*Again she conceived, and when she gave birth to a son she said, ‘Now at last my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.’*

*So he was named Levi* (which means “joined,” the idea being that he is “joined unto me”) (Genesis 29:34).

There is a story being told in the name of this son, “Jehovah has heard my prayer. My husband will be joined unto me.” But is Jacob now joined to Leah? Genesis 29:35 says, “*She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, ‘This time I will praise the LORD.’ So she named him Judah* (which means “praise the Lord”).” Jacob is in Leah’s tent more than he is in Rachel’s tent because Leah has borne for him four sons. But then Leah stops her childbearing. Genesis 29:35b states, “*Then she stopped having children.*”

Genesis 30:1-6 tells that Rachel is very much aware that she can’t have, or isn’t having, any children. What is she going to do to get the love of her husband back? We read,

*When Rachel saw that she was not bearing Jacob any children, she became jealous of her sister. So she said to Jacob, ‘Give me children, or I’ll die!’ Jacob became angry with her and said, ‘Am I in the place of God, who has kept you from having children?’ Then she said, ‘Here is Bilhah, my maidservant. Sleep with her so that she can bear children for me and that through her I too can build a family.’ So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife. Jacob slept with her, and she became pregnant and bore him a son. Then Rachel said, ‘God has vindicated me; he has listened to my plea and given me a son.’ Because of this she named him Dan (which means “judgement” or “he judged”).*

Rachel believed that this was a judgement from God that made Jacob become her lover again.

In Genesis 30:7 we read,

*Rachel’s servant Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. Then Rachel said, ‘I have had a*

*great struggle with my sister, and I have won.’ So she named him Naphtali (which means “wrestled and won”).*

Jacob is back in Rachel’s tent. He was in Rachel’s tent, then in Leah’s tent, and now he’s back in Rachel’s tent. He’s like a ping pong ball. He is being used by his two wives who are striving for supremacy one over the other. The tricker is being tricked. The deceiver is being deceived.

None of this is going unnoticed by Leah, and as it turns out she also has a maidservant who can bear children. In Genesis 30:9-11 we read, *“When Leah saw that she had stopped having children, she took her maidservant Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife.”* She saw that what Rachel was doing worked, so she did it too. What worked for one sister will work for the other. *“Leah’s servant Zilpah bore Jacob a son. Then Leah said, ‘What good fortune!’ So she named him Gad (which means “fortunate,” or “good fortune”).”*

Zilpah conceives again as we read in Genesis 30:12-13: *“Leah’s servant Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. Then Leah said, ‘How happy I am! The women will call me happy.’ So she named him Asher (which means “happy am I”).”* Evidently Jacob is back in Leah’s tent. Jacob is learning his lesson. He’s being treated even worse than he treated Esau.

Reuben, who is the oldest, now enters the picture in Genesis 30:14,

*During wheat harvest, Reuben went out into the fields and found some mandrake plants, which he brought to his mother Leah. Rachel said to Leah, ‘Please give me some of your son’s mandrakes.’*

It is not known for certain just what these mandrakes were. They were a plant that were believed to have sexual potency and to restore the ability to have children. *“But she said to her,*

*'Wasn't it enough that you took away my husband? Will you take my son's mandrakes too?'*" (Genesis 30:15a)

Just a short time ago we left Jacob in Leah's tent, but between then and now, he's back in Rachel's tent. Anytime that Leah or Zilpah are not bearing him children he's back in Rachel's tent. So he is back at the place where he should not be. *"'Very well,' Rachel said, 'he can sleep with you tonight in return for your son's mandrakes'"* (Genesis 30:15b).

Rachel is trying to find a way to become fertile, so she agrees to Leah's request to have Jacob. Jacob doesn't seem to have much to say about all of this, does he? He is just going where his wives tell him to go. Therefore, in Genesis 30:16 we read, *"So when Jacob came in from the fields that evening, Leah went out to meet him. 'You must sleep with me,' she said. 'I have hired you with my son's mandrakes.'"* It is as if he has become a male prostitute. He has been hired with these mandrakes to sleep in his wife's tent. So what does he do? *"So he slept with her that night."*

It is obvious that God knows what is going on here and approves. Genesis 30:17 tells us, *"God listened to Leah and she became pregnant and bore Jacob a fifth son."* She has been praying that she wanted other children, and now she has her fifth son. That is nine children all together for Jacob, but this is a fifth son that she has borne him. Now Leah must name the child. Genesis 30:18 says, *"Then Leah said, 'God has rewarded me for giving my maidservant to my husband.' So she named him Issachar (which means "my hire")."* Leah hired Jacob to come to her tent with her son's mandrakes, so she calls this boy Issachar, which means "my hire."

Leah will show that she is still able to have children. Genesis 30:19 says, *"Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son."* She has born half of the sons and the only daughter that Jacob has. Leah is grateful for this.

*Then Leah said, 'God has presented me with a precious gift. This time my husband will treat me with*

*honor, because I have borne him six sons.’ So she named him Zebulun (which means “he dwells”).*

“My husband will now dwell with me,” she thought, and evidently he did for a long time because he realized that she was truly the one who was blessed of God. She has been blessed to bear six children. It says in Genesis 30:21, *“Some time later she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah.”* Dinah is the feminine for Dan so it also means “judgement.” Dinah has no significance in the family as far as continuing the family tree or the family wealth, but she is the only daughter and will be discussed again when the family returns to the land.

Ten children are now born, and Rachel is still barren. During this entire time she has been praying that she would have a child. She finally has her prayer answered in Genesis 30:22-24,

*Then God remembered Rachel; he listened to her and opened her womb. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son and said, ‘God has taken away my disgrace.’ She named him Joseph (which means “add to me”), and said, ‘May the LORD add to me another son.’*

Every time she calls his name it will be a prayer, “give me another.” That makes twelve children. There will be twelve sons, and Rachel will die bearing the twelfth one just outside of promised land.

Jacob is now ready to go home. He has learned his lesson. We are going to find out that he is through with the trickery that has got him so far down the line. He has been outfoxed by Laban and by his two wives. God has also blessed Laban because of Jacob. Laban’s flocks have multiplied exceedingly because the person whom God made the covenant with is there. God had made a covenant with Abraham that He would bless him and his sons and their sons also. God had promised that He



would bless all of the nations that came from Abraham and since Jacob, the covenant one, is in the house of Laban, God is blessing Laban's household. His flocks are increasing greatly.

### **Jacob Departs Padan-Aram**

Jacob now says to Laban in Genesis 30:25-26,

*After Rachel gave birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, 'Send me on my way so that I can go back to my own homeland. Give me my wives and children, for whom I have served you, and I will be on my way. You know how much work I've done for you.'*

Laban doesn't want that to happen, so in Genesis 30:27-33 we read,

*But Laban said to him, 'If I have found favor in your eyes, please stay. I have learned by divination that the LORD has blessed me because of you.' He added, 'Name your wages, and I will pay them.' Jacob said to him, 'You know how I have worked for you and how your livestock has fared under my care. The little you had before I came has increased greatly, and the LORD has blessed you wherever I have been. But now, when may I do something for my own household?' 'What shall I give you?' he asked. 'Don't give me anything,' Jacob replied. 'But if you will do this one thing for me, I will go on tending your flocks and watching over them: Let me go through all your flocks today and remove from them every speckled or spotted sheep, every dark-colored lamb and every spotted or speckled goat. That will be my wages. And my honesty will testify for me in the future, whenever you check on the wages you have paid me. Any goat in my possession that is not speckled or spotted, or any lamb that is not dark-colored, will be considered stolen.'*

Normally, these kind of sheep and goats are in the great minority. But God has given Jacob a dream, and in that dream he saw Laban's flock bearing dark colored, speckled and spotted goats and lambs. So he knows he is going to inherit the majority of the flocks if he does this. God has even told him they will be the stronger of the flock. Now if Jacob is superstitious, then it isn't from God. He takes some rods and peels them. He then puts stripes on the rods. Whenever the strong of the flock came, he would show them the rods and put them over on his side. Whenever the weak ones of the flock came, he wouldn't show them the rod and he would put them over on Laban's side. That way he got the majority of the good flock by putting the strong over on his side. The idea of the rod is just Jacob's superstition. God had already determined that most of the flock would bear ring-streaked, speckled, spotted and dark sheep and lambs. In this way Jacob gets not only the majority of Laban's flock, but he gets the strongest of Laban's flock. The results of this are seen in Genesis 30:43b: *"In this way the man grew exceedingly prosperous and came to own large flocks, and maidservants and menservants, and camels and donkeys."* Just as Isaac had become rich in the land, now Jacob has become rich in the land. He will inherit two-thirds of all that Isaac has and all that he has gotten in his twenty years of labor in Laban's household.

### **Jacob's Return To Canaan**

In Genesis 31 we read of Jacob fleeing from Laban in order to return to Canaan. Now that he has bargained with Laban, he is told by God that he must return home. In Genesis 31:3-7 we read,

*Then the LORD said to Jacob, 'Go back to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you.' So Jacob sent word to Rachel and Leah to come out to the fields where his flocks were. He said to them, 'I see that your father's attitude toward me is*

*not what it was before, but the God of my father has been with me. You know that I've worked for your father with all my strength, yet your father has cheated me by changing my wages ten times. However, God has not allowed him to harm me.'*

Jacob has made the decision that he is leaving. But when he gets ready to leave, Rachel does an unusual thing as we see in Genesis 31:19-21,

*When Laban had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole her father's household gods. Moreover, Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean by not telling him he was running away. So he fled with all he had, and crossing the River, he headed for the hill country of Gilead.*

Why does Rachel steal the household gods? It isn't only because she's probably an idolater, but the person holding the gods is proof as being the head of the house. She wants Jacob not only to be the head of Jacob's house but also the head of Laban's house. But Laban pursues Jacob. He's interested in kissing his daughters and his grandchildren, but he is also interested in getting the household gods back. He tells Jacob that he stole his gods, a charge that Jacob aggressively denies. He even tells Laban to search the camp and anybody who has those gods will be killed. Jacob doesn't know that Rachel has stolen them. Laban searches all of the tents and finally comes to Rachel's tent. Rachel has put the idols underneath the camel saddle, and she's sitting on the saddle with her dress draped over it. She says, "Excuse me father, for not getting up, but the manner of women is with me, and I cannot get up." He searches the entire tent but doesn't get the chance to look at the only place where the gods are. This leads Jacob to chide Laban. He claims that Laban came out here to spy on him. Jacob says that he is going back home and that he doesn't have Laban's household gods.

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Laban goes home, and Jacob heads for home. He is bringing idolatry to the promised land. That will have to be taken care of, but the point is that he left Haran a person that got what he got by thievery and lying. In his uncle's house, where he got two wives and thirteen children, he learned what it was to be lied to and what it was to be cheated. Now he is ready to be the man of God. He was the supplanter at home. He was the servant in Padan-Aram. What will he become as he goes back to promised land? He is going to be the saint living in Hebron. He goes from supplanter to servant to saint. That is Jacob's journey. One last lesson from Jacob's experience is that God can be trusted. All of the lying, the arguments, controversies and contests between his wives, his children, his father-in-law and himself still show that God is in control. He is preparing Jacob to become Israel and the prince of God.

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# THE SAINT IN HEBRON

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**(Genesis 31:1-35:29)**

## **Introduction**

In this chapter in our study of Old Testament history we are still in the book of Genesis studying the life of Jacob. To begin with, we need to be reminded of the peculiar nature of the book of Genesis, particularly in the way that it marks off its divisions. At one point it will say, “These are the generations of,” or “This is the account of,” and it names a particular person. As it does so, his son or one of his son’s will be the primary character in that division. We read earlier, “This is the account of Terah,” and Abraham, his son, was the primary person in that period of history. Now we are studying “This is the account of Isaac,” and Jacob, his son, is the primary person in this time. Later, we will read, “This is the generation of Jacob,” or “This is the account of Jacob,” and Joseph, his son, will be the primary person in the story.

We are in the generation of Isaac, and Jacob is the main character. We have studied two things in Jacob’s life so far. We have seen Jacob as the supplanter. He is living up to his name. Jacob means “one who supplants,” or “one who takes the place of another,” and he is not too good of character at the beginning of his life as he steals his brother’s birthright and blessing. Now it is God’s will that Jacob have these two things, but it is not God’s will that Jacob steal them. So Jacob has to leave home for twenty years because of his stealing, deception and crookedness. He serves his uncle Laban, who is his mother’s brother, for twenty years, and he is really an equal to Jacob. He tricks Jacob by getting Jacob to work for seven years to get

Rachel, but instead he gets Leah. He then gets Rachel but has to work another seven years. Then he has to work six years for his portion of his father-in-law's flocks. So he serves Laban for twenty years and makes Laban a rich man. Jacob then leaves with a good portion of Laban's flocks, his two daughters, eleven grandsons and one granddaughter.

We are not going to study the servant as he serves his father-in-law in Padan-Aram. He has been a supplanter, and he's been a servant, but now he is going back to be head of the house. He is going back to be the spiritual leader of the seed of Abraham, the one who is going to possess all of the promised land, bruise the devil's head and bless all mankind. Jacob cannot do that as a supplanter. He can't really do that as a servant to his father-in-law, so the third part of Jacob's life is him becoming the saint, the holy one, the separated one, and the chosen one from God.

## The Saint In Hebron

### **From Haran to Hebron—From Jacob to Israel**

Since Jacob lives in Hebron, he is called the "saint at Hebron." In this particular chapter we are going to see the supplanter become the prince of God. We are going to see the crook become the saint. In Genesis 32:1-2 we read,

*Jacob also went on his way, and the angels of God met him. When Jacob saw them, he said, 'This is the camp of God!' So he named that place Mahanaim (which simply means "two camps").*

In this case it is his camp and God's camp. God is indicating to Jacob again that He is with him in this journey. Laban has come and kissed his children goodbye, searched for the household gods, but not finding them, for Rachel had hid them, he has left to go back to Padan-Aram. Jacob, on the other hand, is going

back to God's land, the promised land, and God wants him to know he is not alone. Not only does he have the camp of all of his house, but God sends angels to be with Jacob so that he will know that God is going with him.

However, Jacob knows that he is going to have to meet Esau while on this journey home. Twenty years ago Esau pledged to kill Jacob, and Jacob is still aware of Esau's profane character. Therefore, he will perhaps still be angry enough to kill Jacob. In order to head off any trouble, we read in Genesis 32:3-6,

*Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. He instructed them: 'This is what you are to say to my master Esau: "Your servant Jacob says, I have been staying with Laban and have remained there till now. I have cattle and donkeys, sheep and goats, menservants and maidservants. Now I am sending this message to my lord, that I may find favor in your eyes."' When the messengers returned to Jacob, they said, 'We went to your brother Esau, and now he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him.'*

This doesn't sound much like a brotherly greeting. It appears to Jacob that Esau still intends to kill him because he's coming out with a small army to meet him. Jacob's reaction is understandable. In Genesis 32:7-8 we read,

*In great fear and distress Jacob divided the people who were with him into two groups, and the flocks and herds and camels as well. He thought, 'If Esau comes and attacks one group, the group that is left may escape.'*

Jacob is prepared to meet Esau. He tried in his own way to get Esau to come and meet him personally, but Esau may be a little concerned about this tricky brother. Perhaps Jacob is trying to get him out into the desert to kill him. So he comes with protection, four hundred men. Jacob now does what he should have done to start with. In Genesis 32:9-12 it says,

*Then Jacob prayed, 'O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, O LORD, who said to me, "Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper," I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two groups. Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children. But you have said, "I will surely make you prosper and will make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted."'*

Jacob prays that he wants God to remember that He is in covenant with him and also that He will prosper him, help him and protect him. In Genesis 32:13-19 we read,

*He spent the night there, and from what he had with him he selected a gift for his brother Esau: two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty female camels with their young, forty cows and ten bulls, and twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. He put them in the care of his servants, each herd by itself, and said to his servants, 'Go ahead of me, and keep some space between the herds.' He instructed the one in the lead: 'When my brother Esau meets you and asks, "To whom do you belong, and where are you going, and*



*who owns all these animals in front of you?" then you are to say, "They belong to your servant Jacob. They are a gift sent to my lord Esau, and he is coming behind us." He also instructed the second, the third and all the others who followed the herds: 'You are to say the same thing to Esau when you meet him.'*

Jacob's servants do as they are told as we read in Genesis 32:21: *"So Jacob's gifts went on ahead of him, but he himself spent the night in the camp."* He is still getting ready to meet Esau, and he's afraid. He's distressed. He not only prays to God but he sends bribes and gifts ahead of him.

## Jacob Wrestles With God

That night Jacob is going to learn where the power is. In Genesis 32:22-31 we have the lesson of him wrestling with a man that later he believes to be God. This event is going to result in a momentous life change for Jacob. The text reads, *"That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two maidservants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok."* The Jabbok is a little river that flows east out of the Jordan, a little over half way between the sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea.

*After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. So Jacob was left alone and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, 'Let me go, for it is daybreak.' But Jacob replied, 'I will not let you go unless you bless me.' The man asked him, 'What is your name?' 'Jacob,' he answered. Then the man said, 'Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel (one who has power with God) because you*

*have struggled with God and with men and have overcome' (Genesis 32:22-28).*

We notice that there has been a name change because there has been a character change. A proud, young crook left the promised land, but now a mature and righteous man has come back. But Jacob has a question on his mind.

*Jacob said, 'Please tell me your name.' But he replied, 'Why do you ask my name?' Then he blessed him there. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, 'It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.'*

In theological terms this is what is called a theophany which means "God in a human form." God has come down and as a man has wrestled with Jacob all night long. Now the day has come and we read in Genesis 32:31,

*The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip. Therefore to this day, the Israelites do not eat the tendon attached to the socket of the hip because the socket of Jacob's hip was touched near the tendon.*

In Jacob's day, in Moses' day, and even today, the tendon of the hip socket of an animal is not kosher and cannot be eaten. It is to remind the nation of Israel that God is Jehovah. He is the one who is to be honored.

But now it is time for Jacob to meet Esau. For the first time in twenty years the two brothers are back together. Genesis 33:1-3,

*Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men; so he divided the children among Leah, Rachel and the two maidservants. He put the*

*maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph in the rear. (That was the order in which he loved these people.) He himself went on ahead bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother.*

Note Jacob's humility and changed character. This time he is not trying to gain something from Esau, but he is trying to be acceptable to him. In Genesis 33:4 we see what effect the years have had on Esau. The years that Jacob have been away from Esau have turned the dagger in Esau's hand to a kiss from Esau's lips. "*But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept.*" Here is reconciliation. Esau knows that he is as much to blame for what happened to him as Jacob is. His profane nature and Jacob's crooked nature worked together to get the will of God done. Jacob has the blessing of Abraham, and he has the birthright of Abraham.

Now it time for Jacob's family to honor Esau.

*Then Esau looked up and saw the women and children. 'Who are these with you?' he asked. Jacob answered, 'They are the children God has graciously given your servant.'*

Notice again Jacob's humility. He is even honoring God.

*Then the maidservants and their children approached and bowed down. Next, Leah and her children came and bowed down. Last of all came Joseph and Rachel, and they too bowed down (Genesis 33:5-7).*

This is all recorded for us to understand that the promise that was there when these two boys were in the womb, that the elder would serve the younger, definitely spoke not of the two boys, but of the two nations.

Esau now wants to know why Jacob sent all of the animals before he arrived.

*Esau asked, 'What do you mean by all these droves I met?' 'To find favor in your eyes, my lord,' he said. But Esau said, 'I already have plenty, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself.' 'No, please!' said Jacob. 'If I have found favor in your eyes, accept this gift from me. For to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably. Please accept the present that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me and I have all I need.' And because Jacob insisted, Esau accepted it (Genesis 33:8-11).*

When God wrestled with Jacob He was getting him ready for this day so that he could look upon his brother not as someone to trick, to deceive or to rob, but as if he were God Himself. Esau accepts the gift because he knows that it is truly a gift and not a bribe. In return, Esau offers to stay with Jacob for the remainder of the journey.

*Then Esau said, 'Let us be on our way; I'll accompany you.' But Jacob said to him, 'My lord knows that the children are tender and that I must care for the ewes and cows that are nursing their young. If they are driven hard just one day, all the animals will die. So let my lord go on ahead of his servant, while I move along slowly at the pace of the droves before me and that of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir.' Esau said, 'Then let me leave some of my men with you.' 'But why do that?' Jacob asked. 'Just let me find favor in the eyes of my lord.' So that day Esau started on his way back to Seir. Jacob, however, went to Succoth, where he built a place for himself and made*

*shelters for his livestock. That is why the place is called Succoth (Genesis 33:12-17).*

### **Jacob At Shechem**

In Genesis 33:18 we read that Jacob settles in Shechem. Before we read that, however, we need to remember what has happened to Jacob so far. He has left his father-in-law behind, but he has learned that God is with him and that there are angels watching over him as well. He has learned that he is the prince of God. He has power from God as his name is changed from Jacob to Israel. He has humbled himself before Esau who earlier he had deceived, defrauded and robbed. The two brothers have been reconciled, and now Jacob is going to be settling again in the promised land. That brings us to Genesis 33:18-20 where we read,

*After Jacob came from Paddan Aram, he arrived safely at the city of Shechem in Canaan and camped within sight of the city. For a hundred pieces of silver, he bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, the plot of ground where he pitched his tent. There he set up an altar and called it El Elohe Israel.*

This is the first time that we read in Genesis that Jacob pitched an altar. Abraham always did it as soon as he arrived at a new location. Jacob has now become Israel, the son of Abraham, so he pitches an altar and calls it “*El Elohe Israel*” which means “the mighty one,” the mighty God of Israel.

The Shechemites had a man there named Shechem, the son of Hamor, the Hivite, and he looked at Dinah, the daughter of Jacob and he loved her, or he liked her. The text says in Genesis 34:2-4,

*When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, the ruler of that area, saw her, he took her and violated her. His heart was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob, and he*

*loved the girl and spoke tenderly to her. And Shechem said to his father Hamor, 'Get me this girl as my wife.'*

Shechem has done a foul and evil deed. There is no doubt about that, but he did it out of love and not lust. It was not just a sexual thing; he wanted this lady to be his wife. Jacob hears that his daughter has been defiled, and he keeps it to himself until his sons come in from the field, and he tells them. The father of Shechem, Hamor, comes and says, "*But Hamor said to them, 'My son Shechem has his heart set on your daughter. Please give her to him as his wife.'*" (Genesis 34:8) He was saying, "Let him have her as his wife, and I will give you anything you ask for a bridal gift. All of this land that is before you can be yours. I want my son to marry your daughter." We aren't told what Jacob thought, but we do know what his sons thought. His sons were still incensed that their sister had been violated, so, acting deceitfully they say to Hamor,

*They said to them, 'We can't do such a thing; we can't give our sister to a man who is not circumcised. That would be a disgrace to us. We will give our consent to you on one condition only: that you become like us by circumcising all your males' (Genesis 34:14-15).*

Jacob's sons demand that all of the males of the land, not just Shechem the son of Hamor, but all of the males of the land be circumcised. Only then can Dinah become Shechem's wife. As we will see shortly, the sons have no intention of honoring that agreement at all. But it seems good to the people, so all of the males of the land are circumcised. On the third day, while the men are still sore and weak, Simeon and Levi, two of Jacob's sons, take their swords, and attack the city, killing every single male in the city and country. They take their wives and daughters as slaves. They take their flocks and their herds for Dinah being defiled. When Jacob hears of this, he is terribly angry. He calls his two sons in and says,

*. . .you have brought trouble on me by making me a stench to the Canaanites and Perizzites, the people living in this land. We are few in number, and if they join forces against me and attack me, I and my household will be destroyed. (Genesis 34:30).*

But the brothers are not having any of that. They say in Genesis 34:31, “. . .*Should he have treated our sister like a prostitute?*”

The answer to that question is “No,” but the question is, “Had Shechem treated Dinah like a prostitute?” There is no justifying what Shechem did, because what he did was a foul and terrible deed, but he did not treat her like a prostitute. He did not just walk away and leave her bleeding. He did not put some money down in front of her and walk away. He had pledged himself. He had pleaded for her to be his wife. Of course, he had done wrong, but he wanted to do the best he could with the wrong he had done, and he deeply loved this girl.

In Genesis 35, Jacob returns to Bethel which is where he got the vision of the angels ascending and descending on a ladder. When he got that vision from God, he had told God that if God would be with him, he would come back here and pay a tithe. Jacob does exactly that in Genesis 35:1-7. He does what he promised he would do.

On the way back to Hebron from Bethel, Rachel is giving birth to a child. She is in terrible pain and about to die as the child is being born. The maid who is there says, “*Don’t be afraid, for you have another son*” (Genesis 35:17b). Rachel had called her first son Joseph but had pleaded for another son. But as she is giving birth she’s dying, and so she names the son Benoni which means the “son of my sorrow.” Jacob will have none of that so he says call his name, Benjamin which means the “son of my right

hand.” On his right hand is where Rachel had always walked, and he wants this son to walk where his mother had walked.

There were eleven sons born outside of the promised land and one child born in the promised land. Rachel dies and is buried, and to this day, as Moses writes this book, the place of her burial is known. But another interesting thing occurs in chapter 35. In Genesis 35:22 Reuben commits adultery with his father’s concubine, Bilhah and Israel (Jacob) heard of it. Why is that mentioned? Later, in Genesis 49 we will find out why this is discussed. Jacob will remember that Reuben did this when he is blessing his sons, and therefore, Reuben receives an unfavorable blessing.

Jacob is now living in Hebron. His twelve sons are listed in Genesis 35:23-26, and in 35:27-29 the death of Isaac is recorded.

*Jacob came home to his father Isaac in Mamre, near Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had stayed. Isaac lived a hundred and eighty years. Then he breathed his last and died and was gathered to his people, old and full of years. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.*

Jacob was born when Isaac was sixty years old. That means that Jacob is now 120 years old, and that is where Genesis 35 ends. Genesis 36 outlines Esau’s descendants. This really has no bearing on our study with the exception of a significant statement in verse 43: *“This was Esau the father of the Edomites.”*

Jacob had lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan. Jacob occupies Canaan, and just south of it is the country of Edom which is the territory that Esau occupies.



There is one more incident in Jacob's life, but that will be all the way over in Genesis chapters 46 through 50. What happens then between chapter 36 and chapter 46? We read of that in Genesis 37:2, "*This is the account of Jacob.*" We are about to enter into a study of one of Jacob's sons, Joseph, a study that will take us through our next four chapters. When Jacob goes to Egypt, years later, we will find that Jacob is there to stand before Pharaoh and bless him. He is there to stand before the two sons of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, and bless them. He is also there to stand before his twelve sons and bless them and to stand before Jehovah and be blessed by God at the end of his life. This is a beautiful story to read and think about. This is the story of Jacob, the one who started out as the deceiver, but became the one who is the humble and blessed servant of God. The lesson we can learn here is that in our lives, no matter how we start out, no matter what wickedness or deception we practice at the beginning of our life, we need to find our day with God and wrestle with Him until our name is changed to Israel, the one who is striving and has power with God. May you and I find that power today.

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# THE ACCOUNT OF JOSEPH (1)

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## (Genesis 37-39)

### Introduction

Continuing our study of Old Testament history, we are beginning a study of one of the most interesting people in the book of Genesis. Joseph, in many ways, is even more interesting than Abraham, Isaac or Jacob. Joseph is a hero. He is a star; but like most men of God he doesn't start out that way. It takes a while for God to mold a man into what he ought to be. Abram had to undergo some experiences before God changed his name and he became Abraham. Jacob had to go through a lot of difficulties and trials in order to be named Israel. And for Joseph to be the preserver of his people, he must also undergo some very serious trials.

### Joseph—The Princely Son

#### The Pre-eminent Son of Jacob

We are going to divide Joseph's life into sections, just as we did Jacob's. The first part of Joseph's life will be called the "Princely Son," since in his father's house, he is the prince among his brothers. This section of Joseph's life is found in Genesis 37:2, which says, "*This is the account of Jacob*" or as other versions read,

*These are the generations of Jacob. "Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his*

*father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them.*

The sons of Leah are not involved in this. Although we aren't told just what they are doing in the business that caused a bad report about them, they apparently aren't tending the flock properly.

Joseph does what we call tattling, and it doesn't make him popular at all. This is reason number one why his brothers are going to hate him. But there is another reason as we see in Genesis 37:3,

*Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a richly ornamented robe for him.*

Some versions read "*a coat of many colors*" which is fine, but the idea is that it is a special coat. It's a coat that no one else has. It's one-of-a-kind, exclusive.

As can well be imagined, this does not sit well with Joseph's brothers. "*When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.*" (Genesis 37:4) They take out on Joseph the fact that Jacob is showing favoritism. Jacob is prejudiced, yet the main reason why Joseph's brothers hate him is his pride. It would be hard not to be proud, though, would it not? The pride is exhibited when Joseph has a dream. He can't help having a dream because it's from God, but Joseph tells it to his brothers. He didn't have to do that. He could have kept it to himself. Why is he telling this dream to his brothers? Genesis 37:5-7 tells us why.

*Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said to them, 'Listen to this dream I had: We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose*

*and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it.'*

Joseph is saying here that not only is he Jacob's favorite but he is also favored by God, and that makes him superior to his brothers.

The brothers' reaction is quite understandable.

*His brothers said to him, 'Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?' And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said (Genesis 37:8).*

God wants Joseph to know that he was going to be pre-eminent, or He wouldn't have given him the dream, but He didn't want Joseph to tell it to the brothers. This was Joseph's pride in action.

Then Joseph has another dream, and what is the first thing he does?

*Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. 'Listen,' he said, 'I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.' When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, 'What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?' His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind (Genesis 37:9-11).*

Why would Jacob keep this matter in mind? Could it be that Jacob also had dreams? Of course he had. At Bethel and Padan-Aram he had dreams. Had they all come to pass? Every single dream that God gave Jacob had come to pass. So Jacob knows that God gives dreams, and Jacob knows that God follows up on what the dream was about.

Regardless, Joseph is hated. Why? **Number one**, he told. **Number two**, he was loved more than the others. **Number three**, he was proud. What does pride go before? “*Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.*” (Proverbs 16:18) Joseph is on his way to a fall. He is going to be sold into slavery by his own brothers. The scene is set.

*Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem, and Israel said to Joseph, 'As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them.' 'Very well,' he replied. So he said to him, 'Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, and bring word back to me.' Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron (Genesis 37:12-14a).*

Joseph is not out with his brothers keeping the flock, and it is important for this story for him not to be there.

*When Joseph arrived at Shechem, a man found him wandering around in the fields and asked him, 'What are you looking for?' He replied, 'I'm looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks?' 'They have moved on from here,' the man answered. 'I heard them say, 'Let's go to Dothan' (Genesis 37:14b-17a).*

Dothan is over near the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. They had probably run out of pasture land for the flocks, so they have moved on to Dothan.

*So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan. But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him. 'Here comes that dreamer!' they said to each other. 'Come now,*

*let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams.' (One brother doesn't want that to happen.) When Reuben heard this he tried to rescue him from their hands. 'Let's not take his life,' he said. 'Don't shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the desert but don't lay a hand on him.' Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father (Genesis 37:17b-22).*

Reuben did not want to see the sorrow and mourning that would take place in Jacob's life if Joseph were to die. The brothers heed Reuben's advice in as much as they throw Joseph into a pit.

*So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the richly ornamented robe he was wearing—and they took him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it. As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt (Genesis 37:23-25).*

These traders are descended from Ishmael, the older son of Abraham and the older brother to Isaac. We see here that Ishmael's descendants have already become large enough that there's a nation called Ishmael. They will also be called Midianites in this same chapter because that is their geographical location.

One of the other brothers comes up with an idea, now that these traders are coming.

*Judah said to his brothers, 'What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let's*

*sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.’ His brothers agreed (Genesis 37:26-27).*

This kind of morality is difficult to understand. We see a morality here that will not allow Judah to kill his brother but the kind of morality that enables him to come up with the idea to sell Joseph into slavery not knowing what will happen to him at the end of that journey. But since the brothers agreed to this, the plan proceeds.

*So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt (Genesis 37:28).*

A shekel is worth a month’s wage. So over a year and a half’s wage is what they get for their brother.

*“When Reuben returned to the cistern and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes.”* He doesn’t know what all transpired while he was gone. *“He went back to his brothers and said, ‘The boy isn’t there! Where can I turn now?’” (Genesis 37:29-30)*

There is no record that they ever told Reuben what they had done, but since the act of selling Joseph to the Ishmaelites has been carried out, a new plan is devised, this one aimed at deceiving their father, Jacob.

*Then they got Joseph’s robe, slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. They took the ornamented robe back to their father and said, ‘We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son’s robe.’ He recognized it and said, ‘It is my son’s robe! Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces’ (Genesis 37:31-33).*

Isn't that tragic? Isn't it morose that here are at least ten of Jacob's sons letting their father believe this lie that Joseph is dead? Pride does go before the fall, doesn't it? And a haughty spirit goes before destruction (cf. Proverbs 16:18).

*Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. 'No,' he said, 'in mourning will I go down to the grave to my son.' So his father wept for him. Meanwhile, the Midianites sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard (Genesis 37:34-36).*

This part of the story will be picked up later in Genesis 39. But why did the brothers hate Joseph? Let's review here. They hated Joseph because he told their father about the evil they had been doing. They hated him because of the favoritism that Jacob showed him, which Joseph accepted. They hated him because of his pride that caused him to tell his dreams. That showed that he was going to be superior not only to his brothers but also to his father and his mother. What was the result of that hatred? Joseph is now sold as a slave into Egypt. Joseph must inherit the consequences of his pride. Now if you know the rest of the story, it comes out all right. God's story always does. But right now it is a tragedy. One brother is sold to Egypt into slavery; a father is tearing his clothes and mourning over the situation, and the rest of the sons are letting him do it. I would have, after a month or two, begun to feel terribly guilty and dishonorable to my father. We will pick that story up in our next chapter.

In the rest of this chapter, however, let us look at a redemptive sideline. Let us look at something that tells the story going all of the way back to Genesis 3:15. In Genesis 3:15, God said that the seed of the woman—singular seed—would bruise the devil's head. Now there are twelve families in Jacob's



family. We are going to find out in Genesis 49 that the family of Judah is going to be the one selected to be the family through whom the seed is traced. That selecting of a single person out of Judah's family will allow the rising of the one who is to defeat the devil, to bless all mankind and to carry on Abraham's seed. In Genesis 38, we read the story of Judah's family line so that we can know who the one will be to trace this seed from Adam all the way to Christ. This is also an interesting sidelight into the morality of the children or the lack of morality. Judah is maybe the best son, other than Joseph. Joseph is the best of Jacob's children, and even he has his flaws.

## The Incident of Judah and Tamar

### **The Birth of Er and His Marriage To Tamar**

Reading from Genesis 38:1-8 we see the story of Judah and Tamar.

*At that time, Judah left his brothers and went down to stay with a man of Adullam named Hirah. There Judah met the daughter of a Canaanite man named Shua. (He is marrying outside the chosen line. He is marrying a Canaanite, and it will end up influencing him.) He married her and lay with her; she became pregnant and gave birth to a son, who was named Er. She conceived again and gave birth to a son and named him Onan. She gave birth to still another son and named him Shelah. It was at Kezib that she gave birth to him. Judah got a wife for Er, his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. (Tamar becomes Judah's daughter-in-law.) But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the LORD's sight; so the LORD put him to death. (We don't know what evil Er did or how the Lord killed him, but whatever it was the Lord saw it as serious enough to put Er to death.) Then Judah said to Onan, 'Lie with your brother's wife and fulfill your*

*duty to her as a brother-in-law to produce offspring for your brother.'*

When God writes the law of Moses, this is one of the laws that He will make. It is called Levirate marriage. If I died, my brother must take my wife and conceive a son to raise up children to me. After that the children can be his but the first born of my wife is my son and carries on my line. One wicked son has died, and Judah gives his second son. The wickedness of his sons is testimony that Judah should not have married this Canaanite woman. In Genesis 38:9-10 we read,

*But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his so whenever he lay with his brother's wife, he spilled his semen on the ground to keep from producing offspring for his brother. What he did was wicked in the LORD's sight; so he put him to death also.*

Once again, how God killed Onan is not stated, but it is obvious that Onan's action of not impregnating Tamar was worthy of death. He refused to do the will of God.

### **Tamar's Scheme**

Judah now has only one more son, and after seeing what has happened to his first two sons, he begins to wonder that if he gives Shelah to Tamar, that the same fate will come upon him.

*Judah then said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, 'Live as a widow in your father's house until my son Shelah grows up.' For he thought, 'He may die too, just like his brothers.' So Tamar went to live in her father's house. After a long time Judah's wife, the daughter of Shua, died. When Judah had recovered from his grief, he went up to Timnah, to the men who were shearing his sheep, and his friend Hirah the Adullamite went*

*with him. When Tamar was told, 'Your father-in-law is on his way to Timnah to shear his sheep,' she took off her widow's clothes, covered herself with a veil to disguise herself, and then sat down at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. For she saw that, though Shelah had now grown up, she had not been given to him as his wife (Genesis 39:11-14).*

Judah was not keeping his word. He is a whole lot like his father Jacob, isn't he? He is deceiving the girl, but the tables are soon to be turned against him.

*When Judah saw her he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face. Not realizing that she was his daughter-in-law, he went over to her by the roadside and said, 'Come now, let me sleep with you.' 'And what will you give me to sleep with you?' she asked. 'I'll send you a young goat from my flock,' he said. 'Will you give me something as a pledge until you send it?' she asked. He said, 'What pledge should I give you?' 'Your seal and its cord, and the staff in your hand,' she answered. So he gave them to her and slept with her, and she became pregnant by him. After she left, she took off her veil and put on her widow's clothes again (Genesis 38:15-19).*

Neither Judah nor Tamar are the moral, upright people that you would expect God would use to bring the seed line into effect. These are the people He is using to bring His Son into the world to save all the world. God uses what He has got, but this does reflect on the moral standard of that land. Judah should still be back with his brothers in the promised land living with them. If he were with them he wouldn't be enduring such agony. He has been affected by his living among the Canaanite people to the point that he now goes to a prostitute. His daughter-in-law, being a Canaanite, is setting Judah up for the fall.

### **Tamar's Vindication**

*Meanwhile Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite in order to get his pledge back from the woman, but he did not find her. He asked the men who lived there, 'Where is the shrine-prostitute . . . '*

That is an interesting statement, but it was made because the religion in Canaan was Baal worship. Baal was the god of fertility, and so one of the rites was that they finished their worship to Baal by committing adultery or fornication with a temple prostitute, be it a male or a female.

*' . . . who was beside the road at Enaim?' 'There hasn't been any shrine-prostitute here,' they said. So he went back to Judah and said, 'I didn't find her. Besides, the men who lived there said, 'There hasn't been any shrine-prostitute here.' Then Judah said, 'Let her keep what she has, or we will become a laughing-stock. After all, I did send her this young goat, but you didn't find her.' About three months later Judah was told, 'Your daughter-in-law Tamar is guilty of prostitution, and as a result she is now pregnant.' Judah said, 'Bring her out and have her burned to death!' As she was being brought out, she sent a message to her father-in-law. 'I am pregnant by the man who owns these,' she said. And she added, 'See if you recognize whose seal and cord and staff these are.' Judah recognized them and said, 'She is more righteous than I, since I wouldn't give her to my son Shelah.' And he did not sleep with her again (Genesis 38:20-26).*

### **The Birth of Perez and Zerah**

Judah doesn't take her to be his wife, but her son is going to be in the lineage of Jesus. In Genesis 38:27, we read about the birth of the two sons.

*When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. As she was giving birth, one of them put out his hand; so the midwife took a scarlet thread and tied it on his wrist and said, 'This one came out first.' But when he drew back his hand, his brother came out, and she said, 'So this is how you have broken out!' And he was named Perez (which means "breaking out"). Then his brother, who had the scarlet thread on his wrist, came out and he was given the name Zerah (which means "scarlet" or "brightness") (Genesis 38:27-30).*

Perez is in the lineage of Christ, a lineage of Christ which is the product of an incestuous relationship between Judah and Tamar. God uses strange instruments to get His will done, doesn't He? I didn't say all of this to imply that Judah and Tamar are lost but simply to show that they are flawed. There are no perfect or spotless people in the seed line of Christ until Christ Himself is born. You and I are just like Judah and Tamar. We are here because of God's will. We are in God's covenant, and we are being used by God as the seed of the woman to carry out the will of God on earth. But you and I are flawed. Because of that we need to realize that even by doing our very best we are not what we ought to be. But God is fulfilling His promise. He said that there would be a seed and that the seed would continue until finally the one would come to destroy the devil and to bruise his head, and whatever has to happen for that to be fulfilled will be fulfilled.

That seedline is going through Judah as we will see in Genesis 49. It will not be Judah's line through Shua, his wife, but it will be Judah's line through Tamar, his daughter-in-law. But don't forget Joseph. We left Joseph in Genesis 37 after being sold into slavery in Egypt. We have seen this redemptive sidelight with Judah, but don't forget Joseph, for Joseph's story must continue in Egypt where he is no longer the princely son but the patient sufferer in Potiphar's house and eventually in Potiphar's prison. This will be the focus of our next study. God bless you until then.

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## THE ACCOUNT OF JOSEPH (2)

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### (Genesis 39-41)

#### Review and Introduction

As we continue our study of Old Testament history we are nearing the end of the book of Genesis. As was said in the last chapter, Joseph's life is one of the most, if not, the most interesting story in all of the Old Testament. We have seen the princely son. At home he was his father's pride and joy. He was his father's favorite. He curried his father's favor by telling on his brothers when they did wrong. His father indicated his prejudice and his superior love to Joseph by giving him a unique coat. It was a coat richly ornamented or a coat of many colors. Joseph manifested his pride by telling his family the dreams that God gave him, dreams which promised Joseph superiority and pre-eminence in the family. He told those dreams to his brothers and then told them to his father and mother, and the whole family was upset at him because of his prideful claim to be superior to them. So his brothers are filled with such jealousy that they sell him into Egyptian captivity. They sell him to a passing band of Ishmaelites from Midian who sell him into the house of Potiphar, who is the captain of Pharaoh's house.

#### Joseph the Patient Sufferer

##### **Joseph—God's Man In Potiphar's House**

Beginning our study in Genesis 39:1, we look at Joseph the patient sufferer. Notice something in verse one that will help us to understand why the Egyptians, who detested shepherds, are

going to make a shepherd prime minister and a shepherd nation pre-eminent within their nation. We read,

*Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there.*

Who would you expect to be captain of Egyptian guard? Wouldn't you expect it to be an Egyptian? Why do we read, "*Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard . . .*"? However, suppose the Pharaoh was not an Egyptian. There are periods in Egypt's history where they are ruled by foreign kings, and this is one of those times. We will see other indications of this as we move through our study because they will help us to date the time when Joseph was in Egypt. But Joseph is sold to the second-in-command in all of the land. The captain of the guard means the captain of the inner guard. He is the captain of the guard that is responsible for Pharaoh's safety. Pharaoh means "great house." His is the great house, and so the person who rules that great house is called "great house" (Pharaoh). But Potiphar is the second-in-command, the captain of the guard. He is an Egyptian man who is trusted completely by a non-Egyptian who sits on the throne.

What does the Lord do with Joseph in Potiphar's house? Notice Genesis 39:2, "*The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master.*" God is telling Joseph, "I'm with you. I know it was your pride that brought you here; I know it was your brothers prejudice that brought you here, but I want you to know that I came here with you. I didn't stay in the promised land." Of course, a point is made here. God is omnipresent; He is everywhere. But He said, "I didn't leave you alone. I've come with you, and I'm prospering you in Potiphar's house."

None of this is lost on Potiphar. "*When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in*

*everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant.*” The word “attendant” would be better translated “steward.” I know that because of the next line. “*Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned*” (Genesis 39:4). He is lord of Potiphar’s household. He is in control of everything that Potiphar has. Genesis 39:5 says,

*From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the LORD was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. So he left in Joseph’s care everything he had; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.*

Potiphar has got everything going his way. All of his goods are prospering, and all of his flocks are increasing. He doesn’t have to worry about anything. He goes home; he sits down at the table; he eats; he has total confidence that Joseph is doing everything that needs to be done, but now trouble comes. Everything is going well. Joseph has been blessed, but the seed is not going to be able to be preserved with him as the steward of Potiphar’s house. That is not a significant enough position for Joseph to hold for God’s will to be done. So now God is going to use the lust of an immoral wife to fulfill His purpose, Potiphar’s wife. The scene is now set.

“*Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, and after a while his master’s wife took notice of Joseph and said, ‘Come to bed with me!’*” (Genesis 39:6b-7) Here is a good looking, young man, and she wants to have sex with him, but he refuses. Notice the words with which he does so. He uses the magic word “no.” That word is hard to misunderstand, isn’t it? Joseph says “no,” but then he gives the reason why he said “no.”



*But he refused. 'With me in charge,' he told her, 'my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?'* (Genesis 39:8-9)

Notice that Joseph doesn't ask how he could sin against Potiphar, his wife, or even against Pharaoh. He says, "*How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?*" Now I know why Joseph is able to say "no." **Number one**, he's not that kind of man. **Number two**, he has the trust and responsibility that his master has given him, and **number three**, he's a man of God. He knows God is watching his actions. He will not sleep with Potiphar's wife because it would be a sin against God. Genesis 39:10 says, "*And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even to be with her.*"

Notice that Joseph tried never to be alone with this woman because she was constantly after him to commit fornication with her. But even with his best efforts we read,

*One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. She caught him by his cloak and said, 'Come to bed with me!' But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house* (Genesis 39:11-12).

Joseph may have been afraid that he might give in to her. After all, when the temptation becomes great, that is the time to run. The Bible says, "flee fornication" (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:18; 2 Timothy 2:22). The Bible says "run from sin." Here is a young man who knew the lust that was within him, and he knew that to stay there and to remain with that woman, with her insistence

that they commit adultery together, he would have to be in bed with her. So he ran, leaving his cloak in her hand.

“Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.” (William Congreve, 1670-1729) We are about to find out that is true. In Genesis 39:13 we read,

*When she saw that he had left his cloak in her hand and had run out of the house, she called her household servants. ‘Look,’ she said to them, ‘this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us! He came in here to sleep with me, but I screamed. When he heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house.’*

She is absolutely lying, of course, but the woman has been scorned, so she tells on Joseph just as Joseph had told on his brothers. The difference is Joseph had been telling the truth and this woman is not. He is steward of Potiphar’s house. He is tempted by Potiphar’s wife, and now he’s being framed by Potiphar’s wife. Verse 39:19 says, “*When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, ‘This is how your slave treated me,’ he burned with anger.*” Is Potiphar angry because he believes her? It could very well be that he does not believe her. If he had believed her, what do you suppose would have happened to Joseph? Potiphar would have killed him. But instead, he puts Joseph in a prison in Potiphar’s house. He puts him in the prison where the captain of the guard’s prisoners are kept. So it is not that Potiphar believes his wife, but rather, he could be angry because he is losing the steward of his house. He is losing the one who has multiplied his goods.

### **Joseph—God’s Man In Potiphar’s Prison**

But Potiphar must do something to Joseph, so in Genesis 39:20a, we read, “*Joseph’s master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined.*” So Joseph is in Potiphar’s house. He has been a steward; he has

been tempted; he has been framed, and now he is in prison. But God has not forgotten Joseph.

*But while Joseph was there in the prison, the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did (Genesis 39:20b-23).*

Joseph had been lord of Potiphar's house, and now he's lord of Potiphar's prison. Now events are about to take another turn. In Genesis 40:1-3 we read,

*Some time later, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their master, the king of Egypt. Pharaoh was angry with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, and put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the same prison where Joseph was confined"*

Potiphar knows that Joseph is a responsible person whom God blesses and so, "*The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, and he attended them*" (Genesis 40:4a). Potiphar still trusts Joseph. I do not think he believed that Joseph tried to sleep with his wife.

These two men are each going to have a dream, and Joseph is going to be the one who is called upon to interpret those dreams. We read in Genesis 40:4b-14

*After they had been in custody for some time, each of the two men—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were being held in prison—had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its*

own. When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected. So he asked Pharaoh's officials who were in custody with him in his master's house, 'Why are your faces so sad today?' 'We both had dreams,' they answered, 'but there is no one to interpret them.' Then Joseph said to them, 'Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams.' So the chief cupbearer told Joseph his dream. He said to him, 'In my dream I saw a vine in front of me, and on the vine were three branches. As soon as it budded, it blossomed, and its clusters ripened into grapes. Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes, squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup and put the cup in his hand.' 'This is what it means,' Joseph said to him. 'The three branches are three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your position, and you will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand, just as you used to do when you were his cupbearer. But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison. For I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon.'

The chief baker obviously likes what he has just heard, and desiring good news himself, he also tells Joseph his dream.

When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given a favorable interpretation, he said to Joseph, 'I too had a dream: On my head were three baskets of bread. In the top basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head.' 'This is what it means,' Joseph said. 'The three baskets are three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head and hang you on a tree. And the birds will eat away your flesh.' Now the third day was Pharaoh's birthday,

*and he gave a feast for all his officials. He lifted up the heads of the chief cupbearer and the chief baker in the presence of his officials: He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, so that he once again put the cup into Pharaoh's hand, but he hanged the chief baker, just as Joseph had said to them in his interpretation. The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him (Genesis 40:16-23).*

What if the cupbearer had remembered Joseph? What if he had told Pharaoh about Joseph? What if Pharaoh really wanted to honor the cupbearer and had gotten Joseph out of prison that day? What is the best Joseph could hope for? He would hope to be a minor servant in Pharaoh's house. I am grateful that God put a forgetful cupbearer in prison.

## Joseph—God's Man In Pharaoh's House

### **He Interprets Pharaoh's Dreams**

But there are more dreams. There are not only the dreams of the forgetful cupbearer and the wretched baker, but there is also the dream of the provident Pharaoh. "*When two full years had passed,. . .*" God has left Joseph in prison for two full years. The butler or the chief cupbearer has forgotten him for two full years. At the end of those two full years,

*. . . Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile, when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds. After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank. And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up. He fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk. After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted-*

*thin and scorched by the east wind. The thinheads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up; it had been a dream. In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no-one could interpret them for him (Genesis 41:1-8).*

Nobody in all of Egypt can interpret the dream. Enter, again, the cupbearer. *“Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, ‘Today I am reminded of my shortcomings.’”* He now remembers at the right time. God keeps a good calendar.

*‘Pharaoh was once angry with his servants, and he imprisoned me and the chief baker in the house of the captain of the guard. Each of us had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. Now a young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us, giving each man the interpretation of his dream. And things turned out exactly as he interpreted them to us: I was restored to my position, and the other man was hanged.’ So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh. Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it’ (Genesis 41:9-15).*

Look at verse 41:16. Joseph is no longer a proud person. He has become a humble servant. *“‘I cannot do it,’ Joseph replied to Pharaoh, ‘but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires.’”* Joseph is now giving credit to God. Pharaoh then repeats the dream all the way through 41:24, and still, nobody

could interpret the dream. That is, except for Joseph with God's help. Genesis 41:25-32 says,

*Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, 'The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterwards are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind: They are seven years of famine. It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt, but seven years of famine will follow them. Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will ravage the land. The abundance in the land will not be remembered, because the famine that follows it will be so severe. The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon.'*

When God says something, you can count on it happening. When He says it twice, it means it's going to happen soon. But now that Joseph has given the interpretation, he gives Pharaoh some advice. In 41:33-36, we read,

*And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. (Joseph must know that he is that discerning and wise man.) Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. This food should be held in reserve*

*for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine.'*

This is Joseph's advice. Find one wise man to organize the harvest. Get some commissioners, gather 20% of everything that is grown, put it in silos and wait for the famine. Pharaoh likes what he has just heard. *"The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. So Pharaoh asked them, 'Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?'"* (Genesis 41:37-38)

Now don't get the idea that Pharaoh is confessing faith in the one true God. Put it in the terminology of his day, he would be saying, "in whom the spirit of the gods is," but he recognizes divine revelation in what Joseph is saying. He has not been converted to Jehovah, but he has been converted to the fact that Joseph's God is speaking to him. With that knowledge of Joseph's God, Genesis 41:39-41 says,

*Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.'*

We need to take some time and think about this. A lot of times when we read and come to the end of our study, we need to think about what we have just read. What is the lesson in this? What is God doing? In the case of Joseph, He is preserving a seed. He is still fulfilling the promise that was made in Genesis 3:15, that the seed of the woman will bruise the head of the serpent, and He is using all of the bad things that have happened to Joseph, even his pride. He even uses his father's favoritism toward him, his brothers' hatred of him, and Potiphar's wife's evil desires. Everything is a part of God's



plan. God is weaving all of this together as a master weaver would do.

Have you ever watched anybody weave a rug or weave a garment? They are made out of all kinds of different colors of yarn. I once watched a rug weaver in Madras, India. It was a huge rug. It hung from the ceiling to the floor. One man sitting up on a stool was the master weaver. There were many people, three or four or six on one side and three or four or six on the other side, and he would call out orders, and they would poke the thread through, and he would call out orders, and they would pass it back to him. I stood there and watched for about twenty minutes with an interpreter, and they stopped for a tea break. I spoke to the master weaver saying, "It is marvelous, a marvelously beautiful rug and not a single mistake has been made in these twenty minutes." And he said, "Not a single mistake! They made all kinds of mistakes." I said, "You didn't stop them. You didn't say, hey wait a minute, a mistake has been made, we've got to start over here." And he said, "Well, of course not. I just wove the mistake into the pattern I already had in my mind."

You see, God is better than that rug weaver. He knew from eternity the mistakes that people would make. He knew from eternity Joseph's pride. He knew from eternity the brothers' hatred. He knew from eternity the lust of Potiphar's wife. He knew from eternity that the butler and the baker would be in the right prison. Isn't it amazing that God is working all of this together and weaving it as one would weave a rug together? God is in control of this thing. Is it only of this incident that God is in control? No, God will continue to be in control of Joseph's life throughout all of his life to bring about His will, and He will continue to be in control of your life and my life. But like Joseph, we have to get rid of our pride. We will let evil things happen to us, make mistakes, and persecution of other people will come upon us. If we will let that drive us from our pride to our knees, and then to God, then, like Joseph, it will be said of us, "There is no man as wise and discreet as this one is."

Joseph is about to become the prime minister of all of Egypt and the second most powerful man in all of the world. It isn't because of his ability but due to the fact that he gives God credit and because God is working in his life. Give God credit, and He will work in your life too.

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## THE ACCOUNT OF JOSEPH (3)

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**(Genesis 41:37-50:26)**

### Review and Introduction

We are still in the book of Genesis, drawing near the end of Joseph's life. We have studied about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and now about Joseph. We have divided Joseph's life into two parts and now are entering into the study of the third part of his life. We saw him, first of all, in Genesis 37 as the princely son. He was the favorite of his father which was manifested by his ornamented robe or coat. He was a very proud young man that brought bad reports to his father of what his brothers did, and then reported his dream, first of all to his brothers, and then to his father. All of this caused jealousy among his brothers and even anger from his father, but his father still remembered that when God gave dreams, God fulfilled those dreams. Because of his pride and because of the jealousy of his brothers, he was sold into Egypt, to Potiphar, who was an Egyptian and the captain of Pharaoh's host. There he was tried and we see him, not the princely son anymore, but the patient sufferer. He suffered time away from his father and mother and brothers, and he suffered the temptation of a lustful woman, who just happened to be Potiphar's wife. She then framed him as someone who tried to molest her. He suffered imprisonment and in that prison was exalted to the place of being over all of the prisoners.

We saw the butler or the chief cupbearer and the baker there in prison with Jacob. They both had dreams, and Joseph interpreted the dreams. The baker was hung and the cupbearer was exalted back to his place of honor. He was supposed to remember Joseph but very quickly forgot about him. We have seen Joseph, however, remembered at a time when Pharaoh had dreams, and he

came into Pharaoh's household and interpreted Pharaoh's dream. The interpretation was that there would be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Joseph gave Pharaoh good solid advice, although he is still the patient sufferer. The advice that he gave Pharaoh was that a wise and discreet man should be found who would be set over all of the gathering of the good crops during the seven good years. The purpose of this was so that during the seven years of famine there might be bread not only for Egypt but for all the world.

At the end of that counsel, Pharaoh asks if it is possible to find a man as wise and as discreet as this man, a man who evidently has the divine power behind him. Since God is the only one who can interpret dreams and Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams, Pharaoh concludes that Joseph has the power of God in his life, so Joseph is going to become prime minister. That is the third act in this play in Joseph's life. He was first of all, the princely son, then the patient sufferer, and now he becomes the provident sovereign, the second most powerful man in all the world. In reality, he is the man that rules the world by what he does as steward of all that Pharaoh has. He will increase Pharaoh's goods until Pharaoh becomes the richest and the most powerful man in all the world, and Joseph is steward of his kingdom.

## Joseph—The Provident Sovereign

### **Joseph Exalted and Set Over All the Land**

We covered Genesis 41:37 in our last chapter, but we need this little bit of overlapping because we need to see Pharaoh's decision that Joseph is the man that Joseph himself described, the wise and the discreet person. Genesis 41:37-40 states,

*The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. So Pharaoh asked them, 'Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of*

*God?’ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Since God has made all this known to you, there is no-one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.’*

So Joseph is chosen by Pharaoh to be over all of the land of Egypt. He will end up being over the entire world because all the world is going to have to come to Egypt to buy grain. In Genesis 41:41-42a we read,

*So Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt.’ Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph’s finger.*

The signet ring makes treaties and laws. When the signet ring was put on any document, it made the document the official law and order of Egypt. Pharaoh gives to Joseph the key to the great house. He will make law. He will make treaties. He will make decisions that will affect all of Egypt and all the world. Then he put on him the robes of royalty.

*He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and men shouted before him, ‘Make way!’ Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt (Genesis 41:42b-43).*

He wears Pharaoh’s ring. He wears Pharaoh’s clothes. He rides in the second chariot. Everybody makes way before him. He is the number one minister. He is the prime minister of all of Egypt, but Pharaoh is not through talking to him yet. Pharaoh enhances Joseph’s position in Genesis 41:44a, “*Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘I am Pharaoh, but without your word no-one*

*will lift hand or foot in all Egypt.*’ Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-Paneah . . .” Probably the best definition to these words is “the king says he will live.” With that name Pharaoh gave to Joseph the right to decide who would live and who would not live. He makes Joseph the king over all of the life in the land Egypt by his name. “. . . and gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, to be his wife. And Joseph went throughout the land of Egypt.” (Genesis 41:44b)

And so Joseph is given a new position, prime minister. He is given authority with the signet ring. He is given royalty in the robes he wears. He is given the second place in all the kingdom and the chariot he rides. He is given obedience from all the people as they make way before his chariot. He is given the right to determine where everybody sits, where everybody stands, where everybody walks, and he is given a new name that says that he is king in the land and will determine who will live and who will not live. He is given a wife, and he goes throughout all the land of Egypt. And how old is he? Genesis 41:46a tells us, “*Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*” How old was he when he left his family? He was seventeen years old. For thirteen years he has been the patient sufferer in Potiphar’s house and in Potiphar’s prison. He ruled Potiphar’s house. He ruled Potiphar’s prison. He ruled Pharaoh’s kingdom. He is an “in-charge” person.

### Joseph’s Stewardship

*And Joseph went out from Pharaoh’s presence and traveled throughout Egypt. During the seven years of abundance the land produced plentifully. Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the*

*sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure (Genesis 41:46b-49).*

Joseph is a very good steward. He would like to keep records of all the grain that there is, but there got to be so much grain that he could not keep record of it. An interesting point here is that when excavations were done by archaeologists in Egypt, they found multitudes of silos dug down in the ground with some of them still having grain in them. Joseph had dug silos in the ground to keep this grain in the great years of plenty in the land of Egypt. They didn't put their silos up above ground. There was not need to do that. Egypt is dry territory. They just dug holes in the ground and stored the grain there for the years of famine.

### **Joseph's Family**

In Genesis 41:50-52, before the famine begins in earnest, we read that Joseph has two sons.

*Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphra, priest of On. Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, 'It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household.'*

Joseph is finding forgetfulness in his work and in his family. The two things that are important to any man are work and a family to honor. *"The second son he named Ephraim (which means "fruitful") and said, 'It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering.'"* Joseph has now found comfort in the work that he is doing for Pharaoh and in the sons that he bears. He is even forgetting the deep sorrow that he had felt for thirteen years as he was away from his father and his brothers.

### **The Seven Years of Famine**

In Genesis 41:53-56, the famine begins with the predictable results.

*The seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end, and the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food. When all Egypt began to feel the famine, the people cried to Pharaoh for food. Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, 'Go to Joseph and do what he tells you.' When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt.*

When Joseph took up the twenty percent of grain it no longer belonged to the people of Egypt, it belonged to Pharaoh. So the people will not simply be given grain. There is no dole system here. They are sold grain. Pharaoh is becoming rich off of the grain of Egypt, and all the countries are coming to Egypt to buy grain because the famine was severe in all of the world. And so Joseph is again making Pharaoh rich. Even Jacob is going to have to come to buy grain from his son without realizing that he is Joseph.

### **Reunion and Reconciliation**

#### **Joseph Meets His Brothers**

In Genesis 42:1-28 the brothers come to Egypt for the first time. They will be back a second time and then a third time. They won't know who Joseph is until the end of the second trip there. But in Genesis 42:1-2 we read,



*When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, 'Why do you just keep looking at each other?' He continued, 'I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die.'*

They are not out of money, but there comes a time when money is not the most important thing. You can't eat money. The Jews have plenty of money, but they don't have any grain. Something has to be done, so we read in Genesis 42:3-6,

*Then ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with the others, because he was afraid that harm might come to him. So Israel's sons were among those who went to buy grain, for the famine was in the land of Canaan also. Now Joseph was the governor of the land, the one who sold grain to all its people. So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground.*

Joseph's dream is being fulfilled. Here are at least ten of the eleven sheaves on their face before Joseph's sheave. "As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them" (Genesis 42:7a). Joseph even uses an interpreter. He speaks in the Egyptian language. Why don't they recognize him? Well, they aren't expecting to see him. The last time they had seen him, they had sold him to the Ishmaelites, the ones from Midian to carry down into Egypt. They wouldn't expect him to be the governor. Plus, at least twenty-one years have passed since they have seen him. So they don't have any right to recognize him, plus the fact that he pretends to be a stranger wearing Egyptian clothes. Maybe he was bearded. He definitely spoke to them in

a foreign language. But he disguised himself so that they did not know who he was, and he spoke harshly to them. He is going to put them through a series of tests to find out if they are true men now rather than the deceitful men they had been when he left them.

*‘Where do you come from?’ he asked. ‘From the land of Canaan,’ they replied, ‘to buy food.’ Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. Then he remembered his dreams about them and said to them, ‘You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected.’ ‘No, my lord,’ they answered. ‘Your servants have come to buy food (Genesis 42:7b-10).*

Now, they are not literally on their face, but with these words again they are bowing before Joseph: “my lord” and “Your servants” So they are admitting that he is superior to them.

“*‘We are all the sons of one man. Your servants are honest men, not spies’*” (Genesis 42:11). Maybe they are honest men. We will find out in the trial. They definitely have not been honest before, but maybe this trial will find them honest and sincere men. Joseph responded them by saying,

*No!’ he said to them. ‘You have come to see where our land is unprotected.’ But they replied, ‘Your servants were twelve brothers, the sons of one man, who lives in the land of Canaan. The youngest is now with our father, and one is no more’ (Genesis 42:12-13).*

Normally a slave would work constantly, day and night. His life would not last for twenty-one years. It has been that long since they last saw Joseph, so they believe Joseph is dead by now. Joseph is having none of their argument.

*Joseph said to them, 'It is just as I told you: You are spies! And this is how you will be tested: As surely as Pharaoh lives, you will not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here. Send one of your number to get your brother; the rest of you will be kept in prison, so that your words may be tested to see if you are telling the truth. If you are not, then as surely as Pharaoh lives, you are spies!' And he put them all in custody for three days. On the third day, Joseph said to them, 'Do this and you will live, for I fear God: If you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here in prison, while the rest of you go and take grain back for your starving households' (Genesis 42:14-19).*

This is interesting. He put them in custody three days. They came back the third day and he said, "Here is what I will do. I will put one of you in prison and the rest of you go home, but I will keep this one in prison until you return." It is Simeon who ends up in prison. Why didn't he put Reuben, the firstborn, in prison? Why did he go to the second born son? Who was it that had pled for his life earlier? It was Reuben, so Simeon is going to be in prison until they come back with Benjamin. And he sends them out with their grain, and when they get a day's journey out they open their bags to get some grain for their animals and themselves, and they are shocked because each one finds his money in the grain bag. Now they are frightened because now how will they go back and face him since it looks like they are thieves. They not only have got grain, but they have got their money. They go back and tell their father, and their father is terribly disturbed because it appears that his family is a bunch of thieves, and he knows that soon what food they have will run out too.

The food does run out, and so Jacob calls his sons to him, and he tells them to go back to Egypt and buy grain. The sons

are quick to point out to him that they cannot do that unless they take Benjamin with them. This brings an immediate objection from Jacob. Joseph is already dead, and Benjamin is all that he has left.

So Reuben says that he will stand up for him. But Jacob remembers that it was Reuben who laid with Bilhah, his handmaiden, and so he says that he won't trust him with Benjamin. Then Judah says that he will take custody of Benjamin. If I don't bring him back you punish me and you punish my house. Finally, Jacob relents and says, "Ok, take Benjamin, and if he dies, he dies. If I be bereaved, I be bereaved." He said, "But take double money. Take the money that was in your sacks plus the money for new grain and take this little gift and plead with the ruler of the land for me."

The sons get back to Joseph, and Joseph recognized them, of course. He gave them grain to eat and a place to clean up. He then tells them, "We will have dinner tonight." When the steward came, they said, "We found this money in our sack, and we want you to know that we're not thieves." The steward says, "I had your money all the time. Don't worry about it." They go before Joseph and eat in his home. He eats by himself and they by themselves because it's an abomination for an Egyptian to eat with shepherds. The Egyptians won't eat with Joseph because he's a shepherd, and they won't eat with his brothers because they are shepherds.

Another interesting thing is that Joseph lines the brothers up in birth order, from Reuben all the way down to Benjamin which leaves them wondering how he knew the birth order. He gives them the food from his table, giving Benjamin five times as much as any of the others. He is testing them to see if they harbor the jealousy toward Jacob's other favorite, Benjamin, as they did toward him when he was the father's favorite.

The meal is over, and he puts the grain in their sacks, and he says, "Put the money back into their sack and put my golden cup in Benjamin's sack." They weren't outside the city until

Joseph sends the army after them and says, “Bring back the one who has the golden cup.” The brothers say, “We didn’t steal the cup. If you find the cup among us, we will be your slaves forever.” They search all their sacks, and they find the golden cup in Benjamin’s sack. They all go back and plead for Benjamin’s life. They say, “Let us all be your slaves.” Judah then says, “Let me be your slave, but let Benjamin go back because I swore to his father that he would return and I don’t want to bring my father’s old gray hairs down to Sheol and sorrow.”

At this point Joseph can’t take it any longer. He makes all the Egyptians leave. He takes off his outer garment and he stands in front of his brothers and he says, “I’m Joseph, your brother.” They fall back. They don’t believe him. He says, “Come here. I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. I know you meant it for evil, but God meant it for good to preserve all of us as it is this day, saved.” The brothers are so happy. They weep, of course, but they are tears of joy and not tears of sorrow. Joseph then goes to Pharaoh, and he tells him these are his brothers. So Pharaoh gives him carts, and on those carts he puts all the luxuries of Egypt and enough grain to sustain the 75 that are going to come back all the way from Canaan to Egypt. The brothers take these carts and go home. They tell their father that Joseph is alive! He is the prime minister that we’ve been talking to all this time. Jacob will not believe it. Why? Because he’s believed this lie all these years, and when you believe the lie so long it forms a scar on the heart that won’t even let the truth get through. But Jacob looks at all these carts filled with all of Egypt’s things, and he remembers that God had promised that He would always be with him and preserve him. So, Jacob finally says, “It is enough. What I hear is great. What I see proves it right.” Jacob says, “Joseph, my son, is alive. I will go and see him before I die.”

Our next chapter will deal with the reunion of Jacob with his son, Joseph, but right now we need to think again about the

providence of God. At the end of our last chapter we talked about the weaving of a rug. In ending this chapter, let us talk about the different threads that are in this rug, in this case the different things that God used to preserve the seed, not only in Canaan, but now in Egypt so that one day the seed of the woman would come to bruise to head of the serpent.

**The first thread** that He used was a foolish father, a father who openly loved Joseph more than he loved the other brothers. **The second thread** that He used was a proud son who would not only tell on his brothers but even boast of dreams that proved that he was superior. **The third thread** He used was the hateful brothers as they, in their hatred, wanted to kill Joseph. **The fourth thread** that He used was the Midianite band. They came by at just the right time to take Joseph to just the right place to sell him to just the right man in order to get God's will accomplished. **The fifth thread** was the Egyptian captor who was an honest man and put Joseph over his house and blessed him because Joseph did good to him. **The sixth thread** was the lust crazed woman, who without her, Joseph would not have gotten into the right prison. **The seventh thread** was the good warden of the prison, that put Joseph over all of the other prisoners who were there. **The eighth thread** was the forgetful cupbearer. If God had chosen a good remembering cupbearer then God would not have had everything done His way. Then an honest Pharaoh is **the ninth thread** in our rug. This Pharaoh put a shepherd over all of the things of Egypt and then finally, and this is the beautiful one, **the tenth thread** were the repentant brothers. The brothers started to deal with their jealousy, and they ended it with their love not just for Joseph but primarily for their father.

God uses strange tools. He uses strange threads to make the beautiful rug of a completed, providential upbringing and preserving of the seed. May God use us in all of our strangeness to carry out His great and marvelous plan.

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## THE ACCOUNT OF JOSEPH (4)

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### **Genesis 45:16-50:26**

#### Introduction

This chapter brings us to the conclusion of the book of Genesis. We are in the fourth section of Joseph's life, having divided his life into three parts thus far: he was the princely son; he was honored by his father and hated by his brothers at home; he became the patient sufferer in Potiphar's house and in Potiphar's prison, and then he became the provident sovereign when he explained and interpreted Pharaoh's dreams and gave the advice about how to take care of the seven years of famine that lay ahead. He then became the number two man in the empire, the prime minister, the governor of all the land of Egypt. We saw his brothers come to Egypt to buy grain for their families in Canaan at which time he tested them until they proved themselves to be the honest and true men that they needed to be. He then revealed himself to them. They fell on each other's neck, kissing each other and talking for a good long while.

At this point I want us to move back a bit and read about the news reaching Pharaoh's palace of Joseph meeting his brothers, and that will prepare us for the great scene that occurs when Jacob comes to be with Joseph.

#### Israel Goes To Egypt

##### **Revelation and Relocation**

In Genesis 45:16-20 we read of the news of Joseph and his brothers reaching Pharaoh. When Pharaoh hears of this, he is

pleased and instructs Joseph what to do in order to get his family to Egypt.

*When the news reached Pharaoh's palace that Joseph's brothers had come, Pharaoh and all his officials were pleased. Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Tell your brothers, "Do this: Load your animals and return to the land of Canaan, and bring your father and your families back to me. I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you can enjoy the fat of the land."' 'You are also directed to tell them, "Do this: Take some carts from Egypt for your children and your wives, and get your father and come. Never mind about your belongings, because the best of all Egypt will be yours.'"*

“Leave everything behind. Just come with the people. I'll take care of you.” Genesis 45:21-23 tells us that this is exactly what they did. Everybody received provisions and some new clothing for the journey home, but to Benjamin, he gave 300 shekels of silver and 5 sets of clothes. The brothers are instructed in 45:24, “*Don't quarrel on the way.*” Joseph is evidently concerned that they are still very quarrelsome with one another.

In Genesis 45:26-28 we read of the joyous news that the brothers have to share with their father. However, Jacob is doubtful at first.

*They told him, 'Joseph is still alive! In fact, he is ruler of all Egypt.' Jacob was stunned; he did not believe them. But when they told him everything Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. And Israel said, 'I'm convinced! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.'*



But remember, Jacob has been warned time and time again not to go down to Egypt, and yet now it appears as if he should. He needs a word from God as to what to do. In Genesis 46:1-4 we read that Jacob gets word from God.

*So Israel set out with all that was his, and when he reached Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night and said, 'Jacob! Jacob!' 'Here I am,' he replied. 'I am God, the God of your father,' he said. 'Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph's own hand will close your eyes.'*

That is such a beautiful promise. The son that Jacob thought for certain was dead, is going to be there when he dies and will close his eyes. Comforted with this word from God, Jacob goes to Egypt.

### **Israel's Relocation to Egypt**

In Genesis 46:5-7, we read of Jacob's departure for Egypt.

*Then Jacob left Beersheba, and Israel's sons took their father Jacob and their children and their wives in the carts that Pharaoh had sent to transport him. They also took with them their livestock and the possessions they had acquired in Canaan and Jacob and all his offspring went to Egypt. He took with him to Egypt his sons and grandsons and his daughters and granddaughters—all his offspring.*

We do not have all the sons or all of the children of Jacob listed because he had other daughters besides Dinah. In Genesis 46:8-25 we have a listing of those who traveled to Egypt with

Jacob. You have the sons and the grandsons of Jacob listed, a total of 75 people. Your version may read, as my does in 46:27, *“With the two sons who had been born to Joseph in Egypt, the members of Jacob’s family, which went to Egypt were seventy in all.”* In Acts 7:14, Luke records that there were 75 people who went to Egypt, and the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament) also says that there were 75 people in Egypt that were sons, grandsons, daughters and granddaughters of Jacob. They will leave Egypt a little over four centuries later with over 2 million in number. What a multiplication!

### **Jacob’s Family Settles In Goshen**

In Genesis 46:28-30 we read of a very happy reunion and the fact that Jacob can now live the rest of his life in peace. *“Now Jacob sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph to get directions to Goshen.”* You may notice how trusting Jacob is now of Judah. Judah is becoming the number one son. He will be the one through whom Jacob’s seed will be traced.

*When they arrived in the region of Goshen, Joseph had his chariot made ready and went to Goshen to meet his father Israel. As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and wept for a long time.*

They have been separated for over twenty years, and now a son that Jacob had thought was dead is now back with his brothers. *“Israel said to Joseph, ‘Now I am ready to die, since I have seen for myself that you are still alive.’”*

However, Jacob doesn’t die for another seventeen years. God is going to give Jacob seventeen years to enjoy Joseph’s presence. We read in Genesis 46:31-34,

*Then Joseph said to his brothers and to his father’s household, ‘I will go up and speak to Pharaoh and*

*will say to him, "My brothers and my father's household, who were living in the land of Canaan, have come to me. The men are shepherds; they tend livestock, and they have brought along their flocks and herds and everything they own." When Pharaoh calls you in and asks, "What is your occupation?" you should answer, "Your servants have tended livestock from our boyhood on, just as our fathers did." Then you will be allowed to settle in the region of Goshen, for all shepherds are detestable to the Egyptians.'*

The Egyptians did not live in the land of Goshen. The land of Goshen is all the land of the delta of the Nile. The Nile is one of those strange rivers that flows north, and at the point where it enters the Mediterranean sea, it parts into three main tributaries. At that point the land is flat, and once a year there is four feet of water across all of that territory. It is a swamp land which is perfect for the raising of sheep and cattle. For this reason the Egyptians would not possess it since to them the raising of cattle and sheep was a detestable thing. But for Jacob and his family it was exactly the best of land, and because of that they will become a great nation.

With Jacob and the family moved and settling into the land of Goshen, Joseph goes and reports to Pharaoh that all has been taken care of in regard to his family. In Genesis 47:1-6, we read,

*Joseph went and told Pharaoh, 'My father and brothers, with their flocks and herds and everything they own, have come from the land of Canaan and are now in Goshen.' He chose five of his brothers and presented them before Pharaoh. Pharaoh asked the brothers, 'What is your occupation?' 'Your servants are shepherds,' they replied to Pharaoh, 'just as our fathers were.' They also said to him, 'We have come to live here awhile, (they know that they are going*

back because they cannot live forever outside of the promised land) *because the famine is severe in Canaan and your servants' flocks have no pasture. So now, please let your servants settle in Goshen.*' Pharaoh said to Joseph, *'Your father and your brothers have come to you, and the land of Egypt is before you; settle your father and your brothers in the best part of the land. Let them live in Goshen. And if you know of any among them with special ability, put them in charge of my own livestock.'*

This Pharaoh not only trusts Joseph, but he now trusts Joseph's family. But we need to come back to Jacob for a while. Remember in our earlier study of Jacob we talked about how we would see him as the seer in Egypt as he stood before Pharaoh, his sons and his God. Let us see Jacob as he stood before Pharaoh and find out that Pharaoh will have to acknowledge that Jacob is the superior person. Jacob is 130 years old when we read in Genesis 47:7-10, *"Then Joseph brought his father Jacob in and presented him before Pharaoh. After Jacob blessed Pharaoh, Pharaoh asked him, 'How old are you?'*" Before we get the answer to Pharaoh's question, notice that Jacob blessed Pharaoh without any dispute. Without any dispute, the lesser is blessed by the greater. Jacob blesses Pharaoh, so Jacob claims to be superior to Pharaoh, and Pharaoh acknowledges that Jacob is superior to him as he accepts this blessing.

*And Jacob said to Pharaoh, 'The years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty. My years have been few and difficult, and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage of my fathers.'* Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh and went out from his presence.

Jacob blessed Pharaoh twice. He blessed him at the beginning of their conversation and then again at the end of

their conversation. Jacob is seen to be superior to the ruler of all the world. After this meeting Jacob settles his family in Goshen.

*So Joseph settled his father and his brothers in Egypt and gave them property in the best part of the land, the district of Rameses, as Pharaoh directed. Joseph also provided his father and his brothers and all his father's household with food, according to the number of their children (Genesis 47:11-12).*

### **Joseph's Wise Stewardship**

Joseph is now the ruler of the house, although Jacob is still alive. Joseph is governor of the land, and Joseph is the provider of the family. Beginning in 47:13, Joseph is going to make Pharaoh the richest man in the world and the owner of all the land of Egypt. Joseph's wise business policies are seen in 47:13-15.

*There was no food, however, in the whole region because the famine was severe; both Egypt and Canaan wasted away because of the famine. Joseph collected all the money that was to be found in Egypt and Canaan in payment for the grain they were buying, and he brought it to Pharaoh's palace. When the money of the people of Egypt and Canaan was gone, all Egypt came to Joseph and said, 'Give us food. Why should we die before your eyes? Our money is used up.'*

"We don't have anymore money," the Egyptians say. "We cannot buy anymore grain." Pharaoh has all of the money in Egypt and Canaan in his treasury, but he doesn't give them food yet. They have still got something to buy food with, so in 47:16-19 he says,

*'Then bring your livestock,' said Joseph. 'I will sell you food in exchange for your livestock, since your money is gone.' So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and he gave them food in exchange for their horses, their sheep and goats, their cattle and donkeys. And he brought them through that year with food in exchange for all their livestock. When that year was over, they came to him the following year and said, 'We cannot hide from our lord the fact that since our money is gone and our livestock belongs to you, there is nothing left for our lord except our bodies and our land. Why should we perish before your eyes—we and our land as well? Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we with our land will be in bondage to Pharaoh. Give us seed so that we may live and not die, and that the land may not become desolate.'*

And Joseph complies with their wishes.

*So Joseph bought all the land in Egypt for Pharaoh. The Egyptians, one and all, sold their fields, because the famine was too severe for them. The land became Pharaoh's, and Joseph reduced the people to servitude, from one end of Egypt to the other. However, he did not buy the land of the priests, because they received a regular allotment from Pharaoh and had food enough from the allotment Pharaoh gave them. That is why they did not sell their land (Genesis 47:20-22).*

Joseph has just made Pharaoh the owner of all of Egypt. Pharaoh owns all of the money, all of the livestock, and all of the land, and all of the people are his servants. This leads Joseph to say in 47:23,

*... 'Now that I have bought you and your land today for Pharaoh, here is seed for you so you can plant the ground. But when the crop comes in, give a fifth of it to Pharaoh. The other four-fifths you may keep as seed for the fields and as food for yourselves and your households and your children.'*

The people do not complain about this. As matter of fact, they say in 47:25-26,

*'You have saved our lives,' they said. 'May we find favor in the eyes of our lord; we will be in bondage to Pharaoh.' So Joseph established it as a law concerning land in Egypt—still in force today—that a fifth of the produce belongs to Pharaoh. It was only the land of the priests that did not become Pharaoh's.'*

I want you to notice a difference in Goshen. While Egypt is being sold piecemeal, Goshen, where Jacob and his household live, is being blessed. *Now the Israelites settled in Egypt in the region of Goshen. They acquired property there and were fruitful and increased greatly in number* (Genesis 47:27). Egypt is being cursed by the famine, but Israel is prospering during the famine. The reason for that is simple. The Nile does not dry up, and so the Nile will overflow their land, bring the rich fertile soil of Central Africa down with it, fertilize the land, water the land and grow the grain for their crops. So although they can't grow the corn to eat, their animals can still eat.

### **Joseph Pledges To Bury Jacob In Canaan**

God has been gracious to Jacob. He has been allowed to live seventeen years in the land with Joseph. But it is now time for Jacob to take care of some personal matters before he dies. Genesis 47:28-31 says,

*Jacob lived in Egypt seventeen years and the years of his life were a hundred and forty-seven. When the time drew near for Israel to die, he called for his son Joseph and said to him, 'If I have found favor in your eyes, put your hand under my thigh and promise that you will show me kindness and faithfulness. Do not bury me in Egypt, but when I rest with my fathers, carry me out of Egypt and bury me where they are buried.' 'I will do as you say,' he said. 'Swear to me,' he said. Then Joseph swore to him, and Israel worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.*

### **Jacob Adopts Joseph's Sons**

Jacob knows that he is about to die, and so he must now bless his sons. First of all, he calls for Joseph to come in and in Genesis 48:5 he says, "I adopt your two sons as my sons. Manasseh and Ephraim will inherit in my house." Joseph now gets the double portion because both Manasseh and Ephraim will inherit in the house of Jacob. So Joseph has the birthright, the double portion. In Genesis 49, we are going to find out that Judah has the blessing. Through him the seed will be traced. Joseph then brings Manasseh and Ephraim to Jacob for blessing, and he puts Manasseh in his left hand and Ephraim in his right hand. As he puts them out to Jacob, the father's right hand will be on Manasseh and his left hand upon Ephraim so that Manasseh will get the greater blessing because that is Joseph's first born. Jacob is just like Isaac was at this late stage of his life in that he can't see too well, but he can see well enough that he crosses his hands, and he puts his left hand on Manasseh and his right hand upon Ephraim, and he pronounces a great blessing upon them. They will be powerful, and they will be called by the name of God and the name of Abraham and Isaac. They will increase greatly in the land. And the angel that has been with Jacob will be with them and preserve them.

Joseph saw that his father had put his left hand on Manasseh and his right hand on Ephraim, so he reached out to get his father's hand, yet Jacob said, "I know. I know, my son.



I know what I'm doing." And Manasseh will be a great tribe, he will possess great land but the younger brother will be greater than the older brother. The force of that blessing will be so powerful that the whole nation of Israel will be addressed as Ephraim in days to come. Manasseh inherits most of the land. Ephraim only possesses a small territory, but he will be the most powerful tribe in all of Israel other than Judah. Later on they will be two nations. One will be called Judah and one will be called Ephraim. But the main lesson is that Jacob has adopted Manasseh and Ephraim as his sons making Joseph the first born, the one with the double portion of his substance.

### **Jacob's Prophecy Concerning His Sons**

Jacob then calls for all of his sons to come before him. The twelve sons of Jacob stand before him and he blesses them as best as he can, one by one. I imagine they are listening carefully because one of them will be chosen to be the one through whom the seed comes. He brings Reuben in and he says in Genesis 49:3-4,

*Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, the first sign of my strength, excelling in honor, excelling in power. Turbulent as the waters, you will no longer excel, for you went up onto your father's bed, onto my couch and defiled it.*

So Reuben is told, "You will not have the seed traced through you because you defiled my couch."

He then speaks to the next two oldest sons at once,

*Simeon and Levi are brothers (Aren't they all brothers? Why does he say that these two are brothers? It is because they are similar in their behavior) — their swords are weapons of violence. Let me not enter their council, let me not join their assembly, for they have*

*killed men in their anger and hamstringed oxen as they pleased. Cursed be their anger, so fierce, and their fury, so cruel! I will scatter them in Jacob and disperse them in Israel. (Genesis 49:5-7)*

Remember that back in Shechem they slaughtered the whole city and the whole tribe because of the evil done to Dinah. Because of that, Jacob says that they will not be the ones blessed, but instead he will scatter them in Israel. Simeon receives, for a time, a small territory, but he soon loses it and is scattered throughout the land. Levi never gets a territory. There are 48 levitical cities in which the tribe of Levi will live, but they are all within somebody else's land.

Jacob comes to Judah in 49:8-12: "*Judah, your brothers will praise you; . . .*" Judah is chosen. Was he sinless? Absolutely not. Remember the deal with Tamar. He committed fornication with his own daughter-in-law, thinking her to be a prostitute. It wasn't because of his sinlessness; it was because of his faithfulness.

*. . . your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you. You are a lion's cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness-who dares to rouse him?*

Nobody goes into the lion's den, grabs him by the beard and shakes him awake. If he does that, he will remember it forever. Jacob says, "*The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.*" A single seed is promised from Judah that will conquer all of the enemies. "*He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; . . .*" Notice that he didn't say his horse. He didn't say his charger. He said his donkey and his colt. That is what Jesus will ride on when He comes in glory to the city of Jerusalem. “.

*. . he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes. His eyes will be darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk.*" Judah is chosen to be the one through whom the seed will come. Throughout the rest of Genesis 49 you see Jacob try his best to bless his sons, and after he has blessed them all, he gives instructions to them regarding his bones.

### **Jacob's Death and Burial At Machpelah**

*Then he gave them these instructions: 'I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite, the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre in Canaan, which Abraham bought as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite, along with the field. There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried, there Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried, and there I buried Leah. The field and the cave in it were bought from the Hittites. When Jacob had finished giving instructions to his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed, breathed his last and was gathered to his people (Genesis 49:29-33).*

Joseph went and asked for permission from Pharaoh to go and bury his father. Pharaoh not only gave permission, but all of Pharaoh's officials went with him all the way from Egypt to Palestine. There were so many Egyptians in the party that when they arrived and began to mourn before they put Jacob in the grave, the people of Canaan commented on how the Egyptians had come to give a great mourning. So they put Jacob in the grave where Isaac and Abraham were and returned back to Egypt (Genesis 50:1-14).

### **Joseph Receives Homage and Gives Assurance To His Brothers (Genesis 50:15-21)**

Joseph's brothers began to think that since Jacob was dead that Joseph would deal badly with them and kill them. So they

came to Joseph and said, “While our father was alive he said for us to tell you not be angry with us and kill us but to be kind to us.” Joseph said, “Am I God that I would judge you. You meant evil for me, but God meant good. You don’t need to worry. I will preserve you all of the days of my life.” Then Joseph lived in Egypt along with his family.

**Joseph Charges That His Bones Be Returned  
To Canaan and Dies at the  
Age of 110 Years (Genesis 50:21-26)**

Joseph died at the age of 110 years. They embalmed him and placed him in a coffin. He had made them promise that when they went back to the promised land, not if, but when they went back to the promised land, they would carry his bones and lay them there in a grave in the promised land. He died at 110. How old was he when he became the governor and the ruler of all of Egypt? He was 30. He ruled Egypt for 80 long years. That is longer than most people ever live much less to be ruler of all of Egypt and all the world.

The death of Joseph closes the book of Genesis. The story doesn’t end there, however, because the book of Exodus will begin with the Hebrew word “and.” Exodus is a continuation of this story. Everything is well at this time. The people of God are living in a beautiful place, seemingly at absolute and perfect peace. But they are not in the promised land, and the covenant with Abraham can only be fulfilled when these people are back in the land of promise. Their journey to the promised land will begin in our next chapter.

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# THE LAND OF CAPTIVITY

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**(Exodus 1:1-4:17)**

## Introduction

Our study is continuing to focus on the Hebrew family. We finished our study of the book of Genesis in our last chapter. The book of Genesis is probably the most important book in all the Bible. It lays the foundation for everything that will occur. It is indeed the book of beginnings. It is the beginning of creation. It is the beginning of sin. It is the beginning of redemption. It is the beginning of covenant. Everything that the Bible will discuss is introduced in the book of Genesis.

Now, however, we begin our study of the book of Exodus. The word Exodus, of course, means “a departure,” or “going out.” The book of Exodus looks forward to the time that the children of Israel leave the land of Egypt. When we closed the book of Genesis they were in the land of Egypt living in peace and prosperity, due mostly to the fact that Joseph was the prime minister, the ruler, the governor of all of Egypt and, therefore, all of the world.

## Egypt—The Land of Captivity

### **Names By Which It Is Called**

Before we get into the book of Exodus, with the story of the oppression and the exodus from that oppression, let us think for a moment about the country and the territory of Egypt. Egypt is a very important land in the Old Testament. So much so that in the study of archeology there is a separate science called Egyptology. People have studied this nation down

through the centuries to see how it relates to the people of God and how the people of God relate to it, and by doing so, they give us an even better understanding of the word of God.

To begin, let us look at the land of Egypt. Although it's not found in the Bible, on many ancient monuments this land is called Kem. This could be the name that Egypt was called by its neighbors. It is also called in the Psalms the land of Ham, for they are descended from Noah's son, Ham. The word Egypt in the Old Testament is from the Hebrew word, *Mizraim*. Mizraim was the son of Ham and the father of all of the Egyptian people. This word is found nearly a hundred times in the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and is always translated in our text, Egypt. Two or three times in the Psalms, Egypt is called *Rahab*, not because of the Canaanite spy in the city of Jericho, but because Rahab means "the exalted one," or "the haughty one," "the insolent one," or "the proud one." And that is the way Egypt was. The word Egypt, which we have in our translation, is the Greek name for this nation. It is a word that means "divided" because when the Nile arrives at lower Egypt, it becomes three tributaries and forms what we call the delta.

### **Divisions of the Land**

Egypt is always discussed in two categories, lower Egypt and upper Egypt. This can be confusing at times because the lower part of the Nile is at the top of the map since the Nile flows north. Lower Egypt is the delta formed by the three tributaries or the three divisions of the river as it enters the flat land just before it goes into the Mediterranean Sea. Upper Egypt is on the bottom of the map which is made up of a narrow valley. It varies in width from two to ten miles as it follows the course of the Nile. This is the fertile part of Egypt and the only part of Egypt which is suitable for permanent habitation.

### **Special Features of the Land**

Egypt extends 675 miles from north to south and 500 miles from east to west. That figures out to a half a million square

miles, and yet, less than five percent of all of that territory is suitable for permanent habitation, and even less than that is suitable to grow crops. The Nile River is really Egypt. Without the Nile, Egypt would just be a part of the desert. The Nile river brings Africa's fertility into Egypt and makes it a suitable place to live. The Nile has three sources. The lakes of northeastern and central Africa are the sources of the Nile river. There are three tributaries: the Baro, the Blue Nile and the White Nile, or the Atbara, as it is called. From where the Atbara enters the Nile to where the Nile enters the Mediterranean is a distance of 1,500 miles. There are no other tributaries feeding it on its way.

One of the most interesting things about the Nile is the yearly overflow. The Nile will begin to overflow when it begins to swell in upper Egypt, but as it gets to lower Egypt it will overflow completely when it comes out of the valley and flows into the delta which is a plains type area. The overflow begins about the 25<sup>th</sup> of June every year. It obtains a height of 36 feet above normal at Thebes and 25 feet above normal at Cairo. When the river divides, it spreads out over all the delta to a depth of four feet at the mouth and will stay that way for at least a month. This remarkable overflow is due to the heavy rains in Central Africa. There is no snow melting; it is just heavy rains, and it brings down new soil and keeps the land fertile year after year. This is what made Egypt the powerful nation it was. And this is why in our last few chapters we studied about the whole world coming to Egypt to buy grain when there was a seven year drought and famine in all the land. The Nile is an unusually effective and efficient tool.

### **The People of Egypt**

Let us look briefly at the people also. What kind of people lived here? What was their origin? In Genesis 10 we find out that the Egyptians come from Ham and particularly from his son Mizraim. These people are one of the earliest civilizations known. Only the Sumarian civilization that we know about today is older than the Egyptian civilization.

As far as religion is concerned, they were very religious people. They had splendid and highly ornamented temples. Their priests were skilled in the learning of their day, practicing many mysterious rites. They had hundreds of gods, but they had one chief god, Ra, who was the sun god. Ra was followed by a triad of high ordered gods, Osiris, his wife Isis, and their son, Horus. Sit, or Set, is the author of all evil in the Egyptian religion. He is the Egyptian Satan with whom Ra, Osiris, Isis and Horus wage eternal warfare. The Egyptians did not worship images. Various animals, however, such as bulls, dogs, cats, crocodiles, snakes, insects and especially the beetle were regarded with great reverence because they were thought to be not gods but representative of the gods, and to kill them was a fearful sin. The Egyptians believed correctly in the immortality of the soul, and they believed that the soul would one day be reunited with the body. This may explain the detail that they showed in their practice of embalming the body. They tried to preserve the body until such time as the soul could be reunited with it.

The Egyptians also believed in the day of judgement when everybody would be rewarded according to his deeds. Osiris was the guardian of the dead, and he, with 42 other gods who associate with him as judges, would at the day of judgement render absolute, perfect judgement to all people. Their religion was highly organized and had some truth in it. God had revealed Himself in the past, and that revelation was never absolutely erased. Man knew about the character and the nature of God. Some of this was carried over into the belief system of the Egyptians.

The Egyptians by nature were very intelligent. You can tell this by their pyramids, the sphinx and all the ancient buildings that they built. They were very progressive and were above and beyond the thinking of their day. They were kind and hospitable to guests, although they felt superior and were not ashamed to let everybody know that they felt superior. They treated their women with respect. Agriculture was a highly honored



profession, but all shepherding, whether it was with sheep, goats, cows or whatever, was held in contempt. The shepherd was thought to be one cursed by God.

### **The History of Egypt**

The history of Egypt is divided into three divisions: the early empire, the middle empire and new empire. The early empire is from 3,500 B.C. to 2,500 B.C. That was before Abraham went to Egypt. Their first king was a man named Menes. Their first capital was Memphis which was very close to present day Cairo. During this 1,000 years or more, all life centered around Pharaoh, and it is during this time that the word “Pharaoh” began to be used for the ruler of Egypt. The word “Pharaoh” means “great house,” and it was that house that ruled not just Egypt but as far as the Egyptians were concerned, all of the world. They thought of themselves as the mother empire. They believed that all nations had come from this great house, and so whoever was sitting on the throne in that great house was the father of all the world. So during these 1,000 years, they not only centered their life around Pharaoh, but they considered Pharaoh a god.

The middle empire ran for about 750 years from 2,500 B.C. to 1,750 B.C. It was a feudal society during this time ruled by local princes named Nomes. It ended with the invasion of what is known as the Hyksos which simply means the “foreign empire.” The Hyksos people were a shepherd people who introduced the horse and chariot. This might indicate that they were Hittite in nature because the rest of the Bible and archeology traces the chariot back to the Hittite empire in Asia Minor (at the northern end of the Mediterranean Sea). It was during the time of this empire that Abraham, and then Joseph, enter the land. This helps us to understand why they received a warm welcome there although they were shepherds. The one sitting upon the throne was not an Egyptian, but a foreigner, who was himself from a shepherd nation. This will prove

interesting because Pharaoh is going to chase the Jews to the Red Sea with horses and chariots.

During this time the empire form of government took shape. Pharaoh did not make decrees. Decrees were established by the word of the god, but Pharaoh would establish men under him who would carry out the will of him and his officials. This is why Joseph can be made the second in the empire with people under him. They had established the kind of government that is popular today, the pyramid, the empire form of government. When Joseph dies we are going to read in the book of Exodus that a new king arose that did not know Joseph.

The middle empire is followed by the new empire. It begins about 1750 B.C. and will be there until 570 B.C. At the start of this empire the native Egyptians expelled the Hyksos and started a new government order. It is during the time of this empire, 1446 B.C. to be exact, that Israel comes out of Egypt. Egypt was harmed by their departure, but they continued as a somewhat powerful empire until 570 B.C. when they were annexed into the Persian empire and then destroyed later, never to be strong again.

### **Major Cities In Egypt**

There are six major cities that we need to look at. Five of them are located in lower Egypt and one in upper Egypt. The first is Memphis which was the ancient capital located near modern day Cairo. Heliopolis, called “On” in the Bible, is a little bit north and east of Memphis. Ramses, which is in the land of Goshen, is just west of the easternmost tributary of the Nile. Pelusium is located at the eastern mouth of the Nile, and Alexandria is located at the western mouth. Alexandria will not be important until later in history, but it will become the second metropolis of the world, second only to Rome. In upper Egypt is the city of Thebes, as it is called today. It is called “No” or “No-Amon” in the Bible. Amon was one of the chief gods of Egypt. “No” means “a city,” so here is “the city of Amon” that we find in the Bible.

### **The Geography of the Land of Wandering**

When the Israelites leave the land, they go through the Sinaitic Mountains. These mountains are located between Egypt and the promised land and are where Israel wandered for forty years. Today, you go through what is called the Sinaitic Peninsula which has two major deserts: the wilderness of Shur and the wilderness of Paran. Israel will go through those wildernesses until they come to the Gulf of Aqaba, an arm of the Red Sea. It is there that they stand with the Egyptian army behind them and the impassable sea in front of them. God will part the Red Sea, Israel crosses on dry ground, and the water covers the Egyptian army. There is archeological proof of this event which we will discuss as we study the exodus.

There is the land of Edom that Israel will go through before they get to the promised land. It has as its boundaries the Arabah and Arabian Desert. It is a mountainous territory called "Seir" in the Bible. Edom is where Esau's people dwell. There are three chief cities in Edom that we need to keep in mind: Bozrah, which is the capital on the northern border just before you enter the promised land, Sela (Petra), which is the most mountainous city and Ezion-geber (Elath), which is a seaport at the northern end of the gulf of Aqaba.

## **The Bondage of Israel**

### **The Oppression**

In Exodus 1 we will study today the oppression of the people of Israel, the birth of Moses, the flight of Moses and the call of Moses. Exodus 1:6-7 says, "*Now Joseph . . .*" The word "now" in the Hebrew is literally translated "and." The word combines the book of Exodus with the book of Genesis. As a matter of fact, the first six books of the Bible begin with the word "and," and that is why the first seven books of the Bible are often times called the "Heptateuch."

*. . . and all his brothers and all that generation died, but the Israelites were fruitful and multiplied greatly and became exceedingly numerous, so that the land was filled with them.*

What was the promise to Abraham? The promise was that his seed would become as numerous as the stars of the heavens. God is beginning to fulfill that promise. Exodus 1:8 begins with the word “then,” the Hebrew word being “and.” *“Then (and) a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt.”* That does not mean he didn’t know Joseph’s name or Joseph’s history. It simply means that he didn’t recognize the agreements and the covenants that the previous Pharaoh and the old empire had agreed to with Joseph and his people. With that in mind, the new king says,

*‘Look,’ he said to his people, ‘the Israelites have become much too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country.’ So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh (Exodus 1:9-11).*

What Israel does not know is that they are being prepared for the forty years in the wilderness. They have gotten soft during all of these years of being fed. But God is seen working here, even during the oppression. *“But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly.”* (Exodus 1:12-13)

### **The Birth and Adoption of Moses**

Seeing this happen, Pharaoh makes a decree that every male child of any Israelite was to be killed at the time of birth

and only the female children were to be preserved. He is trying to stop the growth of Israel. During the time of this decree, a man named Amram, and Jochebed, his wife, have a boy. They don't want to kill the boy, so they place their baby into the Nile after making an ark made of bulrush for him. His sister, Miriam, watched it as it floated down the Nile. Pharaoh's daughter also saw the ark and went and got it. She knew it to be a Hebrew child because he was wrapped in Hebrew clothing. But instead of killing the child, she took the child to be her own. She talked to her maids and said, "But who will care for the child?" Miriam said, "I know a lady who will care for the child." His own mother, Jochebed, was to care for Moses in the house of Pharaoh. He grows up as Pharaoh's daughter's son and as the grandson of Pharaoh. So, here is Pharaoh trying to exterminate the nation of Israel, and yet, in his own house, he is bouncing the boy who is going to carry Israel out of Egypt.

### **The Flight of Moses to Midian**

One day, after Moses was an adult, he was walking along and he saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite. He ended up killing the Egyptian and burying him. Days later he saw two Israelites arguing with one another. When he tried to get them to stop arguing, they said, "Who made you ruler over us? Are you going to kill us like you did the Egyptian?" Moses knew that Pharaoh would find out about him killing an Egyptian, so he fled to Mount Sinai in the land of Midian east of the gulf of Aqaba. There he served a man named Jethro who gave him his daughter, Zipporah, as a wife.

### **The Call and Return of Moses**

While watching sheep one day, Moses sees a burning bush. He turns to the side to see what this burning bush is, and God speaks to him out of this bush that burned but was not consumed. God says to Moses, "I want you to go back and deliver my people, Israel, from Egypt." Moses begins to make excuses in Exodus 3:11-4:17. The first excuse was, "Who am

I that I should go and deliver your people?” The second objection was, “Who shall I tell them sent me?” God said, “You tell them the Eternal one has sent you. You tell them you are not here on a time based mission. You are on an eternal mission.” So Moses, not satisfied, says, “Where is my authority?” God has Moses throw his staff on the ground where it becomes a serpent. As a final effort, Moses says, “But Lord, I am slow of speech. I don’t know how to talk.” Moses has been debating with God all day long, and he says he doesn’t know how to talk. These are excuses. These are not true. Finally, he gets to the bottom line. He says, “Lord, send someone else. I don’t really want to go.” At this point the Lord is mad. The Lord says, “Here comes Aaron your brother. He will go with you, and he will be the spokesman. I will speak to you; you speak to him, and he will speak to the people.” When they get back to Egypt things begin just as Moses had feared they would. Before long Moses is standing before Pharaoh demanding that he let the Israelite people go. The confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh will be the subject of our next chapter.

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# WONDERS OF DELIVERANCE

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**(Exodus 4:19-12:51)**

## Review and Introduction

In this chapter we will be studying from the book of Exodus about the life of Moses and the wonders that Moses will perform to deliver his people, Israel, from Egyptian bondage. In our last chapter God appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai and gave him His commission to go back to Egypt and deliver His people from slavery. After overcoming his excuses, Moses finally asked for some sign that he could give the people to prove to them that he had been sent from God. God responded in Exodus 4:2-5,

*... 'What is that in your hand?' 'A staff,' he replied. The LORD said, 'Throw it on the ground.' Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it. Then the LORD said to him, 'Reach out your hand and take it by the tail.' So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand. 'This,' said the LORD, 'is so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has appeared to you.'*

The LORD had another sign for Moses to take with him. In Exodus 4:6-7 we read,

*Then the LORD said, 'Put your hand inside your cloak.' So Moses put his hand into his cloak, and when he took*

*it out, it was leprous, like snow. 'Now put it back into your cloak,' he said. So Moses put his hand back into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was restored, like the rest of his flesh.*

God then told Moses that if Pharaoh doesn't let the people go because of the rod and the hand then he is to go down to the river where God will turn the water into blood. Still, Moses does not want to go. He says to God in Exodus 4:13, "*O LORD, please send someone else to do it.*" In 4:14-17 God's patience with Moses reaches its end.

*Then the LORD's anger burned against Moses and he said, 'What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and his heart will be glad when he sees you. You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do. He will speak to the people for you and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him. But take this staff in your hand so that you can perform miraculous signs with it.'*

Moses is now ready to go back to Egypt. His reluctance has been broken down. Aaron will be his spokesman, and he will perform great signs by the staff that is in his hand. The time has come to say farewell to Jethro.

*Then Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, 'Let me go back to my own people in Egypt to see if any of them are still alive.' Jethro said, 'Go, and I wish you well.'*



## Moses Returns To Egypt

### Moses' Mission Restated

*Now the LORD had said to Moses in Midian, 'Go back to Egypt, for all the men who wanted to kill you are dead.' So Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt. And he took the staff of God in his hand. The LORD said to Moses, 'When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go' (Exodus 4:19-21).*

Moses knows before he even starts that Pharaoh is going to be reluctant, resistant. But God will not let that deter Moses from his mission.

*Then say to Pharaoh, 'This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you, "Let my son go, so that he may worship me." But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son' (Exodus 4:22-23).*

Moses knew from the beginning that the last sign would be the death of Pharaoh's sons. Now on his way back to Egypt, Moses has an encounter with God. For some reason, he has not followed the covenant of circumcision. His two sons are uncircumcised, so God stands in the way to kill the three of them. Zipporah takes a knife and circumcises her two children and calls Moses a "husband of blood" unto her. In Exodus 4:27-30 we read,

*The LORD said to Aaron, 'Go into the desert to meet Moses.' So he met Moses at the mountain of God (Mount Sinai) and kissed him. Then Moses told Aaron*

*everything the LORD had sent him to say, and also about all the miraculous signs he had commanded him to perform. Moses and Aaron brought together all the elders of the Israelites and Aaron told them everything the LORD had said to Moses. He also performed the signs before the people, and they believed. And when they heard that the LORD was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped.*

It is obvious from this reading that the people believe that they are delivered. They believe that God is going to immediately perform great miracles and deliver them from Egypt. But in reality, they are not ready to go yet. It is going to take the first three plagues before they will be fully converted. It will take three more plagues to make a distinction in their mind between themselves and the Egyptians. Then it takes three more plagues so that some of the Egyptians can believe and join themselves to Israel. Then all parties will be ready for the exodus. The last plague will result in Pharaoh's tremendously hard heart being broken, and then Israel will go out, not simply with Pharaoh's permission, but with Egypt's money, gold and honor.

### **Moses Before Pharaoh**

The day after Israel has seemingly accepted Moses as a leader things go bad.

*Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, 'This is what the Lord, the God of Israel says: "Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to Me in the desert"' (Exodus 5:1).*

Pharaoh then asks a question that he is going to painfully learn the answer to. In Exodus 5:2-3 we read,

*Pharaoh said, 'Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go.' Then they said, 'The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Now let us take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God, or he may strike us with plagues or with the sword.'*

Moses and Aaron both recognize that this is an either/or situation. Either you let us go or the Lord will strike you with a plague and with the sword. There is no room for negotiation. Pharaoh is unmoved by their words, but quite bothered with what he says is a ploy to keep the people from working.

*But the king of Egypt said, 'Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people away from their labor? Get back to your work!' Then Pharaoh said, 'Look, the people of the land are now numerous, and you are stopping them from working.' That same day Pharaoh gave this order to the slave drivers and foremen in charge of the people: 'You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather their own straw. But require them to make the same number of bricks as before; don't reduce the quota. They are lazy; that is why they are crying out, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.' Make the work harder for the men so that they keep working and pay no attention to lies' (Exodus 5:4-9).*

Pharaoh's solution to their request to go and worship God is to simply make them work harder. When the slave drivers told the people that they had to scatter all over Egypt to gather stubble to make straw they kept telling them,

*. . . 'Complete the work required of you for each day, just as when you had straw' The Israelite foremen*

*appointed by Pharaoh's slave drivers were beaten and were asked, 'Why didn't you meet your quota of bricks yesterday or today, as before?' Then the Israelite foremen went and appealed to Pharaoh: 'Why have you treated your servants this way? Your servants are given no straw, yet we are told, 'Make bricks!' Your servants are being beaten, but the fault is with your own people.' Pharaoh said, 'Lazy, that's what you are—lazy! That is why you keep saying, 'Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD.' Now get to work. You will not be given any straw, yet you must produce your full quota of bricks'*  
(Exodus 5:13-18).

Who do you think is going to be in trouble with the people? It is Moses and Aaron. The people are going to blame them. In Exodus 5:19-21 we read,

*The Israelite foremen realized they were in trouble when they were told, 'You are not to reduce the number of bricks required of you for each day.' When they left Pharaoh, they found Moses and Aaron waiting to meet them, and they said, 'May the LORD look upon you and judge you! You have made us a stench to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.'*

### **Moses Before God**

Who is going to doubt what God has said? Surely Moses will. God has sent him into the land to deliver these people, and rather than delivering them it seems as though He has added to their burden. Moses was sent to relieve their burden, so he goes to the Lord in 5:22,

*Moses returned to the LORD and said, 'O Lord, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this*

*why you sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all.'*

One has to admire Moses. He may not think he's a very eloquent man, but he is not only eloquent, he has the courage to go and argue with God. Moses doesn't like what has just happened to him and Aaron, and he tells God as much. "God, you've not done what you said you would do. You said you would deliver this people, and you've not delivered them. You've added to their burden because of my ministry." Moses may just be thinking that he would still like to be keeping sheep at the foot of Mount Sinai with Jethro his father-in-law. But anytime you talk to the Lord this way, the Lord is going to talk back, and in Exodus 6:1-12 we read,

*Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country.' God also said to Moses, 'I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them. I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant. Therefore, say to the Israelites: "I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to*

*give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.” Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and cruel bondage. Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Go, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites go out of his country.’ But Moses said to the LORD, ‘If the Israelites will not listen to me, why would Pharaoh listen to me, since I speak with faltering lips?’*

## Ten Plagues—Pharaoh’s Ten-Lesson Course

### **Some Preliminary Facts About the Plagues**

We soon find out why Pharaoh will listen. He will listen because Moses is about to perform ten great plagues. I want us to take these ten plagues in order to see that they build to a crescendo. They attack every single god that the Egyptians held in great honor, and they exalt Jehovah.

The plagues come in a series of three: 1-3, 4-6, 7-9, with 10 coming as a climatic blow to Pharaoh himself. The first plague in each series, one, four and seven will be announced at the bank of the Nile River in the morning. The second set of three will be in the palace at night and the third set of three will come unannounced. Plagues one, two and three come on Egypt and Israel alike. Plagues four, five, and six make a distinction between Israel and Egypt. Plagues seven, eight and nine make a distinction between the believing Egyptian and the unbelieving Egyptian. God is trying to convert the Egyptian people.

### **The Ten Plagues**

For the first plague (Exodus 7:14-24), Moses goes down to the river in the morning as Pharaoh has come to offer a sacrifice to the river god. Moses says, “Let my people go.” Pharaoh refuses to comply, so Moses places his staff in the water of the

Nile where Pharaoh is offering his sacrifice, and the water turns into blood. Whether or not the blood was literal or a form of red poison doesn't really matter. The miracle is that when Moses places his staff in the river it immediately turns red. Not only is the water from the Nile affected but also the water that comes from the wells and cisterns that are around the Nile. God has shown that the great Nile is not the reason that Israel and Egypt can be sustained. God can take away from them the one thing that they are dependent upon for their existence. God proved Himself to be superior to the river god. However, the Egyptian magicians also change the water into blood which causes Pharaoh to harden his heart, and he refuses to let the people go.

Seeing Pharaoh's response, God said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh." Moses will go to the palace of Pharaoh to tell him about the second plague (Exodus 8:1-15). Moses goes and tells Pharaoh that frogs would leave the Nile and be in all of the houses and in the palace. There will be frogs in the bread that the Egyptians baked and in their beds as well. One of the chief gods in Egypt was a frog-headed woman who was the goddess of fertility. The purpose of the plague is to show Egypt that they will cease to be fertile because of Israel's God. Frogs do come up from the Nile and cover the land. Anywhere the Egyptians walk, there are frogs. Anywhere they sit, they sit on frogs. When they lay down in bed there are frogs in the bed with them. When they cut their bread in two, there are frogs in the bread. Pharaoh has all that he can stand. He calls for Moses, and says, "Please take away the frogs, and I will let your people go." Moses tells Pharaoh, "In the morning, there will not be a frog in Egypt." When he woke up in the morning there was not a single frog anywhere. All of them had gone back to the Nile, but still, Pharaoh hardened his heart because the Egyptian magicians could do the same thing with the frogs. Pharaoh hardened his heart; and he refused to let the people go.

God follows this by sending the third plague upon Egypt, a plague of gnats (Exodus 8:16-19). Some translations may say that these were lice, or fleas, but the point is that after Moses is

told by God that there will be lice upon the land, that is exactly what happened. This plague was intended to attack the god Seb, the earth god. However, with lice all over the land and afflicting all of his people, Pharaoh hardens his heart again and does not let the people go. But this is one plague that they cannot match. Their words to Pharaoh in Exodus 8:19 sum it up well: "*The magicians said to Pharaoh, 'This is the finger of God.'*" They could change the water into blood, and they could get the frogs to come up out of the Nile, but they could not get the lice to cover the land. Pharaoh still hardens his heart.

These first three plagues affected the Israelites as well as the Egyptians. That is now going to change. Moses is told to go and tell Pharaoh about another plague. Moses tells Pharaoh about the fourth plague, those being flies (Exodus 8:20-32). The Hebrew translates these as being beetles or scarabs. This is one of their great representatives of the gods. This scarab is a symbol of all of the gods, but now they are filling the land. And so Pharaoh calls the people in and says, "This is too much for us. Go and make your festival to God, but stay in the land" (cf. Exodus 8:28). Pharaoh tries to get Moses and Aaron to compromise. God has already said, "You have to come to Sinai and worship me." But Pharaoh says, "No, stay in the land. I will let you offer sacrifice here, but I will not let you leave the land." But Moses stays obedient to God by saying, "We can't do that. We are not going to offer a sacrifice here. God has said, 'Come to the holy mountain,' and so it is on the holy mountain that we must be." So Pharaoh hardened his heart again and would not let the people go.

So Moses is told by God to go and inform Pharaoh of an even more severe plague that will come upon all of the cattle of Egypt (Exodus 9:1-7). One of the chief representatives of the gods of Egypt was the bull. He was the god of power. But God is sending a message to Egypt by saying, "Pay attention. I am." Moses represents the power of Egypt, not this bull. After all, the bull now has an incurable disease and will die. But not one



single cow, bull, sheep or any other beast in Goshen, where Israel lives, has one single disease among them.

Still Pharaoh hardens his heart, and so the sixth plague comes unannounced, and all of a sudden the people begin to break out with boils and sores (Exodus 9:8-12). The beasts that the Egyptians took from the Israelites begin to break out with boils and with all kinds of disease upon them. This plague attacks the Egyptian god, Typhon or Typhus, from which we have the word “typhoid fever.” Here is a terrible and many times fatal disease. The god of disease is being attacked, and God is simply saying, “This god is not the cause of this. I am. I am the God of disease. I brought this disease upon Egypt.” What was Pharaoh’s response to this? Did he soften his heart? No, because that is not the will of God. Pharaoh hardened his heart again and would not let the people go.

Moses is then told to go to Pharaoh again. This time the plagues are going to make a distinction between believing Egyptians and unbelieving Egyptians. The believing Egyptians are going to be given an opportunity to flee to Goshen and live among Israel where these plagues have no affect. It was as if a curtain fell between the Egyptians and the Israelites, and none of these plagues could pass that curtain. God is keeping His covenant to Abraham. He is prospering His people. He is protecting His people. Moses is to tell Pharaoh that there is going to be hail and fire (Exodus 9:13-35). There is going to be hail and fire upon all the land as God is getting closer to attacking the great house of Pharaoh. God attacks the god of the air. The most important thing to life is the air we breath. He attacks the very reason for their living, but still Pharaoh hardens his heart. He does this even though you can be walking along in Egypt where there is hail and fire and then take one more step and be in Goshen where the sun is shining and everything looks beautiful.

Pharaoh is still refusing to honor God, and so Moses is told to go to Pharaoh and tell him that God is going to send locust upon the land (Exodus 10:1-20). Those locusts are going to eat

the entire harvest. The severity of the impact of this on the people can be seen in the fact that next to air, food is the thing that preserves life. God is in essence saying that He is going to take away life. And He does exactly that by sending a great locust plague. Again Pharaoh calls for Moses and says, "This is too much for me. Go and offer your sacrifice, but leave your family. Leave your wife and children here. You go, but leave them behind." Moses says that nothing will be left behind.

It is time for the plague of darkness (Exodus 10:21-29). That night it gets dark, and in the morning it is still dark. All day long it is dark. God has attacked their god, Ra. You can be walking along in Egypt in total darkness, and then take one more step into Goshen and bright sunshine. Still Pharaoh refuses to let the people go. He also tries to make another compromise. He says to Moses, "Go, but leave your flocks and herds behind." But Moses, still obedient to God's message will not negotiate. He says, "We won't leave a single sheep or lamb behind. We are leaving, and we are taking everything with us." That makes Pharaoh so mad that he says that he will never see Moses again, and if he does he will have him killed.

Moses turns to leave, and on the way out God tells Moses to let Pharaoh know that on that night there will be visited on Egypt such a plague the like of which the world has never seen (Exodus 11-12). God will send one angel to stiffen in death the first born in every single Egyptian house. God tells Moses to tell all of Israel to kill a lamb without spot and blemish. They are to put blood on their doorpost and lintel and stay inside eating unleavened bread along with the lamb and sing songs, not of joy, but of sorrow, for He is bringing a tragedy in Egypt this night. Just as God had promised, that night there was a moaning throughout all the land, and the first born of every animal of Egypt, the first born of every family, every first born male of every family in Egypt from the poorest man, to Pharaoh's son, died. Pharaoh then called Moses and Aaron to him and said, "Get out of my land! Take your families. Take your flocks. Take all of my gold and all of my silver. Take all

you want, but I want you and all your people out of my land tonight.”

It is a night to be remembered. Two million people go out that day and night to camp in the wilderness. Pharaoh's back has been broken by the ten plagues that God performed in Egypt. God will break the back of the unbelieving. That is why you and I need to be believers in God. We need to trust in the Lord. We need to trust in Jehovah that He doesn't have to bring upon us plagues, tragedy, disease and disorder to get our love and concern. May the Lord bless us in the study of His word, that we might come to be the people who can be called by God in the moment of tragedy to stand if necessary before kings to declare the greatness of our God. Otherwise God will have to smite this earth with a plague. Let us be about the Lord's business. Let us be telling others about the Lord's mercy, graciousness and love, or the Lord will fling again the bloody finger of plague upon this earth. May God bless us

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# THE EXODUS EXPERIENCE

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**(Exodus 12:37-40:38)**

## Review and Introduction

Israel has been in Egypt for hundreds of years, but they are about to leave. The importance of the exodus for our study of Old Testament history cannot be underestimated, and so, for the next two chapters, we will study the exodus experience.

It would be good for us to go back and think about what has happened in the city of Rameses, in the land of Goshen, where Israel has been living and working for several hundred years. Joseph had been sold into slavery by his brothers. After spending some time in the house of the captain of the guard and being tempted by his wife, in refusing her advances, he spent some time in prison where he met a cupbearer and a baker. Joseph had interpreted the dreams of these two men with the result that the cupbearer was released from prison and restored to his position while the baker was hanged. The cupbearer forgot about Joseph after his release from prison but remembered him when Pharaoh needed to have his dreams interpreted regarding the nation of Egypt. When Joseph did interpret the dreams and give advice to Pharaoh as to a solution for Egypt's upcoming problems with the famine, Pharaoh made Joseph prime minister and governor of all the land. Joseph was only thirty years old.

For the next eighty years Joseph was second only to Pharaoh in Egypt in the entire world. He eventually brought his family to Egypt where they were given the best of the land for shepherding their flocks, the land of Goshen. Joseph's family

increased and became a mighty people with great flocks and great herds. Due to this growth in numbers Egypt became afraid of them. God allowed them to be put under oppression where they worked in building the great store cities of Pithom and Rameses.

Then Moses was born. Moses prematurely tried to deliver the people when he was forty years of age. Stephen says in his sermon in Acts 7 that Moses supposed that they would know that he was the leader that was to bring them out of captivity. But the time was not yet right, because neither Israel nor Moses was ready for the Exodus, so God drove Moses to Mount Sinai where for forty years he learned the arduous job of leading. He was no longer Pharaoh's daughter's son. He was now simply the servant of Jethro, the priest of Midian. Moses was given Zipporah, Jethro's daughter, to be his wife, who gave him two sons.

It is at this point that God decided that Moses was ready to go back to Egypt in order to lead God's people out of bondage. He was hardened, but he was sufficiently in love with God and had enough faith in God to deliver Israel from Egypt's bondage. So God calls Moses, but now he is reluctant to go. Finally, after all of Moses' reluctance is broken down, he goes back to Egypt and with the ten plagues sent from God, breaks Pharaoh's back. That results in Pharaoh calling for Aaron and Moses and allowing the exodus to begin.

In Exodus 12:31-32 the tenth plague has already been carried out. All of the gods of Egypt have been conquered and Pharaoh's own house has experienced the death of Pharaoh's first born son. From this point, Pharaoh doesn't waste any time:

*During the night Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, 'Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship the LORD as you have requested. Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go. And also bless me.'*

This is the one time that Pharaoh got close to having a soft heart, when he said the words, “*And also bless me.*” Notice the attitude of the Egyptian people in 12:33-36:

*The Egyptians urged the people to hurry and leave the country. ‘For otherwise,’ they said, ‘we will all die!’ So the people took their dough before the yeast was added, and carried it on their shoulders in kneading troughs wrapped in clothing. The Israelites did as Moses instructed and asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold and for clothing. The LORD had made the Egyptians favorably disposed towards the people, and they gave them what they asked for; so they plundered the Egyptians.*

The Israelites had been in captivity, but now they leave Egypt not as slaves, but as honored people. They go out with the blessing of God. They go out with the command of Pharaoh. They go out with the goodwill of the people and with the gold, silver and clothing of Egypt. They have despoiled the Egyptians. Joseph had made Pharaoh rich, but Moses, through God, makes Pharaoh poor.

## **Leaving Egypt At Last**

### **Rameses and Succoth**

The exodus begins as we read in Exodus 12:37, “*The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Succoth.*” Succoth is not a city, but rather is a word that means “booth.” It is there that the Israelites will pitch their tents for the first time.

*There were about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. Many other people went up with them, as well as large droves of livestock, both flocks and herds.*

Think about the journey on that first day. If there are 600,000 men besides women and children, then there are at least 1.2 or 1.3 million Jews leaving that land. How many people went in when Jacob came to Egypt? Seventy-five went in. God has greatly blessed Israel in Goshen. Besides the 1.2 or 1.3 million Jews that leave Egypt, there are Egyptians who left with the Israelites as well. There are also large herds of livestock. Imagine this many people traveling to Succoth during one day on foot or by cart. Remember also that all of these people left Egypt in a great hurry. Exodus 12:39 says,

*With the dough they had brought from Egypt, they baked cakes of unleavened bread. The dough was without yeast because they had been driven out of Egypt and did not have time to prepare food for themselves.*

The Israelites had been in captivity for 430 years as we read in Exodus 12:40-41, “*Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of the 430 years, to the very day, all the LORD's divisions left Egypt.*” The Israelites left Egypt 430 years to the day after they had come to Egypt. It is not clear whether this means when Joseph was brought to Egypt or when Jacob moved his family to Egypt from Canaan. Regardless, we see that God has kept His promise and is watching out for Israel. “*Because the LORD kept vigil that night to bring them out of Egypt, on this night all the Israelites are to keep vigil to honor the LORD for the generations to come*” (Exodus 12:42). The Israelites are to be vigilant and alert people, and they are to observe this day in remembrance of the night that God led them out of Egypt.

In Exodus 12:43-49 some Passover restrictions are given, because the Israelites are to observe, from now on, the day that they ate the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs. The Passover commemorated the day that the Lord passed over the Israelites

when He destroyed all the firstborn of Egypt. The restrictions were outlined by God Himself.

*The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ‘These are the regulations for the Passover: “No foreigner is to eat of it. Any slave you have bought may eat of it after you have circumcised him, but a temporary resident and a hired worker may not eat of it. It must be eaten inside one house; take none of the meat outside the house. Do not break any of the bones. The whole community of Israel must celebrate it. An alien living among you who wants to celebrate the LORD’s Passover must have all the males in his household circumcised; then he may take part like one born in the land. The same law applies to the native-born and to the alien living among you.”’*

The text tells us that Israel did exactly what God commanded. *“All the Israelites did just what the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron. And on that very day the LORD brought the Israelites out of Egypt by their divisions”* (Exodus 12:50).

In Exodus 13 we read of the consecration of the firstborn. In verse one we read, *“The LORD said to Moses, ‘Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether man or animal.’”*

They are to commemorate the day of the feast of the Passover. They are to eat nothing containing yeast. They are to do it in honor of the fact that God not only passed over their firstborn but also allowed them to pass out of their slavery and captivity. When God leads them into the promised land (13:11), they are to offer this sacrifice to God. This sacrifice and the purpose for it are noted by God in Exodus 13:14-16:

*In days to come, when your son asks you, ‘What does this mean?’ say to him, ‘With a mighty hand the LORD*



*brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed every firstborn in Egypt, both man and animal. This is why I sacrifice to the LORD the first male offspring of every womb and redeem each of my firstborn sons.' And it will be like a sign on your hand and a symbol on your forehead that the LORD brought us out of Egypt with his mighty hand.'*

### **Etham**

In Exodus 13:20-22 we read of the continuing of the journey from Succoth down to a little place called Etham. “*After leaving Succoth they camped at Etham on the edge of the desert.*” That would be the wilderness of Shur. But notice here that they begin to be led by a cloud and a pillar, which is the Lord.

*By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.*

On other occasions this cloud would shield them from the hot desert sun in the daytime and the pillar of fire would give them warmth from the cold desert night. So, God was not only leading them, He was providing for their comfort and their need.

### **Pi-Hahiroth**

In Exodus 14 we read of Israel leaving Etham. From Etham they journey to a place called Pi-Hahiroth near Migdol and the sea. As they camp there, Pharaoh has decided that he made a mistake in letting all his slaves go. He gets all of his chariots and army to go with him, and he goes out into the desert to recover them. In Exodus 14:7-12 we read,

*He took six hundred of the best chariots, along with all the other chariots of Egypt, with officers over all of them. The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, so that he pursued the Israelites, who were marching out boldly. The Egyptians—all Pharaoh's horses and chariots, horsemen and troops—pursued the Israelites and overtook them as they camped by the sea near Pi Hahiroth, opposite Baal Zephon. As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the LORD. They said to Moses, 'Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!'*

However, Moses is courageous, and he tells the people, . . . *'Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.'* Then the LORD said to Moses, *'Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen'* (Exodus 14:13-18).

Exodus 14:19-22 tells us that not only has a pillar of fire and a cloud gone before the Israelites during the night and the day, but God has been there also.

*The angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel's army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side; so neither went near the other all night long. Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.*

Try to imagine a wall of water on both sides, going up higher and higher. It would have been a fearful day. Bones would have been quaking, and knees would have been knocking. But the people keep on going. Why? Because Moses is ahead of the them. The leader has taken the lead in Israel, and the people are following him. Praise you, the Lord. That day all of the Jews pass over, along with the great multitude that had come out of Egypt with them. When everyone had crossed over, God allowed Pharaoh and his army to enter into the valley that had been formed by the walls of water from the Red Sea. When all of Israel was on dry ground, God spoke and the waters came together with the result that all of Pharaoh's chariots and horses, along with all of Pharaoh's army was drowned.

It is an archaeological fact that in the gulf of Aqaba there is a level place underneath the water that would have been sufficient for this number of people to pass over. In that level place are the ruins of chariots and chariot wheels. Pharaoh and his army were devoured by the sea. God used the sea as His tool to devour Pharaoh and his people because they had oppressed God's people.

### **Marah, In the Wilderness of Shur**

On the other side of the Red sea, the people are needing water. They come to a place where there are some springs of water, and they find out very quickly that these waters are “*marah*” which is the Hebrew word for bitter or poisonous. God has Moses make that water pure so that the people can drink, and God begins to tell His people the story that He will tell for the next 40 years. That story centers on the fact that God is with His people. He will preserve them. Their clothes will not get old. Their shoes will not wear out. They will be fed with bread from heaven, and water will be supplied from the rocks. They will be fed with quail that God stacks up three feet deep. God will take care of His people whether or not they are faithful to Him because of the promise that He made to Abraham. He has made a covenant to Israel that they will enter into the Promised Land.

### **Elim**

From Marah, they journey to a place called Elim where there are 12 springs and 70 palm trees. Springs and palm trees sound good, but unless God miraculously continues to supply the people with springs and palm trees, especially when there are 1.2 million men, and nearly 2 million women and children, then this will simply be a mockery. Seventy palm trees will not provide enough dates to feed 2 million people. God is trying to tell them that this land cannot sustain them. There are not enough crops. There is not enough water in this land to sustain all of them. So it will have to be God who sustains them. This is the lesson that Israel learns at the springs of Elim.

### **Wilderness of Sin (Dophkah and Alush)**

From Elim they travel to the wilderness called “sin” or “of sin.” It is here that they will sin because of their murmuring against Moses. In Exodus 16:1-3 we read,

*The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt. In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, 'If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat round pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.'*

It is a historical fact that freed slaves do not know what to do with their freedom. This is seen here in the fact that the people are longing for the flesh pots of Egypt because they don't have the food that their body desires. The Lord hears this complaining, so in 16:4-5 He speaks to Moses.

*Then the LORD said to Moses, 'I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days.'*

God is about to give them a day called the Sabbath day. It is a day in which they are to remember that God delivered them from Egypt's bondage. On that day they are to rest and serve the Lord. The next morning the people find flakes on all of the bushes. They gather these flakes and make bread out of them. They look at these flakes and wonder what it is. From that day on they called it manna which means "what is this?" They didn't know where it came from except that it came from God. They didn't know what it was except that it would sustain their life. They didn't know what to do with it until God told them to bake it and make bread out of it, and then they were sustained by the thing that came from God.

God is still teaching them, and by teaching them, He is teaching us that the only way that we are going to be able to sustain ourselves in this unfriendly environment of the world is by learning to trust His grace and by using whatever provision He gives to us for that day. That is why when Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He told them to begin this way, *“Our Father in heaven, . . . Give us this day our daily bread”* (Matthew 6:9, 11). That is a daily prayer. That is a morning prayer for the bread of a single day. That is all the Lord has promised to provide, the bread for this day.

God provides manna, but eventually they complain about that also, so God gives them quail. He gives them quail not for a day or two, but it is quail stacked up three feet high. Some people believe that this means that the quail were flying three feet high so that they could catch them. This does not seem to be what is being said here. God kills enough quail to meet the people's needs. The people are once again being taught that God provides not for the future but for today. They have the bread and meat that they need for the day, along with all of the water that they need.

### Rephidim

In Exodus 17 the people arrive at a place called Rephidim where they set up their camp, but as it is in other places, there is no water for the people. This, in turn, sets up another confrontation between the people and Moses. In 17:2-7 we read,

*So they quarreled with Moses and said, ‘Give us water to drink.’ Moses replied, ‘Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the LORD to the test?’ But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, ‘Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?’ Then Moses cried out to the LORD, “What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me.” The LORD answered Moses, “Walk*

*on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.' So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"*

The Lord does bring them water. Water comes out of the rock, and the place is called Massah or Meribah because of the quarreling and contention that took place there between the people, Moses and God. Israel is a complaining, grumbling and quarreling people because they are free from slavery and do not know what to do with their freedom.

Another important event occurs in Exodus 17, when they meet a people called the Amalekites. These people are on their way to defeat the Egyptians. They are going to destroy the Egypt that Israel has just despoiled. This is not some small tribal people. This is a huge army of people that now faces Israel. It is at this point that we read of Joshua coming forward as the general of God's people. He has been Moses' servant, his right hand man, but now he becomes what he was called by God to be the general of the army of God.

In Exodus 17:8-16 we read of Israel going down to fight the Amalekites in the valley below Rephidim. It is during this battle that Moses stands up on top of the mountain and holds his hands up in the air with the rod in his hands. As he holds the rod up the Amalekites are defeated in the valley below. If Moses lowers his hands then Israel starts to lose the battle. A person can only hold their hands up for so long, so Aaron and Hur (Miriam's husband), stand on both sides of him and hold his hands up. This allows the rod to stay raised until Joshua finally defeats the Amalekites in the valley below. It is a day to

be remembered. The Amalekites do go on to defeat Egypt, and Israel goes on to inherit the promised land.

As Moses travels toward the promised land, Jethro, his father-in-law, comes out to meet him. He watches what Moses does during the day. All day long Moses sits in the tent of meeting and all of Israel lines up to receive counsel and have their problems solved, but when the day is over most of them go home without seeing Moses. So Jethro asks Moses, *“What is this that you’re doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening.”* (Exodus 18:14) Jethro tells Moses that what he is doing is not good. Jethro then tells Moses what he needs to do. Moses needs to divide Israel and put captains over ten, over fifty, over a hundred and over a thousand. This will divide the people into tribes. Then you would have the family heads, the tribal heads and finally the head of all, the head of each single tribe. What Moses needed to do was delegate some of his authority. That is true in any situation among God’s people. The kingdom of God also needs to be organized in such a fashion. Nobody should be responsible for more than ten people, and everybody can get answers to their problems from the one who is above them. If that person cannot solve it, then the one above him should hear the case, and if he can’t solve it, then the one above him, until finally, it will get to the elders, the bishops, the leaders of the people of God and then finally submitted to God Himself. The word of God, of course, will always be the guide. We need to work and live so that we are our brother’s keeper. God help us not to make the mistake that Moses made in Egypt.



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## THE EXODUS EXPERIENCE (2)

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**(Exodus 19-40, Numbers 1-11:3)**

### Review and Introduction

In the last chapter of our study, we saw Israel leave Egypt by the mighty hand of God. Israel plundered the riches of Egypt prior to their departure, but a few days later Pharaoh was sorry that he had let the Israelites go, so he pursued Israel with the intent of bringing them back to the city of Rameses. When Pharaoh caught up to Israel, he and his entire army were destroyed in the Red Sea, and Israel was triumphant with the Lord as their leader and with Moses as their apostle and provider.

However, we began to see almost immediately that the land between Egypt and the Promised Land could not sustain them. There was not enough water or food. What was really happening was that the people were being tested, and as we saw, they failed the test. They grumbled, complained, argued and fought with Moses until finally the Lord rained manna from heaven so that they could make their bread, and He gave them quail to eat and water from the rock. As God had told them time and time again, what He was trying to get them to learn was that they needed to learn to trust Him. He was the One who cared for them. He was the One who would provide for them. Pharaoh could not take care of them because he was dead, having been drowned in the Red Sea with his army. The land could not take care of them because it was arid. Moses could not take care of them because he was limited in his power. Only God, who is the LORD and who defeated all of Egypt's gods, was the One who could provide for them in that wilderness.

One lesson that Israel has learned is that Moses is not adequate as their spiritual help and their spiritual guide. They have tried to line up at his tent and get advice or counsel from him, but that failed to work because Moses cannot handle the workload by himself. So Jethro, a priest of God and Moses' father-in-law, has given Moses the revelation of how to delegate his authority so that the case load can be handled. Moses was told to organize the camp so that every tenth person is a caregiver and every person has someone who they are intimate with. The purpose of this is so that every person can get his counsel and advice in order to be the spiritual person that he ought to be.

## Meeting God At Mount Sinai

### **The Law Given At Sinai/Horeb**

Now that the people recognize that it is God who will supply them with all of their needs and Moses has a system of delegation in place, the people are ready to hear the law of God. They have finally arrived at the mountain where Moses had served his father-in-law as a shepherd, Mount Sinai. It is here that God will speak to them. From Exodus 19:1 through Numbers 10, Israel will be at Sinai. God is going to do marvelous things among them. We will see great spiritual lessons that are there even for us today. These laws are not given for us to follow, but the God who gave these laws is still to be followed, and He states here the principles that will enable us to know the attitude in which He would have us serve Him today under the new covenant.

We will look at several things during this period of time that will let us see exactly what is happening to them, and then they will begin their journey toward the Promised Land. Israel has come to this mountain in the third month after they left Egypt, and they will be here until the end of the second year.

They will be only 38 years out of the Promised Land when this story is over.

In Exodus 19-24 the law is given. The law is not just the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are sort of like the beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount. They are the introduction to all of the principles that will be discussed during this time and from this law. This law was a national law for Israel. It provided such things as provisions for taxes, the killing of a person, and stealing a person's sheep or a person's wife. Legal laws are found in what we call the Law of God. But there are also individual laws and laws about their health, laws about the way they are to treat their wives and children, and laws that deal with the minute details of personal life, hygiene and family ordinances. As sacrifices are demanded and commanded by God, they will find their fulfillment either in the Lord's sacrifice, on the cross, or in our daily sacrifice for the Lord.

### **The Pattern For the Tabernacle Given at Mount Sinai**

In Exodus 25-31 the pattern for the tabernacle is given. The word "tabernacle," as we read it in our Bible, simply means "tent." It is the Lord's tent. It will have one section in it that will be 20 x 10 cubits and one section that will be 10x10x10 cubits. The smaller one of these will be called the "holy of holies." All of the furniture that is to be found there is described in Exodus 25-31.

### **The Idolatry of the People At Sinai—The Golden Calf**

In Exodus 32-34 one of the most tragic events in the wilderness occurs. While Moses is up on the mountain receiving all of this great testimony from God, the people below are again thinking of Egypt. They are thinking about how dry it is out here in this desert and how all they have to eat is this manna and quail. All that they have to drink is this water that comes from this rock. They no longer have the beautiful things

of Egypt, and so they decide to make themselves a god and go back to Egypt. The people have Aaron, Moses' own brother, take gold earrings and the gold rings that they got from the Egyptians, melt them down, and make them a golden calf like the one Egypt has. The people begin to bow down to this golden calf saying, "*These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt*" (Exodus 32:4b). They begin to dance, drink and have sexual orgies until finally they are caught up in the kind of religion that the pagans are caught up in. They also plan to appoint a new leader other than Moses, for they believe that Moses has died on the mountain. They are going to go back to Egypt, apologize for having left and again become the slaves of Egypt. However, all of this is not going unnoticed: God tells Moses,

*Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt' (Exodus 32:7-8).*

Moses walks down the mountain with two tablets on which are written the ten great words, the ten great commandments of God. Joshua has been waiting for him on the mountainside, and as they near the camp Joshua hears the noise. Joshua says, "*There is the sound of war in the camp.*" (Exodus 32:17) That is what a general would hear, but Moses, being the spiritual leader of the people, hears the noise and says, "*It is not the sound of victory, it is not the sound of defeat; it is the sound of singing that I hear*" (Exodus 32:18).

As Moses and Joshua approach the camp, Moses sees the golden calf. He sees all the people dancing before it. He sees all of the drinking and arguing, and he is so angry that he throws down the tablets of stone on which are written the Ten

Commandments of God and breaks them. The commandments were already being broken by the people in the valley, and they had not even received them yet. Moses came down and rebuked them for the evil that they had done and demanded that those who had caused this die. He then takes the golden calf, grinds it into fine powder and mixes it in their drinking water. The people drink that golden calf in their water until the water is all gone. What Moses is trying to tell them is that Jehovah alone is God and that anything else brings, not only defeat and death, but destruction to the people of God.

The people have learned to bow before other gods before they ever enter the Promised Land. This is not a people who deserves to be delivered; it is a people that deserves to be destroyed. They are only preserved by the grace of God, who knows that they are to enter the Promised Land. The Lord has not left them though because as soon as the incident with the golden calf is settled, they begin the first steps toward the erecting of the tabernacle.

### **The Construction of the Tabernacle At Sinai**

In Exodus 35-40 the people get everything ready to get the tabernacle built, get the furnishings made and get the ark of the covenant made. Instructions in getting the priests trained on how to function in the tabernacle and everything that is to be provided for their worship in this tabernacle is described. God intended to dwell in this tabernacle and did so until later when David and Solomon built Him a temple. God said, "I never asked for a temple to dwell in" (cf. 2 Samuel 7:5-7). God was satisfied with this movable tent because He wanted to teach the people a very important lesson, that being, that no matter where they have a house that house is nothing but a tent. No matter where they call home, they are still strangers and sojourners in a foreign land, and they must never believe that it is time for them to dig their roots deep and get to the point where they are at home. They are to be looking for a city that has no foundation but whose builder and maker

is God (cf. Hebrews 11:10). The construction of the tabernacle brings the book of Exodus to a close.

## Regulations For Consecration and Worship

### **Worship of the Tabernacle Instituted (Book of Leviticus)**

In the book of Leviticus the people of Israel are taught how to worship God. That is what the whole book of Leviticus, with the exception of chapter two, is all about. It is a book on how worship is to be done. Each sacrifice is explained in detail as are all of the feasts. In Leviticus all of the offerings are discussed. The book of Leviticus is fabulous. As you read through it look for this statement or this thought: "The Lord is holy." It is the holiness of God that is stressed in the book of Leviticus, not the sacredness of worship. Worship needs to be sacred, but that is not the emphasis of God in the book of Leviticus. The emphasis of God is that He is holy and therefore He is to be worshiped. Since He alone is holy, worship to Him is to be sacred.

### **A National Census Is Taken**

In Numbers 1-4 we read of a national census being taken. Each tribe is numbered with each subdivision being named. All of the men in each tribe, along with all of the men in each subdivision, are counted until finally, when that count is over, Israel numbers over 605,000 men. Israel has not lost any of their numbers. They have the same number of men that they did two years before when they left Egyptian bondage. They will be preserved in this land with this number of people even though this number of people will not enter promised land because of their rebellion toward God and because of Moses' sin. Instead, it is their sons who will enter the Promised Land at which time there will be 603,000 of them in number as they get ready to enter the Promised Land. God has now fulfilled part of His promise to Abraham. Abraham is a great nation of people who

have been given a great law and who are now marching toward a great land. That is all it takes to have a nation: a people, a law and a land. Israel is all of these. They are a people; they have a law, and soon they will enter a land, not as a tribal few, but as a great nation.

### **The People Must Be Pure**

In Numbers 5 and 6 the people are purified. They go through a ceremony that purifies them as a nation and makes them holy to God. They have been brought out of bondage; they have been given a law, and they have been given a tabernacle in which to worship. They have been given a revelation of God's holiness, and now they are given a ceremony by which they can become ceremonially pure. You can never be sinless, but by the grace of God, the blood of Christ can make us ceremonially pure so that we can stand before God to worship Him.

### **The Tabernacle Erected and Furnished**

As soon as the people are pure, the tabernacle is set up. Everything is ready, having already been built according to the instructions given to Moses by God. All of the laws concerning what is to go into the tabernacle have been given. It is now possible for the tabernacle to be erected and for the people to enter it in order to worship God. They are able to worship because they too are pure. The people are pure; the priests are pure, and the law is pure, as is the tabernacle. It is furnished with the golden candlesticks along with the table of shewbread. The ark of the covenant is placed in the most holy place, and the glory of God fills the tabernacle which now makes it the place that they are to come to offer their sacrifices. It is a two full years since they have left Egypt. They are not what they were when they left Egypt. They are an organized nation, a purified nation and a legalized nation.

### **Israel Celebrates the First Passover**

Among the things that Israel has become, they have also become a worshiping nation, and in that light, they now celebrate the first Passover. It is not known what happened the first year, whether or not they celebrated the Passover, but they celebrate the first Passover in Numbers 9. All of Israel gathered in their private homes. The Passover was not a public thing where they came to the tabernacle to serve God. It was a private thing. Everybody went into their house, gathered their family together, ate that unleavened bread and bitter herbs, and drank the wine as if the Lord was again passing over Egypt. They sang the low music, the sad and mournful music, because the death angel had passed by. It was not a joyous occasion, although it was a day that brought joy in that God had passed over them. But their souls were afflicted that night as they thought about all of the tragedies that God had allowed to happen that had brought them to this place. Those tragedies had made it possible for them to serve Him with the joy with which they now served Him.

Today, when we partake of what is called the Lord's Supper and we eat that little bit of unleavened bread and drink that little bit of the fruit of the vine, we do so with a degree of sadness. We look back to all that Jesus had to do, that His body had to be broken, that His blood had to be shed, and that He had to give the full measure of His life. But that mournful event and this mournful memorial bring great joy, because the memorial declares His death until He comes again, and it declares that we spend the day as a part of His nation because of the sorrow of that bitter day on Calvary's hill. That is what the Passover does here. It declares to the people their victory and their joy because of the sadness of the passing over of the death angel.

### **The Silver Trumpets Discussed**

In Numbers 10:1-10 we read of the silver trumpets that are to be built. These silver trumpets are to be the things that cause Israel to know what the Lord wants of them. God will speak to



the priest, he will blow a certain trumpet sound and they will know that it is time to gather for an assembly. He will blow another trumpet sound which will mean that it is time for them to go on the march. With another trumpet sound a warning will be given of coming enemies. The people are to go to their appointed places of defense and get ready to fight a war. There is another trumpet sound which the people will recognize as meaning that they are supposed leave the place they are at and begin marching once again toward the Promised Land. The silver trumpets are great things in God's economy.

### **Taberah—"Burning"**

With these silver trumpets, the incidents at Sinai end, and God tells them in Numbers 10 that they have stayed at this mountain long enough. God is now going to turn them northward. All that God intended for them to learn has been learned, and it is now time for them to go to the Promised Land. As they leave Sinai, the first place that they come to is where they are going to camp. They will call this place Taberah. It is not a city, but a place out in the desert, and they call it Taberah because Taberah means "burning." What happens here in Numbers 10:11-11:3 is that the people murmur and grumble. They still have not learned the lesson that they can trust God. He has provided them with water, bread, meat, protection, guidance, advice and comfort. He has provided everything that they could ever need, and still they grumble before God. "We wish we had died in Egypt. You brought us out in this wilderness to die." Because they murmur, the text says, ". . . *his anger was aroused. Then fire from the LORD burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp*" (Numbers 11:1b). As they leave that place they leave graves to mark the place where they murmured and call the site "Taberah" which means "burning."

From Taberah they journey to a place that they end up calling Kibroth-hattaavah (Numbers 11:4-34). Kibroth-hattaavah means "graves of lust." Israel is going to have to dig

some more graves for again they did exactly what they did in Taberah. Digging those graves and burying their loved ones in Taberah had obviously not convinced them that they ought not to murmur. But at the next camp they murmur again, and this time God kills many more of them. God is doing His best to teach them that they are to trust Him and quit their murmuring.

The New Testament says, *“Do all things without grumbling or disputing”* (Philippians 2:14). I am to look at Egypt and at Israel in the wilderness and not murmur or grumble as they grumbled. Grumbling is unbelief, and we are not saved by unbelief. Here at Kibroth-hattaavah God tells Moses that the work is getting too great for him, and besides, Moses is getting nearer the end of his experience with Israel. So Moses appoints seventy-two elders to help him. There are seventy elders in the tent with Moses, and there are two more, Eldad and Medad, who are in the camp prophesying. They have not come to the tent to be appointed by Moses this day. In total there are 72 elders appointed in Israel. Moses lays his hands on them, and when Moses lays his hands on them the Spirit that is with Moses comes to be with them. They are given the wisdom Moses has. They are given the power that Moses has. They become Moses’ agents, if you will, Moses’ apostles. They are the people who are to serve under Moses to dispense God’s will throughout all of Israel.

God speaks to Moses, and Moses sends the seventy-two to do the will of God. The camp is divided so that everyone can be cared for by all the captains just as Jethro had advised Moses in Exodus 18. But there are still those who lust after Egypt’s things with the result that thousands of the people are killed. But now there are 73 people to represent God so that the people do not appoint a new captain and go back to Egypt.

From Kibroth-hattaavah, they come to Hazeroth. They are finally getting close enough to the Promised Land that they are coming to established settlements and established outposts. Hazeroth is one of those, located on the trade route where people would pause to stop and eat, and refresh themselves as

they journeyed on toward their destination. It is here at Hazeroth that Aaron and Miriam murmur against Moses (Numbers 12:1-15). Their murmuring against Moses deals with jealousy that they have toward Moses. *“Has the LORD spoken only through Moses?” they asked. “Hasn’t he also spoken through us?”* (Numbers 12:1) They also apparently have a problem with Moses’s wife. Numbers 12:1 says, *“Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite.”*

At some point in time Moses had married an Ethiopian woman. This is probably not Zipporah because she is a Midianite. This lady is a Cushite. But either way, Aaron and Miriam murmur against Moses because he has married someone outside of God’s family. That is what made them mad. Because they murmur against Moses, God appears to them and says, “Moses is my prophet. If there is to be another prophet, I will make Myself known to him in a dream or in a vision. With My servant Moses, it is not so. With him I speak mouth to mouth, as it were, man-to-man and my form shall he behold, and because you have murmured against Me, Miriam is to spend days as a leper.” Thankfully for Miriam, Moses intercedes for her. She might have died a leper had it not been for Moses’ intercession, so God says, “If her father had but spit in her face, she’d be unclean seven days.” Miriam spends seven days outside the camp, and the nation has to wait for her to be healed. Upon their departure, they travel to Kadesh-Barnea. We read of this in Numbers 12-14, and Israel is now on the edge of the promised land.

At this point, Moses sends twelve spies, one from each tribe, into the land. They all bring back one single report. “It is as God said. This is a land flowing with milk and honey, a land that will sustain all this nation.” As proof of what they have seen they bring a grapevine so big that it takes two men to carry it so that it can be shown to Moses. Ten of the spies tell the people, “It is as God promised, but we cannot take it. There are giants in the land. We look like grasshoppers in their sight, and

so there is no way that we can take this land.” However, Joshua and Caleb say, “Let’s go up and take it. It is like God said it would be, and we can take it.” But the people refused to listen to Joshua and Caleb, and instead, they listened to the majority report. The majority is hardly ever right because most people don’t follow God. Most people don’t have faith, and because they don’t have faith, they will not listen to Joshua and Caleb.

God is angered over their lack of faith, so He says, “You will wander in this wilderness for a total of 40 years. You have already spent two years here, so now you will wander for 38 more years.” The people do not like this word from God. In fact, they dislike God’s word so much that they try to go in and take the land anyway. The result is that they are soundly defeated and return to the desert to spend their lifetime wandering in the wilderness.

We can be grateful, however, that there is more to this story. It would be tragic if that ended it. Has God ever brought us to the edge of a promised land and asked us by faith to go in to take it? If so, have we ever told God, “No.” Let us pray that we will have the faith at our Kadesh-Barnea not to turn back and end up wandering in a wilderness of futility, but rather, to march forward and conquer a promised land of victory.

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## THE EXODUS EXPERIENCE (3)

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### **(Numbers and Deuteronomy)**

#### Review and Introduction

In the last chapter, Israel arrived at the edge of the Promised Land. They were ready to go in and conquer the land that God had promised to Abraham. They sent 12 spies into the land, and when they returned they all came back with a single report: “God has told us the truth. It is a land flowing with milk and honey. It is a land that will sustain all of our great people. It is just as God has said. It is that kind of land, but we can’t take it because there are giants in the land.” They said further, “It is as God had said, but God won’t do what He said.” God had said, “This is the way the land will be, and I will give it to you.” They believed what their eyes saw about what God had promised, but they did not believe that they could conquer what they were seeing. So, they did not believe at all. Faith is being sure about what you do not see and confident about what you have not received.

However, two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, had faith. They said, “Let’s go take the land.” The people refused to listen to them, and so God said, “You will not take the land for 38 more years. You will wander in this wilderness. The shoes will not grow old on your feet nor the clothes on your back. I will feed you, but you will not inherit the land that I promised to Abraham because the land is only for those who have faith.” The people were not satisfied with this, so they tried to take the land by themselves. They were soundly defeated.

## The Exodus Experience—The Last 38 Years

### Twelve Unknown Stations

The nation of Israel begins its time of wandering. It is here (Numbers 15:1-19:22) that you will read of twelve unknown stations. They are not unknown by name because they are listed (Numbers 33:19-30), but it is unknown where they are now.

In Numbers 15-19 and also in chapter 33 (which is a summary of Numbers 15-19), there are five things that occur during that period of time that are very important for us to remember because these not only explain *what is* happening but they tell us *what is going* to happen with the people of God. In chapter 15 ordinances are given concerning worship. There are certain sacrifices and ordinances that Israel is to follow during this time of wandering and also after they enter the Promised Land. So God begins to use these 38 years for schooling them in the way that they are to worship when they get into the land. This schooling is for those who are the children of those over twenty years old when they left Egypt. It is for the children who will inherit the Promised Land.

However, in Numbers 16 we will see a second incident during this period of wandering that is outright rebellion. First, we had the ordinances for worship. Now we have rebellion. This will be the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, Abiram and On.

*Korah son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and certain Reubenites-Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth-became insolent and rose up against Moses. With them were 250 Israelite men, well-known community leaders who had been appointed members of the council. They came as a group to oppose Moses and Aaron and said to them, 'You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the LORD's assembly?' (Numbers 16:1-3)*

Anytime that God's ordained leaders are questioned like this, the questioners are in trouble. Moses and Aaron have not set themselves up as rulers. God has chosen them. God has appointed them as leaders. These 254 people may be leaders, but they are not leaders of faith.

*When Moses heard this, he fell face down. Then he said to Korah and all his followers: 'In the morning the LORD will show who belongs to him and who is holy, and he will have that person come near him. The man he chooses he will cause to come near him. You, Korah, and all your followers are to do this: Take censers and tomorrow put fire and incense in them before the LORD. The man the LORD chooses will be the one who is holy. You Levites have gone too far!'* (Numbers 16:4-7)

Most of the people involved in this rebellion are people from the tribe of Levi. They are jealous that Aaron is high priest and jealous that Moses is leader.

*Moses also said to Korah, 'Now listen, you Levites! Isn't it enough for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the rest of the Israelite community and brought you near himself to do the work at the LORD's tabernacle and to stand before the community and minister to them? He has brought you and all your fellow Levites near himself, but now you are trying to get the priesthood too'* (Numbers 16:8-10).

Only the family of Aaron could be priests, but all of the Levites served God in the holy service in the tabernacle. But that wasn't enough for them. They wanted to have the place of honor. Numbers 16:11 reads,

*It is against the LORD that you and all your followers have banded together. Who is Aaron that you should grumble against him?’ Then Moses summoned Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab. But they said, ‘We will not come! Isn’t it enough that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the desert? And now you also want to lord it over us’* (Numbers 16:12-13).

The people are always saying something about wanting to go back to Egypt. They want to be fed. But they have forgotten that they had to work from daylight to dark, seven days a week, to get the little bit of food and honey on their bread. All they can remember is that they don’t have food, water, or honey out in the wilderness. They are saying, “It is not enough that you brought us out here to kill us, and,

*. . . now you also want to lord it over us? Moreover, you haven’t brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey or given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Will you gouge out the eyes of these men? No, we will not come!’* (Numbers 16:13b-14)

In other words, will Moses himself make slaves out of the men who come to meet him? They refuse to report to Moses.

The truth of the matter is that Moses had given them a land with milk and honey, but they had refused to take it. It is one thing to be given a land, and it is another to receive it. Moses had given them a land flowing with milk and honey. All that they had to do was have the faith to go get it, but they didn’t have that faith.

Because of their lack of faith and their rebellion against Moses, we read in Numbers 16:15-22,

*Then Moses became very angry and said to the LORD, ‘Do not accept their offering. I have not taken so much*



*as a donkey from them, nor have I wronged any of them.’ Moses said to Korah, ‘You and all your followers are to appear before the LORD tomorrow—you and they and Aaron. Each man is to take his censer and put incense in it—250 censers in all—and present it before the LORD. You and Aaron are to present your censers also.’ So each man took his censer, put fire and incense in it, and stood with Moses and Aaron at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. When Korah had gathered all his followers in opposition to them at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, the glory of the LORD appeared to the entire assembly. The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ‘Separate yourselves from this assembly so that I can put an end to them at once.’ But Moses and Aaron fell facedown and cried out, ‘O God, God of the spirits of all mankind, will you be angry with the entire assembly when only one man sins?’*

Moses and Aaron both plead for the assembly. All the assembly of Israel would have died if Moses and Aaron had not pled with God for their lives. God hears Moses and Aaron, but there is still some punishment to be delivered.

*Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Say to the assembly, “Move away from the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.”’ “. . . So they moved away from the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.” “Then Moses said, ‘This is how you will know that the LORD has sent me to do all these things and that it was not my idea: If these men die a natural death and experience only what usually happens to men, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD brings about something totally new, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them, with everything that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the grave, then you will know that*

*these men have treated the LORD with contempt.' As soon as he finished saying all this, the ground under them split apart and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, with their households and all Korah's men and all their possessions (Numbers 16:23, 24, 27a and 28-32).*

The earth swallowed up Korah, Dathan, Abiram and 14,700 other men as God spoke very clearly that Moses and Aaron were His leaders. In Numbers 16:49-50 we read,

*But 14,700 people died from the plague, in addition to those who had died because of Korah. Then Aaron returned to Moses at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, for the plague had stopped.*

God does not want Moses and Aaron's authority to be questioned because they are leading the people in a time of rebellion. In a time of disobedience, leadership is even more essential than it is in a time of peace and prosperity. Korah, Dathan, Abiram, On, 250 Levites and 14,700 of the people are cut off and die so that Moses and Aaron's leadership will be recognized in guiding the people to the Promised Land.

Sometimes we have trouble with the Lord killing 14,700 people. But know one of two things; either those people deserved to die or God was delivering them from the evil environment in which they were in to bring them home to Himself. In one case it is judgement because of sins committed, and in the other case it is deliverance because of righteousness honored. Those people will die anyway because they have to die before the people of God can enter the Promised Land because they rejected God at Kadesh-Barnea.

The next thing that happens during these 12 unknown stations of wandering is the proof of priesthood. In Numbers 17 the Lord wants to stop these people's grumbling about Aaron so he says in verse 5, "*The staff belonging to the man I choose will*

*sprout, and I will rid myself of this constant grumbling against you by the Israelites.*” A staff is a dead stick but this dead stick without any root and soil is going to sprout buds in order to prove that Aaron is the priest. When that happened the Israelites said to Moses in verse 12, “. . . ‘*We shall die! We are lost, we are all lost! Anyone who even comes near the tabernacle of the LORD will die. Are we all going to die?*’” God makes it very plain that only Aaron can enter the holy of holies and only his sons can enter the holy place. The people also say that they will die because they are lost with no hope and because if someone even goes near the tabernacle they will die. If they touch the mount they will die. If they come near to the tent of the tabernacle they will die. What hope do they have?

The fourth thing that occurs during this period of wandering is the Levites support (Numbers 18). The duties of the priests are given, but God also states that they are to receive one-tenth of the tenth that goes to God. All that the Jews give goes to support the Levites with Aaron’s family receiving the tenth of the tenth. The tenth from the people supports the Levites, and the Levites tenth supports Aaron and his family.

In Numbers 19 the fifth thing in this period of 12 unknown stations is that the Day of Atonement is ordered, detailed and predicted. The Day of Atonement is a day when the people are to bring a sacrifice; it is to be offered on the altar, and their sins are to be remembered when they do that. They are to be remembering the fact that they are sinful, and the Day of Atonement is to keep them, in spite of their sin, in fellowship with God. As they offer the sacrifice, God honors their sacrifice and says that the people are in fellowship with Him. During this period of wandering, God is not leaving them alone. It is not as if God is ignoring them, rather, He is giving them ordinances for worship. He is correcting their desire to have the authority that belongs only to Moses and Aaron. He is establishing the house of Aaron as the priestly family. He is providing for the support of Levi and Aaron’s households, and He is giving them the great day in which they can offer the sacrifice that God will

accept as their work of faith and keep them in fellowship with Him on a national basis. The Day of Atonement was not so that the individual would be in fellowship with God, but rather, the day of atonement was so that the nation could continue in fellowship with God and not wander into the sin that they did at the foot of the mountain when they made the golden calf. They would also not fall into the sin of Korah, Dathan and Abiram and On if they had a constant worship and a yearly reminder of the fact that they needed God, not only for their physical needs, but also for their spiritual forgiveness of sin.

### **Moserah**

The fifteenth station on this exodus is Mount Hor and a city called Moserah. It is here that God says the wandering is over. The people have fulfilled the time that was set for them to wander in the wilderness prior to entering the Promised Land. The entire generation that had left Egypt who were 20 years or older were now dead with the exception of Aaron, who will die at this spot, Moses, who will die soon, and Joshua and Caleb who get to enter the land because they were faithful at Kadesh-Barnea. The rest of them have died. A new generation has risen. It is time to enter the Promised Land.

Here at Moserah on the top of Mount Hor, Aaron dies. The first high priest of Israel has now passed away. Aaron, who was the right hand of Moses, who was the spokesman for Moses and God is now dead, and so another generation is to continue. The leaders must die before the people who are going to be the leaders will arise.

### **Ezion-Geber, Kadesh-Barnea, Mount Hor and Elath**

There are three stations where not much happens. The people do a little more wandering, picking up people who have stopped in various places. They travel to Ezion-Geber, Kadesh-Barnea and back to Ezion-Geber (Numbers 20:30). This traveling results in just one thing; gathering the people. This

would be necessary during a wandering of millions of people. One group would stop to feed their sheep at one place and another group would stop to feed their sheep at another place.

All of the people must cross the Jordan River and go into the land that God has promised to Abraham. So they gather at a place called Elath. Elath and Ezion-Geber are sister cities, one beside the other at the northern end of the Gulf of Aqaba. It is a copper mining place. Later, Solomon's copper mines will be found here. At Elath, the people do what they have been doing from the very beginning of their time with God. In Numbers 21 they begin to murmur again. This time God sends fiery serpents to strike the people, and hundreds and thousands of people begin to die, so they appeal to Moses. Moses again appeals to God, and God says, "Ok, erect a serpent, a brass serpent, and there I will save the people. Anybody who looks upon this brass serpent will be healed." It wasn't the serpent that healed them. It wasn't even the looking that healed them. The writer of the book of Hebrews makes it plain what it was that saved them. It was the faith that caused them to look that healed them. God always saves people by faith, but it is a faith that does what God says for the simple reason that it is God who said it.

The brass serpent is just a piece of brass, but they are to look at it. They are to look at that brass serpent, and in the looking they will live. This became a superstition to the people. They thought, "That serpent is something else. We need to carry that with us." So they put that piece of brass in the ark of covenant. That meant that the brass serpent was in the most holy place where all that was supposed to be there was the ark of the covenant and inside of it the two tablets upon which Moses had rewritten the ten commandments after Moses had broken the original edition that God had written. That was all that was supposed to be there: God's ark and God's law. Man is to go there once a year to meet God. But the people put that piece of brass there, and it was to stay there until Hezekiah, who was a king during the nation of Judah's day. It is amazing how

superstitious people can be even when they have the revelation of God.

### **Valley of Moab/Plains of Jordan**

In Deuteronomy 28-30 we see an additional covenant that God makes with Israel apart from the one that He made at Sinai. The word “Deuteronomy” comes from two Greek words “*deuteros*” which means “second,” and “*nomos*” which means “law.” So this is the second law. It is not literally a second law, but the law as it is repeated to the people. The book of Deuteronomy is the law repeated. Pay attention to the fact that when He gives the law, He often gives the reason for that law. It is similar to Jesus, who, when He discussed a law or principle such as in the Sermon of the Mount, He also told them what was behind that law. That is what Deuteronomy does that Exodus does not do. For instance, when God is repeating the ten commandments in Deuteronomy 5:12-15, when He gets to the one that says, “*Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy ...*” He doesn’t simply make the statement without any details. He goes on to tell them why they are to keep the Sabbath day holy. God said to remember the Sabbath because they were slaves in Egypt, and God delivered them by a mighty and powerful hand.

Israel had the Passover to observe yearly and the Sabbath day to observe weekly as reminders that they were under obligation to God. They were to give praise and glory to Him for His work in delivering them out of the tragedy of Egypt. God is gracious in that He gives us reminders of our deliverance and His power. We have one such reminder every Lord’s day, as we mentioned earlier. As we eat the bread and drink the fruit of the vine we are declaring His death until He comes. We are remembering that He died for us. We are honoring God for His great deeds and the great power that He places into our lives.

After the whole law is recited, God gives a new covenant. It is an additional covenant to Israel besides the covenant He gave at Sinai. This covenant is found in Deuteronomy 28-30. Here we find

the way that God has promised to deal with His people. In Deuteronomy 28:1-2a we read,

*If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands that I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God:*

Notice the “ifs” there? If you obey the Lord, He says,

*You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock—the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed. You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out. The LORD will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven. The LORD will send a blessing on your barns and on everything you put your hand to. The LORD your God will bless you in the land he is giving you. The LORD will establish you as his holy people, as he promised you on oath, if you keep the commands of the LORD your God and walk in his ways. Then all the peoples on earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will fear you. The LORD will grant you abundant prosperity—in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your ground—in the land he swore to your forefathers to give you. The LORD will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. The LORD*

*will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the LORD your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom. Do not turn aside from any of the commands I give you today, to the right or to the left, following other gods and serving them (Deuteronomy 28:2b-14).*

They will be blessed in every way, but then in 28:15 he says,

*However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you.*

God says, “I’ll curse you in every way I promised to bless you. I will curse you when you go out and when you come in. I will curse the fruit of the womb. I will curse the land. I will curse everything, and I will put you in captivity. I will take you away from the land where you are and will scatter you.” (cf. Deuteronomy 28:64) “I will scatter you among all the nations. I will give you an anxious mind. I will give you eyes weary with longing. I will give you a despairing heart. You will be in constant suspense. In the evening, you will wish it was morning, and in the morning you will wish it was evening. You will wish for me to send you back to Egypt in ships. Your males will be for sale, and your females will become other people’s wives. I will make you so cursed that nobody will buy you.”

However, in chapters 29 and 30 God says that if they remembered Him according to the law and repented and turned to do His will, then He would bring them back from that captivity and bless them again in this land. That covenant will govern all that happens to Israel from this time forward. When they are obedient, they are blessed. When they are not, they are



cursed. That is the covenant of blessing and cursing, and it will be discussed many times in future studies.

In the last chapter of Deuteronomy, chapter 34, Moses dies. He climbs to the top of Pisgah and looks at the Promised Land. Moses doesn't get to enter the Promised Land, but he does get to see it. He will enter it later on the mount of Transfiguration when he stands with Jesus, but he doesn't get to enter it as long as he is living. In Deuteronomy 34:5-7 we read,

*And Moses the servant of the LORD died there in Moab, as the LORD had said. He (the LORD) buried him in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where his grave is. Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone.*

Why did he die then? His work was done. It was time for Joshua to serve, so the Israelites prepared for life without Moses.

*The Israelites grieved for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days, until the time of weeping and mourning was over. Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the LORD had commanded Moses (Deuteronomy 34:8-9).*

There follows a powerful epithet for Moses.

*Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, who did all those miraculous signs and wonders the LORD sent him to do in Egypt—to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel (Deuteronomy 34:10-12).*

The most powerful leader that Israel ever had was this man, Moses. But Joshua is now the leader of Israel. In our next chapter we will pick up the story of Joshua, and that will complete our story of the history of the Hebrew family.

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# CONQUEST OF THE EAST BANK

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**(Numbers 21:21-31:54)**

## Introduction

This is the last chapter in our study of the history of the Hebrew family which has been the first division of Old Testament history. In our last chapter, as we were studying the flow of history, we wandered through the wilderness to the death of Moses.

## The Amorites and Israel—Central Campaign

### Israel's Request

We need, at this early point of our chapter, to go back in time and talk about the conquest east of the Jordan which occurred while Moses was still alive. This portion of land is not really part of the Promised Land, because if you look at the boundaries of the Promised Land in Numbers 34, you see that it actually ends with the Jordan river. But the Israelites need to conquer this land because, although they would rather just cross the Jordan River and begin conquering the Promised Land, Sihon and some other kings who rule over the east bank of the Jordan River refuse to cooperate with them. So Israel had to conquer that land. Two and a half tribes of Israel desire this land and will eventually settle there. So the conquering of this territory is an important consideration and an important study. In Numbers 21:21ff., we will read of three campaigns that take place on the east side of the Jordan that result in Israel conquering what we might call “bonus land.” In other words, it

is more land than was originally promised to Israel. The text begins with Israel's request:

*Israel sent messengers to say to Sihon king of the Amorites: 'Let us pass through your country. We will not turn aside into any field or vineyard, or drink water from any well. We will travel along the king's highway until we have passed through your territory.'*

The king's highway makes for an interesting study. It is the highway that the king's of Egypt used to communicate with the kings of Mesopotamia. It was a flat rocky place where chariots could run with speed. It was a well-traveled and well-worn highway.

### **King Sihon's Negative Response and Its Consequences**

Israel said to Sihon, "We will stay on the main road. We will stay on the highway. We will not get off into the countryside, nor will we bother any of your country." The response from Sihon was:

*But Sihon would not let Israel pass through his territory.*

*He mustered his entire army and marched out into the desert against Israel. When he reached Jahaz, he fought with Israel. Israel, however, put him to the sword and took over his land from the Arnon (which is about half way down to the Dead Sea) to the Jabbok (which is about half way between the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee), but only as far as the Ammonites, because their border was fortified (Numbers 21:23-24).*

Joshua could not conquer the Ammonite territory, but he did take all of Sihon's territory, the territory of the Amorites. In 21:25-26 we read,

*Israel captured all the cities of the Amorites and occupied them, including Heshbon and all its surrounding settlements. Heshbon was the city of Sihon king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab and had taken from him all his land as far as the Arnon.*

With the victory being completed, Israel celebrates in song (Numbers 21:27-30). It is titled the Song of Arnon. It talks about the victory that Israel has just accomplished. Then in 21:31 we read, “*So Israel settled in the land of the Amorites.*” This is what is called the Central campaign. Joshua has passed through the country of Moab and taken this central territory between the two seas down into the land paralleling the northern end of the Dead Sea, all of the central territory east of the Jordan from Sihon. The land is called Gilead and the tribe is Amorite.

## Israel and King of Bashan—Northern Campaign

### **The Enemy**

After this in 21:32 we read,

*After Moses had sent spies to Jazer, the Israelites captured its surrounding settlements and drove out the Amorites who were there. Then they turned and went up along the road towards Bashan . . .*

Bashan is a northern territory up near the waters of Mirim and extending all the way nearly to Damascus. It is a very fertile land, a land where great cattle herds are found. “. . .and Og king

*of Bashan and his whole army marched out to meet them in battle at Edrei.”*

### **The Victory Given**

Israel is not wanting to wage war against Bashan. They just want to pass through the land. But here comes the king of a powerful country to encounter Moses. However, God speaks to Moses and He says,

*... ‘Do not be afraid of him, for I have handed him over to you, with his whole army and his land. Do to him what you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon.’ So they struck him down, together with his sons and his whole army, leaving them no survivors. And they took possession of his land (Numbers 21:34-35).*

Joshua, in two great battles, has conquered all the land from the northern end of the Dead Sea to the city of Damascus in Syria. The only thing that remains are the plains of Moab where they first camped as they entered the Promised Land. The plains of Moab extend from the northern end of the Dead Sea to the southern end of the Dead Sea. Many of the events that are recorded in the book of Numbers occur in this area.

### **Israel and Moab—Southern Campaign**

Balak of Moab, King of the Midianites

From Numbers 22 through Numbers 31:54 we have the story of the conquest of Moab. In Numbers 22:1-3 we read,

*Then the Israelites traveled to the plains of Moab and camped along the Jordan across from Jericho. Now Balak (who is the king of this area) saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites, and Moab was terrified because there were so many people. Indeed, Moab was filled with dread because of the Israelites.*

We must remember that when Israel left Egypt they were over 600,000 in population. In the book of Numbers, when Moses and Eliezer make a census of the people, there are over 600,000 men over twenty years of age that can go to battle. This is a powerful army. That means there would be over 2 million people camped on the plains of Moab with all of their flocks, their herds and all of their servants. This would be terrifying to the inhabitants of the land. Imagine the number of tents that would be spread in that valley to house 2 million plus people. No wonder Moab is afraid. So in 22:4-5 we read, *“The Moabites said to the elders of Midian, ‘This horde is going to lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field.’”*

### **Balak’s Alliance With Balaam**

The Moabites are frightened that they are about to be devoured.

*So Balak son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time, sent messengers to summon Balaam son of Beor, who was at Pethor, near the River (this would be the Euphrates) in his native land.*

The Moabites are going all the way up to Mesopotamia to get this prophet who is going to come and curse the people of God. It may be hard to keep these two men apart in your mind but remember that Balak is the king and Balaam is the prophet. Here’s what Balak, the king, said to Balaam, the prophet:

*Balak said: ‘A people has come out of Egypt; they cover the face of the land and have settled next to me. Now come and put a curse on these people, because they are too powerful for me. Perhaps then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the country. For I know that those you bless are blessed, and those you curse are cursed’ (Numbers 22:5b-6).*

Balaam is a prophet of God. He is a true prophet, but he does not have a true heart. He desires money more than he desires his office and his work, but he is a prophet of God, and from this time, everything that he says, that comes from God, comes to pass.

In Numbers 22:7-9 we read,

*The elders of Moab and Midian left, taking with them the fee for divination. When they came to Balaam, they told him what Balak had said. (That is, if you'll come curse these people, all this money is yours.) 'Spend the night here,' Balaam said to them, 'and I will bring you back the answer the LORD gives me.' So the Moabite princes stayed with him. God came to Balaam and asked, 'Who are these men with you?' (God is not asking for information here. He's all knowing. So why is He asking this?) Balaam said to God, 'Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, sent me this message: "A people that has come out of Egypt covers the face of the land. Now come and put a curse on them for me. Perhaps then I will be able to fight them and drive them away."' But God said to Balaam, 'Do not go with them. You must not put a curse on those people, because they are blessed' (Numbers 22:10-12).*

### **Balaam's Response**

Balaam's word cannot counterbalance God's word. God has already said, "These are blessed people." So it doesn't matter what Balaam or Balak says, God doesn't want Balaam, his prophet, violating His will. Armed with those words from God, we read, "*The next morning Balaam got up and said to Balak's princes, 'Go back to your own country, for the LORD has refused to let me go with you' "*" (Numbers 22:13).

It seems that Balaam has overcome his desire for money and is going to serve God. However, the story continues, and as it turns out, Balaam has not overcome his desire for money,



even though he struggles in trying to do the right thing. In Numbers 22:14-18 we read,

*So the Moabite princes returned to Balak and said, 'Balaam refused to come with us.' Then Balak sent other princes, more numerous and more distinguished than the first. (As we find out later, he also sent more money.) They came to Balaam and said: 'This is what Balak son of Zippor says: "Do not let anything keep you from coming to me, because I will reward you handsomely and do whatever you say. Come and put a curse on these people for me."' (If what I have given you is not enough, then you tell me how much you want, and I will see that you get it. Now watch Balaam's speech. Balaam's speech is right and sounds so good.) But Balaam answered them, 'Even if Balak gave me his palace filled with silver and gold, I could not do anything great or small to go beyond the command of the LORD my God.'*

If Balaam had said at this point for the princes to go back to Balak and tell him exactly what he had just said, then Balaam would have continued to be the honorable, true and faithful prophet of God. But notice what he says in addition to his earlier comments. In Numbers 22:19 Balaam, who has just stated some great words, says, *"Now stay here tonight as the others did, and I will find out what else the LORD will tell me."* Now the Lord has already told him what to do, and the Lord has not changed his mind. God had already said, "these are blessed people." Balaam must be hoping that God will have changed His mind. God has an answer for Balaam. *"That night God came to Balaam and said, 'Since these men have come to summon you, go with them, but (watch this condition) do only what I tell you'"* (Numbers 22:20).

God has not changed His position at all. "Do not do anything unless I tell you to do it. Don't say anything that I don't tell you to say. Stop with the words that I tell you to

“speak.” Balaam is glad because now he gets the money. But God is displeased with Balaam. Yes, God did tell Balaam to go, but that doesn’t mean that He is pleased with him. This is about to become very evident to Balaam. In Numbers 21:21-34 we have the story of Balaam’s donkey.

*Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey and went with the princes of Moab. But God was very angry when he went, and the angel of the LORD stood in the road to oppose him. Balaam was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD . . .*

Why didn’t Balaam see him? Balaam is not innocent. The donkey is innocent, and the pure in heart can always see God. So this donkey with an innocent heart sees the angel. “. . . standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand she turned off the road into a field. Balaam beat her to get her back on the road.” The donkey is trying to save Balaam’s life, and Balaam’s beating the donkey. As strange as it sounds, the donkey is smarter than Balaam right here.

*Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between two vineyards, with walls on both sides. When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she pressed close to the wall, crushing Balaam’s foot against it. So he beat her again.*

Again the donkey is trying to save Balaam’s life, yet Balaam is beating the donkey.

*Then the angel of the LORD moved on ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn, either to the right or to the left. When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam and he was angry and beat her with his staff.” Watch carefully what happens in verse 28: “Then the LORD*

*opened the donkey's mouth, and she said to Balaam, 'What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?'*

The strange thing here is that Balaam doesn't seem surprised that his donkey is talking to him. So he begins conversing with the donkey.

*Balaam answered the donkey, 'You have made a fool of me! If I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now.' The donkey said to Balaam, 'Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden, to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?' 'No,' he said. Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low and fell face down (Numbers 22:29-31).*

Balaam is fortunate that he is alive. But he is only alive because of the actions of the donkey. And the angel wants some answers from Balaam.

*The angel of the LORD asked him, 'Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me. The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If she had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now, but I would have spared her.' Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, 'I have sinned. I did not realize you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now if you are displeased, I will go back' (Numbers 22:32-34).*

Balaam now appears to be totally honest in this statement of his. He may not necessarily be pleased because he would still like the money, but he is willing to go back. And when he goes

back he will be going to carry out the instructions of the LORD. “*The angel of the LORD said to Balaam, ‘Go with the men, but speak only what I tell you’*” (Numbers 22:35a). Notice once again that he is told to speak no less or no more than what God has told him to speak. Balaam is ready to do what he is told.

*So Balaam went with the princes of Balak. When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the Moabite town on the Arnon border, at the edge of his territory. Balak said to Balaam, ‘Did I not send you an urgent summons? Why didn’t you come to me? Am I really not able to reward you?’ ‘Well, I have come to you now,’ Balaam replied. ‘But can I say just anything? I must speak only what God puts in my mouth’* (Numbers 22:35b-38).

The two men made a great sacrifice and get ready for Balaam to curse Israel. In Numbers 23, you have the first of Balaam’s oracles. He says,

*Balaam said, ‘Build me seven altars here, and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me.’ Balak did as Balaam said, and the two of them offered a bull and a ram on each altar. Then Balaam said to Balak, ‘Stay here beside your offering while I go aside. Perhaps the LORD will come to meet with me. Whatever he reveals to me I will tell you.’ Then he went off to a barren height. God met with him, and Balaam said, ‘I have prepared seven altars, and on each altar I have offered a bull and a ram.’ The LORD put a message in Balaam’s mouth and said, ‘Go back to Balak and give him this message.’ So he went back to him and found him standing beside his offering, with all the princes of Moab. Then Balaam uttered his oracle: ‘Balak brought me from Aram, the king of Moab from the eastern mountains. ‘Come,’ he said, ‘curse Jacob for*

*me; come, denounce Israel.' How can I curse those whom God has not cursed? How can I denounce those whom the LORD has not denounced? From the rocky peaks I see them, from the heights I view them. I see people who live apart and do not consider themselves one of the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob or number the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and may my end be like theirs!'* (Numbers 23:1-10)

Balaam can probably imagine the response that this is going to bring and wants to be apart from them. Balak's response is predictable.

*Balak said to Balaam, 'What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my enemies, but you have done nothing but bless them!' He answered, 'Must I not speak what the LORD puts into my mouth?'* (Numbers 23:11-12)

Balak is not at all satisfied with this, so he takes Balaam to another place hoping that it is there that Balaam will place the curse on Israel. God puts a second oracle into Balaam's mouth. In Numbers 23:17-24, God sends Balaam back with another message for Balak.

*So he went to him and found him standing beside his offering, with the princes of Moab. Balak asked him, "What did the LORD say?" Then he uttered his oracle: "Arise, Balak, and listen: hear me, son of Zippor. God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill? I have received a command to bless; he has blessed, and I cannot change it. No misfortune is seen in Jacob, no misery observed in Israel. The LORD their God is with*

*them; the shout of the King is among them. God brought them out of Egypt; they have the strength of a wild ox. There is no sorcery against Jacob, no divination against Israel. It will now be said of Jacob and of Israel, 'See what God has done!' The people will rise like a lioness; they rouse themselves like a lion that does not rest till he devours his prey and drinks the blood of his victims.'*

Balak is furious. *"Neither curse them at all nor bless them at all"* (Numbers 23:25). Again, Balaam says, "I can only do what God tells me to do." This, also, does not satisfy Balak. He wants to take Balaam to another place, and maybe it will be there that Balaam will curse Israel. God, of course, will not allow that to happen, and so He gives Balaam a third oracle. Balaam goes and delivers the third oracle as is read in Numbers 24:1-9. It is the same thing repeated once more. God blesses Israel. They cannot be cursed. *"May those who bless you be blessed and those who curse you be cursed!"* (Numbers 24:9b)

*Then Balak's anger burned against Balaam. He struck his hands together and said to him, 'I summoned you to curse my enemies, but you have blessed them these three times. Now leave at once and go home! I said I would reward you handsomely, but the LORD has kept you from being rewarded'* (Numbers 24:10-11).

Balaam's potential reward is removed. He gets nothing from Balak. But Balaam knows why it is that he is not being compensated. And so he gives a fourth oracle and finally a fifth oracle and in both oracles, God has blessed these people. Balaam cannot curse them. God has blessed these people. Balak cannot defeat them, and so Balaam leaves seemingly with no money. However, the story is not yet over.

*"Then Balaam got up and returned home and Balak went his own way."* (Numbers 24:25) If that is all we knew of

Balaam, we would say that he was a very faithful person. He has only said what God put in his mouth but there's more. In Numbers 25:1-3 we read,

*While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate and bowed down before these gods. So Israel joined in worshipping the Baal of Peor. And the LORD's anger burned against them.*

Numbers 25:9 tells us that 24,000 people are killed because of the plague that God sends on the people because they are bowing down to the god of Peor. The question then, is, "What does this have to do with Balaam? Moses and Joshua end the destruction of the Midianite people, and we read in Numbers 31:15-16 that at the end of the war with the Moabites, Moses asks the military commanders,

*'Have you allowed all the women to live?' he asked them. 'They were the ones who followed Balaam's advice and were the means of turning the Israelites away from the LORD in what happened at Peor, so that a plague struck the LORD's people.'*

What we see here is that what Balaam could not do with his curse, he did with his counsel. He had said everything that God told him to say, but he obviously added to what God had said. He said, "I can't curse these people because they are blessed. You cannot defeat these people because they are blessed. But if you can just get them to compromise, if you get them to marry your women and marry your sons and worship your gods, then God will do the rest." That is exactly what happened as God slaughtered 24,000 Israelites in one day. That didn't cause them to not be able to defeat the Midianites, for God is not limited in His ability to save, whether it be with few or many, but Israel

was cursed because they followed Balaam's advice of compromise.

This will be brought up again in the book of Revelation. This is another reason why we are studying Old Testament history, because one of the churches of Asia Minor is going to be cursed because they follow the counsel of Balaam. What is the counsel of Balaam? It is to compromise. Compromise the unique standing you have with God, and God will do the rest. It is good that we think about this. We are a unique people if we are called by God. God has called us according to 1 Peter to be a peculiar people (cf. 1 Peter 2:9-10). We are a people set apart, a people different from other people. We live in heavenly places. We are blessed with heavenly blessings. We follow a heavenly High Priest. We are the heavenly people of God, and to compromise that is to bring upon ourselves the judgement that was brought upon Israel because they followed the counsel of Balaam.

What we have seen in our study so far is that Moses is still living. Israel has conquered all of the land east of the Jordan. They not only possess that promise land west of the Jordan but they have also conquered Sihon of Gilead. They have conquered Og of Bashan and now they have conquered Balak of Moab. The battle with Moab was the hardest battle. It was a hard fought battle. It took several battles, but finally the whole nation fell to God. Israel now possesses the land that two and a half tribes of the twelve will live in.

### **Closing Arrangements Before the Promised Land**

In Numbers 26 Moses and Eleazar take a census. This was not a war census which they were forbidden to take. Rather, this was a care census. We need to know who the people are, where the people are and how many of the people there are because we are about to enter promise land and dwell in settled cities. Through the taking of this census they would also know how many men there were for battle because the time has come for



war. They have already fought three great battles, and now they are about to cross the Jordan River and fight against the most powerful tribes in the land. Joshua, the general, must know where his people are.

In Numbers 27:12-14 Moses is warned of his death, being told by God that he is about to go the way of all mankind. With these words God appoints Joshua to be the leader of His people. In Deuteronomy 34:9 we read about Joshua and his preparation by Moses and God to lead Israel.

*Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the LORD had commanded Moses.*

Israel is no longer the family of Abraham. They are now the nation of Israel, and Joshua is about to lead that nation across the Jordan River to conquer the land promised to Abraham. Joshua will set them up as an established, legalized nation with him being the first ruler. Judges will follow him, and the kings will follow the judges. The second series of chapters in Old Testament History will focus on the history of the Hebrew nation. May God Bless you.

# Richard Rogers



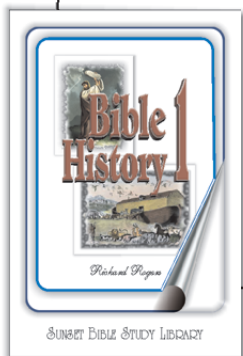
Richard Rogers was born in 1936 in Dallas, Texas. He was educated at Abilene Christian University, and Florida Christian College. He was an avid reader, a diligent student of the Bible, and authored some twenty teaching workbooks and published outlines.

Richard was well known and recognized as a gifted evangelist, teacher, and lectureship speaker. Until his death he was in great demand as a missionary encourager and world evangelist. He taught for more than three decades at Sunset International Bible Institute, assisting in the training of thousands of preachers and missionaries. Richard mentored church planting teams in California, Mexico, Thailand, and the Philippines.

Richard preached for local congregations at Blue Ridge, Azle, Midland, and the Sunset Church of Christ in Lubbock, Texas. Speaking appointments took him to forty states and thirty foreign countries and to many Christian university campuses as a teacher and lecturer. He was also a frequent speaker at soul-winning workshops across the nation.

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Richard and his wife, Barbara, were blessed with four children and eight grandchildren.



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