Genesis: Introduction

Title

The Hebrew title of the book is, in accordance with ancient Jewish custom, the initial word of the book: Bresit, translated “in the beginning.” The English word “Genesis” is derived from the Greek word geneseos, a translation of the Hebrew word toldot, which translates into the English word “generations,” a key word in the book. In Genesis 2:4, the Septuagint translation of Genesis 2:4a is, “This is the book of the geneseus (generations) of heaven and earth.

Thus, In the beginning (Hebrew: בְּרֵאשִׁית, English pronunciation bereshith) is the first word of the book of Genesis and, according to Jewish custom, the name of the book.

בראשית is the equivalent of the Greek word ἀρχή, (pronounced “arkhay”).

The English title “Genesis” takes its name from the title given to it in the Septuagint version of the Brit Hadashah. The name is derived from the heading of it ten divisions, he biblos genesios (the book of the generations).

Authorship

I. Like most books in the Tenach, the author of the entire Pentateuch is not stated in the text. Nowhere in the book does the author refer to himself as such or identify himself.

II. Eighteenth century rationalism launched attacks against the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible) along with the rest of the Bible. Denying any supernatural origin of Scripture, it completely humanized the Bible and viewed it as a record of man’s experience with God rather than God’s revelation to man. As the teachings of evolution made an increasing impact during the nineteenth century, the concept of slow development was applied to Scripture. Thus it was taught that the Pentateuch developed gradually: documents and sources were collected and edited until it finally came to its present form during the fifth century B.C. Mosaic authorship was denied.

III. However, early and reliable tradition has ascribed the authorship of the Pentateuch to Moses; and throughout the pentatuchal narratives it is Moses who is most closely associated with the writing of the material that is contained in the Pentateuch. For example, Moses recorded details of the battle with the Amalakites (Exodus 17:14). Also, most, if not all, of the laws in the Pentateuch were written down by Moses as they were dictated to him by the Lord (e.g. Exodus 20:1).

IV. The Pentateuch itself claims that important parts were written by Moses (e.g. Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 31:9, 24-26). Internal evidence shows that the Pentateuch was written
V. *Pentateuchal* claims for Mosaic authorship are supported in the rest of the *Tenach*, intertestamental literature, and the statements of Messiah, *Yeshua* on numerous occasions spoke of the law of Moses, sometimes of the “book of Moses,” and twice of “Moses and the prophets” (Luke 16:29, 31) or “Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms” (Luke 24:44), obviously asserting that Moses was in fact the author of the *Pentateuch*. The early church and the church of later centuries almost unanimously accepted Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.

VI. The position that Moses was the author of the *Pentateuch* is sound, and is too highly supported to be dismissed by a group of rationalists.

**Date of Composition**

When Moses wrote *Genesis* will never be known, but the latest possible date is the time of his death, just before the Jewish people crossed the Jordan and attacked Jericho. The date of that event depends on the date assigned to the Exodus. Many scholars subscribe to the early date of the Exodus (about 1440 B.C.) and thus conclude that *Genesis* must have been written by about 1400 B.C., for Moses died at the end of the subsequent forty years of wilderness wandering.

**Structure**

The book of *Genesis* divides rather easily into two major parts: the early history of mankind (chapters 1-11) and the patriarchs (chapters 12-50). This yields an outline as follows:


The Creation (1:1-2:3)

The Fall of Man and Extension of Civilization (2:4-5:32)

The Flood (6:1-9:21)

Historical Developments After the Flood (10:1-11:32)

**Part Two: The Patriarchs (12:1-50:26)**

Abraham (12:1-25:18)
Isaac (25:19-26:35)
Jacob (27:1-26:43)
Joseph (37:1-50:26)

The structure of Genesis may also be marked by an initial section and then eleven sections beginning with the word toldot (“These are the generations of…”). This word has traditionally been viewed as the heading of a section. According to this view the book has the following arrangement:

I. Creation (1:1-2:3)
II. Toldot of the heavens and the earth (2:4-4:26)
III. Toldot of Adam (5:1-6:8)
IV. Toldot of Noah (6:9-9:29)
V. Toldot of Shem, Ham, and Japheth (10:1-11:9)
VI. Toldot of Shem (11:10-26)
VII. Toldot of Terah (11:27-25:11)
VIII. Toldot of Ishmael (25:12-18)
IX. Toldot of Isaac (25:19-35:29)
X. Toldot of Esau (36:1-8)
XI. Toldot of Esau, father of the Edomites (36:9-37:1)
XII. Toldot of Jacob (37:2-50:26)

Since Toldot is derived from yalad (to bear, to generate) it refers to what is “brought forth.” This formula word for Genesis, then, marks a starting point, combining narrative and genealogy to move from one point (toldot) to the end (the next toldot). It is Moses’ means of moving along the historical lines from a beginning to an ending, including the product or result of the starting point. The word toldot, therefore, refers to the particulars of a man and his descendents.

Nowhere in the Tenach does toldot clearly refer to what has proceeded; in every place it can and often must refer to what follows (e.g. in Ruth 4:18 the word looks forward to Perez’s line, and in Numbers 3:1 the toldot of Aaron and Moses cannot refer to the preceding census in Numbers 1-2). In Genesis when the toldot are taken to refer to the following sections, these toldot fit nicely.
The *toldot* headings are, therefore, the very fabric around which the whole of Genesis has been constructed. Each *toldot* shows a narrowing in the development of the theology of blessing.

**The Theology of Genesis**

Genesis was written with the presupposition that God exists and that He has revealed himself in word and deed to Israel’s ancestors. The book does not argue for the existence of God; it simply asserts that everything exists because of God.

The subject matter of the theology in Genesis is certainly God’s work in establishing Israel as the means of blessing the families of the earth. Genesis forms the *Pentateuch’s* main theme of the founding of the theocracy, that is, the rule of God over all creation. It presents the origins behind the founding of the theocracy: the promised blessing that Abraham’s descendants would inherit and possess the land promised to him.

In the program of God, Genesis introduces the reader to the nature of God as sovereign Lord over the universe who will move heaven and earth to establish his will. He seeks to bless mankind, but does not tolerate disobedience and unbelief. Throughout Genesis the reader learns that “without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6).
Genesis: Chapter One

Verse 1

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

I. From its beginning and throughout the entire Bible, God’s existence is asserted but not formally proven.

A. Just as the sun in its brightness needs no formal proof of its existence, the brightness of God’s words and works clearly establish his existence without the necessity of formal proof.

B. The following passages of Scripture illustrate the existence and revelation of the living God.

Psalm 19:1-2
For the choir director. A psalm of David.
The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
And their expanse is declaring the work of his hands.
Day to day pours forth speech,
And night to night reveals knowledge.

Romans 1:18-20
For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them. For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes, his eternal power and nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

II. There are four beginnings in the Bible.

A. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1).

B. The beginning of the gospel of Yeshua the Messiah the Son of God (Mark 1:1).
C. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1).

D. What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of Life (1 John 1:1).

1. B above speaks of the forerunner of the Messiah, John the Immerser, and does not relate to Genesis 1:1.

2. C and D above speak of the existence of God and the Word (the Son of God) Prior to creation. In fact, John 1:1 may be rendered, “Before the beginning began, the word already existed with God.”

3. A above speaks of the beginning of creation and the origin of all things apart from God, who is eternal.

   a. God alone is self existent, existing from eternity without cause. He alone is not dependent upon anything outside of himself for his continued existence.

   b. “The beginning” in Genesis 1:1 refers to the commencement of space, time and matter in our universe and asserts that the substance of the universe had a definite origin and did not start itself.

E. “Created” translates the Hebrew word bara, which Hebrew scholars have understood to signify the bringing into being ex nihilo, from nothing, without the use of pre-existing materials. God’s ex nihilo creation of the universe includes time, matter, energy, kingdoms, and all of the laws that govern the universe, both material and immaterial (e.g. the laws of physics, morality and justice), and in fact all that exists apart from himself.

   “All things came into being from him, and without him nothing came into being that has come into being” (John 1:3).

F. The means of creation was the spoken word of God.
“Then God said let there be light and there was light” (Genesis 1:3).

“By faith we understand that the worlds we prepared by the word of God so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible” (Hebrews 11:3).

G. “The heavens and the earth” denotes the entire universe, for there is no single word in the Hebrew language for universe. Thus, as we have observed earlier, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (the entire universe). There is nothing belonging to the composition of the universe, either material, visible, or invisible, which has an existence apart from the God and his divine act of creation.

**Verse 2**

“The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters”

III. Some see verse two as a description of chaos, which are symptomatic of sin and judgment. However, there is nothing in the immediate or wider context that indicates this to be the case.

A. Those who adhere to this view see a gap between the first two verses, allowing for the fall of Satan and the entrance of sin into the universe that caused the chaos.

B. However, there is nothing in the text to support this position. This interpretation is a matter of conjecture not supported by the immediate or wider context.

IV. A more likely interpretation is that verse two describes a part of God’s creative work. Verse two then describes the condition of the land just before God prepared it for man. The general context of chapter one suggests that the author meant the terms “formless and void” to describe the land before God made it “good.”

A. In light of the fact the remainder of the chapter pictures God preparing the land as a place for man to dwell, we should understand verse two to focus our attention on a land not yet inhabitable for man.

B. Having described the land as uninhabitable, the remainder of the account is a portrayal of God’s preparing the land for man.
C. The meaning of the word *tohu* (empty) is identical to *tohu* in Isaiah 45:18: “[God] did not create it [the land] to be empty [*tohu*], but formed to be inhabited.” The term “empty” in the Isaiah passage stands in opposition to the phrase “to be inhabited.” This is the same meaning of the word *tohu* in Deuteronomy 32:10. There “formless” (*tohu*) is parallel to “desert” (*midbar*), an uninhabitable wasteland.

“And the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters” (verse 2c)

V. The word “moving” may be translated “brooding” and is used in the *Tenach* to describe the young of an animal or a family of young, especially the young (as of a bird or insect) hatched or cared for at one time. Similarly, it may represent a mother bird sitting on or incubating her eggs until they hatch, or protectively covering her young with her wings.

VI. Thus, the Holy Spirit was protectively watching over God’s land in anticipation of his commencing his creative acts and making the land good.

**The First Day (1:3-5)**

VII. The pattern for each of the days of creation is established here:

A. A creative word.

B. The report of the word’s effect.

C. God’s evaluation of it as “good.”

D. At times a sovereign naming of that which has been created.

E. The numbering of each day.

VIII. Regarding the word “day” (*yom*) several interpretations have been suggested.

A. The days of creation refer to extended geological ages prior to man’s presence on earth.
B. The days are twenty four hour periods in which God revealed his creative acts.

C. The days are twenty four literal days of divine activity.

D. In favor of the third view is the fact that the term yom with an ordinal adjective (first, second, etc.) means twenty four hour days wherever this construction appears in the Tenach.

E. Also, the normal understanding of the forth commandment (Exodus 20:8-11) would suggest this interpretation:

   “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do your work, but in the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord the your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, Lord your male of female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and made it holy.”

IX. God’s first creative word produced light. The elegance and majesty of creation by decree is a refreshing contrast with the bizarre creation stories of the pagans. It was God’s word that motivated Israel to trust and obey him.

A. The light was natural, physical light. Its creation was an immediate victory because it dispelled darkness. In the Bible, light and darkness are also symbolic of good and evil. Here began God’s work which will culminate in the ages to follow when there will be no darkness (Revelation 22:5).

X. Israel would know that God is light – and that the truth and the way are with him. In the darkness of Egypt (Exodus 10:21-24) they had light, and in the deliverance to come they followed his light (Exodus 13:21).

The Second Day (1:6-8)

XI. On the second day God separated the atmospheric waters from the terrestrial waters by an arching expanse, the sky. This suggests that previously there had been a dense moisture enshrouding the earth. God’s work involves making divisions and distinctions.
The Third Day (1:9-13)

XII. Dry land with its vegetation was formed on the third day.

A. Vegetation is part of the ordered universe of the true God. There is no cyclical or seasonal myth to explain it. God started it once and for all time.

B. Moreover, while pagans believed in deities of the deep as forces to be reckoned with, this account shows that God controls the boundaries of the seas.

The Fourth Day (1:14-19)

XIII. Either these two great lights were created with apparent age, or they were previously created and were then made visible on the earth on days one and two when God separated light from darkness and waters above from waters below.

XIV. These heavenly bodies were to serve for signs and for seasons and days and years (verse 14). These terms, as well as “day” and “night” in verse five, are meaningless without the existence of the sun and rotation of the planets.

XV. In astrology unbelievers use stars and planets for guidance, but the Bible says they merely display the handiwork of God (Psalm 19:1). What folly to follow astrological charts of the Babylonians, worship the Egyptian sun gods, or become involved in earth worship, rather than trust the one who made these objects in the heavens. However, many humans repeatedly reject the creator to worship the creation (Romans 1:25).

The Fifth Day (1:20-23)

XVI. The great creatures of the sea and the air were created on the fifth day. In this section (verse 21) is the second use of bara (“created,” see verse one). Great creatures of the deep, worshipped as dragons and monsters in the ancient world, were nothing more than creations by Almighty God. Moreover, fertility of life comes from the blessing of the true God (verse 22).

The Sixth Day (1:24-31)

XVII. Day six was Creation’s climax, for it included mankind. Though man was the last creature mentioned in the account, he did not evolve; he was created.
A. Human life was created in (literally “in essence of) the image of God (verse 27). This image was imparted only to humans (verse 27).

B. “Image” is used figuratively here, for God does not have human form. Being in God’s image means that humans share, though imperfectly and finitely, in God’s nature; that is, in his communicable attributes (life, personality, truth, wisdom love, holiness, justice), and so have the capacity for spiritual fellowship with him.

C. God’s purpose in creating human life in his image was functional: man is to rule or have dominion (1:26;28). God’s dominion was presented by a representative. (Egyptians kings later, in idolatry, did a similar thing: they represented their rule or dominion by making representative statues of themselves.)

D. God pronounced his blessing on the male and female: they were to be fruitful and increase in number. In Genesis, to be blessed is to be rich and fertile. Such marvelous decrees of God would be significant for Israel, God’s representative on earth. She would enter the land of promise and expect God’s continued blessings.

E. However, because of sin not all things are under man’s dominion (Hebrews 2:8). However, Messiah will establish dominion over all the earth (Hebrews 2:5-8) at his second coming.
Genesis: Chapter Two

The Seventh Day (verses 1-3)

I. God’s finished task of creation is sealed with the words “He rested” (literally “ceased;” from sabat, the root of Sabbath). God blessed the seventh day and made it holy (sanctified it) because it commemorated the completion or cessation of his creative work.

A. This is a rest of achievement, not inactivity, for God nurtures what He creates. It is comparable to the symbolism Yeshua’s being “seated” after his finished work of redemption (Hebrews 8:1; 10:12), to dispense its benefits.

B. Thus, God’s work of creation is followed by his continuing work of providence. Providence is the continuing work of God by which He sustains His creation, nurtures it, and directs it toward his good end.

C. Providence, which follows creation, is the basis upon which Yeshua justified his providential works of healing on the Sabbath (“My Father is working until now, and I myself am working, John 5:17).

II. The account of creation, seen through the eyes of the new nation of Israel in Moses’ day, had great theological significance.

A. Out of the chaos and darkness of the pagan world of Egypt God brought his people, teaching them the truth, commissioning them to be his representatives, and promising them rest as they obeyed his Word, which included observing the Sabbath to commemorate God’s great work of creation.

B. Before the Fall God’s Sabbath rest represented the perfect creation, sanctified and at rest. After the Fall this rest became a goal to be sought. The establishment of theocratic rest in the land demanded faith and obedience.

C. Today believers enter into God’s Sabbath rest spiritually (Hebrews 4:8-19) and will certainly share in its full restoration.

III. The formula that rounded off each of the six days with the onset of evening and morning is noticeably absent from verses 1-3, as if to imply the infinite perspective of God’s
Sabbath. Having entered into God’s rest, the believer remains there forever. When the curse is removed from creation, it will once again enter into God’s rest forever.

**Early Conditions (verses 4-6)**

IV. Verses five and six picture the situation prior to man’s creation and indicate the need for his creation in order that he might till the ground.

A. Some conclude that the creative process was complete here except for the appearance of man and some of the cultivated plants that appeared subsequently. According to this view the mist or subterranean streams rather than rain was the source of water for agriculture until after the flood.

B. Others believe verses five and six refer to the condition of the earth after Genesis 1:2, before the creative was very far advanced. Thus the atmosphere with its clouds and rainfall was not yet in existence; there was only a continual rise of mist over the watery waste. In either case neither the wild grasses and weeds of the field nor cultivatable crops had yet come into existence.

C. Yet another view sees verses four to six focusing on the description of those parts of the land that were to be directly affected by the Fall.

1. The narrative points to the fact that at that before man was created, the effects of man’s rebellion and fall had not yet been felt on the land. In the subsequent narrative each part of the land in verses four to six is specifically identified as affected as a result of the fall of man. For example the shrub of the field and the plant of the field are not a reference the to the vegetation in chapter one but rather anticipate the thorns and thistles and plants of the field that were to come (in 3:18) as a result of the curse.

2. Similarly, when the narrative states that the Lord God had not yet sent rain on the earth, we can sense the allusion to the flood narratives, at which time the Lord explicitly stated, “I will send rain on the earth (7:4).

3. The reference to no man to work the ground (verse 5) points to the time when the man and the woman were to be cast from the garden to work the ground (3:23).
4. Thus, as an introduction to the account of man’s creation we are told that a land had been prepared for him: streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground (verse 6). In the description of that land, however, we can already see the coming of the time when man would become an alien and a stranger in a foreign land.

**The Creation of Man (verse 7)**

V. The repeated emphasis on “the Lord God” is significant (2:4-5, 7-9, 15-16, 18-19, 21-22). The sovereign Creator (God) of chapter one is also the covenant making Lord. Thus Israel would know that her Lord had created everything, and that He had formed man by special design.

VI. The work of the Lord in creating life involved both fashioning from the dust and inbreathing. The word “formed (yasar, 2:7) describes the work of an artist. Like a potter shaping an earthen vessel from clay, so God formed man from clay. Man was made by divine plan; also he was made from the earth. He is “earthly” in spite of his subsequent dreams of being like God (3:5). The Hebrew for “man” (adam) is related to the word for ground (adamah, 3:17).

VII. God’s breathing the breath of life into man transformed his form into a “living soul.” This made man a spiritual being, with a capacity for serving and fellowshipping with God. With this special creation in mind we can see the significance of the Fall. Since the Fall, regeneration by the inbreathing of the Holy Spirit is essential in order for people to enjoy fellowshipping with God.

VIII. Chapter two makes an important contribution to the picture of man’s creation in God’s image. It can be seen in the depiction of the land that was prepared for man’s dwelling. The description of the Garden of Eden appears to be deliberately cast to foreshadow the description of the Tabernacle found later in the Pentateuch. The garden, like the Tabernacle, was the place where man could enjoy the fellowship and presence of God.

**The Creation of the Man and the Woman (verses 4-25)**

IX. This section (verses 4-25) as indicated in verse 4a, traces the account (what became of) the heavens and the earth when (b’yom, literally “in the day,” and idiom for when they were created. What became of creation is that sin entered it and devastated it.

A. In the creation of Adam the contrast is striking: against the background of a time when there was no life, no growth, no rain, no one to till the ground, God took
great care in forming man. The arrangement of these verses includes a title (verse 4) three circumstantial clauses beginning in the Hebrew with “when” (“when no shrub... had yet appeared, ‘when’ there was no man to work the ground, “when streams watered... the ground), and a verb beginning the narrative (and He formed). This mirrors chapter one (title 1:1; circumstantial clauses, 1:2, and the first narrative verbs 1:3).

X. Mankind was placed in a perfect setting. The garden provided the arena for man’s test of obedience. The description of the lavish garden (verse 8) and the trees (verse 9) and the river in it (verse 10) leads up to the commandment: man could enjoy it all but he must not eat from one forbidden tree (verse 17).

XI. Whereas God had possibly created the trees with the appearance of age (1:12), the trees in the garden were others that had grown later (2:9). Among those trees in the garden was one that produced life (the tree of life) and another that produced knowledge (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil), or at least eating from them did.

A. This knowledge was experiential. “Good and evil,” a merism for the things that protect life and that destroy life, would be experienced if the forbidden fruit were eaten (verse 17). The potential for catastrophe was great if man and woman in self confident pride overstepped their bounds and attempted to manipulate life.

B. The tree of life , on the other hand, was apparently a means of preserving and promoting life for Adam and Eve in their blissful state. These trees were in the midst of the garden, apparently close to one another; they provided the basis for the testing to come.

C. The trees, the river, and the precious gold and gems (verses 11-12) in the garden will also be in the new earth in its eternal state. The new creation will be endowed with all these elements (Revelation 21:10-11, 21; 22:1-2), thus indicating that paradise will be restored in the new earth.

D. These verses, a long parenthesis, describe the richness of the then known world.

XII. Verses 18-25 record the creation of the first woman and the institution of marriage; so it says much about the mainstay of Israel’s society. God intended husband and wife to be a spiritual, functional unity, walking in integrity, serving God, and keeping his commandments together. When this harmony is operative, society prospers under God’s hand.
XIII. Adam was alone and that was not good; all else in creation was good. As man began to function as God’s representative (naming the animals [2:9-20] representing his dominion over them (1:28), he became aware of his solitude (2:20). God therefore put him to sleep (verse 21) and created Eve from his flesh and bone (verses 22-23).

A. God decided to make a helper suitable (literally a “a helper corresponding to him” or “a corresponding helper” for the man. Helper is not a demeaning term, it is often used in Scripture to describe God Almighty (Psalm 33:20, 70:50,115:9, where it is translated “help” in the NIV.

B. The description of her as “corresponding to him” means basically that what was said about him in Genesis 2:7 was also true about her. They both had the same nature. But what man lacked she supplied, and what she lacked he supplied. The culmination was one flesh – the complete unity of man and woman in marriage.

C. Since Adam and Eve were in complete unity, living in integrity without sin, there was no need for instruction here on headship. Paul later discussed that in relationship to the order of creation (1 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:13).

IX. Its reason the words al-ken (Genesis 2:24) are used frequently in Genesis. If the words in verse 24 were spoken directly by God to Adam, then the verb “leave” must be translated as the future “will leave.” But if God said these words through Moses, they should be translated in the present tense: that is why a man leaves…”

A. The implication is that marriage involves one male and one female becoming “one flesh.” Their nakedness (verse 25) suggests that they were at ease with one another without any fear of exploitation or potential for evil.

B. Such fellowship was shattered later at the Fall and is retained only in a measure in marriage when a couple begins to feel at ease with one another. Here nakedness, though literal, also suggested sinlessness.
The Temptation and Fall

I. These verses provide both the historical record of the temptation and the fall of man. The passage is a perfect case study of temptation, for sin cannot be blamed on environment or heredity.

II. Genesis 1-2 recorded what God said; now the serpent (the devil, Revelation 20:2) spoke. The word of the Lord brought life and order; the word of the serpent brought chaos and death. Truth is older than falsehood; God’s word came before Satan’s lies.

III. Genesis 3:1 is connected with 2:25 by a Hebrew wordplay: Adam and Eve were naked (arumeimin) and the Serpent was more crafty (arum, shrewd) than all. Their nakedness represented the fact that they were oblivious to evil, not knowing where traps lay, whereas Satan did and would use his craftiness to take advantage of their integrity. The quality of craftiness or shrewdness is not evil in itself (indeed, one of the purposes of the Bible, according to Proverbs 1:4, where armah [shrewdness] is translated “prudence” is to make believers shrewd,) But it was used here for an evil purpose.

IV. The tempter was a serpent (Satan in the form of a snake), thus suggesting that temptation comes in the form of a disguise, quite unexpectedly, and it often comes from a subordinate (someone whom one should have exercised dominion (Genesis 1:28).

A. Eve either did not know God’s command very well or did not want to remember it. By contrast, Messiah Gained victory over Satan by his precise knowledge of the Word of God. Eve disparaged the privileges, added to the prohibition, and weakened the penalty, all seen by contrasting her words (Genesis 3:3) with God’s original commands (2:16-17). After Satan heard this, he blatantly negated the penalty for sin (negated the penalty of death that God had given (3:4). Satan is a liar from the beginning (John 8:44) and this is his lie: one can sin and get away with it. But death is the penalty for sin.

B. The tempter also cast doubt over God’s character, suggesting that God was jealous, holding them back from their destiny (3:5). They would become like god when they ate – and God knew that, according to Satan. So Satan held to them the promise of divinity, knowing good and evil.

V. With this the work of Satan was finished. The woman was then left to her natural desires and physical appetites. The word for “desirable (nehmad, verse 6) is related to a word
that appears later in the command, “You shall not covet (tahmod, Exodus 20:17). Physical practicality (good for food) aesthetic beauty (pleasing to the eye), and the potential for gaining wisdom – these draw a person over the brink once the barrier of punishment is supposedly removed.

VI. The results, of course, were anticlimactic. The promise of divine enlightenment did not come about. They both ate and saw, but were spoiled in so doing. They were ill at ease with one another (mistrust and alienation) and they were ill at ease with God. (fearful and hiding from him). Satan’s promises never came true. Wisdom is never attained by disobeying God’s Word. Instead the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 1:7).

VII. The remainder of this chapter falls into three sections: (a) the confrontation with the Lord in which the two sinners, hearing him, feared and hid among the trees (verses 8-13); (b) the oracles of the Lord in which new measures were given to the serpent (verses 14-19); and (c) the clothing provided by the Lord as a provision for the new order.

A. The effects of sin are punishment and provision. Whereas the man and the woman had life, they now had death; whereas pleasure, now pain; whereas abundance, now meager subsistence by toil; whereas perfect fellowship, now alienation and conflict.

B. The motifs in chapter three – death, toil, sweat, thorns, the struggle, and the seed – all were later traced to Messiah. He is the other Adam, who became the curse, who sweat drops of blood in bitter agony, who wore a crown of thorns, who was hanged on a tree until he was dead, and who was placed in the dust of death.

VIII. God spoke to the serpent (verses 14-15) and to Adam (verses 17-19). God’s words to the serpent included (a) the announcement that the snake, crawling and eating dust, would be a perpetual reminder to mankind of temptation and the Fall, and (b) an oracle about the power of the snake. God said there would be a perpetual struggle between satanic forces and mankind. It would be between Satan and the woman, and their respective offspring or “seeds.”

A. The “offspring of the woman was Cain, then all humanity at large, and those collectively in him. The “offspring” of the serpent includes demons and anyone serving his kingdom of darkness, those whose father is the devil (John 8:44). Satan would cripple mankind (you will strike his heel), but the seed, Messiah, would deliver the fatal blow (He will crush your head).
B. Then God told the woman that she would have pain in bearing children. She would also be mastered by her husband, whom she prompted to sin. Your desire will be for your husband means that the woman would tempt to get her husband to sin (see Genesis 4:6-7).

C. God then told Adam that he would experience great pain in scratching out a livelihood (3:17-19). (Painful toil translates the same word used in verse 16 for the woman’s pain in childbearing.) Death would be his end – he would return to the ground (a gracious provision in view of the suffering), and he would return to dust and become the serpent’s prey again (3:14).

IX. These punishments represent retaliatory justice. Adam and Eve sinned by eating; they would suffer in order to eat. She manipulated her husband, she would be mastered by husband. The serpent destroyed the human race; he will be destroyed.

A. God also made gracious provisions. Man will die and not live forever in this chaotic state, and children will be born (verse 16) so that the human race will endure and continue. Ultimate victory will come through Messiah, the seed (Galatians 3:16) of the woman (see also Galatians 4:4).

B. No matter how hard people try to do away with male domination, painful childbearing, agonizing labor, and death, these evils will continue because sin is present. They are the fruits of sin.

X. Adam and Eve’s faith and God’s provision are noted in these verses. God would save them and ensure that they would not live forever in a chaotic, sinful state. Adam’s faith is seen in his naming his wife Eve (literally, “living”). Thus Adam was looking to the future and not primarily to death. Eve’s faith is seen later (4:1) when she named her firstborn Cain because he was from the Lord.

A. All God’s dealings with people as sinners can be traced back to this act of disobedience by Adam and Eve. God is a saving God, however, and the fact that He clothed them testifies to that. An animal was sacrificed to provide garments of skin, and later all Israel’s animal sacrifices would be God’s provision to remedy the curse – a life for a life.

B. The skin with which God clothed Adam and Eve perpetually reminded them of God’s provision. Similarly in the fullness of time God accepted the sacrifice of
Messiah, and on the basis of that atonement He clothes believers in righteousness (Romans 3:21-26).
Cain and Abel

The Advance of Sin in Cain’s Murder of Abel (verses 1-16)

I. The nature of rebellious man unfolds in the person of Cain. He had a beginning of hope (verse one reads literally: I have gotten a man, the Lord. Eve thought she had given birth to the redeemer). However, the narrative lines him up with the curse (he worked the soil, the dust of death).

II. Abel, however, seems to be lined up with man’s original purpose, to have dominion over life (1:28); he kept flocks.

III. These coincidental descriptions are enhanced with their actions in worship. Abel went out of his way to please God (which meant he had faith in God, Hebrews 11:6), whereas Cain was simply discharging a duty. Abel’s actions were righteous, whereas Cain’s were evil (1 John 3:12). These types of people are still present. Cain’s lack of faith shows up in his response to God’s rejection of his offering of fruit. Rather than being concerned about remedying the situation, he was angry.

A. God was less concerned about Cain’s offering than He was to Cain’s response to the Lord’s rejection of his offering. Whatever the cause of God’s rejection of Cain’s offering, the narrative focuses our attention to Cain’s response. Which was twofold:

1. Anger against God (4b).

2. Anger against his brother (8)

B. This narrative gives us a subtle warning, which is stated in the Brit Hadashah: by their fruit you will know them (Matthew 7:20).

C. Here Moses is very close to the ideas expressed by Jeremiah against the false worshippers of his day. Just as Jeremiah pleaded with his people “to do well…and not shed innocent blood,” lest they be exiled from the land (Jeremiah 7:5-7), so God pleaded with Cain to “do what is right or face the consequences of shedding innocent blood and exile from the land.”
IV. Cain was so angry he would not be talked out of his sin – even by God. Eve, however, had to be talked into her sin by Satan; but Cain “belonged to the evil one” (1 John 3:12). It was if he could not wait to destroy his brother – a natural man’s solution to his own failure.

V. God’s advice was that if Cain would please God by doing what is right, all would be well. But if not sin would be crouching (robes is used here in the figure of a crouching animal) at his door, ready to overcome him.

A. Sin desires to have Cain (these words show God’s interpretation of “desire,” the same Hebrew word in Genesis 3:16), but Cain could master it.

B. Here is the perpetual struggle between evil and good. Anyone filled with envy and strife is prey for the evil one.

VI. After murdering his brother (verse eight) Cain denied responsibility for it (verse 9) and claimed that God’s punishment (cropless soil and wandering, verses 10-12) was two severe (verse 13).

A. God graciously protected him by some mark or sign that would be a deterrent to an avenger (verse 15), but God condemned him to a life of ceaseless wandering (verse 12). This was his curse, to be banished from God’s presence (verse 14).

B. But Cain defied that curse by living in the land of Nod (literally, “wandering”), east of Eden (verse 16).

VII. Several Mosaic motifs are founded here:

A. Sacrifices should be offered to God from a heart of faith, and should be the best of the livestock, the firstborn (verse 4).

B. Israelites had responsibility to their brothers and must not kill one another.

C. Homicidal blood pollutes the land, crying out for vengeance.
D. Blood revenge was averted by God through protective care, just as later removal to a city of refuge would avert an avenger.

E. Punishment for guilt was at the foundation of Israel’s theocracy.

F. Life without God is a dangerous life without protection.

G. Sometimes the elder was rejected in favor of the younger, turning the normal societal custom around.

**The Spread of Godless civilization: 4:17-26**

VIII. Cain’s family began in Nod (verse 16). The name “Nod” is related to the words for “restless wanderer (verse 14). It was the land of fugitives from God. Here Cain fathered a child, Enoch, and named a city after him. (No doubt Cain’s wife was a daughter of Adam.)

IX. The seventh descendent through Cain was Lamech. Lamech altered the plan of God and married two women. His family produced musical instruments (the harp and flute) and implements (tools of bronze and iron) to make life enjoyable.

A. But in spite of this prosperous good life, evil was advancing ominously. Lamech slew a youthful warrior who wounded him and demanded greater leniency in any vengeance that might come his way than that given to Cain (4:24).

B. Lamech boasted about the murder (the word “killed” in verse 23 is the same word used of Cain’s murder of Abel.) So here is a picture of an affluent society defying God and his laws, seeking pleasure and self indulgence. Into this world Israel (and later the church) would come as a kingdom of priests to proclaim God’s righteousness.

X. In strong contrast with this godless society were the righteous. In the line from Seth there was faith. Seth himself was a provision from God, according to Eve’s statement of faith. In the days of Enosh, Seth’s son, men began to call on (better, “proclaim”) the name of the Lord.
Genesis: Chapter Five

The Descendants of Adam: from Adam to Noah

I. This chapter begins with a reiteration of the creation of man in the likeness of God ("resemblance," a synonym for image). One cannot miss the blessing of the image (He blessed them) at creation. But with that in mind the chapter then traces the result of sin, death.

II. God’s image in Adam was then reproduced in Seth, Adam’s son. The capacities and qualities of a parent are passed on to his children by natural reproduction.

III. Besides providing the link between Adam and his times and Noah and his, this chapter has a motif that cannot be missed – and then he dies (verses 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 27, 31). If one were in doubt whether the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), he need only look at human history.

IV. In Enoch’s case, the statement was not made – as it was with the other males in this genealogy – that he lived so many years and then he died. Instead he walked with God (Genesis 5:22, 24). “Walk” is the biblical expression for fellowship and obedience that results in divine favor. Enoch’s walk lasted three hundred years. No doubt his walk would have continued, but God took him away (verse 24) – he did not die. Such a walk was commanded of Israel (Leviticus 26:3, 12) and the church.

V. Genesis five includes the etymology of the name Noah (verse 29), whose life would be the dominant force in the sections that follow.

A. Lamech named his son Noah, hoping he would bring comfort to them from the curse (verse 29, compare with “painful toil and the ground’s curse in 3:17). “Comfort is not the meaning of Noah, but the words sound the same.

B. Lamech had no idea how God would turn these words around and fulfill the wish in his own way, but he did have high hopes for his boy.

C. Thus a second glimmer of hope appears in this chapter of death. Enoch escaped the curse of death, and Noah would comfort those under the curse.
Genesis: Chapter Six

The Corruption of the Race (verses 1-4)

I. The point of this passage, whichever way we take it, is that a new stage has been reached in the progress of evil, with God’s bounds being overstepped in yet another realm.

   A. The sons of God are identified by some interpreters the sons of Seth; the daughters of men as the offspring of Cain.

   B. By others, including early Jewish writers, they are taken to mean angels.

   C. If the second view defies the normalities of experience, the first defies those of language. While the Tenach can declare God’s people to be his sons, the normal meaning of the term “sons of God” is angels.

      1. Possible support in the Brit Hadashah for “angels” may be seen in 1 Peter 3:19-20, and also in 2 Peter 2:4-6, where the fallen angels, the flood, and the doom of Sodom form a series that could be based on Genesis, and in Jude 6, where the angels offence is that they “left their normal habitation.

      2. The craving of demons for a body, evident in the gospels, offers at least some parallel to this hunger for sexual experience.

      3. One possible scenario is that this was an attempt by Satan to corrupt the line of the seed predicted in Genesis 3:15, through which the Messiah would come.

   D. More important than the detail of this episode is its indication that man is beyond self help, whether the Sethites have betrayed their calling, or demonic powers have gained a stranglehold.

God’s Reaction (verses 5-8)

II. People’s wickedness was great, and every inclination (better “plan,” yeser) of their hearts was only evil continually (see 8:21, “every indication of his heart is evil from childhood”). God had made man by design (yasar, “to form by design”; 2:7), but man had taken that capacity given to him and produced evil alone.
III. There is hardly a stronger statement in the Bible about the sin of mankind. This passage gives insight into Yeshua’s explanation that “before the flood “people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage (Matthew 24:28) – seemingly a harmless statement until its context is studied. In addition man was “corrupt” and “full of violence” (Genesis 6:11, 13).

IV. The wordplays in verses 5-8 are striking.

A. God “repented” that He made man because the sin of the race filled him with pain. The words “repented” “pain” and “made” go back to chapters 3 and 5. Lamech longed for comfort (naham) from the painful toil under the curse (5:29). Now God “repented” (naham, was grieved) that He had made man because human sin pained him (6:6). This is why pain was brought into the world - God was grieved with sin.

B. But now God, rather than comforting man, “repented” after making him. This gave an ironic twist to Lamech’s words. God determined to destroy them all. Repented does not suggest that God changed his mind, for He is changeless (Malachi 3:6). Instead it means that God was sorrowful.

V. Even though swift judgment would fall because God’s Spirit would not always shield (dun; “shield” is better than “contend with,” Genesis 6:3) mankind, the judgment would be delayed 120 years (verse 3) During this time Noah was a “preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5). Noah was a recipient of God’s grace and therefore was spared from the judgment (in contrast to those who aspired to immortality).

VI. In the time of Moses, Israel would know they were chosen of God and should walk in righteousness. They, as God’s people, would meet the Nephilim, the Anakites (Numbers 13:33), and the Rephaites (Deuteronomy 2:11; 3:13; Joshua 12:4) when they entered the land. But Israel should not fear them as demigogs. God would judge the corrupt world for its idolatry and fornication. And in the later day the wicked will suddenly be swept away by judgment when God will establish his theocratic kingdom of blessing (Matthew 24:36-39).

The Ark Commissioned (verses 13-22)

VII. Noah’s close walk with God makes it fitting that he is taken into his master’s confidence, as Abraham was to be concerning Sodom (18:17). This relationship, and the reasoned verdict, are in strong contrast to the atmosphere of rivalries and caprice which pervades the Babylonian flood stories.
VIII. The earth’s destruction (13c) was to be only in measure, 2 Peter 3:5-13 points out how different will be the final annihilation. In fact the whole act of judgment was partial; the survivors passed through a mere token of judgment, only to carry into the new world the sin of the old, as if to demonstrate that nothing less than complete death and rebirth will meet our situation.

IX. The Ark’s general features and name – for it is called a “chest” not a ship – emphasize its sole purpose, to provide shelter and orderly existence for a variety of creatures. Hence, the three decks of 16, and, in the received text, the rooms or cabins, here rather charmingly called, in the Hebrew, “nests.” But perhaps qinnim, “nests,” should be called qunim: of reeds shall you make the ark, which is an easier Hebrew sentence. It is more meaningful to view the reeds as functional, both caulking the vessel and binding its wooden frame together, as is done with the papyrus boats of the Nile and Euphrates to this day.

X. Nothing is known about gopher wood, a name found only here. A plausible conjecture is “cypress.” Both the verb and the noun for pitch (k-p-r) are, it seems, closely related to the Hebrew for atonement. This may be more than a verbal coincidence (well suited to a story of judgment and salvation), for both words probably rest on a common basic meaning, “to cover.”

XI. The size of the ark is vast (a cubit is about 18 inches). It was a flat bottomed rectangular vessel 450 feet long 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high, with a displacement of some 43,300 tons and three decks. But the shape is simple, and buildings of such a size were not unknown in antiquity. Also it would need no launching. The proportions of the ark were those of a coffin. A similar root in Egyptian means chest or coffin, and the only other teba in the Tenach was that in which the infant Moses, committed to death, voyaged into life.

XII. A window was to top the structure, the meaning of finish it to a cubit above is obscure, but it may mean that an opening of this depth was to be left near the roof, as in some buildings of the ancient Near East, perhaps to give light to the vessel. The door is of obvious importance, literally and symbolically. Yeshua made much of the metaphor of the sheepfold (John10:1-9).

The Reasons for the Flood

XIII. Why would God bring such a flood? There are several reasons:

A. God is sovereign over all creation and frequently uses nature to judge mankind.
B. The flood was the most effective way of purging the world. It would wash it clean so that not a trace of the wicked could be found.

C. The flood was used by God to start a “new creation.” The first creation with Adam is paralleled by the second with Noah. When Noah was finished with the ark God commissioned him to be fruitful and multiply (9:1) and to have dominion over the earth, just as he had told Adam (1:26, 28). Noah planted a garden (9:20), whereas God planted a garden for Adam and Eve (2:8). But sin had tarnished the race. Adam and Noah are contrasted: whereas Adam’s nakedness was a sign of righteousness (2:25), Noah’s was one of degradation (9:21) and he ended up cursing his grandson Canaan.

XIV. The motifs in 6:9-8:22 are significant.

A. First, God is shown to be the judge of the whole earth. In a word He made distinctions between the righteous and the unrighteous, the clean and the unclean. What was clean was for God.

B. A second motif is that God made provision for the recipients of his grace. Thus the warning that those who claim to be grace receivers should walk with God in righteousness, being separate from sinners.

C. A third motif had significance for Israel. As God judged the world in Noah’s day and brought Noah through the flood, so He judged the wicked Egyptians and brought Israel through the waters of the Red Sea to worship and serve him.

XV. The flood narrative points up God’s power and freedom over his creation. It reveals God’s deadly anger over sin. The flood also shows that God’s gracious redemption is meaningful in light of judgment, and that his grace is not to be taken lightly. The cause of God’s judgment is stressed – monstrous acts of sin performed habitually.
Genesis: Chapter Seven

The Boarding of the Ark (6:19 - 7:9; 13-16)

I. Into the Ark Noah was to take all kinds of animals to preserve life on earth. A distinction was made very early between clean and unclean animals. To preserve life Noah had to take on board two of every kind of animal, but for food and sacrificing he had to bring seven pairs of every kind of clean animal. The distinction between clean and unclean animals became a major point in the Levitical order (Leviticus 11:2-23).

II. The Ark was completed. Cages for birds and animals were in place. Food supplies had been laid in. All of this was made possible because of the faith of Noah. (7:1); “righteousness delivers from death” (Proverbs 10:2; 11:6).

III. Noah stood alone against the whole condemned world and took its ridicule for 120 years while he built the Ark. No doubt his building activity itself was to be viewed as the primary element of his preaching of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5). With every day of construction he proclaimed the judgment of God against sin and the grace of God in offering deliverance.

IV. Instructions for saving creatures (6:19-20) were amplified (7:2-3), and details would be repeated on the fulfillment of these instructions.

A. God’s careful provision and sovereign control of the operation are evident in this passage.

B. Moreover, the matter of fact specifications about preservation of life and the careful notations of time throughout the flood account help to establish its factual, historical character. Poetic, symbolic, and mythical elements are missing.

V. Throughout this passage the faith and obedience of Noah are striking: “Noah did all that God commanded him” (6:22; 7:5); “Noah went in” (7:7). But so are the sovereign initiatives of God (“God commanded,” 7:5, 9, 16; “God said,” 7:1), and the submissive response of nature (“there went in to Noah,” 7:9, 15-16).

VI. After God’s invitation to Noah and his family to enter the ark, He predicted the flood would begin in seven days. Thus all deliberate speed, but no panic effort was to be exercised to get the animals on board. When at the end of seven days all the animals were
on board, everything was in readiness for judgment to fall. God, who himself had been in charge of the whole operation, shut them in, and the rains began.

**The Flood (7:10-12; 17-8:14)**

VII. Clearly the flood came because of heavy rains. A literal translation of the Hebrew is graphic: “the sluice gates of heaven were opened” (7:11) (A sluice gate is a gate holding back a channel containing a large deluge of water.)

VIII. Additionally, “the fountains of the great deep were burst open” (7:11). Exactly what that means is not clear. Often it is interpreted to say that some convulsion of the earth’s crust released stores of subterranean waters. But to date geologists have been unable to find evidence of such subterranean reserves or of any general and cataclysmic alteration of the earth’s crust that may have eliminated such reservoirs by the collapse of geological structures above them.

**The Extent of the Flood**

VIX. There are numerous arguments in favor of a universal flood.

A. The phrase “‘under the whole heaven” (7:19) cannot be reduced to a local condition.

B. A local flood would not have fulfilled the purpose of judging the sinfulness of the entire population of the earth.

C. An Ark would have been unnecessary because both animals and human being could have fled the Mesopotamian valley and returned when the flood was over.

D. The promise to never again destroy all flesh with a flood (9:11) has universal implications.

E. A flood that would cover the Ararat mountains (17,000 feet) could not have been a local flood. Water seeks its own level, and would have covered the whole earth for a depth of three miles.
The Duration of the Flood

X. Many people believe the flood lasted for forty days because that is the time during which it rained hard. But Noah and those with him were actually shut up in the ark for a total of 371 days.

A. They entered on the seventeenth day of the second month of Noah’s six hundredth year (7:11) and disembarked on the twenty seventh day of the second month of Noah’s six hundred first year (8:13-14).

B. The chronology of the year in the Ark is as follows:

1. Immediately after God shut the door of the Ark, rain fell on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and water rapidly covered the earth.

2. Then it continued to rain lightly for another 110 days. This conclusion is reached from Genesis 8:4 and 8:2, where it states that God stopped the rain 150 days after it began to rain on the seventeenth day of the seventh month (five 30-day months after it began, 7:11); thus the 150 days of 7:24 must be viewed as including two periods of 40 and 110 days.

XI. For the next seventy four days the water abated until the tops of the mountains could be seen (from the seventeenth day of the seventh month until the first day of the tenth month = 13+30=30+1=74, Genesis 8:4, 5).

A. Forty days later Noah released a raven (8:6,7) which did not return because it was able to scavenge for its food. Seven days later he sent out a dove that found no resting place and returned (verse 9). After another seven day he sent out a dove that returned with an olive leaf (verse 11). After yet another seven days, Noah sent out a dove and it did not return (verse 12).

B. After an additional twenty nine days Noah removed the covering of the Ark (verse 14). After yet another fifty seven days God commanded Noah to evacuate the Ark (verses 14-17). All those figures together (150+74+40+7+7+7+29+57) total 371.
Genesis: Chapter Eight

**Summary: The Floods Abate (verse 1)**

I.  We have looked at the chronology of the flood, which takes us to 8:14, in the last chapter. It is important to take note that although those in the Ark may have been safe during the flood, they were not saved until Noah and his family were on dry ground. Thus, after the Ark came to rest, those in the ark had to wait 150 days (7:24) before God sent his deliverance.

A.  Just as Moses later passes over the four hundred years that Israel waited in Egypt (Exodus 1:7) and then forty years in the wilderness (Numbers 14:33-34) before entering the promised land, he passes over the 150 days of waiting on dry ground and proceeds immediately to the decisive moment when “God remembered Noah and all… that were with him in the Ark.”

B.  Thus, God’s deliverance of His people is at the heart of the Bible and every story in it.

II.  The description of God’s rescue of Noah foreshadows God’s deliverance of Israel in the Exodus. Just as later “God remembered his covenant” (Exodus 2:24) and sent “a strong east wind to dry up the waters before his people (Exodus 14:21) so that they “went through on dry ground” (Exodus 14:22), so also in the story of the flood we read that “God remembered those in the Ark and sent a wind to pass over the earth, and the water subsided” (8:1).

The Command to Exit the Ark (verses 15-19)

III.  In the same style of the description of the entry of the ark, Moses depicts the exit from the ark (compare 7:1 with 8:16). Moses is careful to note that, just as Noah entered the ark at God’s command, so he exited the Ark at God’s command. God is sovereign; the righteous are obedient to their sovereign Lord’s commands.

IV.  The description of Noah disembarking from the Ark, though condensed (verse 17), closely follows the creation pattern in Genesis one (e.g. “let them swarm upon the earth, and let them be fruitful and multiply upon the earth (verse 17). The picture given is that of a return to the work of creation “in the beginning.” It is significant that right at this point in the narrative Moses takes up a lengthy account of the covenant (8:20-9:17). The restoration of God’s creation was founded on the establishment of a covenant.
V. There is a striking parallel between the picture of God’s calling Noah out of the Ark (8:15-20) and the call of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genesis 8:15-20</th>
<th>Genesis 12:1-7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Then God said to Noah (8:15)</td>
<td>The Lord had said to Abraham (12:1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Come out from the Ark (8:16)</td>
<td>Leave your country (12:1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noah came out (8:18)</td>
<td>So Abraham left (12:4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noah built an altar (8:20)</td>
<td>Abraham built an altar (12:7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God blessed Noah (9:1)</td>
<td>And I will bless you (12:2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be fruitful and increase (9:1)</td>
<td>I will make you to a great nation (12:2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I now establish my covenant with you. and your descendents (9:9)</td>
<td>To your offspring I will give this land (12:7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both Noah and Abraham represent new beginnings in the course of events recorded in Genesis. Both are marked by God’s promise of blessing and of the gift of the covenant.

The Altar and the Covenant (verses 20-22)

VI. Upon leaving the Ark Noah immediately remembered the goodness of God in preserving his family through catastrophic judgment and in singling out them alone to assume the responsibility of repopulating the earth.

A. In gratitude Noah built an altar and sacrificed on it one each of every clean animal and bird.

B. God accepted the offering and promised never again to blot out all living things “as I have done,” that is, by a flood. The seasons that had been obliterated for a year were now promised in regularity until the end of time.

VII. “The Lord smelled the soothing aroma” (verse 21). Of course God’s righteous demands were not met merely by the offering of animal sacrifices. The heart of the offender must be right if God is to accept the sacrifice. This is clear from numerous passages in the Tenach (see Isaiah 1:10-20).
VIII. Observations.

A. In the account of Noah’s altar and the covenant, Moses continues his close association with Genesis one. As a result of Noah’s altar and offering, the whole of the state of mankind before the flood is reestablished. Man is still fallen (9:21), but through an offering on the altar he may find God’s blessing (8:21-9:3). It is significant that just as in Genesis one, the focus of Moses’ interest in man after the Flood is his creation in God’s image.

B. Just as significant as the association of this passage with the creation account, however, are the several close associations between Noah’s altar and Moses’ altar at Mount Sinai following the Exodus (Exodus 24:4-14). A brief list of some parallels gives a sense of these similarities.

1. The building of the altar in both accounts follows a major act of God’s salvation – God’s rescue of Noah from the Flood and God’s deliverance of the Israelites from bondage in Egypt.

2. The altar and offering in both accounts mark the establishment of a covenant (brit) with God (Genesis 9:9; Exodus 24:7).

3. The outcome of both covenants is God’s “blessing” (Genesis 9:1; Exodus 23:25).

4. The central provision in both covenants is protection from “beasts of the field” or “wild animals” (Genesis 9:2; Exodus 23:29).

5. Specific mention is made that the earth will be preserved from destruction (Genesis 9:11; Exodus 23:29).

6. In Genesis the visible sign of the covenant is the rainbow in the clouds (9:13-17), and in Exodus the conclusion of the covenant making is marked by the appearance of the glory of God in the cloud the covered the mountain (Exodus 24:15).

7. In both covenants stipulations are given to which the people must be obedient (Genesis 9:4; Exodus 24:3).
C. What these observations suggest is that Moses is intentionally drawing out the similarities between God’s covenant and the covenant at Sinai. The reason is that he wants to show that God’s covenant at Sinai is not a new act of God. The covenant is rather a return to God’s original promises.

1. Once again at Sinai, as He had done in the past, God is at work restoring his fellowship with man and bringing man back to himself.

2. The covenant with Noah plays an important role in Moses’ development of God’s restoration of blessing. It lies midway between God’s original blessing of all mankind (1:28) and God’s promise to bless “all peoples on the earth” through Abraham (12:1-3).
Genesis: Chapter Nine

The Noahic Covenant

God’s Commandments to Noah and His Sons (9:1-7)

I. God’s commandments to Noah are similar to those He gave to Adam, but the tone and atmosphere are different. The heavy reality of sin now hangs over all relationships. Strife and murder are to be expected as part of the natural order.

A. With the earth depopulated, a new progeny was essential (verse 7); so God commanded Noah and his sons, “Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth.” Though nothing is said in this passage about the glory of God, that must be intended. Certainly God was not merely concerned with having people on the earth.

1. God had just wiped out the masses because of their sin. In subsequent generations he would again and again destroy individuals and communities because of their sin

2. Evidently, as these new people were brought into the world they were to be taught to fear God.

II. The dominion of man over all creation is reaffirmed in verse two, but there are differences from God’s original statement to Adam.

A. Instead of the harmony of the original creation, the Creator now instills a “fear” and “dread” or “terror” in the animals of the earth to prevent them from destroying human beings.

B. God’s second commandment extends man’s dominion over creation to include meat in his diet. But there is a prohibition, that all blood be properly drained from animals slain for food. Probably that restriction is at least in part an anticipation of the later, more fully developed sacrificial system.

1. Since life resides in the blood itself (Leviticus 17:11), the use of blood was to be sacred in sacrifice and not to be consumed by man (see Leviticus 7:27; 17:10).
2. The pouring out of the blood temporarily covered the sins of humanity and looked forward to the time when the shedding of Messiah’s blood would forever remove the penalty of human sin.

III. A third commandment concerns the shedding of human blood. The sanctity of man’s blood is stressed in verses 5 and 6, especially because he was created in the image of God. Though the moral image may have been flawed greatly in the Fall or even viewed as destroyed, the natural image remains.

A. Therefore, a human being is to be especially respected, and the shedding of his blood is a crime against God himself. God intrudes into the administration of human justice, instituting capital punishment: “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man” (verse 6). God himself may carry out capital punishment, but normally He would do so through a delegated authority.

1. A beast that kills a human being is also to be put to death (verse 5), see also Exodus 21:28), but the focus of attention here is on human beings.

2. God does not merely permit execution for taking a human life but commands it: “shall be shed” is an imperative.

B. “By men shall his blood be shed” is left unspecified at that point but must refer to judicial execution by a constituted government when it would be set up at a later time.

C. Failure to administer capital punishment pollutes a land, according to Numbers 35:33-34; and the implication is that such pollution may bring on dire consequences.

**God’s Covenant With Noah and His Sons (9:8-17)**

IV. God next made a covenant, a binding from of divine promise, with Noah and his sons to the effect that never again would he destroy all living creature or ruin the earth with a flood. The covenant was unconditional and unmerited. Because brute beasts were also beneficiaries of the covenant, understanding of the covenant was not even necessary for it to have force.
A. Moreover, no obligation were laid on the recipients to guarantee avoidance of universal catastrophe by water; and the covenant was to be everlasting.

B. The sign of the covenant was the rainbow, which may or may not have come into existence at that time.

1. Some argue that there is no reason why a rainbow could not have appeared earlier because even a mist can produce a rainbow (if one holds that there was no rain before the Flood).

2. Others conclude that atmospheric conditions did indeed change after the flood and that the rainbow would be a much more effective sign of God’s grace and providence if it were a new phenomenon.

3. In any case, all the text requires is that God was setting or appointing the rainbow (whether or not pre-existent) as a sign of his everlasting covenant and that every time it appeared it would serve as a reminder to God of the covenant He had made and to man of the providence and power of God.

The Curse of Canaan (9:18-29)

V. When interpreting this passage, it is important to remember the purpose of the book, for this passage has direct reference to the nature and destiny of the Canaanites, Israel’s antagonists.

VI. Those who came out of the ark are identified, with special note that Ham was the father of Canaan. From Noah’s three sons descended all the world’s people. The descendents of Sham were the Shemites from whom Abraham descended. (10:21-31; 11:10-26).

VII. Noah, “the man of the earth” (as the rabbis translated the words a man of the soil), began to plant a vineyard. Though wine is said to cheer the heart (Judges 9:13; Psalm 104:15), and alleviate the pain of the curse (Proverbs 31:6), it is also clear that it can have disturbing effects.

A. Here Noah lay drunk and naked in his tent. Intoxication and sexual looseness are hallmarks of pagans, and both are traced back to this event in Noah’s life. Man had not changed at all; with the opportunity to start a new creation, Noah acted like a pagan (see Genesis 6:5; 8:21).
VIII. The basic question concerns what Ham, Noah’s youngest son, did (9:22, 24) and why Noah cursed Ham’s son Canaan (Verses 25-27). The Hebrew expression here means what it says: Ham saw his father’s nakedness. (verse 22). He was not involved with Noah sexually, for in that case the Hebrew would be translated “he uncovered (causative form of the word galah) his father’s nakedness.” Instead Noah had already uncovered himself (wayyitgal, reflexive form, verse 21), and Ham saw him that way.

A. To the ancients, however, even seeing one’s father naked was a breach of family ethic. The sanctity of the family was destroyed, and the strength of the father was made a mockery. Ham apparently stumbled out upon this accidentally, but went out and exultingly told his two brothers, as if he had triumphed over his father.

B. So what seems to be a trivial incident turned out to be a major event. Noah’s oracle (verses 25-27) showed that the natures of his three sons would be perpetuated in their descendants.

C. In all but one of the verses of Leviticus 18:6-19, Moses used the causative form of the verb galah to refer to the Canaanite’s (Ham’s descendants) “uncovering another’s nakedness” (rendered in the NIV “have sexual relations). This euphemism reports the actual licentious and immoral behavior of the descendants of Ham (see Leviticus 18:3). Ham’s disposition toward moral abandon thus bore fruit in the moral acts of his descendants, the Canaanites.

Noah’s Prophecies about his Son’s Descendants (verses 24-29)

IX. Because of this incident Noah prophesied about his son’s descendents.

A. He began with the direct words, Cursed be Canaan! However, Noah was not punishing Ham’s son for something Ham did. Instead Noah’s words referred to the nation of the Canaanites that would come from Ham through Canaan.

B. Ham’s immoral, arrogant act could not be left without repercussions. A humiliation in like measure was needed, according to the principle of retributive justice. Ham had made an irreparable breach in his father’s family, thus a curse would be put on his son’s family.

C. It has been suggested that Ham may have attempted to seize leadership over his brothers for the sake of his own line. This would be similar to other ancient traditions about a son replacing his father. But if he did, his attempt failed, and his
line through Canaan was placed not in leadership over other clansman, but under them (verse 25).

D. Noah’s oracle predicted that the Canaanites would be in servitude to the Shemites and Japhethites (verses 26, 27). But this was because the Canaanites lived degrading lives like Ham, not because of what Ham did. The point is that nationally, at least, drunken immorality enslaves a people. This is why, in God’s program to bless Israel, the Canaanites were condemned. They were to be judged by God through the Conquest because their activities were in the same pattern and mold as their ancestor Ham.

E. The enslavement of the Canaanites is seen in many situations in the history of the Tenach. Such a case turned up fairly soon; the Canaanites were defeated and enslaved by eastern kings (chapter 14). Another example was the Gibeonites who later under Joshua became wood choppers and water carriers for Israel’s Tabernacle (Joshua 9:27).

X. This blessing – cursing motif is crucial in Genesis. The Canaanites would have to be dispossessed from their place by Israel under Joshua in order for blessing to come on Shem (verse 26) and for the Japhethites to dwell in the tents of Shem (verse 27). This meant that the Japhethites would live with the Shemites on friendly terms, not that the Japhethites would dispossess the Shemites. So verses 24-29 actually set the foundation for Israel’s policy in the land (Deuteronomy 20:16-18).

XI. Noah’s oracle to Shem was, “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant” (verse 26). God, the eternal and unchangeable One, was Shem’s God. God would be blessed through what he would do in and through Shem and the importance of that action for the world. Abraham was to come from Shem’s line to head God’s special people Israel. And in the fullness of time Messiah was to come from that line and bring blessings to the whole world (Galations 4:4).

XII. Noah’s oracle to Japheth stated that God would enlarge or grant abundant territory to Japeth (whose name means “enlargement”). Japheth’s descendents have indeed come to occupy much of the earth’s area.

A. That Japheth would “dwell in the tents of Shem” means, that Japheth would share Shem’s hospitality and blessing, and this context must refer especially to Shem’s spiritual history. Through Messiah and his Jewish disciples, Gentiles have come to share abundantly in the gospel and to have enjoyed its benefits.
The Death of Noah (verses 28-29)

XIII. The topical nature of biblical history and its incompleteness are demonstrated here. For the next three hundred years the historical narrative is a blank. Then the death of Noah at the age of 950 years is recorded as a proper close to the Flood narrative and a proper introduction to subsequent history.
Genesis: Chapter Ten

The Table of Nations (verse 1)

I. Genesis ten is commonly called the Table of Nations” because it presents the origin and spread of national groups. The table gives a survey of Noah’s sons, whom God had told to “fill the earth.” Critics used to argue that the table could not be true, but most of the names in the table have now been discovered in written remains from the ancient Near East, and the chapter increasingly is regarded as a trustworthy record.

A. This table appears to represent the known tribes of the earth. Seventy descendents of Noah’s sons are listed, including 14 from Japheth, 30 from Ham, and 26 from Shem.

B. These descendents are cleverly arranged into patterns. The basic framework of the table is the bne (“the sons of “) motif (the Hebrew bne occurs 12 times, in verses 2-4, 6-7, 20-23, 29, 31-32). Other times, however, the table uses yalad (“he begot”), which is commentary on the bne table. The yalad sections (beginning in verses 8, 13, 15, 21, 25-26) trace the significant developments of persons within the structure of the table.

II. Of special note are verses 15-19, in which Canaan’s descendents are traced (verses 15-18) and even the boundaries if the promised land are given (verse 19).

III. Moses was apparently using the table to clarify which of Noah’s descendents would experience blessing and which ones would experience cursing. Most of the yalad section sections pertain to the Canaanites or the Hamites, the tribes close to Israel. To see which neighbors would face blessing and which cursing, Israel only need consult this table.

IV. The purpose of the table is not primarily to trace ancestry; instead it shows political, geographical, and ethnic affiliations among tribes for reasons, most notable being war. Tribes shown to be “kin” would be in league together. Thus the table aligns the predominant tribes in and around Israel. These names include founders of tribes, clans, cities, and territories.

The Descendents of Japheth (verses 2-5)

V. The descendents of Japheth, numbering 14, are given first. These were northern people remote from Israel.
A. Gomer represented the Cimmians, thought to be of the same stock as the Scythians.

B. Magog was the land of Gog, between Armenia and Capadicia. The name represented Scythian hordes southwest of the black sea.

C. Madai represented the Medes of east Assyria and southwest of the Caspian Sea.

D. Javan was the general word for the Hellenistic race, the Ionians of western Asia Minor.

E. Tubal and Meshech were northern military states. They might have been located in Pontus and the Armenian mountains.

F. Tiras may refer to the seafaring Pelasgians of the Aegean coasts.

G. From these seven, seven more were derived. Three northern tribes came from Gomer: Ashkenaz (Related to the Scytians), Riphath, and Togarma (distant northern tribes).

H. The sons of Javan, two geographical names and two tribal names, were all kin to the Greeks.

I. Elishah was Alashiyah or Cyprus.

J. Tarshish was a distant coast in Asia Minor. The Kittem also dwelt on Cyprus.

K. The “Dodanim” may have lived in Dodana, Greece.

VI. These northern tribes did not figure predominantly in Israel’s history, but occur frequently in prophetic writings (Ezekiel 27; 37-39).
The Descendants of Ham (verses 6-7)

VII. The descendents of Ham (verses 6-20) formed the eastern and southern peoples of Meopotamia.

A. The Cushites (descendants of Cush) settled in south Arabia and in present day Egypt, Sudan, and northern Ethiopia. They became mingled with Semetic tribes dwelling in the same region; thus there is repetition of some of the names in other lines.

B. Seba was in upper Egypt.

C. Havilah (“sand land”) could refer to northern and eastern Arabia on the Persian Gulf or the Ethiopian coast.

D. Sabtah, ancient Hadhramant, was on the western shore of the Persian gulf.

E. Raamah and Sabtecah were in southern Arabia.

F. Sheba was in southwest Arabia, and Dedan was in northern Arabia. Some of the people of these ancient kingdoms traced their lineage to Joktan from Sham (Genesis 10:29). Thus, there was a mixing in the settlement of these peoples.

Nimrod (verses 9-2)

VIII. Inserted in this table of nations is the story of Nimrod. This is the first “begot” and forms a major stylistic break from the tribal names preceding it.

A. Attempts to Identify or date Nimrod have been unsuccessful. Because his name seems to be connected to the verb “to rebel” (marad) tradition has identified him with tyrannical power.

B. He was the founder of the earliest imperial world powers in Babylon and Assyria.
C. The table merely presents him as a mighty hunter, a trait commonly found in Assyrian Kings. He was founder of several powerful cities. The centers he established became major enemies of Israel.

Mizraim (verses 13-14)

VIX. Another “son” of Ham was Mizriam, or Egypt. Mizriam developed into tribes that ranged from North Africa to Crete. The placing of the Philistines in this connection refers to migration, not lineage (similar to Israel being “from” Egypt).

A. The Philistines migrated from the Aegean homelands through Caphtor into the delta of Egypt and finally to Canaan.

The Canaanites (verses 15-20)

X. The final Hamite line that was significant for Israel was the Canaanite group. The listing uses yalad to list the cities and tribes living in the Promised Land.

A. Sidon was the predominant Canaanite Phoenician city.

B. Hitites (het, “Heth”) is problematic but may refer to a pocket of Hitites from the early movement of tribes.

C. The Jebusites dwelt in Jerusalem.

D. Amorites was a general reference to western Semites, but here points to a smaller ethnic group in the mixed population of Canaan.

E. The other seven Canaanite tribal names are less problematic; they were tribes that settled in Lebanon, Hamath on the Orantes River, and all throughout the land. Their listing is significant after the passage pronouncing the curse on Canaan (9:25-27).

The Descendants of Shem (verses 21-31)

XI. The descendants from Shem are recorded last. Elamites, descendants of Shem’s first son Elam, dwelt in the highlands of east Babylonia. Asshur was the name of the region and people of Assyria, where Nimrod, a Hamite, had founded several cities (verse 11).
A. Arphaxad resided northeast of Nineveh.

B. Lud was the Ludbu of the Assyrians. Perhaps Lud was a shortened form of Ludda, possibly another name for Lydia (in what is now western Turkey).

C. Aram was an ancestor of the Aramean tribes in the steppes of Mesopotamia. His descendents (verse 23) are not well known.

D. The line then traces Arphaxad to Eber and his sons, using “begot” to introduce this embellishment.

1. The note on Eber’s son Peleg – that in his time the earth was divided – seems to pinpoint the Babel experience (11:1-9).

2. The verb *palag* is used in the *Tenach* to describe division into languages. So the Babel event occurred five generations after the flood.

E. The table then turns to trace the tribes from Peleg’s brother Joktan (10:26-29), most of whom lived in the Arabian Peninsula. Israel would find ancient blood ties with these 13 tribes of Joktanites in the desert.

XII. The end of the table (verse 32) reminds the reader that all families came from Noah, but some were of special interest to the nation of Israel.
Genesis: Chapter Eleven

The Tower of Babel (verses 1-9)

Verses 1-4

I. The flood had eradicated multitudes of people, but not the sin nature. This passage explains how the nations came to be scattered across the face of the ancient world. It is a message of judgment: what they prided themselves in became their downfall, and what they feared the most came upon them: “What the wicked fears will come upon him, but the desire of the righteous will be granted” (Proverbs 19:24).

II. The account is structured in antithetical parallelism and chiasm. Everything that mankind proposed in the first half (11:3-4) was disposed of in the second half (11:5-9), almost an undoing or reversal of their activity, even to the extent of parallel expressions.

III. The narrative hinges on the central fact, “The Lord came down” (verse 5).

IV. One of the problems with this chapter is its connection with chapter ten.

A. At the beginning of chapter eleven the whole world is “of one language” and one vocabulary.

B. But chapter ten has already divided the nations according to peoples and tongues. “Territories,” clans,” “nations,” and “languages” occur three times, though not always in the same order (10:5, 20, 31).

C. Probably 11:1-9 explains how the arrangement in chapter ten came about. Genesis often goes outside the chronological order to arrange the material thematically. The exact chronology is only hinted at in the expression about Peleg: “In his time the earth was divided” (10:25).

Verses 5-9

V. The sin of the Sinarites (people in the plain of Shinar) appears to be immense pride.

A. They said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves.”
B. This was open rebellion against God. Humility is often equated with trust and obedience, and conversely pride is equated to independence and disobedience. Here the people came together to strengthen themselves and in pride to make a reputation for themselves lest they be scattered over the face of the whole earth.

C. This appears to be in direct opposition to God’s command to spread out and fill up the whole earth (9:1).

**Verses 5-9**

VI. Their desire to enhance their unity and strength had potential for the greatest evil, according to the Lord’s evaluation: If…they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Thus what they would not do in obedience (scatter over the earth, verse 4) He did for them in judgment (verse 8).

**The Descendants of Shem (verses 10-26)**

VII. This genealogical record traces the line from Noah’s son Shem to Abram. Earlier Moses had traced the families of the earth that came from Noah’s three sons (chapter ten), explaining how they came to be scattered around the earth (11:1-9). Here Moses directs his attention to the Shemites.

VIII. The list in verses shows 10-26 shows the line of Shem, who was blessed, to Abram, thus authenticating God’s handing down the blessing to Abram.

IX. The main contribution of this passage is the linking of Abram with the line from Shem. The ancestry of Israel lies here. Interesting archeological material shows that many of these names are preserved in the names of places around Haran.

X. Unlike the genealogy in chapter five, the list in 11:10-26 does not tally the total number of years of each person and does not close each section with the words “and he died.”

A. Genesis 5:1-6:8 stresses death before the flood, 11:10-26 stresses life and expansion even though longevity was declining.

B. The mood of chapter eleven is different, then, from the earlier genealogy. This is because verses 10-26 trace the lineage of Abram – who was to be blessed by God – back to Shem, the son of Noah, who was blessed by God.
XI. The story of Abraham, which begins here, is under the heading of the name Terah. What follows after the toldot (verse 27) are the particulars of the family from Terah – this is what became of Terah in his son Abram.

A. It begins with Terah’s move to Haran and continues with the move on to Canaan by Abram, the recipient of the promise.

B. Terah’s story is completed when Abram finally had a son, who would carry forward the line and the blessing.

XII. Verses 27-32 account for the three sons of Terah and their marriages. They also account for Lot, Abram’s nephew, who figures prominently in the narratives about Abram.

XIII. Terah was an idolater, worshipping other god’s (Joshua 24:2). Perhaps the home of Terah was originally in Haran because many of Terah’s ancestor’s names are similar to the names of places in the land of Aram where the city of Haran was located. If so, then the family had approximately 600 miles to go to Ur, the capital of Sumer, where Terah’s youngest son Haran was born and died (11:28).

XIV. God’s call to Abram (12:1) initially came in Ur; the family then moved back to Haran and settled there (11:31). Because that was not the Promised Land, Abram moved on to Canaan, where God appeared and confirmed the location.
Genesis: Chapter Twelve

The Call of Abram

I. In this narrative the tone of the book changes. This passage records how God called Abram out of a pagan world and made astounding promises to him, promises that later became part of the formal Abrahamic Covenant.

II. The passage also illustrates the faith of Abram, and teaches that faith obeys God.

   A. Abram was middle age, prosperous, settled, and thoroughly pagan. The word of the Lord came to him – though it is not known exactly how – and he responded by faith and obediently left everything to follow God’s plan.

   B. This is why Abram is the epitome of faith in the Bible (Romans 4:1-3; 16-24; Galatians 3:6-9; Hebrews 11:18-19; James 2:21-23).

III. The religious-historical point of the passage is the call of Abram to found a new nation.

   A. Israel would learn by this that her very existence was God’s work through a man who responded by faith and left for Canaan.

   B. It would be a message to convince Israel of the divine call they were facing, and their need of faith for their move from Egypt to Canaan.

Verses 1-3

IV. Verses 1-3 record God’s call to Abram, and verses 4-9 record Abram’s obedience. The call had two imperatives.

   A. The first imperative was to get out (Leave your country…go to the land, verse 1).

   B. The second imperative was to be a blessing. (The second imperative, in verse 2, is inaccurately rendered in many versions as a prediction, “you will be a blessing.” But literally it is “Be a blessing”.)
V. Abram’s leaving started a chain of reactions. If Abram would get out of Ur, God would do three things for him, so that he could then be a blessing to the land (the second imperative); and he had to be that blessing so that God would do three more things for him. This symmetry should not be missed, for it strengthens the meaning of the passage. Abram’s calling had a purpose: his obedience would bring great blessing.

VI. Three blessings were based on God’s call for Abram to leave his land:

A. A great nation.

B. A blessing for Abram.

C. A great name.

VII. These promises would enable him to ‘be a blessing’ (the second imperative, verse 2).

VIII. Based on this obedience were God’s three promises to:

A. Bless those who blessed him.

B. Curse anyone who would curse him.

C. Bless the families of the earth through him (verse 3).

IX. To bless or curse Abram was to bless or curse Abram’s God. Unfortunately God often had to use other nations to discipline his people because instead of being a blessing to the world they were usually disobedient.

X. The third promise takes on its greatest fulfillment in the fact that Messiah became the means of blessing to the world (Galatians 3:8, 16; Romans 5:9).

XI. The idea of faith is stressed in these passages. Abram was told to leave several things – his country, his people, and his father’s household (verse 1). But he was told nothing about the land to which he must go. His departure required an unparalleled act of faith.
XII. The themes of blessing and cursing are heightened here. In fact, this is the central passage in the book of Genesis.

A. Here begins the program that was so desperately needed in chapters 1-11 (a purpose of which was to show that this blessing was needed).

B. This was the call and Abram responded by faith. The ensuing promises were formulated later, under covenant conditions (15:18-21).

**Verses 4-9**

XIII. The narrative reports simply that Abram obeyed. His obedience is manifested in two ways, corresponding to the two imperatives in verse two:

A. He left.

B. He was a blessing (verses 5-9).

XIV. In Haran many people were acquired by Abram and his family (verse 5). This “getting of souls” may refer to proselytizing, that is, to Abram’s influence on some Haranites to follow God.

XV. Then in the land of Canaan he built alters at Shechem (verse 6) and east of Bethel (verse 8). At this second location he called on the name of the Lord, that is, he made proclamation of God by name (see 21:33; 26:25). “Called on the name…” may be rendered ‘preached,” which is not far off in the Hebrew text.

XVI. God thus had a witness in the midst of the Canaanites, who were then in the land. In fact the mention of the great tree of Morah (literally “teacher”) is significant in connection with this.

XVII. The Canaanites had shrines in groves of oak trees, and Moreh may have been one of these cult centers.

XVIII. At Shechem God appeared to Abram to confirm His promise and to reward Abram. God showed it to him, but it would be given to his descendents, not to him. Indeed, when
Abram died his only real estate was a cave he had bought for his family’s burials (23:17-20).

XIX. After God confirmed his promise Abram abode in the land, waiting for the promise to be fulfilled. But the Canaanites had all the good fertile land. Abram had to journey by stages to the great and terrible Negev (12:9), a barren desert south of Canaan.

XX. For Israel the call of their great patriarch demonstrated that their promises were from God, promises of a great nation, a land, divine blessing, and sovereign protection. God’s appearance and confirmation (verse 7) proved that Canaan was their destiny.

XXI. But God demanded a response by faith if this generation were to share in those promised blessings. Faith takes God at his word and then obeys him.

The Sojourn in Egypt (verses 10-20)

XXII. This sojourn has much more to it than a simple lesson in honesty – though the story certainly warns against the folly of deceit.

A. The claim that “she is my sister” occurs three times in the patriarchal narratives (12:13; 20:20; 26:7). Critics say that these occasions refer to the same event.

B. However, in the second instance Abram explained that this was their policy wherever they went (20:13) so it is not surprising that he repeated this lie.

XXIII. One cannot miss the deliberate parallelism between this sojourn of Abram in Egypt and the later event in the life of the nation in bondage in Egypt. The motifs are remarkably similar:

A. The famine in the land (Genesis 12:10; Exodus 47:13).

B. The descent to Egypt to sojourn (Genesis 12:10; Exodus 47:27).

C. The attempt to kill the males but save the females (Genesis 12:12; Exodus 1:22).

D. The plagues on Egypt (Genesis 12:17; Exodus 7:14-11:10).
E. The spoiling of Egypt (Genesis 12:16; Exodus 12:35:36).

F. The deliverance (Genesis 12:19; Exodus 15).

G. The ascent to the Negev (Genesis 13:1; Numbers 13:17, 22).

XXIV. The great deliverance out of bondage that Israel experienced was thus already accomplished in her ancestor, and was probably a source of comfort and encouragement to them. God was doing more than promising deliverance for the future nation; it was as if He acted out their deliverance in Abram.

XXV. In relation to the message of the book, Genesis 12:10-20 is significantly placed right after Abram’s call and obedience. In this story Abram was not walking in faith as he had in the beginning, but God had made promises to him and would keep them. Abram was not the only patriarch who had to be rescued ingloriously from such difficulties.

**Verses 17-20**

XXVI. The Lord plagued residents of the Egyptian palace with serious diseases. Divine intervention alone could deliver Sarai from Pharaoh’s harem unharmed. With that deliverance came a royal rebuke (Verses 18-19) and expulsion from the country (verse 20). The Egyptians were a superstitious people, and any such plague would be ominous to them.

XXVII. Pharaoh’s orders for Abraham to leave (“take her and go!”) parallel the words of God’s call to Abram (“leave your country…and go”; verse 1), but while God’s words were said in honor, Pharaoh’s words were said in dishonor.

XXVIII. One can see in this story how God delivered the patriarchal family from the Egyptians by means of plagues, and how that mirrored the future Exodus experience.

XXIX. But unlike the Exodus this first deliverance was made necessary because of Abram’s deception. In spite of the trouble Abram caused for himself, God was faithful to his word and did not let the foolishness of this man to throw his plan into jeopardy.

A. Abram probably felt the easiest way out of danger was to manipulate deceptively. But such scheming put him in danger and jeopardized the promise.
B. God’s servants should trust him completely and not resort to self-directed schemes.

XXX. At first Abram prospered as a result of his deception. It is true that he got rich, but those riches could have diverted him from retaining Sarai, the one person who was needed for retaining the promise.

XXXI. Moreover, it is generally assumed that Hagar was acquired during this stay in Egypt. In giving away his wife, Sarai, Abram may have acquired Hagar, who later became his slave wife (16:1-2).

XXXII. Moses would have his readers learn of God’s gracious protection of his plan through divine intervention and deliverance. He would also have them learn of the folly of trying to deliver themselves from difficulties by means of deceptive schemes.
Genesis: Chapter Thirteen

The Setting of the Story (verses 1-5)

I. Expelled from Egypt, Abram returned to Canaan by way of the Negev. The Negev is a great triangle of land with its apex on the Gulf of Aqaba (an arm of the Red Sea) and its base on a line extending east and west and running south of Beersheba.

A. Explorations have shown that numerous settlements dotted the Negev between about 2000 and 1800 B.C.E. but did not exist for long periods of time before and after those dates. Such settlements made possible the journey of people, flocks and herds through an arid region and help to date the patriarchal period.

B. Abraham, Jacob, Joseph and the caravan that sold him into slavery in Egypt all needed a line of settlements to facilitate their journey through this inhospitable area. If one accepts reckonings based on the Hebrew text, one can develop a rather firm date for Abram.

1. Of course it is necessary to work backward. Solomon began to reign about 970 B.C.E. It is stated in 1 Kings 6:1 that the Exodus took place 480 years before the fourth year of Solomon’s reign, or about 1446.

2. Exodus 12:40-41 puts the entrance of the patriarchs in Egypt 430 years earlier – about 1876.

3. From a study of Genesis 12:4; 21:5; 25:26; and 47:9 it is inferred that the patriarchs sojourned in Canaan 215 years earlier, entering about 2091.

4. In these references it is clear that Abram entered Canaan at 75, Isaac was born to him at 100, Isaac was 60 at Jacob’s birth, and Jacob was 130 when he stood before Pharaoh.

5. A total of 215 years elapsed, then, between Abram’s entrance into Canaan and Jacob’s entrance into Egypt. If Abram was 75 when he entered Canaan, his birth would have occurred about 2166 B.C.E.

C. Abram’s wealth was measured not merely in “livestock” but in bullion (“silver and gold”). Abram’s possession and use of precious metals has led some scholars
to conclude that Abram was a merchant prince (see such passages as Genesis 23:16, with its reference to “current money with the merchant”).

D. As Abram journeyed northward, at length he came to the vicinity of Bethel, where he had first erected an alter for worship after his entrance into Canaan. There he “called on the name of the Lord,” probably meaning that he restored fellowship with God. He returned to the life of dependence on God by faith.

E. Lot had traveled from Mesopotamia to Canaan with Abram. Evidently he had also accompanied his uncle to Egypt but played no important part in the events there. Now he appears in the narrative again.

**Strife between Abram and Lot (verses 6-7)**

II. The flocks and herds of Abram and Lot had multiplied rapidly, and there were not enough pasture lands and water holes to provide for all of them if they stayed together. Earlier the land supplied inadequate resources because of famine; now it “could not support them” because of increase in livestock.

III. A new test of faith arose for Abram. Conflicts over meager resources became more frequent between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot. The problem was compounded because the Canaanites and Perizzites also shared the land with them. The later may have been only one of the tribes of Canaanites in Canaan rather than a separate ethnic group.

**Abram and Lot Separate (verses 8-13)**

IV. Having renewed his faith near Bethel, Abram was now better prepared to handle the pressing problems of life. In dealing with Lot, he demonstrated wisdom, generosity, and insight.

V. Wisely, he determined that the best way to handle the lack of resources was for him and Lot to separate. Generously he offered Lot his choice of the best lands of Canaan, refusing to assert his own rights and trusting God to meet his needs. Evidencing great insight, perhaps spiritual insight, he recognized that they could not afford to engage in quarrels before a pagan world: “for we are brothers.”

VI. When Lot scanned the whole plain of the Jordan, he saw that it was “well irrigated,” “like the land of Egypt.” It was green and productive as far south as Zoar in those early days (13:10; 19:22).
A. Such luxuriant conditions would have been quite alien to the thinking of readers in Moses’ day or later because by then God’s judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah had reduced the southern part of that region to a sterile, burned out condition.

B. Information of this sort helps to build a case against the assertion of critics that Genesis is a compilation of sources originating in Canaan during the first millennium B.C.E. Such writers would not know the earlier condition of that region.

VII. Lot chose an area that would bring monetary advantage, without consideration of its ultimate effects on him. He simply would not be able to stand against the unbridled wickedness of Sodom. (verse 12) and continued as he moved into town and settled in a house there. He became one of the leaders of the city and sat in the place of leadership – the “city gate.”

VIII. Though tainted by the sin of his environment, Lot never capitulated to it; he was “distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men” and “tormented…by the lawless deeds he saw and heard” (2 Peter 2:7-8).

IX. Abram stayed in the land of Canaan, in the highlands, where water and food were a little less plentiful than in the plain of the Jordan but where people were fewer and opportunities for expansion greater.

X. After looking at the fruitful lands of the Jordon Valley, Lot made a decision based on sight. By faith Abram had made a decision to follow God in Canaan, and now he was rewarded by sight.

God speaks to Abram (verses 14-18)

XI. God told Abram to lift up his eyes and look about him. In further confirmation and elaboration of the Abrahamic covenant, God promised to Abram the land of Canaan in perpetuity: to him and his descendents “forever.” And that promise applied not only to land as far as he could see but also to all the “length and breadth” of the land where he should wander..”) Moreover, his offspring were now declared to be innumerable.

XII. Then Abram acquired grazing rights in the area of the oaks of Mamre (named for an Amorite, Genesis 14:3) near Hebron. Hebron is nineteen miles southwest of Jerusalem on the road to Beersheba and the traditional site of Mamre, a little over a mile north of Hebron.
A. At Mamre today one may see a well constructed enclosure wall erected by the Emperor Hadrian in the second century C.E.

B. Inside is a “well of Abraham” and the ruins of a church built by Constantine over Hadrian’s pagan shrine. Hadrian’s shrine is believed to have been built on the site of Abram’s altar in a deliberate effort to desecrate that holy place.
Genesis: Chapter Fourteen

The deliverance of Lot (verses 1-16)

Verses 1-12

I. The record of the battle of the four kings against the five is interesting, for it is part of the outworking of God’s promise to Abram great and to bless those who blessed him and curse those who cursed him (12:3). Chapter fourteen describes a typical international skirmish in the ancient world in which powerful nations formed a coalition to plunder and subjugate areas near the border of the land promised to Abram.

II. In an effort to put down a rebellion (verse 4), four powerful eastern kings invaded the Jordan Valley near the Salt Sea, that is, the Dead Sea, defeating all the forces in the region (verses 5-7), plundering the five Jordanian kings (verses 8-11), and taking Lot captive (verse 12).

III. Archeology is very helpful in understanding this chapter.

A. The kings have not been identified, but their names fit the types from the ancient near east of this period, especially the Mesopotamian kings.

B. The name Arriyuk, similar to Arioch, was found at Mari; Kedoralomer fits the name of Kuder; and Tudhalia, mindful of Tidal, is attested in early Hittite literature.

C. Moreover, the gathering of city-states (“nations”) in military service was common.

IV. The location of many of the areas and cities are also now known.

A. Shinar (see 10:10) is another name for what later became Babylonia.

B. Elam (see 10:22) was eastern Shinar.

C. However, the locations of Ellaser, and Goiim, remain unknown.
D. Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela (that is, Zoar (see 19:22)) – the cities of the five kings who rebelled against Kedorlaomer were near the Salt (Dead) Sea.

E. Ashteroth and Karnaim (see 14:5) were in Hauran, ancient Bashan, east of the sea of Kennereth.

F. Ham was in eastern Gilead, east of Bashan.

G. Shaveh Kiriathaim, was east of the Dead Sea.

H. The hill country of Seir was southeast of the Dead Sea, in the area later known as Edom.

I. El Paran was modern Elat, on the Gulf of Aqaba.

J. Kadesh and Tamar were southwest of the Dead Sea.

K. The route of the conquerors was well known in antiquity, being designated as the “Kings Highway” (Numbers 20:17; 21:22).

V. The four kings – Kedorlaomer, Tidal, Amraphel, and and Arioch (14:9) went down the eastern side of the Jordan, turned around in the Arabah (the rift valley south of the Dead Sea), went up to Kadesh, over to Tamar, and then to the region of Sodom and Gomorrah in the valley of Siddim (verses 8, 10).

VI. The five cities of the plain were apparently close together at the southern end of the valley.

VII. The four kings looted Sodom and Gomorrah and captured Lot.

**Verses 13-16**

VIII. Hearing of the invasion and the capture of Lot, Abram mustered his 318 trained men and together with his allies (verse 13) pursued and defeated the invaders in a night attack.
IX. He pursued them all the way to Dan, the future northern border of the Promised Land (140 miles from Abram’s home in Hebron). Dan was then named Leshem (Joshua 19:47) or Laish (Judges 18:29).

X. During the night Abram pursued them on to Hobah, another 100 miles north of Dan, and brought back Lot and his possessions and family and other captives. This was a striking victory for the patriarch over four leading kings who had previously conquered such an extensive portion of Transjordania and the area south of the Dead Sea.

XI. Abram the Hebrew (verse 14) was now recognized as a clan leader. This is the first occurrence in the Bible of the word “Hebrew.” Though the term “Hebrew” should not be equated with the later group of marauding soldiers known as the “Habiru,” it may be etymologically related. In fact Abram’s military action in this chapter shows that this meaningful designation fits. He was thus a force to be reckoned with among the nations.

XII. Lot’s dwelling in Sodom was the means of Abram’s being drawn into the conflict. Abram was dwelling in Hebron but had a covenant with Mamre the Amorite and his brothers Eshcol and Aner (verses 13, 24).

A. Here this covenant worked in favor of Abram, for these Amorites, who allowed him to dwell with them, had to fight with him.

B. When the term “Amorite” is used alone, it refers to western Semetic peoples living in Transjordanian kingdoms and the hill country of Canaan. These Amorites were a small ethnic group, not the large wave of Amorites who poured into ancient Sumer and the west.

XIII. Abram was the general and the victory was attributed to him (verse 17). However, this does not fully explain the triumph.

A. Later Melchizedek attributed the victory to God as part of God’s blessing on Abram (verse 20). God was working through the life of Abram in accord with his promise. When invaders plundered the land and stole his troublesome relative, Abram instinctively sprang into action.

B. Israel would thus learn that God would give his chosen people victory over enemies that plundered the Promised Land. This must have encouraged God’s
people in the times of the Judges and in later invasions. Of course, faith and obedience to God were prerequisites to victory.

The Blessing by Melchizedek (verses 17-24)

Verses 17-21

XIV. This is one of the most fascinating encounters in the *Tenach*. Two kings met Abram on his return from the battle, and they could not possibly have been more different.

A. In contrast with the wicked city of Sodom and its ruler Bera (verse 2) who also was undoubtedly wicked, was Melchizedek King of Salem (Jerusalem, Psalm 76:2), a priest of God most high (verse 18).

B. Melchizedek’s name (which means “king of righteousness”) suggests a righteous ruler who was God’s representative.

XV. Melchizedek is the only person whom Abram recognized as his spiritual superior. Abram accepted blessing from him (verse 19) and paid him a tenth (a tithe) of all he had (verse 20). Abram did this deliberately, in full awareness of what he was doing.. It shows how unthreatened and humble Abram was, even after a victory.

XVI. Abram recognized that God’s revelation was not limited to him. While the reader’s attention is focused on Abram carrying the whole spiritual hope of the world, there emerged out of an obscure Canaanite valley a man nearer to God than Abram was, who blessed Abram. That valley was the Valley of Shaveh (verse 17), possibly the Kidron Valley near Jerusalem (2 Samuel 18:18).

Verses 22-24

XVII. Abram swore before the Lord, God most high, Creator of heaven and earth (verse 19) that he would take nothing that belonged to Sodom, lest the king take credit for making Abram rich.

A. Bera, Sodom’s king, offered a most appealing deal. But Abram, knowing what he did about the king of Sodom, felt that keeping Sodom’s loot which he captured would make him subject to Bera.
B. Abram wanted something far more enduring than possessions and wealth; he wanted the fulfillment of God’s miraculous and enduring promise.

C. Abram knew that he would become more prosperous, and he knew who was blessing him. He intended to receive everything from God and not even a thread from Sodom.

XVIII. The king of Sodom was obviously a wicked man over a wicked empire; Abram discerned that dealing with him might be dangerous. Abram could have reasoned that God was seeking to bless him by means of this offer. However, he could not bring himself to equate the blessing of God with the best that Sodom had to offer.

XIX. Melchizedek is an important figure in the Bible.

A. Preceding Abram, he was not a Levitical priest. When David, the first Israelite king to sit on Melchizedek’s throne, prophesied that his great Descendent the Messiah would be a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4) David looked beyond the Levitical priesthood which would be done away with.

B. The Book of Hebrews demonstrates how Messiah in his death fulfilled the Levitical order and began a better high priesthood. In referring to Melchizedek as the perfect type of Messiah, the writer of Hebrews capitalized on Melchizedek’s anonymity: whereas (Genesis) is filled with genealogies and ancestral notations, this man appeared without family records (Hebrews 7:3). Melchizedek is remembered as a high priest.

C. Because Abram paid tithes to Melchizedek, the order of Melchizedek is superior to Levi, who descended from Abram (Hebrews 7:4-19).
Genesis: Chapter Fifteen

**Abram’s Dilemma (verses 1-3)**

I. Abraham’s refusal to receive a blessing from Bera King of Sodom indicated that he was still trusting God alone to bless him (14:21-24). His faith was also affirmed by how he addressed God: *Adonoi Yahweh*. The first name indicates “master,” the second “covenant keeper.”

II. However, when God appeared to Abram in a vision and told him that his reward would be great, Abram became worried. He was old and childless, so he was concerned that his household Servant Eliezer would be his heir, rather than a son of his own blood. (The social texts from Nuzi in northern Mesopotamia demonstrate that it was common for a childless couple to adopt a servant as an heir.)

**Abram Is Justified by Faith (verses 4-6)**

III. The Lord answered, “this man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir” (verse 4).

   A. God then showed Abram the stars and stated that Abram’s descendents would be just as numerable (an hyperbole).

   B. The word by which God created the stars would also guarantee Abram’s seed.

   C. Abram believed (literally “believed in”) the Lord and He credited to him as righteousness. This foundational truth is repeated three times in the *Brit Hadasha* (Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6 and James 2:23). It indicates that righteousness comes not from human works, but through faith in God.

   D. The Abrahamic Covenant did not give Abram redemption; it was a covenant God made with Abram who had already believed and to whom righteousness had already been imputed.

IV. The Bible clearly teaches that in all ages imputed righteousness (i.e. salvation) comes by faith.
The Covenant Is Ratified (verses 7-21)

V. In Abram’s day, a covenant (contract) was not ratified by the parties of the covenant signing a document, as it is in our day.

A. Rather, the parties to the contract would dig a long trench, tear a number of small animals in half, and put the halves along the sides of the trench. As the blood from the animals flowed into the trench, the parties to the covenant would walk through the trench together and say, “May God do so and more to me if I do not keep my obligations under this covenant.”

B. God instructed Abram to construct such a trench. Then, when the sun was going down, God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Abram.

C. While Abram was sleeping, God told him about the 400 year enslavement of his descendants, after which they would return to the land promised to Abram. The enslavement was symbolized by birds of prey swooping down on the trench to get at the pieces of the animals Abram had prepared. Egypt, like the birds of prey, opposed the covenant. However, the promise would ultimately be fulfilled. Abram’s descendents would be freed and return to the promised land.

D. Exodus 12:40 and Galatians 3:17 state that the Egyptian bondage was 430 years. Apparently Genesis 15:13 and Acts 7:6, which describe the Egyptian bondage as being 400 years are using rounded figures.

VI. God is just, and wished to permit the sin of the Amorites to be full before he would judge them (15:16). God would tolerate their sins until Israel under Joshua conquered Canaan. Thus, the fulfillment of the promises to Abram involves a retributive judgment on the inhabitants of the land of Canaan.

VII. After sunset God revealed himself in the image of a smoking oven and a flaming torch. These passed through the trench while Abraham slept. (These elements were connected with sacrificial ritual in the ancient world.)

VIII. Because only God (i.e. the oven and the torch) and not Abraham passed through the trench, the Abrahamic covenant is unilateral; that is, its fulfillment depends solely on God’s faithfulness, and not on Abraham’s works. The covenant is absolutely secure.
IX. God even specified the geographical boundaries of Israel’s land (verses 18-21) - from the river of Egypt (Wadi el-Arish, not the Nile River) to the great river, the Euphrates.

A. Israel has never possessed this land in its entirety, but she will when Yeshua returns to reign as Messiah.

B. For Abram God’s message was clear: in spite of the prospects of his own death and the suffering of his descendants (enslavement in bondage), his descendents would receive the promises, for God had assured it. Israel could be encouraged by this while in bondage in Egypt as well as in subsequent times of distress, even during the Babylonian captivity.

C. God’s solemn covenant assures the Chosen People of the ultimate fulfillment of his promises in spite of their death and suffering.

D. Israel would also notice the parallel between the beginning of this narrative (“I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur,” verse 7, with Exodus 29:2, “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt”). This assured Israel that in spite of opposition and bondage God would judge their enslavers and fulfill his promises.

E. This passage also encourages believes today. God affirms solemnly that he will fulfill his promises concerning salvation and all the blessings that pertain to that life (see 1 Peter 1:3-4), despite opposition, suffering, and even death. God keeps his promises.
Genesis: Chapter Sixteen

Sarai and Hagar (verses 1-6)

I. Sarai was old and barren, so by all human standards the heir of the promise could not come through her. This set in motion some unwise activities on the part of Abram and Sarai. Abram would learn, however, that the promise was to be filled in God’s way, not in Abram’s way.

A. In the legal custom of that day a barren woman could give her maid as a wife, and the child born of that woman was regarded as the first wife’s child.

B. If the husband said to the slave wife’s son, “You are my son,” then he was the adopted son and heir.

C. Thus, like the practice of surrogacy practiced in our day, wherein a woman carries another woman’s child and gives birth to it, Sarai’s suggestion was not objectionable according the customs of that time. However, God can and sometimes does repudiate social customs.

II. Sarai’s plan, with Abram’s approval, turned sour, however, after the Egyptian slave girl, Hagar, became pregnant. Hagar began to despise Sarah.

III. Both women may have wondered what would become of Abram’s seed. Would Hagar have it?

A. Because of the conflict of the women, Sarai blamed Abram for the problem. He told her to handle it in whatever way she wished. Sarai treated Hagar harshly, so Hagar fled.

B. There is no problem seeing what went wrong on the dark side of the story. When the way of faith (which involves patient waiting) was abandoned and the way of
human “wisdom” was taken, Abram was caught up in a chain of causes and effects that would trouble him for many years

**Hagar and the Angel of the Lord (verses 7-16)**

IV. The Angel of the Lord found Hagar in the desert at a spring on the way to Shur on the way to her homeland, Egypt.

V. This is the first reference in the *Tenach* to the “Angel of the Lord. This Angel is identified with *Adonoi* in 16:13 and many other passages in the *Tenach*. And yet, the Angel is distinct from *Adonai* (24:7). Thus, “the Angel of the Lord may refer to a theophany of the preincarnate Messiah (see Genesis 18:1-2, 19-21; Judges 2:1-4; Zechariah 1:8).

VI. After asking Hagar two questions (“where have you come from and where are you going?”) God gave her two sure words: one was an exhortation (return and submit, verse 16), the other a promise (she would give birth to a boy (verses 10-12).

A. Hagar called God “the One who sees me” (verse 13), and to commemorate the event she named the well at that (unknown location) *Beer Lahai Roi* (“well of the living One who sees me”).

B. God Himself named the boy Ishmael, which He then explained: “for the Lord has *heard* your misery (verse 11). Another significant naming is Hagar’s referring to God as “the One who *sees*” after her, that is, looks out for her.

C. So in these two names is a world of theology: God hears and God sees.

D. This spot would afterward become holy, a place where God could be found providing and hearing the cries of his people.
E. The names provide a message: God spoke in direct revelation, and Hagar responded in faith. God sees distress and affliction, and He hears. Sarai should have known this. Since God knew Sarai was barren, she should have cried out to the Lord. Instead she had to learn the lesson the hard way – from the experience of a despised slave – wife who, ironically, came back with a faith experience.

VI. Abraham was surely rebuked when Hagar said God told her to name her son Ishmael, “God Hears.”

VII. In great distress (here Sarai’s barrenness) one must turn to the Lord because He hears the afflicted, sees them in their need, and will miraculously fulfill his promises. Our deepest needs cannot be successfully resolved by human intervention. Giving children to the barren is God’s work (Psalm 113:9)

VIII. Later Leah also knew that God heard her affliction, for she named Reuben and Simeon (Genesis 29:32-33) to reflect that she still had a way to go in her faith.

A. So God provided for the pregnant woman who was thrust out into the desert God promised that Hagar would become a matriarch – her son would become the father of a tribe of wild hostile people. (see 25:18), living in the Arabian desert (25:12-18).

B. But they would not be the promised seed; they would only complicate matters. Sarai’s sin caused the origin of the Ishmaelites, a harvest that is still being reaped. In fact Joseph, Sarai’s grandson, was later taken to Egypt by the Ishmaelites (37:28).

C. The lesson was clear for Sarai, Abram, Hagar, Israel, and for all believers: God’s servants are to trust his Word and to wait for its fulfillment, enduring patiently to the end.
XIV. It becomes increasingly clear in Genesis that any person or any nation that owes its existence by divine election should live by faith. But the good news for God’s people is that the living God sees and hears.
Genesis: Chapter Seventeen

I. This chapter records (a) God’s assurance of his promises by changing the names of Abram (verses 1-8) and Sarai (verses 15-18), (b) God’s instituting circumcision as the sign of the covenant (verses 9-14), (c) God’s sure word on the promises’ fulfillment through Sarah (verses 19-22) and (d) Abraham’s compliance.

Abraham’s Age (Verse 1a)

II. At the close of chapter sixteen, Abram was eighty six years old when Ishmael was born. At the beginning of chapter seventeen, Abram’s age was ninety nine years.

A. The close attention to Abram’s age comes up again at the conclusion of the chapter where the reader is reminded that Abram was ninety nine years old when he was circumcised and Ishmael was thirteen (verses 24-27).

B. Thus, the age of Abraham serves as a framework for the events of the chapter as well as a link to the preceding context.

C. The next note concerning the age of Abram after the age of Abram after chapter seventeen comes with the account of the birth of Isaac (21:5). There it is noted that Abraham was one hundred years old.

III. Between these two points the text contains a diverse collection of narratives with little close attention to their chronology. The record of the age of Abram/Abraham provide the outside chronological boundaries for the events of the narratives, showing that they are all to understood as taking place within the year before the birth of Isaac.

God is The Lord, The Almighty

IV. Chapter seventeen is one of a small groups of narratives in which Moses explicitly states that the “Lord appeared” (wayera) to someone (12:7; 18:1; 26:2; 24; 35:9).
A. Unlike the similar statement in chapter eighteen (verse 1), where Moses devotes special attention to the actual nature of the Lord’s appearance, here Moses’ interest seems solely in what the Lord said, not in the nature of the appearance itself.

B. The Lord’s first speech to Abram is brief and serves mainly as a summary introduction to the second speech, which by comparison is long. As a summary, however, the first speech establishes the interpretive boundaries for the rest of the chapter. Most importantly, it establishes the fact that the events of the chapter represent the making of a covenant between the Lord descendents.

V. Moses immediately identifies God as the Lord (ywhh, verse 1b), the God of the covenant at Sinai (Exodus 3:15). Within the narrative, however, God identifies himself to Abram as “God Almighty (el shaddai).” By doing this, God removed all doubt regarding the faith of Abram at this stage of the narrative. Abram worshipped the covenant God, Yahweh (yhyh), but knew him as “God Almighty” (el shaddai).

“I appeared (waera) to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty (el shaddai) but by name the Lord (ywhh) I did not make myself known to them.”

VI. After identifying himself, the Lord gives a brief synopsis of the covenant, stressing Abraham’s obligation: “Walk before me and you will be blameless.” Note that, according to literal Hebrew, the imperative is to walk before the Lord, and the consequence of walking before the Lord is that “you will be blameless.”

VII. Also stressed in the synopsis of the covenant is the Divine promise: “[I] will greatly increase your numbers” (verse 2).

VIII. “I will make my covenant” poses a question of the coherence of chapter seventeen with the preceding narrative.
A. Had not God already made a covenant with Abraham in 15:18? Why did he establish a covenant with Abraham a second time?

B. Several solutions to this problem have been proposed. The simplest answer sees the two covenants as two distinct aspects of God’s covenant with Abraham— one stressing the promise of the land (15:18-21) and the other stressing the promise of a great abundance of descendants (17:2).

IX. The record of Abram’s response to the Lord is also brief. Moses simply records that Abram “fell face down,” a sign of deep respect.

A. The significance of this brief description of Abram’s response can be seen in the similarities between it and the account of the Lord’s second speech. At that point, (verse 17) he not only “fell facedown” but also laughed. In other words, when Abraham heard that God would greatly increase his descendants, he responded with respect and submission. But when he heard how God would carry out his plan, his respect contained a tinge of laughter.

B. The notion of laughter (yishak) and the announcement of the birth of Isaac (yitzak, 21:4), an obvious wordplay, plays an important role in the composition of the next several chapters (discussed below).

X. The second divine speech is divided into three sections (3b - 8, 9 - 14, 15 - 16), each marked by the reintroduction of “and God said (verses 9, 15).

A. Each deals respectively with one of the parties of the covenant (the Lord, Abram, Sarah), each of whom is specifically named or identified at the beginning of each section: the Lord (“As for me,” verse 4a), Abram (“As for you,” verse 9a) and Sarai (“As for Sarai your wife,” verse 15a).

B. The substance of each section of the covenant is memorialized by a specific sign within that section: the change of Abram’s name in the first section (verse 5), the
circumcision of all males in the family in the second section (verses 10-14), and
the change of Sarai’s name in the third section (verse 15).

XI. God’s part in the covenant verses 3b - 8) consists of two promises: abundant descendents
(verses 4 - 6) and eternal faithfulness (verses 7-8). As the narratives have already
stressed, the descendents of Abraham who belong to the covenant will existence to God
alone: “You will be the father of many nations.”

A. They will be “children born not natural descent, nor of human decision or of a
husbands will, but born of God (John 1:13).

B. The promise of many children is memorialized in the change of Abram’s name to
Abraham (verse 5). Abram means “mighty father”; Abraham means “father of a
multitude.”

X. The choice of the word “be fruitful in verse six (“I will make you fruitful“) and
“multiply’ in verse 2 (“increase your numbers”) seems intended to recall seems to recall
the blessing of all mankind in 1:28: “Be fruitful and increase in numbers; fill the earth”
and its repetition in 9:1: “Be fruitful and increase in numbers; fill the earth,” showing the
covenant with Abraham to be the means by which God’s original blessing would again be
channeled to all mankind.

XI. A new element is added in verse 6b: “kings will come forth from you.” This seems to
anticipate not only the subsequent history of Abraham’s descendents as recorded in the
later historical books (e.g. Samuel and Kings); but, more importantly, it provides a link
between the general promise of blessing through the seed of Abraham and Moses’
subsequent focus of that blessing on the royal house of Judah (Genesis 49:8-12; Numbers
24:7-9).

A. The notion that the blessing would come from a king is not new to Moses’
arguments (see 14:18-19). What is here being developed for the first time,
however, is that a king would come from the seed of Abraham.
B. At work here is the same theological planning as that lying behind the structure of the genealogy behind Matthew 1:1: “A record of the genealogy of Yeshua the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

C. Keeping in mind the close association of the term “Messiah” (Christos) with the kingship elsewhere in biblical literature (e.g. 1 Samuel 24:6, 10) it is reasonable to speak of a “Christology” of Genesis in such passages.

XII. The focus of chapters seven and eight lies in the repetition of the term “everlasting” (olam). The covenant promised is an everlasting covenant (brit olam, verse 7) and the possession of the land is an “everlasting possession” (huzzat olam). The promises contained in these verses are not (see 13:14; -15; 15:18-21); rather it is the “everlasting (olam) nature of the covenant - that which is to assure the fulfillment of the promises - that is in view.

A. The eternality of the land covenant was certainly implied in the in the “forever” (ad-olam) of the promise (verse 13:15), but when the promise was when the promise was granted in chapter 15 it was not yet granted as being eternal. Thus when God reiterated his role in the covenant, the focus was on his everlasting faithfulness: I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant…The whole land of Canaan, …I will give as an everlasting possession.

XIII. Abram’s part in the covenant consisted of his obedience to the covenant: “You must keep my covenant.” What is meant by this immediacy explained: “This is my covenant (et-briti tismor, (verse 9). What was meant by his was immediately explained: “This is my covenant (briti)…you are to keep…Every male among you shall be circumcised.” Lest the reader conclude that the whole of the covenant was simply the rite of circumcision, Moses included the words “and it will be a sign of the covenant” (verse 11b).

XIV. Sarai’s part in the covenant was to be the one through whom the offspring of Abraham was born. She was to be the mother of nations, and “kings and peoples will come from her (verse 16b). She, in her old age, would be the one through whom it would be demonstrated that God alone could fulfill his covenant promise.
A. As with Abraham, Sarai’s new name was to a sign of her part in the covenant. She would no longer be called Sarai, but would be called Sarah (verse 15).

B. Moses does not explain the meaning of Sarah’s new name as he had with the renaming of Abraham (verse 5b). He apparently takes it for granted that the reader will understand verse 16 as an explanation for her name. Since in Hebrew “Sarah” self evidently means “princess,” the reader could easily recognize that she was to be called “princess” because “kings will come from her” (verse 16b).

**Abraham’s Response to God’s Promise (verses 17-18)**

XV. Abraham’s response to God’s promise is not what one would expect: “Abraham fell facedown” and “laughed” (verse 17a). In light of Moses’ portrayal of Abraham thus far in Genesis (e.g. 15:6), it does not seem likely that his laughter is intended to point to a lack of faith - although one admit that the text itself gives that impression. However, without commenting directly on Abraham’s surprising reaction to God’s promise, Moses allows Abraham’s own words in 17b to uncover the motivation behind his laughter - “Will a son be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?” - leaving a final verdict on the nature of the nature of his laughter somewhat obscure.

A. In 18:12, when Sarah also responded to God’s promise with laughter, Moses shows that her laughter was met with divine disapproval” Then the Lord said, “Why does Sarah laugh?” The absence of such a rebuke of Abrahams laughter here in chapter seventeen shows that his laughter does not so much reflect a total lack of faith as a limitation of his faith in what God must do to fulfill his promise. Abraham is not depicted here as one who lacks maturity: rather, he is one whose faith still must be pushed beyond its present limits. His faith must grow if he is to continue to put his trust in God’s promise.

B. In any event, one clear purpose in Moses including the note about Abraham’s laughter can be seen in the fact that the Hebrew expression for “he laughed” (wayyishaq, verse 17) foreshadows the name “Isaac” (yishaq).
XVI. The irony of Abraham’s response is evident. Even in his surprising response of laughter in the face of God’s promise, Abraham’s laughter became a verbal sign marking the ultimate fulfillment of the promise in Isaac. Throughout the remainder of the narratives surrounding the birth of Isaac (Yishaq), a key word in each section is “laughter” (sahaq). Sarah laughed (8:12); Lots sons-in-law laughed (19:14); all who heard of Sarah’s birth to Isaac would laugh (21:6); the son of Hagar laughed (21:9b, “was mocking” NIV) at Isaac. Finally, Isaac’s own failure to trust in God (26:7) when the Philistine king saw him laughing (meshaq, caressing NIV) with Rebekah. Thus, for Moses, both the power of God and the limitations of human faith are embodied in that most ambiguous of human acts, laughter.

 XV. For the first time the name “Abraham” rather than “Abram” is used as the subject of a verb: “Abraham fell facedown; he laughed (verse 17). Moses’ irony can be seen in the fact that Abraham was laughing at the very thing that his new name was intended to mark: You will be the father of many nations (verse 4b).

The Third Divine Speech (verses 19-22)

XVI. The content of the third divine speech extends the covenant to include Isaac, who is to be born of Sarah, and consequently excludes Ishmael, the son of Hagar.

A. Thus Isaac was not to be one of the anonymous “offspring” who was to receive the benefits of the covenant. Here he is brought to the level of participant in the original covenant: “I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendents after him (verse 19b).

B. Thus the identification of the covenant “offspring” of Abraham was made more specific. The descendents of Abraham who are heirs of the covenant are those through Sarah, that is, the “offspring” of Isaac. In this respect God’s words to Abraham concerning Isaac in chapter seventeen (“I will establish my covenant with him,” verse 19b) already anticipated the reiteration of these words in the covenant with Isaac in 26:3b: [I will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham.”
C. The descendents of Hagar, on the other hand, are consequently excluded from the covenant. However, in this final speech Moses is careful to show that although Ishmael has been excluded from the covenant with Abraham, Ishmael and his descendents are still to live under the blessing of God (verse 20).

1. In fact, in his blessing of Ishmael, God reiterated both of his original blessings of all mankind in 1:28 (“I will surely bless him, I will make him fruitful and greatly increase his numbers” (17:20a) and his blessing of Abraham in 12:12 (“I will make him a great nation, 17:20b).

2. Just as the “offspring” of Isaac would form a great nation of twelve tribes (49:1-27), so the “offspring of Ishmael, under God’s blessing, would form a nation of great rulers (verse 20b). The list of these twelve rulers is given in 25:13-15.

Abraham’s Final Response (verse 23)

XVII. Abraham’s final response shows that he obeyed the covenant as commanded in verse 9; that is, he circumcised all male members of his household “as god told him.” This final remark about Abraham’s obedience carries the reader back to the beginning of the narrative where the injunction was given “Walk before me and be blameless.” This portrait of an obedient Abraham is reminiscent of the portrait of Noah who also walked with God” and was “blameless” (6:9).

A. In light of the In light of the scarcity of these terms in Genesis it seems likely that Moses expected that an association be made between these two great men based on the close recurrence of both terms. “Blameless” (tamim) occurs in Genesis only in these two texts. “Walk before God” (hithallek) appears more frequently but un more carefully planned contexts (Enoch, 5:22, 24; Noah 6:9; Abram 17:1; 24:20 and 48:15 (with Isaac). Thus Abraham and Noah are presented as examples of those who have lived in obedience to the covenant and were therefore “blameless” because both obeyed God.
The ages of Abraham and Ishmael (verses 24-27)

XVIII. The ages of Abraham and Ishmael mark an *inclusio* to the narrative, which opened with the age of Abraham and, by implication, the age of Ishmael. The final word at the close restates Abraham’s obedient response to the covenant. The chiastic structure of verses 26 and 27 adds a certain formality to the conclusion as well as stresses the major topic of the chapter: Abraham’s obeyed God’s will in carrying out his covenant obligations.
Genesis Chapter Eighteen

The Promise of a Seed Confirmed by Visitation (verses 1-15)

I. Three men visited Abraham by the great trees of Mamre to confirm the time of the fulfillment of these promise.

   A. These three were the Lord (see 18:1, 10, 13) and two angels. Though one may correctly see lessons here about hospitality, the angels certainly did not visit Abraham for the purpose of teaching him this.

   B. Why did the Angel of the Lord approach Abraham in this manner? Why did he not use an oracle, a vision, or a voice?

      1. Possibly he meant it for a test for Abraham and the Sodomites. The moral states of Abraham and Sodom may have been indicated by their different treatments of strangers. Abraham’s peaceful, quiet visit contrasted greatly with Sodom’s outbursts of brutality and inhumanity.

      2. But more likely Abraham’s visitors meant to convey intimate fellowship. To eat together was to convey intimate fellowship, peace offerings, and treaties.

      3. When the Lord was ready to specify the fulfillment of the covenantal promises, He came in person and ate in Abraham’s tent. Nothing could more significantly communicate their close relationship.

   C. Abraham hurried to them (verse 2) hurried back to the tent (verse 6) ran to the heard (verse 7) and had his servant hurry (verse 7); Abraham bowed low before them (verse 2); he had water brought to wash their feet (verse 4); he served them freshly baked bread (verse 6), a choice calf (verse 7), curds and milk (verse 8), and stood while they were eating (verse 8, see also verses 1-2). All this suggests he knew who his visitors were.
II. After the meal one of the angelic visitors announced that a son would be born to Sarah in a year. This angel of the Lord was clearly the Lord himself (see 16:7).

A. The thought seemed ludicrous to Sarah and she laughed in her heart. The Lord’s reply gently rebuke Sarah: “Is anything too hard for the Lord?”

B. Thus, this account is a call to believe that God can do the impossible. He confirmed his promise by a personal visit - and ate with them - to announce that the time was at hand. It was the annunciation of a humanly impossible verse.

1. When something as incredible as this is declared, the human response is consistent: like Sarah, people are taken off guard, laugh, and then out of fear they deny they laughed (18:5).

2. But God knows human hearts and that believers often stagger at what God says He can do.

C. Is a child from a dead womb to marvelous for the One calls all things into existence? It is no laughing matter. He can do it. Nothing is incredible for those in covenant relationship with the Lord because nothing is too difficult for him.
Genesis: Chapter Nineteen

This chapter records God’s judgment on a morally bankrupt Canaanite civilization, but it also provides a severe warning against others becoming like them: it was difficult to get Lot out of Sodom, and Sodom out of Lot’s family.

Lot was an upright citizen, hospitable and generous (verses 2-3), and a leader of the community. Actually he was a judge, for he was sitting “was sitting in the gateway of the city (verse 1). Judges usually sat by the city gates, public places, public places where legal and business transactions were finalized (Gen. 3:18). As a judge Lot sought to screen out the wickedness of his townfolk and to give advice on good living. He knew truth and justice, righteousness and evil. He was a righteous man (2 Peter 2:7-8).

Yet in spite of his denunciation of their lifestyle, he liked the good life of Sodom’s society. He preferred making money off its citizens than to staying in the hills (Gen. 13:10-11) where there would be no filthy living but also no good life.

The hour of truth came with the visitation from on high. Lot seemed godly and pure, but he was hypocritical. His words were not taken seriously (19:14). The saint at first pitched his tent near Sodom, but later Sodom controlled his life. He was moral, for he opposed sodomy and homosexuality; he knew great evil when he saw it. But ironically he was willing to sacrifice his daughter’s virginity to fend off the vice of the Sodomite men (verse 8). He escaped judgment by the grace of God, but his heart was in Sodom. His wife was too attached to the city to follow the call of grace, and his daughters had no qualms against having sex with their drunk and naked father (verses 30-35).

As long as the Lord left Lot alone, he would seek to profess while living in Sodom. Ultimately, he could not have both. Sodom would have destroyed him if the Lord had not destroyed Sodom.

The Visit of the Two Angels (verses 1-14)

The two angels were reluctant visitors to Lot. In spite of Lot’s hospitality, they preferred to lodge in the square. But when the angels were in Lot’s house, all of the men of the city surrounded the house. They wanted to have sex with Lot’s visitors. They wanted to have homosexual relations with these two who they thought were men. As angels, they apparently
were handsome. The men’s vileness was matched, surprisingly, by Lot’s hypocrisy, for he was willing to give them his virgin daughters (19:8). To protect one’s guests was part of hospitality, but this was going too far! Lot’s pleas for righteousness (verse 7) were now wasted as they now saw a different side of their judge (verse 9). He might as well have mocked. The angels then pulled Lot back into the house, made the men outside the door blind, and told Lot to get out because they were going to destroy the city. When Lot told this to his two daughter’s fiancés, they did not believe him.

**Lot Taken From The City (verses 15-22)**

Early in the morning the angels literally had to drag Lot from the city (verse 16). The Lord, of course, was being merciful in sparing Lot for Abraham’s sake. But even after he was delivered, Lot wrung a concession out of the angels. He wanted to go to the small town of Zoar, which means “a little one.” But this scene would always remind Israel of Lot, lingering and halting, being dragged to safety. Why do some of god’s people fall in with the corrupt world rather than willingly flee a society destined for destruction?

**The Destruction of Sodom (verses 23-29)**

With burning sulfur the Lord overthrew the wicked cities if the entire plain in a great destruction (verses 24-25). Some have suggested that deposits of sulfur erupted from the earth (14:10) and then showered down from heaven in flames of fire (Luke 17:29). Lot’s wife gazed back intently and was changed into a pillar of salt, a monument to her disobedience. The dense smoke (19:28) Abraham saw was caused by the burning sulfur. Though God judged the sinners in the cities of the plain, He also remembered Abraham, that is, God remembered his request (18:23-32) and saved Lot from the catastrophe.

**Immorality in Lot’s Family (verses 30-38)**

The closing section records the incident of Lot’s two daughters in a mountain cave. Lot had been afraid to flee to the mountains (verse 19) so he went instead to Zoar (verse 22). But now, ironically, he left Zoar for the mountains and lived in a cave (verse 30).

Thinking their chances for marrying were slim (Genesis 19:11), the two daughters, whose fiancés were killed in the holocaust at Sodom, took turns getting their father drunk and having sex with him. Their acts of incest shows the influence of Sodom on them. They gave birth to
Boys, Moab and Ben-Ammi, whose descendents were the Moabites and the Ammonites, perennial enemies of Israel.

**Conclusion**

Four major motifs are in this chapter: 1) God’s swift judgment on the vile Canaanites, 2) Lot’s close attachment to the wicked society, 3) God merciful sparing of Lot from the doom and, 4) the “rebirth” of Sodom in the cave.

Through these, Israel could see that if God judges a people severely, He is righteous because of their great evil. She also could learn of the folly of becoming attached to the wickedness of Canaan.

How should one live then, knowing how God dealt with the Canaanites? The lesson is clear: “Do not love the world or anything in the world…[for] the world and its desires [lusts] pass away” (1 John 2:15, 17) under the judgment of God. It is dangerous and folly to become attached to the present corrupt world system because it awaits God’s sudden and swift destruction.

*Yeshua* Referred to Genesis 19:26 to warn of the destruction to come on unbelieving Israel: “Remember Lot’s wife! (Luke 17:32) When Messiah returns, people should not look back as she did. If an unbeliever craves the best of this world he will lose both this world (for it passes away) and life in the next world (Luke 17:33-37).

*Yeshua* also said that if the miracles He did in Capernaum had been dome in Sodom the Sodomites would have repented (Matt. 11:23). As it is, “it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment” than for the cities of Galilee (Matthew 11:24). This signifies that God judges according to knowledge, and that judgment greater than physical destruction awaits sinners.
Genesis: Chapter Twenty

This story records God’s providential protection of his people, but its emphasis is on purity, specifically the preservation of Sarah’s purity. For the fulfillment of the promise, marriage is important: Participation in God’s promised blessings demands separation from worldly corruption.

Sinfulness and weakness of faith created a threat to the promised blessing. It is a sad commentary on one’s lack of faith if God has to deliver him again and again.

God Delivers Abraham From Egypt (verses 1-7)

I. Earlier God delivered Abram with plagues after he lied about Sarai being his sister (chapter 12). Here Abraham told the same lie about Sarah (20:2) to Abimelech, King of Gerar, out of fear (verse 11). Later, Isaac did the same thing with another Abimelech (26:1-11)!

A. Gerar was near the coast about 12 miles south of Gaza and about 50 miles south of Hebron, in the land of the Philistines (21:34).

B. When Abimelech took Sarah, God warned him in a dream (20:3) and by the barreness of his wife and slave girls (verses 17-18) that she was married.

1. There is a fitting wordplay here. Abraham had prayed that the righteous would not be destroyed with the wicked (18:23-32).

2. Now Abimelech’s words echoed the same concern: “Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation?” The rebuke of this expression would have been forceful for Abraham.

II. So when Abimelech assured God of his clear conscience in the matter, God told him to return Sarah and have Abraham the prophet (nabi, the first occurrence of this word in the
Tenach), God’s Spokesman, pray for Abimelech. Only the patriarch’s prayer saved the king’s life.

A. God did not rebuke Abimelech, but He certainly gave him the sternest of warnings: he should not commit adultery because it was a capital offense.

B. The wording clearly anticipates the command in the Law (Exodus 20:14).

C. God made Abraham and Sarah one so that they might produce a godly seed. This was basic to the covenant.

III. Both deliverances of the patriarch preserved the purity of Sarah and kept the promise intact.

A. The first incident (Genesis 12), however, was outside the promised land and reflected more clearly the life and death struggle of the nation in Egypt as God would later save them and deliver them.

B. The second incident (chapter 20) was in the land and was an event in which God protected their marriage and thereby his promise.

C. God controls birth; He miraculously intervenes; He opens and closes wombs (verses 17-18). No mere human potentate can thwart God’s plan.

Israelites (and all believers) should not destroy their marriage by adultery (20:8-18)

I. Though God did not rebuke Abimelech, Abimelech did rebuke Abraham. The king spoke of the great guilt Abraham’s action brought on him (verse 9) and he spoke to Sarah of his (Abimelech’s) offense against her (verse 16).
A. Abimelech sensed that his plan to take Sarah into his harem was wrong. So he made amends by giving the patriarch livestock (sheep and cattle 21:27) and slaves (20:14), allowing him to live in his land (verse 15), and giving Abraham (whom he called Sarah’s brother!) a thousand shekels of silver (verse 16).

B. God’s preventing the destruction of Abraham’s marriage by adultery reinforced the fact that the Israelites should not destroy their marriages by adultery. Here the stress was also on the protection of intermarriage with pagans. To take the wife of another man is a life and death issue. God punishes such a sin.

C. So the message was clear: God did not want Israel to intermarry with pagans - especially when adultery of divorce was involved. Israel seldom remembered this (Malachi 2:10-17).
Genesis: Chapter Twenty One

The Birth of Isaac (verses 1-8)

I. God had Sarah give birth to the child of promise at the very time he had promised (18:10). Abraham and Sarah responded in faith by:

A. Naming him Isaac (21:3),

B. Circumcising him according to the covenant (verse 4, see also 17:9-14),

C. And praising God for this amazing fulfillment (21:6-6).

II. The name Isaac (“he laughs”) is cleverly explained in this passage.

A. Sarah said that God gave her laughter, that is, joy (verse 6).

B. Her laughter of unbelief was now changed to rejoicing through the provision of her son.

C. Everyone who would hear about this laugh, that is, rejoice with her.

The Expulsion of Ishmael (verses 8-13)

III. God used the incident of Ishmael mocking Isaac to drive out the child Ishmael and his mother Hagar (verse 10), for they would be a threat to the promised seed.

A. The word “mocking” is mesheq (“laughter or jesting”) from which we get “Isaac” (Yishhaq).

B. Earlier Sarah had mistreated Hagar (16:6), Now Hagar’s son was mistreating Sarah’s son.

C. Earlier pregnant Sarah caused Hagar to flee (16:6); now she caused Hagar and her 16 or 17 year old son to flee (Abraham was 86 when Ishmael was born 16:16),
and 100 when Isaac was born [21:5], and Isaac was probably weaned [verse 8] at age 2 or 3).

D. When Abraham became distressed because of Sarah’s request to oust Hagar and Ishmael, God assured Abraham that Ishmael would have a future because he too was Abraham’s offspring (verses 11-13).

IV. The two emphasis (verses 1-13) then are these:

A. The birth of Isaac (in which the naming commemorated the fulfillment and the circumcision confirmed the covenant).

B. And the expulsion of Ishmael as the removal of the threat.

1. Once the promised child was received, Abraham and Sarah, rejoicing in God’s miraculous provision, had to avoid any threat to Isaac’s inheritance.

2. Because God chose one son, His choice had to be protected. Abraham and Sarah had to expel Ishmael.

The Angel of the Lord meets Hagar in the desert (verses 14-21)

V. Paul’s use of this account is marvelous (Galatians 4:21-31).

A. Ishmael was born by the flesh through “the slave woman.” Isaac was born by the promise and was the heir.

B. One represented bondage at Sinai, the other freedom when the promise finally came.

1. When Messiah, the seed came, the old was done away. Now that the promise has come, believers are co-heirs with the promised Seed by adoption through God’s grace.
2. To go back under the Law would be to undo God’s promise. Those adopted by the Seed become seeds and are set free from the bondage of the Law (Galatians 5:1).

3. Just as Ishmael and Isaac were in conflict (Galatians 4:29), so the flesh and the Spirit do not harmonize. The flesh struggles against the spirit, often mocking it (Galatians 5:16-18).

4. Therefore believers are to “get rid of the slave woman and her son (Galatians 4:30), that is, to remove the threat of the flesh and “live by the Spirit” Galatians 6:16).

**The Covenant at Beersheba (verses 22-34)**

VI. The striking feature about this passage is the explanation of the name of the name of Beersheba, the home of Abraham. This name will always reflect the covenant the patriarch made with the residents of the land, which enabled him to dwell there in peace and prosperity.

VII. The word *saba* (“to swear or take an oath”) occurs three times in the passage (verses 23-24 [swear], verse 31, [swore]; the numerical adjective *seba* (seven) occurs three times as well (verses 28-30); the name *ber seba* (“well of seven” or “well of the oath” occurs three times (verses 31-33). Certainly the stress is on the significance of the oath (verse 31) between Abraham and Abimelech, a fact commemorated by Beersheba’s naming. *Saba* is clearly the key to the passage. Later Israel would learn about the solemnity of oaths and treaties.

VIII. The story fits well in the context that builds up to the sacrifice of Isaac in chapter 22. The birth of Isaac was clearly promised (18:1-5), and in Abraham’s deception (chapter 20) Abimelech learned that God’s hand was on this man (21:2). Then the promised seed was born and the rival was expelled (verses 1-18).

IX. Now a covenant was made (verses 22-34) that allowed Abraham to settle in the land in peace and Abimelech to share in the blessing. All this built slowly to the test in chapter 22, each chapter showing the completion of different phases of the promises.

X. The story in 21:22-34 reveals that the patriarch was blessed of God, and that some pagans recognized God’s blessings. The motif of the well appears again (21:19). God provided water - a symbol of blessing – out of the wilderness, out of barren land, out of the rock.
Abimelech realized this, and after the controversy over his servant’s seizure of the well (verse 25), the two men made a treaty so that the pagan king could share in the blessing (12:1-3).

XI. In making the treaty (covenant) Abraham gave Abimelech both sheep and cattle (21:27; 20:14), including seven ewe lambs (21:29-30). These secured Abraham’s legal right to dwell in the land in peace, and legally forced Abimelech to recognize that the well at Beersheba belonged to Abraham (verses 30-31). The patriarch thus secured by treaty his right to the well, that is, God’s provision of blessing.

XII. It is significant that Abraham planted a tree there and sojourned there many days (verses 33-34), indicating his faith and security.

A. To plant a tree in Beersheba presupposed a constant supply of water and indicated a determination to stay in the region. God would bless with well water and Abraham would stay settled in the land. Dwelling under one’s tree was a sign of peace and security.

B. The passage certainly anticipated Israel’s future peaceful coexistence in the land with other tribes who would respond to the message of peace and desire to share in the blessing.

XIII. A subtle rebuke, however, is found in the story (Abimelech’s rebuke in 20:9-10). Abimelech pressed for the treaty so that Abraham would not deal falsely with him (21:23). All Abimelech knew of Abraham was that:

A. God blessed him (verse 22) and

B. he was deceptive (verse 23).

C. This tragic contradiction called for a binding treaty.

The Philistines (verse 34)

XIV. The Philistines settled in Palestine en masse around 1200 B.C. However, some sea traders settled on the coast of Palestine as early as Abraham who lived 2,166-1991 B.C.
God Tests Abraham’s Faith (verses 1-2)

I. God’s test of Abraham’s faith involved Abraham giving his beloved son back to God.

A. The greatest test in the life of Abraham came after received the promised seed after a long wait. The test was very real: he was to give Isaac back to God.

B. As a test it was to prove Abraham’s faith. And for it to be a real test, it had to defy logic: it had to be something Abraham would resist.

C. God had told the Patriarch to send Ishmael away, and now He told Abraham to slay Isaac. Abraham had willingly sent Ishmael away, but he would not want to kill Isaac.

1. It is one thing to trusts God’s word when waiting for something; it is quite another to trust obey his word after it received. This was a test of how much Abraham would obey God’s word.

2. Would he cling to the boy now that he had him, or would still obey and return him to the Lord? In other words, how far would Abraham go in obedience? Did he really believe that God would still keep his word and raise the word of promise?

II. There are obvious connections with God’s earlier words to Abraham to get out and go to the land showed him (12:1-3).

A. But in this subtle reminder of the original call, God also reminded Abraham of the fulfillment which made the test so hard: “Take your son, your only son Isaac [laughter] whom you love as a burnt offering” would undoubtedly seem (even though child sacrifice was known in Canaan).

B. How then would God fulfill the promises He made earlier (12:1-3), to say nothing of the emotional loss of his only son, born to him so late in life?
**Abraham’s Response (verses 3-8)**

III. Abraham’s response was staggering – he gave instant, unquestioning obedience. He even got an early start.

A. However, the three day journey (verse 4) was probably silent and difficult. (The distance from Beer Sheba to Mount Moriah was about fifty miles)

B. When he saw the place in the region of Moriah (verse 2; later the Temple mount; 2 Chronicles 3:1), he took only Isaac and left the two servants behind. His statement, “We will worship and then we will come back (verse 5) is amazing. All Abraham knew was that:

1. God planned the future around Isaac and

2. God wanted him to sacrifice Isaac.

C. Abraham could not reconcile the two, but he would obey anyway. That is faith.

D. In response to Isaac’s question, “Where is the Lamb?” Abraham again revealed his faith: God would provide (verses 8, 14) Isaac was brought from the dead twice – once from Sarah’s dead womb and again from a high alter. (see Hebrews 11:7-19).

**God’s Intervention (verses 9-14)**

IV. God’s intervention – so dramatic and instructive – showed that He never intended to have Abraham to through with the sacrifice (child sacrifice was not allowed in Israel) but that it indeed a test. The angel of the Lord (a pre-incarnate appearance of the Son of God) stopped him just as he took in his hand the knife to slay Isaac.

A. Now God knew that Abraham would hold nothing back and that he did in fact fear God.

B. To fear God means to reverence him as sovereign, trust him implicitly, and obey him without question.
V. A. true worshipper of God holds nothing back from God but obediently gives him what he asks, trusting that He will provide.

A. The key idea of the entire passage is summarized in the name Abraham gave to the place: Yaweh Yireh, the Lord will provide (or “see”, verse 14).

1. The explanation is, “on the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.”

2. This is the basis of a truth often repeated in the Tenach: The Lord was to be worshipped in his holy mountain by the nation. “Three times a year all the men [of Israel] are to appear (yaraeh, verse 14) before the sovereign Lord to worship him, bringing their offerings and sacrifices (Exodus 23:7) The Lord would see (raah) the needs of those who came before him, and would meet their needs. Thus in providing for them He would be “seen.”

3. In naming the place Abraham would of course be commemorating his own experience of sacrifice to the Lord. But an animal (a ram, not a lamb, 22:8) caught …its horns and a thorn bush). This ram was provided by God’s grace as a substitute for the lad as an offering (verse 13).

4. Later all Israel would offer animals to the Lord involved accepting God’s sacrificial substitute. But of course in the Brit Hadashah God substituted his only Son for an animal, and the perfect sacrifice was made. John certainly had this in mind when he introduced Yeshua as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1 John 1:29).

VI. Yet the main point of Genesis 22:9-14 is not the doctrine of the Atonement. It is the portrayal of an obedient servant worshiping God at great cost, and in the end receiving God’s provision.

A. Abraham did not withhold his son. Similarly Paul wrote that God did not did not spare (ephisato) his own Son, but gave [delivered] him up for us all (Romans 8:32). A form of the same Greek word is used of Abraham in the Septuagint: “Thou hast not spared (epheiso) thy beloved Son (Genesis 22:12).

VII. This reveals the greatness of Abraham’s faith; he was willing to obey God by sacrificing his son. It also reveals the greatness of Isaac’s faith in submission; he had everything in the Lord to live for but willingly followed his father’s words, believing that God would provide a lamb.
The Covenant is Confirmed (verses 15-19)

VIII. God again confirmed his covenant with Abraham. His descendants would be numerous like the stars (15:5; 26:24), like the sand on the seashore (32:12), and like the dust of the earth (13:16; 28:14). God then added another element to the covenant: Abraham’s descendants would be victorious over the cities of their Canaanite enemies. This was done by Joshua in the conquest.

IX. The lessons in this chapter about true worship are timeless:

A. Faith obeys completely the Word of God.

B. Faith surrenders the best to God, holding nothing back.

C. Faith waits on the Lord to provide all one’s needs.

D. God does not provide until personal sacrifice has been made.

X. True worship is costly. This was always so for Israel when they brought

XI. Those offerings were supposed to be given in faith so God would provide all the needs of each willing worshipper.

The transition of the promises to Isaac by Faithful Abraham (22:20-25:1)

XII. From this point on, Abraham’s task was to prepare for future blessing through Isaac.

The report of Nahor’s family (verses 22-24)

IX. Reports came for the east that the family of Nahor, Abraham’s brother (11:27-29) was expanding. Among those born was Rebekah, the future wife of Isaac (24:15, 67). She was a daughter of Bethuel, the youngest of Nahor’s eight sons by Milcah. This record is included here even though one would expect in closer to chapter 24. But it serves as a tie-in with chapter 23, which records Sarah’s death and burial. Abraham ignored his ancestry, not going back to Paddan Aram for her burial.
Genesis: Chapter Twenty Three

The Death and Burial of Sarah (verses 1-20)

I. Sarah died in Hebron, and Abraham went there to mourn her death (verses 2).

A. Although the text is not clear, it appears that he came from Beersheba, where he had been dwelling at the end of chapter 22 (22:19).

B. The point of the narrative of chapter 23 is to show how Abraham first came into possession of a parcel of land in Canaan.

C. Through what appears to be a hard bargain, Abraham bought a cave in which to bury his wife but also a large field with many trees. The chapter shows that Abraham came by this property fair and square.

D. The field and the cave in it became an important burial site for the patriarchs and their wives. According to 49:30-32) this is not only where Sarah and Abraham were buried but also Isaac, Rebekah, Leah and Jacob (50:13).

II. The sense of chapter 23 within the larger context of the book of Genesis can be seen in the similarity between Abraham’s response to the offers of the sons of Heth and to those of the king of Sodom in chapter 14. In both cases Moses wants to show that Abraham would not accept a gift from the Canaanites.

A. When the king of Sodom offered to reward Abraham, he replied that it should never be said that the king of Sodom made Abraham wealthy.

B. In the same way Abraham adamantly refused to accept the parcel of land as a gift. Apparently against the wishes of the Hethites, he paid the full price for the land.

III. If viewed from the perspective of God’s covenant promises to Abraham, both these narratives fit well within the overall themes of the book. God, not man, was the source of Abraham’s hope of blessing. He would not seek to become wealthy or to own land apart from the promises of God.
A. Following the example of his grandfather Abraham, when Jacob returned to the land after his sojourn in the East, he purchased a portion of a field in which to pitch his tent.

B. Wherever possible Moses seizes the opportunity to show that the patriarchs came by their possession of the land fairly and that it was a gift from God and not from those who were dwelling in the land at the time.

IV. Another idea that lies in this narrative can be seen in the book of Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 32:6-15, on the eve of the Babylonian captivity, Jeremiah’s trust in God’s promise of the land was expressed in his purchase of land. Though the people would soon be removed from the land purchased a plot of ground because he was confident they would one day return and enjoy the good land God had given them.

A. Moses appears to have a similar idea in mind in the picture Abraham in Genesis 23. He purchased only a portion of the land that would some day belong to his seed. In this small purchase was embodied the hope in God’s promise that one day in the future it would all belong to him and his descendants.

B. In the same way Joseph’s last request was that his bones be returned to the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (50:24). His request was carried out when the Israelites buried his bones in the parcel of land purchased by Jacob from the sons of Hamor (Joshua 24:32).
**Genesis: Chapter Twenty Four**

Thus event emphasizes the providential working of God in the circumstances of his servants. The key idea in the passage is the word *hesed*, “loyal” or “love” or “loyalty to the covenant” - from both God’s perspective and man’s. The Lord providentially ensured the fulfillment of his promise by guiding Abraham’s servant in acquiring a bride for Isaac. The chapter divides into four sections.

**The commission (verses 24:1-9)**

I. Abraham, confident in the Lord’s promise, had his chief servant swear an oath to find a wife from Abraham’s native land, 459 miles away. Eliezer’s putting his hand under the patriarch’s thigh (47:29) was a solemn sign that if the oath were not carried out, the children who would be born of Abraham would avenge the servant’s unfaithfulness.

**The trust (verses 24:10-27)**

II. Eliezer (15:2) trusted the Lord to grant him specific leading. He prayed that Isaac’s future bride would give him and his camels water drink.

A. To water ten thirsty camels involved much work, for camels drink a great amount of water.

B. At the town of Nahor in Aram Naharaim (northwest Mesopotamia) he received a precise answer to his prayer: God answered his prayer through Rebekah.

C. In gratitude he gave the girl some expensive jewelry – a gold nose ring weighing a beak (1/5 an ounce) and two gold bracelets weighing four ounces.

D. He asked if there was room to stay at her father’s house overnight. Again she revealed her kindness by offering him not only a place to stay but food for his camels.

**The success (verses 28-59)**

III. Laban invited Eliezer and his men in. Eliezer then recounted to Rebeka’s family his mission and God’s providence and gained their permission and blessing to take her to Isaac. In that society a woman’s brother gave his sister in marriage, which explains why Laban, Rebekah’s brother, was the negotiator in this marriage contract.
The completion (verses 60-67)

IV. Rebekah returned with Eliezer to Isaac in the Negev, and became Isaac’s wife when Isaac was 40 years old (25:20; Abraham was then 140).

V. In these four sections four participants were acting in hesed: Abraham in preparing for the future, Eliezer in carrying it out, God in performing it. Rebekah in responding to it. In God’s providence and loyal his loyal love (“loyal love”) He sovereignly worked through the circumstances of those who lived by faith. The hidden causality of God is stressed in chapter 24 in three ways:

A. God was the sole cause of all the events in the story. Eliezer’s words “the Lord has called led me” verse 27,48), are the motto. This is true throughout all the Bible. Even Laban, Rebekah’s brother, (verse 29) recognized this was the Lord’s doing (verses 50-51).

B. God was deliberately behind the scenes, directing the acts. So this event in Abraham’s life was similar to Ruth experience in the book of Ruth. The narrative in chapter 24 records no word from God, no miracle, no prophetic oracle; it does not even restate the Abrahamic covenant. This event it unique in Genesis; yet it is realistic for believers today. The anticipatory role of faith, expressed in personal prayer, looks for outward evidences of God’s working and is predominant because God is not visibly active.

VI. The story reveals more than God’s providence. It is also part of the development of his plan to bless mankind. Many potential mishaps were avoided: The servant could have failed (verses 5-8), the sign could have been missed (verses 14, 21), Laban might have refused (verses 49-51), or Rebekah might have been unwilling (verses 54-58). God steered through all the potential hazards and then put all the parts together.

VII. Conclusions

A. While one marvels at God’s providence in this event, human responsibility is also evident. The servant faithfully carried out his assignment.

1. He was loyal to his holy commission to further God’s program to bless mankind.
2. He trusted God implicitly, looking in prayer to God’s leading.

3. Covenant loyalty was his predominant motivation. (verses 9, 12, 27, 49).

4. He praised God even before his assignment was completed (verses 27, 48-49). This praise is an important part of the story. Many readers pass over it as repetitious. But that is the point: It is such a marvelous story it has to be repeated.

B. So the choice of a bride for Isaac was God’s. The sign confirmed it. Laban recognized it. Rebekah complied with it. They who do the will of God, prayerfully and obediently, are led by God (Proverbs 3:5-6)
Genesis: Chapter Twenty Six

Isaac Settles in Gerar (verses 1-5)

I. Some have supposed that the story about Isaac in chapter 26 was confused with the occasions when Abraham was in Egypt (12:1-20) and Gerar with Abimelech (Chapter 20). But the repetition of motifs is deliberate; it shows that the blessing was passed on to Abraham’s descendents.

II. Isaac’s parallels to Abraham here are numerous:

A. A famine (12:10)

B. A plan to go to Egypt (12:11)

C. The stay in Gerar (20:1)

D. Out of fear calling his wife his sister (12:12-13; 20:2)

E. The wife’s beauty (20:11-14)

F. Abimelech’s concern about committing adultery (20:4-7)

G. Abimelech’s rebuke

III. The Abimelech in 26:1 was probably not the same Abimelech in 21:20, for the events were 90 about years apart. It is possible that “Abimelech” was a title (like Pharaoh or Caesar).

IV. Abraham was now gone. How then will God keep his promises to him?

A. Very simply, the promises would continue after his death. Chapter 26 stresses by rhetorical devices that the promises were passed on to Isaac.
B. The basic idea in was that the descendents of the obedient servant would be blesses because of Abraham, but they too exercise faith to enjoy the promised blessings.

C. Faith in God’s promises results in a fearless walk with God, but to cower ignores the promises and makes a mockery of faith.

V. The obedience of one man brought blessings to his descendents. The Lord gave the Abrahamic to Isaac (His blessing, the land, numerous descendents). All this was because Abraham believed God, and kept his requirements, demands, and laws. These are standard terms in the legal literature of the Tenach. By reading this passage, Israel could see Torah (Law) in the record of Abraham, and would be prompted keep the Law. True faith obeys God’s words.

Isaac in Gerar (verses 6-11)

VI. Isaac in Gerar, like his father before him, deceived Abimelech, who knew that the penalty for adultery was death (verses 10-11). The illegal nature of would remind Israel of the importance of preserving marriage for the future of their nation.

VII. So Isaac, like Abraham, received God’s great promise, but in fear he deceived Abimelech and made a mockery of the promised blessing.

Isaac among the Philistines and Gerarites (verses 12-22)

VIII. Isaac sojourned on the land, enjoying divine prosperity (his crops flourished, and He became rich). But the Philistines, envious of his wealth, filled Isaac’s wells with dirt.

A. Again, wells provide tangible evidence of God’s blessing. (Abraham also disputed with the Philistines over a well – 21:5, 30.)

B. No matter where Isaac dug, and not matter how often the Philistines stopped up the wells, Isaac reopened old dirt filled wells (26:17). God’s blessing on Isaac could not be hindered.

C. Driven away by the Philistines, Isaac camped in the valley of Gerar, and continued his search for water. He faced opposition there too. They claimed that two of the three wells Isaac dug were theirs.
1. The names he gave the three wells reflect not only his struggle but also his triumph: *Esek* ("dispute") and *Sitnah* ("opposition") reflect the conflict over two wells, and *Rehoboth* ("room") represents the room provided by the Lord.

2. Isaac refused to fight back. He continued to relinquish one after another until the Philistines in frustration let him alone.

**God meets with Isaac (verses 23-25)**

X. After Isaac moved to Beesheba, God appeared to him, confirming the Abrahamic Covenant. Isaac responded as did his father, by building an alter, and proclaiming God’s name (12:7-8; 21:33).

**Isaac and Abimelech Make a Treaty**

X. Once the conflict over the wells was settled, Abimelech suggested that he and Isaac make a treaty. Just as an earlier Abimelech acknowledged that God was with Abraham, so this Abimelech acknowledged was with Isaac.

A. Isaac named the well there *Shiba* ("oath" or "seven"), for they made a treaty by an oath similar to the earlier treaty Abraham made when he named the city *Beersiba* (21:23-24, 31). That treaty was necessarily renewed with Isaac, God’s blessing was on the seed of Abraham: Isaac was the rightful heir.

B. No matter how much opposition came to thwart it, the blessing would thrive. Other nations would recognize that God’s hand was on the seed of Abraham and would seek peace with Israel if they were share in the blessing.

**The Failure of Esau (verses 34-35)**

XI. Esau’s marriage to two Hittite woman (Judith and Vasemath) were a grief to his parents. This illustrates how unfit Esau was for God’s blessing, and how foolish was Isaac’s later attempt to bless Esau (27:1-40).

XII. Esau later married a third wife, Mahalath (28:9).
Genesis: Chapter Twenty Seven

The Deception of Jacob for the Blessing (verses 1-40)

I. God expects his servants to carry out their spiritual responsibility by faith. Unfortunately faith is not present and then matters become complicated. This chapter portrays an entire family trying to fulfill their responsibilities by their physical senses, without faith. This is the familiar story of how Jacob got the blessing of his father Isaac through deception. It is the story of a fragmenting of a family over spiritual matters.

II. All participants were at fault (27-14).

A. Isaac knew of God’s oracle to Rebekah (25:23) that the elder would serve the younger, yet he set out to thwart it by blessing Esau agreeing to break the oath he had made with Jacob (25:33).

B. Rebekah and Jacob, with a just cause, each tried to achieve God’s blessing by deception, without faith of love. Theirs would be the victory but their victory would receive hatred and separation for Rebekah never saw Jacob again.

C. So the conflict between Jacob and Esau and Jacob was greatly deepened by Jacob’s pursuit. He wanted what belonged to the firstborn, the blessing—twice he had “overreached” or deceived Esau, by taking his birthright (25:27-24) and now by taking his blessing.

D. All that was left was blessing for a profane person. So the conflict between Esau and Jacob was greatly deepened by Jacob’s pursuit— he wanted what belonged to the firstborn. Yet the story is not just about Jacob. He alone did not destroy the family; parental preference did.

Isaac and Esau (verses 1 - 4)

III. Isaac offered to bless Esau. Important notes are given here about Isaac’s poor eyesight and old age. Moreover, Stress is placed for the taste he had for wild game tasty food (25-28, 24). His palate governed his heart. But Isaac intended to give Esau his blessing. Here was a dilemma for Rebekah that prompted that prompted her to action.

Rebekah and Jacob (verses 5-17)

IV. Rebekah sent Jacob into action to stop Isaac. Rebekah seemed certain she could duplicate the taste of wild game with goat’s milk (verse 9). But Jacob was not so sure he could After all, Jacob said, if Isaac touched him, Isaac would know the difference between Esau’s hairy skim and Jacob’s smooth skin.
A. Jacob had no guilt. Jacob’s only problem was fear that the plan would not succeed.

B. But the blessing was in danger and all must be risked, including even a curse on Rebekah (verses12-13). So Jacob did as his mother told him. Rebekah even had Jacob put on some of Esau’s best clothes.

**Jacob and Isaac (verses 18-29).**

IV. Jacob deceived his father and obtained the blessing. Prodded by his mother he lied twice to his father, first about his identity (I am Esau, verse 9) I am Esau, verse18) and second that God had given him success in hunting (verse 20).

A. Three times the old man voiced his suspicions (verses 20, 22 24). But was deceived by his senses of touch (verses 16, 23) and smell (verse 27) he blessed he blessed Jacob, thinking he was Esau (verses27-29).

B. The blessing included prosperity in crops (verse 28), dominion over other nations and his brothers (verse 37), and cursing to those who cursed him and blessing on those who blessed him (verse 29).

**Esau and Isaac (verses 30-40).**

V. Soon Esau came home and pleaded for a blessing from his father. When Esau brought in his food, emotion ran high. Isaac trembled violently. Isaac trembled violently over what had happened and Esau was very bitter and angry (verse 34).

A. Isaac knew he had been tampering with God’s plan and had been overruled; there was no going back now. Esau began the true nature of Jacob – twice he had “overreached” or deceived Esau, by taking his birthright (25:27-34) and now by taking the blessing. All that was a blessing for a profane person (27:39-40).

B. Esau would not enjoy the riches, or heaven’s dew (verse 28). The Edomites, Esau’s descendents, would live in a land less fertile than Canaan. Also Esau would live by force, be subservient to Jacob, and be restless (see 16:25).

C. So in a sense Rebekah and Jacob won, yet they had not gained anthing God would not have given them anyway; and they lost much.

VI. Yet God would work through their conniving. Their activities would only succeed in doing what God’s oracle had predicted. God’s program will triumph, often in spite of human activities.
VII. The story is one of parental favoritism, which tore the family completely apart. The story is also an account of spiritual insensitivity. All the natural senses play a conspicuous part, especially the taste in which Isaac prided himself, but which gave Isaac the wrong answer. Reliance on one’s senses for one’s spiritual discernment not only proves fallible, but often irrevocably fouls up life.

The Flight of Jacob (verses 41-46)

VIII. This passage begins the transition to the Laban stories. Because of his deception Jacob had to flee from home. But the occasion began the motif of Jacob finding a wife from his relatives in the east.

A. While Abraham had remained in the land while Abraham’s servant had gone to fetch Isaac a wife (chap. 24), Jacob’s journey was necessitated by the imminent danger of being killed by his angry brighter (27:41-42).

B. Moreover, God would deal with Jacob severely under the hand of Laban, his uncle. Indeed, the sojourn out of the land in several ways parallels the later sojourn of Jacob’s family in Egypt.

C. Rebekah told Jacob about Esau’s anger, and immediately told him to go to her brother in Haran. Again deceiving her husband for the sake of her son, she expressed disgust with her two Hittite daughters-in-law, Judith and Basemath (verse 46; verses 34-35), and urged Isaac to let Jacob to get a wife from her own people. In that way, Jacob could flee with Isaac’s blessing.
Genesis: Chapter Twenty Eight

Jacob Blesses Jacob and Commands Him not to Marry a Canaanite Woman (verses 1-9)

I. Like Abraham before him, Isaac did not want his son Jacob to go to Canaan or marry a Canaanite woman.

A. If the culture of the Canaanites, if a person married someone who was not in his clan, he lost his cultural identity.

B. The Canaanites were a “mixed breed” because of their habit of marrying someone not of their clan.

C. Also, if Jacob married a Canaanite woman, the line of the promised seed would become impure, and the blessings God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would become jeopardized.

D. Abraham then told Jacob to go to Paddan Aram and marry a woman from among his relatives.

II. Esau, in an attempt to please his parents, married a woman named Mahalath who was a descendent of Abraham. However, the woman was a descendent through Ishmael. This mixed marriage, outside of the line of promise, indicates that Ishmael did not understand the Abrahamic Covenant and the reason for keeping the line of the seed pure. Both physical and spiritual purity must be practiced if one desires to please God.

III. Ironically, the unchosen son of Isaac married into the unchosen line of Ishmael.

The Promises of the Covenant Are Confirmed at Bethel (verses 10-22)

IV. Jacob followed his parents’ advice and began his journey to his Paddan Aram His destination was his uncle Laban’s house in Haran.

Jacob, stopping for the night on his way to his Uncle Laban’s house at Haran in Padan Aram, dreamed of angels on a stairway to heaven.
A. The point of the story is that wherever Jacob went, God was with him. This was symbolized by the “ladder,” explained in words by God, and recognized in faith by Jacob.

B. God reiterated to Jacob the covenant made with Abraham and Isaac, promising him the land, descendants as numerous as the dust, and universal blessing through him.

C. God also promised to protect and be with Jacob while he was out of the land and to see that he returned.

V. Jacob’s worshipful response included:

A. Having fear before the Lord

B. Erecting a memorial stone

C. Consecrating the stone by anointing it with oil

D. Naming the place Bethel (“house of God’) to commemorate the event

E. Making a vow in which he for the first time his faith in the Lord (the Lord will be my God, verse 19) and

F. Promising to tithe

All of these things enhance the central idea of God’s protective presence.

VI. Several motifs pertaining to later Israelite customs are established here in Jacob.

A. The most notable is the memorial at Bethel. Later the conquering Israelites would reckon this a holy place where God could be “seen.”
B. Another motif here is tithing (as with Abraham in 14:20). To give a tithe was to acknowledge that everything we have is from God.

C. Also Jacob’s vow is important in this event. He vowed that if God would protect him, provide for him, and return him to his homeland, then this place would become a major worship center for him.

D. Moreover, standing stones also became important from this point on. These are different from alters. Memorials were set up to recall Divine visitations so that others might learn about God when they ask, “What do these stones mean

VII. God’s promise to be with his people is a theme repeated throughout the Scriptures. For example, God said to Isaac, “Do not be afraid for I am with you” (Genesis 26:24).

A. The assurance of God’s presence should about in every believer the same response of worship and confidence it prompted in Jacob.

B. This is the message from the beginning: God grace visits His people and promises them protection so that in turn might be a blessing to others.

C. They in turn were to respond in faith, fearing Him, worshipping him, offering to him, vowing to him, and making memorials for worshippers at such places.
Genesis: Chapter Twenty Nine

Chapters 29-30 display how God kept his promise and blessed Jacob abundantly. They also show how God disciplined the patriarch in the process.

**Jacob Meets Rachael (verses 1-6)**

I. The structure and content of this passage reflect the significance of the Bethel experience. Jacob had been fleeing from Esau; now he was looking for a bride.

   A. This change in purpose was due to God’s promise to him at Bethel. His quest now was the fulfillment of part of that promise, namely, the seed, while Jacob was outside the land.

   B. Moreover, Jacob’s spirit was now magnanimous and unselfish. He had a new outlook.

II. Significantly Jacob’s meeting of Rachael parallels his fathers meeting of Rebekah (chap. 24). Certainly Laban, Rebekah’s brother would remember how God had led Eliezer. Yet this narrative, unlike chapter 24, does not emphasize divine leadership; but it is implied.

   A. Here was a man who received a marvelous vision. He knew God’s plan to bless him and lead him

   B. So Jacob hastened on his mission (literally “picked up his feet”). He “happened onto a spot where a well was located; it “happened” to be near Haran, where Laban lived (29:5), and Laban’s daughter Rachael just “happened” to be to be coming to the well.

   C. This timing was the work of the loving sovereign God who was leading all the way.

   D. The fact that the meeting took place at a well was often associated with God’s blessing (16:13-14; 21:19; 26:19-25, 33).
Jacob waters Laban’s Flocks

III. When Jacob watered Laban’s flocks, a note of anticipation was there: subsequent chapters (30-31) show how Laban and his flocks prospered in Jacob’s presence.

A. In contrast with Laban’s lazy shepherds (29:7-8) Jacob was generous, zealous, and industrious (verse 10). He had a mission, a quest. That burning goal implanted by previous experience drove him to succeed.

B. Kissing of relatives (verses 11, 13) was a proper greeting. In calling Jacob his own flesh and blood (verse 14) Laban possibly was adopting Jacob, his nephew, as a son.

Laban’s Deception (Verses 15-30)

IV. Jacob’s joyous prospect of marrying Rachael turned, by Laban’s deception, into a nightmare. In Laban Jacob met his match and also his means of discipline. Jacob had deceived his own brother and father, and now was deceived by his mother’s brother.

A. Twenty years (31:38) of drudgery, affliction, and deception lay ahead. Through Laban he received his own medicine of duplicity.

B. But Jacob’s tenacity shows that he counted these as minor setbacks. God took him, developed his character, turned the fruits of his deception into blessing, and built the promised seed, the nation of Israel.

V. Jacob’s plan was to work seven years to have Rachael as his wife. Those seven years passed quickly for Jacob because of his love for her (29:20). Interesting, the wives of each of the first three patriarchs were beautiful: Sarah (12:11, Rebekah (24:15-16), and Rachel (29:17).

VI. When the time came for the wedding feast (verses 21-22), hearts were merry and spirits high. But in the night Leah, Rachael’s older sister, was substituted. This was a masterpiece of shameless treachery – unloved Leah given to a man in love with Rachel.

VII. Jacob’s anger was to no avail. Now, as the object of trickery, he would understand how Esau felt. Laban offered a technicality of local custom: it is not right to marry the younger before the older.
A. Those words must have pierced Jacob. In his earlier days he, the younger, had deceptively pretended before his father to be the older brother (chapter 27). If social custom were to be set aside, it should be by God, not by deception.

B. Laban’s stinging words were left without any comment; the event was simply God’s decree against Jacob.

VIII. The Bible demonstrates over and over again the principle that what a man sows he reaps (Galatians 6:7). Some have called this irony or poetic justice, but it more than that. It is divine retribution in which there is often a measure for measure turn of affairs. God orders the affairs of people to set things right.

A. With Jacob this deception was perfectly fitted; it was divine punishment to bring his own craftiness before his eyes. He had deceptively presented himself to his father under the guise of firstborn. Now Leah the firstborn was deceptively under the guise of Rachael the younger.

B. After his initial reaction, Jacob recognized the deception for what it was and accepted it. He finished out the bridal week at the end of which he was given Rachael (two brides in seven days).

C. Each daughter was given a servant girl as a wedding gift, a custom common in that society. Leah was given Zilpah, and Rachael received Bilhah. Jacob worked another seven years, which he owed Laban in return for Rachael.

**The Expansion of the Family Seed (29:31-30:24)**

The desire for affectionate approval often leads down dangerous paths. The contest of childbearing between Rachael and Leah shows just such a struggle within a family. This story is about the craving of human beings for love and recognition, and the price of thwarting it.

IX. In his family relationships Jacob still sowed some bitter seeds. He was cool to Leah, his unwanted wife; God, as well as Leah, was aware of it.

A. Leah’s first four sons were born in rapid succession; and this must be contrasted with the long waits of the earlier fathers. The story of these births is sad, but in them, as in the chapter as a whole, God is recognized as the one who gives life in spite of human efforts.
B. Leah named her firstborn Reuben, indicating that the Lord had seen her misery (*ra ah banyi*). Another wordplay joins it: Now at last my husband will become attached (*ye ehabani*) to me. The naming showed her hope but also her consolation and faith. Jacob never saw her affliction but God did (“Beer Lahai Roi” – literally “the well of the living One who sees me.”)

C. Simeon was so named because the Lord heard (*sama*) that Leah was not loved. God heard was her testimony in faith to his provision (compare to “Ishmael” which means “God hears,” 16:15).

D. Levi was named for her hope that her husband would become attached (*yillaweh*) to her, but it was not to be.

E. Judah was her consolation; she would be satisfied to praise (*odeh*) the Lord, for Judah means “let him be praised.” Leah exhibited genuine faith during her great affliction.
Genesis: Chapter Thirty

The Expansion of the Family of Jacob continues (verses 1-24)

I. In chapter 29:31-35, Moses recorded the births of Jacob’s first four sons through his wife Leah: Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah.

The Sons of Rachel through Bilhah (verses 1-8)

II. Rachel was barren. She was jealous of Leah’s fertility, felt wronged over her baroness, and blamed Jacob for the fact that she had not given him any children.

A. In order to compensate for her baroness, Rachel gave her maid Bilhah to Jacob as his wife. She reasoned that any children born to Jacob through Bilhah would be the equivalent of children she had borne. This was an ancient, misguided form of surrogacy.

III. Whereas Leah exhibited genuine faith during her great affliction, Rachel’s sons through Bilhah did not reflect the faith Leah had. Her attempt to have children through her maidservant reflects Sarah’s similar attempt with Hagar (16:1-4).

IV. Bilhah gave Jacob two sons. The names of the two sons borne to Bilhah reflect Rachel’s bitter struggle and feeling of victory.

A. The name Dan is explained by the word dananni, “God has vindicated me,” that is He now had corrected Rachel’s wrong – her barrenness.

B. The name Naphtali reflected her “great struggle,” naptule when I fought with my sister (30:8).

The Children of Leah through Zilpah (verses 9 – 13)

IV. Leah responded to what Rachel had done by offering her maidservant Zilpah, to whom Gad (fortune) and Ashre (blessing) were borne. Leah saw that with God’s help she was prospering.
**More Children Through Rachel (verses 14-21)**

V. Reuben, Jacob’s firstborn, found some mandrake plants, which were supposedly aphrodisiacs, and Rachel thought they would work for her. Thus Leah “hired” Jacob with the plants (that is, purchased a night with Jacob from Rachel).

A. Thus Leah had a son named Issachar. Issachar is explained by *skartika* (my hire). The name of Leah’s sixth and final son was Zebulun. Zebulun has the double significance of dowry or “gift” as well as honor. Leah said God gave her Zebulun as a gift and her husband would treat her with honor.

B. Then Dinah, a girl, was borne to Leah.

**Another Child Through Rachel (verses 22-24)**

VI. Finally Rachel gave birth to Joseph (*yosef*), but not by the mandrakes. This shows that births are given by God, not manipulated by people. Joseph’s name, like Zebulun’s, had a double meaning.

A. Rachel said, “God has taken away (*asap*) my disgrace, and she prayed that God would add (*yosep*) another son.

B. Finally Rachel was jubilant, looking in faith for another child from God.

**Observations**

VII. This passage (29:31 – 30:24) is a combination of small narratives, accenting the puns on Jacob’s son’s names. Each name was interpreted by Leah or Rachel to reflect concrete family conditions at the price of the pious substance which they had as testimonies to God as the Giver of Life.

VIII. Certainly the passage shows how God prospered Jacob and started to make from them a great nation. All Israelites could thus look back and see their ancestry and in the conflict of the women. As brothers the sons of Jacob, who became Israel, were not to become envious like their mothers.

IX. To Israel these narratives were more than interesting little stories. The rivalry that appears here explains much of the tribal rivalry that followed. But Genesis is clear: God
chose the despised mother, Leah, and exalted her to be the first mother. The kingly tribe of Judah and the priestly tribe of Levi trace back to he, in spite of Jacob’s love for Rachel and her son Joseph.

The Expansion of Jacob at the Expense of Laban (verses 25-43)

Jacob Decides to leave Laban. Laban tries to convince him to stay (Verses 25-36).

X. When Jacob appealed to Laban for permission to return home (verses 27, 28 and 31), Laban bargained for him to stay.

A. This was an example of oriental diplomacy – two Bedouin leaders cautiously on the guard as they negotiated.

B. Laban stated that he had learned by divination that God had prospered him because of Jacob.

C. He may have looked from omens, or may have simply perceived what God’s will was in this matter.

D. Dark colored sheep were considered an omen for good, and perhaps an inordinate amount of them spoke of this (verse 32).

XI. Jacob agreed that God had blessed Laban (verse 23). Jacob proposed a plan by which (ostensibly) he would gain little: he would receive as wages for his work the black and multicolored goats (the rarer kind), and and the speckled and spotted sheep which would be born.

A. Laban thought this over and quickly closed the deal (verse 34). He could see only advantages for himself.

B. Jacob’s plan was very risky. Nevertheless he was looking out from his own interests, hoping to prosper from this.

C. But Laban’s ploy added to the risk Jacob was taking. For greater security, Laban removed all the animals of abnormal color, giving them to his sons and not to Jacob. As an additional precaution, he placed a three day journey between them.
Thus he was seeking to ensure that Jacob would have a difficult time acquiring a large herd.

**God Bless Jacob (verses 37-43)**

XII. God blessed Jacob in and unusual was. Here there is a wordplay on the name Laban, for as Jacob peeled back the bark on the sticks and exposed the white (laban), he saw his flocks grow. He played the Laban game and won.

XIII. Clearly, as Jacob later admitted (31:7-12), God intervened to fulfill the expectations Jacob had in the branches.

A. The peeled branches, placed in the watering troughs, appeared to make his animals reproductive as they mated in front of the troughs. In addition, Jacob used selective breeding by mating the stronger by mating the stronger animals for himself and the weak female goats and sheep for Laban.

B. But this was not the only time God’s part in Jacob’s success was much greater than it seemed to and observer.

XIII. So Jacob was greatly prospered (30.43) in fulfillment of God’s promise at Bethel, and at the expense of Laban, who no received in part the recompense due him.

A. A fascinating struggle developed between Jacob and Laban. Laban’s injustice and artifice preceded Jacob’s project, just as Isaac’s attempt to bless Esau had prompted Jacob’s deception. In both cases the attempt to defraud Jacob was actually overcome by Jacob.

B. Afterward, however, Jacob viewed his real gain as divine blessing, though he had to accept to effects (fear and danger) of his craftiness.
Genesis: Chapter Thirty One

**Jacob Leaves Laban (verses 1-16)**

I. Jacob left Laban to go to Canaan for two reasons: First, animosity by Laban’s sons was growing against Jacob. And Laban’s mood was dangerous. Second, God told Jacob to return to his own land (verse 3). Thus, this was a Divine call to leave for the promised land.

II. Jacob gave a wonderful speech to his two wives, who met him at his request when he called them out in the fields (verses 4-16).

   A. This was more than self defense. He wanted to take with him a willing family so he testified about God’s leading and provision.

   B. Jacob must now keep the vow he made at Bethel (28:2-22).

   C. Both women responded in faith. Laban had exploited his daughters wealth and had lost their good will, so they were both willing to leave their father.

III. So the flight began, but it was more risky that Jacob thought it would be. Because Rachel had stolen Laban’s household Gods. This shows the pagan influence in Jacob’s family. Perhaps she told herself that she deserved them since Laban turned the tables on her in the name of custom and had deprive her of her right to marry first. Whatever the reason, her actions brought disaster.

**Laban pursues Jacob (verses 17-53)**

IV. These idols symbolized the right to inheritance and also guaranteed protection. Perhaps Jacob would one day return to Haran and claim all of Laban’s estate. (Upon failing to find the idols, Laban entered into a covenant of peace with Jacob to protect himself from Jacob.

V. In the seven day pursuit, east of the Jordan river, just as Laban was catching up with Jacob, he was warned by God in a dream not to speak good or bad to Jacob. God’s protection of Jacob and of the covenant were in full force.
A. Jacob accused Jacob of robbed him. Jacob denied it and put a death penalty on any one of his people who had them.

B. But Laban was deceived by Rachel. She put the camel’s in her camel’s saddle in her tent. Labab never thought that a woman would defile an idol by sitting on it when she was unclean (which Rachel claimed), so he did not search under the saddle.

VI. Now Jacob made a counter attack. He reviewed the hardships he had undergone for Laban for 20 years, taking financial losses while caring for Laban’s flocks during the heat of the day and the cold of night. The fear of Jacob, the same God Isaac feared, was with Jacob and God had seen his hardship and hard work.

Jacob and Laban enter onto a treaty (Verses 43-55)

VII. Laban suggested they make a treaty establishing a boundary between them (This was suggested by Laban because of his fear of Jacob).

VIII. Jacob set up a tall stone and then piled a heap of stones around it. Laban called them by the Aramaic name Jegar Sahadutha. Laban explained that the name means that the he name means “a heap of witness,” but he added the Hebrew name Mizpah (“watchtower”), entrusting God to look over them. The treaty stipulated that Jacob would not harm Laban’s daughters and that Jacob would Laban would stay apart.

IX. Expressing the treaty, Laban used many words to cover up his untrustworthiness. The undependable man was no trying to convey that Jacob was a slippery character who had to be bound by a series of stipulation. Laban tried to terrify Jacob as though he was ungodly and needed to be threatened. He even went to call the pillar this pillar I have set up, knowing full well that Jacob had constructed the pillar.

X. Both the boundary settlement and the wives’ rights show that Laban and Jacob wanted to maintain the status quo. But the treaty also marked a break with the east for the family of Israel. This border treaty marked out the frontier in the hill country of Gilead.

XI. In their last confrontation God appeared to Jacob (verse 3) and to Laban (verse 24) in dreams for the purpose of separating them. The entire event was complicated by earthly, selfish interests, such as Rachel’s theft of the idols and Laban’s self seeking animosity. Interestingly, in the end God himself was invoked to watch over them.
XII. This account later had great significance for Israel.

A. God would protect and deliver Israel as He brought them back to the land of Egypt.

B. Here Israel would see God’s victory over idols and idolaters, God’s use of dreams for deliverance and protection, and the boundary which God would keep is people apart from their enemies.

XIII. All this became important for future Israelite – Aramian relations (Labam was an Aramian).
Genesis: Chapter Thirty Two

Jacobs “Battle” with God (verses 1-21)

I. God prepared Jacob for a meeting with Esau by giving him a vision of Angeles. Jacob had just left Laban and was about to return and face Esau once again.

II. At this point God’s invisible world opened up and openly touched Jacob’s visible world.

A. The encounter is described with striking brevity. Jacob named the place Mahanaim, possibly meaning “two camps.” He must have seen the camp of angels as he prepared to enter the land.

III. A comparison of Jacob’s earlier encounter at Bethel (28:10-22) when he left the land proves most instructive. The expression “the angels of God” occurs only in 32:1 and 28:10 in the Tenach. The Hebrew Paga with be occurs in 28:11 (“reached”) and in 32:1 (“met”). Zeh (“this”) is used four times in 28:16-17 and is an important reference in Jacob’s response in 32:2. (“This is the gate of heaven” (28:17) with “this is the camp of God” (32:32).

A. In both cases Jacob interpreted what he had seen before naming it (28:17; 32:2), and in Hebrew the identical expression is used in the naming of the two places. (28:17; 32:2).

B. Finally, halak and Derek (“to take a journey” are used in 28:29; 32:1).

C. Obviously the two passages are related. What took place in the naming of Bethel on Jacob’s way out of the land now took place in the naming on his way back into the land. Jacob’s glimpse of the angels assured him once again of Divine protection accompanying him. And the angels welcomed him on his return to the land of promise. This assurance came at a time when Jacob surely needed it.

IV. When God’s work is involved, the conflict is spiritual, not physical. This was true for Jacob, was true for Israel, and is still today. No human effort can be sufficient for these things. The source of effort can be sufficient for these things. The source of defense and the means of victory come from God’s ministering angels.
Jacob Sends a Message to Esau (verses 3-31)

V. Prompted by the idea in the vision, Jacob sent messengers to Esau in Edom with gifts for Esau. (The Hebrew word for angels also means “messengers.” Many key ideas and wordplays are used in this section.

A. Jacob had just seen the angels (God’s messengers) and now he sent his own messengers to Esau.

B. He recognized the angels as the “camp (malhenah) of God” (verse 2), and had named the place mahonoyim (verse 2).

C. Out fear of Esau, who was coming to him with 400 men, he divided his family into two groups or camps (mahanot).

Jacob’s Prayer (verses 9-12)

VI. Out of fear Jacob prayed to be delivered. Doubtless he recalled Esau’s pray to kill him (27:41). Jacob would still, but he would see God’s that God would deliver him from his brother (verse 20). In fact Jacob’s deep fear shows up in every section of this passage, even his prayer.

VI. Jacob addressed God as the God my father Abraham and the God of my father Isaac, and reminded God of God’s command for him for him to return to him to his country and of his promise to bless him. God wants his people to remind him of his word when they pray.

This is a motivation of faith.

VII. Jacob then confessed his unworthiness of God’s kindness and faithfulness and material blessings. Then he reminded God. He had the correct attitude in prayer: total dependency on God.

VIII. Jacob petitioned God because the younger twin was scared. Then he repeated the promise God had made to him about his descendents becoming as numberless as the sand of the sea (22:17). All this should have built Jacob’s confidence, but his guilt and fear completely controlled at this point.

IX. Out of fear Jacob prayed to be delivered.
**Jacob makes ready to appease Esau (verses 13-21)**

X. To appease Esau, Jacob prepared a gift for Esau (verses 13-21)

A. Jacob took a potion of his blessing and prepared a gift for Esau (*minhah*)

B. A *minhah* was often given to a superior to gain his superior.

C. Jacob sent Esau a larger number of animals – 500 in all, not counting the young camels he sent. He reasoned that this gift would surely appease Esau.

D. Later, Jacob learned that that God would have delivered him without such gifts. So too, the nation of Israel would need to learn that deliverance would comes by faith in God and not by giving tribute to the enemy.

**Jacob Wrestles With the Angel of the Lord (22-25)**

XI. Before Jacob could cross the Jabok River after his family, servants, and provisions, a man attacked and fought with him. No details of the fight are given, for it was just the preamble to the most significant part, the dialogue.

A. The word *is* (“a man”) reveals nothing about his identity. This is fitting, for the man for the man refused to reveal nothing about himself directly

B. The fact that the match lasted until daybreak is significant, for darkness symbolized Jacob’s situation. Fear and uncertainty seized him.

C. If Jacob knew that he was about to fight God, he never would engaged in the fight.

D. On the other hand the fact that the wrestling continued until daybreak suggests a long, decisive bout. In fact the Assailant did not defeat Jacob until He resorted to something extraordinary.
E. At last the Assailant touched Jacob so that his hip went out of joint: the Assailant gave himself the advantage. Jacob, the deceitful fighter, was crippled by a by a supernatural blow.

F. Once he realized who his Assailant was (verse 28), Jacob held on resolutely, pleading for a blessing. When we remember that in the *Tenach* a persons name revealed his character, the point becomes clear: Jacob’s way of life had to radically changed. In saying his name, Jacob had to reveal his whole nature. Here, the “heel catcher” was caught, and had to confess his true nature before he could be blessed.

G. The blessing took the form of a new name – Israel. This name probably means “God fights. The explanation was then given that Jacob had fought with God and with men It is easy to comprehend his having fought with men, but that he fought with God was more difficult to understand.

1. Throughout Jacob’s life he had been dragging God’s blessing out under all circumstances, under his own “steam.” He was too self willed and too proud to let the blessing be given to him.

2. So now “God fights” was his name. This meant, first of all, that God chose, because of Jacob’s stubbornness and pride, to fight against him. Second, it meant that God would fight for Israel.

H. Jacob’s new name would remind him and others of this fight in which he had overcome. These words were full of hope for the Israelites. If one could contend successfully with God, he could then win the battle with men. Thus the name “God Fights” and the explanation that Jacob had “overcome” obtained the significance of a promise for the nations forthcoming struggle.

**Jacob Names the Place Peniel (Face of God, verses 30-32)**

XII. Jacob named the place Peniel (face of God) because he has seen God face to face and had been spared. As before (28:19; 31:47; 32:2) he named the place to commemorate an event. God had come as close to Jacob as possible – He had laid his hands on him.

XIII. The idea of this is not *and* yet he was spared, but rather “*and*” his life was spared. He had prayed for deliverance (Gen. 32:11) using the word *nasal* (“Save me”), the same word he would use later (*nasal*, “spared”), (verse 30).
XIV. Jacob’s prayer for deliverance was answered by God in this face to face encounter and blessing.

XV. When God touches the strongest sinew of a wrestler, it shriveled, and with it Jacob’s persistent self confidence also shriveled. His carnal weapons were lame and useless; they failed him in his contest with God. What he had surmised for the past 20 years now dawned on him: he was in the hands against the One against whom it is useless to struggle. After this crippling touch, Jacob’s struggle took a new direction.

XVI. The point of the story for the new nation of Israel that would come from Egypt into the land of promise is clear: Israel’s ultimate victory would come not by the usual ways by which nations gain power, but through the power of divine blessing. Self sufficiency is incompatible with the work of God in any age. Faith alone overcomes the world.
Genesis: Chapter Thirty Three

Jacob’s Reconciliation With Esau (verses 1-17)

I. Jacob’s meeting with Esau. (verses 1-7).

A. Jacob’s long awaited meeting with Esau was a marvelous event. God so turned Esau’s heart that he was eager to be reconciled with his brother.

B. Earlier Esau cared nothing for his birthright (25:32-34), and he cared little for old grudges now. Jacob, relieved because of Esau’s hospitality, had to admit once again that more was due to God’s intervention than he realized.

C. Jacob makes ready for his meeting with Esau. Jacob still showed weakness and fear when he met Esau. He lined up his children and wives in order of their importance to him, with Jacob and Rachel in the rear, the safest place.

D. Jacob bowed down to the ground seven times in homage, thus halting on his way toward Esau. Esau, however, eagerly ran to meet Jacob, and embraced and kissed him, and they both wept. What a change is made when “God fights” in His way.

E. In talking with Esau, Jacob constantly referred to Esau as “my lord” and to himself as “your servant.” Esau simply referred to Jacob as “my brother.” This contrasts with their father’s blessing when Isaac made Jacob Esau’s lord (27:29). Jacob definitely approached Esau. In talking about himself, Jacob referred to himself as “your servant” and to Esau as “my lord.” Jacob definitely approached Esau cautiously and humbly, in an effort to ward off any possible retaliatory spirit.

II. Jacob’s gifts to Esau (verses 8-11).

A. Jacob pressed Esau to accept the gift 500 animals. When Esau hesitated to receive the livestock, Jacob insisted.

B. Jacob’s explanation, that seeing Esau’s face was like seeing the face of God, showed he knew this deliverance of harm by Esau was from God. At Peniel Jacob had seen the face of God and was delivered (32:30). Having then survived that, he
then survived Esau. Thus Esau’s favorable reaction was brought about by God’s gracious dealing.

III. Jacob and Esau depart from one another (verses 12-17).

A. Jacob cleverly avoided traveling with Esau. He led Esau to think that he needed to travel slowly because of his young children and young animals, and that he would meet with Esau at Seir. But Jacob headed in the opposite direction - north to Succoth, east of the Jordan River and north of the Jabbok, instead of south to Seir. He may have been wise to avoid Edom, but it was not necessary to deceive his brother again.

B. Thus miracles were worked in Jacob and Esau. In Jacob, God brought about a spirit of humility and generosity. Esau was changed from seeking revenge to desiring reconciliation. These changes were proof that God had delivered Jacob in answer to his prayer (32:11).

IV. The settlement at Shechem (verses 18-20). These verses form a sort of epilogue to Jacob’s sojourn outside land. He returned in peace and camped near Shechem, directly west of the Jabbok river and about 20 miles from the Jordan in Canaan. This is where Abram first camped when he arrived in Canaan (12:6). Shechem was between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerezim.

A. Jacob, like Abram purchased a portion of the land and there, like Abram, set up an altar (12:7), naming it El Elohe (El is the God of Israel. In this way he acknowledged that the Lord had led him all the way back to the land.

V. The following chapters shift the focus onto Jacob’s children. His arrival back into the land and his establishing of the altar are the culmination of Jacob’s “Laban Experience.”

VI. In this chapter, Jacob named a number of cities (Bethel, 28:19; Galeed, 31:47; Mahanaim (32:2); Peniel (32.30); and Succoth (“shelters”) was named because of the sheds was named because of the shelters he built for his livestock (33:17). The name of the altar he built there (Succoth, “Shelters”) also commemorated the significant of God’s relationship to Israel, Jacob’s new name. God had protected him as He had promised.
Genesis: Chapter: Chapter Thirty Four

Overview

I. Once Jacob settled on the land, the threat from the Canaanites became a problem. The story is a tangled web of good and evil, as are all the patriarchal narratives. To Israel, this story would certainly serve a warning against the defiling effect of interrelations with the Canaanites, evil by deception.

II. Israel was not supposed to intermarry with them or make treaties with the Canaanites. The passage also warns against going to visit the daughters of the land (verse one).

III. Moreover, covenantal agreements must not be made in a sham (verse 13), for the name of Israel was at stake in the land (verse 30). For this, Simeon and Levi (verse 25) were passed over in the blessing with the birthright (49:5–7).

The Defilement of Dinah (verses 1-4)

IV. Dinah, Jacob’s only daughter (30:21), went out to visit the daughters of the land. This loosened a stone that caused a landside of difficulty for Jacob. Jacob had made a commercial connection with Shechem (33:19) but Dinah’s step toward social interaction had serious complications. Avoidance of the Canaanites would have been much safer.

V. Shechem, the ruler of that area, lay with her and violated (raped) her. After a woman was debased in this way, she had no expectancy of ever having a valid marriage. However, Shechem loved Dinah and wanted her to be his wife.

The reaction of Jacob and his sons (verses 5-7).

VI. Jacob’s reaction to the situation was quite unusual. When he heard that Dinah had been defiled, he kept quiet about it until his sons got home. His sons, however, were incensed, for a disgraceful thing had been done in Israel (this is the first mention of the nation by this name).

A. Such a sexual evil was infamous, incriminating a whole community a whole community. It was something that should not be done. While the sons were filled with grief and fury, Jacob was passive and could not pull things together.

B. Perhaps if Dinah were his daughter by Rachel rather than Leah, he would have acted differently.
The Canaanite’s Proposal (verses 8-12)

VI. The Canaanites approached with a proposal.

A. Old Hamar, Shechem’s father made a diplomatic speech. He asserted that great advantages would be gained by both from an agreement to intermarry. He offered Israel the land (verse 10).

B. But God, not the Canaanites, would give Israel the land. Furthermore, Hamar’s later appeal to his fellow citizens showed that he was deceptive all along, hoping to take over Jacob’s possessions (verse 23).

C. Shechem then offered to pay Jacob and Dinah’s brothers whatever price for the bride they suggested, trying to buy his way out of trouble.

VII. The brothers’ reaction.

A. The bother’s refused such a treaty because, they said, Shechem was not Circumcised, and intermarriage would be a disgrace.

B. So the brothers planned for Shechem’s outward conforming to circumcision, but of course this was not true covenant. The bothers, like their father, dealt deceitfully (verse 13). They apparently assumed that Shechem and Hamor would never consent to their males being circumcised as a condition for intermarriage.

C. But the Canaanites accepted the proposal and had every man in the town circumcised, not only so Shechem could have Dinah but also so they could subtly acquire all the Israelites’ livestock and other property.

The Treachery of Jacob’s Sons (verses 25-31).

VIII. The brother’s plot was tragic. Simeon and Levi slaughtered the Canaanite males while they were still in pain from the circumcision and still weak from healing.

IX. The bothers then rescued Dinah and plundered the city and the fields for all the Shechemites’ property, livestock, wealth and women and children.
A. This all struck fear in the heart of Jacob, for it could bring about serious repercussions on him and his family.

B. But the brothers simply replied, “Should Shechem have treated our sister like a prostitute?”

X. Later the nation of Israel was instructed to avoid defilement with the Canaanites. Israel’s foreign policy was to destroy them completely before they could defile the Israelites (Deuteronomy 20:16-18).

XI. In this story the instinct of Simeon and Levi was correct because but because of the unbridled passion they were later passed over in Jacob’s blessing (Genesis 49:5-7).

XI. Moreover, a deceptive covenant was not to be dangled before the pagans. On occasion, however, God used a Simeon, and a Levi, and a Jehu (2 Kings 10:11-14, 17-31) as his instruments of judgment.
Genesis: Chapter Thirty Five

Introduction

I. Two themes run through chapter thirty five: a completion and a correction.

   A. It is a chapter of completion because Jacob was back home in the land of promise with all his family and all his wealth. Victory was won, the goal achieved, and the promise was fulfilled.

   B. But it also a story of correction, for the family had not completely held to the walk of faith: Idols had to be burned and Rubin had to be dealt with.

The Return To Bethel (verses 1-15)

Verse One

II. The first fifteen verses record Jacob’s return to Bethel, about 15 miles from Shechem, as the completion of his vows.

   A. Those vows, made earlier at Bethel, include making the Lord his God, making Bethel God’s house, and pledging to tithe to God (28:20-22).

   B. God called Jacob to return to the land (28:13-15; 31:30), but his pilgrimage took a long time. God had to remind Jacob of his forgotten vows. Apparently the occasion for Dinah’s defilement by Shechem Jacob’s indifference to those vows. Jacob should have traveled on to Beersheba, his parent’s home (28:10) without stopping at Shechem.

Verses 2-5

III. To complete his vows, there had to be a sanctification process.

   A. Jacob’s family had to remove idols, the foreign gods. God permits no rivals; He allows only single loyalty and no magical charms. All of this purification (getting rid of idols, washing themselves, and changing their clothes) was instructive for Israel, who would later need such a consecration when they entered the land of promise (Joshua 5:1-9).
B. After burying the idols (and earrings, associated with the idols in some way, possibly as fetishes) at Shechem Jacob and his family set out for Bethel. People in surrounding towns, apparently having heard of the massacre at Shechem (34:25-39) feared Jacob.

**Verses 6-8**

IV. Arriving back in Bethel, (which used to called Luz, 28:19), Jacob built an altar there as God had told him to do (35:1). Meanwhile Deborah, the nurse of Rebekah, Jacob’s mother died. She was buried under an oak tree, which was given the name Allon Bacuf (“oak of weeping”). This death seemed to indicate that another stage in the patriarchal narratives was ending.

**Verses 9-15**

V. At Bethel God confirmed the promise He had made earlier (32:28). Jacob’s name change to Israel was proof of the promised blessing. God’s reference to himself God Almighty (el sadday) was also an assurance that his promise would be fulfilled.

VI. Now that the patriarch was back in the land of promise, the promise of the nation (“seed”), kings and land was once again confirmed.

VII. Jacob’s actions here are almost identical with those in his earlier Bethel experience: setting up a stone pillar, pouring oil on it, and naming the place Bethel And both times God promised Jacob many descendents in the land. Here God also promised Jacob that kings would be included in his offspring.

**The Completion of the Family and the Corruption of Ruben (Verses 16-29)**

**Verses 16-20**

VIII. Once in the land, the family was completed by the birth of Benjamin. Rachel died in childbirth. Her death was the second transitional death in chapter 25 (verse 8). The name she gave the child, Ben-Oni (“son of my sorrow”) would not do for the lad. Jacob renamed him Benjamin (“son of my right hand”).

IX. Jacob turned this occasion of sorrow into triumph and victorious prospects. In addition he wanted to give a good name to the child who was the answer to Rachel’s prayer (30:24) for a second son (the name “Joseph”, Yosep, is from yasap, “to add.”)
X. This section also signifies that Israel, once in the land, would continue to flourish under God’s blessing.

XI. Jacob set up a stone pillar over her grave between Bethel and Bethlehem.

Verses 21-22

XII. The account of Jacob draws to a close with several short reports.

A. The first describes Reuben’s breach of Jacob’s family by incest with Bilhah, Jacob’s concubine and Rachel’s servant by whom he had two sons, Dan and Naphtali (30:3-8). Rueben’s transgression took place near Migdal Eder between Bethlehem and Hebron.

B. It is possible that Reuben, Jacob’s eldest, was trying to replace his father as patriarch prematurely by this pagan procedure. But in doing so he lost his inheritance and his birthright (49:3-4:1, 1 Chronicles 5:1-2).

C. This act was noted by Jacob who in Genesis 35: 31-32 was twice called Israel.

Verses 23-26

XIII. A second report lists the twelve sons who became heads of the twelve original tribes. This was another assurance that the promises of God are good. The list provides a firstfruits, as it were, of the tribes that would become a great nation.

(Verses 27-29)

XIV. The chapter’s last report is the death of Isaac, who lived 180 years. This is the third transitional death recorded in chapter 35 (see verses 8 and 18). Isaac was then living near Hebron, farther south in Beersheba (28:10). Jacob and Esau united to bury him. Perhaps this was the first time the two brothers met since their departure (33:16-17).

Observations

XV. In the events of chapter 35, Jacob learned that while his return to Canaan was a completion of promises, he could not be complacent for it was also a new beginning.
A. Deborah, Rachel, and Isaac all died, marking the end of an era.

B. Idols had to be buried and everyone had to be consecrated in order for Jacob’s vow at Bethel to be completed.

C. The nation had to be complete with 12 sons (tribes) in the land.

D. God’s covenant had to be carried forward (Jacob’s vows and God’s promises are emphasized).
The Descendants of Esau (verses 1-8)

I. Esau had three wives: Adah, Oholibama and Basemath. Since two of these wives’ names are not mentioned. Though two of these wives’ names are not the same as listed earlier (26:24; 28:9), either the others had died or he favored these names or the two took different names.

II. Oholbama was a great granddaughter of Seir the Hitite, whose descendants were living in Edom when Esau went there (36:20-25). From these wives, Esau had three Sons.

III. The narrative stresses two elements. First, Esau’s sons were born in the land of Canaan he moved to Seir. This contrasts sharply with Jacob, whose children out of the land, and then moved into the land.

IV. In fact all through the chapter the reader is reminded that of this. Certainly Israel would understand the import of this because she often struggled, Esau’s descendants.

V. The wording of verse seven is striking. One thinks of Lot: the land was not able to bear both of them because their herds were so great. Esau, like Lot, left for the east and greener land (see Genesis 13:8-12).

The Succession of Esau, father of the Edomites (36:9-37:1)

VI. The later part of chapter six is a minor division of within the account what happened to Esau. The sons of Esau also had sons. Thus Esau had five sons and ten Grandsons (either literal descendants or tribes founded by them. Esau had eleven 11 grandsons if Korah is included (verse 16). Perhaps he is excluded from the list because he died soon after becoming a chief.

VII. In the Hebrew, each of the 10 grandsons – thirteen in all – These verses list the sons (i.e. sons, grandsons, and daughters) of Seir the Horite, inhabitants of the land.

VIII. The sons were probably aboriginal Edomites conquered by Esau. (Deuteronomy 2:12). Seir’s seven sons became Horite chiefs, from these came twenty “sons” and “daughters” (i.e. tribes).
IX. One of Esau’s wives was Oholibama, a great granddaughter of Seir. Seir gave birth to Zibeon, who bore Anna, whose daughter was Oholbama. It is not clear how the kings of Edom were related to Esau, but they were kings who reigned in Edom, and Esau is Edom.

X. The organization of clans in Edom apparently paralleled that in Israel. They ultimately chose a king from one of their tribes and carried on a succession from him. Whether or not the line of eight kings mentioned here extended beyond the time of Jacob is unclear. The point is comparative though: there were kings in Edom before any Israelite reigned (verse 31). Their were kinds in Edom before any Israelite king reigned.

XI. Verses 40-43 lists the names of the chiefs who descended from Esau according to their families after their places and by their names. Esau was thus a great powerful overlord: the Father of the Edomites (verse 43).
Genesis: Chapter Thirty Seven

**Jacob in the Land (verse 1)**

I. Verse one actually belongs narrative to the preceding (Jacob) narrative. It records the conclusion of the Jacob “story” and readies the reader for the for the Joseph “story.” It shows Jacob back in the Land of Promise but still dwelling there as a sojourner like his father.

II. Moses’ point is to show the reader that the promises of God have not yet been completely been fulfilled and that Jacob, like his fathers before him, was still awaiting their fulfillment.

III. It is from a verse such as this such as this that the writers of the *Brit Hadasha* saw the patriarchs as “aliens and strangers on the earth” (Hebrews 11:13).

IV. This verse also provides a fitting transition to the next section – the “Joseph Narratives,” which trace the course of events by which the sons of Jacob left the Land of Promise and entered Egypt. According to 25:11 Jacobs father, Isaac, dwelt in Beer Lahai Roi, which is evidently where Jacob lived at this time.

V. The story of Joseph in Egypt forms a unique literary unit in the book of Genesis. The fact that there are repeated elements in the narratives does not prove that the material was handed down in two differing traditions as many critical scholars suggest.

A. Repetition was a common literary technique used Jewish writers. It serves to heighten the message, giving it a greater emphasis.

B. One example of repetition is the analogy between the Jacob and Joseph stories.

1. Both cycles of narratives begin with the father being deceived and the bothers being treacherous. (chapters 27; 37).

2. Both cycles include a 20 year period of separation, with the younger brother in a foreign land.
3. Both conclude with a reunion and reconciliation. As God had worked out matters to a proper resolution with Jacob, He would do the same Jacob’s son Joseph.

VI. The Joseph stories also were instructive for Israel. As Joseph spent years in bondage in Egypt, so the descendants would be in bondage there and would be delivered from it. For Joseph the discipline would test his faith; for the nation of Israel the stay in Egypt would be for their preservation and discipline.

The Selling of Joseph into Egypt (verses 2–36)

Joseph: Jacob’s Favorite Son. 2-4)

VII. As the Joseph story begins, Joseph in introduced as an obedient 17 year old son who brought back a bad report is half brothers. Though doing this has never been popular, it shows that Joseph was faithful as a servant. Naturally, his brothers hated him for this.

VIII. Joseph was also honored by Jacob, who gave him a richly ornamented tunic. This seems to indicate that Jacob favored Joseph above the rest with the intent of giving him all or a larger portion of the inheritance.

Joseph’s Dreams (Verses 5-11)

IX. God confirmed Jacob’s choice of his favorite son by two dreams. God’s revelation was given in different forms in the Tenach. He used when His people were leaving or outside the land, that is, in the lands of pagans. In a dream God announced to Abraham the Egyptian bondage (15:3); in a dream God promised protection and prosperity for Jacob in his sojourn with Laban (28:12, 15), and by two dreams God predicted that Joseph would rule over his family.

X. The bothers hated Joseph all the more (37:5,8) and were jealous of him, but Jacob pondered the matter (verse 11). He knew how God works; he was well aware that God could select the younger to rule over the elder, and that God declare his choice by an oracle or a dreams.

XI. The scene of the first dream was agricultural (verse 7). There may be some hint here of the manner of Joseph’s authority over his brothers would be achieved. Joseph’s sheaf of grain was upright while their sheaves bowed down to his. The scene of the second dream was celestial. The sun, moon, and 11 stars bowed down to him. In ancient cultures astrological represented rulers. The dream, then, symbolically anticipated the elevation of
Joseph over the whole house of Jacob (Joseph’s father, the sun; his mother, the moon; his 11 brother the stars (verse 10).

XII. Sensing that Joseph was to be elevated to prominence over them, the envy of his brothers was understandable. However, their reaction in contrast with Joseph’s and faithfulness demonstrated why Jacob’s choosing was proper. God’s sovereign choice of a leader often brings out the jealousy of those who must submit. Rather than recognize God’s choice, his brothers set on a course to destroy him. Their actions, though prompted by the belief that they should lead, shows why they should not have led.

The Sale of Joseph (verses 12-36)

XIII. The occasion for selling Joseph when he obediently went to his brothers near Dothan to inquire about their welfare. In spite of the hatred knew they had for him, he complied with his father’s wishes

XIV. The brothers devised a plot to kill Joseph so that his dreams would not be fulfilled. Before, they plotted to kill many Shechemites in revenge for their sister; now; now by contrast, they plotted to kill their own brother.

XV. Reuben, trying to gain an opportunity to restore Joseph to Jacob, persuaded his brothers not to commit such a crime. He suggested they throw Joseph alive into a cistern. Reuben thought he could come back and rescue Joseph later. So the brothers stripped Joseph of his tunic and threw him into a dry cistern to die.

XVI. Judah then prompted his brothers to sell Joseph to passing Ishmaelites on their way from Gilead to Egypt. Joseph was treated harshly but being sold for 8 ounces (20 shekels) of silver and taken to Egypt, he was kept alive.

The Brothers’ Deceive Jacob (verses 29-35)

XVII. The theme of deception surfaced once again in the family. Here, Jacob was deceived by his own sons. The sons dipped Joseph’s tunic in goat’s blood to deceive Jacob into thinking Joseph was dead, devoured by a ferocious animal. Jacob mourned greatly over the loss or his beloved son. Unknown to the brothers, Joseph was not dead. Rather, he was sold to Potiphar, Pharaoh’s captain of the guard.
Genesis: Chapter Thirty Eight

I. A bizarre event seems at first to glance to intrude on the story of Joseph. However, it served an important purpose in Genesis. It confirmed God’s plan of selecting the younger over the elder, despite how others attempted to contravene it.

**Judah Comes to Joseph’s Aid (verses 1-5)**

II. Judah, who had suggested that the bothers sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites, then left and stayed in Adullum and married a Canaanite woman. They had three sons: Er, Onan, and Shelah.

A. This marriage to a Canaanite woman almost ruined Judah’s family. Intermarriage with the Canaanites had been avoided (chapter 34), but not here.

B. This account of assimilation with the people of the land helps one understand why God settled his young nation the safety of Egypt for its growth.

**The wickedness of Judah’s Sons (verses 6-11)**

III. Judah’s first son Er died because he was wicked. His second son, Onan, was to marry Tamar, the widow of his brother, to raise up offspring for his brother under the custom of the Leverite law of marriage (from the Latin *levir*, husband’s brother). However, Onan used the law for sexual gratification. He took advantage of the situation, but refused to accept the responsibility that went with it. So God took his life too.

IV. In view of this situation, Judah refused to give his third son Shelah to Tamar, Er’s widow. Shelah was not yet grown; but later, when he was an adult, Judah still refused.

**Tamar’s Deception (verses 12-26)**

V. Thus, the family’s future was placed in jeopardy. Tamar thought that she had to take matters into her own hands if she was to be granted the rights of the Leverite custom. This system was later codified by Moses for the sake of preserving the name for the deceased (Deuteronomy 25:5-10).

A. When the time seemed right, Tamar deceptively lured her father-in-law Judah into an immoral union with a Temple prostitute, or so he thought Genesis 38:15, 21). In
pledge that he would send a goat for payment, he left his seal (which was suspended from a chord around his neck) and his staff with her.

B. When he tried to retrieve them from his friend Hirah, the girl nowhere to be found. Again Jacob’s family’s family experienced deception—this time by his Canaanite daughter-in-law.

C. Judah lacked integrity (verse 16), and now he was seen to be a hypocrite.

D. When Tamar was reported to be reported as being three months pregnant, he condemned her to death a prostitute. Then she produced the seal, cord, and staff, that he was the guilty partner.

E. Tamar had won the right to be the mother of Judah’s children, though in a deceitful way. Her action was desperate and risky.

“The elder shall serve the younger” (verses 27-30)

VI. The final part of this story provides the significances of the whole account. God gave Tamar twins, and the line of Judah continued because of her.

A. But in the in the birth of the boys, an unusual event occurred paralleling the births of Jacob and Esau. After one twin’s hand came out, the other made a breach and was born first, so he was rightly named Perez (“breach”). Then the second twin was named Zerah (“scarlet”) because of the scarlet thread the mid-wife tied on his wrist.

B. It was as if the oracle concerning Jacob ruling over his older brother (27:29) was being relived in the line of Judah. What was so significant was the connection dealing with Joseph (37:26-28). He and his brothers sold Joseph into slavery in Egypt, thinking they could thwart God’s design that the elder brothers would serve the younger Joseph.

C. Yet in Judah’s own family, despite Judah’s efforts to hinder Tamar’s marriage, God’s will was worked out in a dramatic confirmation of the principle that the elder would serve the younger. The line of promise would carry on through Perez Matthew 1:3), for God’s program so easily be set aside.
Genesis: Chapter: Thirty-Nine

The Rise in Power of Joseph in Egypt: (Chapters 39-41)

Joseph’s Temptation by Potiphar’s Wife (Chapter 39)

I. After the important digression in the family history (chapter 38), the narrative returns to Joseph who had prospered under God and had become the attendant or steward over Potiphar’s prospered household. Potiphar was captain of the guard for Pharaoh. This Pharaoh was probably Sesostris II (1897 BCE – 1879 B.C.). Joseph’s presence was also the means of God’s blessing on Potiphar.

II. Joseph’s presence was also the means of God’s blessing on Potiphar.

Joseph’s Faithfulness to Potiphar And to God (verses 1 – 6a)

III. God tested Joseph’s faithfulness with Potiphar’s wife to see if he was obedient. Yet when she tempted Joseph, he refused to go bed with her, for that would be a sin against both God and his master.

IV. His refusal was strengthened because he believed that God had sent him on a special task – he had evidence of that in his rise from slavery. If one is to fulfill God’s plan, he cannot sin against the God who bring it about.

Joseph’s Faithfulness Results in His Prosperity (verses 7 – 20a)

V. Potiphar’s wife, humiliated by Joseph’s refusal of her, fabricated a lie to accuse Joseph of assaulting her. She showed to her household servants and to her husband a garment Joseph had left behind when he fled from her presence. This was the second time Joseph’s clothing was used to bring a false report him (37:31-33).

Joseph Prosper in Prison (verses 20b - 23)

VI. Joseph prospered in prison because of God’s favor and his faithfulness.

A. As a result, the jailer put Joseph in charge of the prison. Joseph had prospered under God in Potiphar’s house and then in prison, and here again he prospered under God. Four times, this chapter affirms, that the Lord was with Joseph (verses2-3, 21 23).
B. This chapter shows that Joseph was a faithful servant of God. With the dreams of prosperity still in his memory (verses 6–7, 9) he remained loyal to God rather than yield to temptation at the first glimpse of his rise to power.

C. Wise rulers recognize that allegiance to God is the first requirement of a good king.

VII. This story is similar to the advice frequently given in Proverbs by King Solomon. It is folly to yield to the temptations of a flattering woman or man and ruin all prospects of a life of service to God. The way to wisdom involves counting the cost of sin. Joseph did not yield to sin because he was convinced God had something marvelous for him to do. Joseph would not throw away God’s blessings for the pleasures of sin. Nor was he troubled because he was suffered for his faithfulness. God would ultimately honor him as He had promised.
Joseph in Prison (verses 1-23)

I. “These things” in verse 1 refers to all of the things that have transpired thus far in the “Joseph story” – Joseph being sold by his bothers into slavery in Egypt by Midianite traders, his being sold to Potipher, the captain of the guard, God granting him prosperity in Potipher’s house, and especially being put into prison by his master Potipher for allegedly raping Potipher’s wife.

II. It is notable that the invisible God was at work “behind the scenes” in the life of Joseph. The more dismal Joseph’s circumstances appeared, the more he prospered. God’s purpose here was to work through Joseph to accomplish his purpose for the Jewish people. What appeared to be a series of tragedies in Joseph’s life were actually a series steps orchestrated by the sovereign God to get Joseph close to and trusted by Pharaoh.

A. Joseph had not raped Potipher’s wife. In fact, it was Joseph who resisted her constant temptations to lay with her and “do this great evil and sin against God” (verse 9).

B. Potipher’s wife was so enraged and humiliated by Joseph’s refusal lay with her that she lied to husband, claiming that Joseph had raped her.

C. It appears that Potipher became so angered by his wife’s accusation that he did not give Joseph an opportunity to defend himself.

1. Joseph could have received the death penalty for such behavior, but either his excellent record of service or the fact that Potipher did not fully believe his wife (or possibly both) led to imprisonment instead.

2. As was his habit, Joseph refused to become embittered or destroyed by circumstances. God gave Joseph “favor in the eyes of the chief jailor,” (verse 21) and eventually the chief jailor gave Joseph the responsibility and authority to oversee the prisoners in the jail. Furthermore, Joseph became responsible for whatever happened in the prison. He became the *de facto* warden.

3. Joseph’s came to have the same kind of relationship with the chief jailor as he had enjoyed with Potipher, and for the same reason: the Lord was with him, “and whatever he did the Lord made to prosper” (39:23).

Joseph, the Baker, and the Cup Bearer
III. During Joseph’s imprisonment, two high ranking officials of the Egyptian court incurred the displeasure of Pharaoh (evidently on good grounds, as the Hebrew indicates), and were thrown into prison. These were such high ranking officials the captain of the bodyguard who may have been Potipher, personally assigned Joseph to supervise them.

A. The cupbearer was a very influential man. He had to be trusted implicitly.

B. Among other things, the chief cup bearer had to make sure that Pharaoh’s wine and food was not poisoned. He was in a position to discover plots on the king’s life and to inform him about condition in the realm and people who should be watched for managerial inadequacies or rewarded for abilities or achievements.

C. He could become, in effect, chief confidant or right hand man to the king. Nehemiah bore that relationship to King Artaxerxes of Persia.

IV. After those men had been in prison for some time, each of them had a dream on the same night. The next morning Joseph who evidently was one who was not so overwhelmed with his problems that he was not able to be attuned to the needs of others, spoke to them about their sadness.

A. It was believed in Egypt that dreams had a meaning and were predictive. In fact, a body of writings grew up on the art of interpreting them.

B. Both the baker and the cup bearer believed that dreams were a means of predicting the future, and they were upset that they were without an interpreter, one of the professional wise men.

C. Joseph knew that the dreams were from God and realized that God was beginning to work his will through two more dreams. Joseph interpreted the dreams of the two servants of Pharaoh. The chief cup bearer’s dream had a favorable interpretation. His dream reflected his profession. The dream of the three vine branches of ripening grapes signified that that Pharaoh would lift up the head of the cup bearer; that is, restore him to service within three days. To this Joseph added the request that the man remember him and seek his release from prison.

D. The dream of the baker was not favorable. His dream also reflected his profession, but in it birds were eating the bread he was carrying in three baskets on his head. To the disappointment of the baker, Joseph explained that Pharaoh would also lift his head with
head within three days, but it would be execution by hanging, after which the birds would eat his flesh.

V. The picture of Joseph that emerges in this narrative is precisely that which Pharaoh himself later expresses. Joseph is “one in whom is the Spirit of God (41:38). He knows the interpretations of dreams, which, in Joseph’s words “belong to God” (40:8).

VI. The narrative serves to set Joseph apart from all who have preceded him in the book. He is “discerning and wise” (41:39), and things turn out exactly how he interpreted them” (41:13). Whereas Abraham sees the course of future events “in a vision” (15:1), Joseph discerns the course of the future in the mysterious dreams of others (41:39).

VII. What lies behind Moses’ portrayal of Joseph in these terms? Why the contrast with Abraham? The answer may lie within the perspective of the Pentateuch in General.

VIII. As the last chapters of Deuteronomy show, the Pentateuch addresses itself to an audience that seen the passing of Moses, the great prophet (Deuteronomy 34:10), and yet has not seen the fulfillment of all his great prophecies. Much lay ahead yet to be fulfilled. It is to this audience that the leadership of Joshua is presented, not as a prophet, but as one “filled with the spirit of wisdom” (Deuteronomy 34:9), a “wise man” like Joseph.

IX. Joseph, then, represents the kind of leadership the kind of leadership that the readers of the Pentateuch would be called on follow.

A. He is a leader like Daniel, who needed to “discern” the visions of the prophets to find the course of God’s future dealings with Israel, rather than to wait on new prophecies to come.

B. Joseph, like Solomon, is a picture of a truly wise leader who understands and sees the will of God in the affairs of those around him.

C. In this sense Joseph stands as a prototype of all the later wise men of Israel. All future leaders must stand the test of measurement against him. It is hardly surprising then that one sees foreshadowed in the picture of Joseph elements that later resemble David, Solomon, and, ultimately, the Messiah himself.
Genesis: Chapter Forty One

Pharaoh’s Dreams

I. Two years passed after Joseph had interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh’s cup bearer and baker Joseph. The cup bearer, who was eventually restored to his former position, forgot what Joseph had done for him, seeing it as being of little importance.

II. Then one night Pharaoh had two dreams that disturbed him.

III. The Dreams:

A. In the first dream, Pharaoh was standing by the Nile River and, as he gazed at the river, seven sleek, fat (lit. “full of flesh”) cows immersed from the river and grazed in the marsh grass. Then, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, immersed from the river and ate the sleek cows. The dream was so disturbing that it woke Pharaoh up.

B. Eventually, Pharaoh fell asleep and had another disturbing dream. Seven healthy heads of grain came up on a single stalk. After this, seven heads of grain scorched by the east wind sprouted. The thin heads of grain ate the healthy heads of grain.

C. Pharaoh was so disturbed by these dreams that he called together all of the magicians and wise men and told them the dreams in the hope that they could interpret them for him. No one could interpret the dreams for Pharaoh.

Joseph Interprets Pharaoh’s Dreams (verses 9-32)

IV. The cupbearer remembered how Joseph had accurately interpreted his dream and the dream of the cupbearer, and told Pharaoh about how while he was in prison, Joseph accurately interpreted their dreams, and how the predictive elements of the dreams came to pass just as Joseph said they would.

A. Pharaoh sent for Joseph, told him about his dreams. Joseph’s response to Pharaoh’s request that he interpret keeping with his godly character. He said to Pharaoh, “I cannot do it, but God will give Pharaoh the answer He desires.” Joseph’s response to Pharaoh’s request was in keeping with his godly character: “I cannot do it, but God will give Pharaoh the answer He desires.”
B. Joseph’s answer to Pharaoh is consistent with his belief that only God has the wisdom to interpret “hidden” dreams and only He can bring to pass what the dreams indicate about the future. This is, in fact, the central theme of chapter forty one. “The matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it quickly.”

C. The two dreams have the same interpretation. The reason God gave Pharaoh two dreams with the same meaning gave Pharaoh two dreams with the same meaning was to emphasize that God would surely bring to pass that which was predicted in the dreams.

V. According to Joseph, both dreams have the same meaning: Seven good cows and seven good heads of grain are seven years of abundance. This will be followed by seven years of famine, symbolized by the seven ugly cows and seven bad heads of grain. Likewise

VI. There are several pairs in this chapter (a pair of dreams, Moses recording Pharaoh’s description of the dreams twice, two years passing after which Pharaoh had two dreams, etc.) This is in keeping with the rule that repetition serves to emphasize what is being written.

Joseph’s Advice To Pharaoh (verses 33 – 37)

VII. Joseph advised Pharaoh to put a fifth off the yield of the land during each of the seven years of abundance so that Egypt will have a reserve to carry him through the seven years of famine. Furthermore, Joseph advised Pharaoh to put a wise, trustworthy man in charge of gathering, storing and securing the produce of the good years. Joseph’s proposal looked good to Pharaoh and his advisors.

Joseph’s Exaltation (verses 38 – 49)

VIII. Pharaoh was so impressed with Joseph that he set him over all the land of Egypt. Only in the throne would Pharaoh be greater than Joseph (“only in the throne” means things like war, rebellion, and major foreign and domestic policy decision. Also, only Pharaoh could veto one of Joseph’s decisions.

IX. Joseph’s prediction’s came to pass, and Pharaoh found that Joseph was an exceptionally good administrator and did posses an abundance of wisdom.

X. Pharaoh gave Asanath, the daughter of the priest, to be his wife.
XI. Joseph had two sons before the famine came: Manasseh (making to forget) and Ephriam (fruitfulness).

XII. When the years seven years of abundance ended, there was a severe famine in the land. The Egyptians were hit hard by the famine and cried out to Pharaoh for food. Pharaoh referred them to Joseph, who was in charge of the grain. Joseph sold grain to the Egyptians and other people of the land. Joseph’s wisdom in handling the famine undoubtedly increased Pharaoh’s wealth.
Genesis: Chapter Forty Two

Introduction

The preceding chapter has recorded Joseph’s rise to power. Chapter forty two turns to the divine purpose behind his miraculous rise. Joseph explained to his brothers the ultimate purpose behind the narratives: “God sent me ahead of you to preserve for a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.” (45:7)

To emphasize the importance of this narrative, there are numerous repetitions in the reporting for the events. Nearly every major event is told twice, once by means of the narration itself and then once again by one of the chief characters in the narrative.

Jacob’s Brothers Are Sent To Egypt (verses1-4)

I. The narrative returns to Jacob, Who has been out of the picture since 37:34. As is frequently the case in biblical narratives, the words spoken at the beginning of a story foreshadow its final outcome.

A. Jacob, sending his sons to Egypt, said to his son, “Go down there… so that we live and not die.” Conversely, Joseph later said, “It was to save lives that God sent me.” (45:5)

B. Joseph’s words also serve to align the deeds of Joseph with the larger themes of the Torah, namely, the theme of “life” (hayyim) and “death” (mavet) (2:7, 9; 3:22; Deuteronomy 30:15).

“I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I Have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendents.” (Deuteronomy 30:15).

C. The words of Jacob also align themselves with the greater themes of Scripture, namely the theme of life and death. In doing so the events that follow are cast as a narrative picture, showing the way to return to the gift of life that was lost in the garden.

D. The “twelve” (verses 13, 32) sons of Jacob are divided into two groups throughout the narrative. There are the “ten” of Joseph’s brothers (verse 3) and the two sons of Jacob by Rachel, Joseph and Benjamin. These two sons of Rachel are contrasted with the two sons of Leah, Reuben and Judah.
E. Both Reuben and Judah play an important and similar role in the narrative. They speak on behalf of the other brothers and are the catalyst in the resolution of the plots instigated by Joseph.

F. It was Judah, however, who saved the day by offering himself as a pledge (guarantee) for the young lad Benjamin; and it was Judah who repeated Jacob’s own thematic words “that we and you and our children not die.”(43:8; 42:2).

G. Finally, it was Judah who spoke before Joseph and offered himself as substitute for Benjamin, lest he cause any evil to come to his father, Jacob.

**The “10” Brothers Come Before Joseph (5-13)**

II. Throughout the narrative, then, the plot is woven around the interplay between Joseph and Judah, and in the end it was Judah who resolved the conflict. By the same token it was Joseph who created the conflict and tension throughout the narrative.

A. When his brothers approached to him buy grain, he “pretended to be a stranger (verse 7) and spoke harshly, accusing them of being spies.

B. Joseph was not merely trying to get even with his brothers for what they had done to him. Moses immediately pushed aside such a possibility with the comment that Joseph “remembered his dreams about them (verse 9). Thus, the reader is advised that Joseph’s schemes and plans against his brothers were motivated by the dreams of the earlier narratives and not by when his brothers had done to him.

C. Little more is said specifically regarding the purpose Joseph saw in his continuous schemes to perplex his brothers. But subtle reminders throughout the narrative further reveal his intention.

D. For example, in response to Joseph’s accusation that the brothers were spies, the brothers defended their integrity by saying “Your servants were twelve brothers; but lest their integrity questioned, , they were forced to add, “and one is no more.” Joseph’s schemes had provoked the first hint their evil deed, accomplished in the distant past, may yet still rise up against them.

E. As proof that this point was not lost on the brothers, Moses allows us to listen in on the brothers’ own version of this event when they recount it to their father
(verse 32). On that occasion they reported their own words in a different order than that of the narrative in verse 13.

F. In the narrative account the brothers mentioned first the “one who is no more” (verse 13); but when they tell their father about Joseph’s accusation and their response, they mention last the “one [who] is no more.” (verse 32) and then tell of Benjamin is who is home with their father.

1. Though subtle, such a reversal appears to be a narrative hint that the memory of what they did to Joseph was beginning to rub on their conscience.

2. Another reminder in the narrative that serves to reveal Joseph’s motives in perplexing his brothers is the conclusion the brothers draw from Joseph’s trick of having their money returned to them in their grain sacks. When they saw their money returned, they asked, (“What is this God has done to us?” (verse 28). However they might have meant it, in the logic of the narrative itself, their words have a ring of truth about them.

G. Though the readers know it was Joseph who had had the money put back into their sacks, their words point us to the work of God, serving to confirm the direction of the narrative as a whole appears to be taking. God is at work in the schemes of Joseph, and we are allowed to see in this narrative a preliminary reminder of the ultimate theme: “God intended it for good.” (50:20)

Joseph Tests His Brothers (verses 14-24)

III. Joseph devised two plans to test his brothers. The first was that “one” (echad, verse 16) of the brothers should return for the youngest and the rest and the rest remain in prison. After three days the second plan was announced, “one” (echad, verse 19) of the brothers was to remain behind and others were to return to get the youngest.

A. The double plan fits into the overall narrative scheme of repetition in that for both plans it is the “one” (echad) brother who rescues the others that is central. Within this narrative the narrative this “one” (echad) brother appears to be an echo of the “one [who] is no more.” It is no wonder then that the brothers’ conclusion from within the narrative is that their present distress had been caused by the distress that they had brought on Joseph (verses 21-22).

B. Joseph’s explanation of the change in plans also ties the narrative also ties the narrative to the larger themes of the book. He said about his plan, “Do this and
you will live (verse 18)...that you may not die, which aligns the narrative with the theme of “life” and “death” that runs throughout the Torah.

III. When the bothers began to talk among themselves about the distress they had brought on Joseph, the reader can a glimpse of where Joseph’s plans are leading.

A. Reuben’s words focus our attention on the central point of the narrative: Now we must give an accounting for his blood (verse 22). At this point we can see that Joseph’s plan were not in revenge for how his brothers once treated him; rather they were to show how, in God’s world, the guilt of the brothers came back on them and called for justice.

B. The remarkable message of the narrative, however, is that Joseph had already forgiven his brothers for the evil they had done to him. As verse 24 shows, Joseph had to turn away from them to hide his sorrow for the distress his plan now caused. What awaited the brothers was not the evil they intended for Joseph but the good God intended for them through Joseph.

Joeplh’s Next Plan (verses 25-28)

V. Joseph’s next plan was to fill the brothers’ sacks with the money they had brought to buy grain. Though nothing is said about Joseph’s intention, the word of the brothers as they discovered were all that the narrative required: “What is this God has done to us? (verse 28) The reader knows that it was Joseph who put the money in their sacks, but the brothers give expression to the underlying point of the narrative. God was behind it all and through it all was working out his purposes.

“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.” (Genesis 50:20)
The Return to Egypt (verses 1-14)

I. The story now begins the second journey of the sons of Jacob into Egypt. The famine was still in the land, and the grain purchased earlier was gone; so Jacob sent his sons back for more (verses 1-2). This time it was Judah who insisted on taking Benjamin back with them in accordance with Joseph’s demands. In the previous chapter, it had been Reuben. (42:37).

A. In persuading his father, Judah gave expression once to the central themes of life and death that have been interwoven throughout these narratives (verse 8). In a way similar to Reuben (42:37), Judah offered to take full responsibility for Benjamin if he was allowed to accompany the brothers back to Egypt: “I myself will guarantee his safety (verse 9).

B. The fact that both Reuben and Judah had suggested ways in which Benjamin safely to Egypt suggests another reminder that the events depicted here have already been foreshadowed in the events of chapter 37, the brother’s maltreatment of Joseph. In that narrative both Reuben and Judah attempted to save Joseph’s life in the place of the brother’s evil plan (37:21, 26).

C. Here Both Reuben and Judah attempt to save Benjamin from the plan that Joseph had initiated against the brothers. Such reversals are now commonplace throughout these narratives and serve to show that the whole series of events recorded here were part of a larger plan, a divine plan (50:20).

D. As a further reminder to the reader of the repetition throughout the narrative, Judah is allowed to express his impatience with Jacob by making explicit reference to the fact that this was the second time a journey to Egypt had been made: “If we had not delayed we could have gone and returned twice.” (verse 10)

E. Israel gave in to Judah’s plan. Just it was Judah’s plan in chapter 37 that Ultimately saved the life of Joseph (37:26), so it was now Judah’s plan that saved the life of Simeon. Jacob’s farewell words provide the narrative key to what follows: “May God Almighty provide you mercy before the man (verse 14). As so often in the patriarchal narratives, the events that follow seem to be guided by just these words.

F. At the conclusion of the narrative, when the sons reached Joseph and he saw Benjamin, we are told that “his mercy” (verse 30) was kindled toward his brother. It is important that in these words of compassion that Joseph was to find toward his bothers was given by “God Almighty.” Again, in these subtle and indirect ways Moses informs the reader of the power of God in directing the lives of his people and in carrying his plan to completion.
**The Brother’s Misguided Fear (verses 15-25)**

II. Curiously, the whole problem of the brothers being spies (42:9) is not raised again. The readers, of course, know the brothers were not spies; so Moses lets the whole matter drop without further comment. We are left instead with the apprehensions of the brothers themselves as they were ushered into the royal house of Joseph. Their fears and misgivings reveal to the reader that nothing good was going to come from this.

A. The reader, however, is told from the start that the brothers were taken into the brother’s fears in verse 18 were misguided. The reader is told from the start that the brothers were being taken into the house for a great feast. They need not have feared being Joseph’s slaves. But it is precisely that fear Moses wants to draw our attention to house for a great feast (verse16).

B. To show the underlying cause of the brother’s misgivings and to show just how misguided they actually were, Moses writes that they repeated to the steward the account of their finding the money in the grain sacks (verses19-21). The purpose of this is to get the steward’s response. The picture that emerges is that of the brothers vainly trying to explain themselves to anyone who will listen and vainly trying to return the money they had found in their sacks.

C. However, no one seems to take their explanation seriously, nor will anyone take their money. Joseph’s steward brushed off their treasures with the remark, “It’s all right...Your God, the God of your fathers, has given you treasure in your sacks; I received you silver (verse 23).

D. The reader surely knows that the steward’s cannot be taken seriously. There has been no mention of the money being given to the steward. From the narrative itself we are apparently to understand that the steward has been in on Joseph’s plan all along.

E. But, as is often the case in these narratives, unwittingly the steward expresses one of the central themes of the book: “the God of your father has given you treasure” (verse 23).

**The Banquet (verses verse 26-34)**

III. Moses goes to great lengths in describing the scene of the banquet. During the banquet, Joseph was conspicuously careful to ask about the well being of the brother’s father and the lad, Benjamin, whom they had brought with them (verses 26 29). The reader almost has to remind himself that the brothers still did not knot know it was Joseph who was entertaining them.
A. It was only when we see Joseph hurry to another room to hide his tears (verse 30) that we are sure his identity was still unknown.

B. The question that naturally arises out of this passage is what the brothers themselves thought about Joseph’s questions and their treatment in his house. They had come expecting to be made into servants, but it was they who were being served (verses 31-32).

1. Did they not suspect something? Did they not have questions about Joseph’s curiosity about their father and his special treatment of Benjamin?

2. Moses answers all such questions by simply stating that the were dismayed (wayyitmhu, in astonishment). They asked no questions and seemed to accept the words of Joseph’s steward (“the God of your fathers has given you treasure,” (verse 23) and Joseph’s words to Benjamin (God be gracious to you my son,” (verse 29) as the most plausible solution.

3. For Moses, of course, Joseph’s steward had unwittingly given the correct explanation, and Joseph’s words have provided a bewildering explanation.
I. The narrative is clear that Joseph had taken no personal enjoyment in the deception of his brothers. We are never told why he chose not to reveal his identity to his brothers immediately, but we can see from the narrative itself that the effect of his scheme has been to further the primary themes of the book.

A. In his words of explanation and comfort to his brothers in this chapter, Joseph returned once again to the central theme of the narrative: though the brothers had were responsible for Joseph's being sold into Egypt, and though they intended “harm,” God was behind it all and worked it out for the “good” (50:20). As he told his brothers, “It was to save lives that god sent me ahead of you” (verse 5), and, “God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives” (verse 7).

B. In the narrative thus far, this theme has been expressed by Jacob (verse 42:2) and Judah (verse 43:8) and has been indirectly alluded to by Joseph himself (verse 42:18). Here, however, and in 50:20, the theme is given its full expression in the words of Joseph.

C. Joseph's words pull back the narrative veil and allow the reader to see what has been going on behind the scenes. It was not the brothers who sent Joseph to Egypt; rather it was God. And god had a purpose for it all. We have seen numerous clues throughout the narrative that this has been the case; but now the central character, the one ultimately responsible for initiating the plots and subplots of the preceding narratives, reveals the divine purpose behind it all.

D. Joseph, who could discern the divine plan in the dreams of Pharaoh, also knew the divine plans in the affairs of his brothers. Through it all he saw God’s plan to accomplish a “great deliverance” (verse7). In describing God’s care over him, Joseph made an allusion to the brother’s initial question regarding his dreams as a young lad. They had said, “Do you intend to reign over us? (verse37:8). Now he reminded them that he had been made “ruler of all Egypt” (verse 45:8).

II. In his second part of his speech to the brothers, Joseph made plans to bring his father to Egypt. He twice repeated that the brothers were to go to Jacob and with all haste bring him down to
Egypt (verses 9, 13). He had set aside the “region of Goshen” (verse 10) where they could continue to raise their families and livestock during the five remaining years of famine. In the midst of the famine, the sons of Israel were to be well provided for in Goshen.

III. It can hardly be without purpose that this picture of God’s chosen people dwelling safely and prosperously in the land that Joseph provided for them comes at the close of the Book of Genesis and that is near replica as things were in the beginning. Moses appears intentionally to draw our attention to the connection between the end of the book and the beginning.

IV. Thus when Pharaoh restated Joseph’s offer and “twice” gave the brothers the good (NIV “best”) of the land of Egypt, it is hard not to see in the purpose of this narrative a conscience allusion to the good (1:31) land given to Adam in the first chapter of the book. The picture of Joseph is a picture of restoration – not just the restoration of the good fortune of Jacob but, as a picture, the restoration of the blessing that was promised through the offspring of Jacob.

**Joseph’s response To The News Of Joseph (verses21-28)**

V. Jacob’s response to the news of Joseph plays a key role in connecting these narrative of the message of the Pentateuch as a whole. Throughout the Pentateuch there is a focus on the response of God’s people to the work of God. At important moments in the narrative, this response is interpreted as either one of “faith” (15:6; exodus 4:31;14:13; 19:19) or “no faith” (14:26;Numbers 14:11).

VI. Jacob’s response falls in with these other examples. Here, however, Moses gives a deeper insight into the nature of his faith. At first, when Jacob heard the news that Joseph was alive, (his heart grew numb (verse 26; NIV “Jacob was stunned”) and “he did not believe.” But when he heard the words of Joseph and saw all that he had sent to take him back to Egypt, “the spirit…of Jacob revived” (verse 27) and he set out to go to him.

VI. The faith of Jacob bore the same marks as that of the other occurrences of faith throughout the Pentateuch, but in this text alone a different dimension is stressed. The new dimension in Jacob’s faith is the contrast between his “numbed heart” and his “revived spirit.” Jacob’s lack of faith is identified with his “numbed heart.” When his spirit was renewed, however, he believed. The viewpoint expressed here is very similar to that of the later prophetic literature where faith and the “new heart” are synonymous (Jeremiah 31:33-34; Ezekiel 36:26) and where lack of faith (Habakkuk 1:5; “not believe)is synonymous with numbness (Habakkuk 1:4; NIV “the
law is paralyzed.” All these texts seem to be summed up in the words of David in Psalm 51 “Create in me a pure heart, oh God and renew a steadfast spirit within me (verse 10).
The Brother’s Sin Comes Back To Haunt Them (verses 1-13)

X. Once more Joseph tricked his brothers by having his cup and Benjamin’s money placed in Benjamin’s sack of Grain.

A. Ultimately the purpose of this act on the part of Joseph was to have their brothers face their sin against Joseph and to test the sincerity of the brother’s love for Benjamin.

B. What Joseph told his men to say was primarily directed at the supposed theft by Benjamin of Joseph’s property. However, it undoubtedly brought to the minds of the brothers their sin against Joseph, a heinous act which that they could not dismiss from their minds.

C. The central purpose here was to “test” the brothers’ attitude concerning what they had done that they would, hopefully, come to repentance. This is made clear by what Joseph instructed his men to say when they came upon Joseph: “Why have you repaid good with evil?” “This is a wicked thing you have done.”

D. The theme of “good and evil,” as we have seen, is a major theme in the Book of Genesis. What Joseph’s men said was primarily directed at the theft of the silver cup and money, but also reached back into the brothers’ conscience, bringing their sin against Joseph to their minds. The brothers saw what was happening to them as retribution for their sin against Joseph.

E. If we are to judge by the brothers’ response when the servants reached them with Joseph’s message, what the servants said the word that the servants spoke was more detailed than what we are given in the narrative.

1. The brothers immediately made reference to the silver and gold that was supposedly in their sacks (verse 8). But why were Josephs words reported only in such general terms?

2. The solution lies in the fact that the words spoken by Joseph expressed the central question of Joseph’s expressed the central question of the Joseph narratives: the contrast between the evil done by the brothers and the good intended and accomplished by God.

3. When stated in such a general way, Joseph’s question looks as if it included the question of the treatment of him in chapter 37. The question does, in fact, raise again within the narrative raise again within the narrative the matter of the brothers’ guilt in their treatment of Joseph.

F. Whether the brothers realized this or not, the function of Joseph’s question in the narrative was to point out to the reader that a residue of guilt still hung over the
brothers’ heads. It seemed as if everywhere they turned, they heard the echo of the mistreatment of their brother Joseph.

a. The effect of such narrative strategies is to present a picture of a world in which ultimately justice does prevail and where and “evil” once done will not go unnoticed or dealt with.

b. Joseph’s plan worked out as if every detail had been carefully worked out ahead of time.

1. Not knowing that the money and silver cup were in Benjamin’s sack, the brother made a rash vow, putting the life of Benjamin and their own freedom in jeopardy (verse 9).

2. When the cup was discovered, their response was one of complete hopelessness (verse 13). “They tore their clothing in a gage and returned to the city. There was nothing else to do.

3. Curiously, their response was a mirror image of their father’s response upon hearing their own report of the loss of Joseph: “Then Jacob tore his clothes.” The grief they had caused their father had returned on their own heads. In a word, they were trapped.

The Brother’s Repentance (verses 14-17)

XI. As Joseph’s plan worked out as if perfectly orchestrated, we begin to see what his purpose was all along. While it look like he was the brothers have working a slow revenge upon his brothers, we can now see that his purpose was not revenge but repentance.

A. Through his schemes his brothers were coming to an awareness of their guilt and were now ready to acknowledge it. Their utter frustration was expressed in the repetition of the question, “What can we say?” (verse 16) Finally comes their expression of guilt: “How can we prove our innocence?”

B. The rhetorical answer to these questions was an implied negative: “We have nothing to say; we cannot show ourselves to be right.” Thus the conclusion they drew was “God has uncovered your servants” guilt.”

C. Though we can clearly see that the brothers have only the immediate issue of the “stolen cup” in mind, within the compass of the whole Joseph narrative, their words take on the scope as a confession as well.

D. We, the readers, know that know that the brothers have not taken the cup. So when they speak of God “uncovering [their] guilt,” we are forced to generalize
their sense their guilt within the context of the narrative as a whole. We, along
with Moses, read their words with a broader significance than they might have
intended on that occasion.

E. We see the narrative interconnections that were, obviously, not a part of their own
understanding within the situation itself. In his response Joseph steered the matter
in a direction that even more closely resembles his brothers’ treatment of him.
The young lad was to be sold into slavery, and the brothers were to return to their
father.

Judah’s Final Speech (verses 18-34)

III. In Judah’s final speech, he retold the whole of the Joseph story. His own retelling of the
story reveals the brothers perception of the events, as well as the hopelessness of their
situation. The overall sense of Judah’s version of the story is that the brothers have been
mistreated. The implication was that if anyone is to blame, it was Joseph.

A. According to Judah’s version, Joseph was the one who initiated the series of
mishaps that had ended in the present predicament. All the brothers had done was
follow his instructions and the instructions of their father.

B. Judah’s word, however, reveal something more to the reader than even he
intended. His words show that the fault did not lie with Joseph but with the evil
intention of the brothers toward Joseph. Once again his words raised the issue of
the brothers’ mistreatment of Joseph.

C. Curiously at this point Judah said of Joseph, “[he] is dead” (44:20), rather than
what was said of Joseph on other occasions, namely, “that [he] is no more”
(42:13). The meaning of the expression “he is no more” within Genesis does not
imply that one is dead (e.g. “Enoch walked with God; then he was no more
because God took him away.

D. We can tell, then, in the retelling of the story Judah a dimension to the recounting
of the events to Joseph that was not originally there. The net effect is that the
story now resembles the original intention of the brothers, which was to kill
Joseph (37:18), and it corresponds to the story that the brothers gave to Jacob.
What in real life what perhaps may have been a “slip of the tongue” is now, in the
narrative a clue to the state of mind of the brothers as well as their guilt.

E. But Judah’s account raises even further the issue of the brothers’ guilt regarding
Joseph when he recounted Jacob’s response to the demand that Benjamin be taken
to Egypt. On that occasion Jacob had said “You know that my wife bore me two
sons. One of them went away from me, and I said, ‘he has surely been torn to
pieces.’”
F. How could Judah recount the story this way? He surely knew that Jacob’s words were mistaken. It was not a wild animal that killed Joseph; it was the brother themselves who sold him into slavery.

G. But could Judah have told the story any other way? Clearly he could not. To tell the story as it actually happened would be to admit to a guilt even greater than that which they present accused. Thus even when retelling the story to demonstrate his own innocence, Judah gave testimony, to the reader at least, of his own guilt and the guilt of his brothers.

H. Though it through Judah’s speech that the reader is again reminded of the brothers’ guilt, we should not lose sight of the fact once again it was Judah who intervened on behalf of Benjamin and ultimately, within the narrative, his words that saved the day. After this speech Joseph could contain himself no longer. He felt compelled to unveil himself to his brothers.
Genesis: Chapter Forty-Five

Joseph Reveals Himself To His Brothers (verses 1-8)

I. The narrative is clear that Joseph had taken no personal enjoyment in the deception of his brothers. We are never told why he chose not to reveal his identity to his brothers immediately, but we can see from the narrative itself that the effect of his scheme has been to further the primary themes of the book.

A. In his words of explanation and comfort to his brothers in this chapter, Joseph returned once again to the central theme of the narrative: though the brothers had were responsible for Joseph’s being sold into Egypt, and though they intended “harm,” God was behind it all and worked it out for the “good” (50:20). As he told his brothers, “It was to save lives that god sent me ahead of you” (verse 5), and, “God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives” (verse 7).

B. In the narrative thus far, this theme has been expressed by Jacob (verse 42:2) and Judah (verse 43:8) and has been indirectly alluded to by Joseph himself (verse 42:18). Here, however, and in 50:20, the theme is given its full expression in the words of Joseph.

C. Joseph’s words pull back the narrative veil and allow the reader to see what has been going on behind the scenes. It was not the brothers who sent Joseph to Egypt; rather it was God. And god had a purpose for it all. We have seen numerous clues throughout the narrative that this has been the case; but now the central character, the one ultimately responsible for initiating the plots and subplots of the preceding narratives, reveals the divine purpose behind it all.

D. Joseph, who could discern the divine plan in the dreams of Pharaoh, also knew the divine plans in the affairs of his brothers. Through it all he saw God’s plan to accomplish a “great deliverance” (verse7). In describing God’s care over him, Joseph made an allusion to the brother’s initial question regarding his dreams as a young lad. They had said, “Do you intend to reign over us? (verse37:8). Now he reminded them that he had been made “ruler of all Egypt” (verse 45:8).

Joseph’s Plan To bring His Father To Egypt (verses 9-20)

II. In his second part of his speech to the brothers, Joseph made plans to bring his father to Egypt. He twice repeated that the brothers were to go to Jacob and with all haste bring him down to Egypt (verses 9, 13). He had set aside the “region of Goshen” (verse 10) where they could continue to raise their families and livestock during the five remaining years of famine. In the midst famine, the sons of Israel were to be well provided for in Goshen.
III. It can hardly be without purpose that this picture of God’s chosen people dwelling safely and prosperously in the land that Joseph provided for them comes at the close of the Book of Genesis and that is near replica as things were in the beginning. Moses appears intentionally to draw our attention to the connection between the end of the book and the beginning.

IV. Thus when Pharaoh restated Joseph’s offer and “twice” gave the brothers the good (NIV “best”) of the land of Egypt, it is hard not to see in the purpose of this narrative a conscience allusion to the good (1:31) land given to Adam in the first chapter of the book. The picture of Joseph is a picture of restoration – not just the restoration of the good fortune of Jacob but, as a picture, the restoration of the blessing that was promised through the offspring of Jacob.

Joseph’s response To The News Of Joseph (verses21-28)

VII. Jacob’s response to the news of Joseph plays a key role in connecting these narrative of the message of the Pentateuch as a whole. Throughout the Pentateuch there is a focus on the response of God’s people to the work of God. At important moments in the narrative, this response is interpreted as either one of “faith” (15:6; exodus 4:31;14:13; 19:19) or “no faith” (14:26;Numbers 14:11).

VI. Jacob’s response falls in with these other examples. Here, however, Moses gives a deeper insight into the nature of his faith. At first, when Jacob heard the news that Joseph was alive, (his heart grew numb (verse 26; NIV “Jacob was stunned”) and “he did not believe.” But when he heard the words of Joseph and saw all that he had sent to take him back to Egypt, “the spirit…of Jacob revived” (verse 27) and he set out to go to him.

VIII. The faith of Jacob bore the same marks as that of the other occurrences of faith throughout the Pentateuch, but in this text alone a different dimension is stressed. The new dimension in Jacob’s faith is the contrast between his “numbed heart” and his “revived spirit.” Jacob’s lack of faith is identified with his “numbed heart.” When his spirit was renewed, however, he believed. The viewpoint expressed here is very similar to that of the later prophetic literature where faith and the “new heart” are synonymous (Jeremiah 31:33-34; Ezekiel 36:26) and where lack of faith (Habakkuk 1:5; “not believe) is synonymous with numbness (Habakkuk 1:4; NIV “the law is paralyzed.” All these texts seem to be summed up in the words of David in Psalm 51, “Create in me a pure heart, oh God/and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (verse 10).
Genesis: Chapter Forty Six

Jacob’s Journey To Egypt (verses 1-4)

I. Before going to Egypt, Jacob stopped at Beersheba and there he built an alter and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.

A. Moses is careful to remind the reader in this way that the patriarchs all worshipped the same God. Jacob worshipped the God of his father, Isaac. In light of this fact, there appears to be a remarkable contrast between God’s words to Jacob in this chapter and his words to Isaac earlier in chapter 26.

1. The Lord had said to Isaac, “Do not go down to Egypt” (26:2); but now he said to Jacob, “Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt” (verse 3)

2. Such a change in attitude toward the patriarch’s traveling to Egypt indicates that the Lord was following a specific plan with regard to his people.

B. His instructions to Isaac in chapter 26 might have left the impression that he was opposed in principle to the seed of Abraham going to Egypt. That, in turn, might have left the impression that the whole of the Joseph story, which resulted in Jacob going to Egypt, was running counter to God’s purposes.

C. When the Lord speaks to Jacob, however, it becomes clear that a sojourn in Egypt could play a part in God’s plan. Such a perspective is consistent with the overall theme of the Joseph narrative, which I that God was working all things for the good of Jacob and his house.

II. God’s words to Jacob in the night vision also reiterate the promise to Abraham that from his descendents would come a “great nation” (12:2), but they also add that God would do this in Egypt. Egypt was to be the place where the house of Jacob would become the nation of Israel.

A. These words, then, anticipate all the work of God that was to be recounted in the Torah. God would bring his people into Egypt and be with them there; and after they had become a great nation he would bring them back to the Promised Land.

B. This was the second “vision” in which God had revealed his future plans with the offspring of Abraham. In chapter 15, “in a vision” (verse 1), God revealed to Abraham that his descendents would be taken into servitude for four hundred years (15:13) and after that would come out with “great wealth” (15:14; NIV “possessions”).
The Journey Of Jacob (verses 5-7)

III. Special attention is given to the journey of Jacob and his household into Egypt. Just as Abraham had left Ur of the Chaldeans and journeyed to Canaan (12:4-5), so now Jacob left the land of Canaan and journeyed to Egypt (verses 5-6). Both men were leaving the land of their birth in obedience to the will of God, and the obedience of both men just at this point plays a pivotal role in God’s election of the seed of Abraham.

A. Thus verses 6-7 emphasize by repetition that “all his offspring (verses 6-7; literally “all his seed”) went with Jacob into the land of Egypt.

B. To graphically demonstrate the importance of this point, Moses now lists the names of “all his offspring” and numbers them at 70 (verse 27).

Seventy Names; Seventy Nations (verses 8-27)

IV. The list of names in this list appears selected so that the total numbers “seventy” (verse 27). It can hardly be coincidental that the number of nations in Genesis 10 is also “seventy.” Just as the “seventy” nations represent all the descendents of Adam, so now all the sons represent all the descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the sons of Israel.

A. What we see here in narrative form is a demonstration of a theme in Deuteronomy 32:8, That God apportioned the boundaries of the nations (Genesis 10) according to the number of the sons of Israel. Thus Moses has gone to great lengths to portray the nation of Israel as a new humanity and Abraham as a second Adam. The blessing that is to come through Abraham and his offspring is a restoration of the original blessing of Adam, a blessing that was lost in the fall.

B. The picture of God that emerges from these pages is not merely a God who works with his own chosen people for their good alone, but who works with the nations to bring about his plan of salvation. The picture is very similar to that of Isaiah 45, where the rise of the kingdom of Persia is portrayed as the handiwork of God, all for the sake of the universal salvation and blessing that God Intended through his chosen seed.

C. In Deuteronomy 19:22 the number “seventy” is seen as a very small number in comparison to the fulfillment of God’s promise of making the descendents of Abraham outnumber the stars of the heavens. Thus, in preparation for the idea of God’s faithfulness to the promise to the patriarchs, we are reminded of the relatively few descendents of Israel who went into the land of Egypt.

D. Exodus 1:5 returns to this same theme by reminding the reader of the “seventy” descendents of Jacob who went into Egypt and of their great increase during their
sojourn there: “the Israelites were fruitful and multiplied greatly and became exceedingly numerous, so that the land was filled with them” (Exodus 1:7 – a clear allusion to the promised blessing (cf. Genesis 1:28).

**Into The Land Of Goshen (verses 28-34)**

V. Curiously, in the narrative itself it was Judah, not Joseph, who led the sons of Israel into the land of Goshen. Once again it appears as though Moses has singled out Judah for special attention over against Joseph. Although in the Joseph story as a whole it was Joseph who was responsible for the preservation of the sons in Egypt, here, within the detail of the passage, it was Judah who “pointed out the way” (NIV “to get directions” verse 28) to the land of Goshen.

A. Such a special focus on Judah is part of an overall strategy of Moses to highlight the crucial Role of Judah in God’s plan to bring about Israel’s deliverance. The prominence of Judah is seen most clearly in Jacob’s words of blessing to his twelve sons (49:8-12).

B. The chapter ends with Joseph’s plan to secure the land of Goshen as a dwelling place for the sons of Israel (verses 13-34). The plan was simply to tell Pharaoh that they were shepherds. As Moses informs us, the Egyptians hated shepherds and thus would allow the Israelites to dwell off by themselves in the land of Goshen.

C. In the next chapter, Joseph’s plan succeeded, and the people were given the land in land of Goshen. In these two brief narratives, Joseph and Judah are placed in marked contrast. Judah led the brothers to the land of Goshen, but it was Joseph’s plan that resulted in their being able to live there.
Genesis: Chapter Forty Seven

Joseph’s Family Settles In Goshen

I. Throughout the Joseph narratives, Moses has been careful to allow the key events to be told twice. The events of chapters 46 and 47 are no exception. Joseph has told his plan to his brothers in chapter 46 and now, in chapter 47, Moses describes the outcome of the results of the plan.

A. The point is to show that Joseph’s plan was successful and thereby reinforce a central theme of the narrative: “The Lord was with Joseph and he prospered” (39:2).

B. Joseph’s wisdom resulted in the sons of Israel dwelling safely in the land of Goshen where there was a severe famine in the land of Canaan (verses 1-4).

C. Pharaoh’s response (verses 5-6) was even more generous than the previous narrative would have suggested. Not only did he grant their wish and allow Joseph’s brothers to settle in Goshen, he also put the brothers in charge of his own livestock as well, a result curiously reminiscent of Joseph’s own rise to power in the house of Pharaoh. Thus the narrative shows that Joseph’s fortune was duplicated in the fortune of his brothers.

D. The land of Goshen is called “the best part of the land” (metab, verse 6), which perhaps is a wordplay on the “good” (tob) that God intended in all of these recorded events (50:20).

II. Significantly, the concern of the narrative is to show that Joseph “blessed Pharaoh” when he was brought before him. Its importance can be seen from the fact that it was mentioned twice. Lying behind such emphasis in the narrative is God’s promise to Abraham that he would bless those who blessed the offspring of Abraham. The passage shows that in Joseph and Jacob the promise to Abraham was being fulfilled with the nations surrounding them.

III. The words of Jacob to Pharaoh in verse 9 – “My years have been few and difficult, and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage of my fathers” – sound unusual in the way they contrast with the two accounts of his blessing Pharaoh.

A. What do Jacob’s words mean? They appear to be a deliberate contrast to the later promise in Deuteronomy that one who honors his father and mother should “live long and it should go well with you in the land” (Deuteronomy 5:16).

1. Jacob, who deceived his father and thereby gained the blessing, must not only die outside the promised land, but we also learn that his years were few and difficult.
2. From his own words, then, we can see a final recompense for Jacob’s actions earlier in the book.

B. As Abraham obeyed God and lived long in the land (26:5), so Jacob’s years were short and difficult. In spite of such a final verdict on the life of Jacob, the narrative goes on to show that he lived out his remaining years “in the best part of the land” (verse 11), though not the promised land; and Joseph, his son, provided for him and his household.

Joseph’s rule in Egypt ((verses 13-27))

IV. Moses goes into great detail to show the final steps by which Joseph extended his authority and the authority of Pharaoh over every region of Egypt. The narrative returns to the story line of 41:57 with an account of the affairs of Joseph in Egypt and his work on behalf of Pharaoh.

A. The brothers are no longer the center of attention. Moses, at least temporarily, leaves them behind to focus on Joseph and his sons. The narrative returns to the theme of the brothers in chapter 49, but there it is not Joseph and his brothers, rather it is Jacob and his sons - with Joseph simply being one of the brothers. It is only in the end, at verse 50:15, that we return to the theme of Joseph and his brothers.

B. We might ask what Moses’ strategy is in inserting in inserting the account of Joseph and his brothers (chapters 42-46) in the midst on the narratives dealing with Joseph’s rise to power in Egypt (chapters 39-41, 47. The answer may lie in the way in which this final narrative resembles the story of Joseph and his brothers.

1. Throughout those narratives the theme was repeatedly expressed that Joseph’s wisdom and administrative skills saved the lives of his brothers and father.

2. Thus at the beginning of the story, Jacob had told his sons to go down to Egypt to buy grain “that we may live and not die” (42:2). Then Judah, “in the second year” (45:6), told his father to let them return to Egypt “that we may live and not die: (43:8).

3. Finally, when he revealed himself to them, Joseph told his brothers that God had sent him to Egypt “to save livers” (45:5).

V. In keeping with that emphasis, the present narrative opens with the statement of the Egyptians to Joseph as they seek to by grain from him: “Why should we die before your eyes?” (verse15). Then it continues with the account of their return to Joseph (“the following year” (verse 18) when they again said: “Why should we perish?” (verse19) and
then again, “that we may live and not die” (verse 19). Such repetitions in the surface structure suggest that a thematic strategy is at work. First with his brothers and then with the Egyptians, Joseph’s wisdom is seen as the source of life for everyone in the land.

VI. A further evidence of a distinct strategy behind the present narrative in chapter 47 can be seen in the ironic twist given the earlier narratives by the outcome of this chapter. The whole of the story of Joseph and his brothers began with Joseph being sold (37:28) into slavery (39:17) for 20 pieces of silver. Now, at the conclusion, Joseph is shown selling (verse 20) the whole of the land of Egypt into slavery (verses 19, 25), and taking his family’s “money” (literally “silver”).

VII. In the end, because of the wisdom of Joseph, the offspring of Abraham became “fruitful” (verse 27), “increased greatly in number,” and were dwelling safely and prosperously in the region of Goshen. Such a picture seems to be an obvious replication of the intended blessing of the early chapters of Genesis: “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth” (1:28).

Jacob’s Burial Instruction (verses 28-31)

VIII. The thread of narrative continues from verses 8-12 where, at his last mention, Jacob’s age had been given as 130 years. To return to the subject of Jacob, Moses bridges the narrative gap with a summation of all the years of his life, 17 years in Egypt and 130 give a total of 147 years.

A. The initial impression from this verse is that the Jacob narratives are coming to a close, but such is not the case. Two crucial chapters remain.

B. The function of verse 28 is twofold. It first provides continuity with the Jacob narrative that had been broken in to by the account of Joseph’s further rise to power (verses 13-27); and, second, it moves the narratives to a new time frame, 17 years later.

C. Perhaps the underlying assumption intended is that by now the famine was over and Joseph’s position in Egypt has been well established. With such matters behind, Moses moves to the last days of Jacob.

IX. As he approached death, Jacob’s only request was that he not be buried in the land of Egypt. The manner of the request suggests that it is intended as an allusion back to the sending of Abraham’s servant for a bride for Isaac: “Put your hand under my thigh and promise” (47:29; cf. 24:2). The similarities between the two requests are obvious.

A. As he approached death (24:1), Abraham did not want his son to take a wife from among the people in the land where he was then dwelling but rather to take a wife from among his own family (24:3-4). In the same way, as he approached death
(verse 29), Jacob did not want to be buried among the Egyptians but with his fathers (verse 30) in his own land.

B. The same theme is taken up in chapter 50 when Joseph makes his sons swear that they will carry his bones to the Promised Land, a request carried out by the sons of Israel in Joshua 24:32.
Genesis: Chapter Forty Eight

Introduction

I. The phrase “after these things” suggests an important break in the narrative and separates this passage from the events that have proceeded. Chapter 48 forms a fitting conclusion to the Jacob Narratives. As in the earlier patriarchal narratives, the blessing of the father is passed on to the next generation.

A. Two features of this passage stand out:

1. First, as with the earlier instances of the patriarchal blessings, it was the younger son, Ephraim, who was blessed as the firstborn rather than the older, Manasseh (verse 19). In this respect the passage continues the theme that the blessing did not follow the natural line of descent or natural right.

2. Second, the blessing was a gift bestowed on those who could not claim it as a right. The blessing was a bestowed gift recorded in this chapter is subordinated and superseded by the blessing of Jacob that follows in chapter forty nine.

B. It has been an interesting feature of the entire Joseph narratives that Judah that Judah, rather than Joseph, who ultimately prevailed in gaining the position of gaining the preeminence among his brothers. As important as Joseph is to the structure of the Genesis narratives, his role is subordinate to that of Judah.

C. Consequently the blessing of the sons of Joseph recorded in this passage do not play a significant role in the Genesis story. Rather, It is the blessing of Judah in chapter 49 that plays the dominant role in the continuing story of the promise and the blessing. From Judah comes the house of David, and from David comes the Messiah – that is the focus of the biblical story that follows.

D. The two sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, play an important role in the text dealing with the divided northern kingdom; but Moses’ attention to that kingdom, which ultimately was dispersed and lost in the Dispersion, pales quickly in the rising star of David.

The Last Days of Jacob (verses 1-6)

II. Once again we are reminded of the frailty of Jacob (verse 1), and we can see that his life is drawing to a close. However, after he saw Joseph and his two sons, Jacob was revived (verse 2) and he prepared to bestow God’s blessings on the house of Joseph.
A. Jacob’s recollection of God’s promise to him at Bethel (35:9-13) is significant. He repeated the Lord’s words almost verbatim; but in the minor alterations we can see not only Jacob’s recollection of the promise, but also Moses’ perspective. As he had acknowledged in verse 39, so now Jacob recalled that God had blessed him (verse 3). When he recounted what God had said Jacob brought a meaning to God’s words that helps clarify the reader’s understanding the Lord’s promised blessing.

1. In 35:11, the Lord had said, using the imperative mood, “Be fruitful and increase in number.” The use of the imperative in blessing is not unusual and should be understood, not as a command, but as a form of “well wishing.”

2. The Lord was saying “May you be fruitful and increase,” just as in Genesis 1:28. But as Jacob retold the story to Joseph in this chapter, he did not use the imperative but changed the verbal forms to stress that God was the one who would bring about all that he had promised: I am going to make you fruitful and will increase your numbers. I will make you a community of peoples, and I will give this land as an everlasting possession to your descendants after you (verse 4).

B. As he looked back on the blessing and recounted it to his sons, Jacob brought out just that aspect of the blessing that had been the theme of the Joseph narratives: God would ultimately bring about all that he had promised. All that had happened to the house of Jacob was in God’s plan and was intended by him “for good” (50:20).

III. A second nuance is noticeable in Jacob’s recounting of the promise: when he recounted God’s promise of the land, he did so verbatim: I will give you this land …to your descendants after you. He added “as an everlasting possession (verse 4), a statement that was not recorded in chapter 35.

A. Only one other time is the promise of the land called an everlasting possession, (17:8). There too when the promise was given to Abraham the form of the blessing was not an imperative. (“Be fruitful and increase).

B. But the form of the verb denoting God as the subject of the action: (Be fruitful and increase”) but the form of the verb denoting God as the subject of the action. The Lord says, I…will greatly increase your numbers” (17:2) and “I will make you make you very fruitful” (17:16).

IV. It may also be significant that Jacob omitted one of the key elements of the promise that the Lord had made to him in chapter 35. The Lord had said, “Kings will come from your body” (35:11 cf. 17:16, 6)), but in the present chapter no mention of that part of the promise is made. Probably the stress on Judah with regard to the kinship in chapter 49 has precluded any mention of the promise of kings in reference to Joseph.
**The Sons of Joseph (verse 7)**

V. The two sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, here were taken into the family of Jacob and were treated as his own (verse 5). They, along with the other sons of Jacob, would inherit the promise of Abraham (verse 6).

A. Henceforth the families of Ephraim and Manasseh were counted among the sons of Jacob and were to be treated as his own. Henceforth the families were Ephraim and Manasseh were counted among the sons of Jacob, and later became two of the most important of the tribes of Israel.

B. In later biblical texts these two names became synonymous with the northern kingdom of Israel, which stood in bitter opposition to the kingdom of Judah.

C. Verse 7 has long puzzled interpreters. Why the mention of Rachael at this point in the narrative? If we relate the verse to what precedes, then the mention of Rachael here could be prompted by the fact that as she had born Jacob two sons (44:2727, Joseph and Benjamin) at a time when he was about to enter (48:7) the land, so also Joseph gave Jacob two (verse 5) just at the time when he was about to enter Egypt.

D. Such symmetry suggests that Ephraim and Manasseh are replacements for Joseph and Benjamin, which serves to further the sense of divine providence behind the events of Jacob’s life.

E. Furthermore, Jacob’s recollection (verse 7) is virtually verbatim to that in the account of Rachael’s death in 35: 16 – 19. In both passages the stress is laid on the site of Ephrath, which Moses identifies in both passages as Jerusalem.

1. As in earlier cases in the concern the burial of the patriarchs in the Promised Land, Jacob’s mention of the burial is tied to the promise that the land would be an eternal possession of the seed of Abraham.

2. Rachel’s burial place, like Abraham and Sarah’s and Jacob’s own impending burial site (47:29, 30), serves as a reminder of the faithfulness of God to his covenant promises.

**The Blessing Of Ephraim and Manasseh (verses 8 - 22)**

VI. The blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh is recounted in great detail. In the account of Jacob blessing his sons (chapter 49), these two sons are not mentioned. The overall function of the present account then is to augment the blessings the blessing of chapter 49 with an accounting of the two sons who have taken their place in the house of Jacob along with the other sons (verses 5 – 6).
A. Great care is taken to Emphasize in the blessing of these two sons Ephraim, the younger brother, was given the blessing of the firstborn over Manasseh (verse 20b). As has been the case throughout the patriarchal narratives, it was the younger son who was chosen to carry the line of blessing.

B. The first blessing (verses 15 – 16) appears to be of Joseph, rather than the two sons: Then he blessed Joseph, (verse 15). In the blessing itself, however, mention is made to the “young sons” (verse 16), and the blessing upon Joseph ultimately focuses on them.

C. Before Jacob went on to address the sons specifically, Joseph interrupted him attempting Jacob to place his right hand on Manasseh rather than Ephraim. (verse 13), Thus giving the blessing of Manasseh, the eldest son. After objecting to Joseph’s attempt (verse 19), Jacob went on to bless the two sons specifically, “He blessed them,” (verse 20), thus giving Ephraim prominence over Manasseh.

VII. Jacob’s blessing is a storehouse of key thematic terms that direct the reader’s attention to several major themes at work in the book as a whole.

A. “God is the God before whom my Fathers Abraham and Isaac walked” (verse 15). Not only does the mention of Abraham and Isaac connect Jacob’s faith in God to his immediate forefathers, but it also helps tie together the faith of the earliest patriarchs with that of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. At two earlier points in the book, the faith of the primeval patriarchs described as those who “walked with God.” The faith of the early Fathers was at one with the patriarchs – they walked with God.

B. At the same time this description of God also serves to link the faith of the fathers with that of the later generations of god’s covenant people.

C. At the same time this description of God also serves to link the faith of the fathers with that of the later generations of God’s chosen people. As Moses said in Deuteronomy 30:16, the essence of the covenant relationship was that God’s people were to love God and “walk in his ways”; and as the prophets were later to say “What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).

D. Jacob’s short statement of faith, then, provides a theological link connecting provides a theological link connecting and identifying the faith throughout the ages. God is also described in Jacob’s blessing as the “God who has shepherded me all my life to this day” (verse 15) and as the Angel who has delivered me from all harm (verse 16).

E. It is unusual that God is described as the Angel, since earlier in the book it is that “God sent his angel” (24:7) or simply that one of the patriarchs was visited by “the angel of the Lord” (22:11).
F. The blessing of the two sons picks up the blessing of the promise to Abraham. They are to be called by Jacob’s “name” and the “name” of Abraham and Isaac, just as God had promised to Abraham “I will make you name great” (12:2). They were to increase greatly (verse 16) just as God had promised Abraham, I will make you into a great nation.”

VIII. The central concern of this section is to underscore the fact that Ephraim, the younger son, was given preeminence over Manasseh, the elder. There is an interesting reversal of the scene in which Jacob received the blessing from his father, Isaac, in chapter 27.

A. Isaac, who was nearly blind, was deceived into blessing the younger son rather than the elder. Though nearly blind himself (verse 10), Jacob appeared to be making the same mistake.

B. When Joseph attempted to correct him, however, he stated his intentions clearly: “His younger brother will be greater than he” (verse 19). Moses enforces his words by stating further that “he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh” (verse 29).

IX. We may ask why there is so much concern over whether it was Ephraim or Manasseh who was placed first, especially that it was Judah and neither Joseph nor his two sons who received the preeminent place. The answer is that the issue of preeminence in these texts is meant to address the larger question of who stands in a position to receive God’s blessing. Over and over in these narratives, the answer to that question has been the same. Receiving the offer that does not rest with one’s status in the world. On the contrary, the blessing of God rests solely on God’s grace.

X. The last two verses are difficult to understand, not only in the immediate context, but also in the entire picture of Jacob that emerges in the Genesis Narratives.

A. Throughout these narratives Jacob has been pictured, not as a man of “sword and…bow” (verse 22), but as “a quiet man, staying among the tents” (25:27). Elsewhere Jacob had said of the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, “If they join forces and attack me, I and my household will be destroyed” (34:30). Now, suddenly on his deathbed, Jacob revealed another picture of himself as he bequeathed to Joseph the portion of land he had taken by force.

B. Though he spoke to Joseph, his use of the plural pronouns (“with you,” verse 21) shows that he was addressing a larger audience. In light of the fact that he spoke of a time when they would return to the land of their fathers, that larger audience was to be represented in the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.
Genesis: Chapter Forty Nine

Jacob’s Prophecy Concerning his sons legacy – Intro (verses 1-2)

I. The poetic discourse of chapter 49 plays a key role in the strategy of the patriarchal narratives as well as the strategy of the book as a whole.

A. Jacob’s last words to his sons have become a final statement of the book’s major theme: God’s plan to restore the lost blessing through the offspring of Abraham.

1. The key Moses’ understanding of Jacob’s last words lies in the narrative framework that surrounds them.

2. In verse one we are explicitly told that Jacob was speaking of those things that would happen “in the last days (in days to come NIV).” The same expression occurs in the Pentateuch as an introduction to two other poetic discourses, the oracle of Balaam (Numbers 24) and the last words of Moses (Deuteronomy 31:29).

3. On all three occasions the subject matter introduced by the phrase “in the last days” is that of God’s future of his chosen people. At the center of that deliverance stands a king (Genesis 49:10; Numbers 24:7). Deuteronomy 33:5). In Genesis 49, that king is connected with the house of Judah.

B. At the close of Jacob’s discourse (verse 29), Moses goes to great lengths to draw a line connecting Jacob’s words in this chapter to the blessing that has been a central concern of the book since 1:28. He does this by repeating the word “blessing” three times in the short span of verse 28, which literally reads: each according to his blessing he blesses them. By framing Jacob’s words between verses 1 and 28, Moses shows where his interest lies. Jacob’s words look to the future - “in the last days” – draw on the past, that is, God blessing mankind.

Joseph Blesses His Sons (verses 3-27)

II. The sons of Leah (Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Zebulun, and Issacher) lead the list, followed by the sons of the handmaidens, Bilhah (Dan), Zilpah (Gad and Asher), and again Bilhah (Napthali), and then the sons of Rachel (Joseph, Benjamin).

Reuben

III. The key to regarding the saying of Reuben is the saying “you will no longer excel.” The word “excel is a play on the two statements that have preceded it: excelling in honor and excelling in power. Though Reuben has excelled, he would no longer excel.
A. The reason given is brief but to the point: for you went up onto...my couch and defiled it. This refers to an episode briefly noted in 35:22: While Israel was living in that region, Reuben went in and slept with his concubine Bilhah, and Israel heard of it.” As with the rest of these saying, the message was terse and to the point. Reuben no longer had the right of the firstborn of Jacob because he violated the honor of his father, and although Judah was the strongest of his brothers, the rights of the firstborn belonged to Joseph (1 Chronicles 5:1-2).

1. Ultimately the purpose behind these initial saying was the elimination the rightful heirs to make room Judah and Joseph at the top.

2. Many years later the author of the Book of Chronicles offered the following explanation: Reuben was the firstborn, but when he defiled his marriage bed, his rights as firstborn were given to Joseph son of Israel, so he could not be listed in the genealogical were given to the sons of Joseph son of Israel, and although Judah was the strongest and a ruler came from him, the rights of the firstborn.

B. In his reference to the sons of Joseph taking the birthright the chronicler was no doubt thinking of Genesis 48:5, where Jacob said, Ephraim and Manasseh [the two sons of Joseph will be mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are mine.

**Simeon and Levi**

IV. Simeon and Levi are grouped together because they were the instigators of the bloodshed against the city of Shechem (34:25). At that time Jacob protested vehemently against the two sons and their attack against the defenseless city (34:30).

A. Here Jacob gave his final verdict on their action: the two tribes of Levi and Simeon would not have their own portion in the inheritance of the land.

B. The fulfillment of Jacob’s words can be found in that the tribe of Simeon virtually disappears from the biblical narratives after the time of the Conquest and in the fact that the tribe of Levi was given the priesthood and hence was not given its own inheritance in the apportioning of the land.

**Judah**

V. Having eliminated the older brothers as rightful hears of the blessing, Jacob foretold a future of the tribe of Judah that pictured him as the preeminent son.

A. We have seen that the author of the Book of Chronicles that Jacob’s words did not give Judah the right of firstborn, which, according to Genesis 48:5, belonged to Joseph (1 Chronicles 5:1-2). Thought he did not have the right of the firstborn, Judah had been chosen over all the others as the royal tribe.
Book of Chronicles, Judah “prevailed” (1 Chronicles 5:2, NIV, “was the strongest) over his brothers and thus became heir to the throne.

B. As the writer of Psalm 78 later put it, The Lord rejected the tents of Joseph, he did he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim; but he chose the tribe of Judah, mount Zion, which he loved (verses 67-68). As is suggested in these later biblical texts, the words of Jacob regarding Judah in Genesis 49 anticipated in many details the future rise if David to Israel’s throne.

C. Unlike the imagery used of the other sons, the words regarding Judah are quite transparent, though they are, of course, made up of poetic images. Judah is described as a victorious warrior who returns home from battle and greeted by the shouts of praise of shouts from his brothers. The parallelism of Verse 8 is extended by the statement “your fathers sons will bow down to you.” It is difficult not to see in this an intentional illusion to the dream of Joseph (37:10) in which his father’s sons would come down before him.

1. In other words, what was to happen to Joseph - and did in fact happen in the course of the narrative (e.g. 42:6) – has been picked up by way of this image and transferred to the future house of Judah. What has happened to Joseph is portrayed as a picture of what would happen to Judah “in the last days” (49:1).

2. The picture of the victorious is extended with the picture of Judah as a young lion (“lion’s cub,” NIV) sleeping in its den after having devoured its prey. The end of verse 9 speaks for itself: “Who dares rouse him?” In verse 10 the picture is filled out with a picture of the young warrior as king. He is the one who holds the “scepter” and the “ruler’s staff.”

3. The point of Jacob’s words is that Judah will hold such a status among the tribes of Israel until on comes “to whom it belongs.” Those who reign among the house of Judah will do so in anticipation of the one to whom the kingship truly belongs. The word “Shiloh,” found in some English versions, is simply an untranslated from of the Hebrew expression meaning “one to whom it belongs.” It is not a name as such, nor is it to be associated with the site of the Tabernacle in the days of Samuel (1 Samuel 1:3).

4. The most startling aspect of the picture of this one from the tribe of Judah comes next” “and the obedience of the nations is his” Verse 10b). The use of the plural word “nations” rather than the singular “nation” suggests that Jacob had in view a kingship that extended beyond the boundaries of Israel to include other nations as well. There may be an anticipation of this view of the promise of god to Jacob in 28:3 and 48:4 I “will make you a community of people.”
5. In any case, later biblical writers were apparently guided by texts such as this one in formulating their view if the future reign of the future Davidic King, e.g. Psalm 2:8; Daniel 7:13-14; Revelation 5:5-9.

6. Verses 11 and 12 draw an extended picture of the reign of this one from the tribe of Judah. In his day, there will again be plenty for everyone. Poetically this idea of expressed of plentitude is a short text in their reign of the coming Messiah expressed with the image of the images of the donkey tethered with the choicest of vines and clothing washed in vintage wine (verse 11).

7. The sense of the imagery is that wine, the symbol of prosperity and blessing, will be so plentiful that even the choicest vines will be put to everyday use as tethering of animals of burden and vintage wine will be as commonplace as wash water. Verse 12 returns to the picture of the king of Judah. His eyes are darker than wine and his teeth are whiter than milk. He is a picture of strength and power.

8. Later biblical writers drew heavily from the imagery in this text in their portrayal of the reign of the coming Messiah (Isaiah 63:1-6; Revelation 9:13-14; Revelation 19:15).

**Jacob’s Remaining Sons**

VI. Jacob’s words regarding his remaining sons, with the exception of Joseph, are noticeable, not only for their brevity, but also for their cryptic allusions to coming events that at that time lie in the future of the particular tribe. True the poetic quality of the text, the images on the destiny of the remaining sons are, in most cases, based on a wordplay of the son’s name. The central theme of each image is that of prosperity. Just as the image of the victorious king from the tribe of Judah who will reign over all nations in a time of rich blessing, so each of the remaining brothers will experience the same prosperity and blessing.

**Zebulun**

VII. Zebulun, whose boundaries in 19:10-16 do not touch the sea, will extend its borders as far as Sidon. The Hebrew word Zebulun, which means “lofty abode,” has become a cipher for the of the Promised Land into the “far recesses” of Sidon (NIV, “his border”). There is apparently an intended wordplay between “abode” and “abide” (NIV, “will live”).

**Issachar**

VIII. Issachar, whose name is a play on the word “wages,” (see 30:18), is pictured as a strong donkey who sees that his land of rest is good and applies his back to the burden. The expression “he sees how good is his resting place is perhaps an allusion to chapter one
where the similar expression “and God saw that it was good” is a constant reminder that God’s purpose in Creation was to provide the good for man. The use of the term “resting place or “land of rest” aligns the words of Jacob with the theme of the future rest that God will give his people in the promised land (Psalm 95:11).

**Dan**

IX. Dan, whose name is a play on the expression “he will judge,” is the one who will judge his people. He is likened to a snake along the path that attacks the heels of the horse and cunningly defeats the horseman. Though the sense of the image itself is unclear, Jacob’s final words regarding Dan show that the image was meant in a positive way: “I look for your deliverance, O Lord” (verse 18). Breaking up, as it does, on the terse increasingly terse poetic images, this expression of hope in the Lord’s deliverance provides the much needed clue to the meaning of Jacob’s words. In the individual and future destiny of the sons is embodied the hope of all Israel. At the center of that hope is the King of Israel.

**Gad**

X. The brief statement regarding Gad contains a wordplay on nearly every word: Gad (gad) will be attacked by a band of raiders (ygudennu), but he will attack (yagud) them at their heels. Again, although it is very brief, the saying falls in line with the others following in line with the prophecy of the line of Judah in that it gives expression to the hope of the final defeat of the enemy.

**Asher**

XI. The words regarding Naphtali are also brief. The picture they present, which is similar to the others, is a time of great future prosperity and abundance.

**Joseph**

XII. As might be expected from the importance of Joseph in the earlier chapters in the earlier chapters, Jacob has much to say about the future of his tribe. In substance Jacob’s statements regarding Joseph repeat much of what was said about the other brothers after Judah. The difference in the words to Joseph, however, is the repetition of the word “blessing.” Whereas Jacob’s words regarding the other brother contain a picture of the well being of the sons and thus figuratively speak of a future blessing, Jacob’s words to Joseph explicitly refer to this well being as a “blessing.” As such the words to Joseph fall in line with all those earlier passages in the book that speak specifically of the promised “blessing” and prepare the way for Moses’ final remarks about Jacob’s words in verse 28: “he blessed them, each according to his blessing, he blessed them.” The reference to the “Shepherd” in verse 24 appears to be an allusion to Jacob’s earlier blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh (48:15).
XIII. The picture of Benjamin is similar to that of Judah. Both depict the patriarchs’ future in terms expressing a victorious conquest over the enemy. In both the conqueror is a vicious predator, the lion and the wolf. The stark simplicity of these words to Benjamin, however, bring out the sense of the sudden victory and conquest in much stronger terms than the imagery of Judah.

Conclusion

Moses sums up in unequivocal terms the substance of Jacob’s words to his sons. They are an expression of the theme of blessing that was to be passed along through the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Within Jacob’s words to each of the sons (after Judah), the theme of blessing has been evident in two primary images.

First, the first side of the blessing is stressed in the image of the victorious warrior. The defeat of the enemy is the prelude to the Messianic peace.

Second, the positive side of the blessing is stressed in the image of great prosperity. Behind such imagery of peace and prosperity lies the picture of the Garden of Eden – the Paradise lost. The focus of Jacob’s words has been the promise that when the One comes to whom the Kingship really belongs, there will once again be the peace and prosperity that God all to have in the Garden of Eden.
The Death of Jacob (49:29 – 50:11)

XII. Once more the subject of a patriarch’s grave became important as Jacob instructed Joseph to bury him with his fathers in Canaan, not in Egypt. Canaan was where his hope was

A. At the cave of Machpelah (purchased by Abraham, 23:3-20) near Hebron were buried Sarah, Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah (Jacob’s wife) and Leah (Jacob’s first wife).

1. So Jacob died after 147 years of struggle and his sorrow came to an end. Jacob had many infirmities and more than a few sins. But, he had an unquenchable desire for God’s blessing.

2. Jacob had a deep piety that habitually relied on God in spite of all else. In the end he died as a man of genuine faith.

B. Jacob learned in his life where the real blessings come from, and he fought with God and man to be privileged to hand them on to his sons.

XIII. After weeping on his father’s dead body Joseph instructed that Jacob’s body be embalmed for burial in typical Egyptian fashion. The embalming period was seldom less than a month and normally took 40 days.

A. The Egyptians mourned for Jacob for 70 days, just two days short of the normal time of mourning for a Pharaoh. This showed the great respect the Egyptians had for Joseph.

B. After the time of mourning, Joseph asked Pharaoh and got permission to bury his father in the cave of Machpelah in Canaan.

The Journey to Canaan (verses 7-9)

XIV. Joseph led a great procession, including Egyptian dignitaries, Joseph’s family and brothers, to Canaan to bury his father. This was Joseph’s first time back in his homeland in 39 years.

A. Centuries later the children of Israel would leave Egypt again, taking with them ones of a patriarch, Joseph himself.

B. Here, however, the sojourn into the land of promise was temporary; the grave as a claim to the land of promise. God had promised Jacob that he would return him to the land and that Joseph would bury him (46:4).
C. Along the way the mourning of the bereaved for seven days at a threshing floor near the Jordan River gave rise to naming the place *Abel Mizraim*, meaning “meadow of the Egyptians,” but by a wordplay it suggests mourning (“ebel”) of Egyptians. The Canaanites recognized that this was a great event.

D. The trip back to Egypt was the fourth time the majority of the brothers made a journey to Egypt, and it was Joseph’s second trip.

**The Reassurance Of The Fulfillment Of The Blessing (verses 15-26)**

XV. Now that Jacob was dead, the brothers, fearing that Joseph would deal harshly with them for their wrongs, pleaded for forgiveness. Once again (44:33) they referred to themselves as Joseph’s slaves.

XVI. But Joseph, after weeping, reassured them (twice saying, “Don’t be afraid,” (verses 19; 21) that all that had happened was a part of God’s plan to bring about the fulfillment of the promised blessing. Joseph also promised again to provide for them, and he spoke kindly to them.

**The Death of Joseph (verses 22-26)**

VI. Joseph also died in the land of Egypt. Like his fathers before him, he made his brothers promise that his bones would be taken out of the land of Egypt at the great deliverance. This deliverance, he reassured them, would take place when God would visit them to fulfill his promises to his fathers.