

## Lesson 1

# "In The Beginning"

## Genesis 1 & 2

Sir Isaac Newton had a replica of the solar system made. At its center was a large golden ball representing the sun. Revolving around it were smaller spheres attached at the ends of rods of varying lengths. They represented Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars and the other planets. These were all geared together by cogs and belts to make them move around the sun in perfect harmony.

One day as Newton was studying the model, a friend who did not believe in the biblical account of creation stopped by for a visit. Marveling at the device and watching as the scientist made the heavenly bodies move in their orbits, the man exclaimed, "My, Newton, what an exquisite thing! Who made it for you?" Without looking up, Sir Isaac replied, "Nobody." "Nobody?" his friend asked. "That's right! I said nobody! All of these balls and cogs and belts and gears just happened to come together, and wonder of wonders, by chance they began revolving in their set orbits and with perfect timing."

The unbeliever got the message! It was foolish to suppose that the model merely happened. But it was even more senseless to accept the theory that the earth and the vast universe came into being by chance. How much more logical to believe what the Bible says, "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth." The word also declares, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalm 14:1).

### "God Created"

It should be noted the writer of this account is not concerned with science. However, no proven fact of science contradicts any scripture. The expression "and God" is used 28 times in Genesis 1. God's name appears four other times without the "and." Thus, one can clearly see the writer's emphasis is on the eternal God who is the all-powerful creator of the universe.

Seven times the writer says God saw the things he created were good. In fact, the seventh time, which is at the close of creation, God saw that it was "very good." Any bad that is in the world came as a result of man and his sin.

Verses 5, 8, 13, 19, 23 and 31 mark the end of each of the creative days. On day one, light was created and divided from the darkness. On day two, a firmament, or atmosphere, surrounding the earth was made. The third day, God caused the dry land to appear. He also covered the land with vegetation. Note, light had already been created to sustain such life. The sun, moon and stars were created on the fourth day. Marine life and winged fowl were formed by God on the fifth day. On the sixth day, God created land animals and man.

Because each of the days of Genesis 1 has an evening and a morning, we assume they were literal days. Exodus 20:8-11 makes it plain the days of creation were six days just like we

experience weekly from Sunday through Friday. In fact, the literal meaning of words in the Bible should always be accepted unless compelling reasons are given for adopting a figurative meaning.

### **Man Is Different**

Until man's creation, everything was spoken into existence. Man was different (Genesis 1:26; 2:7). God took of the dust of the earth and made man in his own image. Man's likeness to God cannot be physical since God is a spirit (John 4:24). Instead, man is a being comprised of body and spirit (James 2:26; 2 Corinthians 4:16).

God commanded man to be fruitful and multiply. He also instructed him to subdue the earth and have dominion over all the other living things (Genesis 1:27-28). Man was placed in the garden to dress and keep it, or care for the things it contained (2:15). He could eat of every tree except the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (2:16-17). Here we find man's first job and restriction.

### **A Help Suited to Man**

Everything had been good until man was created. Then God observed, "It is not good that man should be alone" (2:18). God planned to make a helper (aid) "corresponding to him" or "suited to him." No animal was right for this role. Man saw that after God had formed every animal and bird to him to see what he would call them (2:19-20).

Woman was made from a rib out of man's side (2:21-22). Someone noted this was under his arm and close to his heart where he should always keep this special creation. Man and woman are of the same nature or being. God intended one man to be joined to one woman in marriage for life (2:23-25; Matthew 19:3-9).

### **A Day of Rest**

A Bible school teacher once told the story of creation. One of her four year old students then said, "On the seventh day God went to jail." When asked to explain, he said, "You said that on the seventh day God got arrested." Actually, God made a special day for rest (2:1-3). Later, he made it a law that the Jews would rest on that day (Exodus 20:8-22). Here we see the principle that man needs to rest one day out of seven to recover his physical strength. He also needs time for worship, fellowship with God and spiritual development.

### **Conclusion**

Creation was a six day display of the power of our almighty God. Man was the only being God created which had a soul. Woman was the crowning glory of creation, being specially suited to man's needs. God rested on the seventh day, thus showing man the need to pause at the end of a week's work.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Who would you say is the main character of Genesis 1?
2. What word is used to describe God's creative action in 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24 and 26?
3. Describe the basic appearance of the earth when it was first created (1:1-2, 6-8).
4. Briefly list the creative activities of the first seven days.
5. The Hebrew word for God in the creation account is Elohim, which is the plural form of El, the word for power or might. Why did God choose such a word and the plural pronoun "us" in 1:26 and 3:22?
6. Is there more than one God? Compare Deuteronomy 6:4; James 2:19 and John 17:20-21.
7. What made man unique among all creation?
8. Name some ways man is made in the image of God.
9. God gave man a fourfold task in 1:28-30. Briefly describe those parts.
10. What was "not good" about creation?
11. What was woman's role as conceived by God?
12. What did God do on the seventh day? Discuss why man should or should not follow the same course today.

### **Lesson 2**

# When Sin Entered The World

## Genesis 3

God would have been very pleased if he had never needed a remedy for sin. However, man chose the path of sin. Satan's grand lie caused him to transgress God's will. Jesus called Satan "a murderer from the beginning" and the father of lying (John 8:44).

### **Satan's Lie**

Satan denied the reality of the curse of death and God's veracity (Genesis 3:4). God told Adam in the day he ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil he would surely die (2:17). It should be noted this lie involved the addition of only one word to what God had actually said. Man was seduced into believing he would not be punished for sin (Compare Ecclesiastes 8:11). Today, there are those who are evidently deceived into believing they will never die. They live as if they will not die (Luke 12:16-21; Hebrews 9:27). We need to live so as to be prepared for death (Isaiah 38:1; Matthew 25:13).

It should also be observed that Satan used one of God's creatures to bring about the fall of man (Genesis 3:1). Even now, he works through men to persuade us to follow some false teaching, thereby joining his side (Matthew 16:21-23; 2 Corinthians 11:14-15; 1 Timothy 4:1). Sometimes God's truthfulness is denied by saying God does not mean "whosoever" in Matthew 19:9. His truthfulness is also denied by those who say a Christian cannot so act as to be lost eternally. Compare this with 1 Corinthians 9:27 and 2 Peter 2:20-22.

### **Denied God's Loving Kindness**

Satan denied God's loving kindness by saying he kept back something good for man (Genesis 3:5). We know God is good, and loving, and will not hold back anything good for man (Psalm 135:1; John 3:16; Romans 8:31-32). Jesus told his disciples to ask, seek and knock to receive and have it opened to them. "Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" (Matthew 7:7-11).

Modern day feminists have said God is unfair because he denies them roles of spiritual authority (2 Corinthians 11:3). Ironically, the very reason for such denial is from the account of the fall. Paul tells us Eve was deceived and sinned (1 Timothy 2:13-14). Because God said Adam had listened to his wife, we know he sinned in yielding to her instead of to God (Genesis 3:17).

### **Said Nothing of the Positive**

Satan said nothing of the positive side of God's commands. Adam and Eve could eat of all other trees in the garden. Satan emphasized the negative side of God's command and distorted the truth. He said God did not want them to eat because 1) their eyes would be opened and 2) they would be as God, knowing good and evil (3:5). These two assertions were actually partially true (3:7, 22). Man's eyes were opened to their nakedness. They did become like God in the sense that they knew the difference between good and evil.

### **Three Basic Areas**

Satan tempted Eve in the three basic areas to which man is susceptible (1 John 2:15-17). The lust of the flesh is any uncontrolled appetite of the body. Eve "saw that the tree was good for food." Her desire for it was uncontrolled in that it caused her to ignore the danger to her relationship with God. The lust of the eyes is anything excited by sight. Eve saw "that it was pleasant to the eyes." The pride, or vainglory, of life is the seeking of worldly rewards and praise of men above that of God. Eve saw that it was "to be desired to make one wise."

### **Eyes Opened**

Having sinned, Adam and Eve's eyes were now opened and they were ashamed (3:7-10). The simple innocence of the garden had now been shattered (2:25). They tried to hide from God but discovered such was impossible (Psalm 139; Jeremiah 23:24; Hebrews 4:12-13). In response to God's questions, both Adam and Eve tried to pass the blame on to someone else (3:12, 13). The consequences of sin, however, remain with the one who has committed the sin (Ezekiel 18:4, 20; Galatians 6:7-8). The serpent, Satan, Eve and Adam all faced punishment because of their wrongs (3:14-19).

The special fellowship of the garden was brought to an end by man's sin (3:22-24). From that point forward, God set in motion his plan for man's salvation. Sin had now entered into the world. All men, unconditionally, received the sentence of physical death (Romans 5:12). What man lost unconditionally in Adam, he regained unconditionally in Christ (1 Corinthians 15:20-22). All will overcome the grave. The place in which they will spend eternity depends upon their own actions (John 5:28-29). Only in Christ can the special relationship of the garden be restored.

### **Conclusion**

God chose to bring the Savior into the world by woman, thus taking the stigma of sin away from her (3:15; 1 Timothy 2:15). Since men usually trace their lineage through the male parent, it is plain "the seed of woman" refers to Christ. Mary was the only woman to bear a child without a man being involved (Matthew 1:18-25; Isaiah 7:14). The seed of the serpent would be all those who follow after Satan (Matthew 23:33; John 8:44; 1 John 3:10). Enmity between the followers of Christ and the world is natural because good lives and teachings expose the bad (John 15:18-19).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Is it possible for animals to speak? Can the devil or his agents use a man to speak? Give scriptures to support your answers.
2. Who were the first sinners? Before answering, carefully read John 8:44; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6 and Matthew 25:41.
3. How does the temptation of Eve parallel 1 John 2:16? What basic problems lie behind man's sin?
4. We know Eve was deceived (1 Timothy 2:14), but what might have caused man to sin?
5. What were the immediate consequences of Adam and Eve's sin?
6. What was man's response to God's question? What was woman's? How are they alike?
7. What punishment did the serpent receive? Woman? Man? How was their punishment appropriate to each of them?
8. What did God do to and for the couple after he pronounced judgment?
9. To what does Genesis 3:15 likely refer? Name some verses to support your answer.
10. Name some verses showing what happens to animals that harm men.
11. Are there any consequences of Adam's sin for mankind? Do we inherit Adam's sin? Give verses to support your answer.

### **Lesson 3**

## **Sin Grows Worse**

## Genesis 4

Even though Adam and Eve had sinned and been driven out of the garden, there were moments of joy. Eve conceived and bore Cain. She said, "I have gotten a man from the Lord" (Genesis 4:1). Her statement shows she recognized God as the source of her blessing (Psalm 127:3-5). She also bore Abel, Seth and other children (4:2, 25 and 5:4).

### **They Both Offered**

When Cain and Abel reached manhood, Cain became a farmer. Abel was a shepherd. They both brought sacrifices to God as an offering. Cain was not guilty of idolatry. Neither did he fail to work. One could not successfully accuse him of failing to worship. So, we might ask why God had respect for Abel's sacrifice and not Cain's (4:3-5). The only difference in these two sacrifices is that Abel offered by his sacrifice by faith (Hebrews 11:4). Obviously, it was a working faith since the text says he "offered" (James 1:22; 2:17).

The Hebrew writer lets us know God witnessed Abel's sacrifice and its righteousness. The words "witness" and "testifying" come from the same Greek word meaning to give a good report of. John tells us Abel's works were righteous and Cain's evil (1 John 3:11-12). The word "righteous" tells us that Abel had followed the divine law. God had apparently given some directions as to the sacrifice to be made, though we have no record of that command (Romans 10:17).

### **God's Will Or Man's?**

It may be God had commanded them to offer animal sacrifices. Or, it may be God had instructed them to give the first and the best. Remember, in the Genesis account we learn that Cain offered of the "fruit of the ground." There is no comment as to the quality of the fruit offered. However, concerning Abel's sacrifice it is said he offered "firstlings of his flock" and "of the fat thereof."

Certainly, we know that God wanted obedience and not just sacrifice. When King Saul spared the best of the flocks and King Agag, Samuel had to tell him what God thought. "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22). We can be assured God will see our gifts just as surely as he did theirs. He will reward us if we are faithful in the doing of his will (Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18).

Cain did as he willed, but Abel did as God willed. Cain was angry and had resentment because his sacrifice had been rejected. God let him know he was ready to take him back (4:5-7). If Cain did what was right, God would know. Further, Cain would be able to rule over sin. If he did not gain control, sin was at the door of his life ready to take over and rule him. Cain did not repent, but murdered his brother (4:8). The next verse tells of God coming to Cain, perhaps to give him a chance to repent, but he would not. Instead, he lied.

## **He Yet Speaks!**

Abel is dead, but he still speaks (Hebrews 11:4). His blood calls for vengeance, thus speaking (Hebrews 12:24; Genesis 4:10). However, it seems he speaks more clearly through his example of obedient faith. God caused Moses to record that faith for all time in the pages of his inspired word. His example tells us God's favor is always upon those who obey his will (Matthew 7:21).

In stark contrast, we see God's punishment for Cain. Cain said it was more than he could bear (Genesis 4:12-13). He was cursed and condemned to be a fugitive. God would not allow anyone to kill him. He placed a mark on him to warn others (4:14-15).

## **Sin Grows Worse**

Cain went to live in the land of Nod with his wife. Many have wondered where he found a wife. While the text does not tell us specifically, we do know Adam named the woman Eve because she is the mother of all living (Genesis 3:20).

Lamech, a descendant of Cain, is the first polygamist and the second recorded murderer (4:19-24). There can be little doubt that sin has grown worse. Lamech sinned and then boasted about his evil works. He even boasted of the greater punishment he deserved for them.

## **The Promised Seed**

The promised seed might have come through Abel, but he was dead. Man might have seen that as an end to the plan of salvation. After all, the one righteous man had been killed by a self-willed man. Thankfully, God is not so easily deterred. He caused Eve to bear another son, Seth. Eve said, "For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed" (4:25-26).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter should teach us the importance of worshipping in God's prescribed way. He is only pleased with sacrifices offered in accord with his direction. Also, it can be seen that God will reward the faithful and punish the disobedient. Those who would be rewarded of God should fervently seek to do his will.

## **Discussion Questions**

1. According to the text, what were the names of the first two children? What were their occupations?



2. What difference was there between the sacrifices of Cain and Abel?
3. Name some verses that might help us understand the reason such a difference was significant in the eyes of God.
4. What does the word "righteous" tell us about Abel's actions?
5. What does God desire instead of sacrifice alone?
6. What was Cain's response to the Lord's looking on Abel's sacrifice with favor?
7. What response did God, in turn, have for Cain?
8. What sins, or attitudes, led to the murder of Abel? What sin followed the murder? Give some verses showing the danger of each.
9. In what two ways does the blood of Abel speak?
10. What was God's punishment for Cain? How did God prevent someone from murdering Cain?
11. Whose will did Cain follow? Whose did Abel follow?
12. Did God force Cain to sin after he offered an unacceptable sacrifice?
13. What child are we next told was born to Adam and Eve? What was Eve's response to that birth?
14. What kind of heart (spirit) does God want us to have? Give some verses to support your answer.
15. Explain the possible significance of Luke 11:49-51.

#### Lesson 4

## **The Flood: Sin Leads to Punishment**

Genesis 5:24-9:17

## **The Sons of God Married the Daughters of Men**

From the time of the fall, men could be grouped in two major categories. The "sons of God" would be those people who had good morals, were God-fearing and religious. Abel was of this category. He offered in accord with the Lord's will and was accepted in his sight (Genesis 4:1-4; Hebrews 11:4). Enoch was taken off the earth by God because he pleased him. To please God, one must believe God exists and that he will reward those who diligently seek him (Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5-6). The other category was the "daughters of men," who would be those who gave priority to fleshly desires. Cain would be of this group.

There came a time when the righteous began to intermarry with the unrighteous (Genesis 6:2). They chose their mates because of their physical attractiveness instead of their spiritual strength. This wrong motive for marriage turned the hearts of the righteous away from God (compare 1 Kings 11:1-3). People also had their hearts filled with wickedness and the earth was filled with violence (Genesis 6:5, 11). God limited the amount of time he would strive with man to bring him back to recognition of his sins and turn him back (Genesis 6:3). Destruction of the earth was brought by God because of all the wickedness of man (2 Peter 2:5).

God does have a limit to his patience with man's wickedness. He will destroy the earth when he can no longer tolerate man's sinfulness (Genesis 6:5-7; 2 Peter 3:8-10). In the days of Noah, God was sorry, or repented, that he had made man. He did not repent in the sense of turning away from evil. Instead, he turned from fellowship with man because of wickedness.

## **God Saved Noah**

The one righteous man on earth, Noah, and his family were saved by God (Genesis 6:8). Noah was "just" in that he lived in accord with God's will. He was "perfect," or upright, in that he was solely dedicated to God's service. The inspired record also says he "walked with God," which means he did all God commanded him to do (Genesis 6:9, 22; 7:5).

When Noah heard God's warning, he, being motivated by a proper respect for the Creator's power, set out to prepare an ark as God had instructed (Hebrews 11:7). This is in sharp contrast to those around him. They refused to repent and obey God despite Noah's preaching all the years the ark was being built (2 Peter 2:5).

## **God's Covenant With Noah**

God made a covenant with Noah. It was an arrangement whereby God would protect Noah and his family (Genesis 6:18-21). Noah had to meet the conditions of the covenant to receive the reward (Genesis 6:14-17; 7:2-3, 5). Then, God used the waters of the flood to save them from the wicked world. They emerged in a world purified of all evil.

Just so, baptism can deliver us from the condemnation of sin. It can purify us from its terrible stain (1 Peter 3:20-21; Acts 22:16). Baptism serves as a grave for the old man of sin from

which God resurrects us to walk in a new life (Romans 6:3-4). The waters of baptism separate us from our former sins and make us a new creature in Christ (Acts 2:38; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

The water would not have saved Noah if he had not acted in accord with God's will. Neither can we be saved unless we act in accord with God's will (Matthew 7:21). Receiving the love of God is contingent upon our keeping his commandments (John 14:15; 1 John 5:1-3).

### **A Thanksgiving Sacrifice**

The flood lasted one year and ten days (Genesis 7:11; 8:14). Noah's first act on the renewed earth was to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving. It could be viewed as a sacrifice dedicating the renewed earth to God. It also served as a reminder of man's reliance upon God. Following the sacrifice, God made a further covenant with Noah. He said he would never again destroy the earth with water. He placed a rainbow in the sky as a perpetual reminder of the promise. God did this because he was pleased with Noah's sacrifice (Genesis 8:20-22; 9:8-17).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Who were the "sons of God" and the "daughters of men"?
2. In time, what motivated men to marry?
3. With what were men's hearts filled?

4. Why did God decide to destroy the earth by a flood? Under what conditions might one suppose he would destroy it again?
5. What caused Noah to find grace in the eyes of the Lord?
6. What covenant did God make with Noah? What conditions was the covenant based upon?
7. What in the Christian age is likened to that covenant and those conditions?
8. How long did the flood last?
9. What was Noah's first act on leaving the ark? What further covenant did God make with him? With what will God destroy the world the next time?

#### Lesson 5

## **The Lord Came Down**

Genesis 9:18-11:9

### **One Language**

"Now the sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And Ham

was the father of Canaan. These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated" (Genesis 9:18-19). A brief description of the various nations which came out of each son is found in chapter 10.

Chapter 11 opens with a statement the modern reader may find startling. "Now the whole earth had one language and one speech." Anyone who has ever been in a foreign country has longed for a common language. Even the simplest request becomes difficult when we cannot understand one another. Immediately after the flood, men understood each other.

The word for "journeyed" literally means, "to pluck up (tent pegs)" according to John T. Willis. Apparently, the people were nomadic. Their journeys eventually brought them to the land of Shinar. Bible students will recognize its later, more familiar name, Babylon, or modern day Iraq (Genesis 10:10).

### **Making a Name for Themselves**

The text makes it clear the people began to be more interested in their own thoughts than God's will. Three times they used an expression starting with the words, "let us." Much like the man with too great a harvest for his existing barns, they left God out of their planning (Genesis 11:3-4; Luke 12:16-21). They decided to make bricks, build a city with a tower reaching to heaven and make a name for themselves. The tower is reminiscent of a Babylonian ziggurat. Such were shaped like Egyptian pyramids. Their bases could be up to several hundred feet wide. On top of the first level would be another with a smaller base and so on until they reached the final height.

Bricks would have been necessary because large amounts of stone are not generally available in that area. The asphalt they used was a very sticky substance sometimes called bitumen. There is no particular sin in building. The problem here is the intent and attitude of the people. A desire for personal fame prevents one from truly giving God the glory. Also, God wanted the earth repopulated, while they intended to stay in one place (Compare Jeremiah 32:17-22; Nehemiah 9:7-12; Genesis 9:1).

### **The Lord Came Down**

Man was involved in the greatest undertaking since the flood, perhaps in all history. Yet, God is described as having to come down to observe such an insignificant work (Genesis 11:5; Isaiah 40:15-17, 22-24). Remember, God is all knowing (Psalm 139:1-6; Proverbs 15:3). He is also everywhere (Psalm 139:7-12; Jeremiah 23:24). He created all we see and know (Genesis 1:1).

The people were united because of their common ancestors and language. Their unity had produced one great act of rebellion. God saw men would continue to use unity in a bad way. No form of rebellion would be out of the realm of possibility. Therefore, he resolved to confuse the languages (Genesis 11:6-7).

## **The Gate of God**

When God is opposed to any action, the end will always be the same. "Unless the Lord builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the Lord guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain" (Psalm 127:1). The confusion of languages resulted in the end of the mighty tower project. Not one name of those builders who wanted to be made famous remains. They were scattered to the four corners of the earth (Genesis 11:8).

Interestingly, Babel originally meant "the gate of God." It has now come to mean "a confusion of sounds or voices." In a sense, God used the confusion of voices to send people out. So, we might say this city truly served as a gate for God's purposes (Genesis 11:9).

## **Conclusion**

Several facts stand out from this simple story. First, God's plan is the only one which will meet with ultimate success. "There are many plans in a man's heart, Nevertheless the Lord's counsel-- that will stand" (Proverbs 19:21). "Commit your works to the Lord, And your thoughts will be established" (Proverbs 16:3).

Second, it is important to have unity to accomplish any great goal. The people of Babel were capable of great achievements, for men, as long as they had unity. However, their plans collapsed when confusion ruled in place of unity. We must be careful to unite our speech around God's truth. "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11). Paul exhorted the members of the church at Corinth to all speak the same thing (1 Corinthians 1:10). Similarly, he stressed the unity of the Spirit in his letter to the Ephesians (4:1-6).

Third, we can see sin's long range effects. Even today, we are confronted by the language barrier. Though those can be found to interpret, subtle meanings are lost in translation. Thus, man's efforts are thwarted.

## **Discussion Questions**

1. Name the sons of Noah and give at least one nation which descended from each.
2. What unique situation was found on the earth at the beginning of chapter 11?
3. In what land did the people settle? What names would be familiar to us?
4. What happened which caused God to come down in judgment?

5. What attitude did those people have which was particularly displeasing to the Almighty?
6. What repeated expression in the text helps us see the attitude? What possible sins do you see in such an attitude?
7. Did God have to come down to see what man was doing? Give scriptures to support your answer.
8. What does "Babel" mean? Tell how you feel this name is fitting.
9. What conclusions do you draw from the study of this familiar story?

### Lesson 6

# The Call of Abraham

Genesis 11:27-12:20

## A Family for God's Purpose

For the Savior to come to earth as the seed of woman and shed his blood, he had to be born. Such a birth would require a family, or lineage. Naturally, we would expect God to choose a righteous man of faith to be the father from whom the Seed would eventually come.

Abram was the man of faith God chose. Stephen tells us God first called Abram when he was in Ur of the Chaldees (Acts 7:1-4). Perhaps, Terah, his father, moved because of his son's suggestion, or urging (Genesis 11:27-32). However, he stopped in Charan, which, like Ur, was a center of moon worship. This may indicate he reverted to the worship of false gods, if indeed he ever changed to the worship of the true God (Joshua 24:2). Abram, on the other hand, obviously followed the true God.

### **God Called Abram a Second Time**

In Genesis 12, after Terah's death, God called Abram a second time. In conjunction with this call, He made some promises. Because the call included both a command and a promise, it constituted a covenant (Genesis 15:18). Abram was told to leave his country, kindred and father's house (12:1). As the command got more specific, the sacrifices Abram had to make got increasingly difficult. Abram was called to go to a place God had not yet revealed to him (Hebrews 11:8).

Abram was promised prosperity and the Lord's care for himself. The promise was threefold: 1) God would make of Abram a great nation; 2) God would make Abram's name great, which may include the land of promise (see 12:7); and 3) God would make Abram a blessing, which is the promise of the Messiah.

### **Abram Worshipped God**

Abram acted in accord with the Lord's will (12:4). Remember, he moved at the age of 75, which is hardly a time most would be making drastic changes in lifestyle. Truly, it is never too late to change one's life and begin serving God. Abram took Sarai, Lot and all their goods and moved to the land of the Canaanites. He stopped in the shade of the terebinth, or oak tree, of Moreh. There, God promised to give this land to Abram's descendants. He built an altar there to honor the God who provided for him and his household (12:5-7).

One can trace the path of Abram by looking for the smoke of the altars he built to God. When he moved on to the area between Bethel and Ai, he pitched his tent and built an altar. By calling on the name of the Lord, Abram showed he was no longer worshipping the gods of his former land. Nor was he worshipping the gods of the Canaanites. His faithful obedience was ongoing, as is shown by his living in a strange land (12:8-9; Acts 7:5; Hebrews 11:13-16).

### **God Provided for Abram**

Even this great man of faith had times when his trust in God's providence failed. Such an instance is seen in his journey into Egypt in time of famine. He tried to provide for himself instead of relying on God. Perhaps he had heard of men killed by Pharaoh so he could take their beautiful wives into his harem. Whatever the reason, Abram asked Sarai to say she was his sister. Apparently such a statement was a half truth (20:12).



Sarai's beauty was commended to Pharaoh by his princes. He took her into his harem and treated Abram well. God had plans for Sarai so he intervened despite Abram's lack of faith. He brought great plagues on the house of Pharaoh. The ruler responded by having Sarai returned to Abram and having them escorted from the land. God provided despite Abram's deception and lack of faith (12:10-20).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Where did God first call Abram? Give a scripture to support your answer.
2. What two things are necessary to have a covenant?
3. What three great promises did God make to Abram?
4. How do we know Abram's faithful obedience was ongoing?
5. Did Abram ever have times of weakness when he doubted God's providence?
6. Why did Abram go to Egypt?
7. In what deception did he ask Sarai to participate?
8. How did God intervene to prevent Sarai from becoming one of Pharaoh's wives?

### **Lesson 7**

## **The Strong and Lofty One**

**Genesis 13:1-15:21**

The Bible is full of promises so great they stagger the imagination. Anyone would like to receive the blessings they contain, if he could only believe God is able to keep his word. Our purpose in this lesson is to learn of God's greatness so we can better understand how we can believe God's word.

### **Three Hundred Eighteen Trained Servants**

Genesis 13 tells us there was strife between herdsmen of Abram and Lot. The land could no

longer support their combined herds. Abram suggested they go their separate ways to resolve the conflict. Lot chose the fertile plain of Jordan around Sodom and Gomorrah, while Abram went to the plains of Mamre.

After some time, four kings made war with the five kings of the plain and forced them to be subservient to them. In the 13th year of this arrangement, the five kings rebelled. The four kings, led by Chedorlaomer of Elam, attacked the people of the plain with their armies. They slaughtered the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah and took the spoils of those cities, including Lot and all of his goods (Genesis 14:1-12).

A man who escaped the battle told Abram of Lot's plight. Abram immediately took his 318 trained servants and pursued the armies as they were returning home. That small force attacked the armies of the four kings by night and defeated them. As they were returning, the new King of Sodom and Melchizedek, King of Salem, met them in the valley of Shaveh (14:13-18).

### **The Strong One Most High**

Melchizedek was "priest of the most high God," from the Hebrew 'El 'Elyon. This is a name for God used for the first time here. Hugo McCord, in his book *Getting Acquainted With God*, says 'El probably meant "Strong One", or "Powerful One". He then says, "'Elyon means that which is very high, lofty, exalted, most high, supreme." Of course, this could simply refer to God's high and lofty dwelling place (Isaiah 57:15; 66:1). However, McCord believes it portrays God as Commander-in-chief, with complete sovereignty. When 318 trained servants can defeat the armies of four kings, it becomes clear the Strong One is in control.

When Melchizedek blessed Abram, he described him as a follower of the Exalted One. He also underscored God's role as the Sovereign of all by saying all in heaven and earth were his. He went on to note that it was the Lofty One who had brought about the defeat of Abram's enemies. Abram then gave tithes to Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High God. He did not want to diminish, even in the eyes of others, God's role in blessing him. So, Abram refused to accept any of the spoils as payment for his part in defeating the kings and returning the captives safely home (14:19-24).

### **The Promised Blessings**

The words "After these things" in verse one show the importance of remembering the victory God had given. Abram firmly believed God was also the source of his wealth. These facts must be recalled to fully appreciate the vision of Chapter 15. First, God reminded Abram that he was his protection and source of the great blessings he received.

Abram's trouble with fully appreciating God's blessings rested in his lack of an heir. God promised Abram's own son would be heir to the blessings coming from God. In fact, Abram's descendants would be many, like the stars in the heaven. The victory of Chapter 14 gave Abram a strong basis for believing in the Lord (Verse 6).

Second, God renewed his promise to give the land of Canaan to Abram. When Abram asked how he could know he would inherit the land, God's answer came in the form of a covenant made with Abram (15: 7-21). Abram knew he could count on a covenant with God because of the sovereignty he had displayed in the earlier defeat of the four kings.

These two chapters clearly tie God's great promises with his sovereignty. If he rules over heaven and earth, then he can give his faithful whatever he has promised. No wonder Paul said God could work all things together for good to them that love the Lord (Romans 8:28)!

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What caused Abram and Lot to part company?
2. How was the separation of ways achieved?
3. Where did Lot go? What happened to him that was reported to Abram?
4. How could 318 trained servants defeat the armies of 4 kings?
5. What does the name for God used in Genesis 14:18 suggest to you?
6. Explain Abram's refusal of the spoils.
7. When did Abram consider a blessing to not be a blessing? Why?
8. What was the difference in Abram's response to Melchizedak and the king of Sodom?

### **Lesson 8**

## **Stops On The Promise Road**

**Genesis 15-17:5**

### **God's Promise To Protect**

Abram may have faced threats from those around him, but God assured him that he was his shield (Genesis 15:1). That is, God stood ready to protect him like a shield would in battle. Israel received a similar promise (Deuteronomy 33:29; Psalm 7:10; Proverbs 2:6-7; 30:5). David, while fleeing from Absalom, relied on God's ability to protect him (Psalm 3:3).

God's promise of protection evidently reminded Abram he did not have any children. He evidently grew impatient to know how God would keep his promise of making him a great nation. In fact, he complained to God because he did not have a child as promised. He wondered if his

steward, Eliezer, would be his heir (15:2-3). God eased his doubts by telling him it would be his own seed (15:4-5).

The Lord also told Abram he would give the land to him. As one proof the promise would be fulfilled, God made a covenant with Abram (15:6-11). Further, God foretold the four hundred years of bondage Abram's descendants would experience in Egypt. The Lord promised to bring them out with great possessions. He then clearly stated the borders of the land Abram's seed would possess (15:12-21).

### **Planning for God**

Like so many after her, Sarai ran out of patience. She thought of a plan to achieve the end God had in mind. In the land of the Chaldees, a woman who could not bear children could give one of her slaves to her husband. Any child born of such a union would be counted as the wife's child. If the slave began to think of herself as being her mistress' equal, she could treat her again as a slave but not sell her.

Sarai had an Egyptian slave named Hagar. She gave Hagar to Abram. When it was obvious she was with child, Hagar began to treat Sarai in a disrespectful way. Sarai complained to Abram and he put the unruly servant back under her control. Harsh treatment drove Hagar away from the camp. The Angel of the Lord met her at a spring on the way back to Egypt. He directed her to return to the camp and place herself under her mistress. As the angel promised, she bore a son named Ishmael when Abram was eighty-six years old. Ishmael became the father of a vast multitude (16:1-16).

### **Circumcision and the Promise**

The act of circumcision was a part of the covenant which included the land promise (17:1-14). It should be noted the giving of the land was unconditional, but retaining it was conditional (Deuteronomy 28:58-64; 29:22-28). The land promise was later fulfilled under the leadership of Joshua (Joshua 21:43-45; 23:14-16). Solomon reigned over the promised land. Nehemiah said God's promise had been fulfilled (1 Kings 4:20-21; Nehemiah 9:7-8).

During the renewal of the land promise, Abram's name was changed. Abram meant "exalted father." It was changed by God to Abraham, which means "father of a multitude" (17:5). As the new name implies, many people would one day come out of the loins of Abraham.

### **Christ and the Seed Promise**

Paul tells us Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the seed promise (Galatians 3:8, 14, 16). All people can be blessed by him because he died for all (John 3:16-17; Matthew 20:28). Thus, the fulfillment of the promise to Abram extends to us today. While the other promises were fulfilled in Abraham's seed according to the flesh, this is filled in his spiritual seed. The faithful of the Christian age can truly call Abraham their father and claim this wonderful promise of blessing

(Galatians 3:29).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What was Abram's response to God's promise to protect him?
2. What two promises did God make to Abram in chapter 15?
3. What two proofs did God offer Abram to show he would keep the second of those promises?
4. Describe what happened as a result of Sarai running out of patience with God. Discuss possible results of our patience failing.
5. What promise did the Angel of the Lord make to Hagar?
6. Of what covenant was circumcision a part?
7. Was the land promise ever fulfilled?
8. Under whose reign would one find such fulfillment or failure of the land promise? Give scripture to support your answer.
9. Who was the fulfillment of the seed promise?
10. How are all people blessed in Abraham's seed?

### **Lesson 9**

## **The Son Of Promise**

**Genesis 17:15-18:15; 20:1-21:21**

### **Laughing At God's Promise**

When Abraham was ninety-nine years old, God told him Sarah would bear a son (Genesis 17:15-16). It is interesting that her name was changed just as Abraham's had been. Sarah means "princess." Her new name was appropriate since the greatest king the world has ever known would come from her descendants. Abraham laughed at the thought of a one hundred year old man and a ninety year old woman bearing a child after years with no offspring. His laughter did not rest completely in disbelief. Paul said he hoped against hope (Romans 4:13-25). Abraham suggested Ishmael as the one through whom the covenant could be kept, but God assured him the covenant would be established with Isaac (17:17-22).

On the plains of Mamre, when Sarah heard she would have a son, "according to the time of

life," she too laughed (Genesis 18:1-15). Sarah was old. She was past the age of conception. The Lord's response was to ask if anything was too hard, or literally "wonderful," for him to do. Though her response may have initially come out of doubt, she did come to believe the word of God (Hebrews 11:11-12).

### **When Abraham Failed to Trust God**

A book that only claimed to be from God would not record the failings of a great man like Abraham. Since the Bible is from God, it tells us of a second time Abraham failed to trust in God's care (20:1-18). Ironically, God got him out of the trouble in which he placed himself.

Despite Abraham's lack of trust, the next chapter tells us God kept his word. Sarah had a child exactly when God said she would. In fact, the child was born at the very time God had set (21:1-2).

### **A Child Named Laughter**

How appropriate the child of promise should be called Laughter, or Isaac (21:3-7). For 25 years, since the promise of a great nation was made, Abraham and Sarah had waited for the child through whom the great nation would come. Without him, the promised land would have had no people to inhabit its borders. The world could not have been blessed. Both his parents had once laughed at the announcement of his coming. His mother now laughed with joy and wanted everyone to join her. Sarah was thankful God had given her "children" to nurse, even though she had only one son. Clearly the singular is included in the plural.

Abraham kept the covenant by having Isaac circumcised (17:10-12). Though Christians do not have to be circumcised in the flesh, it is necessary to cut away fleshly desire to please God. Such is achieved in the act of obedient baptism (Colossians 2:10-12). Today, those who are circumcised in the heart are Jews, or God's chosen people (Romans 2:28-29).

### **Ishmael Was Cast Out**

Sarah and Abraham had a great feast when Isaac was weaned. When Ishmael made fun of Isaac, Sarah demanded he and his mother be cast out. Though it was against the laws of that region, Abraham cast out Ishmael. He did so at the insistence of Sarah and with God's reassurance (21:8-21).

Hagar thought they would die from lack of water. She placed Ishmael under a bush to die. As she sat down to watch, God heard her weeping. He sent an angel to tell her Ishmael would be a great nation. Then, he caused her eyes to be opened to a well nearby. The boy grew up in the wilderness. Eventually, his mother helped him take a wife of the Egyptians.

### Discussion Questions

1. Who laughed at the thought of Abraham and Sarah having a child in their old age?
2. Tell the story of Abraham's lack of trust in God.
3. Did Abraham ever exhibit such a lack of trust on any other occasion?
4. Do you think uninspired men would have had great men of faith show such weakness?
5. What does Isaac's name mean?
6. What did Abraham have done to Isaac to keep the covenant with God?
7. Are we required to keep the same covenant today? Explain your answer.
8. Why did Sarah demand Abraham cast out Ishmael and Hagar?
9. What happened to them? Who protected them?

### Lesson 10

## The Wickedness of Sodom

Genesis 18:16-19:38

### Abraham's Appeal for Two Cities

After repeating the promise of a son to Abraham and Sarah, God told Abraham of his plans to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. He may have done that because Abraham was his friend (Isaiah 41:8). Certainly, God knew this man of faith would follow his will. He also knew Abraham would command his household to obey God's instruction (Genesis 18:16-19).

The report of the wickedness of these two cities had come before God. Abraham's appeal was for the cities, but particularly for the righteous who might have been living there. He was persistent in asking God if he would spare the city for 50, 45, 40, 30, 20 or even 10 righteous men. His persistence should serve as a reminder to all Christians of the importance of continuing in prayer (Genesis 18:20-33; Luke 18:1-8; 1 Thessalonians 5:17). He also showed great confidence in God's justice, in verse 25. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

## **Righteous Lot**

When the angels of the Lord came to Sodom, they found Lot sitting in the gate. City gates in those days were active places. Much commerce was carried on there. Justice was often meted out by the elders of the city. We do not know Lot's purpose in being there, but we do know he was hospitable. He insisted the visitors come to his house for the night (Genesis 19:1-3). It is also the Christian's duty to exhibit hospitality (Matthew 25:35; 1 Timothy 3:2; Hebrews 13:2).

Lot was tormented by the unrighteous acts he saw committed. Peter says of Lot, "for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds" (2 Peter 2:8). This story shows he even tried to turn them aside from sin.

## **Sodom's Sin**

The men of Sodom were involved in the sin of homosexuality. They had become so wicked that they were not ashamed (Isaiah 3:9; Philippians 3:19). Their sinfulness had become so great that they would force strangers within their city to participate in their evil deeds (Genesis 19:4-5). Both young and old came to the house of Lot to get him to bring out his visitors that they might "know them carnally." This "knowing" was like that described in Genesis 4:1 and Matthew 1:25.

The sin of homosexuality was punishable by death (Leviticus 20:13). In Romans 1, Paul describes the downward spiral of the Gentiles into sin. He says, in part, "For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due" (1:26-27).

## **God's Judgment**

Lot stood outside his house and pled with the men of Sodom. He would not turn over his guests to them. He even offered them his virgin daughters rather than have them sin against his visitors. They accused him of acting as their judge, which may be what he did in the gate of the city. The crowd pushed Lot back to the door and started to break it down.

Habakkuk describes God by writing, "You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness" (1:13). It should not surprise us then that the angels would open the door, pull Lot inside and strike the men outside blind (Genesis 19:6-11). Yet, they were so sinful they kept groping for the door!

## **Lot and His Family**

Any doubt one has about God keeping wicked under his protective care is removed by this



story. The angels delivered Lot, his wife and their two daughters safely from the city before its destruction. Unfortunately, Lot's wife ignored the angels' instruction. She was turned to a pillar of salt for looking back (Genesis 19:12-29; 2 Peter 3:6-9).

Lot's daughters also involved him in sin. They got him drunk on two consecutive nights and lay down with him. Both conceived a child by their father. Perhaps the evil which had surrounded them had influenced his daughters to think of such a plan (19:30-38).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Why do you think God told Abraham of his plans to destroy Sodom?
2. What lessons can be learned from Abraham's appeal on behalf of the cities?
3. What good characteristics can be seen in the actions of Lot?
4. Give Bible verses to show what God thinks of homosexuality.
5. Is homosexuality a sin or just an alternative lifestyle?
6. Use the story of Lot to describe essential ingredients of hospitality.
7. What actions show the depth of sin in Sodom?
8. How did God protect the righteous and his family?
9. What possible effects do you see of Lot and his family living in a sinful city for so many years?

## Lesson 11

# God Tests Abraham's Faith

Genesis 22:1-19

### **Offer Your Only Son as a Burnt Offering**

Abraham and Sarah waited a long time for a child. Then, they experienced the great joy in having him. It is hard to imagine how Abraham must have felt when God tested him by commanding him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. "Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' And He said, 'take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you'" (Genesis 22:1-2).

Isaac is called his only son because he is uniquely the son of promise. While human sacrifice was practiced by some of the people around Abraham in worship of false gods, it was out of character for the loving God of heaven. Yet, Abraham went without asking a single question.

### **Abraham Obeyed the Lord's Command**

He went in exactly the manner God prescribed. "So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him"

(Genesis 22:3). Notice, he made sure to split the wood and take it for the fire. He went to the very place God had said. He had Isaac with him to sacrifice.

"Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said to his young men, 'Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you'" (Genesis 22:4-5). He did not ask a servant to make the sacrifice, but went alone with his son to the place of worship.

### **"God Will Provide"**

Perhaps no one answer portrays the faith of Abraham as well as the one he gave to Isaac. They took the wood, knife and fire with them as they went toward the mountain. Isaac asked, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham answered, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering" (Genesis 22:6-8).

The two of them went on up together to the very place God had told Abraham. The father of the faithful then built the altar and placed wood on it in order. He bound Isaac and laid him on the wood. Finally, he raised the knife and stretched out his hand to slay his son (Genesis 22:9-10). The Hebrew writer explains how he could have done such a thing. He says Abraham was, "accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense" (11:19).

### **"Now I Know That You Fear God"**

God then saw Abraham would obey no matter what the cost. The Angel of the Lord stayed him from killing Isaac. He then said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

God then truly provided a sacrifice as Abraham had told Isaac he would. "Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son." Interestingly enough, Abraham "The-Lord-Will-Provide," or Jehovah-Jireh, as a name for the place. God then renewed the promise. Abraham's descendants would be like the stars in multitude. All nations of the earth would one day be blessed through his seed (Genesis 22:11-19).

### **Lessons Learned From Abraham**

Abraham showed his faith in an obedient response to God. "Do you not see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only" (James 2:22-24). It is a working faith which saves.

Abraham did not do the things he did to earn his way into heaven, but to please God (Romans 4). Our goal is also to please God through obedient faith and enter heaven by God's grace (Ephesians 2:8-10).

#### **Discussion Questions**

1. What unique sacrifice did God ask Abraham to make?
2. Was Ishmael Abraham's son?
3. Why is Isaac called Abraham's only son?
4. How was Abraham able to go forth with the intent of making the sacrifice God required?
5. How did Abraham show his faith?
6. Did Abraham try to earn his way into heaven?
7. How must we show the faith necessary to please God?
8. In showing such faith, do we earn our way into heaven?

## Lesson 12

# Isaac Gets A Wife

Genesis 23:1-25:11

### **Sarah's Death**

Sarah died in Kirjath Arba, which was known to the Jews as Hebron, at the age of one hundred twenty-seven (Genesis 23:1-2). Peter considers her to be the mother of all faithful women who submit to their husbands. "For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror" (1 Peter 3:5-6).

Instead of taking Sarah's body back to Haran or Ur, Abraham chose to purchase a burial place in the land of Canaan. His actions proclaimed to those around that he intended this to be his family's home. The sons of Heth, who were Hittites, offered him the choice of any of the burial places. However, Abraham wanted to purchase the cave of Machpelah.

Though Ephron, the owner, tried to give him the land, Abraham insisted on paying a fair price. He paid Ephron the four hundred shekels of silver he said the land was worth and buried Sarah in the cave. This cave was near their home in Mamre, or Hebron (Genesis 23:3-20).

### **Abraham's Servant Finds Rebekah**

Abraham would have been one hundred thirty-seven at the time of Sarah's death. He made his oldest servant promise to find a wife for Isaac. He made him swear he would not select

a woman from among the Canaanites but would return to Mesopotamia. Abraham assured the servant God would send an angel before him to make sure of a good selection. The servant loaded goods and gifts on camels to make the journey of over five hundred miles back to the region of Abraham's original home. Outside the city of Nahor, the servant made his camels kneel beside a well. He then prayed God would guide him in the selection of a wife for Isaac. He asked God to cause the woman to not only give him drink but also to water his camels.

Sometime after Abraham was tested, he learned his brother Nahor had children by Milcah. One of those children was Bethuel, the father of Rebekah. It was this beautiful young woman who was the answer to the servant's prayer. After she had watered the camels, the servant gave her a gold ring for her nose and two golden bracelets. When she identified herself as the daughter of Bethuel and descendant of Nahor, the servant bowed to give God thanks for providentially leading him to the right woman (Genesis 24:1-27).

### **Wedding Arrangements**

Rebekah ran home to tell of the man she had met and gifts he had given. She also planned to finalize plans for him to stay with her family. Laban, her brother, ran to bring the servant from the well to their house. The camels were fed, the servant's feet washed and food placed before him. Then, he began to tell the story of Abraham's plan for his son Isaac's wedding. He included a brief report his prayer and God's answer.

Bethuel and Laban knew this was the Lord's doing, so they agreed to let Rebekah marry Isaac. After the servant had again thanked God, he gave jewelry of silver and gold to Rebekah, along with clothing. He also gave gifts to the rest of the family. The next morning, the servant wanted to leave for Hebron. Laban and his mother asked him to stay ten days. However, the servant said he wanted to return to his master because such a success had been achieved. They called Rebekah to ask her and she consented to go (Genesis 24:28-58).

### **Rebekah Becomes Isaac's Wife**

The family then sent Rebekah away with her nurse and maids by her side. They blessed her, saying, "Our sister, may you become the mother of thousands of ten thousands; and may your descendants possess the gates of those who hate them." Rebekah and her maids then set off behind the servant of Abraham.

While the servant was away, Isaac went to the South, possibly the Negeb, to wait for his bride. When the servant came, he told Isaac all that had happened. Isaac then took Rebekah as his wife. Interestingly, though they had not known one another before, the text tells us he "loved her." Because of that love, he was comforted in the death of his mother (Genesis 24:59-67).

### **Abraham's Death And Burial**

Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah. Abraham lived another 35 years

beyond that time. He took another wife named Keturah. She bore six sons to him. Those sons received gifts from their father, but Isaac received the inheritance. Abraham sent those sons eastward, away from Isaac.

Abraham died at the age of one hundred seventy-five. Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, where Sarah was buried. After Abraham's death, the author tells us, "God blessed his son Isaac (Genesis 25:1-11).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What lessons can be learned from the life of Sarah?
2. Where did Abraham bury Sarah? Why do you think he bought that piece of land?
3. What possible reasons could Abraham have had for getting Isaac a wife from Mesopotamia?
4. How did the servant enlist God's help in finding a wife for Isaac? What was his response when the help was received?
5. Describe the process of reaching an agreement on the marriage arrangements?
6. What blessing did Rebekah's family give her before she departed?
7. Why do you think Isaac was able to love a woman he never even met before? Could this mean one can learn to love?
8. What happened during the final 35 years of Abraham's life? Where was he buried?
9. What did God do for Isaac after his father's death?

### Lesson 13

## Isaac and His Sons

Genesis 25:20-26:33

### **The Birth of Jacob and Esau**

After nineteen years of marriage, Isaac and Rebekah still had no children. Isaac prayed God would allow Rebekah to conceive. As John T. Willis observed, we may assume having children is a natural occurrence because so many are born. However, no child is conceived without God's blessing (Psalm 127:3). Not one, but two children were in Rebekah's womb. Because they struggled, she asked God if all was well. He said, "Two nations are in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger."

When Isaac was sixty, she bore two sons. The firstborn was red haired and hairy, who they named Esau. The second was born while clutching his brother's heel. Thus, he was named Jacob, which means heel grabber. Esau grew up as a skillful hunter. Jacob grew up as a mild mannered man who dwelt in tents. Isaac loved Esau and Rebekah loved Jacob (Genesis 25:20-28).

### **The Selling of the Birthright**

A special blessing ordinarily went to the firstborn. In fact, under the law of Moses, the firstborn received a double portion when the inheritance was distributed. Of course, in the case of a descendant of Abraham and Isaac, the son of promise, God's promised blessing would also be there for the seed line. Yet, Esau considered immediate gratification of physical needs more important than the lasting benefits of the birthright.

When Esau came in from the field faint with hunger, he found Jacob preparing a stew.



Jacob took advantage of the situation. He asked his brother to sell him the birthright for some of the stew. Esau reasoned death by starvation would eliminate the value of future blessings, so he agreed to sell. An inspired penman would later warn, "lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright" (Hebrews 12:16). He showed more regard for his stomach than for God's blessings (Genesis 25:29-34).

### **Isaac and Abimelech**

Like his father before him, Isaac went to Gerar in a time of famine. God instructed him not to go down into Egypt and repeated the promise of the blessing. He lied about Rebekah by saying she was his sister, because he reasoned they would kill him for his beautiful wife. After quite some time, Abimelech the king "saw Isaac and his wife Rebecca laughing together" (New English Bible). The king chastised Isaac for lying about his wife, thereby endangering any man who might have tried to make her his wife. The king then commanded all his people not to harm Jacob or Rebekah (Genesis 26:1-11).

Because of God's blessing, Isaac prospered during his stay at Gerar. The Philistines began to envy him. Abimelech asked him to move away from the city. So, Isaac went into the valley. The Philistines had filled in the wells his father had dug years before. The herdsmen of Gerar contested his right to the first well, so he named it Esek, or quarrel. They also contested the second, so he named it Sitnah, or enmity. When he dug again the third, they left him alone. So, he named it Rehoboth, which means spaciousness. God had made room for him in the land.

Eventually, Isaac moved up to the place Israelites call Beersheba. The Lord appeared to him that night and renewed his promise. Isaac built an altar and worshipped God. Abimelech and his army commander, Phicol, came up to meet with him. Isaac asked why he had come when they had driven him away. They said they had seen God was with him. They wanted to solidify a peaceful relationship with the one God blessed. An agreement was reached and they departed in peace. On the same day, his servants reported they had found water in the well they were digging. The well was named Shebah, or well of the oath. Thus, the name Beersheba was born (Genesis 26:12-33).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What lessons do you see in Rebekah's conception?
2. What did the Lord mean by his prophecy about the two sons she was to bear?

3. Describe the two sons of Isaac and give their names.
4. What importance was attached to the birthright?
5. Why was selling the birthright viewed in such a bad light?
6. What did Isaac do in Gerar? How does such action reflect on his relationship with God?
7. What actions of Isaac demonstrate he was a peacemaker?
8. Explain how Beersheba got its name.

#### Lesson 14

## Jacob Gets the Blessing

Genesis 26:34-28:22

### Isaac Still Loved Esau More Than Jacob

Esau married two Hittite women. Both Isaac and Rebekah were troubled by his selection of a mate for life. After all, they did not worship the God of heaven. He might be led astray by their false worship. As William Cline noted in a lecture, "In so marrying wives from a people which God had cast off, Esau again furnished proof as to how thoroughly his heart was set upon earthly things" (Genesis 26:34-35).

Despite the marriages, Isaac continued to love Esau more than Jacob. His advancing years convinced Isaac it was time to give the blessing, which normally went with the birthright, to Esau. He intended to do this despite God's prophecy that the older would serve the younger and the selling of the birthright which usually went with the blessing (Genesis 27:1-4; 25:23, 29-34).

### Rebekah Helped Jacob Get the Blessing

Rebekah overheard Isaac's instructions to Esau. She called for Jacob and told him to kill two choice kids from the flocks. She planned to prepare them in a way which would make them taste like wild game. Then, she intended for Jacob to take the meal to his father and receive the blessing.

Jacob protested, not because he did not want to deceive, but because he feared being caught. He worried his smooth skin would give him away and he would be cursed by his father. Rebekah's response shows she was a conscious deceiver in this affair. "Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get them for me." Jacob's willing participation in the deception is seen in his going to get the kids. He follows that by allowing his mother to put the skins of the kids on his hands and neck. He also wore his brother's clothing which his mother gave him. He finished the deception by lying to his father about his identity and the speed with

which he was able to bring the meat.

Isaac was so blind he had to ask who had come. Though the voice was that of Jacob, the smell of the clothes and feel of the kids' skins deceived him. After eating the meat Rebekah had prepared, Isaac gave the blessing to Jacob.

Surely, the smell of my son  
Is like the smell of a field  
Which the Lord has blessed.  
Therefore may God give you  
Of the dew of heaven,  
Of the fatness of the earth,  
And plenty of grain and wine.  
Let peoples serve you,  
And nations bow down to you.  
Be master over your brethren,  
And let your mother's sons bow down to you.  
Cursed be everyone who curses you,  
And blessed be those who bless you!

Thus, the Lord's will was fulfilled despite the intentions of all involved (Genesis 27:5-29).

### **Esau's Despair**

Almost as soon as Jacob had left, Esau returned with the meat he had killed and prepared. Isaac asked who he was. As soon as Esau identified himself, Isaac realized the deception which had taken place. Esau pleaded for a blessing from his father but the real blessing, though received by deceit, had already gone to his brother. Esau declared his brother properly named Jacob, meaning supplanter. He had supplanted his brother in the birthright and blessing.

Isaac did give him such blessing as he could. He said:

Behold your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth,  
And of the dew of heaven from above.  
By your sword you shall live,  
And you shall serve your brother;  
And it shall come to pass, when you become restless,  
That you shall break his yoke from your neck.

This paltry blessing seemed to focus Esau's hatred for his brother. He resolved to kill his brother after the time of mourning for his dead father would be finished. Apparently, someone who heard Esau told Rebekah. She called Jacob and had him prepare to go to her brother's house until the anger subsided. Then, Rebekah went to Isaac and convinced him to send Jacob to Laban's house to find a wife rather than have another daughter-in-law from among the people around them

(Genesis 27:30-46).

### **Jacob Left Canaan**

Isaac agreed with Rebekah in the matter of a wife for Jacob. He sent him to Laban's house to find a wife. Isaac also gave Jacob the blessing of Abraham from God. When Esau realized how unhappy his parents were with his marriages, he immediately married a daughter of Ishmael (Genesis 28:1-9).

On his way to Haran, Jacob spent the night at Luz. In a dream, he saw angels going up and down a ladder which reached up into heaven. God repeated the promised blessing which he had given Abraham. Jacob's seed would receive the promised land. They would be numberless. In his seed, all nations of the earth would be blessed.

When Jacob awakened, he realized the Lord was in that place. He renamed it Bethel, which means House of God. Jacob vowed he would make the Lord his God if God would provide for him and bring him back in peace to his father's house. He also set up the stone he had used for a pillow to be a pillar in a true house of God. Further, he promised to give a tenth of all his blessings to the Lord (Genesis 28:10-22).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What action did Esau take which displeased both his parents?
2. Describe the four different acts of deception which occurred at the time of the giving of the blessing.
3. Who normally received the blessing?
4. What instructions did Isaac give Esau?
5. What motivated him to give this blessing at the time he did?
6. Who overheard Isaac speaking to Esau and what did that individual do?
7. What three things show Jacob was a willing participant in the deception?
8. Name four things Jacob was given in the pronounced blessing.
9. What was included in Esau's blessing and what was his response to it?
10. How did Rebekah persuade Isaac to send Jacob to Laban's house?

11. What verse shows Isaac passing the blessing of Abraham on to Jacob?
12. What was Esau's response to his parents' obvious unhappiness with his first two marriages?
13. Describe what happened to Jacob at Luz.
14. What did he rename Luz and why?

### Lesson 15

## A Wife for Jacob

Genesis 29:1-31:9

### The Deceiver Is Deceived

When Jacob came to a well in a field in northern Mesopotamia, he inquired where he was. He learned he was near Haran and soon met Rachel, his uncle Laban's daughter, who was coming to the well to water her father's sheep. Jacob rolled the stone from the mouth of the well and helped her water the sheep. He then tearfully identified himself as Rebekah's son. Laban ran to meet him and brought him to his house. They were after all flesh and blood kin (Genesis 29:1-14).

Laban did not plan to take unfair advantage of a relative, so he asked Jacob what wages he would like to be paid. Because he loved the beautiful Rachel, Jacob asked to work for her hand in marriage. Laban agreed seven years of service would pay for that honor. At the end of seven years, which seemed but a few days to Jacob because of his love, he asked Laban to fulfill the bargain. Laban prepared a feast for the wedding.

However, instead of Rachel, he brought the soft eyed Leah to Jacob that night. The one who had deceived his father by disguising himself as his brother now was deceived into accepting the wrong sister as his wife (compare Numbers 32:23; Galatians 6:7). When Jacob realized the deception which had taken place, he protested to his father-in-law. Laban explained it was their custom for the older to be married first. He promised to give him Rachel at the end of the week's marriage celebration was completed. Of course, he also required seven more years of service for her hand in marriage. Naturally, Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah (Genesis 29:15-30).

### The Children of Jacob

The Lord opened the womb of Leah. Her firstborn son was named Reuben, or "look, a son." Her hope was that Jacob would now love her more because she had borne him a son. She named her second son Simeon, or "heard." She felt the Lord had heard she was not as well loved as her sister. Next, she bore a son she named Levi, or "will be joined." Her hope was that Jacob would now be joined to her. She named her fourth son Judah, or "will praise," because she was

now praising the Lord (Genesis 29:31-35).

Rachel and Jacob were naturally frustrated by her inability to bear children. Like Sarah before her, Rachel chose to have a child through her handmaid, Bilhah. The son born of the handmaid was named Dan, or "he has judged," because Rachel believed God had judged her case and heard her appeal. The second son borne by Bilhah was named Naphtali, or "my wrestling." Apparently, she saw herself as in a contest with Leah in the bearing of children to Jacob and felt she had won through her handmaid giving birth to two sons.

It appears Leah gave Jacob her handmaid, Zilpah, because she did not want to be outdone by her sister. She bore a son Leah named Gad, or "good fortune." Leah named Zilpah's second son Asher, or "happy" because she said other women would call her blessed (Genesis 30:1-13).

### **Joseph, Rachel's Firstborn**

There are two possible reasons Rachel wanted the mandrakes, a poisonous plant of the potato family. She may have thought they produced fertility, since many in that region still have such a superstition today. Or, she may have just wanted them because they are rare. At any rate, she exchanged an opportunity for Leah to be with Jacob for Reuben's mandrakes. Leah then bore Issachar, meaning "my hire." His name came from the fact that Leah hired Jacob in the exchange for the mandrakes. Leah then bore Zebulun, a name meaning "honor" and chosen because Leah felt God had honored her with six sons. She also bore a daughter named Dinah, or "rights controversy."

Finally, long years after any potential effect from the mandrakes would have worn off, God remembered Rachel. It should be noted that "God listened to her, which clearly indicates she had been praying about the matter. We all need to remember God is the source of all blessings, including children. She bore a son who she named Joseph, or "he adds." In the name is an expression of joy because God had taken away her source of shame in allowing her to have a child. Also, Joseph's name might be viewed as a prayer to God to give her more (Genesis 30:14-24).

### **God Caused Jacob to Prosper**

After the seven years of service for Rachel were completed, Jacob told Laban he desired to return home. Laban did not want him to go because he knew God had made him wealthy through Jacob's service. Jacob also acknowledged God had made Laban prosperous through him. For his wages, he asked to receive all the oddly colored animals from the flocks. Since speckled and spotted sheep and goats and black lambs are rare, Laban agreed to the arrangement. Laban then cut all the designated types of animals from the flock and sent them three days journey apart with his sons. He thus attempted to defraud Jacob. Through various superstitious tricks and selective breeding, Jacob sought to influence the types of young which would be brought forth from the flocks. Laban kept changing which animals Jacob was to receive. However, God is the one who blesses. So, Jacob's flocks grew with the stronger types of animals (Genesis 30:25-43; 31:7, 9).

### Discussion Questions

1. How did Jacob first meet Rachel?
2. What facts indicate the deep love he had for her?
3. How did Laban deceive Jacob? Why did he say he did it?
4. List the names, and their meanings, of all twelve of Jacob's children discussed in this lesson.
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
  - 4.
  - 5.
  - 6.
  - 7.
  - 8.
  - 9.
  - 10.
  - 11.
  - 12.
5. Put the initial of the woman who gave birth to each child beside the numbers. L=Leah  
B=Bilhah                      Z=Zilpah                      R=Rachel
6. What lessons do you find in God opening Rachel's womb?
7. What arrangement was made between Laban and Jacob after fourteen years of service for his

two wives?

## Lesson 16

# Jacob Returns Home

Genesis 30:27

### **Jacob Decides to Leave Laban**

Laban and his sons eventually began to see Jacob as a drain on their flocks. Laban ceased to believe God was blessing him because of Jacob (Genesis 30:27). So, God told him to return home. Jacob told his wives of the decision, noting Laban's change of attitude along with frequent changes in what he agreed to pay his son-in-law during the six years of further service rendered to his father-in-law. God had protected Jacob in the midst of such deceit by causing the flocks to bring forth the type of animals designated as his pay.

Rachel and Leah agreed they should follow the Lord's direction and leave their father's house. They said he had sold them, apparently referring to Jacob's service for fourteen years to receive their hands in marriage. Though it was customary for at least a portion of such money to be given to the daughter as a personal dowry, Laban had used up all the money. They saw God had provided for them even when their father had not. While Laban was shearing his sheep, Jacob and his family packed up and headed back to Isaac. Rachel stole her father's household idols as they were leaving (Genesis 31:1-21).

### **Laban Pursues Jacob and His Family**

After three days, Laban was told of Jacob's departure. He and his men finally overtook Jacob's company on the seventh day in the mountains of Gilead. The night before he met Jacob, God warned him in a dream to do him no harm. Laban questioned Jacob as to why he had stolen away and why he had taken his household gods. As head of his family, he could have acted violently against Jacob. However, he noted God had warned him not to harm him.

Jacob responded by saying he feared Laban would have taken away his wives if he had told him he was going to leave. He also said he had not taken the idols and promised the one in whose possession they were found would be slain. Rachel hid the idols under her saddle and sat upon it saying the "manner of women is with me." Thus, Laban found nothing and was rebuked by Jacob for pursuing and accusing him. Jacob reminded Laban he had served faithfully for twenty years (Genesis 31:22-42).

### **The Covenant Between Jacob and Laban**

Though Jacob accused Laban of intending to do him harm if God had not warned him,



Laban claimed he would not hurt his own family. Perhaps to save embarrassment before the male members of his family who he had assembled to pursue a thief, Laban, despite all previous contracts, claimed his daughters, their children and the flocks were his. However, he said he could do no harm to his own flesh and blood.

Instead, he asked Jacob to make a peace covenant with him. Jacob had his brethren gather stones and put them in a pile. Laban, in Aramaic, and Jacob, in Hebrew, named the place "heap of witness." Jacob's prayer was, "May the Lord watch between you and me when we are absent one from another." He and Laban promised not to pass the heap on the way to do one another harm. Then, Jacob made a sacrifice and shared a meal with Laban and the rest of his kinsmen. The next morning, Laban kissed his family goodbye and returned to his home (Genesis 31:43-55).

### **Wrestling With God**

As Jacob continued his journey toward home, angels met him. He called the name of that place Mahanaim, or "two camps" because there were two armies encamped there, the angels and his family and servants. He sent messengers to tell Esau how he had gained wealth and was returning home. They came back reporting that Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men.

In fear, Jacob divided his group into two camps, hoping one would escape if Esau killed the other. He then prayed God would deliver him as he had promised. He sent a gift of goats, rams, milk camels with their colts, cows, bulls, donkeys and their foals to Esau. He had his servants separate each group of animals into its own drove and had them approach Esau one group of gift animals at the time. They were to tell him the animals were a gift from Jacob. It was his hope the presents would appease his brother so he would accept him (Genesis 32:1-21).

That night, Jacob took his wives and children over a brook of water and remained in the camp alone. He wrestled with a man all night. The man, or angel, reached down and dislocated Jacob's hip joint. Jacob clung tenaciously to the stranger, asking for a blessing. The angel informed him that he would no longer be known as the supplanter, or deceiver (Jacob). Instead, he would be called Israel, which means "one who strives with God." Jacob named the place Peniel, or "the face of God," because he said he had seen God face to face and lived. As day broke, Israel limped toward his family. The author tells us the children of Israel do not eat the sinew of the hip of animals because of this (Genesis 32:22-32; Hosea 12:3-4).

### **The Reunion With Esau**

When Jacob saw Esau coming, he divided his family into three groups. The maidservants formed a group with their children, Leah formed one with hers and Rachel brought up the rear with Joseph. Bowing to the ground seven times before his brother showed Israel's humility. Esau's embrace and kiss with weeping seems to say the anger is in the past. Israel identifies the children as a blessing from God. Though Esau tried to refuse the presents, Israel insisted he take them.

He said seeing Esau's forgiving face was like seeing God's face.

Israel declined Esau's offer to journey with them, since he said the cattle and children would be slow. He also refused help from Esau's men. Instead, he said he intended to settle and then come to see his brother in Seir, the mountain in the land later called Edom. Israel then journeyed on to Succoth where he made booths for his cattle and lived for a time. Later, he moved on to Shechem where he bought a piece of land from the children of Hamor. He then built an altar and worshipped God, calling the place El Elohe Israel, or "God, the God of Israel" (Genesis 33:1-20).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What two things eventually caused Jacob to leave Laban and go home?
2. Describe the way in which Jacob and his family left.
3. How did God insure Jacob's safety?
4. For what was Laban looking?
5. Who had taken them?
6. Why could he not find them?
7. What type of covenant did Jacob and Laban make? How did they commemorate it?
8. What lessons might be learned from Jacob's benediction?
9. Describe Jacob's preparations to meet Esau.
10. What happened at Peniel?
11. What does the change in Jacob's name signify to you?
12. Describe the reunion of Israel and Esau.

## Lesson 17

# God Protected Jacob

Genesis 33:18-36:43

### A Tragic Incident

The move to Shechem (Genesis 33:18-20) proved to be a costly one. Dinah, Leah's daughter, was abducted and raped by Shechem the son of Hamor. He also truly fell in love with her. So, he talked to her in a soothing way in an effort to gain her favor. Jacob learned of the incident while his sons were working in the field. He told them upon their return. They responded naturally with grief and anger.

Hamor tried to reach an agreement for a marriage between his son and Jacob's daughter. He suggested such would open the door for other marriages between their two people and allow Jacob to be considered a citizen instead of a resident alien. Of course, he also thought he could share in Jacob's wealth and gain any daughters of Israel as potential brides for his sons. He expressed his willingness to give any dowry required and other gift which might simply go to Jacob (Genesis 34:1-12).

### Deception and Slaughter

Jacob's sons agreed to the marriage contract, but the text tells us they were acting deceitfully. They told Hamor they could not allow one of the women of Israel to marry an uncircumcised man. They said if Hamor and the other men of Shechem would agree to be circumcised, then the two peoples could intermarry. Hamor went to the leaders of the city who met at its gates to ask for their support. He argued that they would gain women to marry and Jacob's wealth would be theirs. So every male in Shechem was circumcised.

On the third day after circumcision was performed, the men were sore. It was then that Simeon and Levi took their swords and slaughtered all the men. They also took the wealth of the city including the wives. When Jacob found out what his sons had done, he said they had acted hastily without taking into account potential consequences of their actions. It was possible the allies of Hamor would attack Jacob and his family. However, even these words from their father did not elicit a penitent response from Simeon and Levi (Genesis 34:13-31).

### Spiritual Renewal at Bethel

After such violent, vengeful acts, God called Jacob's to worship again at Bethel. Before Jacob would go, he made everyone give up their idols (compare Genesis 31:19). He also required those with him to purify themselves, perhaps with ceremonial washings, and change clothing, likely to symbolize the solemn nature of the occasion.

Remember, Jacob made a solemn promise to give God a tenth of all his goods if God would keep him safe. Since the promise was made at Bethel, God called him there to worship and fulfill the promise (Genesis 28:10-22). As they journeyed, God kept them safe. The people whose land they passed through were afraid of them because of God and did not exact the revenge Jacob had feared they would. Jacob built an altar at the same place he had worshipped while on his way out of Canaan. He called the place "El Bethel," or "house of God." God renewed the promise at that time (Genesis 35:1-15).

### **The Deaths of Rachel and Isaac**

As they continued their journey away from Bethel, Rachel experienced a very difficult time in childbirth. She named the boy born on that day Ben-Oni, or "son of my sorrow." However, Jacob would not let him have such a sorrowful name. He renamed him Benjamin, which means "son of my right hand." Likely, this name refers to the comfort he expected to receive in the life of the son after his mother was dead. Rachel died and was buried there on the way to Ephrath, or Bethlehem. They then travelled on past the sheep tower and set up camp. It was here that Reuben sinned by laying with his father's concubine, Bilhah, who was Rachel's handmaid.

Jacob was at last reunited with his father at Mamre, or Hebron. This was the place Isaac had lived with his father, Abraham. Isaac died at the age of one hundred eighty. Jacob and Esau, having put away all past wrongs, buried their father with those who had died before him (Genesis 35:16-29).

### **The Descendants of Esau**

Genesis 36 gives a brief history of the descendants of Esau. Since they were not part of the promised seed line, inspiration's pen does not pause long over the details. Verses 6-8 do explain why Esau moved. The land could not support the families of Jacob and Esau. So, he moved his family to Seir, a region south of the Dead Sea. As the text notes, they actually dwelt in a mountain known as Seir. The Edomites, as Esau's descendants were known, took kings prior to the time Israel did. In fact, Edom may have been one of the nations Israel wanted to imitate when she asked for a king.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What tragic incident occurred at Shechem?
2. Describe the different responses of Hamor and Jacob's sons to the incident.
3. What possible reasons could there be for such different reactions?
4. In what way did the sons of Jacob deceive Hamor and Shechem?
5. What two sons of Jacob acted next?
6. What did they do?
7. What did Jacob say when he learned of their actions?
8. What does their response tell you about them?
9. Why did God cause Jacob to go to Bethel?
10. How did God keep Jacob's family safe during their journey?
11. What name did Rachel want to give her second son? Why?
12. What name did Jacob give him? Why?
13. What happened at the death of Isaac which shows the extent of Esau's forgiveness?
14. Name at least two significant facts about the descendants of Esau.

### **Lesson 18**

# Sold Into Slavery

Genesis 37:1-38:30

## The Seeds of Jealousy

Jealousy yields ugly actions. Joseph's brothers were jealous of him for several reasons. When Joseph was seventeen, the sons of Bilhah, Dan and Naphtali, and Zilpah, Gad and Asher, did something wrong while tending their father's sheep. Joseph told Jacob, thus stirring the hearts of four brothers against him. Joseph was the firstborn son of Rachel, Jacob's favorite wife. He was also the son born to Jacob in his old age. So, Jacob gave him a coat of many colors. His brothers concluded he was loved more than they were. They hated him for it and would not speak to him in a kind way.

Then, Joseph had a dream that made them hate him more. In the dream, all the brothers were working in the field making sheaves of grain. The sheaves of the other brothers bowed down to Joseph's sheave, which stood erect. They naturally concluded he would rule over them. He had another dream in which the sun, moon and eleven stars bowed down to him. When Jacob heard the dream, he asked if it meant he and his wife along with eleven sons would bow down to Joseph. This aroused envy in the brothers. However, Jacob, who knew the significance of certain dreams, kept the matter in his heart (Genesis 37:1-11; 28:10-22).

## An Opportunity For Revenge

Joseph's brothers took their father's sheep to the area around Shechem. Remember, this area would have been fraught with potential danger because of the slaughter worked by Simeon and Levi. That may have been why Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers. However, when he arrived at Shechem in the valley of Hebron, he could not find them. A man told him he had heard them say they were going on to Dothan.

Joseph caught up to his brothers in Dothan. Before he ever reached them, they said, "Look, this dreamer is coming! Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, 'Some wild beast has devoured him.' We shall see what will become of his dreams!" Reuben suggested they not shed blood but cast Joseph into a pit, or empty cistern. The inspired writer says his plan was to rescue Joseph and safely return him to his father (Genesis 37:12-22).

## Sold By His Brothers

When Joseph reached them, they stripped him of the coat Jacob had given him and cast him into a pit. Then, they sat down to eat. While they were eating, a caravan of Ishmaelite traders were sighted by the brothers. They were going from Gilead to Egypt to sell spices, medicine and perfume. Judah suggested they not kill Joseph but make a profit by selling him to the traders.

The Ishmaelites gave them twenty shekels of silver, which was the redemption price for a boy up to twenty years of age (Leviticus 27:5). All of the business with the traders must have been done while Reuben was away. When he returned to an empty pit, he tore his clothes. Then, Joseph's brothers took his coat and dipped it in goat's blood. The extent of their jealous anger can be seen in the question they asked their father. "We have found this. Do you know whether it is your son's tunic or not?" Notice, they would not even call Joseph their brother.

Jacob assumed just what they hoped he would. He knew it was Joseph's coat and believed a wild animal had killed him. He tore his clothes and put on sackcloth. Then, he mourned for his lost son and would not be comforted. In fact, he said he would mourn until he died. Meanwhile, Joseph was sold by the Midianites to Potiphar, a captain of the guard serving Pharaoh (Genesis 37:23-36).

### **Judah's Adultery With Tamar**

Perhaps out of disgust for his brothers' thoughts of killing Joseph and deceiving Jacob, Judah went to a city about twelve miles outside Bethlehem. He married a Canaanite woman who bore him three sons, Er, Onan and Shelah. Judah arranged a marriage contract for Er with a woman named Tamar. Before they could bear any children, God slew Er for wickedness. By the law of levirate marriage (see Deuteronomy 25:5-10), Onan was compelled to marry Tamar. The first son born to them would then be named for the deceased brother, Er, to keep his name alive. Onan apparently did not want to bear a child to carry on the memory of his brother, so he spilled his semen on the ground. God killed him for his act (Genesis 38:1-10).

Judah instructed Tamar to remain a widow in her father's house until Shelah reached an age for marriage. Actually, he feared for Shelah's life. Over the course of time, Judah's wife died. Tamar was told he was going up to Timnah to shear his sheep. She took off her widow's clothes, covered herself with a harlot's veil and waited by the road for Judah to pass. When he did, she made an agreement to have relations with him for a kid. He left his signet ring on a cord and shepherd's staff as collateral until he could send a kid back in payment.

When Tamar was found with child, Judah planned to burn her. However, she produced his signet ring on a cord and staff. Judah said she had been more righteous than he, however, both sinned in this matter. She bore twins, Perez and Zerah. It seems likely this story is included in the text because Judah was to receive the birthright. The Lord came out of the tribe of Judah. Also, Judah's sin is in stark contrast to Joseph's actions in the house of Potiphar (Genesis 38:1-30).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Name some of the things which may have produced jealousy in Joseph's brothers.
2. What gave them an opportunity to seek their revenge?

3. What did the brothers do to Joseph?
4. What significance can one attach to twenty shekels of silver?
5. How did the brothers explain Joseph's absence to Jacob?
6. What event in Jacob's life shows it is possible to believe a lie?
7. List some lies people have believed to their own spiritual detriment.
8. Explain the law of levirate marriage and its purpose.
9. Why did God kill Er?
10. Why did God kill Onan?
11. Why did Jacob say he would not give Tamar Shelah's hand in marriage?
12. What was the real reason?
13. What did she do to make up for her failure to bear a child to carry on the name of Er?
14. Were her actions justified? Why or why not?

Lesson 19

## **Enslaved In Egypt**

Genesis 39:1-40:23

**Sold to Potiphar**



In Egypt, Joseph was sold to Potiphar. The writer tells us he was an Egyptian. This may be because this was a time when a non-Egyptian dynasty was ruling in Egypt. Potiphar was a commanding officer of the royal bodyguard. These men carried out executions for Pharaoh. The writer tells us God caused Joseph to prosper in all he did. This fact was noticed by Potiphar, who put him in charge of all his house.

God blessed the household because of Joseph. Potiphar did not concern himself with anything going on in the house. All he did was eat his meals and leave the rest to Joseph (Genesis 39:1-6).

### **Fleeing From Temptation**

"And Joseph was handsome in form and appearance." This simple statement at the end of verse six introduces the reason for another serious problem which was to arise in Joseph's life. Potiphar's wife was attracted to the young Hebrew slave. She tried to entice him daily. He refused for two reasons. First, his master had placed great trust in him which he did not want to abuse. Second, he asked, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

However, she would not be put off. She spoke to him daily and asked him to lie with her. Though he continued to refuse her advances, she kept seeking an opportunity to have her way. At last, a day came when Joseph was the only one in the house with her. She caught his coat and asked him to lie with her. He ran away, leaving his coat in her hand (Genesis 39:7-12). It is as if Joseph was obeying Paul's later instruction to "Flee sexual immorality" (1 Corinthians 6:18; Proverbs 4:14-18). Paul instructed another young man to, "Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22).

It should be observed that the advances of Potiphar's wife follow a normal course of temptation. First, she looked at him (compare Matthew 5:28). Next, she began to entice him with her words (remember Satan's discussion with Eve in Genesis 3). Finally, she caught him by his garment. As in the temptation of our Lord, Satan does not give up easily. If one advance is turned aside, he takes another approach (Matthew 4:1-11).

### **Imprisoned Though Innocent**

The unfortunate truth is that people who do what is right do not always receive right treatment. Though Joseph had honored his master and God, Potiphar's wife lied about him. She called the other servants together and told them Joseph had tried to lie with her. She claimed he fled when she cried out. She said the proof was found in the coat he had left beside her. Notice, she did not say left his coat in my hand as that might have shown the true nature of the case.

When Potiphar came home, she repeated her lie. Potiphar was enraged and cast Joseph into prison. This was actually a very mild punishment for the crime supposedly committed

(Genesis 39:13-20). Whether one thinks Potiphar may not have believed every detail as related by his wife, or not, still it must ultimately be said God protected Joseph (compare 1 Corinthians 10:13). Such is clearly seen in his being placed in a special prison used for the king's prisoners.

### **God Was With Joseph In Prison**

Again, the Lord was with Joseph. He caused the keeper of the prison to look on Joseph with mercy. Eventually, the keeper placed all under Joseph's authority, just as Potiphar had. "The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's hand, because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper."

After Joseph was placed in charge, Pharaoh became angry with his chief butler and baker. He cast them into prison with Joseph. The captain of the guard naturally put them in Joseph's charge. One night, they each had a dream. When they expressed sorrow at not having anyone in prison to interpret for them, Joseph said, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me, please." In his statement can be seen the fact that he knew God was with him and expected him to help.

The butler dreamed of squeezing three clusters of grapes into Pharaoh's cup and placing it into his hand. Joseph said the dream meant Pharaoh would restore the butler to his place of service in three days. The baker did not get such good news, though he was encouraged by the explanation of the meaning of the butler's dream. The three baskets full of baked goods being eaten by the birds meant he would die in three days. Joseph said the birds would feed on the baker's body. Of course, both dreams came to pass just as Joseph, with God's help, had said they would. But, the butler who had faithfully promised to remember Joseph when he was restored to his rightful position failed to do so. Joseph remained in prison (Genesis 40:1-23).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What significant statement do you find in Genesis 39:2?
2. Who, if anyone, was able to notice the effects of that truth?
3. Could there be any relationship between the promise of Genesis 12:1-3 and what happened in Potiphar's house after Joseph was made overseer?

4. In what three ways did Potiphar's wife try to entice Joseph?
5. What reasons did Joseph give for refusing to lie with her?
6. What do Joseph's actions teach us to do when temptation to sin is getting too close?
7. List at least two encouraging statements found in Genesis 39:21-23.
8. What notable men were cast into prison and placed under Joseph's care?
9. Why were they there?
10. What happened while they were there?
11. Briefly describe their dreams and give the explanation God gave through Joseph.
12. Discuss how the fulfillment of the dreams proves God is.
13. When the butler was restored to his place, what did he do about Joseph?

#### Lesson 20

## When God Used Forgetfulness

Genesis 41:1-57

### God Rules In the Kingdoms of Men

For two years, the butler forgot Joseph. Sold and abandoned by family. Imprisoned by a woman's lie after doing the right thing. Hope, which seemed so bright with the promise of the

butler, shattered by days, weeks, months and even years of forgetfulness. Seemingly, forgotten by God. Had we been in that prison cell, discouragement might have reigned supreme.

However, God was using the forgetfulness of the butler. If the butler had remembered Joseph right after his own release from prison, Joseph might have left the land of Egypt. How would God have preserved Abraham's seed then? Men do not always appreciate the fact that God causes everything to happen in its season (Ephesians 1:10; 3:8-12). He really does work in the kingdoms of men, as this story will plainly show (Daniel 4:25; 34-37).

### **Pharaoh's Dream Awakened the Butler**

Two years after Joseph told the butler the meaning of his dream, Pharaoh had a dream. He saw seven fat cows come up out of the Nile River. Then, seven lean cows came up and stood beside them. The lean ate the fat, but grew no fatter. Pharaoh awoke. When he slept again, he dreamed about seven full heads of grain growing on one stalk. Then, seven withered heads sprang up. The withered heads ate the full heads, but grew no fuller.

The next morning, Pharaoh was troubled by what he had seen in his dreams. He called for the magicians and wise men of Egypt. He asked them to interpret his dreams, but none could. It was then that the butler remembered Joseph in prison. He briefly related the events of two years before. He told Pharaoh of the young Hebrew who had correctly interpreted his and the baker's dreams (Genesis 41:1-13).

### **Pharaoh Called For Joseph**

Naturally, Pharaoh sent for the Hebrew who had interpreted the dreams of his servants in prison. Joseph cleaned up, shaved the hair of his head and put on fresh clothing and approached the ruler of Egypt. Joseph's answer when Pharaoh said he had heard Joseph could interpret dreams is most interesting. Just as he had told the butler and baker, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

Pharaoh related the dreams to Joseph. God's messenger then began to explain that God had revealed coming events to Egypt's ruler. Actually, Joseph explained, the two dreams had one message. Seven years of plenty were to be followed by seven years of famine which would make everyone forget the plenty. "And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass."

Joseph went on to suggest Pharaoh set a man over the land. This man would in turn select other officers to collect a tax of twenty percent during the time of plenty. Grain thus stored up would serve as a reserve during the years of severe famine to follow (Genesis 41:14-36).

### **Pharaoh Appoints Joseph**

There was obvious wisdom seen in the interpretation and suggestions offered by Joseph.

Pharaoh realized such wisdom could only come from God who was clearly with this Hebrew. So, he appointed him grand vizier, or prime minister, which made him the most powerful man in Egypt outside of Pharaoh himself. The king gave Joseph his signet ring which would give him authority to issue royal edicts. He also gave him fine clothing and placed a gold chain around his neck. He directed that Joseph was to be driven in the second chariot, which normally followed Pharaoh's in procession, and sent men before him commanding the people to bow their knees.

Joseph was, in the truest sense, made ruler in Egypt since no one was to lift hand or foot without his direction. The king gave Joseph an Egyptian name, Zaphnath-Paaneah. It meant, "sustainer of life." God, through his providence both miraculous and non-miraculous, had caused Joseph to be in a position to sustain the lives of the Egyptian people and, more especially, the Israelites. In addition to his new name, Joseph was given a wife. Her name was Asenath. She was the daughter of the priest of the sun god, which meant she was from the most important caste in the land. It had been thirteen years since Joseph's brothers had sold him into slavery, as Joseph was now thirty years old (Genesis 41:37-46).

### **When Joseph Ruled In Egypt**

Joseph immediately caused storehouses to be built in the cities. A twenty percent tax was collected from the abundant harvest. The grain collected was so bountiful, they ceased to number the amount. During that time, Joseph's first son was born. He named him Manasseh, which means, "causing to forget." God had helped Joseph forget the years of painful service and the hurt inflicted on him by his brothers. A second son was named Ephraim, meaning, "double fruitfulness." Joseph said God had caused him to be fruitful in the land of his affliction.

At the end of seven years of plenty, the famine came just as God, through Joseph, had said it would. The famine encompassed all the surrounding lands as well, but only Egypt had bread. This was because Egypt was the only nation with grain. Pharaoh directed the complaining people to go to Joseph. Joseph then began to sell them the grain they had been storing up. When other people in other lands heard it, they naturally came to Egypt to buy from Joseph (Genesis 41:47-57).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. How did God use the forgetfulness to the butler to keep his people safe?
2. Describe the two dreams of Pharaoh.
3. Who did he call to interpret the dream?
4. Who did the butler say could interpret the dream?
5. How did Joseph say Pharaoh would know the meaning of the dream?

6. What did the dreams mean? Why were there two dreams?
7. What suggestion did Joseph offer Pharaoh after he interpreted the dream?
8. What symbols did Joseph receive which showed he was in authority?
9. What name did Pharaoh give Joseph? What did it mean?
10. What did Joseph name his two sons? Why?
11. What did Joseph do during the years of plenty?
12. Why did other nations begin to come to Egypt during the time of famine?

## Lesson 21

# A Dream Come True

Genesis 42:1-45:24

### **Joseph's Brothers Bow Before Him**

Jacob heard of the great supply of grain in Egypt. He sent the ten older brothers to buy grain to sustain them. As the grand vizier, Joseph had complete control over the food distribution. His brothers came before him and bowed, which was an exact fulfillment of his earlier dream (Genesis 42:1-6; 37:5-8). It will be remembered they hated him for the dream, yet it was fulfilled.

Joseph recognized his brothers but they did not recognize him. He spoke roughly to them and accused them of being spies. They explained they were ten of twelve brothers born to one man. They said one was at home with their father and the other was no more. Joseph said the only way they could prove they were not spies was if one of them returned home and brought their younger brother to him.

After keeping them in prison three days, Joseph said he would keep only one of them in Egypt while the others returned to get their brother. The brothers felt trouble was coming to them for their mistreatment of Joseph. Joseph turned away so they could not see the tears that came to his eyes as he remembered the painful past. Simeon was taken and bound while the brothers watched (Genesis 42:7-24).

### **Joseph Gets to See Benjamin**

All of their sacks were filled with grain along with their money. Having already been accused of being spies, they were horrified when one brother discovered their money was in the mouth of their sacks. When they arrived back home, the brothers told Jacob everything that had happened. He felt he had now lost Simeon as well as Joseph and would lose Benjamin if he returned with them to Egypt. He would not allow them to go back, perhaps thinking the famine would end before the fresh supply of grain had been exhausted.

When the grain had been eaten, Jacob told his sons to return to Egypt to buy more. Judah reminded his father there was no need to go without Benjamin since the grand vizier, Joseph, had said they would not see his face without bringing their younger brother. Judah pledged to bring Benjamin back safely to him. Jacob relented, sending Benjamin along with double money and a gift of the best fruits of the land (Genesis 42:25-43:14).

Joseph, upon seeing his brothers return with Benjamin, directed that they be taken to his house and an animal slaughtered for a feast. They fearfully approached the servant explaining they had found their money in their sacks. He told them their God had given them the money because he had received the purchase price. Then, he brought Simeon out to be with them. When Joseph came, he asked concerning his father's health. Then, he could barely contain himself when he saw Benjamin. He went to his quarters and wept. Joseph had each brother seated according to his age, which surprised them. Each brother was served, with Benjamin receiving five times as much as any other (Genesis 43:15-34).

### **A Test for Joseph's Brothers**

Once again, Joseph told his steward to fill the sacks with grain and place each man's money in his sack. However, he also told him to put his silver cup in the mouth of Benjamin's sack. All eleven brothers left at dawn. Before they had gone very far out of the city, Joseph told his steward to find them and ask why they had taken his cup. They told him they had not taken the cup and he could kill the man with whom it was found.

When the cup was found in Benjamin's sack, they tore their clothes and went back into the city with him. Judah told Joseph he felt this trouble arose because of sin in their past, likely referring to selling their brother into slavery. He offered Joseph the service of all the brothers as slaves. Joseph told him only the one in whose sack the cup was found would be made a slave.

Judah then explained how difficult it had been to get Jacob to let Benjamin go to Egypt. He expressed a sincere fear that Jacob would die if his youngest son was not with them. He also told Joseph that he had guaranteed Benjamin's safe return and offered himself in the lad's stead (Genesis 44:1-34).

### **Joseph Made Known to His Brothers**

Joseph could restrain himself no longer, so he caused all the servants to leave. He revealed his true identity to his brothers and openly wept. The brothers were fearful but Joseph reassured them. Three times in four verses he stated God had been active in his being sold into slavery. He had sent him ahead to preserve life by making him lord over Egypt. He also told them two years of famine were past but five more were yet to come (Genesis 45:1-10).

Joseph directed them, especially Benjamin, to go back and assure their father they had seen him with their own eyes. He fell on Benjamin's neck for a tearful reunion. He kissed each brother and wept over them. Naturally, the report got back to Pharaoh that Joseph's brothers had come. He told Joseph to load his brothers' beasts and send them to bring back their father to live in Egypt. They were also given carts to load the children in to bring them. Pharaoh told them not to worry about bringing their possessions because they would be given the best of the land.

Joseph gave each brother a change of clothes. To Benjamin, he gave five changes of clothes and three hundred pieces of silver. Ten donkeys were loaded with good things from Egypt. Ten more were loaded with grain and bread to sustain Jacob until he could come to Egypt. Joseph sent his brothers to get their father and bring him back. As they left, he warned them not to quarrel along the way. They might have been tempted to argue over whose fault it had been that they sold their brother. He had already heard Reuben remind them of his warning not to sin against the boy (42:22). Joseph did not want anything to delay his reunion with his father (45:11-24).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Why did Jacob send his ten oldest sons to Egypt?
2. Tell about Joseph's first dream and its fulfillment.
3. How did Joseph insure they would bring Benjamin on their return?
4. What was done with the money for the grain?



5. How did Jacob react to the story of the trip to Egypt?
6. Recount the story of how Jacob finally allowed Benjamin to go to Egypt.
7. What did Joseph do upon their return?
8. What special treatment did Joseph give Benjamin at dinner?
9. What was put in the mouth of each brothers' sack?
10. How did they respond the steward's accusations?
11. What was their response when the cup was found in Benjamin's sack?
12. Briefly relate what Judah told Joseph.
13. Why did Joseph send the servants out?
14. Where could the crying be heard?
15. What did Pharaoh hear? What did he do about it?
16. What did Joseph give each brother before they left?
17. What did Joseph send to his father?
18. What final instructions did Joseph give his brothers before they left?

#### **Lesson 22**

## **Jacob and Joseph In Egypt**

**Genesis 45:25-50:26**

### **A Journey Toward Reunion**

Jacob had believed a lie so long that he could not accept the truth. It took hearing his sons repeat Joseph's words and seeing the carts he sent to convince him. Then, he said, "It is enough. Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die" (Genesis 45:25-28).

Jacob stopped at Beersheba on his way to Egypt. He offered sacrifices to God, perhaps in thanksgiving for learning Joseph was still alive. God reassured him that going into Egypt was in accord with his will. He promised to make of Jacob a great nation and bring that nation safely out of Egypt. God also promised Jacob that his favorite son, Joseph, would be there to close his eyes in death.

Jacob sent Judah ahead to get directions from Joseph as to where they should settle. They went to the land of Goshen, as directed. "So Joseph made ready his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel; and he presented himself to him, and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while." Jacob was so happy that he said, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face, because you are still alive" (Genesis 46:1-30).

### **Joseph's Statesmanship**

Joseph directed all the members of his father's household to say they were shepherds. He well knew the attitude of the Egyptians toward nomadic herdsmen. They thought of shepherds as an abomination. By having his family so identify themselves, Joseph was assuring Pharaoh would favor settling them in Goshen where he wanted them to settle (45:10).

Joseph selected five of his brothers to go with him before Pharaoh. After they told Pharaoh they were herdsmen, he directed them to settle in Goshen. He also asked them to be in charge of his own livestock. Then, Joseph brought Jacob before the ruler of Egypt. When asked, Jacob said he was one hundred thirty years old. Interestingly, he described his life as a pilgrimage, probably because he never had a permanent home on earth. Also, it was he who blessed Pharaoh and not the other way around. The writer of Hebrews says the one who gives the blessing is always the greater of the two (Hebrews 7:7). Joseph then situated his family in Goshen, which was later known as Rameses. He saw to it that they had plenty of food to make it throughout the famine. (Genesis 46:31-47:12).

### **Joseph's Stewardship**

Joseph proved to be a good steward over the grain collected during the years of plenty. First, he sold grain for money until all the money in Egypt and Canaan was exhausted. Next, he took their livestock in exchange for grain to make bread. Then, he accepted their land and their very lives.

Having acquired everything in the land of Egypt in the name of Pharaoh, Joseph told the people his plan. From that time on, the people would work the land and give twenty percent of the harvest to Pharaoh. Only the land of the priests was exempted because Pharaoh had given them an allotment of grain and they did not have to sell their lands to his representative.

Joseph's plan strengthened and enriched the government in Egypt. Willis wrote, "Egypt was apparently in a condition of unsettled disorganization during much of the period of Hyksos domination. The Egyptian people would have welcomed a stronger, more secure central government, especially in a national crises like a famine, even if this meant infringements on individual rights or privileges." The fact that the statute remained until the time of the writer, likely Moses, is evidence of how valued this arrangement became (Genesis 47:13-26).

### **Jacob's Final Days**

The writer gives a brief record of the rest of Jacob's life before he gives details of the events surrounding the time of his death. Jacob lived seventeen more years in Egypt and saw his descendants multiply. Before his death, he made Joseph promise to take his body back to be buried with Abraham and Isaac.

Some time prior to Jacob's death, Joseph took his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh to be blessed by him. Jacob adopted them as sons who might have been born to Rachel. Woods says, "The act of placing the sons beside Jacob's knees had symbolized their adoption by him." By placing his right hand on Ephraim's head, Jacob designated which son was to receive the greater blessing from him. To Joseph, Jacob said, "Behold, I am dying, but God will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers. Moreover I have given to you one portion above your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."

Jacob then called all of his sons to him and blessed each one. With God's help, these blessings were prophetic. Reuben lost the right of the birthright because he went into his father's bed with Bilhah (35:22). Simeon and Levi were scattered among the tribes with no real inheritance of their own because of their angry sin at Shechem (34:25-26). The Levites had cities throughout the land. Simeon's inheritance was in the middle of Judah's land and eventually caused his descendants to be absorbed (Joshua 19:1).

Of Judah Jacob said, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people." Of course, this was fulfilled in Christ. Zebulun was located in the perfect spot for commerce (Deuteronomy 33:18-19; Joshua 19:10-16). Issachar received a beautiful piece of land but ended up serving the surrounding nations. Dan was the smallest of the tribes but would, by guerilla warfare, prove a difficulty to any enemy entering Israel. Gad was troubled with raiders but defended herself very well.

Asher received a plot of land that was among the most fertile in the promised land (Joshua 19:24-31). Rich foods came out of this region which were fit for kings. Naphtali is described as a hind, or gazelle, which Keil and Delitzsch say "is a simile of a warrior who is skilful and swift in his movements." The men of this tribe helped Deborah and Barak defeat the armies of Jabin, who was a king of Canaan (Judges 4-5).

Joseph, as Jacob's firstborn by Rachel, received the double portion through the adoption of his two sons by his father. A fruit tree by a spring grew especially well in Israel. Joseph's descendants faced strong opposition but overcame with God's help. When the blessings were complete, Jacob died (Genesis 47:27-49:33).

### **Joseph's Final Days**

Joseph had experienced Egyptians embalm Jacob's body, which took forty days. For seventy days, the Egyptians mourned Jacob's death. Joseph asked Pharaoh to allow him to take

his father's body back to their burial place in Canaan. Permission having been granted, Joseph went, with Pharaoh's servants, the elders of Joseph's house and elders from the land of Egypt, to bury his father. Seven more days of mourning were fulfilled in Canaan. Then, Joseph and his brothers returned to Egypt.

The brothers feared Joseph would now seek revenge on them. However, he reassured them that God was working in their actions to save them all. He told them, "Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones."

Joseph lived to be one hundred ten years old. Before his death, he made his family promise not to bury him in Egypt. Instead, he said, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here." When he died, the Egyptians embalmed his body and it remained in a coffin in Egypt awaiting the day of the exodus (Genesis 50:1-26).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. How does Jacob show us one can believe a lie?
2. What happened at Beersheba on Jacob's journey to Egypt?
3. Describe Jacob's arrival in Egypt and his reunion with Joseph.
4. What instructions did Joseph give his family before they saw Pharaoh?
5. Why did he give those instructions?
6. Describe Jacob's meeting with Pharaoh.
7. Who blessed whom? What can we conclude from this?
8. Where did Joseph settle his family? Why? How did he care for them?
9. How did Joseph handle the sale of grain over the course of the famine?

10. What was the result of his actions?
11. What statement by the writer shows Joseph truly acted with wisdom in the sight of the Egyptian government?
12. What promise did Jacob cause Joseph to make?
13. Tell about the blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh.
14. Briefly relate the blessing of each of Jacob's sons.
15. What fact about those blessings makes you believe they are predictive in nature and shows God is the Bible's author?
16. How did Joseph handle the details of Jacob's funeral?
17. What happened when he and his brothers returned to Egypt?
18. What promise did Joseph exact from his family?
19. How old was Joseph when he died? Where is his body as Genesis comes to a close?

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