

New Beginnings

Wise Principles

for Living

Part II
Studies from the Book of Genesis
Chapters 22-50

A Creative Living International Publication

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Foreword

Welcome to this life-enriching seminar for men and women who already know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and others who may be seeking Him.

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New Beginnings

Wise Principles for Living

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PART 1

THE BEGINNINGS OF HISTORY

Genesis is a book of beginnings: of life, death, marriage, parenting, problems. The characters in Genesis experienced them all. Genesis is also a book of facts. It is not an exhaustive book of scientific or historical fact, but rather a book containing the facts needed to answer certain questions the author meant to address.

Jewish tradition ascribes authorship of Genesis and the first five books of the Bible to Moses. Jesus Christ explicitly ascribed these writings to Moses as well (Luke 24:44). Some theologians contend that unknown authors or editors long after Moses put together these works, but these theories have many variations as well as flaws. There are many evidences, however, that the true author was Moses, although he may have used existing sources for Genesis and some minor editing may have been done after his death.

With Moses as the author, we can assume Genesis was addressed to Israel during their years in the wilderness around 1450 B.C. It was written to explain to these people where they had come from, where they were going, and why. Though miraculously delivered from slavery in Egypt under the leadership of Moses, they understood very little of how and why it happened. Although they were Hebrew and had always been outcasts in the Egyptian culture, they had little knowledge of the God of their forefather Abraham. God set them apart to be a holy nation, but they had a long way to go from the pagan thinking they had developed in Egypt during 400 years of captivity. They needed to know God and His purpose in history, guides to their worship, and standards for moral and ethical decisions.

So the five books of Moses were written to help the Israelites make a clean break with their past in a pagan society and begin to look at life from God's perspective. They were to become a new culture, out of which the

world would be blessed. They needed, as we do, answers to the questions: Who is God? What is my relationship to Him? How did it come about? How does this affect the way I live? Why should I live this way? As we follow the history and people of this book, we will receive, as the Israelites did, God's great answers to these questions.

Easy Breakdown of Genesis

I. Beginnings of Mankind (Chapters 1-11)

Creation

Fall

Flood

Babel

II. Founding Fathers of Israel (Chapters 12-50)

Abraham

Isaac

Jacob

Joseph

Lesson 1

ISAAC ON THE ALTAR

Genesis 22-23

Isaac was probably in his teens or older when God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son on an altar. This was an incredible demand upon Abraham, but God knew this man's faith would stand. God also proved *His* faithfulness and bestowed great blessing because of Abraham's resolve.

Through circumcision of himself and the males of his household, Abraham had both covenanted himself to obey God and dedicated his son to the Lord. Now came the test of these commitments. Would Abraham obey, and would he give back his son to God? The answer to both questions was "yes." As Abraham raised his hand to take Isaac's life, he believed God would either provide another sacrifice or bring Isaac back from the dead (Hebrews 11:19). Whatever He did, Abraham knew God would fulfill His promise to give him descendants through Isaac, numerous as the sand on the seashore (15:4-5; 17:19-21).

The angel of the Lord stayed the hand of Abraham, and a ram in the thicket became the substitutionary offering for Isaac. This sheep became a picture of the substitutionary "lamb of God" (John 1:29) to come in Jesus Christ.² The sacrificial love of Abraham was analogous to the Father's love in sacrificing His only Son for the sins of the world (John 3:16; Romans 8:32).

The Lord responded to Abraham's incredible faith: "I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me" (22:16-18).

Abraham and Isaac had seen the amazing working of God. They could be sure all He promised through their lives for the generations to come would come true.

In Genesis 23, the author records the death of Sarah, Abraham's faithful wife of probably more than 100 years. In his grief, Abraham buried Sarah in a cave at the end of a field that he purchased in Canaan³ for an exorbitant price. His purchase of this plot showed Abraham's commitment to follow the Lord in making Canaan a homeland for him and his children's children.

Read Genesis 22.

1. What command did God give Abraham? What words point to the enormity of this sacrifice (22:1-2)?

Reference: Note 1, *God tested Abraham's faith*, p. 13.

2. What amazes you about Abraham's response (22:3-10; also Hebrews 11:19)?

3. How did God prove worthy of Abraham's trust (22:11-12)?

4. *Fear* of the Lord (22:12) in the Old Testament refers to “reverential trust” in God. How did Abraham show this in his thinking and actions?

5. What did Abraham predict that God fulfilled (22:5,7-8,13-14)?

Read Genesis 23.

6. a. Briefly describe the events of Genesis 23.

b. What do these events demonstrate about Abraham's character?

c. What did his purchase of burial ground in Canaan demonstrate about Abraham's faith in God's promises (23:4,19; see also 12:6-7; 17:8)?

Reference: Note 3, *field Abraham purchased in Canaan*, p. 13.

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Trusting God

In Genesis 22, we see a supreme test of faith, and believers in God throughout history have benefited from the same humble and instant obedience Abraham displayed.

God always tests our faith, not to see what we will do, rather to prove Himself real and faithful to us. When we fail to trust Him, He remains faithful, but we miss the great rewards that come with trust.

According to the Bible, at the heart of the wise person is a “fear” or “reverential trust” in the Lord (Proverbs 1:7a). Trust in a biblical sense is not a “what-will-be-will-be” attitude, but rather a disciplined mental choice that results in bold action. Trust means making decisions to obey God based on an understanding of who God is.

Why should we trust God? Why did Abraham trust God to such an extent? As we continue our Genesis study, we will observe some biblical answers to these questions.

1. a. Where do we tend to put our trust?

Proverbs 11:28

Proverbs 28:26

b. In what other things do modern men and women trust?

2. Why do these things prove untrustworthy?

3. Why can we trust in the Lord according to the following?

Jeremiah 29:11

Romans 8:32

Hebrews 13:5b

2 Corinthians 4:18

4. What benefits of trusting God are found in Proverbs 30:5?

5. How does God encourage us to trust Him to meet our needs in the following areas?

a. When facing temptation: 1 Corinthians 10:13

b. When we are fearful: Isaiah 41:10

c. When we are anxious: Matthew 6:31-34

d. When we feel inadequate: 2 Corinthians 9:8

e. When we are tired and discouraged: Matthew 11:28-30

Optional:

f. When we fail: Psalm 37:24

g. When we need strength: 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

h. When we need courage: Joshua 1:9

i. When we need stability: Psalm 40:1-3

j. When we need peace: John 14:27

6. a. What is integral to trusting God, according to Philippians 4:6?

b. What is the result, according to Philippians 4:7?

SUMMARY

7. a. Where do you need to trust God right now?

b. What principles or promises from this study apply to your situation today?

8. Is there anywhere you are placing trust besides God? Are there any decisions you would like to make in this regard?

9. Is there something you need to put on the altar in order to fully trust God? How does Abraham's story encourage you?

LESSON 1 NOTES

1 *God tested Abraham's faith.* Abraham was tested, not tempted, for God does not tempt according to James 1:13. Satan tempts us (1 Corinthians 7:5b) in order to make us fall; God tests us in order to affirm our faith or prove our commitment. The desired outcome is that we find God faithful, draw closer to Him, and experience Him more deeply as our greatest comrade in life and eternity.

2 *picture of the "lamb of God" to come.* The resemblances between Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac and God's sacrifice of His Son are many. Mount Moriah is even located near Calvary where Jesus Christ was sacrificed for the sins of the world (see John 3:16; 2 Chronicles 3:1).

3 *field Abraham purchased in Canaan.* This historic event marks the first actual possession of land in Canaan by an Israelite.

Lesson 2

REBEKAH

Genesis 24:1-25:11

Abraham was 140 years old, and God blessed him in every way. The people of the area called him a “mighty prince;” and he was held in high esteem by all. Abraham had become very wealthy. He gave generous gifts to the children of Keturah, his second wife, and to his son Ishmael. But Abraham's son Isaac would be the sole heir of Abraham's great estate. More importantly, Isaac was the heir to God's promises that had directed Abraham's life for the past 70 years (12:1-3;17:19).

But Isaac at 40 was still not married. In light of his spiritual heritage, Abraham was concerned that Isaac find a wife from his own people, rather than from Canaan.¹ With a solemn oath,² Abraham's chief servant was commissioned to travel several hundred miles northeast to the Euphrates River valley where his brother Nahor's family lived and find a wife for Isaac. Abraham believed the Lord would send an angel ahead of his servant to give him success in his mission.

After the long journey, the servant stopped at a well and prayed fervently for the leading and provision of God. Before he finished praying, Rebekah, a beautiful young girl, approached and served him by offering him a drink and watering his camels. As he interacted with her, he found her to be the granddaughter of Abraham's brother Nahor, Isaac's second cousin. Through a series of events and interactions with the family, everyone realized that it was the Lord's will for Rebekah to marry Isaac. She journeyed back with Eliezer and the entourage to become Isaac's wife. Isaac loved her.

Genesis 25 briefly tells of Abraham's second wife, or concubine,³ Keturah, who had six sons. At the age of 175, outliving Sarah by almost half a

century, Abraham died, and Isaac and Ishmael buried him. His body was placed with Sarah's in the cave of Machpelah in Canaan where Abraham had purchased a burial place for his family. A man of renowned faith, he would forever be known as “the friend of God.”⁴

Read Genesis 24:1-27.

1. What were Abraham’s main concerns (24:1-9)?

References: Note 1, *instead of [a woman from] Canaan*, and Note 2, *commissioned...chief servant*, pp 22-23.

2. In 24:12-14, we see the first prayer in the Bible for specific guidance. What did Eliezer ask of God?

3. a. Summarize how God began to answer this man’s prayers (24:15-25).

b. What was the servant’s response (24:26-27)?

Read Genesis 24:28-67.

4. After Abraham's servant recounted his amazing story (24:33-49), how did Rebekah's family respond (24:50-53)?

5. What was Rebekah's part in the decision (24:54-60)?

6. Describe Isaac's reception of Rebekah (24:61-67).

Read Genesis 25:1-11.

7. What does this account say about Abraham's last years?

Reference: Note 3, *concubine*, p. 23.

8. Optional question: How would you sum up Abraham's life in a phrase or sentence?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Knowing God's Will and Prayer

How can we discover God's leading? Abraham and his servant model some principles that can help us to seek godly wisdom and guidance. As we continue our study on *New Beginnings*, let's look at some of biblical principles that instruct us in seeking God's best for our lives.

1. Philippians 4:6 says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything . . . present your requests to God . . ." God encourages us to pray about any situation, great or small.

a. List everyday decisions in which we need God's direction.

b. What are some major decisions which confront us from time to time: personal, family, social, vocational?

c. Why are many of these decisions difficult? Why do we need God's help?

2. In the story of Rebekah, what were the most important elements in seeking God's leading and provision?

3. As we seek God's leading and provision, why should we pray? What do the following suggest?

James 1:5

Matthew 7:7-8

4. Why is it important to seek God's will and provision?

Proverbs 14:12

Proverbs 20:24

Jeremiah 10:23

5. What is outstanding to you about the way Abraham and his servant sought God's will? What motivated them to have the attitudes they did regarding the situation?

Optional question: Abraham's servant had not asked for guidance through miraculous signs but through clear signs in natural circumstances. What part do natural reasoning and circumstances often play in discerning God's leading?

6. a. What counsel should we seek in finding God's will, and why should we seek this counsel?

Proverbs 15:22

Psalm 1:1-3

b. How did Abraham's servant do this?

7. What does God promise the one who seeks His will?

Proverbs 3:5-6

Psalm 32:8

Psalm 48:14

8. What might we pray as we seek God?

Psalm 86:11

Psalm 143:10

9. For Abraham's servant, God's leading and provision were almost instant. But Abraham did not see other promises God had given him fulfilled in his lifetime. If God's provision seems slower in coming than we would like, what should we do according to Psalm 27:13-14?

SUMMARY

10. a. What major decision or pressure are you facing right now?

b. What part does prayer play in seeking God's provision or leading in this situation? Have you taken time to pray? What specifically would you ask God for?

11. What two principles from this lesson are most encouraging to you in your circumstances right now?

12. *Optional question:* What is the most important lesson you have learned from studying the life of Abraham?

LESSON 2 NOTES

1 *instead of [a woman from] Canaan.* Noah had prophesied the inevitable outworking of the lascivious tendency in his son Ham (Genesis 9:20-25) especially through his descendant Canaan. Canaan's descendants occupied Palestine (10:15-19) before Israel's conquest documented in the book of Joshua.

"The Canaanites were enslaved by one of the most terrible and degrading forms of idolatry, which encouraged their immorality. Discovered in 1929-37, Canaanite religious literature from Ras Shamra (ancient Ugarit in North Syria) reveals the worship of the immoral gods El and Baal and the sacred courtesans Anath, Asherah and Astarte. This literature fully corroborates the Old Testament notices of the religious debauchery and moral degradation of the Canaanites. Cult objects, figurines and literature

combine to show how sex-centered was Canaanite religion, with human sacrifice (especially infant), cult of serpents, sacred courtesans and eunuch priests excessively common. The sordid depths of social degradation to which the erotic aspects of Canaanite cults led can scarcely be imagined.” Merrill Unger, *Unger’s Bible Handbook*, p. 51.

2 *commissioned...chief servant.* Placing a hand on or under the thigh (a symbol of the reproductive organs) in Genesis 24:2 when taking an oath in connection with the last wishes of a superior symbolizes an involvement of posterity in the results of the agreement. The continuance of Abraham’s godly line through Isaac depended on his servant’s keeping of the oath. The *chief servant* of Abraham is thought to be Eliezer (15:2)

3 A *concubine* was a woman lawfully married to a man in a relation inferior to that of the regular wife. In Abraham’s times, the immediate cause of concubinage was the barrenness of the lawful wife. No moral stigma was attached to being a concubine. It was a natural part of a polygamous social system. A concubine had no authority in the family or household affairs, and their husbands could send them away with a gift, as well as send their children away with a gift, to exclude them from the inheritance (Genesis 25:6). Prominent Old Testament figures who had concubines were Nahor, Abraham, Jacob, Eliphaz, Gideon, Saul, David, Solomon, Caleb. *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, p. 180. Although polygamy was practiced by godly men in ancient times, it was a cultural compromise. Monogamy was God’s divine intention (Genesis 2:23-24).

4 *Abraham... "the friend of God,"* Isaiah 41:8; 2 Chronicles 20:7; James 2:23b.

Lesson 3

JACOB AND ESAU

Genesis 25:19-27:40

Isaac prayed for Rebekah, and after 20 years of barrenness, she became pregnant. It was a difficult pregnancy, and she prayed about the jostling going on inside. The Lord informed her that the twins she would have would father two nations, and the older son would serve the younger.

When the boys were born, Esau came out red and hairy, and Jacob followed hanging on to his brother's ankle. As they grew, the boys became very different. Esau loved to hunt, and Isaac, who liked the taste of wild game, favored Esau. Jacob was quiet and stayed closer to home. He became Rebekah's favorite.

One day, Esau came in famished, and flippantly, but under oath, sold his birthright¹ to Jacob in exchange for some bread and lentil stew. Since the promises of God that Isaac had inherited from Abraham were at the heart of the birthright, Esau's attitude showed that he was godless.² Esau did not care about God's purpose to bless the world through Abraham's offspring. As God had informed Rebekah, Jacob would naturally have been the one to inherit the birthright and carry out the spiritual purposes of the family.

Things became complicated when Isaac's and Rebekah's favoritisms got in the way of waiting for God to work out His plans in His own way. Isaac, while knowing Esau's heart attitude toward God and the prediction given Rebekah, insisted on giving the spiritual blessing³ to Esau. Rebekah overheard as her husband told Esau to go to the field to kill fresh game for a special meal before Isaac gave Esau the family blessing. Immediately, Rebekah contrived a plan whereby her favorite son, Jacob, would fool Isaac into thinking he was really Esau.⁴ The plan worked, and Isaac unknowingly gave the blessing to Jacob instead of Esau.

When Esau came home and the truth became known, he wept and begged his father to bless him, too. Although Esau was ignorant of the sacredness of the blessing, he regretted missing its advantages. Esau hated Jacob for robbing him of both his birthright and his father's blessing, and from that point on his relationship with his mother could not have been good. The story continues in our next lesson.

Genesis 26 recounts three other significant happenings. First, Isaac tried to duplicate his father, Abraham's, scheme of protection in foreign lands. To protect his life, Isaac did as Abraham had done; he told the Canaanite king that Rebekah was really his sister. As with Abraham, God once again intervened to bring protection to the chosen family line.

The second event of Chapter 26 is God's encounter with Isaac to give him the promise of his father Abraham. Isaac responded with worship, the first personal response to God recorded about this patriarch.

The last part of Chapter 26 records the problems Isaac had with the surrounding farmers' jealousy of Isaac's prosperity. They continuously either stopped up or claimed Isaac's water wells. Isaac finally found relief as he settled near the well at Beersheba.

Read Genesis 25:19-34.

1. What problems did Isaac and Rebekah have with the birth of Esau and Jacob (25:19-24)?

2. What does Genesis 25:25-34 tell us about these two sons?

3. Esau despised his birthright (which gave him the greatest part of the inheritance and the headship of the family). He gave up something spiritually valuable for something of comparatively little value. How is this a common human error?

Reference: Note 1, *birthright*, p. 33.

Read Genesis 26.

4. How did Isaac follow in his father's footsteps (26:1-11; see also Genesis 12:10-20; 20:1-18)? What principle of parenting do you see here?

5. What promises did God give Isaac (26:2-5, 23-25)?

Read Genesis 27:1-40

6. How did the parental partiality of Genesis 25:28 work itself out (27:1-17)?

7. What blessing did Jacob receive, and how did he obtain it (27:18-29)?

Reference: Note 3, *Blessing*, and Note 4, *Jacob...selfish interest*, p. 33.

8. What was Esau's reaction (27:38-40)? What prediction did Isaac make?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Building Love: Overcoming Prejudices

Sibling rivalry is common, but add to it parental partiality and the struggle can destroy the family. Isaac and Rebekah's story began with the joyful birth of twins. However, because of insensitivity toward God's leading in raising their sons, Isaac and Rebekah followed their own prejudices and ended up in a web of deceit, malice, and shattered family relationships.

If we are to create and enjoy an environment of love around our lives, we must guard against natural prejudices and favoritisms. Let's observe some guidelines that the Bible offers on the subject of building love by overcoming prejudices.

1. What do you observe about the prejudices or partiality in this story?

2. Why do prejudices cause tension and discourage good relationships?

3. What motivates prejudice and favoritism in our families, workplace and friendships?

4. a. What do the following tell us about God's character regarding partiality?

Romans 2:11

Acts 10:34-35

2 Chronicles 19:7

Job 34:19

b. What was said about Jesus, whom Hebrews 1:3 describes as "the exact representation" of God's character?

Mark 12:14a

5. What does God care about according to 1 Samuel 16:7?

6. What do the following tell us about God's perspective on partiality?
James 2:1,4

Leviticus 19:15

1 Timothy 5:21

7. What biblical principles related to love can help us rise above prejudice?
1 Peter 4:8

1 John 4:20-21

Romans 13:8

8. What other biblical principles have the power to neutralize prejudice?
Colossians 3:13

Luke 6:37

Deuteronomy 25:15

Proverbs 24:17

9. When we invite Christ to come into our lives, His Spirit comes to dwell within us. What specific fruits of the Holy Spirit help us overcome prejudice?

Galatians 5:22-23

SUMMARY

10. Children learn what they see. If you have children, what specific prejudices do you *not* want your children to learn from you or others?

11. How has prejudice hurt you or those you love?

12. As a result of this lesson, what prejudices would you have God's Spirit help you overcome?

13. What have you learned from this lesson about prejudice? About building love around you?

LESSON 3 NOTES

1 Birthright. From the beginning of time, it seems that the firstborn son in the family has been given privileges above other family members. This is seen in successions to thrones in kingdoms throughout history. In Israel, God had a special claim on the firstborn. The birthright included a double portion of the inheritance and, in Esau's time, representation of the family before God (priesthood). Because God had allowed Esau to be born first, it was he that would receive the covenant blessings God had promised to Abraham and to his descendants. Although Esau regretted his move to sell his birthright to Jacob for a mess of pottage, he could not undo the contract he had made under oath. Other examples of loss of birthright: Reuben through sin, Simeon and Levi through violence, all lost birthrights to Judah (Genesis 49:3-10).

2 Esau also married two Canaanite women, as is recorded in Genesis 25:34b; 26:34-35. This further demonstrated his disregard for things of God. See also Note 1, *The Canaanites*, p. 22.

3 Blessing. In Old Testament times, godly men under inspiration bestowed prophetic blessings on their offspring as in Genesis 27:27-29,39,40. Other examples are Jacob in Genesis 49 and Moses in Deuteronomy 33, both giving prophetic statements on the tribes of Israel.

4 Jacob showed only selfish interest in the spiritual treasures as well. Jacob wanted rule over his brother. His name connotes deceiving and supplanting characteristics in this man. God would make Jacob into a godly leader, but it would take years and some hard lessons.

Lesson 4

JACOB IN EXILE

Genesis 27:41-30:24

Jacob had succeeded in securing all of Esau's rights as firstborn, and Esau's frustration and disappointment quickly turned into a determination to kill Jacob as soon as their father died. To protect Jacob, Rebekah urged him to journey several hundred miles northeast to her homeland. Rebekah and Jacob told his father, Isaac, that Jacob was going to find a wife among Rebekah's relatives rather than in Canaan. Isaac blessed Jacob, who left for Paddan Aram with Rebekah's promise to send for him when Esau had cooled off.¹

The first night en route, the Lord visited Jacob in a dream. He promised to protect and bless Jacob, and to bless the world through his descendants as He had promised his grandfather, Abraham (cf. 12:2,3,7). When he awoke, Jacob was in awe that God had so appeared to him. He marked the place with a pillar and named it Bethel, meaning *house of God*. He made a vow that if God would provide for and protect him, and return him to his father's house safely, he would give him a tenth (tithe) of all he received from God.

Upon arriving at a well in Paddan Aram, Jacob met his cousin, Rachel, and instantly fell in love with her. She was the daughter of his mother's brother, Laban. To get Rachel as his wife, he agreed to work seven years for Laban. The time went fast, but Laban pulled off a master deception by having the usual wedding feast for Rachel and Jacob, only to give his eldest daughter, Leah, to Jacob for the consummation. When Jacob discovered this the morning after, Laban's explanation was that it was not the custom to give the youngest daughter in marriage first. He agreed to give Rachel to Jacob, too, after the usual bridal week for Leah was over, and in return for another seven years of work. Jacob, who had been

deceptive himself in getting his brother's birthright, had now ironically become the son-in-law of a master deceiver.

Probably because she was not attractive to him as well as because he had been tricked into becoming her husband, Jacob did not love Leah. Rachel, on the other hand, was not able to give Jacob the children that Leah bore him. The women had a vicious competition over who could have the most children, either by maid or by self, in order to gain the most valuable position to Jacob. The naming of their children reflected their bitterness and rivalry toward each other.

Finally, Rachel was able to conceive. She named her son Joseph. Over seven years, Jacob's wives had eleven sons and one daughter: six sons and a daughter by Leah, two sons by her maid Zilpah, one son by Rachel, and two sons by her maid Bilbah.²

Understandably, Jacob longed to escape Laban and return to his homeland. However, Laban schemed to keep Jacob longer. Through it all, God's promised protection and provision for Jacob were unailing.

Read Genesis 27:41-28:9.

1. What plan did Rebekah design to protect Jacob from Esau's threats (27:41-46)?

Reference: Note 3, *both of you*, p. 41.

2. What encouragement and blessing did Isaac give Jacob before he left (28:1-5)?

Read Genesis 28:10-22.

3. What happened to Jacob at Bethel, and how did he respond to this first encounter with God?

Reference: Note 4, *stairway*, p. 42.

4. Even though Jacob had fallen far short of God's ideal man, what do you observe about God's grace towards him?

Read Genesis 29.

5. After Jacob agreed to work seven years to get Rachel, what trickery did Laban employ (29:14-24)?

Note: It is interesting that blindness played a part in both Laban's scheme here and Jacob's scheme to steal his brother's blessing (cf. Genesis 27).

6. How did Laban and Jacob settle the issue (29:25-30)?

7. What do the names Leah chose for her children tell us about her (29:31-35)?

Read Genesis 30:1-24

8. Describe the relationship between Leah and Rachel.

References: Note 5, *Leah*, Note 6, *mandrakes*, and Note 7, *or I'll die*, p. 42.

9. What suffering might Leah, Rachel and Jacob have experienced?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Building Love: Dealing with Jealousy and Comparison

Jealousy and comparison cover the pages of Jacob's life. Jacob was jealous of Esau; Rebekah was jealous for Jacob; Esau became jealous of Jacob; Leah was jealous of Rachel, then Rachel of Leah; finally, Laban became jealous of Jacob. Rebekah, Esau, Rachel, Leah, Laban, all join Jacob in the parade of victims of jealous thoughts.

We have all seen and perhaps experienced the destructive nature of envy and comparison around us. Jealousy can develop into seething hatred, causing fractured relationships and sometimes even murder. When jealousy is allowed to control a heart, it causes strife in a family, neighborhood or workplace. How can we control this common vice? In this lesson, we will look at what the Bible has to say about jealousy and comparison.

1. What was the result of jealousy and comparison in Jacob's life and family?

2. What results of jealousy have you seen or experienced in your life and relationships?

3. How do coveting and comparison contribute to problems with jealous thoughts?

4. How do the following verses address the issues of coveting and comparison?

Deuteronomy 5:21

Galatians 6:4

5. a. Jealousy often results from a poor self-image. What do these verses say about our worth to God?

Psalm 139:13-18

Luke 12:6-7

b. What difference will this knowledge make in us?

6. Contentment with what we have can counter jealousy in our lives. What instructions are found in the following?

Philippians 4:11

1 Timothy 6:6-8

Hebrews 13:5

7. What wrong focus dominated Isaac's family? What should have been their focus?

8. What warnings do these verses contain about jealousy and comparison?
Proverbs 27:4

James 3:14-16

9. If jealousy has caused a broken relationship, what can we do about it?

a. If we have been at fault?

1 John 1:9

Matthew 5:23-24

b. If we have been hurt?

Colossians 3:13

c. What will be the result?

Proverbs 14:30

SUMMARY

10. What important warnings and instructions have you seen regarding jealousy in this lesson?

11. In what relationships would you like to eliminate jealousy? You might want to take time now to ask God for help in these situations, whether in someone else's life or your own.

12. In what areas are you most prone to be envious of others? What encouragement do you find in our study of Jacob?

LESSON 4 NOTES

1 *promise to send for him.* Jacob did not return home for another 20 years. Rebekah and Jacob never saw each other again before her death.

2 **Reference:** Note 3, *concubine*, p. 23.

3 *both of you (27:45).* Rebekah may have been referring to the loss of Jacob and Isaac, whose death may have seemed imminent, but actually was not. (Isaac outlived Rebekah. He died more than 20 years later at 180 years old; cf. Genesis 35:28-29). Or, Rebekah may have been referring to the loss of both Jacob and Esau, as Esau's murder of his brother would have invoked the laws of blood revenge described in 2 Samuel 14:6-7.

4 *stairway* (28:12). The description is of a stairway at the top of which Jacob saw the Lord, with angels ascending and descending on the steps below Him.

5 *Leah*, although unloved, was given the privilege of being the mother of Levi, whose descendants eventually had the honor of being the priests of Israel. Her son Judah's descendants included King David and his royal line, and ultimately, Jesus Christ.

6 *mandrakes* (30:14). Rachel wanted the mandrakes because they have a root shaped like the lower parts of the body, and were superstitiously believed to aid fertility when eaten. Her statement about God's taking away her disgrace in 30:23 referred to the assumption of the day that inability to conceive was correlated with divine displeasure. Overall biblical doctrine does not support this rule of thinking.

7 *or I'll die* (30:1). Rachel's statements in Genesis 30:1,24 were sad predictions of her death in childbirth in Genesis 35:16-19.

Lesson 5

JACOB AND LABAN

Genesis 30:25-31:55

Although Jacob longed to go home, his father-in-law, Laban, had managed to keep him in Paddan Aram and impoverished. In fact, Laban did not want Jacob to leave because he had learned through a fortune teller that his own prosperity was the result of God's favor towards Jacob. To persuade him to stay longer, Laban asked Jacob to name his wages.

Jacob requested the off-colored animals which Laban's flocks produced as compensation. Laban readily agreed, and *that day*, while Jacob was working, Laban took every such animal out of his herds. He removed them to a safe distance and put them under the care of his sons. This low trick gave Jacob almost nothing with which to start his earnings.

In response, Jacob employed superstitious schemes having to do with prenatal influence and selective breeding in an effort to build his estate. In the end, however, the off-colored animals which the herds produced were so strong and numerous that only God could have been responsible.

Jacob's prosperity provoked the growing hostility of Laban and his sons, and in a dream, the Lord informed Jacob that it was time to return to his homeland. When Jacob told Leah and Rachel of the dream, they readily agreed to the move. They had long since lost respect for their father, who had charged Jacob 14 years of work for them, as well as deprived them of their rightful bridal inheritance.

So Jacob proceeded to leave Laban's territory without telling him. To add to her father's fury, Rachel stole the household gods¹ as she left.

When Laban discovered these things, he and his relatives pursued Jacob and his party 300 miles, overtaking them in the hill country of Gilead. However, during the journey God warned Laban in a dream not to speak

“either good or bad” to Jacob. This was so much as to say, “Don’t say anything.”²

While his dream persuaded Laban not to harm Jacob, he still took the opportunity to complain. Why was there no “farewell party,” and who stole his household gods? After a futile search for the gods that Rachel had well-hidden in her camel saddle, both men aired their feelings. Jacob recalled Laban’s unreasonable treatment over the past 20 years and gave God credit for his own prosperity in spite of the impossible circumstances. Laban, in his usual foul logic, said that everything—daughters, grandchildren and flocks—was rightfully his. Even so, he stated, he couldn’t stop them from going (especially with the warning from God).

The two men then made a covenant, inviting the Lord to judge between them and promising never to harm the other. After a final meal and night together, Laban kissed and blessed his daughters and grandchildren and returned home.

Jacob was finally free of Laban and heading for home at last. Only one obstacle remained: meeting his brother Esau.

Read Genesis 30:25-43.

1. What were the desires and motivations of Laban and Jacob (30:25-30)?

2. How did Jacob ask to be paid (30:31-33)?

3. How did Laban deceive Jacob (30:34-36)?

4. What scheming did Jacob do (30:37-43)? From where did Jacob's prosperity really come (31:9)?

Read Genesis 31:1-21.

5. a. What developments caused Jacob to approach Leah and Rachel about leaving (31:1-13)?

b. What was their response (31:14-21)?

Reference: Note 1, *household gods*, p 50.

Read Genesis 31:22-55.

6. Describe the two sides of the argument between Laban and Jacob. Laban (31:26-30)

Reference: Note 2, *not to say anything*, p. 51.

7. How did Laban and Jacob settle the issues (31:43-55)?

Reference: Note 3, *Jacob's oath*, p. 51.

8. How did God bless Jacob in spite of Laban's mistreatment?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Dealing With Resentment

Few of us escape having at least one person in our lives who treats us with injustice while claiming integrity. Such behavior can be the most exasperating to deal with, and resentment is almost invariably our response.

Though resentment can seem our just due, this little attitude feeds unhealthy emotions and actions. As in the story of Laban and Jacob, resentment can and should be brought to an end. As we continue our study of *New Beginnings*, we will observe keys to successfully coping with resentment.

1. How did Jacob respond to Laban's low trick of removing all the animals which could start Jacob's flocks (wages)?

2. Jacob's deceitful response did not accomplish anything that God was not already going to bring about in an even greater way for Jacob. What does this tell us about responding to unfair treatment?

3. What finally brought an end to the differences between Laban and Jacob? What healthy components of resolving issues are seen in their resolution?

4. If we are faithful to God, what provision does He promise, regardless of the ill treatment of those around us?

Isaiah 41:10

Isaiah 46:4

Proverbs 2:8

5. What does 1 Peter 5:7 encourage us to do that can help us rise above resentment?

6. What do the following say about some common responses to resentment?

a. Judging

Romans 14:13

1 Corinthians 4:5

b. Hatred

Leviticus 19:17

1 John 2:9-11

Proverbs 10:12

c. Slander

Ephesians 4:29-30

James 1:26

Proverbs 13:3

7. What, in your opinion, is the most freeing position to take with difficult people in our lives?

8. What was Christ's response to unfair treatment according to the following?

Luke 23:34a

1 Peter 2:23

9. If we make the unnatural choices to forgive and pray for the one who has treated us unreasonably, what is the outcome in our lives?

SUMMARY

10. What stands out to you from the story of Laban and Jacob and from our study on resentment?

11. What by-product of resentment is the most challenging for you to fight? (Refer to Building on the Basics, Question 6.)

12. Is there a situation in your life or the life of a close friend that you would like God's help with today? How would you like Him to help?

Consider your answer a prayer.

LESSON 5 NOTES

1 *household gods* (31:19). The possession of the *teraphim*, or household deities, implied family leadership. “In the case of a married daughter, they assured the husband the right to the property of her father. Since Laban evidently had sons of his own when Jacob left for Canaan, they alone had the right to their father’s gods. Accordingly, Rachel’s stealing the teraphim

was a serious offense aimed at preserving for her husband the chief title to Laban's estate." Merrill Unger, *Unger's Bible Handbook*, p. 75.

2 *not to say anything...good or bad* (31:29). When Laban was instructed by God in the dream not to speak "either good or bad" to Jacob, it meant "don't say anything" because opposites are frequently used in the Bible to indicate totality. *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 34.

3 *Jacob's oath in the name of the Fear of his father Isaac* (31:53) possibly uses *fear* as a surrogate word for God. It is also possible that the Hebrew for the word *fear* means "Kinsman," stressing the intimacy of God's relationship to Isaac. *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 54.

Lesson 6

JACOB MEETS ESAU

Genesis 32-33

It had been 20 years since Jacob left his homeland in Canaan, alone and empty-handed, fleeing from the hostility of his older twin brother, Esau. Jacob had schemed to take all his brother's rights as firstborn away from him, and Esau had planned to kill Jacob as soon as their father died. Jacob fled to Rebekah's homeland 300-400 miles northeast, hoping to find safety and a wife among his mother's family.

Upon returning to Canaan, he was the husband of not one, but two wives and two concubines, all of whom, with the exception of Rachel, he had not wanted. He had eleven sons and one daughter, and, because of God's blessing, he had become very wealthy.

He left the hostile region of his father-in-law, Laban, at peace with his wives' family. However, now he had to face what he assumed would be a hostile brother who had driven him away 20 years earlier.

When he initially left Canaan, the Lord and His angels appeared to Jacob to promise God's safekeeping and blessing on his sojourn in Aram (28:12-15). As Jacob traveled home, angels once again met the patriarch with the promise of God's protection. Encouraged by this encounter, Jacob sent messengers to tell Esau that he was coming, only to receive word that Esau was headed toward him with 400 men. In spite of God's promise, Jacob became fearful and distressed. He arranged to protect his family as much as possible, prayed fervently for God's help, and set aside huge gifts of livestock for Esau. Jacob's herdsmen went ahead of Jacob and his family in hopes that the offering might appease Esau and soften his heart.

After sending everyone else across the river, Jacob spent the night wrestling with a man who renamed Jacob *Israel*, and crippled him in the

hip joint. The man would give no name but said, “You have struggled with God and with man and have overcome” (32:28). He blessed Jacob as he left at daybreak, and Jacob recognized his encounter to have been with God Himself.¹

Jacob and Esau met, and separated, in peace.² Esau *ran* to meet Jacob, and embraced him with kisses and tears. After meeting Jacob’s family, and, at Jacob’s insistence, taking the livestock gifts, Esau offered to accompany Jacob until he got home. Jacob encouraged his brother not to be bothered with the slow trip with all the women and children, and promised to come to Esau’s home in Seir. With that, Esau started toward home that day. Jacob never went to Seir,³ but instead bought some land for his tent outside of the Canaanite city of Shechem.

Jacob had learned about working with God through a struggle. Even so, greater challenges awaited him with his children, who had learned the art of deceit.

Read Genesis 32:1-23.

1. What was Jacob’s first experience after leaving Laban, and of what would this remind him (32:1-2;28:12-15)?

Reference: Note 4, *the camp of God*, p. 61.

2. What attitudes characterized Jacob in his approach to Esau and God (32:3-7,9-12)?

3. a. How did Jacob pray at this crisis point (32:9-12)?

b. What is exemplary about Jacob's prayer?

4. How did Jacob prepare to meet Esau (32:13-23)?

Read 32:24-32.

5. What did Jacob's wrestling match with the unknown being show about him (32:24-32)?

6. How were Jacob and his descendants forever affected by this struggle (32:28,30-31)?

Reference: Note 1, *God came to Jacob*, p. 60.

Read Genesis 33:1-16.

7. Esau had obviously forgiven Jacob completely. What results of forgiveness are evident in Esau's reunion with Jacob?

8. How did Jacob model reconciliation with someone wronged?

Reference: Note 2, *Jacob's bowing*, and Note 3, *Jacob never went to Seir*, p. 60.

Read Genesis 33:17-20.

9. What is the first thing Jacob did after settling near Shechem (33:20)? What brought him to a worshipful level of spirituality?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Dealing with Stress

All of us can relate to the desperate feelings that Jacob experienced as he prepared to face Esau again. The encounter could have spelled disaster for him and his family.

Many of our stresses are small daily ones. Sometimes, however, they are life-threatening. Regardless, we can learn from the story in our lesson today, as well as from other biblical sources, about how to work through stress successfully.

1. a. What natural stresses are involved in daily living?

b. What are some severe stresses that come into our lives periodically?

2. What effects can stress have on:
Our physical well-being?

Our emotions?

Our spiritual life?

3. How did Jacob deal with stress in this story?

4. a. Esau's forgiveness and Jacob's humility before one wronged relieved the stress in their relationship. How might forgiveness or asking forgiveness play a major role in stress relief?

b. How does God give us security and freedom from guilt in our relationship with Him?

Micah 7:18

Psalm 103:8, 11-14

Ephesians 1:3,7

5. How does God's forgiveness help us to forgive or to have the courage to ask forgiveness as Jacob did?

6. How does prayer relieve stress according to the following?

Philippians 4:6-7

James 1:5

7. Slowing down to relax can help us deal with stress. How do the following encourage us to make rest a priority?

Exodus 34:21

Mark 6:31

Psalm 127:2

8. What are the stress producers addressed in these verses, and what are the biblical principles that bring relief?

Proverbs 17:9

Proverbs 17:14;20:3

Proverbs 22:24

Proverbs 28:25

Proverbs 29:11

Proverbs 29:25

9. What *absolute statements* are made in the following verses that relieve stress?

Proverbs 3:5-6

1 Peter 5:7

SUMMARY

10. What, if any, are the greatest sources of stress on you today?

11. What actions on your part might be helpful in dealing with the stress(es) you are facing?

12. a. What grounds for hope in the midst of stress do you see from the story of Jacob and Esau?

b. Claim this hope for your own situation.

LESSON 6 NOTES

1 *God came to Jacob* in such a form that he could wrestle with him, but he showed Jacob that he could disable him at will when he touched his hip and crippled him. As he changed Jacob's name, meaning *supplanter*, to Israel, meaning *he struggles with God*, the nation of Israel was given her name. *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 56.

In this wrestling match, Jacob realized his own weakness and the superiority of God. When he finally yielded, he became a new man, who could receive God's blessings and assume his place in God's plan as a God-governed man instead of an unscrupulous supplanter. It was a turning point in Jacob's life, one which his limp would remind him of. *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 36.

2 *Jacob's bowing to the ground seven times* was symbolic of total submission, documented also in texts found at Tell el-Amarna in Egypt and dating to the 14th century B.C. *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 56.

Evidently God had so blessed Esau that he no longer held a grudge against Jacob (33:8,9).

3 *Jacob never went to Esau's home in Seir* as he promised. Some commentators attribute Jacob's never fulfilling as yet another example of Jacob's deceitfulness. Others think he may have been reluctant to fully trust Esau in spite of their reconciliation.

4 *the camp of God* (32:2). Jacob named the place where the angels assured him of God's protection *Mahanaim*, meaning *two camps*. This name described an inner camp, made up of Jacob's group, and an outer company, made up of the messengers, or angels, of God. The circle of protection around Jacob and his family is a beautiful picture of the security and protection of God around each believer. *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 35.

Lesson 7

MORE ABOUT JACOB

Genesis 34-36

Although God had blessed Jacob and his family, their heritage was filled with deception on the part of Jacob, Rebekah and Laban. It is not surprising that deceit would emerge in Jacob's children. Genesis 34 records a horrible illustration of the predominant family weakness in action.

Rather than keep his promise to travel to Esau's home at Seir, Jacob settled near the Canaanite city of Shechem. Jacob and Leah's daughter, Dinah, was beautiful. Consequently, when she made a visit to the nearby city of Shechem, the son of the ruler there fell desperately in love with her. He forced Dinah to have sexual relations with him, an act which was, in Israelite terms, an outrage against the honor of Jacob's family.

Hamor, the young man's father, asked that the girl become his son's bride at any price, and welcomed intermarriage with Jacob's family. The marriage agreement required that all the men in Shechem be circumcised.

On the third day while the men of Shechem were still recovering from the circumcision, Jacob's sons Simeon and Levi killed every man in the city, then seized their families and possessions. It was an incredible act of violence for God's people to commit. Jacob's sons had acted like cruel pagans before the people of the land. Jacob rebuked them and prepared to move, having now become odious to his neighbors.

God commanded Jacob to return to Bethel and build an altar there to the Lord. Jacob had his household rid themselves of all foreign gods, purify themselves, and prepare to return to Bethel where God met with the patriarch many years before. There Jacob built an altar and worshiped. God once again affirmed his promises to build a nation from Jacob's descendants and give them the land of Canaan.

Bethel marked a turning point in Jacob's life. Rachel died while giving birth to Jacob's youngest son, Benjamin. She was buried near Bethlehem. After this, Reuben slept with Jacob's concubine, Bilhah, which cost him his birthright as the eldest son.¹ Then, after Jacob returned to Hebron where he had grown up, his aged father Isaac died, and together Esau and Jacob buried him.

The focus of the story now turns from Jacob to his sons, whose descendants were to become the twelve tribes of Israel.²

Read Genesis 34:1-12.

1. What transpired between Dinah and Shechem (34:1-4)?

2. What did Shechem and his father try to do about the situation (34:5-12)?

Read Genesis 34:13-31.

3. a. How did Jacob's sons act deceitfully (34:13-29)?

- b. What was Jacob's rebuke and his son's reply (34:30-31)?

Read Genesis 35:1-15.

4. a. What did Jacob do before moving his family to Bethel (35:1-7)?

b. How were they protected as they traveled (35:5)?

5. a. Jacob's return to Bethel was a turning point in his life. What promise did God reiterate to Jacob (35:9-12; cf. 28:13-15; 32:28)?

b. How might Jacob have viewed God and His Word in a different light than he had in his youth?

Read Genesis 35:16-29.

6. What sad events in Jacob's life are recorded in Genesis 35:16-29?

References: Note 1, *Reuben...slept with Bilhah*, and Note 2, *twelve tribes of Israel*, p. 69.

7. What does Genesis 35:29 and 36:6-8 reveal about Jacob and Esau's relationship?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Coping With Disappointment and Losses

Jacob had come to the godliest years of his life as well as the most difficult. His children had learned to compromise their integrity, causing Jacob much heartache. He also faced the loss of his mother, her life-long faithful nurse, Deborah (35:8; 24:59), his much-loved Rachel, and his father, Isaac. Although he had come to trust God, grief was very much a part of his experience.

Disappointment and losses, great and small, are an inescapable part of life. Even though we are wholly committed to God, past violation of biblical principles that have shaped the decision-making processes of others can bring deep disappointment. The death of ones we love can cause tremendous pain. The difference the Lord makes is that He is there to comfort us and to ultimately bring good out of the difficult situation. As we continue our study of *New Beginnings*, let's look at some promises that give hope in times of disappointment and loss.

1. What heartache did Jacob experience as he went home to Canaan?

2. What might be the effects of deep disappointment and loss of loved ones in our lives:
spiritually?

physically?

emotionally?

3. How did returning to Bethel help Jacob? What do you think it symbolized in his life?

4. How does total commitment to God strengthen us as we face disappointment and loss? What do the following suggest?

Psalm 62:5-8

Proverbs 2:7-8

1 Timothy 4:8

5. Where is God when disappointments and losses come?

Psalm 34:4,18

6. What is God able to do with the disappointments and losses of our lives?

Romans 8:28

2 Corinthians 1:4

7. What does the Lord promise as we cope with daily disappointments?

2 Corinthians 9:8

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

8. If we are dealing with depression caused by a loss, what promise for the future do these verses give?

Psalm 40:1-3

1 Peter 5:10

9. What hope do we have in facing death when we are committed to Christ?

Proverbs 14:32

John 11:25

SUMMARY

10. What disappointment or loss are you facing right now?

11. What strength and comfort can be found in commitment to Christ? Have you asked Him for His strength and comfort in your situation?

12. What truths about God's redeeming and patient love are demonstrated in His dealings with Jacob?

LESSON 7 NOTES

1 *Reuben...slept with Bilhah* (Genesis 35:22). Reuben was arrogantly and prematurely claiming his right as firstborn to inherit his father's concubines. This act cost him his birthright as Joseph, through his two sons, received the double portion of the firstborn (Genesis 49:3-4; 1 Chronicles 5:1). See also Note 3, *concubine*, p. 23.

2 *twelve tribes of Israel*. Jacob's polygamous family, with many shameful things to their credit, was accepted by God, as a whole, to be the beginning of the twelve tribes of Israel. That nation would produce the Messiah, the Savior who would bless the world. This shows:

a. That God uses human beings as they are, to serve His purposes, and, so to speak, does the best He can with the material He has to work with.

b. It is no indication that everyone that God in this way uses will qualify for eternal life on the day of judgment (Romans 1:16,17; 2:12-16).

c. It is a testimony to the truthfulness of Bible writers. No other book narrates with such utter candor the weaknesses of its heroes, and things so contrary to ideals that it aims to promote. *Halley's Bible Handbook*, p. 104.

PART 2

BEGINNINGS IN EGYPT

Part 2 of our study ended with Jacob again living in Canaan. God had given him twelve sons, great wealth and a new name: Israel. His sons would become the heads of the twelve tribes of the nation of Israel.

The focus of Part 3 is on Jacob's sons and particularly on Joseph. As Moses, the author of Genesis, continued to explain the Israelite heritage to those who had come through the exodus from slavery in Egypt, Joseph's experience was pivotal. Through his story, they would come to understand exactly how and why Jacob and his sons began their difficult sojourn in Egypt.

Although not mentioned as much as in earlier Genesis accounts, the hand of God is clearly seen in the historical drama of Genesis 37-50. As He sovereignly worked to save Jacob's offspring from famine, He also accomplished the task of reuniting them as a family. It is one of the most moving documentaries in the Bible.

Lesson 8

JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS

Genesis 37-38

As each of his parents had done, Jacob demonstrated open favoritism toward one of his children. The favored son was Joseph, the older son of Rachel. Jacob made Joseph a beautiful robe that announced his partiality to everyone in the family. Adding insult to injury, Joseph flaunted two prophetic dreams he had experienced in which the entire family bowed down to him. Furthermore, Joseph was a "good" boy, obedient, honest and dependable. It is not surprising that many of his eleven brothers, two of which were brutal enough to massacre an entire town of innocent men (Genesis 34), were ready to kill Joseph, too.

One day Jacob sent Joseph, only 17 years old, to check on his brothers in the fields. When he finally reached them near Dothan, they had seen him coming and plotted his death. Reuben tried to save Joseph by suggesting that they put him in a cistern, hoping to return later and rescue him. Judah, also trying to save Joseph, finally convinced his brothers to sell Joseph as a slave to a passing caravan en route to Egypt.

With this, Joseph found himself in the company of Ishmaelites (distant cousins) and soon became a slave in the Egyptian family of Potiphar. Back at home, Reuben (who as eldest was responsible for Joseph) and his brothers faced their father with Joseph's coat smeared with goat's blood. They told a tale that broke their father's heart and once again duplicated the deceit of Jacob in his youth.¹

The story of this rowdy bunch continues as Judah chose to leave home and marry a pagan Canaanite woman. They had three sons, two of which, Er and Onan, died without leaving children. As was the levirate marriage

custom,² Judah promised Tamar, the wife of Er and then Onan, that she could marry his third son, Shelah, when he became old enough.

With time, however, it became evident that Judah did not intend to keep his promise to give Shelah to Tamar. Desperate to obtain offspring, Tamar posed as a Canaanite religious prostitute and tricked Judah into having relations with her. Now Tamar was still considered part of Judah's family, and when he learned of her pregnancy, he ordered her death. He retracted the sentence, however, when she produced evidence that he was the father. Tamar had twins, who continued Judah's line.³

In our next lesson, we will resume following Joseph and his experiences in Egypt.

Read Genesis 37:1-11.

1. What caused trouble between Joseph and his brothers (37:1-4)?
2. What further aggravated the problems (37:5-11)?

Read Genesis 37:12-36.

3. What happened as Joseph approached his brothers in the field (37:12-22)?

4. What saved Joseph's life (37:26-28)?

5. a. How did the brothers report to their father about Joseph's disappearance (37:29-35)?

b. Favoritism, arrogance, and envy had fractured Jacob's family. Where did Joseph find himself as a result (37:36)?

Read Genesis 38:1-11

6. What did Judah choose to do, and what resulted (38:1-5)?

7. After the death of both sons, Judah did not intend to give Shelah to Tamar in marriage, too. Even though Tamar was now considered permanently a part of Judah's family, what did he instruct her to do (38:11)?

Reference: Note 2, *levirate marriage*, p. 80.

Read Genesis 38:12-23.

8. Realizing Judah had no intention of keeping his promise, how did Tamar arrange to obtain children (38:13-18)?

Read Genesis 38:24-30.

9. a. How would you describe Judah's response to Tamar's pregnancy (38:24)?

b. How did his response change (38:25-26)?

c. To whom did Tamar and Judah give birth (38:27-30)?

Reference: Note 3, *Perez*, p. 80.

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Handling Broken Relationships

Jacob's favoritism, Joseph's insensitivity, and his brothers' jealousy worked together to shatter this family. Deceit also breaks the strongest relationship bonds, and so the brothers lived with their lie to their father.

One of the most difficult things we can experience is a close relationship that is somehow broken. Thus far in our study, we have looked at many biblical principles related to building healthy relationships. In our lesson today, we will make a broad sweep of many of these principles as we discover some causes of broken relationships, and how to handle broken relationships with integrity.

1. List some causes of broken relationships we have already seen in Genesis. (*a.-c. optional*).

a. Sarah and Hagar (Genesis 16:1-6)

b. Jacob and Esau (Genesis 27:34-41)

c. Rachel and Leah (Genesis 29:30-35;30:1)

d. Joseph and brothers (Genesis 37:3-4,8,11)

2. What would you say are the foundational causes of broken relationships?

3. What do you think are the main ingredients necessary for the healing of broken relationships?

4. a. Pride can be a major factor in broken relationships. The biblical definition of pride involves conceit, arrogance, a sense of superiority, and boasting. What warnings against pride are found in the following?
Proverbs 16:18

Isaiah 5:21

John 5:44

b. How do you see the truths of James 3:13-16 illustrated in the story of Joseph and his family?

5. a. What role does humility play in resolving conflict?

b. What do these verses say about humility as a strength?

Proverbs 11:2

Proverbs 13:10

Proverbs 15:33

6. What is characteristic of the integrity needed in mending broken relationships?

Philippians 2:3-4

Matthew 7:12

Romans 12:16-21

7. What else can help us reconcile our hurt feelings?

Colossians 3:12-14

8. In the midst of hurt and conflict, it is sometimes hard to discern true wisdom. How is wisdom described in the following verses?

James 3:17-18

Proverbs 18:2

9. If we have sought to reconcile a broken relationship and not succeeded, what is the healthy response and why?

1 Peter 3:9-13

10. As we will see in Joseph's life, the broken relationships with his family continued. But God was with him as he made the best of his situation. If we have opened our lives to Christ, of what can we always be sure?

Romans 8:38-39

SUMMARY

11. What attitudes can lead to broken relationships?

12. What principles do you feel are most important in handling broken relationships?

13. a. Is there a relationship in your life that you would like to heal, or a person you would like to develop a healthier attitude toward?

b. What principles from our lesson offer you the most help in dealing with this situation?

14. If you feel you have been at fault in some way in a broken relationship, you might want to take a moment now to ask God's forgiveness and His help in possible reconciliation.

LESSON 8 NOTES

1 *deceit of Jacob's youth.* Jacob and Rebekah had also used the meat and skin of a goat to deceive Isaac (Genesis 27:9,16).

2 *levirate marriage custom.* Tamar's experience exemplified the law of the levirate marriage custom of the day described in Deuteronomy 25:5-6. A deceased man's brother or nearest male kin was required to marry his brother's widow and continue the family lineage *in his brother's name*. Onan's failure to follow this custom was a refusal to allow the family line to continue through his brother. Onan's action jeopardized God's plans for the nation of Israel (the Messiah was to come from the line of Judah) and resulted in Onan's death. Even though the deaths of Er and Onan resulted from evil actions and God's judgment, Judah may have been afraid that somehow Tamar was the reason. Thus he would fear giving his youngest son Shelah in marriage to Tamar lest he die, too.

3 *Perez.* The redeeming grace of God is seen in the fact that Perez, the twin who continued the line of Judah, was in the line of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:1-6). See also Note 2, *twelve tribes of Israel*, p.69.

Lesson 9

JOSEPH THE PRIME MINISTER

Genesis 41-42

Joseph had been in prison for some time when he helped the imprisoned cupbearer and baker interpret their dreams. The cupbearer had promised that after his release and reinstatement to position next to the king, he would use his influence to help Joseph. Instead, the cupbearer forgot about him.

Two years later, Pharaoh had a dream that none of his wise men could interpret. The cupbearer then remembered Joseph's incredible ability and recommended him to Pharaoh. Immediately Joseph was taken from the prison, made presentable, and brought before the king.

As with the cupbearer and baker, Joseph gave credit to God for any accurate interpretation he might be able to give Pharaoh. The dream, he declared, was a prediction of seven years of prosperity followed by seven years of severe famine in the land. This warning from God was accompanied by a plan: Joseph recommended that Pharaoh place a wise and discerning man in charge of the land to oversee the storage of food during the period of plenty and the distribution of food during the period of famine.

Pharaoh had observed God's Spirit in Joseph, so he and his officials chose Joseph to be the overseer.¹ Joseph was inaugurated with fanfare, many gifts, an Egyptian name, and a wife named Asenath. He was 30 years old when he became an Egyptian prime minister and had been away from home for 13 years. With his wife Asenath, Joseph had two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

The famine Joseph had predicted affected not only Egypt but also the entire known world. Countries everywhere came to Egypt to buy corn. So

twenty years after Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery (37:2;41:46), ten of them faced Joseph again, now in desperate need of food. Jacob had sent all except Joseph's true brother, Benjamin, to buy grain in Egypt. They bowed down before Joseph, now the most powerful figure in the land of Egypt apart from Pharaoh. He recognized his brothers, but because of his language, dress, and official bearing, his brothers did not recognize him.

Remembering his dreams (Genesis 37:5-9), Joseph devised a plan to test their trustworthiness and to see his younger brother, Benjamin. He accused the men of being spies and held Simeon, traditionally believed to be the cruelest of all the brothers, in prison. He sent the other nine home to get Benjamin as proof that their story was true and that they were not spies.²

In their own language, which they did not know Joseph understood, the brothers discussed their remorse over their hostility toward Joseph years before. They felt they were being recompensed for the evil they had done by this difficult turn of events. When he saw their repentant hearts, Joseph turned away to weep. When he came back, he had Simeon bound before them and sent them on their way. As his men were loading the grain purchased by his brothers, Joseph ordered them to put each brother's silver back in his sack.

When they stopped for the night, Joseph's brothers found all the money they had paid for grain and were puzzled and afraid. Upon returning home, they told their father, Jacob, all that had happened with the "lord over the land" in Egypt. Jacob was overwhelmed and refused to let Benjamin go with them³ to retrieve Simeon and obtain additional grain.

Read Genesis 41:1-36.

1. What turn of events allowed Joseph to get out of prison (41:1-14)?

2. What do you learn about Joseph from the interpretation and proposal he gave Pharaoh (41:15-36)?

Read Genesis 41:37-57.

3. a. What were Joseph's new responsibilities as prime minister (41:37-49)?

Reference: Note 1, *in charge of the palace*, p. 90.

b. How had God used Joseph's experiences over the past 13 years to prepare him for his new position?

4. What feelings were reflected in Joseph's naming of his two sons (41:50-52)?

5. What happened over the next 14 years (41:53-57)?

Read Genesis 42.

6. What finally brought about the fulfillment of Joseph's earlier dreams (37:5-8; 42:1-9)?

7. What was Joseph's response to his brothers (42:9-20)?

Reference: Note 2, *spies*, p. 90.

8. What change did Joseph see in his brothers, and what was his response (42:21-24)?

9. What obstacles did Joseph place before these men (42:24-35)?

10. What happened when they returned home that further complicated the situation (42:29-38)?

Reference: Note 3, *Jacob refused to let Benjamin go*, p. 90.

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

In the World, Not of It

Although Jacob's twelve sons were split by jealousy and selfishness, God had His hand on them to bless them just as He had promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis 12:2,3; 26:2-5; 28:13-15). Regardless of how they responded to God, they all knew of their calling as His chosen family.

While it is difficult to discern the individual character of many of the brothers, the character of Joseph is becoming clearer as we follow his life in Egypt. Even though his experience in this foreign land seemed hopeless for many years, he finally began to see the fruits of his faithfulness to God's purposes.

If we have opened our lives to God through Christ, we, as Joseph, are set apart for God's purposes. The biblical word for this concept is *sanctification*. Let's make some observations from Joseph's life regarding how we can successfully pursue God's purposes in the world around us.

1. a. Besides the interpretation of his dream, what do you think impressed Pharaoh about Joseph and led him to believe in the existence of his God?

b. What can the nonbeliever appreciate about a person who has personal faith in God?

c. What characteristics of Joseph's brothers gave a negative testimony about their God to the unbelieving world around them? (See also p. 131 commentary on Genesis 34.)

d. What can we learn from this about our witness as believers?

2. The Bible says believers are *set apart* or *sanctified* for God's high purposes in the world. How are Christians set apart?

Hebrews 10:10

John 17:17

Romans 12:1-2

2 Corinthians 3:18

Galatians 5:22-23

3. a. Power, greed, selfishness, ambition, and pleasure are motivations around us that can stand in opposition to the character qualities by which God sets the believer apart. What disappointments had Joseph suffered because of these worldly motivations?

b. Although sometimes very appealing, what happens in our lives if we submit ourselves to these motivations?

4. What initiates the fulfillment of God's purposes in our lives, and what is our "set apart" status and responsibility?

John 1:12 (*him* refers to Christ)

Matthew 5:13-16

Philippians 2:15

2 Corinthians 5:19-20

5. What further instructions do these verses give about being God's person in the world around us?

1 Peter 3:15

1 Peter 3:3-4

Note: A *gentle and quiet spirit* does not refer to a quiet personality, but to the peaceful spirit inside which comes from fully trusting God.

Colossians 4:5-6

6. What is our source of power to carry out God's purposes?

Acts 1:8

John 15:5

Colossians 1:27b

SUMMARY

10. As you reflect on the life of Joseph in Egypt, what principles of being a witness, set apart for God's purposes, stand out to you?

11. In time, Joseph was greatly rewarded for his faithfulness. How is Joseph's story an encouragement as we seek to remain faithful "in the world, but not of it"? (See also 1 Corinthians 15:58; 1 Peter 5:10.)

12. Where has it been difficult for you to be set apart for God in the world around you?

13. What do you see in Joseph's life as he lived for God in Egypt that you want for your own life today?

14. Have you ever made Romans 12:1-2 a prayer for your life, giving yourself completely to fulfilling God's desires for you? Maybe you would like to establish or reaffirm that commitment right now.

LESSON 9 NOTES

1 *overseer in charge of my palace* (41:40). The Hebrew terminology here signified the title for the person in charge of the royal estate and revenues as well as the prime minister or "ruler over Egypt" (See also Acts 7:10; Psalm 105:21). The prime minister or First Minister reported each morning to the Pharaoh for instructions. "All the affairs of the land passed through his hands, all important documents received his seal, all the officials were under his orders. He really governed in the Pharaoh's name and acted for him in his absence." Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Volume 1: Social Institutions*, pp. 129-130.

2 *you are spies* (42:9). Egypt was constantly vulnerable to its neighbors to the east, so the accusation against them that they came as spies to observe holes in Egypt's walls of defense was a reasonable one.

3 *Jacob refused to let Benjamin go with them*. Jacob had lost Rachel, Joseph's and Benjamin's mother, and thought Joseph also was dead (37:33). Jacob was afraid of losing, Benjamin, too.

Lesson 10

REUNITED FAMILY

Genesis 43:1-45:15

When Jacob and his family had eaten all the grain they bought in Egypt, Jacob instructed his sons to go back to Egypt to buy more food. The men reminded their father that they could not go back without Benjamin, who the governor, alias Joseph, had demanded to see to prove they were not spies. Only when Judah pledged his own life to guarantee the safe return of Benjamin did Jacob finally consent to letting his youngest son go.

They left with twice the silver they had taken before (to repay what had been put back in their packs when they left Egypt before and to buy more food). They also took gifts of honey, nuts, and spices for the governor. When they arrived in Egypt, they found themselves invited to the governor's house to dine. They didn't know what to expect from the grand vizier of Egypt, and when Joseph entered the room, they bowed low before him. Joseph was so moved by the sight of his younger brother, Benjamin, that he had to leave the room to cry and compose himself. Joseph dined apart from them according to Egyptian custom,¹ and had the brothers seated before him in order of their age, which amazed them. Curiously, Benjamin was served five times as much food as the others.

The next morning, as they were preparing to leave, Joseph devised a final test for his brothers. He had his silver cup put in Benjamin's sack, framing him as a thief in order to take him prisoner. As they set out, Joseph had all of them arrested, and when the goblet was found in Benjamin's sack, they were speechless with fear and despair. Judah spoke for himself and his brothers. Offering no excuse or denial, he simply plead with this great Egyptian official for the life and freedom of Benjamin. He explained the story of his father's grief over the loss of Benjamin's brother, and assured him that grief would kill Jacob if Benjamin did not return. Judah begged to

stay in Benjamin's stead to save him from seeing their father in misery once again.²

In a moment, Joseph sent all attendants from the room, and in his boyhood tongue revealed himself to his brothers. He opened his heart and wept so loudly that word about it spread to Pharaoh's house. Joseph calmed his brothers' fears and relieved their guilt about the terrible deed of selling him into slavery. He helped them see that God had allowed him to go to Egypt to prepare a way of deliverance for Jacob's family during the terrible famine to come. God was preserving this family that He had promised would one day be a source of blessing to the whole world.

After this, Joseph instructed his brothers to bring their father and families to the land of Goshen³ in Egypt where he could take care of them, explaining that the famine would last another five years. Joseph sent wagons with them for the return trip to Egypt, and filled them with grain, gifts and supplies of all kinds.

This story stands as one of the most dramatic biblical accounts as well as a vivid picture of God's ability to redeem the worst of situations. The sovereign hand of God used the ugly crimes against Joseph to ultimately reunite and restore Jacob's fractured family and deliver His chosen people from famine.

Read Genesis 43:1-14.

1. What transpired before Jacob allowed his sons to return to Egypt (43:1-10)?

2. How did Jacob send off his sons? Where was his confidence in their safe return (43:11-14)?

Read Genesis 43:15-34.

3. a. When Joseph had his brothers over to dine at his home, what was their fear (43:15-22)?

b. What was the steward's gracious response (43:23-24)?

4. What verses reflect Joseph's character in Genesis 43:26-34?

Reference: Note 1, *dined apart from them*, p. 100.

Read Genesis 44.

5. What final test did Joseph put before his brothers (44:1-17)?

6. What did Joseph learn about the attitudes of Judah and his brothers from Judah's appeal (44:18-34)? What had changed in 22 years?

Reference: Note 2, *Judah did not want to see the misery*, p. 100.

Read Genesis 45:1-15.

7. What explanation did Joseph give his brothers for God's allowing them to sell him into Egyptian slavery (45:1-11)?

Reference: Note 3, *Goshen*, p. 100.

8. What can we learn about God from Joseph's story?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Controlling Those Emotions

Undoubtedly, Joseph had lots of mixed emotions as he saw his brothers for the first time since they sold him into slavery 20 years earlier. Yet his response opened the way for God's purposes to continue to unfold.

All of us deal with various emotions and at times experience overwhelming circumstances. In this lesson, we will look at biblical truths that can help us control our emotions and express our feelings in a positive way.

1. What emotions can be the most difficult to handle?

2. If uncontrolled, what effects can these emotions have on us: spiritually?

physically?

in relationships?

3. a. What emotions do you think Joseph experienced as he saw his brothers for the first time in 20 years?

b. Joseph's emotional stability came from his commitment to God and a godly lifestyle. How does a relationship with God produce emotional stability?

4. It is healthy for us to express our emotions constructively. When and how did Joseph express emotion in a positive way?

5. a. What is the difference between a reaction and a response?

b. What was necessary in order for Joseph to respond rather than react?
What can we learn from him?

6. a. Proverbs 23:7 says, “For as a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” What thoughts produce positive emotions?

b. What keys to controlling our thoughts are found in the following?
Romans 12:2

Philippians 4:6-8

Psalms 1:1-2

7. What disposition does God desire us to have in any situation?
2 Timothy 1:7

Philippians 2:3-4

8. How does God build this mature disposition?
John 14:16-17,26

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Romans 5:3-5

9. a. Emotional disturbances have many root causes. What are some root causes of emotional disturbances according to Galatians 5:19-21?

b. What effects do overcommitment, fatigue, and poor physical health have on our control of emotions?

10. What healthy choices do we continually need to make in order to resist negative pulls on our emotions?

Galatians 5:16,25

Ephesians 4:22-24

Matthew 11:28-30

11. *Optional question:* How do the following instruct us to respond to those who are overcome with negative emotions?

Romans 15:1

Galatians 6:1-2

Hebrews 13:3

12. *Optional question:* It is good to have memorized Scripture which we can call to mind when we come to times of emotional distress. The following are good verses to have memorized at such times. What are the main ideas?

Psalm 23

Romans 8:35-39

John 14:27

1 John 5:4

SUMMARY

14. What do you appreciate about Joseph's emotional strength?

15. What are the most important elements of emotional control for you?

16. What emotional challenges are you dealing with today? What thoughts have been helpful to you from your study of Joseph's life and this lesson?

LESSON 10 NOTES

1 *dined apart from them.* Egyptians did not eat with Hebrews, most probably because of ritual or religious reasons (see Exodus 8:26). *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 72

2 *Judah* did not want to see the misery his father had experienced 20 years earlier when told Joseph was dead (37:34-35).

3 *Goshen* was about 40 miles from present-day Cairo and situated in the delta of the Nile. It was the best land in Egypt for herds and flocks and was near Memphis, where Joseph lived.

Lesson 11

JOSEPH'S LAST YEARS

Genesis 50

After drawing his sons near for final words, Jacob breathed his last. Joseph threw himself on his much loved father in grief, weeping and kissing him. After the embalming, Joseph arranged with the Pharaoh to take Jacob, as he had requested, to be buried in the cave of Abraham in Canaan. Mourning followed for 70 days, and Jacob's family and all of Pharaoh's officials went to Canaan for the burial.

After returning to Egypt, Joseph's brothers feared what he might do to them now that their father was dead. Joseph wept when he received a contrived message from them claiming that their father had requested Joseph forgive them for their cruel act of selling him into Egyptian bondage years before. After this, they came and threw themselves at his feet, offering themselves to be his slaves. It seems they still did not comprehend his forgiveness.

In response, Joseph spoke kindly to them, assuring them of his continued care and reminding them that the hand of God had been in all that had happened. "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (50:20). His statement held a description of the redeeming grace of God in the midst of human error.

At 110 years old, Joseph died in Egypt. He had made his brothers promise to keep his coffin and carry it back with them when they returned to Canaan. Four hundred years later, as the Israelites journeyed back to Canaan some three million strong, Joseph's coffin was kept in the camp. It was a constant reminder of God's sovereign hand working out His purposes for Israel.

After Joseph's death, a new pharaoh would come to power who, not knowing Joseph, would bring cruel slavery upon the rapidly growing Israelite nation in Egypt. But after 400 years, God would raise up a man named Moses to take the burden of leadership and guide these people out of Egyptian tyranny.

The eternal God, who stands outside of time and holds all power and wisdom, would continue to move toward His promise to make Abraham's offspring a nation that would one day bring blessing to the whole world.

Read Genesis 50:1-14.

1. How did Joseph show adoration and esteem for his father Jacob (50:1-14)?

2. What do you see in this story about Joseph's way of dealing with the Pharaoh's court? What continued to be their response to Joseph?

Read Genesis 50:15-26.

3. What did Joseph's brothers fear, and what did they try to do about it (50:15-18)?

4. What do you think might have caused Joseph to weep about their message?

5. What was Joseph's attitude toward his brothers and their past history (50:19-20)?

6. How did Joseph show forgiveness and love (50:21)?

7. What blessings did Joseph experience before his death (50:22-23)?

8. a. How was Joseph's last request similar to that of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob before him (50:24-26)? What did all these men believe?

b. How does Hebrews 11:1 describe their faith, and what example is here for believers today?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

The Power of Forgiveness

Genesis closes (37-50) with one of the most moving stories in the Bible. After Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt by hostile and jealous brothers, a famine reunited the family after 23 years of separation. Joseph, who had become Pharaoh's right hand man, had all his father's descendants move to Egypt where he could care for them. He freely forgave his brothers, believing God had used their actions to put him in a position to help many people—especially his family—through the famine. After his father's death, however, his brothers still did not trust Joseph or appreciate his kindly spirit toward them. In the face of this attitude, Joseph again chose to forgive them and abundantly meet their needs.

So it is with God's love. In spite of our mistakes, rebellion, lack of trust, or ungratefulness, God continues to pursue us. The pages of Genesis show God moving patiently and steadily toward creating a nation that would bring blessing to the entire world. Israel would preserve the Scriptures and the knowledge of the one true God. Most importantly, from their midst would come Jesus, the Messiah, who would take the death penalty for the rebellion of man that originated in Genesis 2 and 3. Because of God's forgiving spirit, we can know Him personally as we choose to open our hearts to Him.

In concluding our study of Genesis, it is appropriate that we make some final observations about one of the most powerful biblical principles--forgiveness.

1. What hardships had Joseph's brothers inflicted on his life?
What caused him hurt in Genesis 50?

2. What focus did Joseph have in his life that allowed him to forgive his brothers?

Genesis 45:2-8; 50:19-21

3. God's perfect love is described in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Which characteristics of this unconditional love are evident in Joseph's dealings with his brothers?

4. As you think back over your study of Genesis, what have you observed about God's love and character?

5. What do the following verses say about God's forgiveness?

Psalm 103:8-12

1 John 1:9

6. What did God's freedom to forgive sinful man cost Him according to the following? What is the benefit to us who believe?

Romans 3:22-25a

Romans 6:23

Romans 5:8

7. How does God's forgiveness affect our lives? In what ways is God able to meet needs in your life because of His forgiveness in Christ?

8. At times it seems impossible for us to forgive the hurts inflicted on us by others. What sources of power to extend God's love and forgiveness are found in the following verses?

Romans 5:3-5

Ephesians 3:16-21

Ephesians 4:32-5:1

9. a. What positive results did Joseph's forgiveness bring about?

b. What positive results can our forgiveness bring to our lives and the lives of those around us?

SUMMARY

10. What stands out to you the most about God and your relationship to God as you look back over your study of Joseph's life?

11. What stands out to you the most about God and your relationship to Him as you think back over your study of Genesis?

12. What is your greatest desire for your own life as you complete this study? Make this your prayer.

Afterword

Moses wrote Genesis to explain to the Israelites their roots as they journeyed back to the promised land of Canaan from Egypt after 400 years of bondage. Genesis helped them understand, as we can today, how man fell, but how God immediately began to work out a plan to bring people back to Himself. God called one man, Abraham, to begin a nation that would bring knowledge of Him and blessing to the world.

As Genesis closes, the curtain is drawn on the drama of Abraham's family, with twelve small tribes founded and settled temporarily in Egypt. Exodus begins 400 years later, with the stage set and the curtain opening on the drama of a nation as God continues to move in history to provide new beginnings for us all.

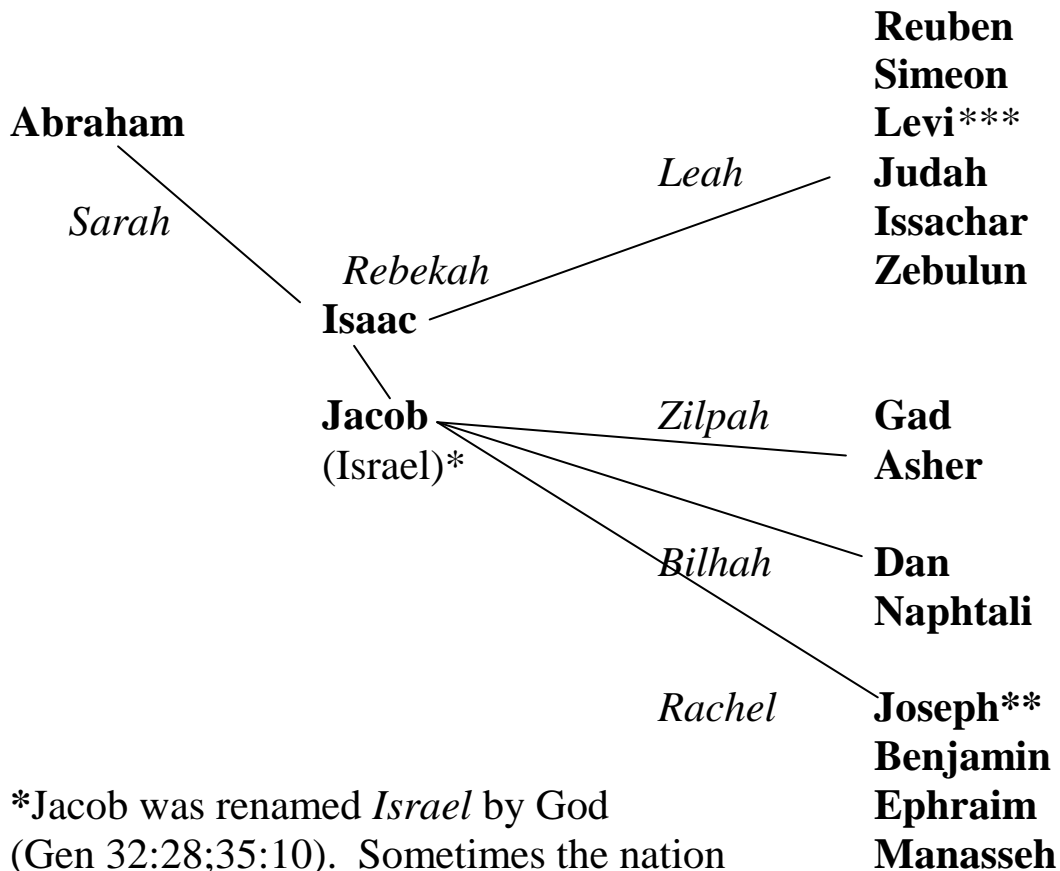
Easy Breakdown of Genesis

- I. Beginnings of Mankind Genesis 1-11
Creation, Fall, Flood, Babel
- II. History of the Founding Fathers of Israel Genesis 12-50
Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph

The Tribes of Israel

Fathers of the tribes of Israel

Wives in italic



*Jacob was renamed *Israel* by God (Gen 32:28;35:10). Sometimes the nation of Israel is referred to as Jacob by Old Testament writers.

**When Jacob adopted Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph became the father of two tribes of Israel.

***The Levites became the priests of Israel, did not own property in Canaan, therefore were not among the traditional 12 landowning tribes of Israel. They were in 48 towns scattered throughout the Promised Land (Joshua 21).

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**NEW BEGINNINGS
STUDIES FROM THE BOOK OF GENESIS**

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