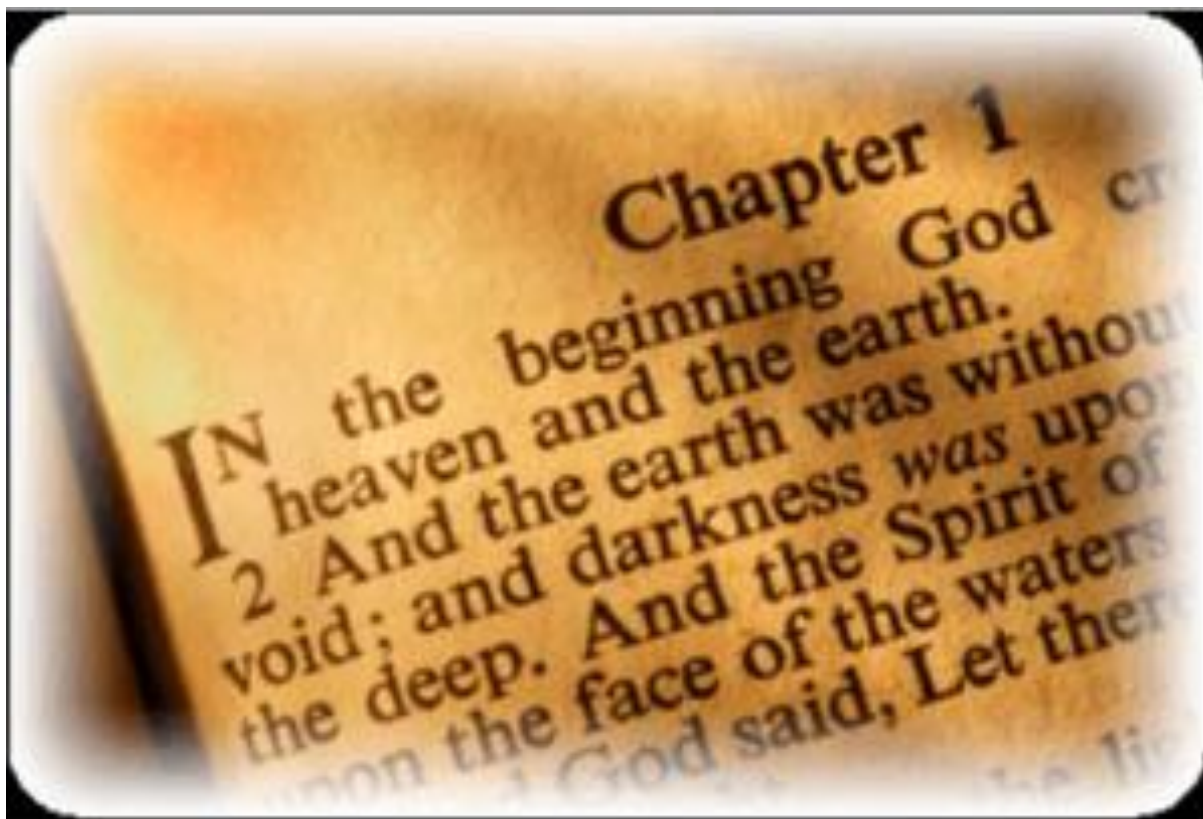


# B'REISHIT

## בראשית - IN THE BEGINNING

DANIEL TICHOTA



“IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED...”

GENESIS 1:1A

Prepared 2015

All Scripture *Complete Jewish Bible* unless otherwise state

# **B'REISHEET ... IN THE BEGINNING**

---

## **CONTENTS**

B'REISHEET – Genesis 1:1 – 6:8 .....	4
NOACH – Genesis 6:9 – 11:32 .....	12
LECH LECHA – Genesis 12:1 – 17:27 .....	18
VAYERA – Genesis 18:1 – 22:24 .....	26
CHAYEI SARAH – Genesis 23:1 – 25:18 .....	34
TOLDOT – Genesis 25:19 – 28:9 .....	40
VAYETZE – Genesis 28:10 – 32:3 .....	46
VAYISHLACH – Genesis 32:4 – 36:43 .....	53
VAYESHEV – Genesis 37:1 – 40:23 .....	59
MIKETZ – Genesis 41:1 – 44:17 .....	64
VAYIGASH – Genesis 44:18 – 47:27 .....	70
VAYECHI – Genesis 47:28 – 50:26 .....	75

# B'REISHEET ... IN THE BEGINNING

---

B'REISHEET

**בראשית**

Genesis 1:1 – 6:8

MAIN SCRIPTURE:

*Genesis 1:1*

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

In English we know the name of the first book of the Bible as *Genesis*, which is actually a Greek term meaning 'origins'. In Hebrew, however, the term is *B'reisheet*, meaning 'in the beginning.' Not only is this the first book in the Torah, or Bible, but it is the first word in all the Scriptures. Within this book are seen the origins of everything, from the creation of the earth, to the population of man, to a promise kept, and all the way to the plot of salvation for a nation. In every aspect God proves Himself to be faithful, and we have a front row seat in watching His every move, every emotion, and every promise.

The book opens with the words, "In the beginning God created..."

**בְּרֵאשִׁית, בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים**

What exactly did God create? As we go on in the opening passage, we find that God created the heavens and the earth. When He created the earth it was first void, covered in deep darkness, yet with the Spirit of God hovering over the surface of the water. He created light, and then divided light from darkness. He created a dome in the middle of the water, dividing water from water, calling it sky. The next day He created dry land, calling it Earth and the gathering of the waters Sea. God then created a covering over the Earth of grass, trees, seed-producing plants, and the like. The creation of lights to serve as signs, seasons, days, and years followed, and the sun, moon, and stars were spoken into the sky to divide night from day, explaining why the Jewish day's beginning is counted at evening. It was on the next day that God created living creatures, creating birds for the air and fish for the sea. This was followed with His creation of livestock, crawling animals, and wild beast to roam the land. And then, God made man, in His own image and likeness, and placed man on the earth to rule over the creatures of the air, sea, and land.

But notice with me the way in which we first learn of God. He is known as the One who speaks. In time He reveals Himself as Jehovah Shalom, El Elyon, and Abba,

but first He reveals Himself as the One who speaks. He spoke and it was. He spoke, "Let there be light," and light was. He spoke, "Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters to separate them," and there was. He spoke about the water being gathered and about grass, seeding plants, and fruit trees being brought forth and they were. God spoke and the world came into existence.

The word of God holds power, and what He speaks comes about. He later would speak to Noah that a flood was coming and for forty days and nights it rained. He too would speak to Abram that he would be the father of many and in God's timing it came to be. And soon enough He would speak that the Messiah would come from the line of King David. This too would in time come to pass.

The question that begs to be answered then is what God is speaking to you? What is it that is in the process of being formed and birthed in your own life? What has God already spoken to you that is about to come to pass? The very One who created something out of nothing is creating even now in your life. Do you hear His words? "Then God said..."

In Genesis 1:27 we read, *"So God created humankind in his own image; in the image of God he created him: male and female he created them."* If we were to look back over the first few days of creation we would notice that at the close of the first five days God looked over His work and declared it good. The Hebrew word here is TOWB, which breaks down to a general sense of good. We see this term in Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21 and 25. Up until this time, all that God had created was generally good. But on day six when He added man as part of His creation, He looked over what He had made and declared it very good (1:31). The words used here are MEHODE' TOWB, referring to vehemently, intensely, or exceedingly good. What was it that allowed this piece of creation to move away from the generally good category to that of the exceedingly good? While the world and animals and plants were all made also within the spoken command of Adonai, it was man who was made within His image. It is this single difference that separates man from anything else, and it is this difference which defines man's relationship with his Creator.

Beginning on Friday night and extending through until Saturday night, it is common to find some folks celebrating the Sabbath, or *Shabbat* in Hebrew. The Torah records in Genesis 2:3, *"God blessed the seventh day and separated it as holy; because on that day God rested from all His work which He had created, so that it itself could produce."* God worked for six days and then rested on the seventh. But despite what some may

conclude, God was not a bit tired from His creating. The Hebrew word for 'rest' is SHAVAT שָׁבַת

The Hebrew word for 'Sabbath' is שָׁבַת . The characters are the same, only the added vowel marks make the difference. To rest on the seventh day as God did is an eternal law and seen as one of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:9-11. It is here that we are commanded to keep the Sabbath in each generation. Sadly, though, the Sabbath was greatly abandoned by the Gentile Christians in the second century, and the day of worship moved from beginning on Friday evening to being held on Sunday morning. Even more saddening, however, is that what was commanded as a day of rest for the generations has become a day of anything but rest.

We read in Genesis 1:27 that God made man in His image and likeness, but it isn't until Genesis 2:7 that we read the details of this purposed and deliberate creation. The root word for 'Adam' means man, red, and ground. Genesis 2:7 records that *"...God formed a person [adam] from the dust of the ground [adamah]..."* Having first taken from the red clay, the dirt, God began shaping and molding a human. Yet one thing was missing, life. So God *"...breathed into his nostrils the breath [neshamah] of life, so that he became a living being."* Man only became living with the breath, the NESHAMAH, the vital breath and divine inspiration, of God alone flowing through his body. Man only stays alive with the breath of God flowing through his body. We are dependent upon our Creator for CHAY, life, lest we forget that apart from God we can do nothing (Jn 15:5).

The man was placed in the Garden of Eden (delight), commanded to cultivate and care for the land. In the Hebrew, it is this work that is considered part of the blessing from God. Before sin ever affected the garden, Adam was told to tend the ground. This word cultivate which is used is the Hebrew word of AVAD. Avad is translated as labor or bondage. However, taking this root we also have the term of AVODAT MISHKAN, which is the service of worship done within the Tabernacle. ADODAH is a common term for worship, and therefore one must wonder if both worship and work are related as opposed to separate. This idea would fit what Paul wrote in Colossians 3:23, where we are to work as unto the Lord and not man. We are to worship the Lord, not man.

Along with the instruction to tend came the instruction to enjoy from each and every tree, except for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Where the tree of life represented the potential of immortality, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil

represented in essence, death. Therefore, a strict instruction was given to stay away from this tree.

*“ADONAI, God, said, ‘It isn’t good that the person should be alone. I will make for him a companion suitable for helping him’...Then God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the person; and while he was sleeping, He took one of his ribs and closed up the place from which He took it with flesh. The rib which ADONAI, God, had taken from the person, He made a woman-person; and He brought her to the man-person (Gen 2:18, 21-22).”* In the first chapter of Genesis we read of all God created and called good. But now, for the first time in the Torah, we read that something was not good. With every created animal having a mate, God saw that man had none. He saw that man was lonely, and this was not a good thing. Therefore, the desire for love and companionship is hard-wired into the creation of man. To solve this circumstance and make it good once more, God took one of Adam’s ribs while he was asleep, and created a woman, which Adam named Eve (חַוָּה), meaning ‘living’. The two were naked and unashamed, joined in spirit, and they became one flesh, ‘ECHAD BASAR (united body). This was God’s intention from the beginning. Man and woman were to become one flesh. His intention has never changed just because society has.

As we read on in Genesis 3:3, we find the serpent comes to pay a visit. God had commanded Adam and Eve to not eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, but He had also instructed them to not touch it. Have you ever stopped to wonder why God put a good and bad tree in the garden? Certainly the all-knowing God knew that in leaving a bad tree in the garden, someone at some point would eat from it. Yet He never uprooted it. I can almost see it now, Adam and Eve wearing out a trail to the Tree of Life, while no such trail was seen leading to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Well at least not at first. We only know of the single event itself where the serpent tempted Eve, but how many other times had the couple been lured over to the tree? How much longer till a path was worn out showing them getting closer and closer to this tree? While God could have uprooted and removed the tree completely, He did not. This is because He wanted them to have freewill. He wanted them to choose to be dependent on Him. He wanted them to choose to serve and obey Him because they wanted to, not because they had to. He wasn’t interested in making robots, He was interested in communion.

The result for eating or touching the tree was death. It was after the two ate from this tree that they began to feel shame and covered themselves. It is following this that God comes to the garden and looks for His creation. When Adam and Eve cannot be found in the garden by God, God calls out, “Where are you? AYEKA?” The term *ayeka*

translates as *'where are you?'* yes, but on a greater scale it translates as, *'where are you in relation to Me?'* God knew where they were physically, hiding in the garden because of their shame, but His greater question was based on where their sin had landed them. Where once a grand relationship had been shared between the Creator and the creation, now a chasm stood in the way. And in response to the question, Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent. While many people will find a way to blame Eve, I cannot fully agree. The whole act is built on blame shifting. We know that the serpent was the root cause, but both Adam and Eve made their own decision to touch and eat.

Genesis 3:14 finds a bitter curse, 'ARAR, pronounced on the serpent, to go about its days on its belly. A hatred, 'EYBAH, was placed between the serpent and the woman and the seed. The seed would bruise the head of the foe, and the foe would bruise the heel. But interestingly, the word for bruise is SHUWPH, meaning to overwhelm, break, bruise, or cover. This is a primitive root in the Hebrew language, but one also pointed to when defining the Hebrew word SHPHIYPHON, meaning a kind of serpent with horns, such as a horned adder or cerastes.



The words of God continued, stating woman would have increased sorrow, or labor pain, as well as from conception through pregnancy, and still her desire would remain for her husband and his ruling. For the man, however, because he listened to his wife and consumed the fruit against the warnings of God, a bitter curse was also named over the ground that man once had dominion over. Now in painful physical labor, man would work to eat until the day of his passing. A warning was given that by touching and consuming, they would die. Now this statement was coming true as the paradise they had once known became a distant memory.

Genesis 3:21 records that for Adam and Eve, God made coats of skins to clothe them both. This act is recorded as the Adamic covenant. It was in this act that God showed man the details related to the sin offering by performing it for them, but also taking the skin to clothe them in their nakedness. Following this action, the two were removed from the Garden and an angel with a flaming sword was positioned to keep the Tree of Life from being eaten of again.

In Genesis 4 we find that Adam knew his wife and she conceived a son named Cain (Kayin). In time she conceived again and named her second son Abel (Hevel). Years later, Eve would birth her third son, Seth. The story of Cain and Abel, however,



is more relevant to us than we may think. The general gist of the story is centered around two offerings. One offering is acceptable to Adonai while the other is not. After an exchange of words, Cain takes out his frustrations by killing his brother. As a result, Adonai questions Cain as to where his brother is and Cain gives the familiar response of, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

While we all know the story and could probably quote it word for word, I think it is important that we take a look at the offerings of the two brothers that they brought before God. Cain brought before God an offering from the soil, while Abel brought an offering of firstborn sheep, including their fat. Abel's offering is recorded as accepted by God while Cain's is not. The entire story then rests on Cain's offering not being worthy of God's acceptance.

How can we apply this to us? I feel it may not be as hard to find a connection as we think, and perhaps all comes down to the offerings in which we ourselves are giving God. God specifically showed Adam and Eve the sacrifices that He desired, going back to the passage where He clothed them with skins. I would image that these two passed this lesson on to their children. Yet Cain still chose to bring the wrong offering. The same may possible be able to be said of us. We have also been advised by God as to what offering to bring, that of a broken and contrite heart (Ps 51:17). Failure to bring Him what He commands puts us also in a place where our offering may not be received.

Yet let us also look at the warning given by God to Cain prior to his taking his brother's life. Verses 7 and 8 give us a glimpse of a conversation between God and Cain. God is encouraging Cain that if he does well, literally, if he brings the right offering, then his offering will be accepted as Abel's was. But He also warns that if he does not do well, does not bring the right offering, sin lies in wait to overcome him. Right here, at this moment, Cain had the same choice to make as we do - to master sin, or be mastered by sin.

The seven deadly sins, per the monk Evagrius Ponticus are: lust, gluttony, greed, discouragement, wrath, envy, and pride. How many of these have I struggled with over the past couple years? I'd have to say all of them in some respect. But when I gain a clear mind long enough to hear God, I hear Him telling me that sin wants to become my master. I have given in and allowed myself to be pounced on and devoured by the enemy.

The point of all this is to remind us to not let sin, of any sort, be our master. Rather we are to be master over sin. Keep in mind, we are powerless on our own, which would explain why we get defeated so often. But with God, we have the ability

and power to block and defeat the enemy. Let's heed the same warning given to Cain before we kill Abel, and take mastery over sin.

The punishment placed on Cain, the curse on his land, was too great for Cain and he cried out to God. As a result, the LORD set a mark on Cain for his safety. Leaving all behind, he dwelt in the land of Nod, meaning the land of vagrancy. Cain knew his wife and to them was born Enoch, who was the Great-Great grandfather of Lamech. It was Lamech's sons, Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal-Cain that were first celebrated in the Torah for their talents in the areas of breeding, making music, and forging tools, proving that to each man God gives specific, yet different, skills.

In Genesis 4:23, Lamech boasts of a fight he was in, and how the victory was his with the death of his foe. As if following in the steps of Cain, he declares that if Cain is avenged seven times, he is to be avenged seventy times seven times. It is this mathematic equation that paves disaster for the world to come, proving that by the days of Noah the world is filled with violence. But it is also this same mathematic equation that later Jesus corrects in Matthew 18:21-22, when asked how many times must one forgive.

If we follow the generations as named in Genesis 5, we find that: Adam was the father of Seth (Shet) and lived a total of 930 years.

Seth was the father of Enos and lived for 912 years.

Enos was the father of Cainan and lived 905 years.

Cainan was the father of Mahaleleel and lived 910 years.

Mahaleleel was the father of Jared and lived 895 years.

Jared was the father of Enoch and lived 962 years.

Enoch was the father of Methuselah, and was taken without death.

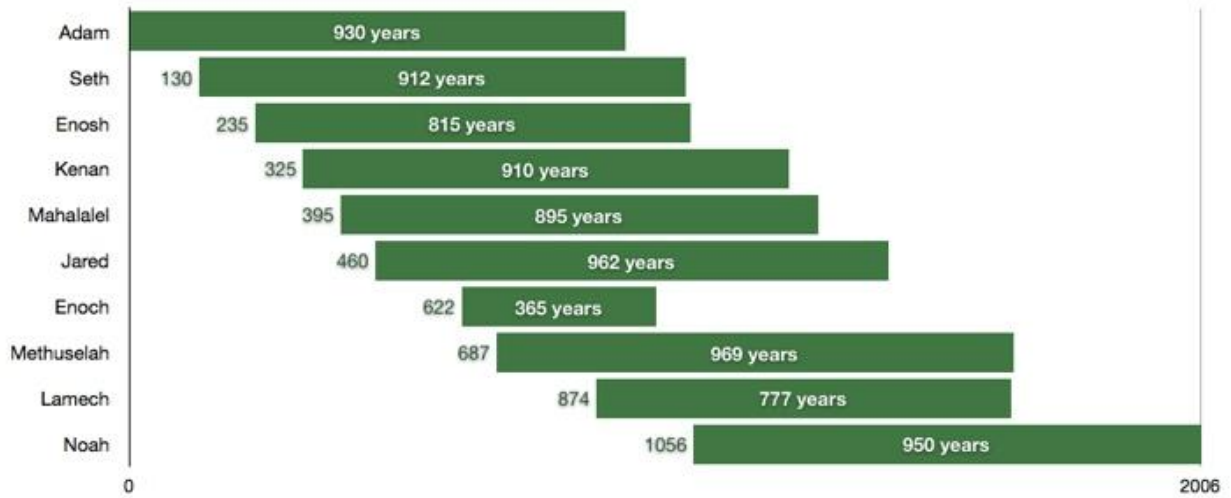
Methuselah was the father of Lamech and lived 969 years.

Lamech was the father of Noah and lived 777 years.

And Noah was the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth...

Looking at these numbers, we see that Adam was only recently passed when Noah was born, yet only Methuselah and Lamech were still living when Noah had his first child at 500 years old. Within the years to follow, Lamech would pass first, and then Methuselah. At 600 years old, the tail end of Methuselah's life, construction on the ark would begin.

## Genealogy From Adam to Noah



<http://www.hopefromthebible.com/genealogy-from-adam-to-noah>

# NOACH ... NOAH

---

## NOACH



Genesis 6:9 – 11:32

### MAIN SCRIPTURE:

Genesis 8:20-21

*Noah built an altar to ADONAI. Then he took from every clean animal and every clean bird, and he offered burnt offerings on the altar. ADONAI smelled the sweet aroma, and ADONAI said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, since the imaginings of a person's heart are evil from his youth; nor will I ever again destroy all living things, as I have done.*

This Torah portion starts out with a great description of who Noah was. In Genesis 6:9 we read, *"Here is the history of Noah. In his generation, Noah was a man righteous and wholehearted; Noah walked with God."* In order to understand these characteristics, let us back up to Genesis 5:29. It is in this verse that we first learn of Noah and why his parents gave him his name. His parents simply hoped that their son would give them rest (*nacham*), from all their toil. We know from reading the genealogy of Adam to Noah that the world was growing in number, but in order for his parents to hope for a rest from their toil makes me think that the sin of Adam was having fruit too big for the people to now bear. And so, in a simple desperation, his parents request a beam of light, a hope for the next generation.

What Noah's parents received was a man named by God as being righteous, wholehearted, and walking with God. This was indeed a much needed son, for it is in the account of Noah that we really learn of God's mercy. The generation that Noah lived in was filled with corruption (Gen 6:11). The Torah records that God Himself looked on the earth and found it corrupt (Gen 6:12). When God said no, man said yes. When God said stop, man said go. So God determined that since the earth was filled with violence, He would wipe it out. This was no light matter, however. God had been watching His creation over the years move away from Him, maybe slowly, maybe quickly, yet nonetheless moving. He saw the creation turn on itself. He saw the violence, the pride, the defiance slip in, and the people no longer heed His voice. And so with a grieved heart, He was sorry (Gen 6:6)

Still, though, in order to really understand who Noah was, let us define these words that describe him in Genesis 6:9. Noah was first named as righteous. This word

in Hebrew is TZEDEK (צֶדֶק), meaning to live in accordance with the standards of morality. In short, it is the characteristic of living in obedience. Noah wasn't living to advance his decisions, but rather was living to advance God's decisions in living a life obedient to God's standards. Let's just be honest, can this be said of us?

The next term used to define Noah was wholehearted. This is the Hebrew word TAMIM (תָּמִים), and it means to be blameless. This same word is later found in the Torah when describing the sacrificial lamb. The lamb was required to be unblemished for it to even be offered. This word is also defined as integrity, broken down farther as one who lives by his convictions. Again, Noah wasn't looking to squeeze by, or make the top-ten list of old status-quo guys. Noah was out to live according to God's ways and standards. So again let's just be honest and question if this characteristic defines us.

Lastly, but not any less of a characteristic, it was said of Noah that he walked with God. Does this mean Noah was perfect? No. The meaning of walking with God here is simply stating that Noah made an effort to walk in God's ways in every part of life, as opposed to walking in the counsel and ways of the wicked. Noah worked to keep God's commands, and in order to do this, he walked in fellowship with God. I dare ask, does this speak of us?

Noah stuck out like a sore thumb, but that wasn't a bad thing in his case. In fact, it was for that very reason that God was able to use him. God looked down, and despite all the corruption He saw in the world, He also found one man who had not lived his life bent over with the morals of the world. God saw Noah, righteous, wholehearted, and walking with Him. Even in his time, Noah was a preacher of righteousness (II Pet 2:5). But if God was to look down again today, with this same decision staring Him in the face, would He see someone again who was living righteous, wholehearted, and in relationship with Him?

Perhaps we fail to understand the depth of our sin. Let me share with you a portion of mine. It was in late August of 2000 that my boss collected my work badge and escorted me out of the building. Why, you ask. I had been caught using company time and equipment for non-work related activities. I had known the rules and signed the Code of Conduct, but my failure to abide by the rules now found me being escorted out of the building. My failure to obey the rules set forth, however, did not only hurt me, but hurt my fellow workers as now they had to cover for me. It hurt my wife at the time because now she had to push for extra hours from her boss until I found another job. And it also hurt our marriage, as a new strain was added to an already strained marriage. Could I be trusted by her in other areas as well? Truth be told, I was selfish.

God punished the sin of the world because they too were selfish. God never wanted to punish the people, but He did want the people to repent and come back to

Him. Yet, Romans 6:23 tells us that the paycheck for sin is death. Are we to think that God never gave the people the opportunity to repent? Should I assume that what I did knowingly was not wrong? Psalm 89:14 speaks that the foundation of God's throne is righteousness and justice. The people of Noah's time walked in ways that seemed right to them, but were not right according to God's standards. The fear is that like in the days of Noah, so again we have measured ourselves to our own standards and not the standards of God. If God is looking, has He found you?

With Noah as the man carrying the torch, God speaks to Noah to build an ark. The term ark is the word TABAT (תִּבַּת). This is the same word we see in Exodus 2:3, where Moses' mother places Moses in a basket to set him down river. The word for basket and ark is *tabat*. Noah was commanded by God to make a gigantic basket in which the animals, his family, and he would be saved. After 120 years, this overgrown basket was completed. Then the command came to come into the ark, for God was about to flood the earth.

At this, the animals began to come aboard in order to save their species. I remember well hearing this story growing up in church. The animals marched in two by two and looked so cute, with the giraffe sticking his head out the window and the dove sitting peacefully on Noah's balding head. But if we read Genesis 7:2-3 a little closer, we find a twist in the story we have all grown to love. *"Of every clean animal you are to take seven couples, and of the animals that are not clean, one couple; also of the birds in the air take seven couples – in order to preserve their species throughout the earth."* Are you telling me that the animals did not all come in two by two? Exactly! According to the Torah, only the unclean animals came in a pair of two. All the birds and the clean animals such as the rams, goats, sheep, cattle, etc, came in seven pairs of two. The term clean is translated as ritually fit, whereas unclean translates as ritually unfit. So as can be seen, Noah not only was needing to preserve the animal kingdom, but was also needing to preserve his own family in having clean animals aboard the ship, and having animals ritually fit for the sacrifices that God later would require.

Let us step back for just a moment, though, and contemplate the reality of this account. Matthew 24:37-39 records Jesus stating that in the days of Noah, before the flood, people were eating and drinking and having a blast. Even despite God's warning to the people, coupled with Noah's obedience in building the ark, people brushed off the fact that God would do such a thing. As the waters began to fall, a first in the Bible, the people were caught unaware and with no chance of being saved.

We do not know the day in which Jesus will come back for His church, but will we also be caught unaware. We have the signs, the promise even of His return, but are we so much like the people of Noah's time, rejoicing, eating, drinking, and being given in marriage, that when Jesus comes we will be caught unaware? It will be too late, just as it was for those who ignored the warning in the past. The people had 120 years to be ready, watching Noah build this ark and probably questioning him the entire time through their snide remarks. We have had much longer to prepare than 120 years. II Peter 3:9 sums it up. *"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some people think of slowness; on the contrary, he is patient with you; for it is not his purpose that anyone should be destroyed, but that everyone should turn from his sins."*

God shut the door on the ark, and judgment of the people began. One day soon, God will shut the door again, and the people left behind will face His judgment again. Let us not be like those who waited too long.

*"The flood was forty days on the earth. The water overflowed the earth and grew deeper, until the ark floated on the surface of the water...The water held power over the earth for 150 days"* Genesis 7:17-18, 24. After forty days and nights of rain, the circus basket floated around for another 150 days before finally settling on Mount Ararat. From the 17<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh month till the first day of the tenth month, the water receded little by little until it gave way to the tops of the mountains. After another forty day, Noah released a raven, which flew back and forth. Noah then sent a dove, which found no place to land and eventually flew back to Noah and the ark. Seven days later, after more of the water had gone down, a dove was again sent, this time returning with a freshly picked olive leaf. After waiting another seven days, Noah released yet one more dove, who this time did not return. Finally, on the twenty-seventh day of the second month, the ark's door was opened and the people saw dry land once again. With his wife, sons, their wives, and the animals, Noah came out of the ark.

Noah's first recorded act after exiting the ark is recorded in Genesis 8:20, stating, *"Noah built an altar to Adonai..."* Of all the things Noah could have done, he does the one thing probably many of us would not have. Noah made an altar and made a burnt offering of each clean animal and bird as unto the Lord. The aroma was sweet in God's nostrils and in His heart He determined that He would not curse the ground because of humankind. From here a covenant with Noah was made, the Noahic covenant. *"I will establish my covenant with you that never again will all living beings be destroyed by the waters of a flood, and there will never again be a flood to destroy the earth"* (Gen 9:11). To seal the covenant, God placed a rainbow in the sky. At the sight of a rainbow, the Bible records that God would remember His covenant made with all living creatures, and refrain

from destruction via a flood again. This covenant still stands today, proving that God does in fact keep His word.

Following his time on the ark, Noah moved into the farming industry, planted a vineyard, and in Genesis 9:21, had a little too much of his homemade wine. The result landed him drunk, naked, and passed out on the floor. When Ham saw his father in this state, he sneered at his father and shared the sight with his brothers. However, when his brothers, Shem and Japheth, heard this, they took a blanket and backed in slowly so as not to look on their father, but also not to leave him in his naked state. Based on these actions, Ham's son Canaan and his line were cursed to be servants to that of his brothers, Kush, Mitzrayim, and Put. For Shem and Japheth, though, a blessing was pronounced over them by Noah.

All in all, Noah lived a total of 950 years. Japheth fathered Gomer and others, Shem fathered Elam and others, and Ham fathered Cush and others. Cush became the father of Nimrod, whom the Bible states became the first powerful ruler on earth. Cities built under his power include Babel and Nineveh. It is recorded that Nimrod was a mighty hunter (Gen 10:9), but let us not be too quick to assume he was hunting deer. It is stated that Nimrod hunted men. In essence, this phrase 'mighty hunter before God' can be translated as '*in opposition to the LORD,*' or '*rebel*'. It was Nimrod who would become the father of the Assyrians, a people who made terror into an art. Rabbi Jonathan Cahn, in his book, The Harbinger, follows the descendants of Nimrod and defines their work of terrorism as, "*...the systematic application of terror, violence, and intimidation to achieve a specific end.*" Where did the Assyrians learn this art? They learned it from the one who was *hunting* men; from Nimrod.

Lastly, in Genesis 11, we read the details of the city of Babel. As the people began to come together under the direction of Nimrod, the thought was shared of building a tower to reach to the heavens. The tower was to not be built for the glory of God, but "*...so that [they could] make a name for [themselves] and not be scattered all over the earth*" (Gen 11:4). Did you catch that? The glory they were seeking was for man and not God. The word Babel translates as 'the gate of God'. It was this tower that was to be a gate to Heaven, but sprinkled within this thought was the idea of removing God from His place of awesomeness.

Instead of being dislodged from His rightful place, God dislodged the people by confusing their common language and thus scattering them over the whole earth. If the people could not work as a solid unit, they could not work to usurp God. But there is a



promise that one day we will all come together again, for the glory of God, and all speak the same language. Zephaniah 3:9 states that God will again give us a pure language to those who call on the name of the LORD. The curse once placed on Babel will in time be reversed as in unity we serve God, instead of working to remove God.

For additional details on the search for Noah's ark, please consider:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i7iycpe16V0>

# LECH LECHA ... GET YOURSELF OUT

LECH LECHA

לך לך

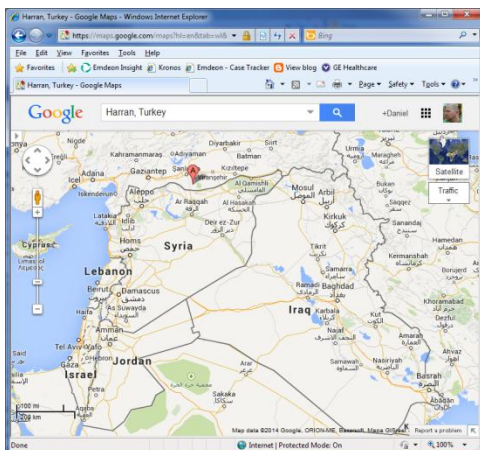
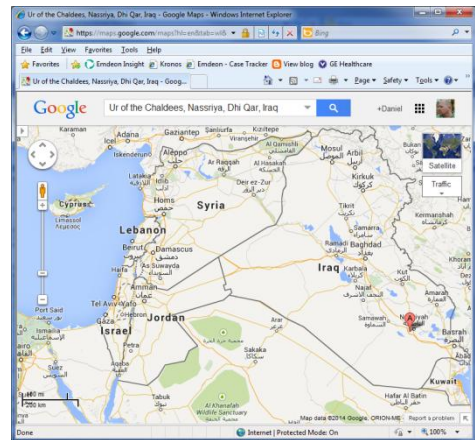
Genesis 12:1 - 17:27

MAIN SCRIPTURE:

Genesis 12:2-3

*"I will make of you a great nation, I will bless you, and I will make your name great; and you are to be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, but I will curse anyone who curses you; and by you all families of the earth will be blessed."*

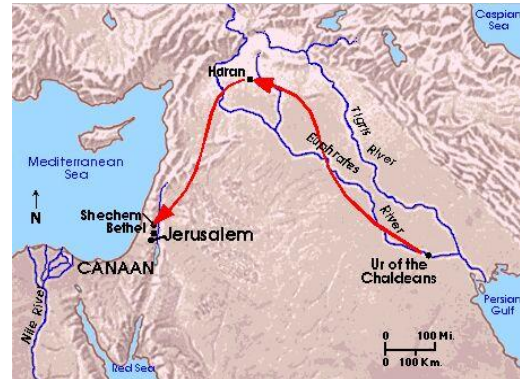
There are times in life when Adonai gives us a simple command. Since we have been given freewill, He cannot perform the command for us. It comes down to us and whether we will obey or not. For Avram (Abram), just such a simple command was given. Genesis 12:1 tells us that Adonai gave Avram the command to get out of the country he was currently residing in. He was to get away from the land and the relatives and travel to a land that would be shown to him. We see that Avram was in a Mesopotamian city called Ur of the Chaldeans, which archaeologists believe they have found remains of near the Euphrates River in southern Iraq. The blessing of a great nation was given to him at this same time, but everything hinged on his obedience, and obedience was Abram's first test. In Genesis 12:4 we read of this obedience and find that when tested, he did indeed obey God.



But let us consider another piece to this getting out that Abram was commanded in regards to. He was commanded to leave behind the gods, and embrace only God. His background, his family line, was steeped in polytheism and idolatry. Yet all that was left behind by Abram. Whether he never embraced it from the start, or whether he forsook it, he did not bring it with him as he traveled in God's direction. Truth be told, he became fiercely loyal to the one true God. When the family caravan made a stop at Haran,

however, it was Abram who trudged forward and refused to continue on in the ways his father Terah embraced. Haran was a city much like Ur, where the people worshiped pantheon gods. For Abram, Sarai, and nephew Lot, this was not an option.

If we skip ahead into Joshua 24:2-3 we read that Adonai “...took your father Avraham from beyond the river.” This means more than just beyond the Euphrates. The word ‘across’ or ‘beyond’ is the Hebrew word EBER. While literally Abraham came from across the river, symbolically he also went across the river. Perhaps we know this term better as conversion or being born again. Regardless of what we name it, it was for him a conversion of the heart and a new birth. In leaving Ur, leaving behind the gods, leaving behind all the common known life, Abraham was reborn in Canaan, into the serving of the one true God, and into a whole new faith.



As I continue to grow in my relationship with Adonai, I want to also grow in the speed with which I obey. I want to stop asking questions and stop trying to find a way around what I am being asked to do and just do it. If He says to get myself out, I want to get myself out. If He requires me to leave the gods behind to be born again in Him, then I want to do it. The blessing for doing His will is just an obedient step away. It was only when Abram arrived in the land of Canaan that the LORD appeared to him at Shechem and stated He would give him this land (Gen 12:7).

Abram's second test is seen in Genesis 12:10. It is here that after his conversion, he is tested with famine. With resources literally drying up, Abram took his family, livestock, and goods, and headed out toward Egypt where the famine had not reached. It seemed as though the land he had been told to move to was anything but the paradise he was expecting. Yet still, even in having to go down to Egypt, Abram still trust, and thus began his life of faith. In order to save his family, he made to decision to step out in faith with God that he would be taken care of.

Now in Egypt, Pharaoh and all the Egyptians saw the beauty of Sarai. This put Abram on edge as he was certain they may try to kill him to get to her. So Abram and Sarai made an agreement to say she was his sister. This just about proved fatal as Pharaoh was so infatuated with Sarai that he began to make his move and bring her to his harem, while giving to Abram a number of sheep, cattle, donkeys, camels, and servants as dowry.

But while celebrating with Sarai, Pharaoh was inflicted with a disease. It was as a result of this disease that Pharaoh realized that he had been duped, that Sarai was not Abram's sister, and that what he was about to do was wrong. Sarai was returned to Abram, and Abram was urged to take his new treasures and leave town.

Still, notice how this whole account started. The one who was growing in faith was now moving forward in fear. Fear will make us do many things. In his fear of believing the Egyptians would kill him over his wife, Avram told his wife to agree in the telling of a lie. So would Adonai still have blessed and protected Abram if the truth had been told from the beginning? I am pretty sure He would have, especially since Adonai had already given him a promise in Genesis 12:2 about making him a great nation. It was in fear, however, that Abram met panic. We are no different, though. Fear will cause us to do some crazy things, but fear is of the enemy. Why do we listen to fear instead of listening to the voice of Adonai? Isn't it time we stop listening to the voice that only brings distance and pain, and put our faith in the words of our Father?

Abram had heard it before, a variant of it at least. In Genesis 12:2 he had been told by God that he would be made into a great nation, with his name great and people blessed. Now he was hearing another version of the same prophecy. God was telling him that all the land set before him in every direction, north, south, east, and west, would belong to him and his descendants. *"All the land you see I will give to you and your descendants forever"* (Gen 13:15). And not only would the land be his, but Adonai was also prophesying to him now that his people would be as numerous as the dust, too great to even be counted. *"...and I will make your descendants as numerous as the specks of dust on the earth – so that if a person can count the specks of dust on the earth, then your descendants can be counted"* (Gen 13:16). Avram was receiving confirmation to a word previously spoken to him. But it came with change. There was weight that Abram first had to part with. The confirmation of Adonai to Abram did not come until first he parted ways with Lot (Gen 13:9).

Fighting was breaking out between the two tribes as they shared land and resources. As a result the two had to part ways. Abram gave Lot the option of where he wanted to go even though Abram was the older of the two. With all due respect, Abram could have just sent Lot away. Still, he gave Lot the option of the land, which ended in Lot picking the land toward Sodom and Gomorrah.

Reading this story so many times from childhood till now, it looks like just another story, another short history lesson, or another use of a page. But this piece of the account needs to be there. If it was missing we would miss the words repeated by Adonai to Abram. If it was missing we would not know how Lot eventually made his

way toward Sodom and Gomorrah. And if it was missing we may not catch what I feel Adonai is saying to us right now. What has Adonai spoken to you? What has He placed in your heart just as he did in Abram's? What prophecy has He given you that has not yet come to pass?

Do you notice that it wasn't until Lot and Abram split that Adonai confirmed His word? I, myself, have received words of prophecy over the years. Were they just nice fluffy words then that someone spoke, pretending to hear from Adonai? No. I believe they were His words. But I also am beginning to see that they may be on hold because I have not broken apart from my Lot. Abram was not free to be what Adonai called him to be until first he distanced himself from Lot. Sin will hold us down and prevent us from being used in the full measure that Adonai has for us. Honestly, I don't want to be skipped over because of something that has no lifelong value.

Not long after the separation of Lot and Abram, a war broke out. The kings of Shinar, Ellasar, Elam, and Tidal the king of nations, went up against the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar. In the course of events, the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fell into tar pits while in the Valley of Siddim, thus falling into the hands of the others. Now with the odds being four verses three, the four kings took captives, one of whom was Lot. Notice though that when Abram and Lot split, Lot headed toward Sodom. He had enough sense at that point not to live in the city, but close by. But within only verses, Lot moved from the outskirts to the inside, as we read in Genesis 14:12, *"But as they left, they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, and his possessions; since he was living in Sodom."* We will look more at this soon enough though.

Lot had been captured; he was a prisoner of war. One from Lot's camp, however, managed to escape and headed straight for Abram to report the news concerning Lot. With an army of 318 men, Abram went in pursuit of this army in order to retrieve his nephew. Genesis 14:14 records, *"When Abram heard that his nephew had been taken captive, he led out his trained men, who had been born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan."* When he caught up to the kings, the Bible records that he recovered all the plunder, bringing not only Lot back, but also the possessions, women, and other people which had been taken as well.

John 10:10 tells us that the mission of the enemy is to steal, kill, and destroy. Knowing that this is the enemy's plan, and seeing him actually do it, I wonder sometimes why we do not fight back. Lot was physically taken as part of the plunder of the enemy, kidnapped and treated as a modern day POW. Yet Abram, who was no part of the situation or town, fought back for his nephew. Abram took the stand against the enemy that we all should take, chasing after the enemy to take back what the enemy

stole. He could have brushed it off and said, “Well it was Lot’s fault for choosing to live over there. I gave him the first pick and that was his choice.” But he didn’t. Instead he pursued the enemy and took the plunder back.

Going on, we find that the king of Salem, Melchizedek, came to bless Abram. The name Melchizedek means *King of Righteousness*. Like Abram, he was a monotheist. Another side note, Salem was an early name for the city *Jerusalem*. Yet let us look at the blessing in Genesis 14:19-20 which was pronounced over Abram:

*“Blessed be Abram by El ‘Elyon, maker of heaven and earth,  
and blessed be El ‘Elyon, who handed your enemies over to you.”*

Notice first how Melchizedek blesses Abram by God, the makers of heaven and earth, but then follows up with blessing God Himself. Melchizedek blessed God. It is in this manner that Melchizedek was *praising* God. In blessing God, we in turn acknowledge that He is God, praising Him for who he is. This was a confession of the worth of God

In Genesis 14:21, we read, “*The king of Sodom said to Abram, ‘Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself.’*” This doesn’t seem like that big a deal, but let us look at it a little more in depth. Abram had just come back with his small army from retrieving Lot and those also captured. Here the king of Sodom offered a reward of all the plunder in exchange for the people. But Abram says no. According to First Fruits of Zion, it is stated that Abram knew the king of Sodom to be wicked and cunning, and he did not want this ‘gift’ to serve as some form of allegiance owed. While Abram did not take it, I cannot help but wonder if I would have. I question only because of ‘gifts’ I have taken in life that seemed only to capture me later on. Something so innocent could have had a life-changing effect on Abram, yet he stood his ground and denied the reward.

A few years back I bought a telescope for my son. For about the first month or so we were outside every night, looking through the little eye piece and standing in awe of the stars. We even soon after purchased a book that gave an inside scope of what star formations could be seen each night of the year. I was so impressed at how much I could see with the naked eye when I knew where to look, but even more impressed when I looked through the lens. So many stars lie out there, some visible yet some void to the human eye. Yet they are still there, still shining, and still proving a promise.

I remember seeing all these stars, honestly too many to count. Yet in reading Genesis 15:5, that is the challenge Adonai gave to Avram in Genesis 15:5. “Count the stars, Avram. Count them if you can.” Obviously there was no way he could count all of them. Adonai knew this, but He also spoke to Abram confirmation once more that his legacy would be as numerous as the stars. Perhaps, though, that in order to

understand this promise better we need to understand the condition Abram and Sarai were in. They were childless, which in these days was a sign of divine disapproval. We know they were both old in age, but the fact that they had not had a child up until this time must have played on them. They were viewed by others, and probably by themselves, as disapproved, forgotten, or maybe plagued by Adonai. How teasing in some ways did it seem for Adonai to promise a child, or nations, to one who was viewed as disapproved?

Yet, we are fortunate to be able to read on and see the end result. We know that Abram became father Abraham, just like the song tells us, and he did have many sons. But before a single son was born, he was first challenged to count the stars, and to count the sand. He was challenged to believe and have faith, which honestly is a huge step.

God made a covenant with Abram, known as the Abrahamic Covenant. It was in these times that a covenant partner was known as a friend, AHEV in Hebrew. In Genesis 15:18, then, it is recorded that God made a covenant with Abram, promising land to the masses that would come from his line. In his own time and way, Abram tried to make God's promise happen, but the covenant was based on God's timing and ways. How we would do well to understand this for ourselves.

A plan was made, an idea hatched. Sarai suggested to her husband that he take her slave girl, Hagar, and with her build the promised lineage God kept speaking of. Always confusing to me, Abram agreed to this proposal. While polygamy in these days was still accepted, Abram took Hagar as his second wife. In lying with her, she became pregnant. What Sarai probably did not know in this offer, however, was the course her actions would take even in today's world. Growing inside of Hagar was a boy, a tribe, a nation not promised of God that would ages later still be contesting their lineage as the true chosen people.

Hagar was no longer just the slave girl, she was a wife of Abram, sharing an equal standing with Sarai. But when it proved to be too much to take in, Sarai went to Abram and rebuked him for accepting her proposal. Abram's response wasn't the typical, "You told me to do it," but rather was that Hagar was still her servant, and she had the power to do as she pleased. In some ways I feel this proved his love for his real, God-ordained wife. Sarai then went back and put things right, expressing to Hagar her position still within the unit. When this didn't sit right with Hagar, she left.

It was while she was away that the LORD's angel found Hagar and asked what was going on. Hagar expressed the bad behavior and that she was running away. The angel stated to go back to Sarai and submit. God spoke something else in this moment of distress for Hagar. He told her the name of her child. His name would be Ishmael,

meaning God hears. God had every intention of blessing Ishmael with a multitude of descendants, but in blessing him would also come a dark spot – that he would be a wild donkey of a man, living always in conflict. We see this played out as Ishmael is known as the father of the Arab people. He is known as the start of Islam, and believed as the rightful heir of Abraham in their faith. The words spoken of by God proved true, that we would have many descendants and he would be living always in conflict.

Abram was 86 when he fathered Ishmael (Yishma'el). Ishmael would remain his only son until he turned 100 years old. This fourteen year gap was purposeful by God for a couple different reasons. First, by moving Abram forward in his faith, God became once more the sole source for Abram to trust in. Where once he had put his faith in himself, and worked to *help God out*, now he was more mature and able to see the higher ways of God. But another reason for the long gap rests in the fact that God was about to re-establish His covenant with Abram, not only changing his name, but changing his practices. God was about to open a door of covenant by circumcision (brit milah). Ishmael was too old to have a Bar-Mitzvah as well. Just these little details would separate Ishmael from Isaac in the years to follow.

In Genesis 17:4-6 we read of God's reaffirmation of the covenant. It was now, at the age of 99, that Adonai appeared to Avram and spoke as the El Shaddai [God Almighty]. *"As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Avram[exalted father]; your name will be Avraham [father of many], for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you"* It took some time, but Abram, now Abraham, finally found himself in God's will. It is said that when God's time and God's word intersect, that suddenly happens. Abraham found himself now in that intersection. At the age of 99, suddenly was happening. Please hear me when I say that this applies to us also. When we are in His timing, intersecting with His word, we too will find suddenly happening. Regardless of our age or name, His will can come suddenly.

As God continued His promise to Abraham, He also mentioned Sarai's, now Sarah's, role. *"I will bless [Sarah]; moreover, I will give you a son by her. Truly I will bless her: she will be a mother of nations; kings of people will come from her"* (Gen 17:16). It is here that God states that through Sarah's birth to Isaac (Yitz'chak), she would become the mother of nations. It was declared that following this line, kings of peoples would come from her. We know that further on down the line the twelve tribes of Israel were birthed. Following these lines further, especially those of Benjamin and Judah, we see the kings that were promised in Saul, David, Solomon, and those who would come



after. Compare this to Genesis 17:20, when Abraham is concerned with what will become of Ishmael. Although Ishmael is also his son, a promise from God was given, but not quite to the same extent. God declared that this line too would be great, but as opposed to kings, Ishmael's line would see twelve princes. Did you catch that? To one will come kings while to the other only princes. Does this mean that God doesn't care as much for the line of Ishmael? Not at all. But what it does state, or rather prove, is that the plans of man fail in comparison to the plans of Adonai.

I am learning to be cautious. I am learning more so these days to stop and seek God's ways. Too many times I have already stepped out in what I thought were good ideas only to find out that I made huge mistakes. I am learning the hard way that my plans are not always right. Instead of stepping out and hoping that God blesses my ideas, I need instead to wait, seek Him, and step where He says to step. In His path is the blessing that I desire to have fall on my life. But the minute I become out of sync with Him, the minute I step out from under His cover, that is when I find myself like Abram instead of Abraham.

Perhaps our biggest challenge is simply that; simply trying to not step ahead of God. I am grateful that there is a whole book full of others like me who have done this. I am grateful that their lessons are recorded for me to read and take into consideration. But it is not enough just to read it. I must apply these lessons.



# VAYERA ... HE APPEARED

---

VAYERA

ויראה

Genesis 18:1 – 22:24

MAIN SCRIPTURE:

Genesis 18:14

*"Is anything too hard for ADONAI? At the time set for it, at this season next year, I will return to you; and Sarah will have a son."*

We read in Genesis 17:16 of God once again promising Abraham a son. This time, however, He specifically says that the son will come from Sarah, stating, *"I will give you a son by [Sarah]."* With every test and trial Abraham faced, his faith was being tested. Yet isn't that really what faith is – a life a testing? Hebrews 11:1 reminds us that, *"...faith [trusting] is being confident of what we hope for, convinced about things we do not see."*

In the English language, the word 'faith' is pretty much always known as a noun. However, for Abraham it was more than just a noun, it was also a verb. It was not only something he had, but something he did. Abraham *had* faith, but *in faith*, Abraham obeyed God to get out of Ur, as well as received the ability to have a child in his old age (Heb 11:8,11). Perhaps it is time we too see faith as not just a noun, but as a verb as well.

In Genesis 13:18 we read that Abram moved his tents in order to live by the oaks of Mamre, and here he built an altar to God. Years later, we find Abraham still in this place, and about to have a trio of guests. Genesis 18:1 begins by stating that *"Adonai appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre as he sat at the entrance to the tent during the heat of the day."* Seeing the men, Abraham began putting together a small feast of bread and meat in which to serve them. During the meal or after, the Bible does not record at what time exactly the guests asked the whereabouts of Sarah. Abraham answered, however, that she was in the tent. To this the men foretold that they would journey back again in one year and Sarah would have a baby. On hearing this, Sarah laughed. I cannot help but wonder if it was at this moment Abraham realized these men were not ordinary men, but angels. And I cannot help but question Sarah's laugh. We have it in our minds that she laughed out loud, but what if her laugh was internal? What if it was

a private thought? If this be the case, then she was not lying when she stated she did not laugh. Outwardly it is true, she did not. Inwardly, though, in the heart where God looks, she did. And why not, she was up in years.

I can relate to Sarah, personally. She looked at her age as the blockage, yet I have looked to other things to reason my blockage. Addictions, divorce, and time itself have all played a factor in why I too feel like what God has spoken and promised is laughable. In ways, have laughed because we both thought we were too far gone. But I love the rebuke that Sarah received, and in many ways that I also received in Genesis 18:14. *"Is anything too hard for ADONAI?"* Absolutely not! I have come to realize the same thing that I imagine Sarah learned that day when she was rebuked. God is able to do more than can ever be imagined. And why not; that is His character. Ephesians 3:20 records Paul stating that God is able to do far beyond anything we can ask or imagine because of His power working in us. At that moment when once again the men declared that Sarah would give birth within the year, His power was working, just as it still is now.

So, is anything too hard for Adonai? Next time we wonder, perhaps we should take notes from what Paul states concerning Abraham in Romans 4:17-22. Paul says that Abraham's faith failed to waver, but in turn grew stronger. Therefore he knew that God A) gives life to the dead, and that God B) calls things that are not as though they are.

With the visitors now leaving Abraham's camp, and the topic of birth wrapped up, the visit changed to a focus on Sodom and Gomorrah. The sin of these cities was great and an outcry had reached the ears of heaven. But was the outcome to be the extinction of these places in full? We see again a characteristic of Abraham in his request. We see compassion. We saw it first in his dealings with Hagar, and perhaps in his giving of the first choice to Lot, but now we see it once more as he pleads for Lot's rescue.

Being told this truth, Abraham begins to barter for the sake of the city, questioning, *"Will you actually sweep away the righteous with the wicked?"* In the account of Noah, God had spared Noah's family because they were righteous. And once again God was bringing judgment. This time Abraham was not in danger of being swallowed up, but Lot was. Because of this a plea was made which started at fifty and ended at ten. God agreed that if ten righteous people were found He would not destroy the city. But as we will see, finding even ten was a chore.

I have often read this story and thought, "Would I be one of those found righteous?" In order to answer that I think we need to look at the word righteous again. As we learned with Noah, it is the characteristic of living in obedience. Another way to

look at it is the character of one who is just and lawful in affairs or cause, justified, and vindicated by God. In essence, Abraham was asking God if He would still destroy the city if only ten people whose character reflected the ways of God could be found.

It is no surprise that our own country has slipped away from following God. It is because of this fact that I wonder – if Abraham was to plead for our city, how many would God actually find? Surly ten, right? Maybe one hundred? A thousand? At what point would the line be drawn and destruction come? I am not asking because I think we should live dangerously close to that line, but rather I am asking because I want to stay very far from that line. But it starts with me, and with you. Will God find us righteous? Would the destruction of many come because of my actions, or would my actions bring about salvation from the judgment?

Let's take a minute to look at Sodom and Gomorrah. The meaning of the word Sodom is believed to be based in the Semitic language and is related to the word *sadama*, meaning fasten, fortify, or strengthen. In turn, the word Gomorrah is looked to be based on the root gh-m-r, meaning to be deep with water. To put these two cities together would give us an understanding of a fortified city near a deep body of water. However, further research of the word Sodom (H5467) from the Strong's shows this word related to a scorched or burnt land, and Gomorrah (H6017) linked to a ruined heap. Was it possible that the outcome of the city was known from the beginning? It is thought also that the word sodomy is related to the word Sodom, based on their illicit sexual sins. It is for these actions also that Jude writes of Sodom and Gomorrah that they indulged in immorality and went after strange flesh (Jude 7). All this makes me wonder how long before of grace runs out. Are we destined to see the same fate as Sodom and Gomorrah?

When the angels arrive at the township, Lot is found sitting at the gate. Immediately he flops down and lays prostrate before them, pleading they come to his house for supper. They came, and a meal is shared, but the Bible records that before they could even go to bed, the men of the city had already surrounded the house, wanting the angelic men to come out and *play* (Gen 19:4-5). In response, Lot goes out to speak with the men while refusing to give them their desire. Instead, Lot does what any good dad would do, right? Wrong! He offers his daughters to the men of the city. Not a good enough offer, the town begins to turn on Lot until the angels reach out their hands and pull Lot back in. Then, to those at the door, blindness overtakes them as sent on them by the angels.

The family is urged to leave, and asked if there are any others who will go with them. With this questioning, Lot goes to his sons-in-law. *"So Lot went out and spoke to*

*his sons-in-law, who were pledged to marry his daughters. He said, 'Hurry and get out of this place, because the LORD is about to destroy the city!' But his sons-in-law thought he was joking" (Gen 19:14).* I'm not sure if perhaps Lot had a comedy show on TV back then, or made repeated performances at the local comedy club, but this was a bad time to be thinking he may be joking. This joke would end up costing the sons-in-law their lives. Not too funny.

But have you ever stopped to think why they would think this? Compromise is normally looked at as a good thing. In marriage, when both parties cannot agree on the same thing, compromise can be the tool used to ensure that a mutual agreement is made. Webster defines this concept of compromise as a settlement of differences by arbitration or consent. But there is a second definition for the word compromise as well. Webster defines this word also as a concession to something derogatory or prejudicial. This is a definition I have found myself fall into more often than desired. It is in those times when our character or stance is no longer valid and our compromise seems to be the root cause.

In Genesis 19:1 we found Lot sitting at the gateway of the city. In only a few chapters Lot had moved from near Sodom to at Sodom. Gradually over time, Lot began to compromise or give concession. When the men of God came to take Lot away at Abraham's request, they found him living within the city. And what is more, the evil lifestyle of the people had encompassed around him. Seeing these men, and the offers being given them by the sexual townsfolk, Lot offered his daughters to the city. What kind of person offers his children to be raped and mistreated purposely? The kind who has compromised.

As I consider this and look into it myself, I see the reason he was laughed at. The man Lot had once been was gone. He failed to take his stand against the enemy and now instead was living among the enemy. Perhaps he was laughed at because the sons-in-law had never seen Lot take a true stand for God. Now here was Lot, warning against judgment and they responded as if it was a joke. Lot's compromise cost him his sons-in-law.

Seeing this revelation, my eyes are opened. What are my children, and others, seeing from me? Am I being looked at as sold out for God, or a guy who has compromised and nothing I say has value? Am I a hypocrite? Lot lost his place as the man of the family when he compromised; I do not want to fall into the same trap. And maybe Lot was worshipping God, but then I question if it was all in secret. One thing I want my children to see in me is that God is not a secret. I want them to see me reading my Bible, praying, worshipping God, and taking a stand for Him. I don't want it to be a show; I want them to see the real thing.

Growing up we had many dogs. Yet, we had many dogs that we also were forced to get rid of for one reason or another. One I remember was forced to go simply because she continually jumped the fence and knocked over trash cans at night. Instead of building a taller fence, the cheaper action was to find her a new home. This home, I recall, was found in taking her to the pound. I remember well going with mom to leave her behind, looking back, and crying big tears of sorrow. My childhood puppy was staying behind in hopes of a better life.

I share this emotional memory with you not to make you cry, but rather to bring up a point. There are times when looking back to say goodbye is fine, as in the case with this dog or when saying goodbye to loved ones. But then there are also times when we look back not to say goodbye, per se, but rather because we do not want that season to be done. Let me explain.

Lot and his family quickly set out for the small city of Tzo'ar as God's fury begins to fall on Sodom and Gomorrah. Yet only one major demand was made of Lot and his family. "Don't look back." It sounded easy and able to be accomplished, yet unfortunately it was not obeyed. As we read in Genesis 19:26, Lot's wife looked back. For her punishment, she became a pillar of salt. It is hard to say why she looked back. Theologians have different answers. Maybe she looked back because she remembered something at home. Perhaps she looked back to see if others had realized it was not a joke and were now following. But for now, let us say that she looked back because she did not want to give up the sin of the city. We know little about Lot's wife, but I am concerned that if Lot was so quick to offer his daughters to the perverted people (Gen 19:8), could he have also at one time offered his wife? Or could it be that although maybe not a member in that lifestyle, she was still curious as to what she may be missing? I cannot answer that.

Let us look at the words of Yeshua, though, in Luke 17:28-33. It is here Yeshua (Jesus) is speaking that as in the days of Lot, people will be eating and drinking, buying and selling, and all around just living life as normal. But in one day, the whole city was taken out by fire and brimstone. So it will be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed. And then it goes on in verse 32, *"...remember Lot's wife. Whoever aims at preserving his own life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will stay alive."* If we want to save our lives, we need to lose the life we have become sinfully happy with. This leads me to believe even more so that Lot's wife was not ready to leave behind the sin that tempted her, for if she had seen the benefit of keeping her focus forward, she would have stayed alive.

With no husbands of their own, and the thought of being the only survivors in the world, Lot's daughters work to get their father drunk in an effort to save the human race. This begs the question of how encompassed they too were within the habits and customs of Sodom since they felt it was right to seduce their own father. In the end, with these births of these two sons, Lot becomes his own grandpa, and these sons become the fathers of the Moabites and Ammonities.

History has a way of repeating itself, and Genesis 20 is no different. Abraham's caravan traveled from the oaks of Mamre toward the Negev. While living here, he began to pass the word that Sarah was his sister...again. Sure enough, Sarah had lookers once more, and one just so happened to be Abimelech, the King of Gerar, a Philistine king. In a dream, Abimelech was warned by God that the woman he was about to take was a married woman. In the morning the king shared this news with his kingdom, returned Sarah to Abraham, and rightly so, questioned Abraham.

In fear Abraham had passed judgment on Abimelech. In fear Abraham failed once more to trust God. And in fear, Abraham had allowed his wife to be a pawn for his safety. So how is it that Abraham is the father of our faith? In all his tests, whether he passed or failed, he never gave up hope in God. All the heroes of our faith failed tests, yet still they continued to hope in God. There is hope then for us too.

Finally Isaac (Yitz'chak), the son of promise, had been born. Once she had laughed when she heard she would be a mother, now she was naming her son 'laughter'. Along with his birth, however, came the mockery. During a great banquet to celebrate Isaac's growth and weaning, Sarah caught a glimpse of Hagar and Ishmael making fun of her son. This behavior angered Sarah and caused her to take her concerns to her husband. Distressed, Abraham took the concerns before God and received the instruction to not take this lightly, but rather to send Hagar and her son on their way. Genesis 21:14 records this, reading, *"Abraham got up early in the morning, took bread and a skin of water and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child; then he sent her away. After leaving, she wandered in the desert around Be'er-Sheva."*

How did Abraham felt in that moment? In truth, Ishmael was his son. For years prior to Isaac being born, Abraham must have taken pride in Ishmael, spoiling him and such. But now he was being asked by Sarah to send him off. Early in the morning he awoke, gave bread and water to Hagar, and said his goodbyes. Watching them travel till they were no longer in sight, what was Abraham thinking?

We have a better understanding of what Hagar was thinking. Traveling through the desert she came to a point where she could take no more. Placing her son under a bush, she walked a little further so that she could cry out to God. This was the second

time she had been pushed out of the camp now. In her crying out, God heard her pray in regards to her son and comforted her, giving her promise concerning his future as well. Yet even though she was all alone in the desert, she was not alone at all. She was still within God's hands, still within His reach, and still within His love.

Abraham made a covenant. When approached by Abimelech and Phicol in Genesis 21:22-34, Abraham was asked if he would swear concerning his behavior. The men had heard that God was with Abraham in all he did. As a result, they wanted to swear with Abraham that he would show them kindness and treat them fairly now that he was increasing beyond the king. They wanted to make sure that Abraham would not try anything sneaky and misleading to the people of the area. So then, Abraham swore to this request. Following an incident at the well which Abraham's camp had dug and Abimelech's men had seized, Abraham then stepped into a covenant. Bringing with him sheep and cattle, Abraham and Abimelech made a covenant (Gen 21:27). Because of seven female lambs specifically, the place was named Beer-Sheba, meaning well of oath.

As I said earlier, God looks at covenants seriously. When Yeshua taught in Matthew 5:33-37, he spoke of the importance of keeping your word. The fathers, or the saints of old, taught us to not break an oath and to keep our vows with God. Yeshua went one step further and encouraged us to let our yes be yes and our no be no (Matt 5:37). Making a pact with God is smart, but breaking that pact is not. Our word should be our bond and not just a cliché. Abraham was blessed not only because of his faith, but because he kept his word.

Abraham had one more trial to walk through to gain his title as the father of our faith, however. Sometime later God called to Abraham and asked him to sacrifice his son. Now understand, Ishmael was already gone and Isaac was the only other son that God had given to Abraham and Sarah. Now God was asking Abraham to sacrifice him. The Torah doesn't record Abraham wrestling with God concerning this matter. In fact, the very next verse tells us that early the next morning Abraham got up, gathered his things, and set off to the region of Moriah with Isaac and two servants.

The small party reached a point on the third day of their journey where they saw in the distance their destination. The region of Moriah is believed by some to be the first point in which Adonai created; the middle of the landscaped earth if you will. This idea is based on the fact that as the navel is the center of the body, so Israel is the center of the world. Jerusalem is in the center of Israel and the sanctuary the center of Jerusalem. The holy place is then found centered in the sanctuary and the ark in the



center of the holy place. What then lies before the holy place? It is the Foundation Stone. As the region of Moriah sits where the Dome of the Rock now is, it may be safe to conclude that God was calling Abraham back to where life first began as another lesson concerning faith.

Abraham looked back at his servants and made a statement that deserves our attention. *"Stay here with the donkey. I and the boy will go there, worship and return to you."* The NIV states more bluntly, *"we will come back to you"* (Gen 22:5). Did you catch it? Abraham said *'we'* will come back. How could he say *'we'* knowing that God had told him to sacrifice his son? Should he not have said *'I'* will come back? No, because he had learned, that God can do anything when we have just even a little faith. Abraham now saw himself physically taking his son up the mountain, but by faith, walking with his son back down the mountain.

Abraham did not back down from this command of God. When asked by Isaac where the lamb was, Abraham responded that God will provide. But let us not glance over what was happening within the eyes of Isaac. While Abraham made the comment that *'we'* will come back, I cannot help but wonder if Isaac really knew what was happening. It is estimated that the boy was in his twenties at this time, and surly he knew the details concerning a sacrifice. So I must add my two cents in here and state that the father of faith also had a son of faith. Isaac was putting himself in the hands of his father, who was putting himself in the hands of God. Together they reached the place God had told them about and began to build the altar. Then, in a great act of obedience, Abraham bound his son and laid him on the altar. With his knife ready, and probably through petition and tears, Abraham took his position for the sacrifice.

It is in this moment that perhaps God was asking Abraham if he loved Him enough to give up his son. The same question can be asked for an event that happened close in proximity many hundreds of years later. It was around the Moriah region that later Yeshua, the lamb that took away the sin of the world, would also be bound and given as a sacrifice. While Isaac's sacrifice would not have saved the world, that of the Messiah did.

A voice called out, *"... Don't lay your hand on the boy! Don't do anything to him! For now I know that you are a man who fears Adonai, because you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."* (Gen 22:12). God took note of Abraham's obedience and faith. The only son given of a promise to Abraham and Sarah was not forsaken from God, and for that God re-stated to Abraham that he would indeed be blessed, *barak* (Gen 22:17). In the end, Abraham and Isaac both came down the mountain that day, just as by faith Abraham had seen.

# CHAYEI SARAH ... SARAH'S LIFE

---

## CHAYEI SARAH

### שרה חיי

Genesis 23:1 – 25:18

#### MAIN SCRIPTURE:

Genesis 24:15

*"Before he had finished speaking, Rebecca the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah the wife of Nahor Abraham's brother, came out with her jug on her shoulder."*

Within the Torah, many ages are given. For example, we know that Adam lived 930 years and then he died (Gen 5:5). Methuselah lived to be 969 years old (Gen 5:25). Noah was 950 years old when he passed (Gen 9:29). But within the Torah only one woman's age is named. In Genesis 23:1 we read, *"Sarah lived to be 127 years old; those were the years of Sarah's life."* Why in all the Torah is Sarah the only woman whose age is named? In doing so, does the Torah distinguish Sarah as the matriarch? As we have already studied, Sarah was the mother of Isaac. But in birthing Isaac, she was also elevated to the status of the mother of all those who believe in God.

We see this same idea in the title given to Abraham. We know that Father Abraham had many sons, but we also know him as the father of our faith. It was his bold move to venture away from the land of Ur and follow on the path that God led him on. By faith he journeyed, and waited for his son. Then, once having his son, he was willing to believe in God when asked to sacrifice him. But there were also tests of faith that Sarah had to go through. She first had to believe that what Abraham was hearing was truly Adonai's voice. She also had to believe that the promise of Abraham having a son would indeed come through her. Lastly, she had to believe that when the men of God came with baby news, that she truly would have the child.

But perhaps Sarah is also written about and given her age here based on another factor – love. Abraham loved Sarah. While he did say she was his sister two times, and did take her advice in marrying her servant girl, the truth is he loved her dearly. Despite the trials of starting a family, the Torah never records any talk about divorce between the two. In a culture where the birth of boys meant everything, still he stayed with her. Instead of value being addressed in children, we see Sarah's value in the devotion of her husband. Proverbs 31:10 asks, *"A wife of noble character who can find?"* It sounds like Abraham found one.

At the time of Sarah's death, Abraham was in the region of Hebron. He owned no land in the area in which he could bury her, so he purchased property from the Canaanites. Abraham offered the full price to Ephron for the cave of Machpelah, yet Ephron refused the offer. Ephron was willing to give the cave free of charge to Abraham based on the person Abraham was. However, Abraham would not allow the offer of free, for without a legal sale, the title to the property could result in issues years later. As such, Abraham insisted on the full price being paid, which in the end was a non-contested 400 pieces of silver. In years to follow, this cave would be the burial place for Sarah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (once brought out of Egypt).

Abraham was growing old. Following the passing of Sarah, he requested of his chief servant, assumed to be Eliezer, that a wife be found for his son. The servant would go back to the land from which they came in order to find a wife for Isaac. He wouldn't marry just anyone, for God had announced that they were to stay within the land of Abraham's birth. The servant agreed to this task being asked of him and made an oath with Abraham. *"The servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master and swore to him concerning the matter"* (Gen 24:9). When the servant placed his hand under the thigh of Abraham, instantly his word became his bond. Within this oath, either he would bring a wife back, or he would be released of his oath should the woman did not wish to come back. Following the oath he was on his way.

In looking to determine why the hand would go under the thigh as an act of sealing a bond, I found that it was all about culture. For these men this action physically was no different than us today shaking hands after a business deal or pinky swearing as children. Despite how it is sealed, the real issue is that we carry out that which we are bound to. In this bond specifically, the servant was being held to either bringing home a wife for Isaac, or being released if the found wife-to-be was unwilling to return. But again I state, oaths are meant to be taken with great caution and the matter sworn to be rightly understood. Why so? Simply put, not keeping our vows opens the door for the enemy.

Failure to accomplish that which was vowed was permissible, but only if the woman found *refused* to follow. But failure to try after the covenant had been made would have been an ill-fated decision for the servant. This is a fate I do not want to see us in. I do not want to see us in a place where we fail to keep our agreements with God. I urge you then to repent for broken oaths made with God and people, and to use caution going forward in making oaths, be it business deals, marriage vows, or what have you. Let your yes, be yes and your no, be no.

In Hebrew, the word for a match between man and woman is called and SHIDDUCH, while the matchmaker is called a SHADKAN. With the events to follow between Isaac and Rebekah, Eliezer played *shadkan*. Since this was not a chore he was accustomed to, Eliezer found himself praying for success in Genesis 24:12. *"He said, 'ADONAI, God of my master Abraham, please let me succeed today; and show your grace to my master Abraham.'"* Sent to find a wife for Isaac, the servant only wanted God's choice as opposed to just any woman walking by. But in this passage is found one of my favorite verses. *"Before he had finished speaking, Rebecca the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah the wife of Nahor Abraham's brother, came out with her jug on her shoulder"* (Gen 24:15). I love this verse because it shows us how involved God is in our future and how active He is in our prayer life. For the servant, all that he had prayed and requested of God, he found Rebekah was and did. Unknowingly, she was the answer to the prayer.

When I read this portion I cannot help but have my eyes opened to just all this provision includes. Abraham's request of the servant, guaranteeing that he had found the right one, was that she would agree to come back with him. The servant had to find a woman, receive both her and her parent's permission for marriage, have her agree to leave her family, have her family agree to let her go, and then do all this on a blind date. Unlike today when we can at least see a picture when on-line dating, the servant had no picture to show Rebekah. But still, God not only provided, but prepared Rebekah and her family.

The message here is simple - God will supply. I can look back and see the many times that God has supplied for me. When my marriage went bad and I was asked to move out, God supplied furniture for me. When my car gave up, God supplied a car for me. When I was lonely, God supplied a friend for me. When I needed a little extra cash, God supplied overtime for me. When I asked for a wife, God brought one to me. I feel bad, because sometimes I take God for granted. But then I see stories like this and am reminded that because He loves me, He takes care of all my needs.

Another point to make here involves the Yiddish word BASHERT. This word means destiny. When the servant was praying, he also asked God that she be the one whom He had appointed for Isaac. He was praying for Isaac's destiny, his *barshert* (Gen 24:14).

I am reminded also of Philippians 4:19 which reads, *"Moreover, my God will fill every need of yours according to his glorious wealth, in union with the Messiah Yeshua."* This word *need*, is the Greek word CHREIA, from the root word CHRAOMAI. The meaning encompasses employment, occasions, demands, requirements, businesses, lacks, uses, and wants. In truth, it is the furnishing of all that is needed. God will take care of everything; there is no reason for us to panic. As easily as He answered a prayer that

was still in the process of being prayed, so He also can answer our prayers before we finish praying. God loves us enough to care for us. We won't always get what we want, but He will be sure to give us what we need. There is hope in this because this applies to all of life. I have learned to throw away my list of what I want in the future and begin to ask God to supply what I need. In trusting in Him, I will find myself in good hands.

Meeting all the requirements that Eliezer had just prayed, the servant took out a gold nose ring weighing one-fifth of an ounce and two gold bracelets weighing four ounces. At this Rebekah ran off to her home. The story could have ended right there. For all the servant knew, perhaps the young lady was scared by the proposal. Not yet had the servant mentioned he was on a mission concerning Isaac, so for all she knew the servant could have been asking her hand in marriage for himself. But it didn't end. Shortly after, Rebekah's brother, Lavan (Laban), came out to see this stranger and welcomed him into their home. Straw and fodder were prepared for the animals, feet were washed for the servant, but when a meal was prepared the servant interrupted and asked that before they eat, he share his story.

The people of Bethuel's house heard the story, the mission as to why the servant had come. They heard about the prayer that had been prayed and about the answer that had come forth. But to be fair, the servant asked if indeed Rebekah could return with him, or if he should continue his search for a wife for Isaac. The response given by both Rebekah's father and brother was, *"Since this comes from Adonai, we can't say anything to you either bad or good"* (Gen 24:50).

As we wrap up the account of Rebekah leaving her family, we find a moment in the Torah where there seemed to be doubt. The doubt, however, was not with Rebekah, but rather with her family. After they collected the dowry of silver and gold, together with clothing, the men stayed awake and drank into the night. In the morning, however, when the servant was ready to make his way back home, Rebekah's mother and brother made a plea that the girl remain able to stay for a few more days. The servant stood his ground, though, and a compromise had to be found. With such a weighty decision they chose to ask Rebekah what she would rather do.

She was asked if she would rather stay at home for ten more days or leave her family now to venture on the back of a camel straightaway to a foreign land to meet her recently, yet unseen, betrothed. Her response was, *"Elech (אֵלֶךְ). I will go."* Just as Abraham had moved out in faith from Ur and by faith believed that both he and his son would come back down from the mountain, so now the same faith was being seen in Rebekah. Knowing not what lay ahead, she agreed to go with the servant.

When we find Isaac again in Genesis 24:62-63, we find him out in the field. In some translations it states that he was *walking* in the field, while others say he was *meditating* in the field. The word in Hebrew is SUWACH, meaning to muse pensively, or to meditate. But have you ever stopped to wonder what he may have been meditating on? With a probable knowledge of why the servant was gone, it serves right to assume that Isaac may have been praying or meditating on what his future wife looked like, should she have chosen to actually come.

It was while he was out there, though, that he saw the camels approaching. And she too saw Isaac. In fact, the Bible records that when she saw Isaac coming to meet her, she covered herself with her veil. As I was reading about this I found an answer to why she did this action. The writing states she covered herself for two reasons. First, it was customary in that time for the woman to cover her face in the presence of her fiancé just prior to her marriage. This amazed me when I read this because being the first recorded blind date in the Bible, Rebekah immediately considered herself engaged to Isaac. The second reason for her covering is stated in saying she wanted her inner beauty to grab Isaac's attention rather than her outer beauty.

In no time at all the wedding bells rang, and Isaac escorted Rebekah into his mother's tent where she became his wife. Taking her into his mother's tent, which had been empty till now, symbolized the addition once more of an *eishet chayil*, a virtuous wife. The Bible records that just as Sarah had been loved by Abraham, so Genesis 24:67 records that Isaac loved his wife, Rebekah. This can be a lesson to us. Isaac did not marry out of love, but loved because he was married to her. How many of us base marriage on love, instead of love on marriage?

When we hear the account of Abraham, we tend mainly to think of the promised child, Isaac. However, the Bible records that Abraham had eight children all together. Jogging our memory we can probably recall Ishmael, birthed from his days with Hagar. But following the passing of Sarah and the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah, Abraham married once more. Abraham took a wife in his old age named Keturah. Thru his marriage with her came the sons Zimran, Yokshan, Meden, Midyan, Yishbak, and Shuach. These are names we do not hear often. In a quick glance, Zimran is said to have become to patriarch of the Zimri named in Jeremiah 25:25, and Midyan became the father of the Midianites who were later defeated by God's hand in Gideon's life.

At Abraham's passing, the Torah records both Isaac and Ishmael once again coming together to bury their father. With Abraham passing at the age of 175, this would tend to make Ishmael the age of 89 and Isaac the age of 75. These men

themselves were already advanced in years compared to the average length of life today. But in keeping with their father's wishes, they buried him alongside Sarah in the cave of Machpellah. Then, as the Torah states, a new legacy was formed. The baton was passed as we read, "After Abraham died, God blessed Isaac his son...(Gen 25:11)"

Ishmael is recorded to have had twelve sons (Gen 25:13-15). We should not be confused with the twelve tribes of Israel which were birthed out of promise as opposed to intervention, however, but we should not forget the relationship in God's promise. As Abraham prayed for Hagar and his son in Genesis 17, God declared that this line too would be great. Although no king would stem from Ishmael's line, twelve princes were declared.

If Ishmael was not the promised child, why then would we concern ourselves with his legacy following Abraham sending him out? I can see three reasons off hand. The first is that Ishmael was his son. The second is because it is Ishmael's line that we read of in Isaiah 60:7 where Kedar and Nebaioth are named specifically. But the third reason I see, and maybe the most important for us, is that once again we see God as a promise keeper. In securing to Abraham that He indeed would watch over his son, God once again kept His promise. This should only prove to us that God keeps his word.

# TOLDOT ... GENERATIONS

---

TOLDOT

תולדות

Genesis 25:19 – 28:9

MAIN SCRIPTURE

Genesis 25:21

*"Yitz'chak prayed to Adonai on behalf of his wife, because she was childless. Adonai heeded his prayer, and Rivkah became pregnant."*

I remember well the first miscarriage that I endured. It was in August of 2000. Just a month before I was looking at a pregnancy test handed to me and trying to make sure I was reading it correctly. The idea of being a father was making me happy. But the joys were short lived. Soon she began to have pains and we found ourselves at the doctor's office only to find that the baby would not be coming after all. The days that followed the miscarriage went from bad to worse as we worked through an array of emotions, even after just a month of expectancy. Since this time I have had the joy of a son, the pain once again of another loss, and the joy again of a daughter, before becoming the step-father to two more sons. I look at all four children, though, and view them as answers to prayer. It was back in college that I began to have a strong desire to be a dad, and after many prayers I have come to walk out the answer to that prayer.

For Isaac and Rebekah, I feel it might have been the same. Instead of dealing with miscarriage, however, they dealt with a barren womb. The two did not have a chance to date and learn about each other's past. They didn't have the ability to learn of one another's medical past. When they were introduced to each other, following the servant bringing Rebekah back from the homeland, they went into the tent and wed. But now, shortly after, they found themselves in a position where children were not coming. So what was the action taken? Isaac prayed.

Isaac had seen the faith of his father, Abraham. He had seen God work His miracles as he himself had been a miracle. So in learning that the two would be unable to have children, Isaac prayed to God on behalf of his wife and asked that her womb be opened. The word for prayer here is a word implying an entreaty being made. It wasn't a one-time prayer, but a persistent praying, for what some Rabbi's believe was a twenty year time frame.

And the part I love, God heeded his prayer. This truth is no different from what Jesus taught in Luke 11. The disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. After



speaking for them the Lord's Prayer, Jesus then tells the story of a man who knocks on the neighbor's door during the night for food. It was not the fact that it was his friend that brought him to the door, but the persistence of the neighbor knocking. Therefore He shares with us that if we ask, seek, and knock, then we will have, find, and see doors open (Lk 11:9). This is the persistence Isaac had in his request for his wife's womb.

In time, Rebekah became pregnant and gave birth to not one child, but two. But I want you to notice something in this fact. The enemy was at work. Abraham had been promised that he would be the father of many. Abraham had in all eight sons. But only one of those sons was the true promised son. And now the true promised son from whom the promise would continue was faced with the fact that his wife was barren. Right there the promise could have ended, the devil could have won, and God could have been named a liar. But, Isaac prayed.

This speaks to me because there have been times when I have been told a promise and only have seen a small portion of it come to pass, if any part at all. It has created in me doubt at first, but also the desire to continue to pray for the completion of the answer. As God is not one who will go back on His word and be made into a liar, it would serve us to do well to pray for the completion of what He has said. There is power in prayer, so let us not forget to lift a prayer up to Him and see what barren places in our life He will also restore.

Inside Rebekah's womb were two people, two nations, struggling for the birthright. From the first son, Esau, would come the Edomites, who years later would be prophesied to by Obadiah. From the second son, Jacob, would come the twelve tribes of Israel. As the two were being born, however, it was Jacob who was delivered second, and grasping the heel of his hairy brother, Esau. For these traits, the two boys would be named. Esau (Eisav) translates as *hairy*; Jacob (Yaakov) translates as *heel*.

Let us take a quick minute to discuss the birthright. The way the birthright worked in this case would be as such. Beings that there were two boys in this instance, the portion of Isaac would first be split into three equal shares. When divided out, the elder would receive two portions, the younger just one. In the case of Jacob's sons years later, the portion of Jacob that he had to split with his sons would be divided by thirteen shares, and the double portion given to Rueben. As we will see in time, Jacob did not fully follow this splitting.

The depth of the double portion, though, was not just about the getting of twice as much stuff. It held within it the title of *patriarchal position* for the family. In essence, he one who received this double portion also carried on his father's name. In the case of Isaac, the inheritance was the covenant promise of God Himself. Passed first from

Abraham to Isaac, Isaac in turn would pass this blessing on to his eldest, who in turn would pass it on to his. As Esau was the firstborn, so the inheritance was to have been his. But in the eyes of Jacob, the blessing should be his.

Hebrews 12:16 tells us that Esau was an immoral and godless person. It is thought that these characteristics aided to the removal of the birthright that should have fell to Esau, therefore placing it on to Jacob instead. But how is it that the godly Isaac would have missed the negative becoming of his son? This too is explained by teachers of old in the fact of Isaac losing his eye sight over time. While physically Isaac was going blind, perhaps spiritually he also was going blind, allowing Esau to get by with things that he never should have.

Genesis 26:7 reads, *"The men of the place asked [Isaac] about his wife, and out of fear he said, 'She is my sister.' He thought, 'If I tell them she's my wife, they might kill me in order to take Rivkah. After all, she is a beautiful woman.'"* I cannot help but to ask, haven't we heard this story before? In Genesis 12:19, Abraham tried the same thing. In order to save himself from being killed because of his wife, he told a half truth in saying that Sarah was his sister. In agreeing to this idea, Sarah was married by the Pharaoh only to be found out as Abraham's wife and released by the Pharaoh in fear of what God would do. Now Isaac was in the same position. However, instead of his wife being his sister, she was his cousin. And yet still, it was because of fear that this lie was made.

Isaac followed in the ways of his father. This is both a bad and good thing. It is bad in the essence that he lied in this instance, but good in the essence that in many other areas he followed the faith of his father. This, though, is where I question myself. As my earthly father passed about four years ago now, I find myself still questioning if I am walking in the same faith that he charged me with. I also question if the legacy I am working to leave for my children matches the legacy he left for me. In a greater scope, I find myself questioning if I am walking in the ways of God. Am I leaving a legacy for my children which reflects His ways? I know for a fact that my children see, and unfortunately follow in, my mistakes, but I want them to more so follow after God, for He is the true leader.

It was because God blessed Isaac so greatly that the Philistines envied him. When he planted crops the harvest would be returned a hundredfold. His animals became fruitful and multiplied. And it seemed that everything he touched was blessed by God to the point of being untouchable. But seeing God's hand on Isaac caused jealousy to arise in the hearts of the Philistines in whose land Isaac was an alien. This then caused the Philistines to plug up wells once built by Abraham. Maybe still not

getting the full point, it finally took Abimelech saying, "Move away from here," before Isaac finally moved away.

It seemed like no matter where he moved to, these jealous Philistines and men of other tribes still followed him. And no matter what he did to provide for his clan and himself, trouble always came looking for him. When out in the valley, after digging a new well named Esek, the herdsmen of Gerar came to quarrel and eventually stole his well. Isaac's response was to dig a second new well which was named Sitnah, but it too was taken from him. It was after this, then, that Isaac moved on from there. He moved on and dug a third well. Seeing that no one was challenging him for the rights to this well, he named it Rechovot, (רחובות) meaning wide open spaces. It was here that God allowed him to flourish. *"He went away from there and dug another well, and over that one they didn't quarrel. So he called it Rechovot [wide open spaces] and said, 'Because now Adonai has made room for us, and we will be productive in the land'" (Gen 26:22).*

Have you ever noticed that what Isaac went through we also find ourselves going through? Let me explain. The enemy's number one goal is to prevent us from being blessed by God. He knows that once we are in sync with God, nothing can stop the tidal wave of blessings that will be poured out over us. This in a way is the fact of digging a well. In going deeper in our relationship with God we are in essence drilling for the fresh water from which we can drink and be filled. But the enemy comes to fill up our well, covering it with the dirt and debris of sin. As we find ourselves thirsty for a true drink still, we dig again only to have the well be covered up again.

But notice that Isaac did not give up in his search for fresh water. Instead he moved on from there. His desire for a drink without the bitterness or dust flavoring his water was so strong that he continued to dig and dig. And this time his digging paid off as the enemy did not follow and did not fill in his wells.

While this may be a physical story about a well, it is a spiritual representation also of our lives. Again, the enemy does not want us to drink deep of God or of His blessings. But we cannot allow him to continue to cover up our wells. Those who are truly thirsty for a relationship with God will continue to dig and ultimately find that fresh water and fresh relationship with Him. So the question I ask is how thirsty are you? Are you thirsty enough to keep digging even when your wells continue to be filled in? The wide open spaces of a relationship with God may be found in the next well dug. But if we do not move on and continue to dig, we will never find the water we long for. So then dig, my friend, dig.

In Genesis 25:29-34, we read the account of Esau coming in from the field, famished, and asking Jacob for a bowl of stew. Jacob agreed to this desire, but not

without a catch. In a trade for bread and lentils, Esau sold his birthright which he showed little value for anyway. It is here in this section of the Torah that we find this birthright come up again.

As we already discussed, Isaac grew old his eye sight began to fade. In addition to his eye sight fading, Isaac was also concerned that he may pass away soon. It was for this reason that he called Esau to him, wanting to bless him before he passed. With the charge to bring him some game in exchange for what would be his final blessing, Esau went into the country. Hiding just far enough away, though, was Rebekah. Quickly she found Jacob and announced to him that his father was going to pronounce a blessing on Esau. She wanted this blessing to fall on Jacob instead, so she told him to go into the flock and retrieve two choice kids.

Coming back, Rebekah cooked the lamb and gave it to Jacob to serve to his father. But because his father had trouble with his eye sight, he seemed to rely on other senses. Touch and smell would be the two used for this specific meeting. When Jacob spoke, Isaac heard Jacob. When Isaac smelled his son, and felt his arms, he figured it was indeed Esau. *"Ya'akov (Jacob) approached Yitz'chak his father, who touched him and said, 'The voice is Ya'akov's voice, but the hands are Esav's hands'" (Gen 27:22).*

Who would have thought that a bowl of lentils could bring someone down? Who would have suspected that the rights as a first born son would so easily be given up? And yet don't we do the same with sin? For the fee of giving into sin we in essence give up our birthright. Think on this for a moment. Romans 6:23 tells us that the wages of sin is death. For so long I have equated that only with how sin kills our spirits. And while that is true, I also now see how sin kills our blessing. Esau's actions cost him his blessing.

Jacob had deceived his father by playing the part of Esau. In so doing he took Esau's blessing as the firstborn. But this robbery of birthright had started back in Genesis 25 when for a bowl of lentils, Esau sold what was his. Now, however, Esau expected to have his reward. The revelation of what he had was becoming clear. True, Jacob had been devious in obtaining the birthright and in obtaining his father's blessing, but once given away Esau could not take it back.

When the moment was right, Jacob approached his father with the familiar smell and feeling of Esau. Isaac blessed his son, assuming that it was Esau, and proclaimed that God would make him lord over his brother, possess the kinsmen as servants, and be sustained with grain and wine. When Esau learned of this,... *"Esav said, 'His name, Ya'akov [he supplants], really suits him – because he has supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright, and here, now he has taken away my blessing!' Then he asked, 'Haven't you saved a blessing for me?'"*

But what was left for Esau? What was left for the one who had so easily gave up what had once been his? The only remaining blessing that Isaac could muster was, "You will live by the sword and serve your brother. When you shake loose you will shake the yoke off your neck.

Esau has had one pulled over on him again by Jacob posing to be him and receiving his father's blessing for the first born child. Now with a vow to get revenge on his brother, Rebekah shares with Isaac that she wants her son to find a wife from her brother's clan as she is tired of the Hittite women in the land they are now living. Isaac and Rebekah push Jacob out of the home with the command to head for the home of Rebekah's brother, Lavan (Laban). But Esau, who also knew of this command and of this conversation, went out in spite and married from the tribe of Ishmael, his uncle. *"Now Esau saw that Yitz'chak had blessed Ya'akov and sent him away to Paddan-Aram to choose a wife from there, and that as he blessed him he charged him, 'You are not to choose a Kena'ani woman as your wife'" (Gen 28:6).* God had already pushed these people away because they were not part of the promise, but Esau in spite welcomed them back in through marriage to Mahalath. In spite, in his way of revenge toward his parents, he did the exact opposite of what he knew was right under God's standards.

So how different are we from Esau? I would venture to say not very different. Like Esau we grow weary of second fiddle. We get tired of seeing the rug pulled out from under us because of deceit and trickery. But let us not forget two things. One, God takes vows seriously. Although done in trickery, a vow was made between Jacob and Esau that exchanged the birthright for soup. While Esau may have agreed to this, thinking it was a joke or because he was just so famished, God saw it etched in stone. But secondly, we cannot expect to walk under God's blessing if we fail to do His will. The actions that Esau took done in spite only proved to hurt him. Yes, his parents were probably upset that he continued to take wives that were not part of God's plan, but I question if they were not more upset that he did this in hopes of getting even with them.

# VAYETZE ... HE WENT OUT

---

VAYETZE

וַיֵּצֵא

Genesis 28:10 – 32:2

MAIN SCRIPTURE

*“And I will let my integrity stand as witness against me in the future: when you come to look over the animals constituting my wages, every goat that isn’t speckled or spotted and every sheep that isn’t brown will count as stolen be me.”*

Genesis 30:33

The promise given to Abraham that continued through the prayer of Isaac, when he prayed for his wife’s barren womb, was now taking its next step through Jacob (Ya’akov). Following his leaving and fleeing from his brother, Esau, Jacob headed out toward Haran. As night fell he stopped at a place for the night where he rested his head on a rock and began to dream. The Torah records this place as ‘the place’. In Hebrew it is named *HaMakom*. Going back to Genesis 22:4, where Abraham is about to sacrifice Isaac, it is recorded that Abraham too saw ‘the place’. As such, many believe that where Jacob rested for the night was in the mountains of Mount Moriah. Seeing a ladder resting on the ground with its top reaching to heaven, Jacob watched angels ascending and descending. To quote from First Fruits of Zion’s Torah Club Volume 1, “This is an exciting idea because it allows us to see the site of the holy Temple as an intersection between heaven and earth.”

While there are many theories about the meaning behind the dream, ranging from the rise and fall of nations, to that of guardian angels, perhaps the strongest understanding behind the dream is that of prayer. As the angels ascended and descended the ladder, so our prayers rise to God and an answer is returned to us. Our faith is the ladder of which our prayers and responses travel. Still others may debate that the ladder is a representation of God’s Commandments, of revelation, or of the coming Messiah. With such a simple recording of a dream that we did not have ourselves, the interpretations are openly vague. Only the giver of the dream knows fully what He is working to speak. But as Proverbs 25:2 states, *“It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, and it is the glory of a king to search out a matter (NET).”*

What we see in the next instant is God, standing next to Jacob, and giving a promise. *“Your descendants will be as numerous as the grains of dust on the earth. You will*

*expand to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. By you and your descendants all the families of the earth will be blessed. Look, I am with you. I will guard you wherever you go, and I will bring you back into this land, because I won't leave you until I have done what I have promised you'" (Genesis 28:14-15).*

The awesomeness in this promise is that it matches exactly with the promise God once gave Abraham. Remember, to Abraham, God promised he would be the father to many nations (Gen 15:5). Now to Jacob, the promise continued, with his descendants being numerous like the dust of the earth. To Abraham, God promised that his descendants would be foreigners in a land not theirs (Gen 15:13-16). Now to Jacob the promise was said again, that He would bring them back to the land after they had been dispersed. The next piece of the puzzle was set in place, the next part of God's plan was now in motion, and the next heir to take the promise forward had been told what was to come. So with a vow, Jacob took the rock that he had rested his head on and made an altar to God.

As we saw in the case of Abraham's servant praying for favor to meet the right woman for Isaac, so we see again here with Jacob. Behind the scenes God was working out all the details. When Jacob arrived in Haran, he went to the place where the shepherds watered their sheep. Upon waiting and asking for his relatives, who should come with the sheep but Rachel herself. Jacob opened the watering hole and then did something bazaar – he kissed her and wept aloud. Was he crying because he realized that the hot girl was his cousin? Maybe in today's culture. Maybe more so it was the expression of a long and personal journey coming to a chapter close. Just like the servant, he had seen the guiding hand of God as He brought him to his family. In a family greeting, he kissed her, and tears of relief followed.

Reading on, however, we see Jacob welcomed into his uncle's home, much like Laban had seen when Abraham's servant had visited the home many years before. Unlike Abraham's servant, though, Jacob was not planning to take a bride and run. Instead Jacob began to work for Laban, and after about a month of free labor was offered payment for his work. It is at this time that we first read not only of Laban's firstborn, Leah, and her weak eyes, but also of Rachel's beautiful features. It appears as though Jacob had become smitten – with his cousin.

The old saying that what comes around goes around may not be too far from the truth. I would venture to say, though, that God says it a little different. You reap what you sew. Yet still, maybe an even better way to put it is be sure your sins will find you out. With the same trickery that Jacob had once played on Esau, now Jacob was getting played. Originally Laban had agreed that if Jacob worked in his field for seven years,

he could have the prize of his daughter Rachel. So smitten with Rachel was he, that he worked for those seven years. To him the Torah records they felt like only a few days. When it came time to collect the wages for his tarry, Jacob asked for Rachel's hand in marriage.

When the agreement between Laban and Jacob was made, I am guessing the small print wasn't read. The small print stated that within the area of Laban's clan, the youngest could not marry before the oldest. That would have been good to know beforehand. But maybe it *was* read and just excused, after all he was smitten. Nonetheless, Jacob married and took his bride into the marriage chamber. In the morning he realized it was Leah he had wed and became upset with Laban, asking, "...What kind of thing is this that you've done to me? Didn't I work for you for Rachel? Why have you deceived me? (Gen 29:25)." Laban worked to explain the details of their culture, the fine print so to say, and in the end Jacob agreed to finish the wedding week with Leah and then marry Rachel the following week in exchange for another seven years of toil.

It didn't seem to end there, though. The Torah records that Leah had weak eyes. Let us not read that wrong. The Hebrew word here is RAK. I have been taught this description of weak eyes means she wasn't cute. But the true term here is 'tender'. While Rachel had a sparkle in her eyes, Leah had gentleness in hers. But Jacob's heart was for Rachel. Seeing that Leah was unloved, lacking sparkle in Jacob's eyes, God opened Leah's womb and hindered that of Rachel. Could we again be seeing the deceiver becoming the deceived? Was he just doing the marital duties with Leah to fulfill an agreement only, and not out of love? If so, it seems as though God was aware of this and closed the womb of the one Jacob truly loved. Yet, the battle for Jacob's love and devotion which was proved through the birth of sons was underway.

In time the nation of Israel was being birthed just as God had promised, as not only did Leah and Rachel engage in the child war, but they brought their maidservants into the battle as well. In just a short time Jacob was father to a number of sons. Let us briefly look at these sons and learn a little about them.

REUBEN - Re'uven - birthed of Leah. His name means "See a son!" Leah believed that with a son, that she would be loved finally, or at least a little less than she was compared to Rachel. She also believed that the LORD had seen her affliction and had had mercy on her.

SIMEON - Shim'on - birthed of Leah. His name means "The LORD has heard". Still knowing she was not as loved as Rachel, she believed the LORD had again heard her cry, and this time had had pity on her in giving another son.



LEVI – Leivi – birthed of Leah. His name means “joined”. With now three sons, Leah hoped that she would now be joined with her husband, Jacob.

JUDAH - Y’hudah – birthed of Leah. His name means “praise,” saying that with the birth of this son, praise would be given to the LORD.

DAN - Dan – birthed to Bilhah (Rachel’s maidservant). His name means “God has vindicated”. Rachel felt that since she was unable to have children, she too would have them through her servant, and in this she would be honored as a mother.

NAPHTALI – Naftali – birthed to Bilhah. His name means “wrestling”. This name stems from the wrestling over Jacob’s love between Leah and Rachel.

GAD – Gad – birthed to Zilpah (Leah’s maidservant). His name means “fortunate”. Once Leah stopped having children, she used Zilpah to continue her family, declaring how fortunate she was to continue her sons through her servant.

ASHER – Asher – birthed to Zilpah. His name means “happy”. In naming him Asher, her thought was that women would see her as blessed.

ISSACHAR – Yissakhar – birthed to Leah when traded with Rachel for mandrakes, believed by many to be an aphrodisiac and fertility drug. His name means “God has given me my wages”.

ZEBULUN – Z’vulun – birthed to Leah. His name means “dwell, living together”. In this meaning, Leah felt that Jacob would now want to dwell with her.

However, not one of these ten sons came from the woman Jacob had wanted to marry from the start. What we find in the end is that God had compassion on Leah, the one who seemed not to be so loved. But this same God who had compassion of Leah is recorded as having compassion on Rachel as well in Genesis 30:22. *“Then God took note of Rachel, heeded her prayer and made her fertile.”* Through Rachel would come the final two sons of Jacob.

JOSEPH – Yosef – birthed to Rachel. His name means “may he add”. With the birth of Joseph, Rachel finally felt as though God had taken her disgrace away, and in time would add other sons.

BENJAMIN – Binyamin – birthed to Rachel. His name means “son of my right hand”. As Rachel lay failing in health with the delivery of her final son, she named him Ben-Oni (son of my grief). However, Jacob changed his name to Benjamin (Gen 35:16-20).

It was following Joseph’s birth that Jacob desired to return to his homeland. He approached Laban and asked to be sent on his way, with his wives and children. He had served his agreed time of seven years for Leah, and an additional seven years for

Rachel. But still he had stayed beyond that. He gave Laban his notice in requesting the ability to leave. Over the years, however, Laban had taken notice of the blessing that followed Jacob, much like the notice taken concerning his father Isaac by Abimelech. Because of this, Laban worked to make a deal with Jacob that would allow him to remain in the blessing of God as well.

It was in college when I first heard the definition of integrity. Well, I had heard Webster's version of it growing up, but this was the first time I had heard a definition closer to God's. While sitting on the tile floor during hall meeting, my chaplain called out that integrity is *who we are when no one is looking*. As a freshman only weeks into college, I was already beginning to take on my own personality and new lifestyle. When these words were said, they brought balance. Suddenly I realized that just because I was now able to do things that my parents would not approve of did not mean I should. I was still being watched and held to a level of integrity. Years have passed since I first heard those words, and yet they still play over and over in my head. All the little things I think and want to hide, whether they be from my wife, kids, or from others, someone still knows about. Every little thought, every little action, every little place I go when I am alone is not hidden from God no matter how well I try to hide it from others.

As I look at Genesis 30, I am reminded once more of this fact. It is in this chapter that Jacob and Laban strike another agreement. With Jacob anxious to move out and begin a life apart from Laban, he gave his request for them to split ways. But Laban knew that the only reason he had prospered so far was because of his son-in-law. The two agreed then that Laban would keep each pure sheep and goat while Jacob would take any sheep or goat spotted, speckled, or colored. The proof then was in the pudding, or wool I guess. There was no way that Jacob could get away with stealing now because the shading and pattern would give him away. And Laban also could not pull a fast one because his sheep and goats would tell on him also. The simplicity of their agreement kept both men living in integrity.

*"And I will let my integrity stand as witness against me in the future: when you come to look over the animals constituting my wages, every goat that isn't speckled or spotted and every sheep that isn't brown will count as stolen be me'" (Genesis 30:33).*

Honestly, sometimes I wish it was still this easy. While I know that many people, including myself, would be exposed if we lived with our integrity in the shading and spotting of a sheep or goat, I would still like it. For far too long I lived one way in private and another way in public. And even still I find myself battling between the two at times, leaving my integrity playing the part of a fake. Who am I when the door is closed and no one is looking? Be not deceived, though, for God warns us that our sins will find us out. Just because I can hide something from you doesn't mean that

I can hide it also from Him. But then I am not sure I want to hide it from Him. Why would I want to continue living a life of false and deception when I could more easily live a life in God's boundaries and blessings? As crazy as it sounds, I know that if I had to live with my sheep and my goats as my means of integrity, I would be living a better life. I would be able to get away with nothing, be fully exposed, and be forced to either live right or pay the consequence.

With the wisdom from God to add in the production of more spotted, speckled, and striped sheep, Jacob now felt the need to flee from Laban. Counseling his wives, and explaining his reasons for leaving, Jacob's wives consented and began to pack up for their journey. However, one person was not told of the upcoming trip - Laban. Knowing that Laban would once again work in any and every way possible to prevent this exodus from occurring, the family left without informing Laban and were able to get a three days start before Laban even noticed the family was gone.

Seven days passed since the small family caravan left before Laban and his men caught up to Jacob. Still, to prevent any wrong action on Laban's side, God appeared to Laban in a dream with a warning in how he approached Jacob. The words that did come forth from Laban's mouth, however, were accusatory. *"What do you mean by deceiving me and carrying off my daughters as if they were captives taken in war? Why did you flee in secret and deceive me and not tell me? ...You didn't even let me kiss my sons and daughters good-bye! What a stupid thing to do!"* But even after all this, Laban's main concern becomes one of false gods, and the questioning of his idols.

When I read this next section of scripture I always get stuck on the same two things. The first issue resolves around the fact that there were gods in Laban's house. Maybe the hang up isn't really that there were gods, as Laban probably did not have the same standards as Jacob. Maybe the hang up comes in the fact that Rachel stole them from her father. I question what she was planning to do with them. Did she take them in spite for Leah being given to her man? Did she plan to worship them later on? Was she still cleaving to the ways of her past as opposed to the ways of her husband? We are never told the details as to why she stole them, just that she did and that she hid them in the saddle of her camel. Regardless of all the pieces I do not read and wonder about, I find the following truth. We cannot bring the gods of our past with us. God is a jealous God and wants no competition, but the bringing of the gods of our past needs to be exposed.

This then brings me to my second point in this passage. Laban began a search. Laban, although looking for his gods, began to search the tents and expose the thief of his property. May I suggest here again that we need to go through the tents and expose

the gods that we have brought with us? Our sinful ways can easily become our gods. The things that we elevate above God need to be exposed, leaving nothing out ranking Him.

It was after Laban had searched the tents that he approached Jacob desiring to make a covenant. Taking stones and making a pile, Jacob and Laban built their altar and named it "pile of witness". With the prayer that God would watch between the two while they were apart, the covenant was sealed. But the part of this section that catches my attention comes in Genesis 31:53. *"But Ya'akov swore by the One his father Yitz'chak feared."*

In Proverbs 1:7 we read that, "The fear of Adonai is the beginning of knowledge..." This fear that Proverbs tells us of, and the fear that Jacob and his father shared, was not a fear as in being scared, but of reverence. It is a reverence for God that brings the beginning of knowledge. Do we possess this? Do we have a holy fear for God; a fear for Him by which we swear? I am challenged in thinking about this. I am forced to think in regards to who I reverence. If I am not fearing God, then I have missed not only knowledge, but all that He offers.

# VAYISHLACH ... AND HE SENT

---

## VAYISHLACH

### וישלח

Genesis 32:3 – 36:43

## MAIN SCRIPTURE

*“Please accept the present that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me and I have all I need.’ And because Jacob insisted, Esau accepted it.”*

*Genesis 33:11*

This Torah portion is named *“And He Sent,”* named so based on the first verse in this section where Jacob sends out messengers before him to his brother Esau. With a message to quote, Jacob entrusts that his men will bring back a favorable response. The response returned, however, was that Esau was now on his way to meet Jacob. As Jacob prepared to meet his brother once again, fear crept over him. It was at their last engagement that Esau had been tricked out of his firstborn privileges as Jacob posed as his brother in order to receive the blessing. In fear of his brother’s revenge, Jacob had fled. Now unsure if the years had been long enough to overcome the anger, Jacob proceeded with caution.

With panic overcoming Jacob, he divided all his possessions into two camps, thinking that if one was attacked the other would be safe. Then, maybe in an effort to calm himself down, Jacob prayed. In his prayer he reminded God of the promise made to his grandfather, Abraham, which carried on through his father, Isaac, and now rested on him. God had promised through this line that a great nation would arise. So he pleaded with God for a rescue from his coming brother.

It is here that I am challenged in my own way of life. I, like Jacob, have been told by God of some of the blessings that He has for me. I, like Jacob, have worked to remind God of these blessings when they seemed to not be working out. And I, like Jacob, have allowed panic before prayer. So then, here is the question. Why do I, or perhaps we, not make prayer our first priority? Why do we allow ourselves to go through the panic and worry first, and make our own plans instead of running straight to God who knows all the plans anyway? I am guilty of treating God as if he should a backup plan when instead I should see Him as the first response, the first action, and the first one to go to. Matthew 6:33 reminds us to seek God first. In making Him first we leave no room for the panic and worry to reside.

In the evening, Jacob took his wives and eleven sons (Benjamin not yet born), and had them cross the Jabbok river (Gen 32:22). He soon would join them, after first having his encounter with God. The river Jabbok, however, is only mentioned 7 times in the complete Bible. Based on this, one may question the importance of the Jabbok. But first, let us look at the next piece in the account of Jacob and Esau reuniting. Fearful of any remaining anger that Esau may have, Jacob had planned to divide his possessions into two camps. In an extra means to keep peace, Jacob sent gifts ahead of him with his servants who were commanded to announce, "Jacob, your servant, is coming behind us." Any means of appeasement was desired. Before nightfall came, Jacob had managed to move everything across the Jabbok and stay in the camp. It was this night that would change his life as he found himself wrestling with God.

So again you may be wondering, why is this reference to the Jabbok any different? The answer is this. In all the other 6 times that the Jabbok is mentioned it states that the person only came up to it. Here, we read of the first time of anyone *crossing* it. In crossing over the Jabbok, Jacob left behind his past. For an estimated twenty years he had worked for someone else. Not a slave, but a hired hand, he had helped to fulfill the destiny of someone else. But now, he was walking into the destiny that God had called him to, leaving behind the past, the deceit, and the trickery he had come to deal in and be dealt himself.

I say all this because within this one verse is the next step for us. It is time for us to cross over into what God is doing. We may have come close many times, but have turned back in fear, pressure, or other obstacles. But this time let us not shrink back; let us instead cross over. The land we leave behind is only holding us down. The land that lies ahead is the Promised Land that God has for us. Let us not lose the passion to cross over. The time to cross over is now! I want to encourage you to stop coming up to the Jabbok only to turn in fear. Stop thinking yourself worthless, that you have nothing to offer, that the world would benefit from your absence. Trust God with the next step of where He is directing you.

Alone in the night, Jacob wrestled with a man until daybreak. This assailant was none other than the angel of the LORD, who had made his second appearance to Jacob now. As the match continued and the morning sun rose, the angel insisted on being able to leave. Seeing that he could not overpower Jacob, the angel touched the socket of Jacob's hip, wrenching him as he demanded to be let go. Jacob, though, had no intention of the angel leaving without first being blessed.

Knowing full well his name, the angel still asked Jacob for his name. He then corrected him, saying no longer was he to be called Jacob, but rather he would be called Israel (Yisra'el), for he had struggled with God and with men, and with both he had overcome. Then, asking the angel also of his name and getting no response, Jacob, now Israel, blessed him there and named the place Peniel, meaning "Face of God". The sun rose in the sky, the assailant disappeared, and Jacob was left limping as a result of his hip.

It isn't until Genesis 35:10 that the name change sticks. And this fact of a name change was nothing new. God had already renamed Abram to Abraham, had told Abraham his son's name would be Isaac, and now, for a third time, had given *His* destined man a destined name. This genuine encounter with God was life-changing for Jacob, and just as the river was a physical leaving of the past, so also this name change striped Jacob of his worldly definition and thrust him forward as God's man for the hour.

The day had finally come when the two camps would reunite. Jacob was moments away from seeing his brother again after an estimated twenty years. But the deceitful man that Esau may have remembered was no more. God had worked in Jacob to change him. In some places the change had had time to set in, but in others the change was recent. In fact, it was only hours before that Jacob wrestled with the man. So moving forward, he stepped with a limp. *"Ya'akov raised his eyes and looked out; and there was Esau coming, and four hundred men with him. So Ya'akov divided the children between Le'ah, Rachel and the two slave girls."* (Gen 33:1).

It is in this humility and change of character that Jacob marched out to meet his brother Esau, but not before sending a number of gifts to him first.. Following all the presents of livestock, and the parade of wives and children, Jacob approached and prostrated himself on the ground seven times before his brother. A meeting that could have been set in anger seemed to subside with compassion as the brothers embraced one another. Then, Jacob formally introduced his children and himself as 'your servant' (Gen 33:5). It is noted by scholars that in addressing himself as 'your servant', Jacob made a plea to show a heart of humility.

Jacob told Esau that the livestock that had gone before him was now his, and encouraged his brother to accept. *"Please accept the present that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me and I have all I need."* And because Jacob insisted, Esau accepted it." Yet within this verse is found a nugget of missed information. The word present, or gift, here in this text is the Hebrew word BERAKAH. The translation goes beyond just the word gift. It translates as 'blessing'. It was in this act of giving these gifts to Esau that Jacob was in some form trying to give Esau back the blessing that he had once

stolen. Unable to change the past, he was able to at least share a portion of the blessing God had given him.

As the meeting lingered, Esau felt the move to continue with his brother on to Seir. However, after an already long trip, a night spent wrestling, and perhaps the emotional and physical toils of the stress of meeting his brother now being relaxed, Jacob and his caravan needed a rest. Watching Esau in the distance headed for Seir, Jacob headed toward Sukkot. It was here that he pitched tents and made shelters for his animals. It is here that we see the first use of Sukkot, which is where we derive the background for what we now understand is wrapped up in one of the High Holy days.

Still moving forward, Jacob landed at Padan-Aram before finally settling within sight of Shechem. It was at Shechem that Jacob put up an altar and named it El-Elohei-Yisra'el. The translation of this is "God, the God of Israel" or "mighty is the God of Israel". In questioning as to why he may have named it this, I think on what all he had been through. Maybe the obvious is his recent name change. Just a few nights back he had wrestled and been renamed Israel. But this man had also truly seen God's might. He had been protected by God's hand from his angry brother. He had been blessed by God's hand in the brown, spotted, and speckled livestock he possessed. And he had been kept in God's hand despite the trickery that once defined him. Jacob had lived to know God's might, and for that God was the God of Jacob.

Upon settling at Shechem, the son of Hamor the Hivite began to take an interest in Dinah, the only named daughter of Jacob. In a moment of lust and heat, Shechem, the son, grabbed Dinah and raped her. Following this action he sought by any means possible the ability to marry her. Neither of these actions seemed to sit well with her brothers. They wanted revenge for Dinah. With Hamor stating that intermarriage between the nations would be a good idea, the sons of Jacob spoke stating the offer would only be agreed to if all the men were circumcised as they were. After debate, the city agreed.

The Torah records that on the third day following, while the men were still in pain, an attack was made. Notice with me who led the attack on the city. I have read this passage before but in reading it again I found something. The Torah records only Simeon and Levi. If we go back to these men's birth we find they were both from Leah, as was Dinah. It was Dinah's true brothers, not half brothers, that took her revenge. But moving on, the two men attacked the men of Shechem. To this Jacob stated he had become a stink in Genesis 34:30. *"But Ya'akov said to Shim'on and Levi, 'You have caused me trouble by making me stink in the opinion of the local inhabitants, the Kena'ani and the P'rizi. Since I don't have many people, they'll align themselves together against me and attack me; and I will be destroyed, I and my household.'"*



This word 'stink' is the Hebrew word BA'ASH. Quite frankly, it means to have a bad smell, to become odious, or to emit a wicked odor. Because of the actions of these two sons, Jacob now was a BA'ASH. In fear he looked at the size of his tribe and thought them small enough to be wiped out. In much the same way as I work to remove the smells in my house, Jacob figured his name would be removed. It was to this concern that God told him to take his family and move. And it was because of the actions of these two men that their blessing, given to them on Jacob's death bed, would not be to their favor. *"Cursed be their anger, for it has been fierce; their fury, for it has been cruel. I will divide them in Ya'akov and scatter them in Isra'el"* (Gen 49:7).

As seen in this account, our actions do not only affect us. Although in reading this passage my anger and revenge rises up much like it did in these men, and I long to see justice done, I fear I too would have made a stink. The things I do bear on me, as Simeon and Levi learned, but they also hurt others. My sin will hurt me. My sin will cause a curse on me. My actions, however, will not only hurt me but my wife and children too.

Genesis 35:18 records the birth of Benjamin in saying, *"But [Rachel] died in childbirth. As she was dying she named her son Ben-Oni [son of my grief], but his father called him Binyamin [son of the right hand, son of the south]."* Granted I do understand that Rachel would pass as she gave birth, and that the naming of children held within them a profession of who they would become, it is because it *would* be a profession that I find myself questioning why such a name would be given. Who would want their child to be a constant reminder of pain and grief, or to only know these traits in all that he did? It is because of this, then, that Jacob spoke up and canceled Rachel's naming choice.

Instead of his final son taking on a name of grief, Jacob rewarded his son with the name Binyamin, the son of my right hand. To be named as the son of the right hand holds within it a stature. Being associated with the right hand or right side was traditionally a reference to strength and virtue. However, the name Binyamin also translates as son of the south, and could in fact reference the location of where he was born, as Canaan was located south in their travels. I do not have the footing to argue and dispute rabbinical sources, but I believe that both descriptions fit. The location of Canaan cannot be disputed, but nor can the truths we read in scripture just soon after, where Binyamin is cherished and protected, becoming a person of strength, following the supposed death of Joseph.

Our portion ends with the genealogy of Esau in Genesis 36. To some who read this final piece, it is just a list of names. It is when we read this portion with the help of

a few aids, though, that we perhaps find deeper things. Allow me to share with you a little behind the scenes action concerning this portion.

In Esau's attempt to make a family line that would receive blessing, failure was found. The lasting dynasty that was dreamed of came to an end because of sin. Incest is said to have been a normal issue on Esau's side as we even see that Zibeon was not only the father of Anah (Gen 36:24), but also the brother of Anah (Gen 36:20). It is also stated in history that it was Zibeon who crossbred the horse and donkey, creating a mule, which God considered an illegitimate creature.

Perhaps the greatest known name in this line is the name Amalek (Gen 36:12). It would be the tribe of Amalek, the Amalekites, who showed no fear toward God. In Exodus 17, it was this tribe that even came against Israel, but was defeated as Moses held up his hands. In the end, God declared that the memory of Amalek would be blotted out (Ex 17:14).

Let us not be like the line of Esau. Although it was Jacob who was born the deceiver, it was Esau in the end whose family line strayed away from God. May it never be said of us that our sin also paved the way for the destruction and blotted memory of so many.

# VAYESHEV ... HE SETTLED

---

VAYESHEV

וישב

Genesis 37:1 – 40:23

MAIN SCRIPTURE

*"Now Isra'el loved Yosef the most of all his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a long-sleeved robe."*

Genesis 37:3

Jacob settled in the land of Canaan (Gen 37:1), thus giving us the portion's name of Vayeshev. However, the portion itself begins to give an order to the events of Joseph (Yosef), which will eventually take us to the end of the Book of Genesis. The story of Joseph and his robe of many colors is known by many. As you may recall, Joseph was born of Jacob's original love, Rachel, and therefore he was favored. This favoritism did not sit right with his brothers, however. They sensed the strong feelings Jacob had and this angered them. Of course things were only added to when Joseph began sharing his God-given dreams with his brothers. But before we get ahead of ourselves, let us consider a few key elements from this portion.

In Genesis 37:3 we find Jacob giving to Joseph a long-sleeved robe, or a varicolored tunic, depending on the translation read. Sages will agree that Joseph was around the age of seventeen when this event happened, and that the coat itself was dipped in expensive dyes of colors related to royalty. In essence, this was a princely garment, therefore showing us the basis again that Joseph was Jacob's favorite. Furthermore, I want to suggest an additional reason as to why it caused such troubles. As is the custom in European families, each family name has its own shield or coat of arms. So it was with each of the tribes, that an emblem defined them. Still, it is thought that each tribe also had its own color. What if the robe of many colors had the color of each of the brothers? It is easy to see how this could add to the brothers' anger. Now while I may not be the world's best dad, I have learned one key lesson in my years – never pick favorites with your kids. Jacob might as well have just thrown stones at a bee's hive in giving Joseph this coat, for all it did was stir up the anger of his other sons.

This favoritism shown to Jacob made things worse for him with his brothers, but was not the only piece that aided their hatred. Joseph was also known as the tattletale (Gen 37:2). Putting the icing on the cake was his dreams, which while from God were

maybe best kept quiet at the time. His brothers mocked him as they displayed their resentment for him. Still it is in Genesis 37:10, after Joseph has shared his second dream with his family, that Joseph hears the words of mockery also from his father. His father states, *"Do you really expect me, your mother and your brothers to come and prostrate ourselves before you on the ground?"* It is suggested that not all the pieces of Joseph's life were written in chronological order. I bring this idea up because in reading this we see the word *mother* as opposed to *mothers*. I also bring this piece to our attention because based on Genesis 37:3, where we see the term *old age*, it can be assumed that Benjamin was not yet born. Quite possibly, Rachel may have still been alive when Joseph began to share his dreams.

With hatred fixed in their eyes, the brothers finally had Joseph in their grasp. Perhaps feeling the tension between his other sons and Joseph, but also wanting an update on how things were going, Jacob sent Joseph out towards where the brothers were grazing sheep for a status. When he got to the Valley of Hebron, he was then advised that the brothers had moved out toward Dothan. Sure enough, he found them. And sure enough, they still hated him. So they devised an evil plan.

Without their father close by to be ran back to, the brothers intended to kill Joseph, throw the body in a pit, and then report back to father that he had been killed by an animal. Hearing this plan, Reuben spoke up and attempted to rescue Joseph from death, agreeing to put him in a cistern, but only so that he could deliver him later on. Ambushed by his half-brothers, Joseph was stripped of his robe and shoved into the cistern

It was while they were eating that they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, headed toward Egypt. The evil wheels on the brothers' minds began spinning once more. *"Y'hudah said to his brothers, 'What advantage is it to us if we kill out brother and cover up his blood? Come, let's sell him to the Yishma'elim, instead of putting him to death with our own hands. After all, he is our brother, our own flesh.' His brothers paid attention to him"* (Gen 37:26-27). The boys were about to get rich off the dreamer. They still kept the part in the story to their father where an animal had attacked, but failed to relay to their father that their bitterness and hatred was that attacking animal. In the end, Joseph was sold by his brothers who in turn sold him to the Egyptian official, Potiphar.

Here, following the crying of a father, the selling of a brother, and the purchasing of a slave, we find the story of Judah and Tamar. Maybe this story is a little out of place, maybe this story is like a commercial in the account of Joseph, or maybe this story

is here to remind us of a lesson we all hope to forget. Nevertheless, we find an account that reiterates to us that our sins will find us out.

I would like to admit that in the past I have done some very stupid things. I know it is hard to believe, right? Okay, maybe not so much. I will admit, I have broken things on accident and blamed the dog. I have played one too many times with matches and almost burned things down or blown things up. And I have blatantly gone against God's word on numerous occasions. This is not something I want to just look back and laugh at, however. It is these things, these stupid choices I have made, that in many ways can prevent me from receiving the full blessing God wants to pour out on me. We see this is the life of Judah and how one night with a prostitute cost him part of his blessing.

Judah was the forth son of Jacob and born to him from Leah (Gen 29:35). The Bible explains to us that he had three sons, 'Er, Onan, and Shelah. 'Er married Tamar, but the two were unable to conceive prior to his death. His death, however, was brought about by God because of his evil lifestyle. As was the custom, if no children were born, the second son would be wed to the first son's wife. Soon enough, Onan became the husband of Tamar. Knowing that if he aided to her conceiving that the child would still be considered 'Er's, he did not release himself within Tamar. This action angered God and God put him to death as well. Now with only one son left, Judah feared his final son being killed and postponed giving him to her right away.

While out with his sheep-shearers in Timnah, Judah saw a prostitute. He made an offer and she accepted. A moment of lust and passion would cost him only one kid from his many goats. However, since he didn't have the goat on hand, a guarantee was made. Giving her his seal, cord, and staff, and with the agreement to exchange it all for the goat later, the two engaged in passion. The next day, when he went to pay her with the goat and take back his items, the prostitute was nowhere to be found. Not wanting to make too much of a scene, he let it pass. But little did he know it would come back around.

A few months after his trip to Timnah he received word that Tamar was pregnant. Knowing he had not given his last son to her, he assumed that she had been frolicking. She was questioned in great detail as to whom this man was who had impregnated her, and her answer was stated clearly. *"When [Tamar] was brought out, she sent this message to her father-in-law: 'I am pregnant by the man to whom these things belong. Determine, I beg you, whose these are – the signet, the cords, and the staff'"* (Gen 38:25). As Judah looked over these items he immediately knew they were his own. Although she had tricked him, she was also more righteous than he was as he had kept his son from her.

This story speaks many lessons. When I read it, however, I see one main point. My sins are not hidden. I understand Judah's fear and the waiting to keep his final son from death as he had that fear. I understand Tamar wanting to make a point. But I also see clearly how what Judah thought he could dismiss was exposed. There is not one thing we can hide from God, yet it is funny how we continue to try over and over again. I want to remind you, as I myself have again been reminded, that God watches over all we do – not to smack us upside the head with a stick every time we do something wrong, but to forgive us when we do wrong and bless us when we do right. But if we are not living right, how can He bless us? In the knowledge once more that my sins will indeed find me out, I want to review my life in full detail and end the areas in my life where I am still hoping to hide my actions from God. How about you?

Our Joseph account continues in Genesis 39, where we find in verse 2 and following that the LORD blessed Joseph. So blessed was he that “...[Potifar] left all his possessions in Yosef's care; and because he had him, he paid no attention to his affairs, except for the food he ate” (Gen 39:6a). While Potiphar was not paying attention, knowing he could trust Joseph, Potiphar's wife was paying attention, and not in the right way. Potifar's wife saw him as a well built desire, and a possession to be had. When Potifar's wife confronted him and gave her offer of a one night fling, he refused (Gen 39:7-8). She, however, was resilient. Day after day she kept coming to Joseph with her offer, and day after day he kept saying no. The desire and lust for what she could not have continued to grow toward Joseph. But it was this lust that continued also to feed. “But she kept pressing him, day after day. Nevertheless, he didn't listen to her; he refused to sleep with her or even be with her” (Gen 39:10).

What Potifar's wife most wanted to hear was “Yes”, but what she kept hearing from Joseph was “No”. Seeing she was constantly being denied, she tried another more forceful approach. With the house fully empty, she waited for Joseph. Catching him in her trap, and catching him by the cloak, she offered again, “Come to bed with me.” No matter how many times she approached him, his answer was always the same. Leaving his cloak behind, he left her once again.

Think about it this way. A leech makes a special type of saliva which allows them to drink quickly and painlessly. As they spread this saliva over the area where they will feast, they also spread an anesthetic which stops any pain. This anesthetic then keeps the host from feeling the bite. It is common for leeches to be connected to a person for hours before they are ever noticed or realized. But a second agent is also found in the saliva, one called anticoagulant. This agent prevents the blood from clotting, which in turn becomes like a flowing waterfall of blood for the leech to drink freely from. Once filled, the leech will drop off and be filled for months.

When I think of this portion of Joseph's life where daily he was hounded by Potiphar's wife, I think of how she was in essence, a leech. She came to him with her saliva of anesthesia working to convince him that no one would ever know. She also came to him with her anticoagulant in the offering more and more and more, just like the waterfall of blood. But Joseph came with one item she was not expecting. He came with God on His side. In one of her attempts prior, Joseph had even replied to her advance saying, *"How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against Adonai?"* (Gen 39:9)

On this final advance made on Joseph by Potiphar's wife, Joseph stood his ground, said "No!," and ran out. He didn't care about his cloak, he only cared about getting out. When Potiphar returned home, she lied to her husband and Joseph was placed in prison. But even with all that had happened already, from the bitterness of his brothers, to his being sold into slavery, to now being placed in prison for additional lies against him, Joseph saw God's hand.

In prison, when all hope should finally be lost, Joseph finds the strength to keep believing in God, keep his chin up, and keep obeying those over him. To this point, the jailer too notices Joseph and places him in charge of the prison. In time, two new and special prisoners were brought in, and Joseph noticed something was troubling them. Genesis 40:5-6 records, *"One night the two of them, the king of Egypt's cupbearer and his baker, there in prison, both had dreams, each dream with its own meaning. Yosef came in to them in the morning and saw that they looked sad."*

In the ability given to him by God alone, Joseph listened to the dreams and interpreted. To one, restoration would come. To the other, death would be his end. Within the three days foreseen, the interpretations were true. The cupbearer was restored to his post while the baker was found guilty of a crime and hung (Gen 40:19).

Through the dreams, Joseph seemed to have a way out of prison now. The cupbearer had told Joseph that he would remember him and approach the Pharaoh on Joseph's behalf. But Joseph was forgotten by the cupbearer. Is this not the same frustration we face? We see God at work and the pieces coming together, only to find that we are postponed, forgotten, or hindered. Ancient Hebrew teachings prove this one thing, however. *When we see someone being blessed, it only means our blessing is on the way.* I have learned in my own life that when God's timing and God's Word intersect, 'suddenly' happens. For Joseph, suddenly was coming.

# MIKETZ ... AT THE END

---

## MIKETZ

### מִקֵּץ

Genesis 41:1 – 44:17

## MAIN SCRIPTURE

*“...you will be in charge of my household; all my people will be ruled by what you say. Only when I rule from my throne will I be greater than you.”*

Genesis 41:40

When last we left Joseph, we left him in prison. This parashah, then, opens with Joseph in prison still, accused for being with Potiphar’s wife when in fact he was not. However, as we will see, God had plans even in this mess that would benefit Joseph, as well as the people of Israel. It was Joseph’s dreams that first got him into trouble with his brothers, but it would also be dreams, or shall we say the interpretation of dreams, that would help get him out of trouble. Romans 8:28 serves to remind us that all things work out for the good of those who love God. At first, Joseph’s life wasn’t looking to work out for the good. Yet, while he kept his eyes on God, Joseph found the truth in this fact.

The portion begins with the Hebrew word *miketz*, translated as “at the end”. It was at the end of two years that Pharaoh began to dream. It happened that Pharaoh had lost sleep due to his dream and his being unable to understand the meaning. *“In the morning he found himself so upset that he summoned all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dream, but no one there could interpret them for him”* (Gen 41:8). Pharaoh’s first action was to call the magicians and wise men of Egypt to help, but they too were unable to give this dream meaning. Reminded of his short time in prison, Pharaoh’s chief cupbearer, who had had his dream interpreted by Joseph also, spoke of the Hebrew boy and his abilities. With the possibility that an answer may be available, Joseph was beckoned to appear before Pharaoh.

Pharaoh’s dreams were these. In the first dream he saw seven healthy cattle grazing in a lush marsh, only to be swallowed up by seven unhealthy cattle. The second dream was as the first, in that seven healthy stalks of grain were devoured by seven withered stalks of grain. It is important that we define a term here in Genesis 41:8. Pharaoh called on the magicians of Egypt. The word in Hebrew for magician is derived from the root word ‘engraver’ or ‘writer’, and refers to ones trained in occult



knowledge. Notice how even these *trained* followers of the occult could not interpret these two dreams. Coincidence? Not at all.

With the memory of the chief cupbearer stirred, Joseph was shaved, dressed, and then brought before Pharaoh where he was told to interpret the dreams. Where were all the laughs and bitter resentments of his brothers now? Now he stood before the very one who ruled over Egypt. In a moment where he could have spoken in pride, Joseph spoke in humility. Giving all glory to God, Joseph spoke to the royal audience of his inability and humanness. So here I add again, when God's timing and God's Word intersect, 'suddenly' happens. For Joseph, suddenly was happening now.

I am sure we have all had those dreams before where we aren't sure whether we are being given a message or if we are just suffering from the affects of late night pizza. I know I have. It seems like some dreams are just so crazy that there is no way that they can be anything but bad food. Yet there do seem to be those dreams that just leave a feeling that they are not supposed to be ignored. Perhaps you know what I'm talking about. I have had dreams, even fairly recently, where I knew God was speaking something to me. There was a peace, perhaps even an urgency, and a knowing all at the same time.

I feel that is what Pharaoh may have felt in this moment. He woke up from having not one, but two urgent dreams telling him the same meaning. The details were hidden from him, but God was just placing things in motion. You see if Pharaoh or the magicians had been able to tell the meaning, Joseph would not have been needed. But God kept the meaning hidden in order to promote Joseph. And that He did. Joseph, summoned by Pharaoh, made it clear that the interpretation to follow would be from God. He also spoke to Pharaoh that the two dreams that had just been shared were one in the same, according to Genesis 41:25. *"Yosef said to Pharaoh, 'The dreams of Pharaoh are the same: God has told Pharaoh what he is about to do.'"* God was telling Pharaoh in both the healthy cattle and the healthy stalks of grain that seven years of abundance were coming. But the rejoicing of this abundance would be followed by seven years of famine, as described by the seven weakly cattle and seven withered stalks whom both overtook the healthy ones. This paved the way for Joseph to find the promotion that God had been saving for him. It was all in due time and under the right circumstances.

The interpretation was taken as truth and Pharaoh didn't have to look too far to find just the right man for the upcoming job. Genesis 41:40 tells us Pharaoh placed the honor of the second in command to Joseph. *"...you will be in charge of my household; all my people will be ruled by what you say. Only when I rule from my throne will I be greater than you."* Only Pharaoh had more power and weight still than Joseph now was being

given. But let us take a moment to see what Joseph gained in this upgrade. Pharaoh gave Joseph his signet ring, he clothed him in fine linen, he gave him a golden necklace, and he had him ride in his own personal chariot. These details so easily overlooked in one's reading were indeed the representation of the transference of power. Additionally, he was given a wife, Osnat, the daughter of Poti-Fera of On, and from her would come Manasseh and Ephraim, the final two in the named twelve tribes of Israel. But maybe more important than his new found power, a wife, and in time children, was the assurance that all he had suffered was redeemed.

Our account of Joseph is not finished, for we still have nine chapters to go. But in this piece we already see that in the bleakest of situations, God is in control. Being the one the brothers detested, being the one sold as a slave, being the one lied about, being the one in prison - none of those places was fun. Yet, God was with Joseph at all times. And we too can relate these feelings. We know the sting of being detested. We know the feeling of be enslaved. We know the pain of a lie spoken about us. And we know the hopelessness our own prisons capture us in. Still, we must not give up. Our promotions are coming. Let us continue to trust in God in our hard times, for He alone is in control.

Not sure how you feel about this idea, but to not die is on the top of my list. Well let me rephrase that - to not die physically. Trust me, spiritually and daily I want to die to sin and find myself alive in Christ. But I understand where Jacob was coming from. With the famine spreading all over, and most severe in the land of Egypt (Gen 41:56), Jacob had to do something in order to make ends meet. Once he had heard that food was available in the land of Egypt, he knew he had his answer. *"Now Ya'akov saw that there was grain in Egypt; so Ya'akov said to his sons, 'Why are you staring at each other? Look,' he said, 'I've heard that there's grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us from there, so that we can stay alive and not die!'"* (Gen 42:1). Now he may not have known what all would have transpired, but God's hand was at work.

All the brothers, with the exception of Benjamin, traveled to Egypt to purchase grain as their father had requested. Remember, their life depended on it. In coming into Egypt they found their way to the official who was in charge of the dispersing. Little did they know that this official was their brother. Joseph did not let on, but he instead began questioning them. As the dreams he had once had as a child began to replay in his mind, he called the brothers out as spies and had them all placed in custody.

In reading this, I want to point out two facts that I am reminded of in reading this portion. The first is in the words of Jacob. Sometimes the blessing is waiting for us

in another place. The brothers had to go to Egypt. Domino's Pizza wasn't around back then to bring them what they needed. FedEx wasn't delivering quite yet. So the brothers had to extend their faith in extending their feet. We too may have to follow the leading and go to the place of blessing as opposed to waiting for God to bring the blessings to us. The second point I want to point out is that, as we know by reading ahead, Joseph was looking for a heart change in his brothers. He was wanting to see if they were sorry for what they had done against Joseph, as well as how they had brought pain to their father. Doesn't that sound like us? God looks at our heart when judging our forgiveness. Paul speaks of a worldly sorrow and godly sorrow. The world sorrow is basically being sorry you got caught. But godly sorrow brings about true and lasting change. Which then are we offering when we ask for forgiveness?

To recap, the brothers are in Egypt seeking relief from the famine by purchasing grain. Joseph, who is hiding his true identity from them, has already questioned the brothers about his father and youngest brother, Benjamin. Calling the others out as spies and placing them in prison, he has now given them the task of keeping one brother behind while they go to fetch Benjamin. This alone will prove their denial as spies on the outward, but will also allow Joseph a look into their hearts. With this said, Simeon was taken, unwillingly, as the brother left behind.

When the remaining nine return to their father, they explain why Simeon is not with them. Automatically Jacob is unwilling. There was no way that he would allow Benjamin to go, not with Joseph already gone and Simeon now in prison. But as the grain ran out, Jacob was placed between a rock and a hard spot. To obtain any more grain he must do as Egypt's official had spoken. But the fear of losing another son weighed on the other end. Even at Reuben's barter to take his sons instead, Jacob was timid to agree (Gen 42:37-38).

Later on, completely depleted of grain, Jacob made his decision. Judah this time pleaded with his father again to place the boy, Benjamin, in his care, allowing any and all blame to fall on him. And it is in this passage I see myself. *"I myself will guarantee his safety; you can hold me responsible. If I fail to bring him to you and present him to your face, let me bear the blame forever. Except for our lengthy delay, we would have been there again by now."* (Gen 43:9-10). Judah says to his father that if he wasn't so stubborn, they could have already gone to Egypt and back instead of knowing the pain of hunger. This piece makes me contemplate the times I too have been stubborn. I think there are times when we are supposed to take our stand, dig our feet in and resist the enemy. This is Biblical. But there are also times when we do this action for the wrong reason. Jacob performed his action out of fear. He knew that his family was hungry, but he also feared that

Benjamin, the last piece he had still from Rachel, could find the same fate as Joseph, or now even Simeon. It is in these times when the answer is known, yet we are afraid to step out in faith that God has it in His control.

Jacob finally did agree with Judah, but he also left it in God's hands, saying, *"May El Shaddai give you favor in the man's sight, so that he will release to you your other brother as well as Binyamin"* (Gen 43:14). So with Benjamin in hand, the other nine brothers returned to Egypt to retrieve Simeon, repay the returned coins found in their sacks from the last time, and purchase more grain. When they returned, however, they were escorted into Joseph's house. I, like the brothers, probably would have also been a little fearful as to what was coming next, as seen in Genesis 43:18. *"Upon being ushered inside Yosef's house, the men became fearful. They said, 'It's because of the money that was returned in our packs the first time that we have been brought inside – so that he can use it as an excuse to attack us, take us as slaves and seize our donkeys too.'"*

Joseph had other thoughts in mind, and in time all their fears were put at ease. Where they had thought he would attack, he instead provided for them. Instead of taking them as slaves, he had their feet washed by slaves. And their fear of seized donkeys was replaced by fodder for the donkeys. Simeon was even released to them. But when Joseph saw his brother, Benjamin, his true brother as opposed to half brothers, he spoke a blessing over him in saying, *"May God be good to you."* At this the brothers sat around the table, each of the eleven according to his birth order.

Just as Jacob feared that his sons would not return, so also the sons feared Joseph's response to seeing them again, especially with the returned coins. But instead they met a man who had kept his word by releasing their brother. This Egyptian man also continued to show concern for them and their father. The dream that Joseph had once had was now coming to be. His brothers were bowing down to him.

On seeing his brothers, more so on seeing Benjamin, Joseph had to collect himself. Now it is assumed that Joseph had been taken from his family by way of the traveling slave trade when he was about seventeen. Years later, he was seeing his actual brother for the first time since. Tears were coming and he had to get himself in check. So he went to his room and cried. In the meantime the meal was had and Benjamin was spoiled, even having a portion five times the size of his brothers. But Benjamin also was spoiled with additional coins and a silver cup. Both these things were a surprise to him, and one that would bring about some trouble. Not knowing that he was in possession of stolen goods, Benjamin left with his brothers to head back home. Not far out, though, the traveling band was stopped by Joseph's guards. *"Then each hurried to put his pack down on the ground, and each one opened his pack. He searched, starting with the oldest and ending with the youngest; and the goblet was found in the pack belonging to Binyamin."* (Gen 44:11-12). When they checked the bags for stolen goods,

they found the missing goblet in the bag of Benjamin. The brothers had already sworn an oath to their father, so instead of allowing Benjamin to remain behind as a slave, they all volunteered to take his place.

In reading this account I believe that one thing is evident. The brothers had grown up since their childish ways with Joseph. They knew the pain they had caused Jacob. They saw the distress their father had lived with for so long. And they allowed the fear they saw in his eyes to be their driving force. So with that, each brother willingly allowed himself to be considered as Joseph's slave as opposed to Benjamin. Finally they had learned, and finally they were willing to lay down their life for a brother.

# VAYIGASH ... HE APPROACHED

---

## VAYIGASH

ויגש

Genesis 44:18 – 47:27

### MAIN SCRIPTURE

*“And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you....But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.”*

Genesis 45:5, 7

The brothers were being called back to stand before the Egyptian Governor, their brother unknown, and all over a cup. They denied the theft of the cup, yet Joseph kept harboring the point until finally Judah spoke up. But why? Remember back with me in this account. Joseph knew who these men were even though they did not know who he really was. Joseph had questioned of their family and learned his father was still alive, and that Benjamin was home with him. So keeping one brother back, the deal was to bring Benjamin to see Joseph in order to have more goods and see Simeon, the prison brother, again. After eating a meal, the brothers were sent on their way. But, unknown to the brothers, a cup had been placed in Benjamin's sack and now he faced prison in Egypt. It is to this that Judah now approached to speak with Joseph privately and candidly. It was in this conversation that Judah pleaded once more for Benjamin, expressing that they had done all that Joseph had requested in order for them to receive Simeon back, and how the cup got in the sack was a mystery.

According to J. I. Packer in his book, Knowing God, God had ordered the events of Joseph's life for a double purpose. Packer defines this double purpose as such. The first piece is the individual's own personal sanctification. Sanctification is defined as the state of growing in divine grace. In the life of Joseph we find sanctification dripping in his every move. When his brothers sold him, he was sanctified. When falsely accused of making an intimate advance, he was sanctified. While waiting in prison, he was sanctified. In each of these moments, Joseph grew in his relationship with his God. He knew there was a purpose for his sufferings. He never turned back on God, and because of this, God honored him and placed him in a position of authority.

The second piece to a double purpose that Packer describes is the fulfilling of his appointed ministry. Joseph was destined. We see this in his dreams. The dream of

crops bowing down or even the moon and stars, was an indication of the ministry position the Father would place Joseph in. And now, years later, having suffered so much ill fate and not quitting on God, Joseph was being honored. But the dreams were not fulfilled until the famine spread and brought his brothers back to his doorstep. It was here that the double purpose finally made sense. God not only opened the way for Joseph to be honored, but also had opened the way for His people to be saved.

Joseph now, excusing his attendants and standing alone with only his brothers, revealed his true identity. He revealed who he was – their brother. He revealed that what they had meant for evil, God had used for good, and that their actions done in spite indeed had double purpose. In Genesis 45:5, 7, Joseph says to his brothers, *“And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you....But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.”* Consider then your own life. Do you have a double purpose? Does it seem like life is pressing you and you wonder what good can come from these struggles and strains? Do you feel like there is no hope at the end of the rope? I urge you to not give up, for you are about to see your double purpose.

Now the brothers knew it was Joseph. Now they were told that the actions they had once done to hurt Joseph were used by God to keep the family, nation, and the promise of God alive. And now Joseph was hugging and weeping with his brothers, requesting they hurry home and bring their father, *his father*, back with them. *“Hurry, go up to my father, and tell him, ‘Here is what your son Yosef says: ‘God has made me lord of all Egypt! Come down to me, don’t delay!’”* (Gen 45:9).

They would live in Goshen according to Joseph, and they would be given the good part of Egypt according to Pharaoh. In every aspect, the doomed fate of both Joseph and Israel was being redeemed. And we would do well to remember this in regards to ourselves. If nothing else, the account of Joseph in the Torah fills in the missing pieces of how the Jewish nation found its way to Egypt for Moses to deliver them. But it is so much more. It is here we also see that what is intended for bad can really be God working undercover for our good. Despite the number of times the enemy had tried to snuff out God’s promise, be it Sarah’s inability to have a child, Rebekah’s inability to have a child, the war waging between Esau and Jacob, and the famine that Jacob’s family suffered, God’s truth persisted. Again I recall Romans 8:28 about how all things work together for those who love God. But this can also be read as a story of forgiveness, or of provision.

Still whatever lesson you read in this story, perhaps the piece that should not be ignored is in Genesis 45:9. Joseph expressed to his brothers that five more years of

famine were still to come. They had no time to delay in moving their father and all their possessions to Egypt. Their survival depended on it. So it is with us. There will be times when God will tell us to move, and we must heed him. Our procrastination, or delay, or putting it off till tomorrow can easily put us out of sync with what God is doing. Therefore, I encourage you, when you hear His voice of urgency speaking to you to move, do not delay. Your future may depend on it just as the nation of Israel's did.

With the order to not delay, the brothers were on their way. But when they returned to Jacob with the news that their brother Joseph was still alive, Jacob had a hard time believing it. He had put away the idea of Joseph being alive when the brothers had told him already years before that Joseph was dead, producing a torn up and bloodstained coat. Now the brothers were telling him that he was alive and was the second in command in Egypt. I am glad I wasn't part of that conversation, where Jacob quite honestly may have been going off on his sons for their actions and lies. Yet still, the Torah records that Jacob did not believe his sons this time around. In fact, it wasn't until the wagons that were sent were seen (Gen 45:27b) that Jacob was revived. *"...but it was only when he saw the wagons which Yosef had sent to carry [Ya'akov] that the spirit of Ya'akov their father began to revive."*

The word 'revived' here is the Hebrew word CHAYAH. Its definition is probably what you would expect – to live, have life, remain alive, sustain life, and to restore. In seeing the wagons sent from Egypt specifically to carry back all the possessions and people of Jacob's camp, his spirit became restored. In seeing these things he began to believe this tall tale his sons were sharing with him. And in seeing these wagons, hope that Joseph was still alive began to grow.

It seems odd that wagons would have that much affect, but they did. Wrapped up in the sight of the wagons were hope, a new life, and an end to famine. Who is to say otherwise how the sons would have convinced their father of Joseph's life? But then, who is to know what same oddity brings revival to us? What is the wagon that we have seen, or will be convinced by? Our spirit too may be in need of revival. Our wagons also may be on their way. And when we see them, we like Jacob will be revived in spirit. Do not lose hope, the wagons are coming.

Have you ever been in that place where you find yourself fearful of what is to come, but knowing that you will be better because of it? For me that was college. I grew up in Southern California and at the age of 18 found myself venturing east to Oklahoma. I had never been away from home without some other family and close friend, and here I was now with a feeling of fear. I knew that going to college was right



for me, and I knew that this college was where I was supposed to go, yet still I was afraid of all that was unknown.

Jacob knew that same feeling. The wagons had come and were prepared to take him and all his family to Egypt. Yet, Jacob seemed to have a little fear. Yes Joseph was alive and residing in Egypt, but the promise from God had always been that the line of Abraham would be given the land of Canaan. Now he was being moved from the promise to a foreign place. God, knowing Jacob's fear, spoke to him in a dream and said, "...*I am God, the God of your father. Don't be afraid to go down to Egypt. It is there that I will make you into a great nation.*" (Gen 46:3).

A new promise was now being given, not to override the promise given to Abraham, but to confirm the promise given to Abraham. It was in Genesis 15:13 that God first shared what was now coming to pass. The line of Abraham would find themselves foreigners in a land not theirs, as slaves for four hundred years. Now Jacob was packing up and moving to a land not his. The first day of the four hundred years was beginning. If Jacob had not allowed himself to go, then God's promise to Abraham would never have come true. Israel would have suffered the effects of the famine at hand. But the same can be said of me. If I had not gone to the college I felt Him leading me to, then the promises He gave me concerning my education at this institution would not have come true. Too many times we allow fear to paralyze us. Yet in these moments we should remember the words of God. Don't be afraid to go.

Jacob and his sons, and their families, had made it to Egypt. From Joseph's instruction, they had made their way to the land of Goshen. It was here in Goshen that Joseph insisted that they live, for the land produced the best fields and crops for their animals, but also because being a shepherd was an occupation frowned upon by the Egyptians. But even this idea took planning. Knowing how Pharaoh would react, as well as other Egyptians, Joseph spoke with his brothers ahead of time. It was in this time of chat Joseph had advised his brothers to admit to their occupation of shepherding (Gen 47:3). And it was because of these skills that Pharaoh also asked the men to care for his animals as well. While the brothers were honest in sharing that they were 'just shepherds', God was again working behind the scenes to protect them, and work with His people.

Goshen wasn't the land that God had promised, but it was the land in which God preserved His people. And although it would be four hundred years before they returned to their homeland, it was four hundred years of His people thriving off the best that Egypt had to offer.

As the people of Egypt began to run out of money, they had to find a new currency to use in order to purchase the grain needed to survive. The currency following money became their livestock. But within a year their livestock had also diminished. Following this the currency soon became the offering of their land, and finally of themselves. All of this, however, was because of the effects of the famine.

Joseph said to the people who continued to approach him that as he continued to acquire the people and their land, he would give them seed. With this seed they were to do three things. First, they were expected to give twenty percent to Pharaoh. The remaining eighty percent was to be split up by the people for their personal re-seeding and their consumption. It is here that I find an example that may be wise for us as well. As a parent I find myself trying to teach my children ways to be responsible. When it comes to money, there is no exception. This idea of giving a portion to Adonai (tithe), giving a portion for saving (re-seeding), and giving a portion for consumption (spending) is an idea that we should use.

But it is in the end result of where the famine left the people that we find the greatest change. The people went from a free state to being owned. They went from having money, livestock, and land to a position of broke in every possible area. The effects of the famine took their toll, yet still, God was in control.

# VAYECHI ... HE LIVED

---

## VAYECHI

ויחי

Genesis 47:28 – 50:26

### MAIN SCRIPTURE

*"Then Ya'akov called for his sons and said, 'Gather yourselves together, and I will tell you what will happen to you in the acharit-hayamim (last days).'"*

*Genesis 49:1*

It is estimated that seventeen years after Jacob arrived in Egypt, that he began to fall sick. Jacob was 147 years old at this time (Gen 47:28). As with us today, this was the time when his affairs needed to be put in order concerning his inheritance. Also at the time, Jacob wanted to ensure his final wishes concerning his body. He asked Joseph to place his hand under his thigh as a seal or promise that when he passed away, his body would be returned to the homeland. By Joseph placing his hand under the thigh of his father, an agreement was made.

It is thought that Jacob wanted to bequeath the right of firstborn son to Joseph, as it was Joseph's mother Rachel that Jacob originally intended to marry. However, it was Reuben who was in fact the firstborn. Even still, Jacob would find a way to bless this son with a double portion. In one such way he accomplished this with the 'adoption' of Joseph's sons. The inheritance would now be split into thirteen portions, with Ephraim and Manasseh receiving their own under the name of Joseph. This is further confirmed in scripture in I Chronicles 5:1, "[Re'uven's] birthright was given to the sons of Yosef the son of Isra'el." As Jacob again spoke about the promise first given by God concerning him being fruitful and numerous, he looked out over Ephraim and Manasseh. To Joseph he then said, "Now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Efrayim and M'nasheh will be as much mine as Re'uven and Shim'on are" (Gen 48:5).

With failing eyesight, much like his father Isaac, Jacob had called for Joseph to come to him. He had never expected to see his son again, especially after his other sons had announced his death and produced a blood stained and torn coat. But here was Joseph, standing before him, and with his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Having adopted them as his own sons (Gen 48:5), Jacob had every intention of blessing them as

well. So then, Joseph placed his sons in front of his half blind father, with Ephraim reachable to Jacob's left and Manasseh to Jacob's right.

As Jacob extended his hands toward the sons, however, he intentionally crossed his hands, placing his left on Manasseh and right on Ephraim. Yet before blessing the boys, he first spoke another blessing. Jacob declared, *"The God in whose presence my fathers Avraham and Yitz'chak lived, the God who has been my own shepherd all my life long to this day, the angel who has rescued me from all harm, bless these boys. May they remember who I am and what I stand for, and likewise my fathers Avraham and Yitz'chak, who they were and what they stood for. And may they grow into teeming multitudes on the earth."* (Gen 48:15). Joseph saw that his father's hands had been crossed and attempted to correct his father, but to no avail. Jacob was announcing the blessing and said that the younger would serve the older. To this he announced that Israel would announce, *"May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh,"* calling the youngest son's name first.

As part of the Shabbat blessings spoken each Friday night, there is a time when the fathers announce a special blessing over the children. To the son, the father lays his hands on each son and prays, *"May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh,"* while to the daughter he lay his hands on each and prays, *"May God make you like Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah."* Following this the father then prays over the children his own words. But why name these two sons and these four women? I have read that as these two sons were the first to be raised in a foreign land and keep their belief in God, that we pray our sons will do the same in today's culture. Another reason I have read is that in so doing we are calling our son's place in Israel, asking they too be adopted. I have even heard it said that these sons are not only mentioned based on these final words of Jacob, but also because these were the first sons that show no record of quarrelling. We can easily recall that Cain and Able fought. Noah's sons had some issues. Ishmael and Isaac had a few not so happy times. Jacob and Esau quarreled. And we know of many fights that Jacob's sons had. Perhaps one or all of these is true.

But let us look at the words spoken by Jacob again. The blessing bestows a transferring of the Abrahamic covenant and promises on these boys. Jacob received this blessing from his father who received it from his father. *"The God in whose presence my fathers Avraham and Yitz'chak lived, the God who has been my own shepherd all my life long to this day, the angel who has rescued me from all harm, bless these boys; and may my name live on in them, and the names of my fathers Avraham and Yitz'chak; and may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."* Jacob was asking that these sons walk in the same blessing and covenant relationship. In essence, it is like saying, *"May God make you like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."* So we bless our sons in saying, *"May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh."*

Think on this, though, before we move on. Concerning the younger serving the older, Joshua was an Ephraimite, and led the nation of Israel. In Numbers 21 it is recorded that the tribe of Manasseh camped under the standard of Ephraim. And in reading the number from the census taken both times by Moses, Ephraim's numbers are greater than Manasseh's. The effects of this one change, the crossing of the hands intentionally by Jacob, is seen later in scripture.

In Genesis 49, Jacob now calls for all his sons, and adopted sons, so that he may give his final blessings before passing away. This was a special time. This was the time when the father would give the double blessing out to the men in his clan, when he would pass the baton, and when the next generation would rise up. So with expectancy, Jacob's sons came to his side to hear his final will and learn what would happen to them concerning the *acharit-hayamim*, the end of days.

While with each son a depth of their lineage can be traced and proved, I will only hit on key aspects. And so we begin with Reuben. Reuben was the firstborn son, and it was expected that he would receive the double portion. As Jacob had twelve sons, the tradition would be to split all the father's possessions into thirteen segments in this case, and give Reuben two segments. Yet Reuben's actions caused him to miss out on this blessing. Instead, Jacob addressed the fact of what he had done with Bilhah, Jacob's concubine and mother of Dan and Naphtali. This defilement so angered Jacob that he spoke of him being as *unstable as water*, poetically meaning that he lacked self-control. Let us then be warned of the dangers of sin when we recall the life of Reuben. So how did these words come to pass? In Numbers 16 it was Reuben's tribe that joined in the rebellion of Korah the Levite, questioning the leadership of Moses and being swallowed by the earth. It was this same tribe that chose to not move forward but take land on the east side of the Jordan in Numbers 32. And it was this tribe who was sung about in Judges 5 as searching their hearts instead of engaging in the battle against Sisera. This single act of sleeping with his father's concubine led the line of Reuben to not only miss the double portion, but live in instability. In R. H. Charles work titled, The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, according to the Book of Reuben 4:6-7, Reuben states while on his deathbed, "The sin of promiscuity is the pitfall of life, separating man from God and leading on toward idolatry, because it is the deceiver of the mind and the perceptions, and leads youths down to hell before their time. For promiscuity has destroyed many. Whether a man is old, well born, rich, or poor, he brings on himself disgrace among mankind and provides [the devil] with an opportunity to cause him to stumble."

Next Jacob addressed Simeon and Levi, stating they were brothers. This is true, as they were both also born of Leah. But in this context what is meant is that they were

two peas in a pod. They were always getting in trouble together, always seen together, and always hanging around each other. They thought like brothers. It was this mutual thinking that they would not be commended for as Jacob recalled the sin of murder they performed against the men of Shechem. These partners in crime received the word of being divided in Jacob and scattered in Israel. When later they received their inheritance in the Promise Land, Simeon received pockets of arid and barren land within Judah's piece. Additionally, the numbers of this tribe decreased in each census from 59,300 in Numbers 1, to 22,200 in Numbers 26. The leading cause is thought to be idolatry and plague as recorded in Numbers 25. Of Levi we also read of scattering as it was the Levites who would not be given specific land, but would rather have a portion of each to live off of as instructed by God. While having certain allotments and benefits may be a plus for the Levites, the tribe of Levi never had a place all their own, nor does even still today. But anger was their downfall, and of anger Paul warns us that we accomplish the deeds of the flesh (Gal 5:19-21), and James writes that anger does not achieve God's righteousness (Jms 1:20).

To Judah the double portion is given, while not the birthright. I Chronicles 5:2 records that while Judah became the leader, Joseph received the birthright. As was custom, along with the additional blessing came the respect of all the brothers as leader. Since this was taken from the first three brothers based on their actions, the title of leader rested on Judah and was spoken of in stating, *"Your brothers will acknowledge you"* (Gen 49:8). Contrasting to the words of doom spoken to the first three brothers, the words to Judah are of blessing. Judah means praise, and here he was in essence being praised. It is also where we see the shortened version Jew, also giving way to leadership as the entire race was named after him. The greatest claim to fame for Judah, however, is seen in the words of the scepter not passing from him, for it is from this line that first King David rose and later our Savior, Yeshua himself. It was in Judah that people would obey, but this fact would be seen in all his descendants for it would be a kingly line. Yet let us not overlook the final words in this blessing over Judah that speak of his robes, his eyes, and his teeth, for they too depict for us an illustration of our savior.

Zebulun would live at the seashore. Four hundred plus years later this prophecy would be seen truthful as Joshua would allot to this tribe the area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Sea of Galilee. This allowed for trading routes, in which Zebulun was heavily involved, and as was also declared on them by Moses in Deuteronomy 33:19, stating they shall take the abundance of the seas and the treasures hidden in the sand. It is awesome to see, though, all the pieces come together. Jacob spoke also that the border of Zebulun's territory would be at Sidon. When Joshua

divided the land, Sidon was not included in the piece given to Zebulun. In fact, it was not theirs until the tribe of Asher was unable to defeat remaining Canaanites and the tribe of Zebulun began attacking and defeating the Canaanites. This victory allowed them the land.

Of Issachar it is said he was a strong donkey. I am not sure we would read that as a complement these days, but the truth in these words in that Issachar was valuable, as were donkeys at this time. It was the donkey that carried the burden, and it was the donkey that would later carry the Messiah. But it was said that this donkey would bend his back to the burden and submit to forced labor (Gen 49:15). The idea here is that the tribe would be one to fight for what it had, preventing evil from coming in and stealing from it. This is seen in the account of the judge Tola in Judges 10 who led for twenty-three years as a brave leader. We see this idea again in I Chronicles 7 where the tribe was said to be valiant men of might in their families and generations. They were laborious, but also invincible in war, burden bearing, and valiant. Perhaps the best compliment for this tribe comes in I Chronicles 12:32 where they were spoken of as men understanding the times, knowing what Israel must do.

The name Daniel means 'God is my judge'. The name Dan, however, means judgment. Who was the most famous descendant of this line? None other than the judge named Samson. It was through the Danites that the Philistines would find judgment. However, the tribe of Dan also shows a heavy reverting to idolatry, thus the spoken reference to the snake in Genesis 49:17. History shows in Judges 18 that the tribe of Dan grew tired of its allotted land and went looking for some place new. Scouts found the town of Laish and decided to conquer it. Six hundred men and one Levite from Ephraim, who brought with him a graven image, marched to Laish and defeated the town with ease. They named the town Dan and set up an image for themselves. In time, Dan became the cult center for idol worship. The final words over Dan by Jacob, however, are a prayer. *"I wait for your deliverance, Adonai."* The idol worship of Dan would continue until its capture and only then, when the people were humbled, would things change. In time, true salvation would be found in the Messiah, but until then Jacob would wait in prayer for his son to see the way and stand as a strong pillar. Again looking at R. H. Charles' fictitious work, The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, according to the Book of Dan 6:1-4, Dan admits, "and now fear the Lord, my children, be on guard against Satan and his spirits...The enemy is eager to trip up all who call on the Lord because he knows that on the day in which Israel trusts, the enemy's kingdom will be brought to an end."

Genesis 49:19 is concerning Gad, and Jacob jumps right to the point with one sentence. *"Gad - a troop will troop on him, but he will troop on their heel."* This verse

doesn't seem to make sense, yet four of the six words in the Hebrew for this blessing are variants of Gad's name. Gad means troop. So a troop will troop? Although written with the same words in English, in Hebrew it reads that a GADUWD (army) will GUWD (invade) him. In the end, however, Gad would GUWD them back. In this we piece together that Gad would be attacked but in the end would find victory. In Judges 10 we see this truth as for eighteen years the Philistines vexed the children of Israel before finally having their justice served. It was this constant state and declaration of war that kept the men of God ready with the faces of lions. Even Moses blessed the tribe of Gad, stating that they dwelled like a lion and tore the arm with the crown of the head (Dt 33:20). Although no one famous person in the Bible is shown to derive from the tribe of Gad, one main theme is. As stated in I Peter 5:8, we are to be ready at any moment for the enemy to attack us. He may indeed *guwd* us, but in the end we will be victorious and *guwd* his heel. The men of Gad acquired a warrior reputation just as the prophecy of Jacob suggested.

To Asher also Jacob is quick and to the point, stating that Asher's food is rich, fit for a king. In saying little Jacob was stating that Asher would enjoy the rich products of the fertile land, teeming with items to sustain life, and find himself serving his food before royalty. While the sign for this tribe is a jewel, we should not also rule out that the richness may not be food, but also mining. The tribe of Asher failed to remove the Canaanite/Phoenician inhabitants once in their Promised section, though, and perhaps forewent their military capability. There is thought that based on the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 33:24, oil was present with the land of Asher, be this an idea of an oil such as olive oil or in the manner of Texas tea. In the end we read that Asher will be blessed, despite the precious form.

To finish Jacob's list of one-liners we find Naphtali. The words from his father again are to the point, declaring Naphtali as a doe set free, bearing beautiful fawns. The term 'doe set free' is also translated as hind. In Psalm 18:33, David speaks of having hind's feet when escaping his enemy. As David ran from his pursuers, so Naphtali would run from his hunters, but run also with the word of God. Beautiful fawns seem to be symbolism for beautiful words. And consider this. The region of Naphtali's inheritance included Galilee, where in Matthew 4:13-15 Yeshua picks out a few of His disciples. Could it be that these men sharing the good news were in some way related to Naphtali's tribe? These feet, or hind, are beautiful according to Romans 10:15, for with them comes the Good News.

The final two sons to be blessed are the sons of Rachel, with Joseph receiving the lengthier of the two. Joseph is a fruitful plant by a spring with growth climbing over the wall. What is being said here is that Joseph is fruitful, and living with excess in all



he does. When evil comes it is no concern to Joseph as he has already learned to follow God. Writers have found that some words spoken over Joseph are parallel with those spoken concerning the Messiah. The first parallel is in Joseph being his father's favorite. Other parallels consist of being sold for money, withstanding temptation, and rebirthing as Joseph was raised to life after prison while Yeshua was brought to life after the grave. Still, Jacob goes on to say that although Joseph was attacked, his bow is taut and arms are nimble because of God's hand. In other words, the harm his brothers and Potiphar's wife meant were for God's glory. In verses 25-26 the word bless/blessing is found six times, showing us that God did have more in store for Joseph. And as we have already reviewed, the double portion reserved for the firstborn was split up between Judah and Joseph, giving Judah the leadership and Joseph the two spots of land for Ephraim and Manasseh. If nothing else can be learned from Joseph, let us leave with the truth that with a life of humility God is able to promote us.

Lastly, let us look at the son named Benjamin. Of this son Jacob stated he was a ravenous wolf, devouring his prey in the morning and dividing the spoil in the evening. Benjamin would go forward with the characteristic of a vicious warrior. One instance of this warrior wolf-like character is found in Judges 3. Ehud, a Benjamite, was a fearless warrior who alone assassinated Eglon the Moabite king for oppressing Israel. Other warriors would rise and carry on in the declaration made by Jacob. And finally we know of King Saul coming from the tribe of Benjamin. He too would rise up with his army to attack as a wolf those who opposed the people of God.

So now, after looking at all the sons of Jacob, you may wonder why it is so. I beg you to keep in mind that the word of God always comes to pass. These blessings and rebukes were passed from God, to Jacob, then spoken over the sons. These words held within them life or death. And each one of these words came to pass. So then, the question comes to mind. What has been spoken by God over you? His word for you will come about, and His blessing or rebuke will follow you and your line. Let it be true of us that we found favor in His eyes and as such, received His blessing.

The Torah records that after Jacob gave his final words to his sons, he charged them with taking his body to the cave purchased from the sons of Het. It was here that Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, and Leah had been buried. Following this, Jacob pulled his legs up into the bed and breathed his last breath. For forty days following Jacob was embalmed as requested by Joseph and in accordance to Egyptian culture. The Egyptians then mourned his passing for seventy days. But as promised by the sons, the caravan would bring back Isaac's body into the Promised Land.

With Jacob now unable to bring any protection to the brothers, fear again began to arise. An agreement was made by the eleven to plead with Joseph for their lives, stating that their father wanted Joseph to forgive them as his final wish. To this request Joseph questioned the brothers, *"Am I in the place of God?"* (Gen 50:19). Joseph had known and said already that what they had meant for harm had been turned around for good. So then with this fact reiterated, Joseph assured his brothers that he was not going to harm them.

Joseph lived to be 110 years old before passing away, and his final desire was the same as his father's. Joseph called to his brothers to give them a final word of encouragement. It was at this time he reminded them of the promise given to their great grandfather that they would return to their homeland. *"God will surely remember you and bring you up out of this land to the land which he swore to Avraham, Yitz'chak, and Ya'akov"* (Gen 50:25). It would be many more years before this promise would become reality, but sometimes that is just the way God works.

As we have taken these last few months now to study line by line, verse by verse the book of Genesis, I personally have found a repeated theme. Every promise God made, He also made come true. The promise for Abraham to have a son in his old age came true. The promise of a nation came true. The promise of going to a foreign land came true. And knowing what lies ahead in the book of Exodus concerning the freedom of the Hebrews and the returning to the Promise Land is about to come true. I read these promises and think to myself, *'how is it that I still find a way to doubt what God has told me?'* I am embarrassed that I carry doubt concerning what He has spoken. Maybe this challenge from God in me reading the Torah in such depth is deeper than I first thought. Perhaps this is His way of bringing me closer to Him, dealing with my doubt, strengthening my faith, and understanding his love. God remembers me and continues to draw me closer to Him. So then, I am honored to be His.