

Genesis

By Dr. Alan Cobb

Background

This book, along with Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, were called by the Hebrew people the Torah which means “instruction” because they gave divine instructions for how to live in relationship with God and with other people. Thus they teach theology (study of God) and ethics (rules about what is right and wrong behavior). These books were later called the Pentateuch (five books) beginning in 160 AD.

Originally the title of each book was derived from the first word in the book. The first Hebrew word in this book is *b're'shith* (**בְּרֵאשִׁית**) which is translated as “in the beginning.” When the Jews translated their scriptures into Greek about 285 BC, they used the Greek words *en arche* (**ἐν ἀρχῇ**) which means “in beginning.” The title, Genesis, is a transliteration of the Greek word *geneseos* (**γενέσεως**) which translates the Hebrew word *toledot* (**תּוֹלְדוֹת**) which means “generations.” *Toledot* is the key Hebrew word identifying the structure of the book and is also translated as “account” as is found in 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1, 9; 37:2.

The events described in the first chapters of Genesis are an account of the creation of the universe, what scientists call the space – time continuum which includes length, width, depth (height), and time. Many people think that the earth is millions of years old based on statements of scientists which they conclude from their theories. They are just theories because the conditions of the events cannot be recreated so that the scientists can confirm their theories. Consequently, many Christians accept these statements as facts rather than just theories and base their understanding of the creation of the universe upon them. Many other Christians think that the earth is not much older than 10,000 years and base this on the genealogies listed. But they believe that the genealogies are not a complete listing of individuals so they believe that the times referred to by the genealogies is longer than what is given in the lists. A much smaller group of Christians believe that the genealogies are complete and thus that the universe was created about 6,000 years ago. That was the view of James Ussher, an Anglican Archbishop in Northern Ireland, who published a chronology of the universe in 1650 that arrived at a date for the creation of 4,004 BC. John Lightfoot, a biologist, rabbinical scholar, and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, arrived at a similar conclusion but put the date at 3929 BC. The Venerable Bede, an English monk, wrote a work in 732 AD entitled *On the Reckoning of Time* which was based in part on the work of Eusebius, an early church historian, and came up with a date for the creation of 3952 BC. Based on the interpretation principle that the words of the Bible should be understood in their normal meaning within the context of the passage and in agreement with all the rest of the Bible, a date for the creation of the universe would best be accepted as around 4,000 BC, plus or minus about 50 years. Therefore in this study we will use Ussher’s chronology as the basis of all dating. Another system of dating that we will use is called *anno mundi* which is Latin for “year of the world” and abbreviated AM.

The authorship of the Torah or Pentateuch has been greatly debated since the introduction of higher criticism of the Bible in the seventeenth century when the “documentary hypothesis” (literary theory like a scientific theory and not provable as fact) was developed. Prior to this, Jewish and Christian scholars accepted that Moses wrote the books (probably during the latter part of the Exodus) to teach and encourage the Hebrew people as they prepared to enter the Promised Land. The documentary hypothesis proposed that an editor (redactor) took what several writers who lived much later than Moses penned and composed the five books. If you believe that Jesus spoke the truth (as all believers should), then we must conclude that Moses wrote the books because Jesus attributed the authorship to him. (See Matt 19:8; Mark 7:10; Luke 16:29-31; John 7:19, 22) In these passages Jesus doesn’t explicitly say Moses wrote the Torah, but he speaks of passages in the Torah as given to the people by Moses and the people would have understood that meant Moses was the author. The argument that Moses couldn’t have written the books because there was no alphabetic form of writing at that time has been shown by archaeology to have no basis because a library of tablets with alphabetic cuneiform writing was found



in a place identified as Ras Shamra (ancient Ugarit) that dated from about 1400 BC. The earliest evidence of writing itself dates back to 3,500 BC in Uruk, Mesopotamia (north of Ur).

The events of Genesis span the time from creation to Joseph's death which would be about 2,400 years. The history of the patriarchs (Abraham to Jacob) covers about 300 years and is the subject of chapters 12 to 50. The question arises as to how Moses obtained or received the information that he wrote. The information about the patriarchs could easily have been handed down through the families from Abraham to Moses. But what about what came before the time of Abraham? Again, the information from Noah to Abraham could have been handed down through the descendants of Shem to Abraham and thence to Moses. What about the information from before the time of Noah? Again, the information could have been handed down through the line of Seth or as we will see, when we look at the genealogies, it could have been told orally from Adam to Methuselah to Noah to Terah to Abraham and thence to Moses. Or, as some believers propose, God could have revealed it to Moses directly so he could write it down.

As we will see, the scope of information in Genesis progressively narrows down until it is focused on Jacob and his twelve children. This points to the purpose of the book being to reveal the history of God's relationship with people and his calling a specific people to be an example of how to have a right relationship with him. Another purpose of the book would be to encourage the Hebrew people to trust and obey God and provide the prologue for the story that continues in Exodus.

Genesis provides the historical basis for everything else that is in the Bible. It shows God as sovereign over all of the universe and that he will cause whatever he wants to happen to accomplish his will. It show that he seeks

to bless mankind but will not tolerate man's attempts to be god for themselves and decide what they think is the right and wrong things to do. It shows that God desired to have a relationship with mankind since he made him as a special creation, different from all the rest of the created universe, and especially because he created mankind in his own image - having a physical body, a spiritual body, and a soul (mind/will/emotions). It establishes that the reason mankind needs a Messiah (Savior) is that Adam and Eve disobeyed at the beginning and that their disobedience broke the special relationship they had with God and caused all their descendants to inherit their fallen nature which leads them to disobey and try to be god for themselves just like Adam and Eve did. In their disobedience, Adam and Eve showed that they failed to trust in God's goodness and that they rebelled against his authority. Genesis establishes God's promise to provide a Messiah in the future who would do what was necessary to make it possible for mankind to once again have a right relationship with God. It shows what the writer of Hebrew said that "without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." (Heb 11:6) Faith is the key concept in Genesis. Faith means believing that God exists and trusting that his will, what he wants to have happen, is the best for every person. That trust is demonstrated by waiting for God to provide what he has promised. Faith is the prerequisite to having a right relationship with God.

The structure of Genesis is clear from the phrase "the account of" or "the generations of" which introduces each new section. Following its pattern, we can outline the book as follows.

1. Introduction (1:1 to 2:3)
2. The generations of the heavens and the earth (2:4 to 4:26)
3. The generations of Adam (5:1 to 6:8)
4. The generations of Noah (6:9 to 9:29)
5. The generations of the sons of Noah (10:1 to 11:9)
6. The generations of Shem (11: 10 to 11:26)
7. The generations of Terah (11:27 to 25:11)
8. The generations of Ishmael (25:12 to 25:18)
9. The generations of Isaac (25:19 to 35:29)
10. The generations of Esau (36:1 to 36:43)
11. The generations of Jacob (37:1 to 60:26)

Chapter 1

Verse 1. "In the beginning" is the creation of the cosmos – our space-time universe – and not the creation of everything because there is also a spiritual universe which is the realm of angels, God's created spiritual order. Psalm 148:2 calls upon the angels and all God's heavenly hosts to praise him. Job 38:7 describes the angels shouting for joy when God created the earth. Revelation 5:11 describes angels around the throne of God. These verses describe, in part, the spiritual universe which already existed when God created the physical universe. The Hebrew word "elohim," which is translated "God," is a plural noun but that doesn't mean there is more than one God. But when we later see that God created man in his own image and know that man has a physical body, a spiritual body, and a soul (mind, will and emotions) we can see that "elohim" refers to God's triune (three in one) nature. The plural nature of God is what the Apostle John indicated in the beginning of his account of Jesus' life. (See John 1:1-4, 14) The Hebrew word translated as created is "bara," which means to make something from nothing. There is no Hebrew word for universe, so "heavens and the earth" is their way of indicating that everything was made by God from nothingness – just his spoken word. That God created everything in the universe indicates that he exists outside of and beyond what he created and shows his eternal nature.

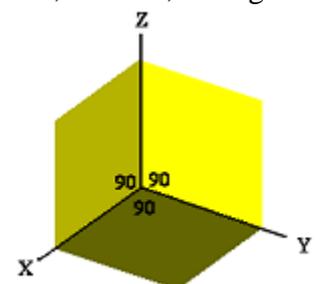
Verse 2. This verse leads interpreters to many interesting and exotic ideas as to what it might mean. One of those ideas is called the Gap Theory. This theory is old. Some early Jewish writers and church fathers held it. Although there are many variations of the theory, the basic elements of it are as follows:

1. There is an indefinite time gap between verses one and two.
2. Verse one is a statement of the creation of a perfect heaven and earth in which a pre-Adamic race of humans lived.
3. Lucifer (unfallen Satan) ruled over this race of people from the Garden of Eden.
4. When Lucifer rebelled against God sin entered this perfect world.
5. Part of God's judgment of this rebellion was destruction of that perfect world by a flood followed by a global ice age, which accounts for the fossils that are found.

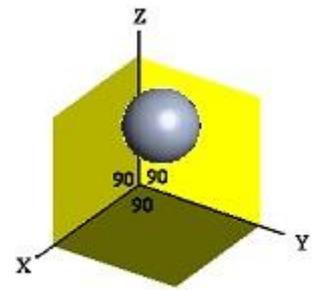
Some scholars and scientists (particularly geologists) even today defend this theory because it provides an easy explanation for the fossil strata that exists. One of their arguments is that the beginning of verse 2 in Hebrew is the letter ו which although it can be used as a conjunction (and) to connect two thoughts in a consecutive (time sequence) manner, it can also be used as a disjunctive (now) that introduces an independent, but circumstantial thought describing something in the previous clause or statement. The theory holds that it should be translated as a disjunctive and thus not a time sequence. Although it can be translated either way, neither really supports a gap in time between the verses. Another of their arguments is that the Hebrew verb “hayata” (הָיָה) which is normally translated as “was” can and should be read “became” in this instance. If you don't already hold the idea that there was a previous creation that was destroyed, there is no valid reason from the context to change from the normal translation to a less used one. Another argument is that the phrase “formless and empty” or “waste and void” and the word “darkness” indicate an evil condition and evil itself. While those phrases are used like that in other places later in the Bible, this is the first use of the phrase and therefore, the latter uses don't force the normal use which would be to describe something that had no form and that there was darkness surrounding everything. Although there are other arguments, the final one we will consider is from verse 28 where they argue that the Hebrew word “mil'u” (מִלְאוּ) which is usually translated “fill” should be translated as “refill.” Again, without already holding to the theory, there is no indication in the context to translate it in this way. Their idea that God's judgment on Lucifer's rebellion was a flood and an ice age is purely conjecture from wanting to believe it and is in no way a justifiable interpretation of the text.

Another of the ideas is the No-Gap Theory which holds that there is no time gap between the verses. This theory follows the more normal interpretation of the use of the words in the text but has different interpretations of the condition described as “formless and void” or “chaos.” One interpretation is that the condition resulted after God judged the earth that he originally created good. Thus, verse two is about God reforming the earth. The problem with this interpretation is that it forces upon the text a pre-existing earth that was judged. A second interpretation is that the phrase means that God created the earth in a formless and void state and then proceeded to give it form and to fill it. The problem with this interpretation is that it doesn't agree with the rest of his creative activity which is shown in verses 3 to 31 as creating things fully formed. A third interpretation is that the phrase describes the “nothingness” that existed before God began creating the earth. This interpretation follows the most normal use of the words and the context of the passage. A problem with it is the fact that waters already existed which indicates that there was not just “nothingness” before God created the earth. Also, the statement that the “Spirit of God” hovered over the waters indicates that the spiritual universe was created before the creation of our space-time universe. Thus, God (the Father – the mind, will, and emotions of the triune God) relates to the spiritual universe as the Holy Spirit. The “Word” which the Apostle John uses to describe Jesus, the Son, existed before the creation of our universe and was the one who did the creating. (John 1:1-4, 14) So we find that our universe was thought of by God, the Father, created by Jesus, the Son, through the power of the Holy Spirit (hovering over the waters).

Verse two is very descriptive scientifically of the creation of the framework of the space-time universe, separate from but in a lower dimensional order from the spiritual universe of Satan and the angels and to which God relates as the Holy Spirit. To understand that our universe is of a lower dimensional order than the spiritual universe, consider our three dimensions to be like the two dimensions on the surface

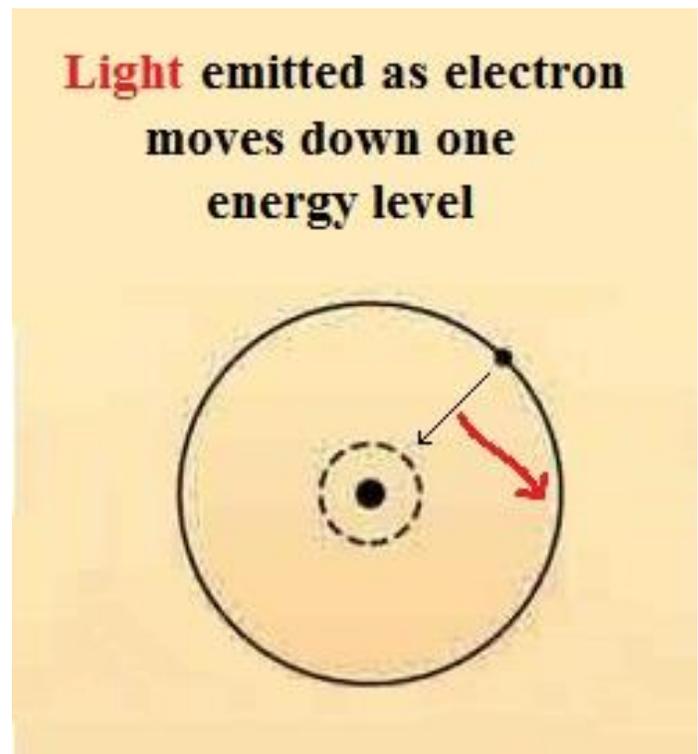


of a piece of paper. There is length and width but no depth. When depth is added, the two dimensions become three. In a three dimensional universe things can exist in the third dimension which do not interact nor can they be seen in the two dimensional universe (like the ball floating above the 2 dimensions of the X – Y plane). Thus, angels, demons, and the Holy Spirit exist in the spiritual universe which is of a greater dimension than our space-time universe. This is a theory and not provable but it does adequately and accurately describe what is related for us throughout the Bible.

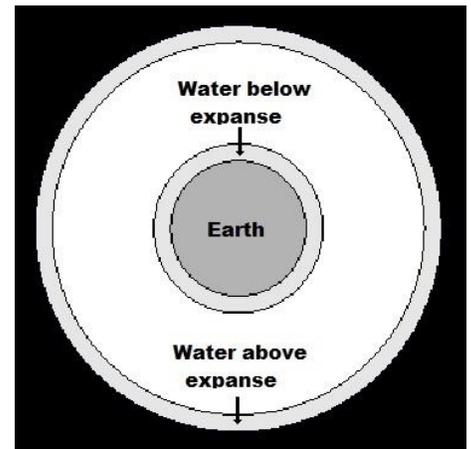


Verses 3 – 31. These verses are God’s description of his creation of the universe. While the Bible is not a science textbook, giving detailed information about scientific processes, it is the Word of God, so where it gives scientific information that information is truth, even if it is not as detailed as we would like it to be. So, as we read these verses we will look at scientific information we already have and see if it agrees with what is stated. God describes the creation of the universe as happening in six days. The Hebrew word for “day” is *yom* (יָמִים). Some people want to say this means an indefinite period of time and once again try to make the age of the earth fit the scientific theory of millions or billions of years of creation. This is called the day – age theory. The Old Testament writers used “*yom*” more than 2000 times and most of those uses (more than 90%) are clearly speaking of a 24 hour period of time. Many of the other times it is used to refer to the time of something happening but without reference to a specific time interval as in “the day of the Lord” (Joel 2:1). The context of the passage in the word is used helps us determine which meaning to give it. Also, later references to the passage by the author or other authors, gives us the understanding of how the writer intended it to be interpreted. One example which explains how God intended us to interpret “*yom*” in this context is found in Exodus 20:8 – 11. Here God in the Ten Commandments tells the Israelites to take a day of rest after six days of work. Obviously, that is intended to be a 24 hour period. And God explains that they are to do this because in six days he created the heavens and earth and rested on the seventh. So that passage and the normal usage of the word tells us to interpret the creation story as happening in six 24 hour periods. Also in the specific context of the creation story each time “*yom*” is used the story also says “there was evening and there was morning.” So the context of the passage, the normal usage of the word, and God’s description in the Ten Commandments all point to a 24 hour period.

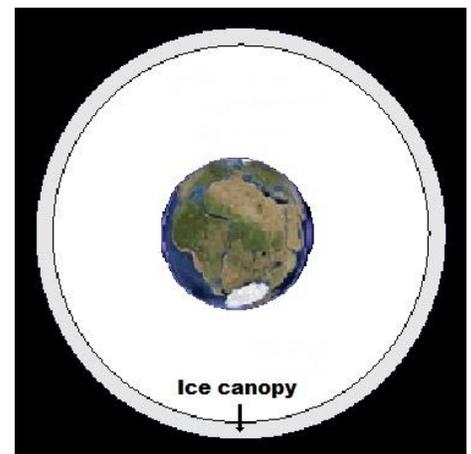
In verse 3, God speaks and creates light. Some people see this as a problem because the sun hasn’t been created yet so how could there be light. Scientific research has discovered that light is emitted when an electron orbiting around the nucleus of an atom changes from one energy level to another. This must be what God created and called “light” and refers to it as “day” whereas the absence of “light” he refers to as “night.” So darkness was not created but is a result of the creation of light and is therefore the absence of light. This statement about the creation of light implies the creation of everything science has learned about particles, sub-atomic particles, and all their interactions. As was said previously, the Bible is not a science textbook and doesn’t give us all the details of God’s creation of the basic framework of our space – time universe. But this statement of the creation of light means the creation of the basics of our space and the creation of time also took place. Thus God ends the “first” day of creation.



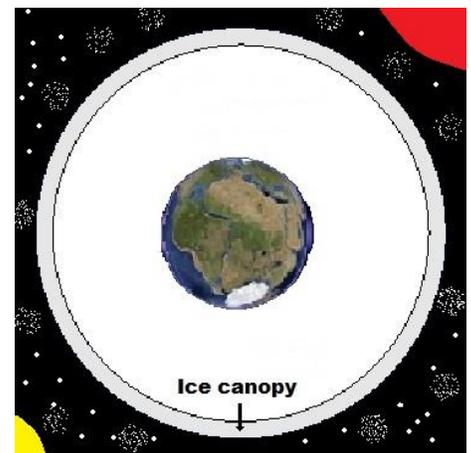
In verse 6, God again speaks to create a separation in the waters that existed. God calls the expanse “sky” which we know is the atmosphere of oxygen and other gases which surround the earth and also the space beyond. Verse 7 says God “made” (formed – “*asah*”) the expanse to separate water so that there was water above and below the expanse. This could mean the water vapor in the atmosphere separated from the water flowing around the earth or it could indicate a canopy of ice (frozen water) surrounding the atmosphere separated from the water flowing around the earth. Thus God ends the “second” day of creation.



In verse 9, God again speaks to command the water under the “sky” to be gathered together so that dry ground appears. He calls the dry ground “land” and calls the gathered water “seas.” When God looks at what he has created to this point he sees that it is good. The word “good” implies perfect in every way so that it would accomplish God’s purpose in creating it. Then God speaks to cause the land to produce seed-bearing vegetation (plants and trees) that then would reproduce like vegetation from their seeds. Since the vegetation had seeds in it when God caused it to come into existence that means it was formed with maturity and the appearance of having grown from seed. Although vegetation that does not reproduce from seed is not mentioned here, it is probably intended to be included as being created in its own maturity at this time. God sees that all of that vegetation is good and thus ends the “third” day of creation.



In verse 14, God again speaks to command lights (stars) in the expanse of the sky to separate day from night; to serve as signs to mark seasons, days, and years; and to give light on the earth. Notice that the function, or purpose, of these lights is to serve (provide something) for the earth. Thus their purpose is subordinate to the purpose of the earth. This differs from some other world views which see the earth’s destiny (lives of people) as being dictated by the stars (horoscopes). The term “signs” is given special significance in other places in the Bible, especially in Exodus where the plagues were “signs” to Pharaoh, the Egyptians, and the Israelites that God who created the universe is more powerful than the gods of man’s creation. So as the lights point to the passing of time and the changing of seasons, they also point to the majesty and creative power of God. Then we are given more detail about the lights. We are told God “made” (formed – “*asah*”) two great lights – the greater (sun) to govern the day and the lesser (moon) to govern the night and to separate light from darkness. We are also told that God “made” (formed – “*asah*”) the stars. So these lights were formed from what God had already created on day one when he spoke the universe into existence. The fact that names were not given to the sun and moon, like light and sky were named, is probably because the Hebrew words for them are very similar to those of other languages where they are used as the names of pagan deities. This emphasizes that God created them and that they are not deities as the pagans worship them to be. God sees that what he has created is good and thus ends the “fourth” day of creation.



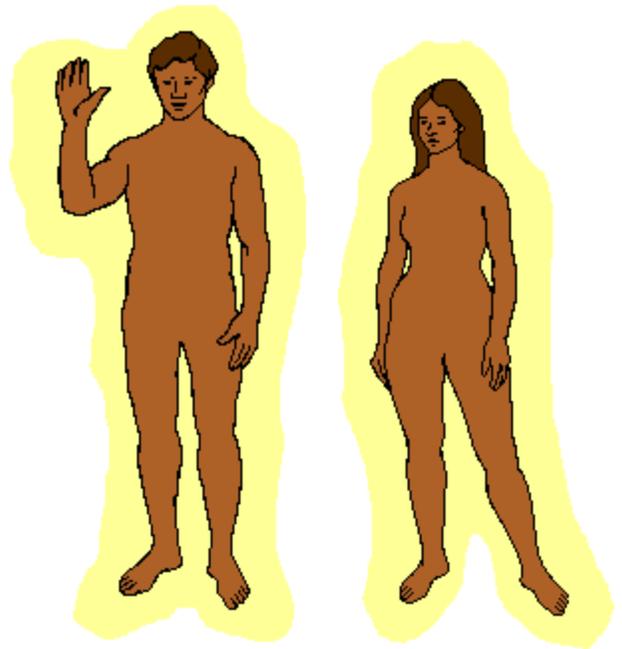
In verse 20, God again speaks to command living creatures to exist in the water and birds to fly in the sky. Here, we’re told that God created (“*bara*”) the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing in the waters along with every winged bird, each according to its own kind. The Hebrew word translated in the NIV as “creatures” (“*taninim*”) in verse 21 is used in modern times to refer to crocodiles, but in ancient times

referred to “sea monsters.” These “sea monsters” would be the largest and most fearful creatures of the sea and could refer to whales, octopus, and giant squid as examples. It could also be used of “leviathan” which Job 41 describes in detail. The Hebrew word translated in the NIV as “creatures” (“*nephesh*”) in verse 20 is not the same as in verse 21 (“*taninim*”). The word “*nephesh*” is also used in verse 24 to describe the land animals. It refers to a creature with a soul (mind, will, and emotions) and is the word used about man in Chapter 2:7 when God breathes life into him. This recognizes that animals are different from vegetation because they have conscious life (mind, will and emotions) unlike vegetation which has unconscious life and this makes it possible for man to relate to animals. (Any pet owner will readily agree with this.) God sees that what he has created is good and thus ends the “fifth” day of creation.

In verse 25 God again speaks to command living creatures (“*nephesh*”) to exist on the land according to their kind – livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals. Here we are told that God “made” (“*asah*”) these animals according to their kinds and God sees all these land animals are good.

Then God says “let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over” all the other creatures. Some people see the use of the plural in this phrase as being like the way kings generally refer to themselves in the plural to refer to the entire royal household. Other people think that God was addressing his heavenly court (angels) that exists in the spiritual universe. The use of the plural here is like in verse one where it is God (plural) who creates. This cannot be used as a formal proof of the Trinity, but it does imply a plurality within the unity (oneness) of God. Obviously the angelic (spiritual beings) are not included here because man is created in God’s (plural) image, not in the image of angels. The verse also refers to man in the plural and not in the singular, so all mankind is to rule over the animal kingdom. This would be an argument against the theory of evolution which claims man “evolved” from lower forms of life all the way back to those of only one cell.

We are told that God “created” (“*bara*”) man (“*adam*”) in his own image and also that he “created” (“*bara*”) them as male and female. Here the emphasis is not on how mankind was created as male and female, but only that their creation was of a higher order than the animals and was to have dominion over the animal kingdom. Being created in God’s image also means that man was created with a physical body, a spiritual body, and a soul (mind, will and emotions) because God (Trinity) has a soul (mind, will and emotions – God the Father), a physical body (Jesus, the Son) and a spiritual body (Holy Spirit). Many theologians get all upset about taking this passage literally because they then want to ask questions like: “If God has a body, then what or which kind of sexual organs does he have?” Because of such foolish questions, they claim the passage must be taken as metaphorical rather than literal when what is indicated by the passage is that man is a triune being like God – having a physical body, a spiritual body, and a soul (mind, will and emotions). We will see more about this in chapter 3.



God blesses mankind and commands that they should reproduce, fill the earth, and subdue it. The command to reproduce and fill the earth is not a command to just Adam and Eve but to mankind in general of which Adam and Eve were the first. Adam and Eve were in an unblemished (not sinful – disobedient) condition at this time, so any offspring they would have had would have also been in this unblemished condition. We’ll see in chapter 3 that this condition changes when they choose to disobey God’s rule over them and try to be the ruler of their own lives. The command to subdue the earth is the basis for all scientific and material progress as man acquires knowledge about his environment and learns to use and master tools that he will use to make the earth produce

material goods (especially after the disobedience of chapter 3). Subdue does not mean to destroy or ruin the environment, but to use it as man fulfills the rest of the command to reproduce and fill the earth.

God gives every seed-bearing plant and trees with seed-bearing fruit as food for mankind and every green plant as food for every creature (on the land or in the air) that has the breath of life in it (“*nephesh*”). This indicates that man’s original diet would have consisted of fruits and grains (and perhaps milk and eggs) but not meat. The same is true of the animals at this time. Only after the flood is man given the right to eat animals. Thus there was no killing of animals by man or other animals and no death in this perfect state. It is a state of “innocence” where all of creation obeys and trusts God in all things. God looks at all he has created or formed, sees that it is not just good but very good, and thus ends the “sixth” day of creation.

Chapter 2

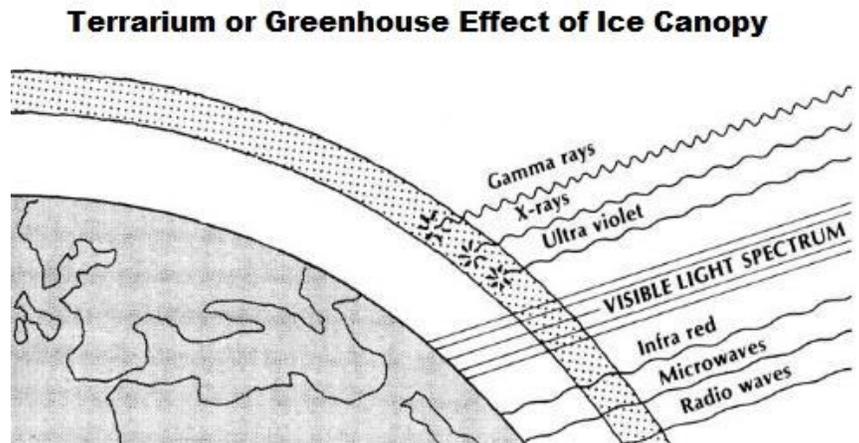
Verses 1-3. Verse 1 is a summary statement about the completion of the heavens and earth in their vast array (diversity). Verse 2 says that by the seventh day, since God had completed all his work of creation, he took a day of rest. That doesn’t mean God stopped creating or interacting with his creation and just left everything that he had done continue to “run” by itself. Verse 3 tells us that he rested on the seventh day as a way of setting it apart, which means “to make it holy.” And that is what God refers to in Exodus 20: 8-11. Note that God did not command Adam to abstain from work on the seventh day of each week. That command did not come until God gave the 10 Commandments to Jacob’s descendants after Moses led them out of their captivity in Egypt a little over 2,500 years after this.

There are four major views (theories) about the origin of mankind – evolution, theistic evolution, special creation, and progressive creation. Evolution holds that all living organisms began from a single cell through a process that took millions of years through a natural selection of the fittest mutations of the organisms to finally arrive at human beings as they exist today. Theistic evolution blends Scripture with the scientific theory of evolution to hold that God “ordered” or “directed” the evolutionary process. This view is not consistent with the scientific theory or with the biblical statements and thus is generally avoided by most of both communities. Special creation holds that God produced the universe and everything in it through a series of special creative acts. Progressive creation tries to blend scientific theories about the universe with Scripture by holding that God did specially create but that there were indefinite periods of time between his creative acts which accounts for different species within each kind of plant or animal. Our basic rule of interpretation is that words should be taken in their normal usage unless the context or other passages in the Bible which interpret a passage indicates the words should be understood as figurative or symbolic in some way. Based on this rule, we will follow the view (theory) of special creation.

Verses 4 – 25. This passage is not a second account of creation that is different from chapter one that was written by some other author, but is a more detailed account of the creation of mankind. When Moses refers to God beginning in verse 4, he doesn’t just use the Hebrew word “*Elohim*” but includes with it the Tetragrammaton “YHWH” (יהוה) which is usually pronounced Yahweh. In most translations, when the Hebrew text has the Tetragrammaton, the translators put the word “Lord” but put it in all capital letters (LORD) to denote that was the Hebrew special name for God. This term comes from the name for himself that God gave Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3:14. So, in using that term with “*Elohim*” Moses is connecting for his readers that the God who led them out of Egypt is the same God who created the universe and mankind.

Verses 5 and 6 are a short summary statement of what the world was like before God created man and emphasizes that God had prepared the world to be a place in which man was to live. Two types of vegetation are mentioned, “shrubs” and “plants.” This would seem to indicate that which was edible by man from that which was not edible. That God had not sent rain upon the earth is seen by some individuals as anticipating the story of the flood. The NIV translation of verse 6 that “streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground” translates the Hebrew text that can also be translated “a mist used to rise from the earth

and water the whole surface of the ground.” These references to the absence of rain and mist have led some individual to express what is known as the “canopy theory” like what supposedly covers the surface of the planet Venus. This theory, along with the statement in verse 7 of chapter 1, that God made the expanse (sky, atmosphere) and separated the water under it from the water above it, have generated the idea that there might have been an ice canopy originally surrounding the earth’s atmosphere which would have shielded the earth from the destructive ultraviolet radiation from the sun and caused a type of terrarium or greenhouse effect which more evenly distributes and controls water vapor and heat within it. This theory is not provable but is suggested as an explanation for the longer lifespans of humans before the flood, during which the ice canopy is proposed to have broken up and came down through the atmosphere as rain.



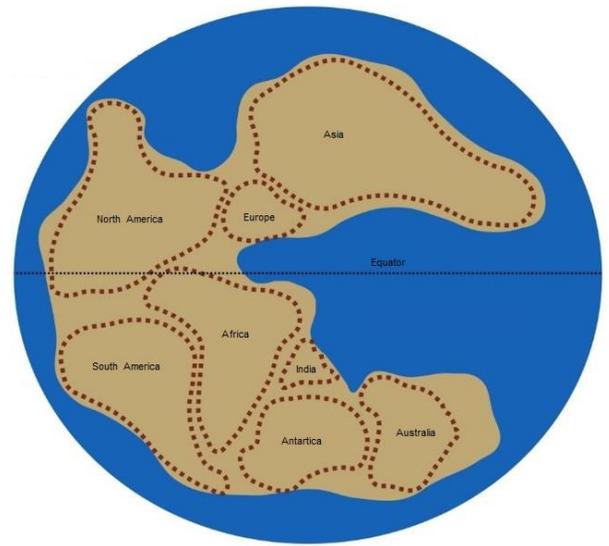
When verse 7 says God formed man from the dust of the ground, the Hebrew doesn’t use the words “*bara*” (created) or “*asah*” (formed) as in chapter 1, but uses the word “*yitzer*” which is used of someone carefully and skillfully fashioning something like a work of art. Here, we are told that man was fashioned from the dust of the ground and not just spoken into existence from nothing. So, although man was created in God’s image, he was made from the materials of the earth just like all the creation over which he was given dominion to rule. The Hebrew word translated as “man” is “*adam*” and is part of the Hebrew word for “ground” (“*adamah*”). This completely goes against many of the other religious views popular in the ancient Middle and Near East that man was special because he was descended from the gods (foundational thought of the Egyptian worldview and religion).

The Hebrew word that is translated “breathed” is “*yipach*” which means to blow. The Hebrew words that are translated “breath of life” are “*nish’mach*” and “*chayim*.” The Hebrew words that are translated “living being” are “*nephesh*” and “*chayah*.” The root word of “*nish’mach*” and “*nephesh*” refers to a creature which has a soul (mind, will and emotions). The root word of “*chayim*” and “*chayah*” refers to something that has life or is alive. Thus the statement indicates that God’s action of blowing into man’s nostrils imparted to the inanimate dust that had been formed into the body of man, the soul (mind, will and emotions) and the spirit (spiritual body) of man that enabled him to relate to the physical universe and the animals and to the spiritual universe, including the spiritual beings (angels) that God had created before he began creating the physical, space-time, universe.

Verses 8 and 9 describe a place that God prepared in which man would live and it shows the care and love of God toward man who was created in his image and therefore as the highest of his creation. A literal translation of the Hebrew of verse 8 would be: “Now/then/and (connective to previous verse) planted YHWH Elohim a garden in Eden toward the east and placed there the man whom he had formed.” Then verse 9 described the garden as being filled with all kinds of trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were two special trees, one called the tree of life and the other called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When Hebrew scholars translated their Scriptures into Greek (the Septuagint), they used the Greek word “*paradeison*” for the Hebrew for garden. Scholars explain that the Greeks had adapted this word from a Persian word which described a large, walled-in natural habitat area where many animals were kept. It is from this Greek word and the description of the garden as being filled with beautiful, fruit-bearing trees that we use the term paradise as describing a pleasant, safe place in which to live and experience the abundance of good which the earth can produce (as in a tropical paradise).

Verses 10 through 14 describe a river flowing from Eden which divides into four rivers, the “*Pishon*”, the

“*Gichon*”, the “*Chideqel*” and the “*Ph’rath*.” The “*Pishon*” is described as winding through the land of Havilah where there is gold. The land of Havilah cannot positively be identified. There are two men born after the flood of Noah’s time that were named Havilah, a son of Cush (Gen 10:7) and a son of Joktan (Gen 10:29). This reference to Havilah may refer to the land in which one of those sons lived or it could refer to the sandy region west of the Euphrates River ending at the mountains of Edom and from the Arabian Sea in the south to the where the Euphrates enters the mountains of Turkey in the north. This would include the modern countries of Yemen, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Jordan, and Syria. The “*Gichon*” is described as winding through the entire land of Cush. The land of Cush was a usual reference to the area west of the Red Sea from the Gulf of Aden north to the southern region of Egypt and included the countries of Ethiopia and Sudan. The “*Chideqel*” is described as running along the east side of Asshur and is generally identified as being the Tigris River. There is a city named Asshur on the western bank of the Tigris River and the land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers is most generally identified as the land of Asshur. And the “*Ph’rath*” is not identified by anything other than its name but is commonly identified as the Euphrates River. From these descriptions, many people have tried in vain to locate the site of the Garden of Eden. Some have placed it in the area of Kuwait, others in Turkey near lake Van, and still others give reasons for why it would have been in the Israeli – Jordanian highlands. All such efforts are futile because there is no way of knowing the topography of the land mass at this time. We will see in a few chapters that a flood of water covered the entire earth and this would have resulted in changes in the topography. And in Genesis 10:25 we are told that after the flood the land was divided. This could refer to allotting of areas to different descendants of Noah or it could refer to the movement of land masses like we now know happens with the shifting of the tectonic plates. Prior to the flood and the “dividing of the land” the earth’s topography could have been significantly different than it is today. That idea, along with the shapes of the earth’s land masses, has given rise to the theory of a supercontinent, called Pangaea, which at this time would have contained all of the land that God caused to appear out of the waters (Gen 1:9).



Possible Pangaea

Verse 15 says God took the man (described in verse 7, which was made in God’s image – verse 1:27) and placed him in the Garden (Paradise) of Eden so that he could “work” and “care for” it. The Hebrew literally says “to cultivate and keep it.” Just as a gardener taking care of his garden does not see what he is doing as “work,” so this should not be seen as “work.” The indication is that this place was prepared for man to enjoy all the good things God had prepared for him and in this way worship / glorify God as the Creator.

Verses 16 and 17 give a single command to man from God for man’s guidance and protection. This is also the first covenant between God and man. This is what is called a Suzerainty Treaty (Covenant). That type of treaty is given from a greater person to a lesser person and obligates the greater person to do something for the lesser person without the lesser person having to do anything to obtain what the greater person is obligating himself to provide. The treaty sometimes contains a punishment of the lesser person if they break the terms of the treaty. That is what is happening here. This is sometimes referred to as the Edenic Covenant. God gives man the freedom to eat from any tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As long as man obeys the treaty and doesn’t eat of that tree, then he will enjoy what has been provided from him without any other restriction for all of his life. Since man was created in God’s image as an eternal being, that means it would be for eternity. The punishment for breaking the treaty is that when he eats of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he will surely die. There is no reason to think Adam didn’t understand the command or the punishment for breaking it because in Eve’s discussion with the serpent in chapter 3 she clearly states the meaning (but with an addition). God’s command implies that he alone knows what is good and not good for man and thus he desires to help man use his freedom in a positive manner. The command also serves as an indicator of whether man will really let God be in control of the universe he created and thus is a type of

worship or man's giving glory to God. As we will discuss further in chapter 3, man's eating of a specific type of fruit, such as an apple or pear or kumquat, is not the issue. The issue is whether man will obey. The tree is correctly named the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because as long as man does not eat of it he will only know good, but as soon as he disobeys and eats of the tree he will learn what evil is.

Verse 18 is a prologue statement for the information that is revealed in verses 19 through 25 which describe the creation of woman as a helper that is suitable, or "of the same kind," as man. This is not an indication that God decided that he made a mistake or that he didn't create man as he should have. It is a recognition that man was not made to live alone. God lives in community with the angels and all of his creation. Man was created to live in community also. That's why God said it is not good for man to be alone and that he would make a helper suitable for him. If God had not made a mate for Adam, then he out of all creation would not have had another creature like him. He would have been alone and that would have been a terrible condition for man since he was created for community. Helper doesn't mean woman is a servant or inferior or of lesser importance than man. In fact, it implies that woman was made like man, having a physical body, a spiritual body, and a soul (mind will and emotions) – so created in the image of God as stated in Chapter 1 verse 27. Jesus used the Greek word "paraclete" when speaking about the Holy Spirit's work of coming alongside of a person as a counselor. That is the same idea as the helper in this passage.

Verses 19 – 25. God brings the animals he created before the man (Adam) to see what he will name them. Whatever Adam called each living thing became the name for them. That doesn't mean Adam saw a dog and said "I'll name it spot." Or that he saw a cat and said "I'll name it fluffy." What it indicates is that God was allowing Adam to do what he had been told to do, namely, have dominion over and take care of what God has created. Giving a name to something means you have authority and control over it. So God brought the different kinds / types of animals (probably not every single animal, but just the different types) to Adam to name. This would indicate that Adam was not just a "grunting" caveman but a very intelligent and creative being just like God. While naming the creatures, Adam notices that there is none like him. It was important for Adam to recognize that he was not "complete" because there was no other creature like him. Thus, when God would create one like him, Adam would be joyful that he was now "complete."

We are told that God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep and then took "part of his side" (most usually translated "rib"), closed up the place with flesh and made woman from the "rib." Then when he is finished creating "one like the man," God brings (presents) her to Adam who replies "This is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." [As some preachers like to paraphrase this, "Adam said 'Whoopie!' I like what I see!" Then Adam goes on to say, "She shall be called woman for she was taken out of man." In this statement, the Hebrew word for "man" is "*ish*" and the word for "woman" is "*ishah*." Then the text says: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." The phrase "for this reason" doesn't have anything to do with them being created male and female, but that because woman was made from man they should join together in unity. There are no "parents" at this time so this is a prefiguring of the relationship that should exist between a husband and wife that is a breaking of the parent – child relationship and the forming of a new relationship separate from both sets of parents. This means there needs to be a breaking of not only the physical but also psychological ties to the parents. The marriage relationship also takes precedence over the parent – child relationship because it precedes it. A woman's primary function in a marriage is to complete her husband and not to bear children. Bearing children is a natural result of the marriage union and the command to be fruitful and increase in number. Husbands and wives who ignore this primacy of their marriage relationship over all other relationships will have trouble keeping their marriage together. That the man and woman will become one flesh involves the physical union that unites them in a bond created by God. When Jesus was questioned about divorce, that's why he stated: "Haven't you read that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.'" (Matt 19:4 – 6) Marriage is not a contract made and written on a piece of paper. There is a "oneness" that occurs when a man and woman are joined together in the sex act. It may also imply that a spiritual "oneness" occurs uniting the man and woman. That's why sex

before and outside of marriage is disastrous.

The information about the creation of man and woman and their relationship ends with the statement that they were both naked and felt no shame. This does not just describe their “unclothed” appearance but also the physical and psychological oneness that exists in the union of male and female. Physically they would share their bodies openly and psychologically they hid nothing from each other and therefore they were not ashamed (because shame means hiding something from the other.)

Chapter 3

Verses 1 – 5. The story continues by describing what happened to this perfect setting into which God had placed the man and woman he had created. It starts out saying that “the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field (wild animal) which Lord God had made.” “Crafty” doesn’t mean “wicked” as much as “wise” or “intelligent.” Who is this serpent? There are two major views. One view is that it was the animal that was named “serpent or snake.” As the text says, it would have been a beast of the field (wild animal rather than a domesticated animal like a cow or sheep). Although we have no example anywhere in the Bible of a snake talking, we do have the example of Balaam’s donkey being allowed by God to talk (Num 22:21-30) or at least being used by an angelic being to talk to Balaam. We know from Jesus’ encounter with the man in the region of the Gerasenes who was possessed by demons that the demons can speak through a living being. (Luke 8:26-33) So, it is quite possible that the serpent was being used by an angelic being (Satan) as a method of talking to the humans. The second view is that it was Satan but only described as a serpent just as Rev 20:2 calls him a serpent. Since the text later says (Gen 3:14-15) that the serpent was cursed and from then on had to crawl on its belly, it would seem best to identify the serpent as a wild animal which probably had legs at that time and was used by Satan to talk with the humans.

The first thing Satan did was to speak to the woman (Eve), not the man (Adam), to plant a seed of doubt in her mind about God. He asked if God had really said that they “must not eat from any tree in the garden.” This was an intentional misstatement (lie) of what God had said and was intended to suggest that God wasn’t really thinking of their best interests but was withholding from them something that was good. (This idea directly opposes what God has shown in the creation of the universe and the Garden of Eden.

The fact that an animal is talking to her doesn’t appear out of the ordinary to Eve or something to be surprised about. That could imply that at this time they were able to communicate with the animals. So when the serpent misstates what she knows God said, she corrects it. Genesis 2:16-17 shows that God gave Adam the command before he made Eve from Adam’s side. So Adam apparently did his job of taking care of everything in the Garden for God by telling Eve the command that he was given. But when Eve corrects the serpent’s statement, she adds to the command that they must not touch it (the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil). There is no way of telling whether not touching the fruit of the tree was Eve’s idea or something that Adam added to help keep her farther away from the tree. Either way, it is exactly what man has done from that time to the present – add to God’s word. Often this may be done to help us keep from disobeying what God has said, but it quickly becomes legalistic when we tell others they must respond to God’s word in the same way that is best to keep us from disobeying it. That’s why in Jesus’ day that the Pharisees had added hundreds or “extra” rules to keep them from disobeying the command (from Exodus 20) not to work on the Sabbath, and then they told everyone else that they had to follow their “extra” rules to be sure of not disobeying the command.

The next thing the serpent does is to deny the truth of God’s word. When he says they will not die, it is possible that he knows they have been made as an eternal creature (in God’s image) and therefore will never cease to exist, especially since he was made as an eternal, spiritual being. There is no way of knowing if Adam and Eve understood what it meant to die since there is no indication that any living creature has died before this time. Death implies separation, not just the separation from the physical body but also a separation from (close relationship with) God. Satan would know that disobedience of God brings separation from a close relationship with God because his own attempt to be worshipped as God and even have a position of honor that is higher

than God's caused him to lose his status as the highest of the angels. (For more information about Satan, see Job 1:6-7; 38:4-7; Isa 14:12-14; Luke 10:18; John 8:44; 2 Cor 11:14; 1 John 3:8; Rev 12:3-9)

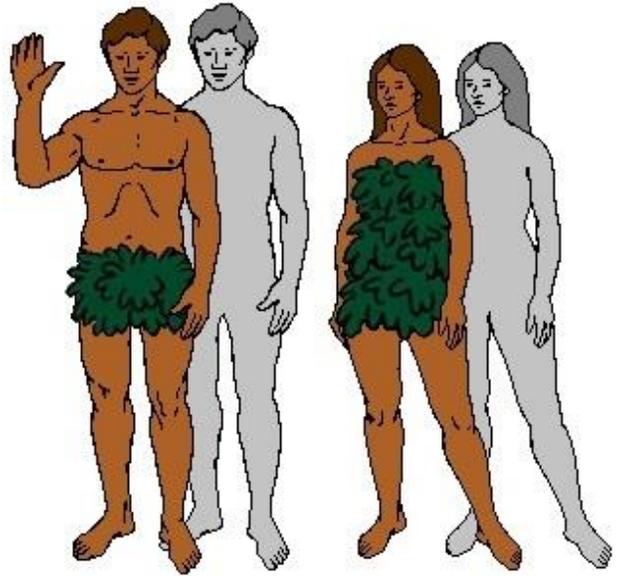
Then the serpent goes on to imply that God's motive for his command is not to protect them but to keep them from becoming gods like him, knowing what is good and what is evil. The serpent's claim that they will not die is a claim that God has lied and will not punish disobedience of his command. Instead, he claims that they will become like God, knowing good and evil. They are already like God, but if they disobey, then they will no longer be innocent of sin, like God, and will become not like God but like Satan, the Father of lies.

Verses 6 – 7. Eve now believes that the fruit of the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eye, and desirable for gaining wisdom. She has accepted the lies of the serpent, so she takes some, eats it, and gives it to her husband, Adam, who is with her, and he eats. Eve is not being tempted without Adam being present, from whom she has heard that they were not to eat of the fruit of the tree. And when she reaches out and takes the fruit, Adam does not stop her. Since he was with her, he must have heard what the serpent said, so that means he also believed the lies, or at least was willing to wait and see what happened to her for "touching" and then "eating" the fruit because then he also eats. Since Adam was the one to whom the command was given and it was his responsibility to care for everything God had created (which would have included the woman) that means he is not only guilty of disobeying the command not to eat, but also has failed in his responsibility to care for what God has created (Hos 6:7). So when Paul writes that "sin entered the world through one man" (Rom 5:12) he is acknowledging Adam's sin was not just eating but failing to protect Eve from eating.

Verse 6 shows that disobedience was not inherent in man, but the free will to become disobedient was part of what God made as a part of man. The origin of sin (disobedience) was not man but Satan (see passages above) and verses one through six show that sin was not the result of divine entrapment but the result of outside temptation from a spiritual being who had already disobeyed God by trying to supplant God as the only one to be worshipped. Verse 6 also shows all the avenues by which man can be tempted. The first avenue is the lust of the flesh (fruit of the tree was good for food) which is also the desire to do something in accordance with one's own will and contrary to God's will. The second avenue is the lust of the eyes (fruit was pleasant to look at) which is also the desire to have something that God has said is not good for you. The third avenue is the pride of life (fruit would make them wise) which is the desire to have something that would make them as important as God. Their disobedience had three stages: they saw (perceived), they coveted (lust), and then they took (acted). All disobedience results from the three avenues of temptation and follows the three stages. As a man, Jesus was tempted by Satan along the same three avenues (Matt 4:1-11) and he showed us that the way to break the stages and avoid the disobedience is to quote what God has said. If Adam had intervened on Eve's behalf and repeatedly quoted what God had told him, they could have resisted the temptation and avoided the disobedience.

After Adam and Eve disobeyed, we are told their eyes were opened and they realized they were naked, so they sewed fig leaves together to make a covering for themselves. God said when they ate of the fruit of the tree they would surely die (Gen 2:17). Since death means separation and they have not been separated from their physical bodies, how did they die? The obvious conclusion is that they died spiritually. What is spiritual death? Since death means separation, it would be the separation of man's soul (mind, will, and emotions) from their spiritual body. Jesus said: "Follow me and let the dead bury their own dead." (Matt 8:22) Physically dead people can't bury other dead people so he was talking about spiritually dead people. Jesus said: "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matt 10:28) The Great White Throne judgment we read about in Revelation 20:11-15 describes the spiritual body and soul being separated from God by being sent to the lake of fire. James, the half-brother of Jesus, wrote: "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead." (Jam 2:26) Paul wrote: "But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal body through his Spirit, who lives in you." (Rom 8:10-11) So, when Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they learned what evil is – disobedience of God – and they were separated from their spiritual bodies just as Hebrew 4:12 says: "The word

of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating even to the dividing of the soul and spirit.” This separation from their spiritual bodies meant their spiritual relationship with God and with each other was broken. Separation from their spiritual bodies also separated them from the spiritual universe in which they also would have lived before this time since they were made in God’s image with a physical body, a spiritual body, and their eternal soul (mind, will, and emotions). Therefore we see that God’s word was true and they did immediately die – spiritually. Thus the nakedness they recognized was that their physical bodies were no longer covered by their spiritual bodies and they were ashamed of what they had done. Now they know what death is. They were ashamed because what they had done was readily apparent to anyone who looked at them. So they made coverings for themselves from the fig leaves in the garden because that was the only thing they could think of to somewhat hide their lack of a spiritual body (dead). This is exactly what man always tries to do when they have disobeyed God – try to hide their disobedience by their own works. Sin in the Bible always results in separation (alienation) never annihilation. It results in alienation between God and man (theological separation), between man and man (sociological separation), between man and himself (psychological separation), between man and nature (ecological separation), between men and women (sexual separation), and between husband and wife (marital separation). There are three types of death shown in the Bible – separation of the spiritual body from the soul, separation of the physical body from the soul, and an eternal separation of the spiritual body and soul from God.



Verses 8 – 13. A literal translation of verse 8 is: “They heard the voice of Yahweh Elohim walking in the garden in the wind of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Yahweh Elohim among the trees of the garden.” God is often spoken of as being in the wind or smoke or even a whisper. (See Job 38:1; Exod 13:20-21; 20:18; 1 Kings 19:11-13) Adam and Eve were trying to hide from God because if they could see their disobedience had caused them to be naked of their spiritual bodies, it would have been obvious to God as well and they were ashamed of their condition. God calls out to the man, “Where are you?” This doesn’t mean God couldn’t see them because they were hidden but was his way of initiating contact with them for the purpose of allowing them to acknowledge their disobedience. When Adam says he heard God but hid because he was afraid due to his nakedness, God asks him who told him he was naked. God continues to ask Adam if he has eaten from the tree from which he was commanded not to eat. God is giving Adam the opportunity to confess that he has disobeyed. But Adam says it was the woman that God put here with him who ate and gave it to him and he ate. In one sense Adam is saying it was Eve’s fault, but in another sense he is saying it was God’s fault because God made the woman and put her with him. So what Adam first recognized as a great, good gift from God, he now regards as bad for him.

God then turns to the woman and asks what she has done. Eve replies that the serpent deceived her and so she ate. Both Adam and Eve are playing the “blame game” by pointing to someone else as being responsible for what they did instead of accepting that they each chose of their free will to disobey God’s command.

Verses 14 – 19. Now God begins to tell everyone what the consequences of their actions will be. This can be called the second covenant of God – also known as the Adamic Covenant. Here God specifies the conditions under which man and all the world will live until God ends it as Paul wrote to the Romans: “For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.” (Rom 8:20-21) The covenant involves judgment on those involved as well as collateral effects on the entire universe.

To the serpent first he says that he will be cursed above all the livestock and all the wild animals and that he will have to crawl on his stomach and eat dirt all of his life. We know that serpents presently eat plants and animals but not dirt so that must not be what is meant here. In the ancient Near Eastern writings, it has been found to be a way of indicating humiliation and total defeat – becoming the lowest of the low. In Isaiah 65:25, God says that a time will come (during the Millennium) when the serpent’s food will be dust. So perhaps God will eventually fulfill this part of what he has said. The fact that the serpent will hereafter crawl on its stomach seems to be an indication that before this the serpent may have had legs on which to walk.

To the serpent God says he will put enmity (dislike – antagonism) between the serpent and the woman and between its offspring and the woman’s. Since the text literally reads “between your seed and her seed” some want to take as meaning between righteous people who follow God and unrighteous people who follow Satan. There is nothing specific in the text which would lead to this interpretation. So, the straightforward reading of the text would indicate enmity between mankind and serpents. Although there is generally an enmity between most people and serpents, this statement probably goes beyond the serpent to include Satan who took advantage of the serpent and used him as his mouth piece. This is even more evident when we consider that God says “he will bruise (crush) your head and you will bruise his heel.” This is a prophecy of the coming of a human (descendant the woman) who will crush Satan while Satan tries to harm him but only is able to slightly wound him.” This is God’s promise of a Messiah who will come and make things right between himself and those who believe and trust his promise. The Gospel accounts show that Satan tried to “bruise” (crush) Jesus but was unable since Jesus rose from death when his body should have been beginning to decompose (on the third day). Revelation describes Jesus crushing Satan and throwing him into the lake of burning sulfur (Rev 20:10), thus fulfilling the prophecy.

To the woman (Eve) God says that he will greatly increase (multiply) her pain in childbearing and that her desire will be for her husband and he will rule over her. This doesn’t say that Eve would have had no pain in childbirth before this but that now it will be greatly increased. The birth of offspring in the animal kingdom doesn’t seem to be as painful as it is for humans. Eve’s desire for her husband and his ruling over her has been the subject of many interpretations. One interpretation is that her desire would be subject to her husband’s desire. This interpretation has been used to claim male dominance over women in general and it has led to women being treated as slaves or little more than property. A second interpretation is that she will have a great psychological dependence on her husband. This interpretation has led to the idea that women have an unnatural attraction for men. A third interpretation is that she will desire to dominate the relationship with her husband. This has led to the idea of the battle between the sexes where the man no longer leads easily according to God’s design but has to fight for leadership. Thus the rule of love that existed in the paradise garden is replaced by struggle, domination, and manipulation. A fourth interpretation is that she will have a longing for the intimacy that she had with her husband before they disobeyed God’s command and they both died in their spiritual nature.

To Adam God says that because he listened to his wife and ate of the tree when he knew he shouldn’t, the ground will be cursed and produce thorns and thistles and through painful toil and sweat of his brow will he eat the plants of the field until he becomes dust and returns to the ground from which he was made. While before his disobedience, Adam and Eve could pick anything they wanted to eat from the garden (except from the one tree), now Adam would have to sweat and toil to get the ground to produce what he needed to eat (fruit, vegetables, and grain). The world and Adam were intended to live in harmony with the land producing everything Adam needed to live and Adam taking care of the land like a loving gardener tending his plants. But because of Adam’s disobedience, everything will now move from organization to disarray, and the land will not solely produce the good things it had but also painful and noxious plants it didn’t produce before. This is the curse Paul says the world is groaning under because of Adam (Rom 8:20-21). Where Adam was originally made to live forever in his created physical body, now he would eventually have his eternal soul separated from his physical body and that body would disintegrate into the dust from which it was formed. So man has died spiritually and would eventually die physically.

These consequences for Adam and Eve are directly related to their innermost natural drives. Adam's drive was to have charge of everything and care for it. Now he would have difficulty caring for things and providing what was needed for his family. Eve's drive was to help her husband and nurture their offspring. Now she would have to toil like her husband and have pain in child rearing. The serpent helped Satan destroy the relationship of man with God bringing spiritual death into the perfect universe, so he became the lowest and most hated of all animals.

Verse 20. Prior to this, the woman has not been given a name. She was just called woman ("*ishah*") because she was taken out of man ("*ish*"). Now Adam continues with the authority God had given him in naming all the animals by naming the woman Eve, (which means "living") because she would be the mother of all the living. Verses 21 – 24. After this, God took animal skins and made clothing to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve that resulted from their sin of disobedience. The text doesn't specifically say God killed animals to get the skins and it is fully within his power to create animal skins without killing any animals, but according to Hebrew 9:22 "...without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." So it seems reasonable that God killed the first animals (shed their blood) in order to take their skin to make the clothing for Adam and Eve. And in this way, their disobedience was forgiven and by accepting the clothing their shame was hidden. God did for them what they could not do for themselves (trying to make clothing from leaves). But the consequences of their disobedience still remained and they would live with them the rest of their lives. God's providing of the sacrifice of an unblemished animal to pay for their sin was the basis of the Hebrew sacrificial system and pointed toward the fact that God would provide the unblemished sacrifice that would pay the penalty of all sin for those who accept it.

Then God says that the man (meaning Adam and Eve) had become like one of us (the Trinity) because they now know the difference between good (obeying God) and evil (disobeying God). They are no longer in a pure (righteous) state but are in a fallen (unrighteous) state even though their disobedience has been forgiven by the shedding of the blood of an unblemished animal. God decides to protect them from the possibility of eating from the tree of life and thereby living in their fallen state with no hope of the promised Messiah's work being applied to their lives by their faith in his promise. So God banished them from the garden where that tree grew and placed Cherubim (angels) and a flaming sword to guard the entrance so they couldn't return. Cherubim are seen through the Bible as surrounding God. Their purpose was to protect anyone from harm by getting too close to the glory of God. Thus they always signify the presence of God and that is why gold representations of them were part of the mercy seat that covered the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle which was where God would meet with his people. The tablets of the law that were in the ark represented the source of life for the Israelites. The golden lampstand in the Tabernacle represented the tree of life. The Table of Showbread represented the Israelite nation. The altar of burning incense represented the prayers of the people rising to God. And all of this together represented God's presence with his chosen people, taking care of them as they obeyed his commands and had faith to trust his promise of a Messiah who would come and restore the relationship between God and man.

Chapter three explains why the earth is not still in the perfect (good) condition in which God created it, why man must work hard to obtain food to eat, and why man must die physically even though he is created as a triune, eternal creature like God. Man's disobedience of God's command resulted in man's separation from his spiritual body. It resulted in his perfect relationship with his wife being broken. And it resulted in the rest of the created universe being shackled with always moving from order to disorder when it is allowed to progress in its current, degraded state. The chapter points to the need for a perfect sacrifice to restore man to a right relationship with God and gives God's promise to provide that sacrifice. The rest of the Bible is the story of God giving man the chance to live in faith that God's promise would eventually be fulfilled and most men repeated refusing to live that way. This continues until God provides the perfect sacrifice in his Son, Jesus, and then gives man the chance to live trusting in that completed work. The story ends as Jesus judges all the humans ever created and assigns them a place either in the new heavens and earth (universe) that he will create for them or the lake of burning sulfur which he created specifically for the angels who followed Satan in his attempt to overthrow God and assume his position. This is why the first three chapters of Genesis are critical to

understanding the rest of the Bible. If these chapters are spiritualized and given only symbolic meaning, then the underlying meaning of everything else in the Bible is placed on unstable ground and makes it easily distorted and used to lead people away from trusting in Jesus' death as their only hope of eternally experiencing a perfect paradise of love without pain or sorrow.

Chapter 4

Verses 1 – 16. Adam and Eve begin to follow God's command to "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it." (Gen 1:28) We are told of two sons that they had. The first was named Cain (קַיִן) which sounds like the Hebrew word (קִיד) which can be translated "I have acquired" or "possession." The second son was named Abel (הַבֵּל) which can be translated as "vapor" or "breath" – meaning something that doesn't last long. We are told that Abel kept flocks (sheep, goats, etc.) while Cain worked the soil (farmed). This would have been after they had become adults. Sometime later they both brought an offering to the Lord. Cain's offering was "some" of the fruits of the soil while Abel's offering was the "fat" portion from some of the "firstborn" of his flock. Notice the difference in how the offerings are described. Cain's was just "some" of the fruits of the soil which indicates it was nothing special and that his bringing the offering was more of a "duty" or "ritual" rather than from love of God. Abel's offering was the "fat" portions from the "firstborn" of the flock which indicates that he brought the best that he had to honor God out of love for God as the Creator. We are told that the Lord "looked with favor" (accepted) Abel and his offering but not Cain and his offering. The offerings of the sons show their attitude toward God. Abel held God in high esteem and showed that he trusted God to provide for him while Cain did not hold God in high esteem and therefore showed that he did not really trust God to provide. Abel showed faith in God while Cain did not as stated in Hebrews 11:4. As a result, Cain became angry, and God replies that if he does what is right he will be accepted but if he doesn't do what is right it shows that sin (disobedience) is crouching at his door and trying to be his master. Some commentators believe Abel realized the need for a blood sacrifice for the temporary covering of sin just as God had killed animals to provide skins to cover the sin of Adam and Eve because their own effort of covering it with fig leaves was not acceptable. There is nothing explicitly said in the text to show they knew this but it would be reasonable to expect that they heard about it from Adam and Eve.

Cain's reaction to God's correction of his attitude shown in the offering he brought, was to invite his brother to go out into the field with him and there he murders his brother. This is the first death of a human and it is caused by a brother. The Apostle John says that Cain murdered Abel because his own actions were evil while Abel's were righteous. (1 John 3:12) The righteous actions of Abel produced guilt in Cain and he responded to that guilt by letting evil have control of his life. The result of rejecting God is to move deeper into disobedience – not letting him be Lord of your life. God again confronts Cain and asks where his brother is. Cain's reply is to ask if he is his brother's keeper (Am I responsible to keep track of my brother?). God says that Abel's blood cries out to him from the ground and that now Cain is under a curse and driven from the ground so that it will no longer produce crops for him and he will become a restless wanderer on the earth. Cain complains that his punishment is more than he can bear. Not only is he being driven from the land, he sees it as being hidden from God's presence, and that as a wanderer whoever who finds him will kill him. But God replies that it will not be as Cain fears. He puts a mark on Cain so that no one who finds him will kill him or they will suffer God's vengeance seven times more than Cain's punishment. What the mark was is not described, but whatever it was it warned others to avoid harming Cain and reminded him of his banishment from his family and relationships. Then Cain leaves God's presence and lived in the land of Nod. "Nod" means "wandering."

Verses 17 – 24. Even though Cain was driven from working the land and banished to wander, he still prospered in the life he had. He married and his wife gave birth to a son whom he named Enoch. Cain's wife had to be a sister or a niece. Nothing is said about the girls that were born to Adam and Eve or the other boys except Seth who is mentioned toward the end of this chapter. Cain built a city and named it after his son Enoch. Here other descendants of Cain are mentioned: grandson Irad, great grandson Mehujael, great great grandson Methushael,

and great great great grandson Lamech. Although there is a Lamech mentioned in chapter 5 as the father of Noah, this is not the same individual. Lamech becomes the first named bigamist by deliberately going against God's will that marriage should be between one man and one woman. Bigamy and even polygamy were common in the Middle East in ancient times and still today. Although God did not approve of the disobedience of man in doing these things, he permitted them to continue living because where there is still life there is the chance that a person will change by turning from their rebellion of God's way and begin to follow him. No rebuke is given by God for this bigamist relationship just as Abraham is not condemned for having a son with Sarah's handmaiden, Hagar, nor is Jacob condemned for marrying and having children by Leah and Rachel. But the biblical record clearly shows that such households suffer unpleasant experiences because of their unnatural relationships and such is the consequence of disobedience (sin) of God's expressed way of living.

One of Lamech's wives was named Adah and she gave birth to a son named Jabal who is said to be the father of those who live in tents and raise livestock – herders rather than farmers which would appear to have been the way everybody before him lived. Adah also gave birth to another son named Jubal who is said to be the father of those who play the harp and flute. Lamech's other wife, Zillah, gave birth to a son named Tubal-Cain who is said to have forged all kinds of tools out of bronze and iron. Some people think that this is an error because the earliest known smelting of iron is thought to be in West Africa around 1200 BC. But there is no reason to believe that prior to the flood of Noah's day man had not learned to smelt metals and make all kinds of tools. The flood would have wiped out the record of those achievements and the processes would have had to be rediscovered. We are also told that Tubal-Cain had a sister named Naamah.

Lamech's statement to his wives that "I have killed a man for wounding me" could also be translated "I will kill a man for wounding me." So we don't know if he actually killed someone or it is a threat to kill someone just like Cain killed Abel whom he perceived as wounding him by bringing a better offering to the Lord. But Lamech's statement that if Cain is avenged seven times then Lamech will be avenged seventy-seven times is nothing but a boast and shows that he was more barbaric than his great great great grandfather Cain. This Lamech is the seventh generation after Adam and he shows the way sin has multiplied in just those generations.

Verses 25 – 26. Now we return to Adam and learn that Eve has given birth to another son who was named Seth. Seth probably means "granted" since he was granted as a replacement for Abel and this expressed their faith that God would continue to provide even after death has taken one of the family. We are told that Seth had a son named Enosh and that at that time men began to call on (or proclaim) the name of the Lord. This could be an indication of the beginning of prayer but is more likely to be the beginning of the public worship of God.

Chapter 5

Verses 1 – 2. This is the beginning of the third section in our outline of the structure of Genesis. In Hebrew it literally is translated "This is the book of the generations of Adam (man). In the day that Elohim (plural God) created Adam (man), he made him in the likeness of Elohim (plural God). He created them male and female, blessed them, and called their name Adam (man) in the day when they were created." This is a statement to connect the genealogy of Adam with his creation and God's command to "be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it." (Gen 1:28)

Verses 3 – 24. These verses list the six generations after Adam through his son "Seth" that ends with Enoch who "walked with the Elohim (plural God) and was not for God took him." (Gen 5:24) That Enoch walked with God shows the great love of and trust (faith) in God that he had and the intimate relationship they had. And as a consequence of that close walk, God translated him to heaven without his physically dying as all other men would because of Adam's disobedience. Contrast this with Lamech, the last of the six generations after Adam through his son "Cain" who was so far from walking with God that he had two wives and boasted that "if Cain is avenged seven times then Lamech seventy-seven times" for killing someone. This shows how wicked man has become following his own way of living, but that faith in God demonstrated by one's walk with God can result in God's intervention to bring his promised redemption into that person's life.

Some people think the age of these individuals is exaggerated and may not even be complete. But the recording of each man's age when his son who is next in the line is born suggests that the list is complete and may even suggest that Moses had some written listing that he carried with him in the ark.

A genealogy diagram of the length of each man's life and the birth of his descendant will show some unique information that can otherwise be easily missed. We notice that Enoch lived one year for each day in a normal year. Although this is interesting, there is no significance given to that fact. It is interesting to note that Methuselah's name means "when he is dead, it shall be sent" and his death coincides with the year the flood began.

Another thing we notice is that seven of Noah's ancestors all had the opportunity to hear the creation story directly from Adam and could have told it to Noah. Only his great grandfather Enoch could not have told the story to him because he had already been taken to be with God. But the seven generations could all tell him about the life of Enoch and about God taking him out of this world without his death. We see that Japheth is the oldest of Noah's sons and Ham is the youngest. We see that Shem's son was born the year the waters of the flood receded so they were able to leave the ark. In the listing of this genealogy, from Adam to Lamech, we are carefully told that every one of them had other sons and daughters. Given the long life spans of people and that they had children until they were 500 or more years old, the population of the world by the time of the flood (after 1655 years) could easily have been in the millions.

Chapter 6

Verses 1 – 8. As the population of the world increased we are told that the sons of God (Elohim) took wives for themselves whomever they chose. There are three main views about who these "sons of God" are.

One view is that they were fallen angels who took human women, impregnated them, and they bore children. This view is evident in the second century pseudepigraphic work entitled "*The Book of Enoch*" and can be found in the writings of Philo, Josephus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Cyprian, Clarence Larkin, Henry Morris, M. R. DeHaan, and others. The main argument for this view comes from the phrase being used only to refer to angels in Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; and such). To this is the attempt to add the comments in 2 Peter 2:4 – 5 and Jude 6 – 7 and the idea that if the Holy Spirit could impregnate Mary with Jesus then surely other spiritual beings could do the same. But the passages in Peter and Jude are obviously referring to the sin of the 1/3 of the angels who sided with Satan in his rebellion against God and not to angels impregnating human women. The fact that the Holy Spirit impregnated Mary doesn't mean angels who are created spiritual beings can do the same thing as God, the Holy Spirit.

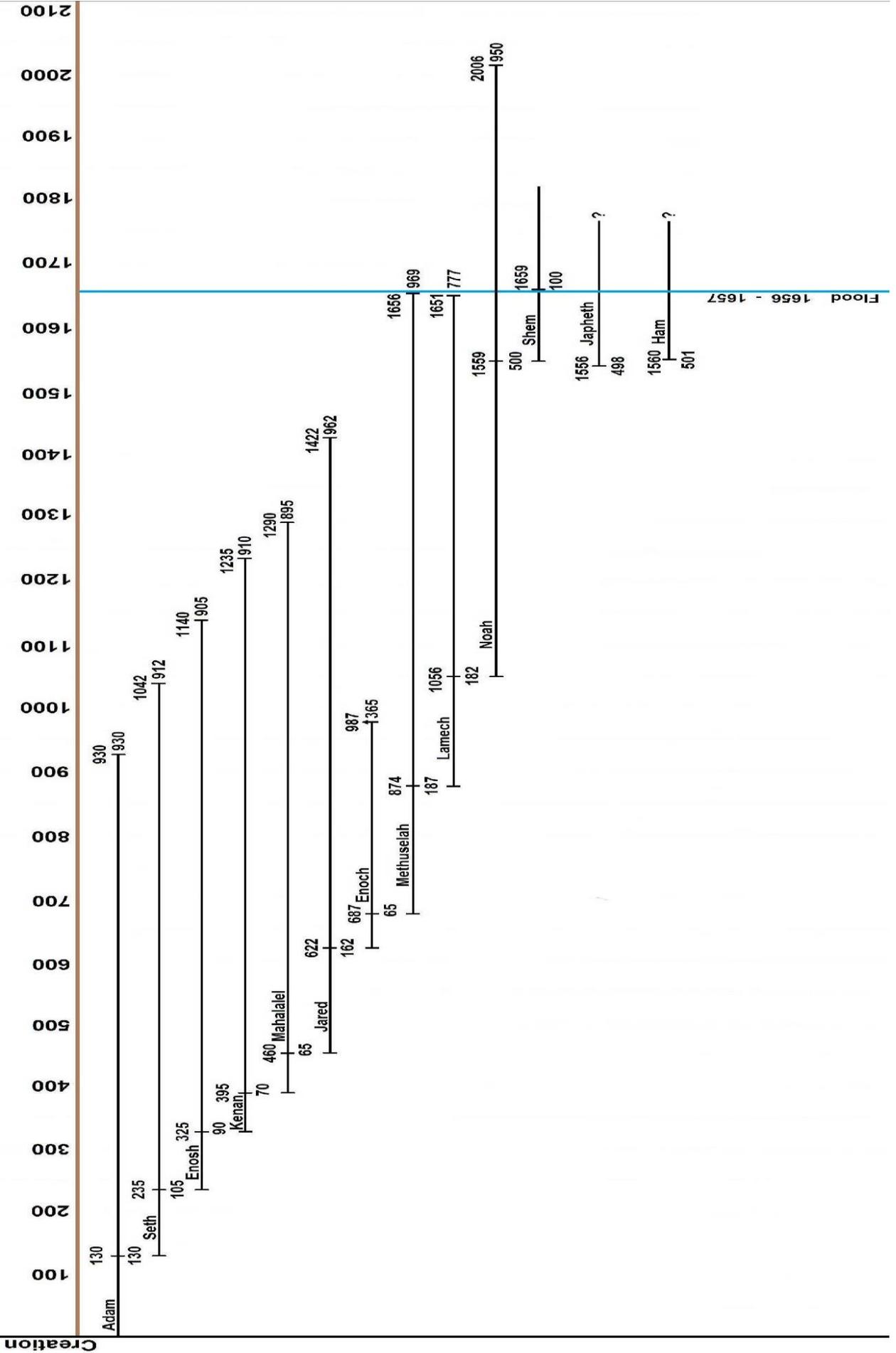
A second view is that they were men who had formed dynasties through their descendants and that demons may have indwelled or at least controlled these ruling individuals. The main argument for this view is that in ancient Near Eastern literature kings were often called sons of God and viewed as deities. This is evident in the Babylonian flood story entitled "*The Gilgamesh Epic*." Just because pagan literature refers to some men in this way does not mean God's word should be given the same meaning.

A third view is that they were godly men of the line of Seth who married ungodly women from the lines of Cain or other children of Adam. The main argument for this view is that there are other references in the Old Testament (Deut 14:1; 32:5) where the Israelites (considered to be the godly line) are called the "children of God" which would be like the "sons of God." This view would mean the "sons of God" phrase is an exception of its use to refer to angels that is found (as noted previously) in Job.

There is no definitive answer to which of these views is correct, but probably either the first or third would be most likely.

Genealogy from Adam to Noah's Sons

Years after Creation



Because of the wickedness of man, God declares that his Spirit will not contend with man forever because man is mortal and therefore his days will be 120 years. This should not be taken to mean that the length of the lives of men would be shortened to 120 years. Instead this should be taken as the length of time from the pronouncement to the beginning of the flood which would end God's Spirit contending with the wickedness of man.

We are told that there were Nephilim on the earth in those days and they were the heroes of old and men of renown. It also indicates that they were on the earth in later days, but because the text inserts "when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them," many people presume that the Nephilim were those children. But the phrase doesn't indicate that those children were the Nephilim but is only indicating that the Nephilim were present at that time. Moses tells us in Numbers 13:32 - 33 that the twelve men who went into the Promised Land to spy out the land returned reporting that all the people were of great size. He says they saw the Nephilim and that the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim. With the flood in Noah's day killing all men except for Noah and his family, the children that resulted from the sons of God and the women of men would have all been killed so the Nephilim can't be those children since there are Nephilim in Canaan in 1500 BC (well after the flood). So the word Nephilim must just describe people who have grown to abnormal height.

That God saw how great man's wickedness was does not mean it caught him by surprise. Remember that God exists outside of time because he created it as part of the physical universe. In Isaiah 46:10 God says, "I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times what is still to come." So God knew before he created the universe that Adam and Eve would disobey, that man would become so wicked that he would wipe out all of them but Noah's family with a flood, and that he would eventually send a Messiah to restore his relationship with mankind (see Gen 3:15). Although God is grieved that the people he made have become so wicked that all the thoughts of their hearts are evil (against God's rule) all the time, he finds a man named Noah who is trying to follow him obediently. Possibly he has heard about Enoch's walk with God from his grandfather, Methuselah, and his father, Lamech, and has decided to try to live that same way. So we are told that Noah found favor in the eyes of God. The ancient Hebrew had no vowels, only consonants. So Noah's name was written as Nh (נח). If these letters are reversed to Hn (חן) we have the word for "grace" which is sometimes translated "favor." This is the origin of the phrase "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord."

Verses 9 – 22. This begins the account of Noah's life. Noah is said to be blameless among the people of his time and walking with God which probably means he is trying to follow the example of his great grandfather, Enoch. We are also told that he has three children – Shem, Ham, and Japheth. This doesn't mean that is their birth order as we see from Genesis 9:24 and 10:21 which tell us that Ham is the youngest, Japheth is the oldest, and therefore Shem is the middle brother.

God tells Noah that man has become so corrupt in their ways that he is going to put an end to the people, destroying them and the earth. So he tells Noah to make an ark of gopher wood with rooms and cover it inside and outside with pitch. The Hebrew word "gopher" (גֹּפֶרֶת) is not used anywhere else in the Bible or even in Hebrew literature so the exact meaning of the word is unknown as is the type of wood it might indicate. When translating the Hebrew into Greek for the Septuagint, the translators used the Greek word "xylon tetragonon" (ξύλων τετραγωνων) which means "timber squared." There is no way of knowing what type of wood Noah actually used.

God gave Noah instructions for the size and overall design of the ark and told him that he was going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy both humans and animals. But Noah was to take with him and his family in the ark, representatives of the animals (male and female) along with all kinds of food that is eaten. We see Noah's faith in God demonstrated because he did everything just as God commanded him.

We don't know exactly what the ark's appearance was. Artists for years have drawn it as some kind of boat, usually one of the types in use at that particular time, only larger. Here are some examples.



For more discussion about the depiction of Noah's ark through history visit the following website:

http://worldwideflood.org/general/ark_history.htm

For more information about the scientific research about the ark's design and stability to withstand a tsunami type flood visit the following websites:

http://worldwideflood.org/ark/safety_aig/safety_aig.htm

http://worldwideflood.org/ark/hull_form/hull_optimization.htm

The Scientists and Engineers that work with Answers In Genesis have studied the description listed here and have studied which shape of ship that fits the description would best be able to withstand the flood that is described. They have also studied how such a ship might be built and have constructed a scale model.

Recently, they have broken ground for constructing a full-sized replica of how they think the ark might have looked and how it would be constructed. An artist's rendition of it is shown below.



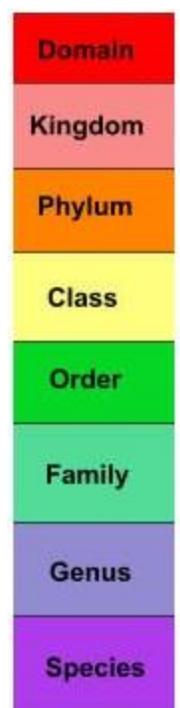
The size of the ark 300 x 50 x 30 cubits when transformed into feet using the royal cubit of 20.61 inches becomes about 510 x 85 x 51 feet. That is about one and a half football fields long from goal post to goal post, a little over half the width of a football field from center of the goal posts to the sidelines, and a little over 8 stories of a building in height. It was quite a large structure and equates to a volume of 2,210,850 cubic feet divided into three levels.

God tells Noah that he is establishing a covenant with him and that he will enter the ark with his wife, with his sons and their wives, and two of every living creature, male and female, that God will send to him to be kept alive. This is the beginning of a second Suzerainty Treaty (covenant) like we saw in Gen 2:16. We will see more of that covenant in chapter 9. We see why Noah found favor (grace) in the eyes of the Lord. Because he walked with God, he was willing to do what God said to do even though it must not have made any sense to him. There is no indication that rain had ever fallen on the earth before the flood and thus probably no floods. So Noah, without understand what flood waters were, was willing to spend years of labor building something whose purpose he may not have understood. If all the earth's landmass was gathered in one place like many believe it might have been originally (a place called Pangaea), then there may have been no reason for the concept of a boat or boat building to have been developed. That would mean Noah was building something totally bizarre to everyone who watched him build it. They would most likely have asked him what it was and that would have given him an opportunity to explain what God had told him to do and why. This would have been a witness to the people that God was planning to judge their wickedness (disobedience) and would have given them the opportunity to change and begin obeying him.

Chapter 7

Verses 1 – 5. Now we learn more about God's instructions to Noah which probably occurred just before he was to enter the ark. He is told to enter with his household (family) because he alone has been seen as righteous before God in this time. As the genealogies showed, Noah's father died five years before the flood and his grandfather died the year the flood began, so his household would have been his wife, his sons, and his sons' wives. There is no indication that any of the sons had children by this time. Then Noah is told to take seven pairs of every clean animal, two pairs of every unclean animal, and seven pairs of every bird with him on the ark. We are not told what was considered clean and unclean animals at this time. God later defined in the Mosaic Law what that would mean for the Israelites from that time under the Mosaic covenant. Noah is further told that seven days from this announcement God will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights and thereby wipe the living creatures from the face of the earth. Since this is from the face of the earth, it involves all land and air creatures but not creatures that live in the water. Note that God says nothing about taking water creatures into the ark. Again we see Noah's faith in God because he did everything God commanded of him.

The question usually arises concerning how Noah could take two of every type of animal (and seven pair of clean animals) on the ark because there wouldn't be enough room. That question presumes that he would have to take a pair of every species of animal so that we would have all the varieties that we find today. But a closer look at the biological classification structure (see right) looking specifically at cats, dogs, and bears will help us to see the error in that thinking. Cats, dogs, and bears all have the same classification for Domain, Kingdom, Phylum, Class, and Order, but they have different families. House cats, lions, and tigers are all members of the family Felidae. Dogs, wolves, and foxes are all members of the family Canidae. Artic bears, black bears, and panda bears are all members of the family Ursidae. We know from experience that dogs and wolves, members of the Canidae family, can reproduce together; that different bears of the Ursidae family can reproduce together; and that different cats of the Felidae family can reproduce together, but none can reproduce with members of a different family. In Genesis 1:24 God made the land animals according to their kind: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals. These kinds most closely resemble the families in the biological classification structure. Since the members of a family can reproduce with each other, it would



only be necessary for the animals that God brought to Noah to keep safe on the ark to have been a representative pair of each family. Then as that pair reproduced after the flood the genetic possibilities within them would eventually produce all the different species of today. There may be only 137 different mammalian families today. Add to that all the extinct families along with the bird, reptile, and amphibian families and that might result in fewer than 1,000 different animal families that would have been on the ark. Then considering that Noah was told to take seven pair of the clean animals the total number of animals may have been close to 3,000. See the following website for more information about determining the kinds of animals on the ark: <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/arj/v4/n1/ark-kinds-flood-baraminologycognitum>

It would also not have been necessary for all the different animals to be fully grown, mature animals, but only of the best size and age for breeding after the flood was completed. Based on the number of kinds and the size of the ark, it seems very plausible that there would have been enough room for all the needed kinds of animals and the food to keep them alive for the 370 days that all of them were confined within the ark.

Verses 6 – 16. We are told that Noah was 600 years old when the flood waters came upon the earth. That information combined with the date of his birth after the creation of the world as determined from the genealogies, means the flood began in 1656 AM (anno mundi). Noah took all the clean and unclean animals with his family and entered the ark. And after the seven days, the floodwaters came upon the earth. The date of the event is given as the 17th day of the 2nd month in the 600th year of Noah's life. Since Moses is giving the day and month, it is likely that he is basing that on the Jewish calendar being followed when he wrote the account. There is no way for us to know if there was any other calendar being used to determine dates before the flood began and if Noah brought the calendar that the Jews used with him through the flood. Using this information along with extra-biblical dates that coincide with events in the life of Abraham that give us "BC" dates, the flood would have begun on the 17th of Ziv (about May) in 2348 BC. When it says that "on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth and the floodgates of the heavens were opened," it would seem to indicate that the land mass broke up allowing water to rise up from the depths and a supposed ice canopy broke up allowing water to rain down through the sky.

Apparently all the pairs of animals and birds came to Noah and not that Noah went out and collected them. So God selected which animals and birds would be spared to begin the process of replenishing their kind upon the earth. The animals, by pairs – male and female – entered the ark and then we are told that "the Lord shut him (Noah) in." This means that God shut the door and sealed it to keep it from leaking rather than Noah having to have a way to shut the door and seal it before the waters came. This also shows that saving mankind and the animals was the work of God and not the great effort of man and agrees with Paul's statement "it is by grace you have been saved through faith – and this not from yourself, it is the gift of God – not by works so that no one can boast." (Eph 2:8 – 9)

Verses 17 – 24. For 40 days the waters continued and lifted the ark to float high above the earth. All the high mountains of the earth were covered by the water to a depth of more than 15 cubits (about 20 feet). Thus no one could stand upon a mountain and escape being killed by the floodwaters (even if they could stand against the waves for forty days). So, every living thing upon the earth died and only Noah and those on the ark with him were saved through the floodwaters. Then we are told the waters flooded the earth for 150 days, which given the Jewish calendar of 30 day months, would have been five months. Jesus affirmed that the story of the flood was true when he compared the end of days to them. (Matt 24:37 - 39; Luke 17:26 - 27)

The extent of the flood has been debated for many years since the rise of geological dating. Geological dating is determined by the amount of a particular element detected in a rock sample and the radiological half-life of that element. The presupposition of this determination is a steady rate of change. This determination results in the earth being about 4.5 billion years old. The height of mountains is given as a reason that the flood must have been local rather than world-wide. Scientists compute that if all the current land mass were placed in the ocean depths that it would all fit under water two miles deep. But if all the land mass of Noah's day was gathered in one location as in the idea of Pangaea, the mountains were not that high before the flood (as

indicated in Psalm 104:6 – 9), and there was an ice canopy around the earth which broke up and provided rain from the sky (there is no mention of rain or rainbows which are present when rain is falling until after the flood), then a world-wide (Pangaea covering) flood is easily possible. And if the “springs of the deep bursting forth” water upon the land was the result of the land mass breaking apart it would form tectonic plate movement, cause volcanic eruptions forming land masses (like the Hawaiian islands), and cause the thrusting up of the land mass to form more mountains and higher mountains, thus reforming the earth its modern configuration. These catastrophic changes in the land mass is easily seen as being the opposite of the steady rate of change which is presently observed and would cause the age of the earth to be skewed from a young earth (about 4000 years old) toward a much older age (4.5 billion years). For more information about catastrophic plate tectonics and how that would result in a world-wide flood and produce the current land positions, see the following website: <http://www.globalflood.org/papers/2003ICCcept.html>

Chapter 8

Verses 1 – 5. God did not forget Noah and all the animals in the ark with him, but caused the rain to stop falling from the sky and the water from coming up from the springs of the deep. The water steadily receded from the land and after 150 days the water had gone down enough that the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. This doesn't indicate a particular mountain that is named Ararat but a collection of mountains that are referred to as “the mountains of Ararat.” In the ancient Assyrian records there is a region referred to as Urartu (which can be Ararat) which was an area around Lake Van that covered parts of southeast Turkey, southern Russia, and northwest Iran. (See map above.)



The ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat on the 17th day of the 7th month (the month of Tisri or about October). The waters continued to recede until on the 1st day of the 10th month (the month of Tebeth or about Jan) the mountain tops became visible.

Verses 6 – 14. After 40 days, Noah opened the window of the ark and sent out a raven to see if the water had receded from the surface of the ground and would give the bird a place to perch. But the raven kept flying around (back and forth to the ark) until the water had receded. Next he sent out a dove, but it flew back to him because there was no place for it to perch. After seven more days he sent out a dove again and this time it returned with a freshly plucked olive leaf which indicated that the ground in some places had receded enough for trees to once again put forth leaves. After another seven days he sent out another dove which this time did not return to the ark. So by the 1st day of the 1st month of Noah's 601st year (Nisan or about April of 2347 BC) the water had dried up so that when Noah removed the covering from the ark he could see that the ground was dry (not covered with water but still was mud). By the 27th day of the 2nd month (Ziv or about May) the earth was completely dry. So the duration of the flood was from the 17th of Ziv 1656 AM 2348 BC to the 27th of Ziv 1657 AM 2347 BC which would have been 370 days.

About 270 flood stories have been found existing in every culture around the world, like the Gilgamesh Epic found in ancient Mesopotamian writings from the 18th century BC. These stories have enough commonality to give evidence of a world-wide flood even though they differ in many of the details. That is exactly what would be expected as men retold the account of the flood and exaggerated man's part in it and gave God's credit to the

local god that they wanted people to follow. Appendix 1 at the end of this study shows how four other accounts compare with the biblical account.

Verses 15 -19. After the ground had dried up completely, God told Noah to exit the ark and set all the birds and land animals free so they could reproduce and increase in number upon the land. Again, Noah obeys God and everyone and all the animals leave the ark. In worship of God and thanks for his protection, Noah builds an altar and sacrifices some of the clean animals and clean birds as a burnt offering. God smelled the pleasing aroma (not just the smell of burnt animals, but the smell of Noah's obedience) and says in his heart that he will never again destroy all living creature as he has done (the world-wide flood) even though every inclination of man's heart is to do evil (disobey God's command and try to be god for himself) even from their childhood. God says that as long as the earth endures there will always be seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night.

Chapter 9

Verses 1 – 7. Now that the water has receded and all creatures living on the land have been killed by the world-wide flood except for the ones God has saved in the ark, God is ready to restart filling the earth with the animals and humans. At this new beginning, like in the first with Adam and Eve, the humans are commanded to be fruitful, increase in number, and fill the earth. But in this new beginning the animals, the birds, and the fish are going to be filled with fear of the humans and with a good reason. In the first beginning, the animals and the humans would only eat plants, but now humans are going to be allowed to eat the animals as well as plants. This is a continuation of the second covenant that God began stating in chapter 6 verse 18 as he promised to save Noah, his three sons, their wives, and pairs of all the land animals and birds through the flood. Now, although God is giving the humans permission to eat the animals, birds, and fish, he commands them not to eat meat that still has its lifeblood still in it because he will demand an accounting for doing such. Some people take this as a prohibition against eating meat, but that is obviously wrong because God has just said everything that lives and moves will be food for humans. Other people think this is a prohibition against eating blood either cooked or not cooked because an animal's life is in its blood. But life taken from one living body cannot be injected into a dead body and cause it to live. So what is the prohibition? The Hebrew of verse 4 can be translated, "But flesh with living blood not shall you eat." The phrase "living blood" (often translated "lifeblood still in it") refers to an animal that is still living. So the prohibition is against eating the flesh of an animal that is still living (breathing). Eating an animal that is still breathing probably seems to many people to be something that obviously would not be done, but there are cultures even today where people eat live insects and fish (think of reality TV shows). The soul (mind, will, and emotions) of an animal is not contained in its blood, but blood moving through a body is what takes life-sustaining food and oxygen to every cell and enables it to live. All life is a gift from God and it is his divine right to determine how long a person or animal continues to live. But God has given humans the authority to take the life of an animal and even eat its flesh but not as long as the animal is still living. God will demand an accounting from every human who takes the life of another human (sheds his blood means taking his life) because man is made in the image of God with a soul (mind, will, and emotions), a physical body, and a spiritual body (which is dead to us because of Adam's disobedience). This is not a complete prohibition against killing a man, because God says that whoever sheds the blood of a man by man shall have his blood shed. This is the origin of capital punishment by government for one person killing another person. God ends this prohibition against killing another human and eating animals that are still living by repeating his command to be fruitful, increase in number, and fill the earth.

Verses 8 – 17. Now we read God's covenant (a Suzerainty treaty in which the powerful ruler promises to do something for his people without them first or ever doing something for him) and see what he has promised to humans and the sign by which he makes the covenant known to all generations. God's covenant is not just with humans but also with all the creatures that he saved in the ark through the flood. God promises never again to cause a world-wide flood over the world which will kill humans and creatures. As a sign of this covenant with the whole earth God sets his bow in the sky. Whenever God sees the bow in the clouds he will remember his promise and not bring a world-wide killing flood. So whenever humans see the bow in the clouds

they can know that God also sees it and will not bring the rains and cause a world-wide flood. This covenant is not like the covenant God will make with Abram nor the one he will make with David. Those covenants will be with specific individual and about a specific group of people. But this covenant is world-wide, includes humans and all creatures, and is unconditional. It is an unconditional promise never again to judge mankind and the whole world by a flood, but it does not promise that God will not again judge people in some other way for rejecting him as God and recognizing his control of the entire universe.

Science has shown that the reason we see a rainbow in the clouds is because the sun's rays are refracted by water droplets and form the different colors that make up the rainbow. Without water droplets in the sky there can be no rainbow. Since this is a sign of the covenant it has to be something that was not present before God commanded it. So from that we can infer that there had not been rain falling from the sky before the beginning of the flood, or else there would have been a rainbow visible.

Verses 18 - 29. This begins by reminding us of the name of the sons of Noah who survived the flood in the ark and telling us that Ham was the father of Canaan. We are also reminded that all of the people scattered all over the world have all come from these three sons. Then we see that although Noah found grace in the eyes of God before the flood, that he was still a fallible individual because he became drunk on wine from the grapes he planted - so drunk that he took off his clothes and passed out naked in his tent. We are told that his son, Ham, saw his father's nakedness went outside and told his brothers. Shem and Japheth took a garment (possibly just a big piece of cloth that the people used to wrap around them to cloth their bodies), laid it across their shoulders between them, and backed into the tent so they could drop it over their father and cover his nakedness. They did this with their faces turned away from their father so they wouldn't see his nakedness. There is no indication in this passage that Ham seeing his father's nakedness in any way means he committed some homosexual act with his father or that there was any sexual immorality involved. What is clearly shown is that getting drunk (letting alcoholic beverages have control of your body) means you can no longer think clearly or control your actions and that puts you in a compromising situation. That's what Paul was emphasizing to the Ephesians when he wrote: "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit." (Eph 5:18) Paul did not advocate total abstinence from wine because he told Timothy: "Stop drinking only water and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses." (Eph 5:23) The problem with Noah and with others who become drunk is that they drink to excess so that they no longer are in control of their body and it results in their immodesty or even worse. Noah's stumbling block that caused his nakedness was the fruit of the vine just like Adam's and Eve's was the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which resulted in their nakedness as their disobedience caused the death of their spiritual bodies. In both cases, the fruit looked good and it seemed right in their own eyes to do what they wanted to do. But God wants people to allow only him to be in control of their lives – nothing else.

When Noah awakened from his drunken sleep he found out what his youngest son (Ham) had done to him. Noah could only find this out by Ham or his brothers, or their wives telling him. The question is: What did Ham do to Noah? It wasn't that he saw his father lying drunk and naked. That was Noah's shame for abusing the fruit of the grape. Ham hurt (dishonored) his father by openly telling his brothers about his father's nakedness (shame). This is seen as the beginning of the abandonment of shame after the flood. Beginning with Adam and Eve, being seen as naked was shameful because it recognized man's disobedience of God. In the ancient societies, especially in the near east and even to this day, seeing someone uncovered brings dishonor upon the person and gains for the viewer the potential for exploiting the shamed person. Ham telling his brothers about their father's nakedness is an example of the exploitation of his dishonor. Some people see his action as an attempt to take leadership of the family from his father and thus become more important than his two older brothers. Some people see Shem and Japheth's action of covering their father without looking on his shame as an imitation of God's covering of Adam's and Eve's nakedness after their spiritual bodies had died from their disobedience of God's command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Noah's response is to pronounce a curse upon Ham's son Canaan that he will be the lowest of slaves to his brothers and the slave of Shem and Japheth. In the curse Noah says that Japheth will live in the tents of Shem.

The question that arises is why Noah cursed Canaan and not Ham. In effect, Noah did curse Ham through what would become the future of Canaan and his descendants. Outside of Enoch naming his son Methuselah “when he dies it will come” as being a possible prophecy of the coming flood, this is the first recorded prophecy (future event given by God through a man’s statement). It explains the shameless depravity in sexual matters that the Canaanite people were known for as recorded in the events of the lives of Abram and later. This information written by Moses would have been an encouragement to the Hebrew people concerning the type of people the Canaanites were, God’s blessing of the Hebrews as descendants of Shem, and that they could drive the Canaanites from the land promised to them by God. Unfortunately, the Hebrews who spied out the Canaanite land were fearful and didn’t trust God’s power, and their children who 40 years later entered the land did not drive all the Canaanites out but made agreements with some and just ignored others, so that the Canaanites continued in the land until Nebuchadnezzar defeated them at Tyre in 572 BC.

There is no basis in Noah’s prophecy that the descendants of Ham (who lived mainly in current day Africa) were doomed to a position of inferiority or slavery among all the other people of the world. This prophecy was used at one time to promote the idea that slavery was acceptable, but the prophecy only applies to descendant of Ham’s son, Canaan, who did not live in present day Africa.

The general lesson from this prophecy is that God blesses those who behave righteously and curses those who abandon moral restraint. As we see in Hebrews 11:1-7, Abel, Enoch, and Noah are all three held up as examples of having faith (trust) in God. But we see that they had different outcomes to their lives. Abel was killed. Enoch did not die but was taken by God to heaven. Noah lived while other died and eventually died after a long life, 350 years after the beginning of the flood and a total of 950 years. His life span was exceeded by only two other people in the recorded genealogies (Jared, 962 and Methuselah, 969).

Chapter 10

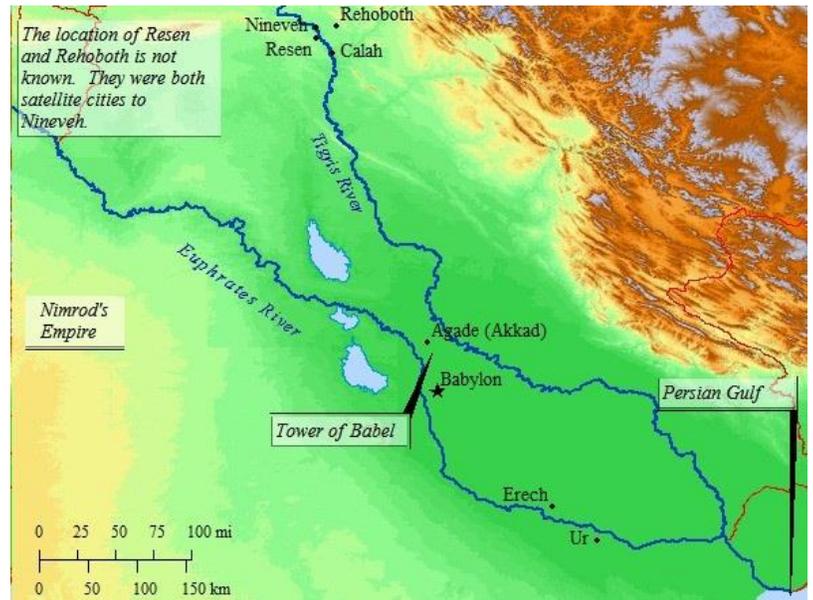
Verses 1 – 5. We know that Mr. and Mrs. Noah exited the ark and that Noah lived for another 350 years, but his account does not end like the genealogy accounts of chapters 5 and 11 which said the individual lived for a number of years and after the descendant listed had other sons and daughters. We don’t know how long Mrs. Noah lived after they exited the ark but we are not told that they had any other sons or daughters. So, following the examples of chapters 5 and 11, we would presume that they did not have any other children. So, all the peoples of the earth are descended from one of Noah’s sons. This chapter gives the descendants of Noah’s sons, but it doesn’t follow the pattern of chapters 5 and 11 because it is not following a specific lineage of individuals. This chapter shows how the people from different areas of the world are descended from Noah’s sons and it begins with the descendants of Japheth. Looking at the list of individuals and the lands that they are historically known to inhabit from extra-biblical writings show that they settled north, east and west of the mountains of Ararat where the ark came to rest. In verse 5, the “maritime peoples” is a translation of the Hebrew for the “coastlands” which refers to the lands along the northern shores of the Mediterranean Sea from western Turkey to Spain at the Strait of Gibraltar. From these lands they appear to have migrated northward throughout all of what is now known as Europe. There is an indication that these people groups had different languages just as we know they did after the incident at the Tower of Babel which we will read about in chapter 11. But this is not a chronological account like we will resume following in chapter 11. It is a summary of the peoples, their territories, and that they had differences.

Verses 6 -20. Next we learn about the descendants of Ham. His descendants moved east, south, and southwest into Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), Egypt, and Africa. The descendants of Ham's son, Canaan, appear to have stayed in the area called Palestine.

Nimrod, a descendant through ham's son, Cush, is noted as becoming a mighty warrior on the earth and the founder of the kingdoms of Babylon, Erech, Akkad, and Calneh in Shinar. Ancient Sumerian king lists state:

"After the flood had swept over, and the kingship had descended from heaven, the kingship was in Kish." [The following extant ancient sources contain the *Sumerian King List*, or fragments: Apkullu-list (W.20030,7); Babyloniaca (Berossus); Dynastic Chronicle (ABC 18) including copies, K 11261+ and K 12054; Kish Tablet (Scheil dynastic tablet); UCBC 9-1819 ("California Tablet"); WB 62 and WB 444 (Weld-Blundell Prism).]

According to Oliver R. Blosser, it is possible that Sargon of Agade (regarded by many secular historians as the first ruler of Babylon) is the individual the Bible calls Nimrod. (Oliver R. Blosser, "Was Nimrod-Sargon of Agade, the First King of Babylon?" *It's About Time* (June 1987), pp. 10-13; Douglas Petrovich, "Identifying Nimrod of Genesis 10 with Sargon of Akkad by Exegetical and Archaeological Means," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 56:2 (June 2013):273-305.)



The individual identified as "Kish" is likely Ham's son, Cush. It is noted that Nimrod built the cities of Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah and Resen (between Nineveh and Calah).

Mizraim, Ham's son, is identified from extra-biblical sources as the people of Egypt. Note that the Philistines were descended from the Casluhites who were descendants of Mizraim.

Canaan, Ham's son, has descendants listed who are noted in the Bible in the area of the land promised by God to Abram's descendants. Their territory is given as being from Sidon southward to Gaza and eastward to Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim as far as Lasha. This area is at the southern end of the Dead Sea.

Verses 21 – 32. Here we are told that Japheth was the older brother of Shem (although some translations reverse that and say Shem was the older brother of Japheth – possibly because Shem is listed first other times). In the list of Shem's descendants, the Septuagint (translation of Hebrew into Greek in the 3rd century BC) says Arphaxad was the father of Cainan and Cainan was the father of Shelah in this verse and in chapter 11 verse 12. This agrees with what Luke lists in his genealogy of Jesus (Luke 3:35) so his list is most likely based on the Septuagint which was in common use at that time. It is possible that the translators of the Septuagint were working from a different copy of the Hebrew that included this information and that later Hebrew copies of Genesis somehow omitted this information. The Dead Sea scrolls fragments of Genesis do not contain these verses so they do not help clear up the difference. This list notes that Eber had two sons, one named Peleg and the other named Joktan. Only Joktan's descendants are mentioned here. Peleg's descendants are listed in chapter 11. The region where the sons of Shem lived is given as in the eastern hill country from Mesha toward Sephar.

The chapter ends by saying these are the clans of Noah's sons according to their lines of descent within their nations and that from these nations the people spread out over the earth after the flood. This is not a chronological statement but a general statement of how the people throughout the world came from the three sons of Noah.

The information in this chapter is also found in 1 Chronicles 1. Eber, which is sometimes written Heber, seems to be the individual from whom the Hebrew language received its name. According to Jewish tradition, Eber refused to help with the building of the Tower of Babel (described in chapter 11) so his language was not confused by God’s judgment on the people building the tower. That would mean that his family retained the original human language and thus Hebrew is called (in Latin) “*lingua humana*”.



The map above shows the areas around the mountains of Ararat where the sons of Noah and their descendants originally settled. From these areas, people migrated to other areas around the earth.

There have been many lists of the Table of Nations down through history showing how the people of different areas were descended from Noah’s three sons. [See the following footnote from *The Tower of Babel* by Bodie Hodge p 75: Nennius, *Historia Brittonum*, edited in the tenth century by Mark the Hermit, with English version by the Rev. W. Gunn, rector of Irstead, Norfolk, printed in London, 1819; Flavius Josephus, *the Complete Works of Flavius Josephus the Jewish Historian* (~ 100 AD), trans. William Whiston (~ 1850 AD) (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2008).] These lists show how the oldest inhabitants of the Americas, Japan, China, Australia, and etc. are traceable back to Noah’s sons.

Chapter 11

Verses 1 – 9. It is reasonable to understand that right after the flood the whole world (Noah and his three sons) spoke (and probably wrote) one language (what was most like handed down through all the generations from Adam to Noah). So as the sons started to have children and their children had children, the sons and their extended families began to move into areas apart from one another. It is also reasonable to understand that there might have been some intermixing of families within areas predominantly settled by the families of

another brother. Thus we see that some of Ham's descendants lived in the area that was predominantly peopled by Shem's descendants. Apparently some of Ham's descendants settled in the region of Shinar and Nimrod established the cities of Babylon, Erech, Akkad, Calneh, Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah, and Resen. These descendants led the peoples of the area (maybe including some of Shem's descendants) to build a tower out of baked bricks, sealed with tar instead of mortar to make a name for themselves so they would not be scattered over the face of the whole earth. Remember that God had told Noah and his sons "be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it." (Gen 9:7) So as Noah's descendants multiplied they were expected to move away from where they exited the ark and repopulate the whole earth. But Ham's descendants, especially through Nimrod, decided they didn't want to obey God's plan, but follow their own plan. [Sounds like the same problem that Adam and Eve had in the Garden of Eden that led to the death of their spiritual bodies and the cursing of the universe.] They wanted to stay together and not only that but to make a reputation for themselves. So they joined together to build a tower.

But God came down to see the tower and said that if the people had done this because they all spoke one language, then they would do greater things (things in defiance of God's will) so he would confuse their languages so they would not understand each other and cause them to be scattered around the whole world. For this reason the place was called Babel because that is where the Lord confused the language of the people and from there scattered them over the earth.

Some people think the description of the Tower of Babel and the confusion of languages as simply a story or myth. But that idea is rejected by the work of Professor Julius Oppert who was part of a French archaeological mission to Mesopotamia led by Fulgence Fresnel in 1851. When the team was recalled in 1854, Fresnel chose to remain and died in Baghdad in 1855. One of the primary reasons for the team's travel was to inspect cuneiform inscriptions that had been found in the ruins of Babylon. Professor Oppert was sent because he was a recognized authority on that type of writing. The inscriptions were on a stele (rock carving) bearing the image of Nebuchadnezzar and a partially built tower referred to as *Barzippa* (Chaldean for "Tongue Tower"). Greek writing before the finding of this stele referred to the Tower of Babel as *Borshippa*. Nebuchadnezzar also called the tower the "Temple of the Spheres" and described it as a rectangle of 460 feet by 690 feet and standing some 275 feet high. The following is Professor Oppert's translation of the inscription that Nebuchadnezzar left about the tower.

The tower, the eternal house, which I founded and built.

I have completed its magnificence with silver, gold, other metals, stone, enameled bricks, fir and pine.

The first which is the house of the earth's base, the most ancient monument of Babylon; I built and finished it.

I have highly exalted its head with bricks covered with copper.

We say for the other, that is, this edifice, the house of the seven lights of the earth, the most ancient monument of Borsippa.

A former king built it, (they reckon 42 ages) but he did not complete its head.

Since a remote time, people had abandoned it, without order expressing their words.

Since that time the earthquake and the thunder had dispersed the sun-dried clay.

The bricks of the casing had been split, and the earth of the interior had been scattered in heaps.

Merodach, the great god, excited my mind to repair this building.

I did not change the site nor did I take away the foundation.

In a fortunate month, in an auspicious day, I undertook to build porticoes around the crude brick masses, and the casing of burnt bricks.

I adapted the circuits, I put the inscription of my name in the Kitir of the portico.

I set my hand to finish it. And to exalt its head.

As it had been in ancient days, so I exalted it summit.

(From *The Signature of God* by Grant Jeffery, Frontier Research, 1996, pp. 40 – 41)

There are many such rectangular mound structures, called ziggurats, found around the world, about 30 in Mesopotamia, but also the pyramids of Egypt, the Aztec temple in Yucatan, Mexico, and the Mayan temple ruins at Altun Ha, Belize. All of these were used for some type of worship, some including human sacrifice.



Egyptian Ziggurats



Aztec Ziggurat



Mayan Ziggurat



Ziggurat of Ur in 1920s photo of Woolsey Expedition



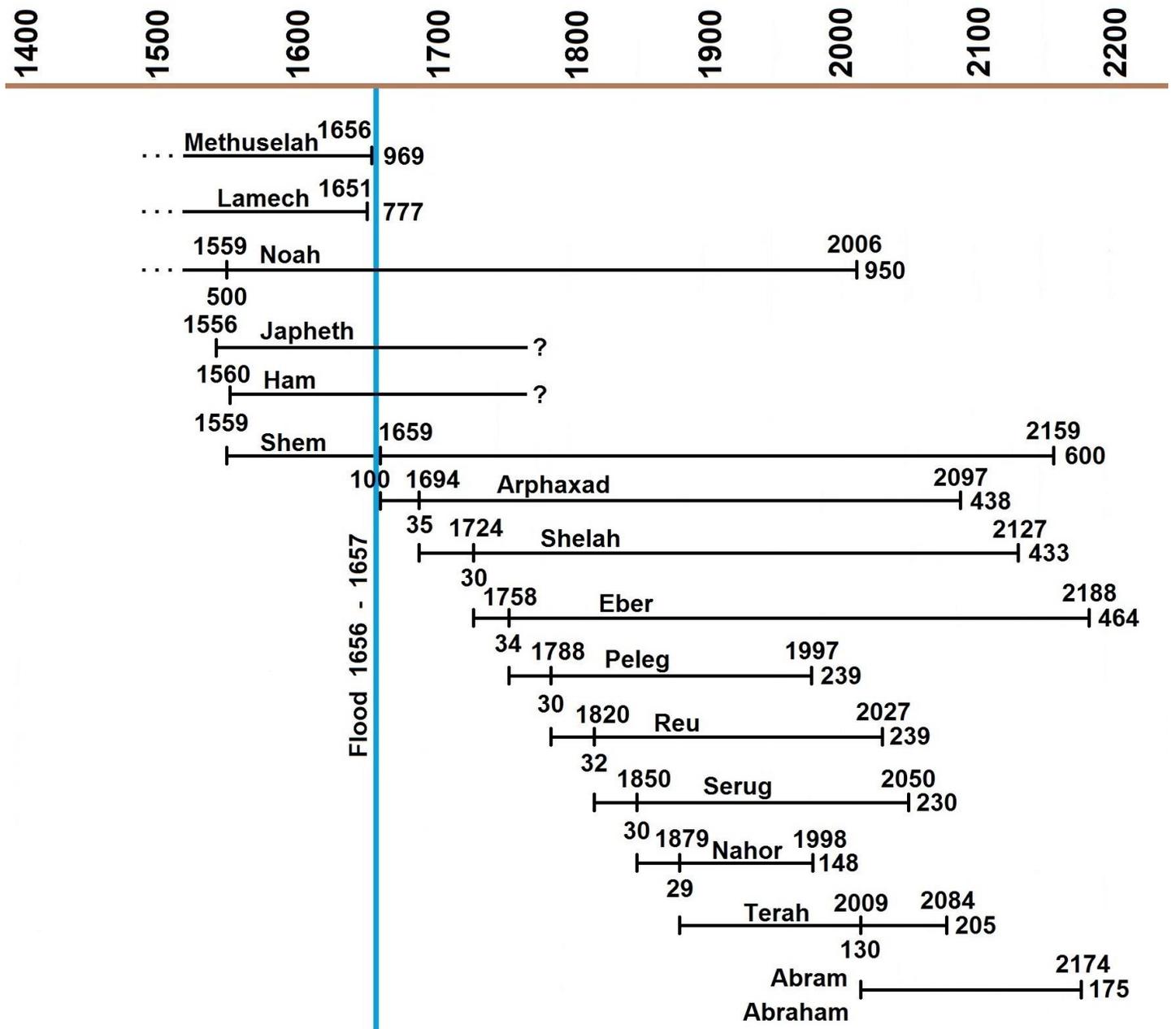
Ziggurat of Ur in 1920s photo of Woolsey Expedition



Ziggurat of Ur partially restored in 2005

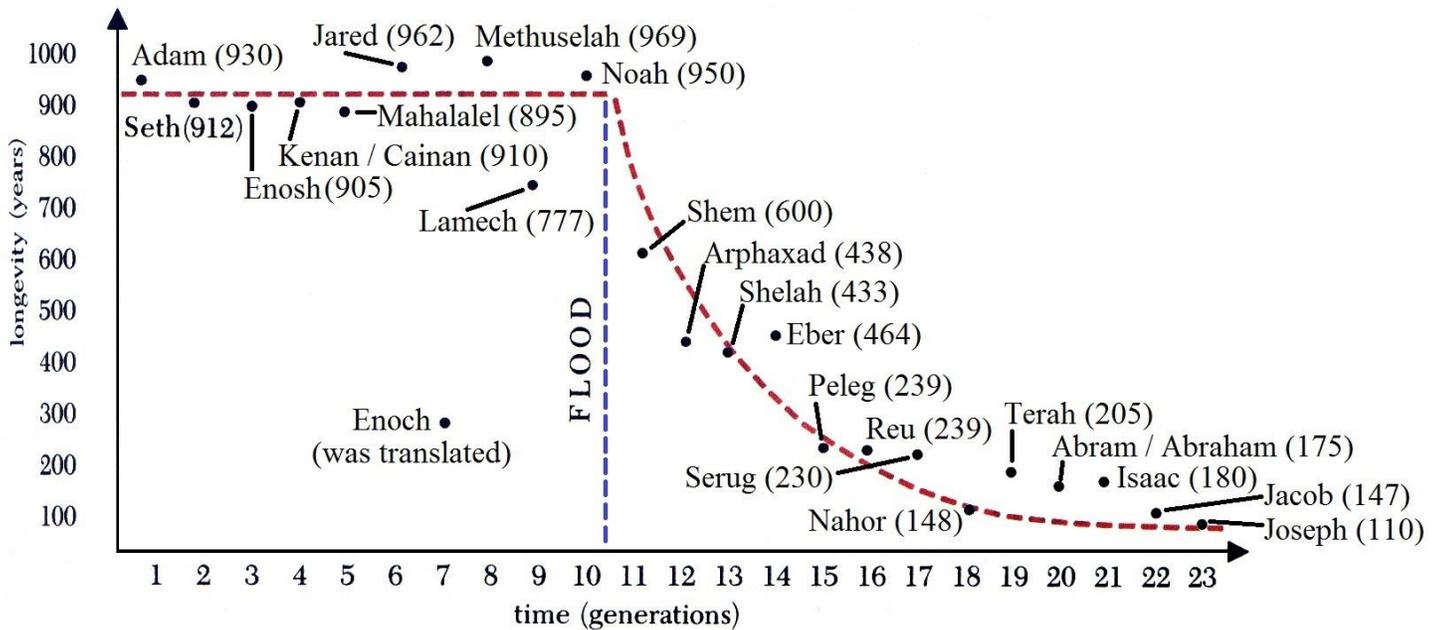
It would only be expected that the people whose language was confused and who were scattered by God would take with them the memory of the tower and the worship for which it was intended. Using the date of the flood as 1656 AM and the date of Peleg's birth as 1758 AM, that would mean the Tower of Babel was built and destroyed about 102 to maybe 110 years after the flood. It would be expected that the dispersed people would settle in nearby areas first and then migrate to other areas. After the flood, scientists expect that there would be a time when ice would cover much of the land and sea. An ice age has been calculated to have occurred and peaked about 500 years after the flood and about 400 years after the dispersion began. So there would have been adequate avenues for the dispersion to extend to the far reaches of the earth.

Verses 11 – 26. These verses continue showing the genealogy of the Messiah who God promised in Genesis 3:15 would come at a future time and restore a right relationship between God and man. It begins with Shem who came through the flood with Noah and his brothers and their wives, eight people in total, and follows his descendants down to a man named Abram. This listing is also found in 1 Chronicles 1:17-27. Luke's list of these individuals is different because it adds Cainan between Arphaxad and Shelah. (Luke 3:35) Luke's list agrees with the lists found in the Septuagint translation of Genesis and 1 Chronicles so it appears Luke used that list as his source. There is no way of knowing whether the Septuagint which was translated in the 3rd Century BC or the accepted Hebrew version is the correct list. As in the genealogy listing of chapter 5, this list gives us the age of the individual when he became the father of the next in the list, the number of years he lived after that event, and that he had other sons and daughters. The chart below shows how the lives of these individuals overlap.



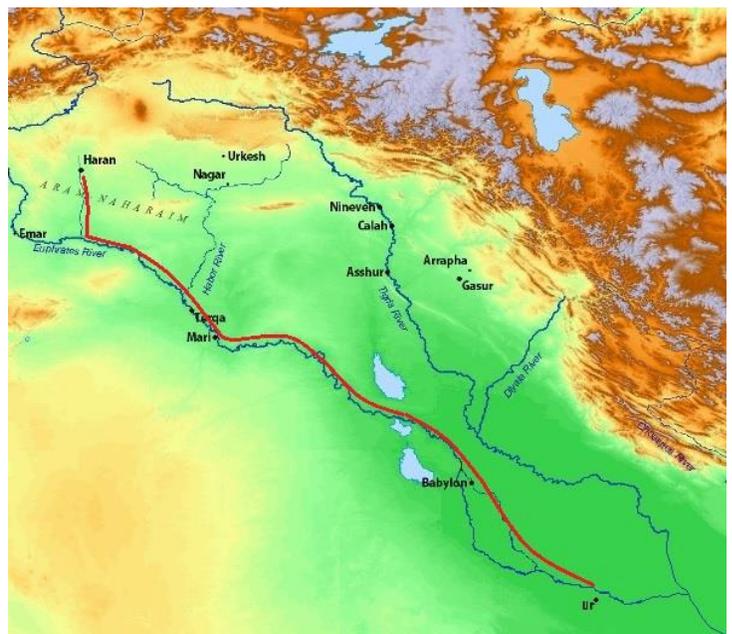
There is additional information that can be found in the combined genealogy lists from chapter 5 and here. Remember that it was during Peleg's life that the world was divided (people scattered by Tower of Babel rebellion). So the Tower of Babel dispersion could have taken place as early as 101 years after the end of the

flood and as late as 340 years after the flood. So it didn't take long for people to fall back into the old way of rejecting God and doing what they thought was right to do. So, although God purified the world of those who were rejecting him, it shows all people have inherited the fallen nature of Adam and Eve and mankind will never be able to maintain a right relationship with God without God's Messiah coming to make things right. Another thing the genealogy lists show us is the rapid drop in the longevity of lives from before to after the flood (see chart below).



Verses 27 – 32. This passage begins where verse 26 ended – with Terah, at the age of 70, becoming the father of Abrah, Nahor, and Haran. They lived in Ur of the Chaldeans which was the land of Terah's birth. That places them in the vicinity of Babylon and the Tower of Babel. Terah's birth would have been at about the midpoint of Peleg's life. So he may have experienced the confusing of the languages or at least he would have heard about all the confusion because people could no longer understand each other's speech. We are told here that Terah had three sons, but we don't learn until chapter 20:12 that he also had a daughter named Sarai by another wife. We also learn from chapter 17:17 that Sarai is ten years younger than Abram so either Terah had two wives at the same time or Abram's mother had died early in Abram's life. Sarai became the wife of her

half-brother, Abram. Sometime after the birth of Terah's children, but before he left Ur, his son Haran died. But Haran had already married and had two daughter's named Milcah and Iscah, and a son named Lot. Milcah became the wife of her uncle, Nahor. We learn from these marriages that even 380 years after the flood it was not uncommon for close relatives (even half-brother and half-sister) to marry. Sometime after Haran died, Terah took his grandson, Lot, his son, Abram, and his daughter-in-law (also daughter) and started on a journey to the land of Canaan. But when they came to the town of Haran, he decided to settle the family there. This was in the lands where Eber, Peleg, and Aran had settled (see pervious map of the Table of Nations).



Since there is no extra-biblical record of any people known as the Chaldeans living in the area of

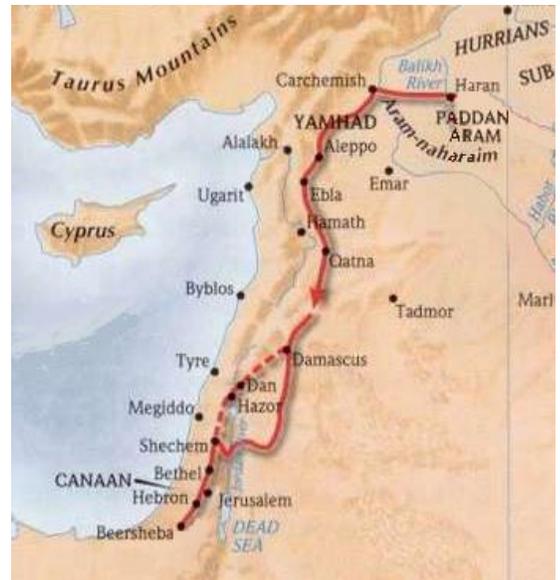
Babylon until around 1000 BC, Moses is probably specifying that Terah lived in Ur of the Chaldeans to be sure his readers would know the correct location (there could have been one or more other cities known as Ur). The Mari tablets often mention cities named Terah, Nahor, Serug, and Haran. We'll see in the next chapter that God called Abram to obediently follow him while he was still in Ur with his father and family, but we will see that he didn't leave Haran until after his father died there.

Chapter 12

Verses 1 – 9. These verses begin by telling us that God had called Abram to leave his country, his people, and his father's household and go to a land that will be shown to him. The Septuagint and Acts 7:3 indicate this call came in Ur. For his obedience, God promises to make Abram into a great nation (many descendants), bless him, make his name great, and make him a blessing to other people so that everyone who blesses Abram will be blessed and whoever curses Abram will be cursed. We just learned in chapter 11 that Terah moved his family from Ur to Haran and then settled there. We also learn in Joshua 24:2 that God tells the people that Terah, Abram (later Abraham), and Nahor lived beyond the River (Euphrates) and worshipped other gods. So God's call to Abram is not because Abram was such a righteous man that God wanted to bless him. It was God's sovereign decision to call an individual who was not worshipping him to trust the Creator of the universe and follow wherever God told him to go. This is the same as God calling individuals to trust Jesus because of his death on the cross to be their Savior / Messiah / One who would restore people to a right relationship with God, and allow him to tell them where to go and what to do with every day of their lives. It is this faith in God that the writer of Hebrews explains is the basis of having an eternal right relationship with God. (Heb 11)

So, at age 75, Abram leaves Haran with Sarai, Lot and all the possessions and servants they had acquired and continued on the journey to Canaan. After crossing into the land of Canaan, they traveled as far Shechem where God appears to Abram and tells him that to him and his offspring (descendants) he will give all the land. So Abram builds an altar (and presumably offers a sacrifice) as worship of God and showing that he will trust God. From Shechem he travels south to the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent. There he also built an altar and called on the name of the Lord (worshipped God). Then Abram moved everyone further south toward the Negev.

Since Abram was 75 when Terah died (2084 AM 1920 BC) and we were told Terah lived 205 years, that means Terah was 130 when Abram was born (2009 AM 1995 BC) and 140 when Sarai was born (2019 AM 1985 BC). The fact that Lot accompanied Abram to Canaan doesn't mean Abram was disobeying God's call. We see nothing that indicates Abram made Lot accompany him, only that he allowed it (which is the same thing God was did – allow Lot to go where Abram went). God's promise to give Abram the land is not a conditional promise which means that the land will always belong to his descendants whether they remain obedient to God or not. In the book of Ezekiel, we find that many years later Abram's descendants had become so disobedient of God that they were disciplined by being taken captive – the northern ten tribes by Assyria in 722 BC and the southern two tribes by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 BC. But Ezekiel prophesied that a godly remnant of Israel's descendants will ultimately possess the land at the Messiah's second coming. (Ezek 20:33-38) This would mean the Jews will live in their ancestral homelands during the Millennium described in Revelation 20:1-6. Those who hold an "amillennial" (no millennium) view interpret this prophecy as applying to the Church as the spiritual seed of Abraham and not to any physical descendants. There is nothing in the promise God gave Abram in these verses that would make that interpretation more acceptable than the physical seed of Abraham possessing the land. It would appear that Abraham and his descendants, right down to Jesus, all took the promise as being to Abraham's physical seed and did not see that promise as something symbolic or spiritual.



Verses 10 – 20. As Abram travels through Canaan it becomes apparent that there is a severe famine in the land. What is Abram to do in such a situation? The normal reaction for a nomad traveling through such an area would be to continue to another area where food would be available. That appears to be what Abram decides to do. Some commentators think that decision means Abram is showing distrust of God and his promise to give Abram the land. That would mean Abram has a lack of faith in God. But the writer of Hebrews says it was because of faith that Abram obeyed God and went to the land God would show him and that it was because of faith that he made the land his home and lived there as a stranger in a foreign land (nomad). Abram never controlled the land promised to him and his descendants even though God promised that it would be theirs forever. (Heb 11:8-10) So instead of staying in a land experiencing famine, Abram decides to take his family, servants, and livestock to Egypt (2084 AM 1920 BC).

Abram is concerned that the Egyptians might kill him and take his wife Sarai for their own. So he tells her to tell them that she is his sister so that his life will be spared and he will be treated well because of her. This is not a lie because she is his half-sister, but it also isn't the complete truth. Some commentators think Abram was just following a practice that was normal in Ur and Haran that a marriage between a man and his sister was considered more sacred than a normal marriage and that would protect him from being killed so an Egyptian could take her as his wife. This idea about such a marriage being considered more sacred than a regular marriage appears to be more speculation than known practice. The text emphasizes that it was Abram's fear that caused him to deceive the Egyptians.

Obviously Sarai was more beautiful than most women of that time who were 65 years old because the Egyptians did praise her beauty to Pharaoh and he took her to become part of his household (one of his wives). Abram's belief that the one of the Egyptians would want Sarai for his wife was well founded, but it still shows a lack of trust that God could and would take care of him so that his promise would be fulfilled to Abram with Sarai as his wife. Otherwise Abram would have to marry another so that the promise could be fulfilled. But we see that God protected Sarai and Abram even though Abram didn't trust God. First, Pharaoh lavished gifts upon Abram and allowed him to acquire many sheep, cattle, camels, pairs of donkeys, and male and female servants. At the same time, God brought serious diseases upon Pharaoh and his household because he had taken Sarai to be one of his wives. We're not told how Pharaoh determined that the diseases were caused by his taking Sarai to be one of his wives, but when he decided that was the cause, he summoned Abram and asked why he had told him she was his sister and not also that she was his wife.

Pharaoh does something that would not be expected of an imperial ruler of that day. Instead of having Abram killed for his deceit or even at the least whipped as a warning, he tells Abram to take her and leave Egypt. And then he gives his officials orders to see that Abram leaves, along with his wife and all his possessions, even those that he had acquired in Egypt. So, even though Abram didn't show complete trust in God, we see that God graciously used the situation to increase Abram's possessions and made it easier for Abram to live in the land when he returned to Canaan. Since it took some time for all these events to happen, Abram's return to Canaan was probably in 1918 BC.

The list of Egyptian rulers of the time period of Abram's arrival in Canaan and Egypt (1920 BC) shows that the Pharaoh he encountered would have been Sesostri I or Amenemhet II. The two year overlap in their dates of reign probably indicates that Sesostri I was failing in health and his son, Amenemhet II was co-reigning with him for that reason. Since Pharaoh was active enough to take Sarai to make her his wife that probably means it was Amenemhet II which actually took Sarai and then expelled her and Abram after having diseases in his household.

Egyptian Rulers of Dynasty 12 (1985-1795 BCE)	
Amenemhet I (Sehetepibre)	c. 1985-1955
Sesostri I (Senusret) (Kheperkare)	c. 1965-1920
Amenemhet II (Nubkaure)	c. 1922-1878
Sesostri II (Senusret) (Khakheperre)	c. 1880-1874
Sesostri III (Senusret) (Khakaure)	c. 1874-1855
Amenemhet III (Nimaatre)	c. 1855-1808
Amenemhet IV (Maakherure)	c. 1808-1799
Sobeknofru (Sobekkare)	c. 1799-1795

Chapter 13

Verses 1 – 4. So Abram returned to the Negev with Sarai, all his possessions, and Lot’s household and we are told that Abram had become very wealthy in livestock, silver, and gold. Again Abram moves from place to place as a nomad until he gets back to the spot between Bethel and Ai where he had stopped before and built an altar. There, again, he calls on the name of the Lord (worships God).

Verses 5 – 7. While Lot was in Egypt with Abram, he also acquired livestock and servants. So when they stopped for a while at the spot between Bethel and Ai it quickly became obvious that their combined flocks and herds were greater than could be sustained by the grasses of the land. In addition, there were Canaanites and Perizzites (descendants of Ham) living in the land and that made it even more difficult to provide for all the animals. Consequently quarrels arose among the servants caring for Abram’s animals and Lot’s animals.

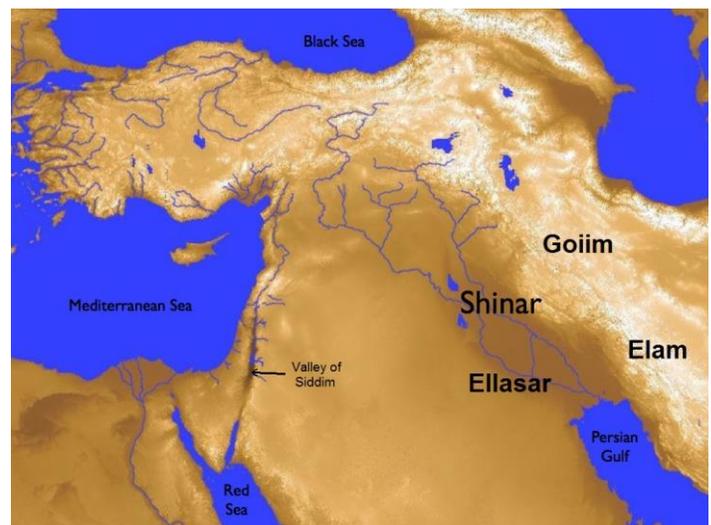
Verses 8 – 9. So that the fighting between the servants could be ended, Abram proposed that he and Lot would part company and move so that they would not be living so close that it would cause problems. Abram told Lot that the whole land was available (before him) so he should choose where he wanted to go (left or right) and whichever way Lot went he would go the other way. Abram is obviously the older, wealthier, and therefore the more powerful of the two men, so it would only be expected that he would choose the area he wanted and Lot, the less powerful, would have to settle for what remained. But Abram chooses to let his nephew, Lot, make his choice and Abram would take whatever was left.

Verses 10 – 13. Lot looks at the land that is available and sees that the whole plain east of the Jordan River was well watered and like a garden and therefore better living for his people and animals. Since this is being written after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Moses makes note that this was before that destruction. So Lot moves to the Jordan plain east of the Jordan River and sets up his tents near the city of Sodom. The exact location of Sodom is unknown, but it has been suggested that it was northeast of the Dead Sea, southeast of the Dead Sea or at the southern edge of the Dead Sea and now covered by the water. Moses notes for us that the people of Sodom were wicked and sinning greatly against God.

Verses 14 -18. After Lot departs from Abram, the Lord speaks to him and tells Abram to look in all directions and that everything that he sees will be given to him and his descendants forever. This is a confirmation of the previous promise that his descendants will be given the land of Canaan as an inheritance forever. God further tells Abram that his descendants will be like the dust of the earth (dust is obviously used as a hyperbole to show that the descendants would be numerous). Then God tells Abram to walk through the length and breadth (width) of the land because it is being given to him. So Abram moves his tents further south to the area of Hebron where he builds another altar for the worship of God.

Chapter 14

Verses 1 – 16. The Hebrew for verses one and two reads “And it came about in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim that they made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboim, and the king of Bela that is Zoar.” (1913 BC) The map to the right shows where the kings who came to the Valley of Siddim to do battle lived. The area west of the Jordan River had been subjected to the rule and demands of Chedorlaomer the king of Elam for thirteen years. But in the fourteenth year the people of the area rebelled against his rule.

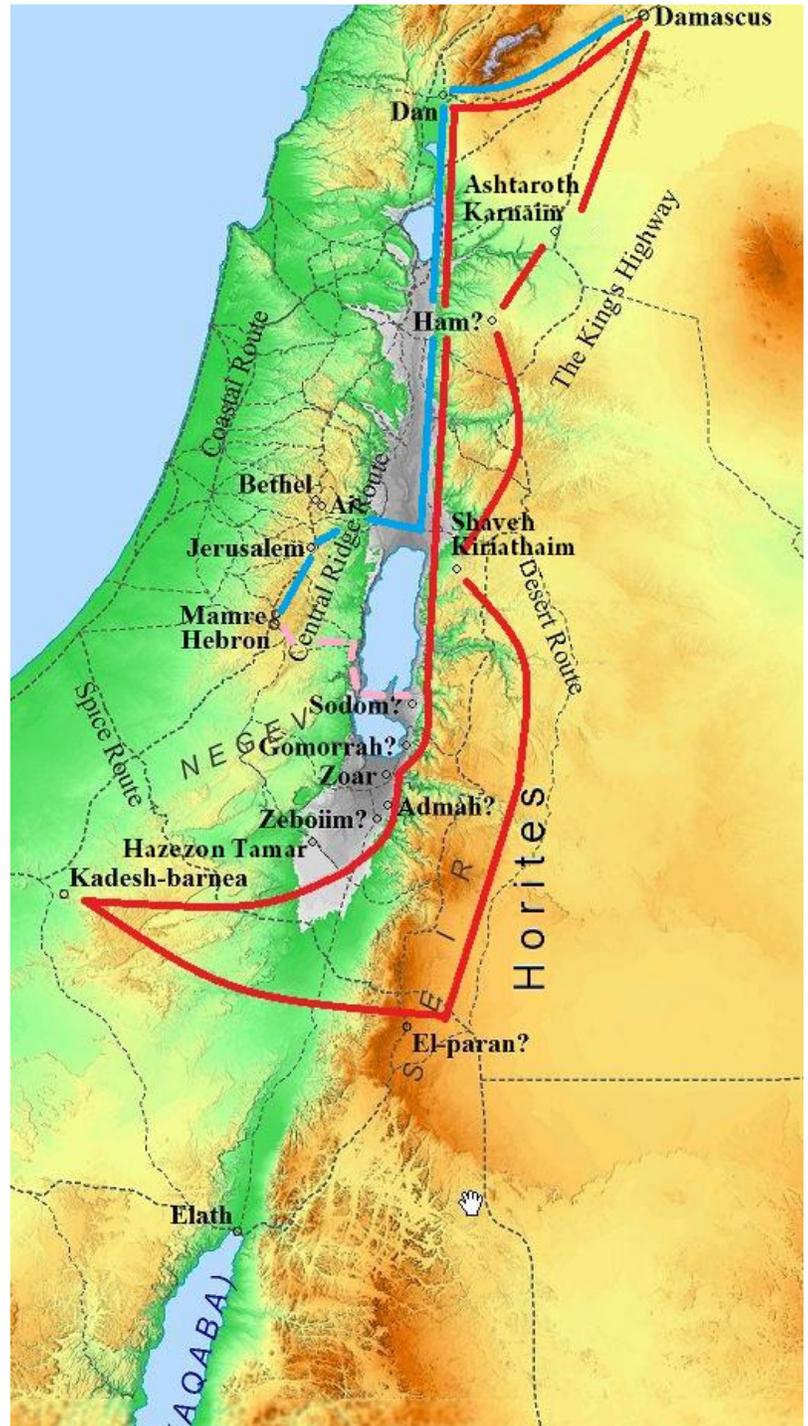


Due to that rebellion, Chedorlaomer and the kings in that area allied with him came to battle the rebellious people. The map at the right shows the route they took in putting down the rebellion. They defeated the Rephaites in Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zuzites in Ham, the Emities in Shaveh Kiriathaim and the Horites in the hill country of Seir as far as El Paran near the desert. Then they moved on to the area of En Mishpat (Kadesh) and conquered the whole territory of the Amalekites as well as the Amorites who were living in Hazezon Tamar.

Since Chedorlaomer's army is so close, the kings of five cities in the Valley of Siddim come out to battle with his army and hopefully keep them from capturing the cities. But most of their army would likely be composed of their citizens and not trained warriors so they quickly begin to flee. The Valley of Siddim contained many tar pits (Josephus calls the area Lake Asphaltitis in his *Antiquities* and *The Wars of the Jews*) and the fleeing armies of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fell there. Some individuals of their armies escaped into the mountains. Chedorlaomer seized the goods and food of Sodom and Gomorrah and then continued to return to their homeland.

Remember that Lot pitched his tents near Sodom and by this time he has apparently begun living in Sodom. So Lot and all his possessions are captured by Chedorlaomer and the captured people taken with the army as slaves. Someone (possibly one of Lot's servants) escapes and goes to where Abram is staying by the oak trees in Mamre (Hebron) to tell him what has happened to Lot. (Follow the pink line.) Abram has a covenant agreement with Mamre, Eshcol and Aner who are Amorites living there. When Abram hears what happened to Lot, he calls out 318 trained men who were born in his household and went in pursuit of Chedorlaomer. (Follow blue line.) He pursued them as far as Dan and during the night divided his men to attack the army. His attack routed the army and he pursued them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus, before defeating them. He recovered all the possessions of Lot along with other possessions and people of the other kings.

Retaliation is a practice that has been followed from ancient to modern times. The people didn't forgive or forget any wrongs or perceived wrongs done to them but harbored resentment for generations and would take advantage of any situation where they thought they could succeed in retaliation for those wrongs. So why would Abram risk his life and possessions with such a small force against Chedorlaomer's army? Perhaps love for his nephew, Lot, was a primary factor, but also he trusted in God's promised blessing and that his descendants would inherit and possess the land. So, he could pursue the army and trust God to take care of what happened. This is the type of trust that God expects of everyone who has faith in his promises.



Verses 17 -24. As Abram returns from routing the army of Chedorlaomer, the King of Sodom meets him in the Valley of Shaveh (King's Valley) which is outside of, but near, Salem (Jerusalem). When that meeting is taking place, the King of Salem who is named Melchizedek bring out bread and wine and blesses Abram saying that Abram is blessed by God and has delivered Abram's enemies into his hand. Melchizedek means "King of Righteousness" and may be a title rather than a proper name. Melchizedek is called "priest of God Most High (El Elyon)" the Possessor or Creator of heaven and earth.

Some individuals want to say this was a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus, but there is nothing in the text to indicate that and nowhere in the New Testament is that connection made evident. This event is occurring about 1913 BC and Shem is 533 years old and possibly the only person living who came through the flood (nothing is said about ages of Ham and Japheth or their deaths). So it is possible that it could be Shem who is living in Salem (although that is within territory mainly inhabited by descendants of Ham) and it is conceivable that he would be known as the "King of Righteousness" and the priest of God Most High. The writer of the book of Hebrews (Heb 7:1-3) refers to Melchizedek as being without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life and compares him to Jesus, saying that he remains a priest forever. But that description is pointing out a "likeness" and not equating Jesus and Melchizedek as the same person.

Bread and wine were typical food for royalty and especially for making covenants in that day. Although some people want to connect them with the elements of the Passover meal to which Jesus gave a special meaning for his followers, there is no basis here for making any such connection.

After Abram receives the blessing, he gives Melchizedek a tithe (tenth) of everything (possessions) he had captured. The King of Sodom tells Abram to give him the people and keep all the goods (possessions) for himself, but Abram replies that he has sworn to the Lord God Most High (YHWH El Elyon), Creator of heaven and earth, not to take anything but what his men have eaten so that no one may say that it made him rich, and the share of the men who went with him (Mamre, Eshcol, and Aner). It is quite possible that the wicked King of Sodom was setting Abram up to appear indebted to him for having made Abram rich rather than being indebted to Abram for defeating Chedorlaomer's army and getting his people and possessions back. But the Amorites who went with Abram were not bound by Abram's oath to God, so they deserved a portion of the "spoils of war."

It was common for people to practice tithing as an act of worship and to honor (give respect to) an important individual (See Jacob's act of worship in Gen 28:20-22). Since Abram had just received a blessing from Melchizedek, the priest of God most High and the King of Salem, it is an appropriate act of worship to give him a tithe to honor God whom Melchizedek represents as priest and through whom he has received God's pronouncement of blessing. Abram's refusal to take any of the "spoils of war" not only keeps him from being indebted to the King of Sodom, but also shows his faith that God would provide everything that he needed.

Chapter 15

Verses 1 – 6. After this event of Abram pursuing the western kings and freeing Lot and all that they had taken, God comes to Abram in a vision to tell him that he (God) is Abram's shield and very great reward. Abram had vowed to trust God and not take any portion of the people or goods that he liberated from the western kings. This taking of people and things from the western kings means Abram would expect retaliation from those kings and their descendants. God is affirming that he will be Abram's protector against such actions and also that Abram will be rewarded. Abram addresses God as "Adonay Yahuwah (Jehovah)" which means "Sovereign (Master) LORD (YHWH / Jehovah). This is the first time God is referred to by an individual in Scripture as "Sovereign" or "Master" and emphasizes Abram's faith (trust in God's direction and provision – his leadership as a master of a servant). But Abram asks how God can reward him since he is childless. Abram is remembering that God has said that he would become a great nation and that all people on earth would be blessed through him (Gen 12:2 – 3) and that his offspring would be like the dust of the earth (Gen 13:16). Abram is wondering how that promise will be fulfilled since the only person who will inherit his estate is

Eliezer of Damascus, a servant (probably the chief or head servant) who was born in his household (not of Abram's ancestors). As chief servant, Eliezer would take care of Abram like an heir in his old age (like a natural born son) and thus inherit his estate like a son would. God replies that this man (Eliezer) would not be Abram's heir but that a son from his own body would be. Then he takes Abram outside and has him look up at the heavens and count the stars if he can and promises that his offspring will be like the stars (too numerous to count). Some commentators see a difference between Abram's offspring being like the dust of the earth (physical descendants) and the stars of heaven (spiritual descendants) but it is unlikely that Abram would have made or even understood such a distinction. In the Hebrew text of verse 6 we are told that "He (Abram) believed in YHWH (LORD / Jehovah) and it was reckoned (credited) to him as righteousness." Believing something but not acting upon that belief shows that you don't really trust what you say you believe. Believing something and acting upon that belief is the definition of faith. Faith in God as Sovereign / Master and acting upon that belief is what Abram displayed as he left his family (broader meaning – extended relatives or tribe) to go into an unknown land inhabited by foreign (non-family) peoples and live there. That same faith is displayed in his pursuing the western kings to free his nephew Lot and the other people captured by them. Hebrew 11:6 says that "without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." That is the faith Abram displayed and for that faith he is credited as having a right standing (righteousness) with God. That right standing is the restored relationship that God promised in Genesis 3:15 would be achieved sometime in the future by one (the Messiah) who would come from the seed (offspring) of the woman (Eve). Jesus was that offspring as Luke showed in the third chapter of his gospel account of Jesus' life. Faith in God's promise of a right relationship with him is the basis of all salvation, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, those who had faith in God's promise looked forward to the work the Messiah would come and do and lived their lives showing their trust in the promise. In the New Testament, those who have faith in God's promise are looking back at the work Jesus did when he died on the cross for sin and live their lives showing their trust that he completed the promise.

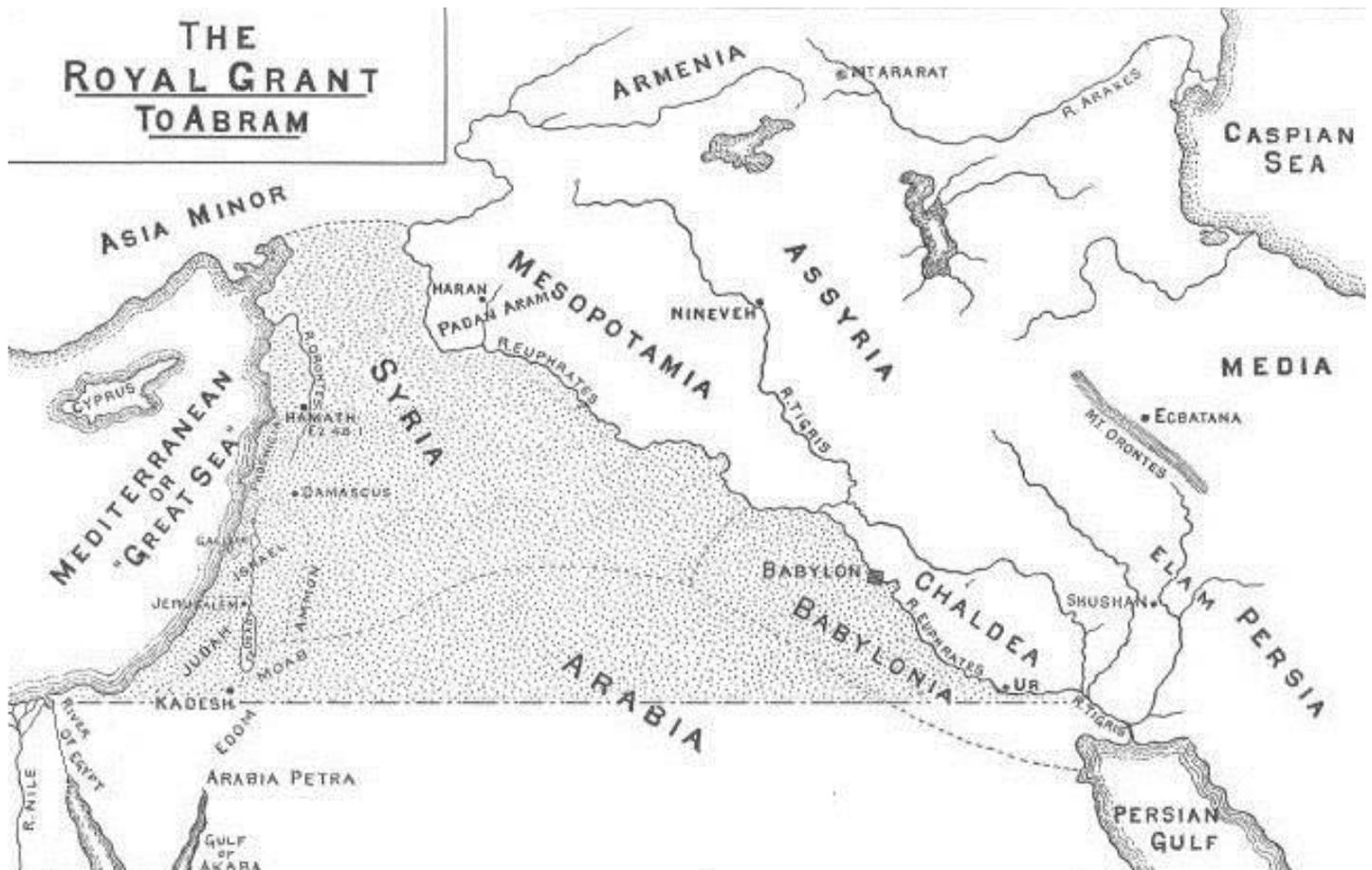
Verses 7 – 21. God reminds Abram that he is the one who brought him out the Ur of the Chaldeans to give him the land as his possession (and his offspring forever – Gen 13:16). Again Abram addresses God as "Sovereign YHWH" and proceeds to ask how he can know he will gain possession of it. Abram is asking for a sign from God, not to discern God's will but to confirm what Abram understands God's will to be. God tells him to bring a heifer, a goat, and a ram each three years old along with a dove and young pigeon and to cut the animals (except the birds) in half and arrange the halves opposite each other (in other words with a walkway between them). Birds of prey immediately sense a meal and swoop down to feed, so Abram has to drive them away. What God is having Abram do is prepare for a formal covenant. Covenants usually involved setting up of a stone or group of stones, the taking of an oath, a communal meal, and the sacrifice of animals or a combination of these. In the sacrifice of animals to formalize a covenant, both parties of the covenant usually walked together along the path between the halves of the sacrificed animals.

As the sun sets Abram falls into a deep sleep with a thick and dreadful darkness coming over him. The Hebrew says "terror and great darkness fell upon him." That Abram experiences terror with this deep sleep indicates this obviously is not a natural sleep but a sleep that God brings upon him like the one God caused to come upon Adam before he took part of his side to make Eve as one like Adam to be his helper. And the terror may also mean that Abram recognized that this deep sleep was sent by God. Then God speaks to Abram in his deep sleep and tells him that his descendants will be strangers in a foreign land and mistreated and serve as slaves for four hundred years before they come out in the fourth generation. He also tells Abram that the nation they serve as slaves will be punished and that his descendants will come out with great possessions to this area where the Amorites live. In part this delay is because the sin of the Amorites has not reached its full measure. But Abram will live to an old age and go to his fathers (die) in peace.

After the sun has set and darkness has fallen on the entire land, a smoking pot with a blazing torch appears and passes between the halves of the sacrificed animals. And in this we are told that God made a covenant with Abram. This covenant is like a Suzerainty Treaty. It is one-sided, committing the more powerful individual to

do something without any commitment on the part of the weaker individual. This is the third covenant that we have seen God make. The first was with Adam. (Gen 2:16 – 17) The second was with Noah and his family, with all living creatures, and with Noah’s descendants. (Gen 9:9 – 17) This third covenant is with Abram and his descendants, giving them all the land from the river of Egypt (Nile) to the great river, the Euphrates. That included the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites. The map at the right shows the best idea of where those lands were located and the map below shows the land granted to Abram. It is interesting to note that even in the days of Solomon when Israel had control or influence over a lot of territory, they never controlled all of this land granted to Abram and his descendants forever. The final fulfillment of God’s promise to Abram is still sometime in the future (the Millennium).

In verse 13 God told Abram that his descendants would live as strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years before they come out of that slavery with great possessions after God has punished the country that has enslaved them. At first scholars thought the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt occurred around 1220 – 1200



BC but the discovery of the Merneptah stele proved that the Israelites were well established in Canaan by this time, so that theory was abandoned. In Exodus 12:40 – 42, Moses writes that the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years and that at the end of that time, to the very day, they left Egypt. Some scholars want to start the time of slavery with when Jacob went to live in Egypt. They weren't slaves at that time but they were living in Egypt. Other scholars refer to Paul's writing to the Galatians (3:17 – 18) and see the time starting with the promise of land to Abram we have just read in Genesis 15. After much more research and discovery of other ancient texts, scholars have fairly well agreed that the Exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt is the same event called the expulsion of the Hyksos from Egypt in Egyptian texts. The exact date of this expulsion is not certain, but Bishop Ussher dates the Exodus to 1491 BC. Backing up the 430 years that Moses says they lived in Egypt we come to 1921 BC. That is the year that Abram and Sarai went to Egypt after entering Canaan because of the famine in the land. When you realize that the land of Canaan was under the control of Egypt at this time, it is easy to see that from the time Abram entered Canaan he and all his descendants were effectively living in Egypt until God had Moses lead them out in 1491 BC.

Chapter 16

Verses 1 – 6. In chapter 15 we learned that Abram was concerned about how God would fulfill his promise of a great number of descendants because he was childless and because of that his estate would be inherited by his servant who was not of his ancestors who had been born in his household. God promised Abram that a servant would not become his heir but his heir would be a son from his own body (Gen 15:4). Now, a couple of years later (1911 BC, 10 years after Abram entered Canaan) we find that Sarai is so concerned about not having borne any children for Abram (a son that would be his heir is really the concern) that she proposes a solution to the problem so that Abram could have an heir from his own body. Scholars Gordon Wenham (*Genesis 16 – 50*, p) and Stuart West (*The Nuzi Tablets*, p) have explained for us that what Sarai was proposing to Abram was a common practice in those days as shown in the Nuzi tablets. The Nuzi tablets record the common practice of a wife having her servant bear a child for her husband and the child being accepted as coming from her. (See Appendix 2) Although Sarai's proposal was a common practice, it still shows a lack of understanding that God who created the universe can cause anything to happen just as he wants. It shows a lack of trust in God's word just like Eve fell for Satan's temptation to distrust God's word. It also shows the human willingness to try to cause what God has promised in our own timing instead of waiting for his timing. Abram's agreeing to Sarai's proposal shows his willingness to follow his wife's leading rather than follow God's just as Adam followed Eve's lead in eating the forbidden fruit rather than following God's command. When Abram had sexual relations with Sarai's servant, Hagar, she effectively became his concubine or second wife although she didn't have the same status as Sarai, his first wife. Hagar's son was then considered an heir of Abram.

But when Hagar knew that she was pregnant by Abram, she began to despise her mistress. Sarai's response was to blame Abram for how she was being despised by Hagar rather than accepting that it was her fault for following the common practices of the culture to try and make God's promise happen rather than wait for God to fulfill his promise. This tendency to blame others began in the Garden of Eden as Adam and Eve chose to blame someone else rather than accept responsibility for their own actions. Although polygamy is not openly condemned in the Old Testament, it was obviously not God's plan as shown in Genesis 2:24. Jesus referred to Genesis 2:24 when he was questioned about divorce (Matt 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-9) to show that God hated divorce and that marriage was between one man and one woman.

Sarai appeals to God's judgment as to which of them has acted rightly. Of course both of them have acted wrongly, but Abram compounds it by telling Sarai that Hagar is her servant so she should do whatever she wants with her. He doesn't take any responsibility but deflects it all to her. Sarai then compounds her wrong actions by mistreating Hagar for obeying what she was told to do. As a servant, Hagar had no say about what she was told to do so she is not responsible for becoming pregnant, but she is responsible for showing that she despised her mistress. So, none of them is right before the Lord. Hagar's response to her mistreatment by Sarai is to flee from Abram's household.

Verses 7 – 14. As Hagar flees, the angel of the Lord meets her at a spring that is along the road from Hebron toward the Wilderness of Shur. (See map at right.) This is the first of several times in the Old Testament that we are told “the angel of the Lord” appeared to someone. In Genesis 22:11 – 16 the angel of the Lord is identified as God, himself. So this would be a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus since this is the way that God interacts with the physical universe.. On other occasions in the Old Testament we are told that “an angel of the Lord” appeared to someone. These would be appearances of one of God’s angel in bodily form specifically allowed by God for the occasion.



God asks Hagar where she has come from and where she is going. Hagar’s answer is just that she is running away from her mistress Sarai. She does not say what her plan is but since she is on the road from Canaan to Egypt and she is an Egyptian, it would most likely be that she is returning to find people she knew in Egypt and perhaps get some help from them. But God tells her to return to her mistress and submit to her and that he will increase her descendants that they will be too numerous to count. Remember that God promised Abram his descendants would be more numerous than the dust of the earth, so this shows Abram’s son through Hagar would also inherit that part of God’s blessing of Abram. God tells Hagar that she will have a son and that he should be named, Ishmael which means “God hears” because the Lord has heard her misery. God goes on to say that Ishmael will be “a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward (or to the east of) all his brothers.” The history of the entire Middle East shows that God’s prophecy for the future of Ishmael (being against everyone and them against him) has happened just as prophesied. Hagar replies by giving the angel a name that means “you are the God who sees me” for she says that she has now seen the One who sees me. The place of the spring was named Beer-lahai-roi which means “well of the Living One who sees me.”

Verses 15 – 16. We are told that Hagar bore a son to Abram and he was named Ishmael and that Abram was 86 years old when Ishmael was born. We later learn in Genesis 21:5 that Abram was 100 when Sarai gives birth to Isaac. So, when Isaac is born, Ishmael is 14 years old. We also know that Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran in 1921 BC so that means Ismael birth was in 1910 BC and that’s how we know the beginning of chapter 16 happens in 1911 BC.

Chapter 17

Verses 1 – 8. We are told that Abram is 99 years old when the event that is going to be described happens. That means Ishmael is 13 years old and that the year is 1897 BC. God appears to Abram, identifies himself as God Almighty (El Shaddai), commands Abram to walk blameless before him, and confirms the covenant he has made with him to greatly increase his descendants. Abram falls face down before God in worship and God continues speaking about the covenant and says that Abram will no longer be called by that name but will be called Abraham which means “father of many” because God has made him a father of many nations. Even though Abraham only has one son, God who knows the end of history at the very beginning, speaks of the covenant of giving Abraham many descendants as already having been completed. God says that Abraham will be the father of many nations and kings will come from him (from his descendants). God restates his promised that the land where Abraham is living as an alien (and identifies it as Canaan) will be given to his descendants as an everlasting possession and that God, himself, will be their God (a special relationship).

Verses 9 – 14. Then God tells Abraham that he and his descendants must keep the covenant and tells him that every male must be circumcised when they are 8 days old and that the command includes all the males born in his household (offspring and servants) and all those males bought from aliens. Circumcision is to be the outward sign of God's covenant with Abraham and his descendants and any male who is not circumcised will be cut off from his people because he has broken the covenant. The covenant had to be with all males in Abraham's household, including servants, because all of them would be affected by the promised blessing to Abraham and anyone who rejected the covenant sign was rejecting God's promise and therefore would be cut off from the household. Being "cut off" could mean being excommunicated from the community and its benefits or it could mean premature death or even execution.

Circumcision was not a new thing. The priests in Egypt, as well as most Canaanites, Arabs, and Hurrians (Horites), practiced it, but for them it was a rite of passage into adulthood and therefore done on young adults. The idea of circumcision of infants was something new. Performing the circumcision on the eighth day after birth is less traumatic than being done at an older age. Medical research has determined that at birth a baby has many nutrients, antibodies and other things, one of those being the mother's blood clotting factor. The blood clotting factor depends on vitamin K for it to be produced and vitamin K is produced by intestinal bacteria which are not present in a newborn. So after birth, the blood clotting factor begins to decrease so that by the third day it is 30% of normal. For that reason, circumcision on the third day could result in a fatal hemorrhage. By the third days after birth intestinal bacteria begins to manufacture vitamin K and its production climbs until on the eighth day it overshoots 100% of the normal to about 110% before dropping back to the normal level. So the ideal day for circumcision would be the eighth day. Most circumcisions today are done on the second day which would seem to still be risky. Vitamin K is routinely administered to newborns shortly after their delivery to eliminate the clotting problem. Some people want to see circumcision on the eighth day as symbolic of completing a cycle of seven days that would correspond to the days of creation, but a 1953 pediatrics textbook recommended that the best day to circumcise a newborn was the eighth day of life. (L. Holt Jr. and R. McIntosh, *Holt Pediatrics*, pp 125-26) and that seems to be the best explanation.

Verses 15 – 27. God tells Abraham that from now on Sarai's name would be changed to Sarah which means "princess" and that she will be blessed so that she will be the mother of nations and that kings of peoples will come from her. On hearing this, Abraham falls face down, laughs, and says to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?" He doesn't believe God can cause such a thing to happen, so he says to God, "If only Ishmael might live under your blessing." Abraham believes God promised blessing of many descendants and that they will inherit the promised land, but he can only believe that it has to come through God blessing Ishmael. God tells Abraham that Ishmael will be blessed but that Sarah will bear him a son who will be called Isaac and that the covenant will be established through him and his descendants. But God says he will bless Ishmael, that he will be the father of twelve rulers and be made a great nation. But, God reiterates that Sarah will bear a son to Abraham by this time next year. When he finished speaking to Abraham, God went up from him.

On the same day God appeared and spoke to him, Abraham took Ishmael (13 years of age) and every male in his household (born or bought from a foreigner) and circumcised them and Abraham himself was circumcised at 99 years of age.

Chapter 18

Verses 1 – 15. Sometime after Abraham and all the males were circumcised, but still in 1897 BC, the Lord (YHWH) again appeared to Abraham near the great trees (Oaks) of Mamre which are near Hebron. Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. That could have been anywhere from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. but more likely around noon. Abraham looks up and sees three men standing nearby. Immediately, he runs from his tent to meet them and bows low to the ground. This reaction and his statement, "My Master" (Adonai) indicates that he knows one of them as God who appeared to him and instituted the covenant of circumcision for him and all the males in his household for all generations. He asks God and the two with him

not to pass by but allow him to bring water for their feet to be washed and time for them to rest under a tree with him. Abraham's hospitality was the normal custom in his day for treating passing strangers. He also asks that they allow him to have some food prepared for them to eat so they can be refreshed before they go on their way. In some respects it is still the same today. But in Abraham's case on this particular day, since he recognizes one of the strangers as the Lord (YHWH), it is more an act of worship and a time of intimate fellowship with God whom Abraham trusts to keep his promises and covenant with him and his descendants. God agrees that they will wait while Abraham has food prepared and water brought to refresh them.

So Abraham hurries into the tent to tell Sarah to get some flour, knead it and bake some bread. And he runs to the place where his herd is to select a choice (spotless), tender calf, gives it to a servant to prepare it. Baking bread, even if it is not made with yeast (unleavened) or not allowed to rise, takes time. Killing the calf, skinning it, and roasting it also takes time (probably about 5 hours) so all of this is a big production and goes further than just the friendly custom of inviting a travelling stranger to sit, rest, and be refreshed for a while. And when the meal is prepared and brought for the Lord and the other two strangers to eat (probably around 5 p.m.), Abraham stands nearby as they eat. Not sitting and eating with them is another sign that Abraham recognized God as his Master because a servant doesn't sit and eat with his master.

God asks Abraham where his wife, Sarah, is and Abraham indicates she is in the tent. This doesn't mean God didn't know where Sarah is, but just like his question to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and his question to Cain about his brother, it was a way to start a discussion about a topic God wanted to address. God tells Abraham that he will visit him again about this same time next year and that Sarah will have a son by then. Sarah was listening at the opening of the tent and when she hears that she will have a son within a year she laughs to herself and thinks to herself that she is 89 years old and well past the normal age of bearing children and Abraham is 99 years old, so will she now have to pleasure of giving Abraham a son. God asks Abraham who Sarah laughed and said that she was too old to have a child. And he asks Abraham if anything is too hard (difficult) for the Lord. Then he again states that Sarah will have a son. Sarah is obviously standing in the tent opening because, in fear (either in awe of his power or not wanting to offend him), she responds to God's question by lying and saying she didn't laugh. But God confronts her lying and says that she did laugh. God's statement shows that he heard her thoughts and that should encourage her that if he can read thoughts he can also open her womb and provide a son even in her old age. We, like Sarah and Abraham, need to remember that nothing is impossible for the One created the universe and everything in it out of nothingness. (Gen 1)

Verses 16 – 33. When the Lord and the angels with him get up to leave after eating (around 6 p.m.), they look toward Sodom, which means they indicated that is the direction they were headed. Abraham walks along with them as part of a host's seeing his guests off on their journey much as we might walk guests to their car to see them on their way. The Lord's question about whether he should hide from Abraham what he is about to do may be an internal conversation of the triune Godhead and not to be heard by the angels or Abraham. Or it could be a discussion with the angels in the spiritual realm and not open for Abraham to hear. Or it could be that God openly asked the question, made his statement about Abraham's becoming a great nation and all nations on earth being blessed through him, and acknowledges that he has chosen Abraham so that he will direct his household and descendants to follow him by doing what is right so that he will cause to happen what he has promised to Abraham so that Abraham will be encouraged to maintain his faith in the promises. The latter explanation is probably the best choice of what transpired between God, the angels, and Abraham. God is choosing to reveal to Abraham how he intends to judge Sodom and Gomorrah for their unrighteous actions and thus encourage Abraham and his descendants to act righteously. From this we see that fellowship is what God desires with man and it involves an intimate relationship which includes being told what God is about to do, although God doesn't always give all the details of what his actions will be or when or how. God revealed to the prophets that would come through the ages, partial details of the future to encourage, strengthen, and direct them in how people should live. Even in his great revelation to the Apostle John, God did not give complete details, but only enough that people should know what living in the world would be like just before he returned to take control of everything and send Satan and his angels (demons) to their just punishment for their revolt against his rightful control of all that he had created.

Even though the men (angels) turned and went on toward Sodom, Abraham remained standing with the Lord (YHWH). Then Abraham, like a friend with a friend, approached and asked God if he would indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked. Abraham asks God if he would really sweep the city away if there were 50 righteous people living there. And then he exclaims that it would be far from God's nature to treat the righteous and the wicked alike and kill them all. And he asks, "Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?" God responds that if he finds 50 righteous people in the city he will spare it. Then Abraham speaks to God again, recognizing that he has been bold in asking God such a question, but proceeds to ask if he finds five less than the 50 righteous people would the Lord destroy the city. When God says no, Abraham continues to keep asking about even lower numbers of righteous people until he reaches the number 10. Each time God answers he would spare the city if that number of righteous people were found.

This is the first time in Scripture that a human initiates a conversation with God. In all previous contacts, God has initiated it. Prayer is conversation with God and we are given a glimpse into Abraham's prayer time with God. Abraham is interceding with God on behalf of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. This question and answer dialog between them raises some questions in our minds. One question is whether this "haggling" with God is an example that we should follow. To some people it would seem that Abraham was trying to wear God down and get him to change his mind about destroying the cities. If that was what Abraham was trying to do then he didn't succeed because God does destroy the cities and it would appear that Abraham gave up asking before God ceased giving. But Abraham's intercession is not strictly for the cities or even for the wicked inhabitants of the cities but for the righteous people living in those cities. He was appealing to God's justice for the righteous and not to his mercy (unmerited favor) toward the wicked as shown by his statement about treating the righteous and wicked alike and his question about the Judge of the earth doing what is right (v 25). But indeed, sparing the wicked from judgment for a while would give them time to change their ways and accept God's rule over their lives. So that would be a merciful outcome for the wicked if they changed. A second question is why Abraham stopped asking when he learned the Lord would not destroy the cities if there were 10 righteous in them. There is no definite answer to this question. Perhaps he thought there would have been at least 10 righteous people due to Lot's influence in the area. But perhaps a more likely explanation is that God did not give him the opportunity to go any further. God knew what the cities were like and whether there were any righteous people in them and he already knew he was going to spare the righteous if they would listen and do what he said. It is the same as for the second coming (or return) of Jesus. Jesus said he was coming back but only the Father knew at what time. (Matt 24) God didn't give Abraham all the information about what he was going to do but just enough for Abraham to be involved in talking with God about it. A third question is whether God would spare a city or nation today because of the Christians living in it. God did not spare Sodom because righteous Lot lived there, but he did choose to give Lot the chance to leave before he judged the cities and the inhabitants for their wickedness. God doesn't always remove his righteous people before judging the wicked as in the example of Daniel and his three friends being taken into captivity by the Babylonians as he used Nebuchadnezzar to judge the wicked people of Judah. (See Daniel 1; 2 Kings 24-25; 2 Chronicles 36; Jeremiah 5; and the book of Ezekiel, the righteous prophet living in the unrighteous land of Babylon giving the exiles God's reason for judging them and his promise that in the future he will give them everything promised to Abraham.) From this dialog we learn that a godly minority may not prevent God's judgment if the wickedness of the people is exceedingly great, but nevertheless the righteous Judge does act justly and those who deserve judgment will eventually receive it. We also see in Abraham's bold, persistent prayer with God what Jesus taught about bold, persistent prayer in Luke 11:5-10 and Luke 18:1-8. We also know from Jesus' telling about the fates of the rich man and Lazarus that the righteous are saved from the judgment that is reserved for the wicked after death even if they have experienced hardship (or even persecution) while alive. (See Luke 16:19 – 31. This is not a parable because it names an individual which parables do not. Parables are a made-up story to teach a truth while this is a story about an individual which tells the truth of the situation.)

Other things to learn from chapter 18 are that God reveals himself to individuals for the purpose of fellowship (eating together) and when the individual participates in that fellowship it leads to further revelation and greater understanding about God's will and his ultimate judgment of everyone who continues to live in opposition to

God's rule in their life. Understanding that God will ultimately judge the wicked should give us incentive to seek his justice for the righteous and even a delaying of that judgment so that the wicked might turn from their ways and be counted among the righteous.

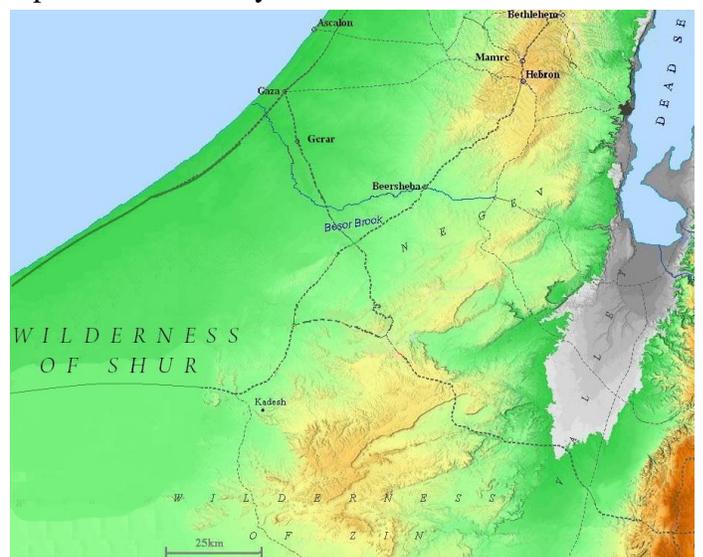
Chapter 19

Verses 1 – 11. When the two angels arrive at the gate of Sodom in the evening (about 6 p.m.), Lot is sitting there. The city gate was the spot where the leading members of a city would sit so people could seek their counsel or make a legal ruling in disputes between individuals. It appears that Lot did not just move his tent near Sodom (Gen 13:12) but he moved into Sodom and became one of the leading citizens. When Lot sees the angels arrive at the gate, he gets up to meet them and bows down with his face to the ground. We don't know whether Lot thought they were angels or just very important individuals, but his bowing with his face to the ground indicated worship. Like Abraham, Lot expresses great hospitality to these visitors to the city and invites them to come to his house to wash their feet and spend the night before they continue on their journey the next morning. The angels answer that they will stay the evening in the city square but Lot insists strongly that they not do that but stay at his house, so they agree. Lot obviously knows that the people of Sodom are like and didn't want these strangers subjected to what he must know would confront them during the night. The angels agree and go to Lot's home with him where he has a meal prepared for them. Since the meal included unleavened bread which takes less time to prepare, it probably was part of the meal his family would have eaten and not a special meal like Abraham prepared for the Lord and the angels to eat. While they are eating the news about strangers in the city spread around Sodom and all the men, young and old, came to surround Lot's home. They call out (shout) for Lot to bring the "men" out so they can have sex with them, but Lot goes out instead and pleads with them not to do such a wicked thing. This would be what Lot was trying to save the strangers from enduring if they stayed in the town square for the night. Instead, Lot goes out and offers to allow the men to do whatever they wanted sexually with his two virgin daughters and pleads with the men not to do anything to the men because they are under the protection of his roof (his care). Some people want to claim that the sin of the men of Sodom that night was inhospitality toward strangers, but the words of the men of Sodom and of Lot clearly indicate that acts of homosexuality were their real intent. The Sodomites reject Lot's offer of his daughters instead of the men, ridiculing Lot as being an alien who came to them and now wants to be a judge. They threaten Lot with even worse things than they would do to the men and kept pressing closer to him and moving him back toward his house where they would break down his door and take the men so they could do their wicked things to them. But as Lot is backed up to the door, the men reach out to pull Lot inside, shut the door, and then strike the Sodomite men with blindness so they couldn't find the door.

Verses 12 – 22. Then the two angels ask Lot if he has anyone else in the city, like sons, sons-in-law, or other daughters, who belong to him (are of his household) and tell him to get them out of the city because they have been sent by the Lord to destroy the city because the outcry to the Lord about their evil is so great. As a response to the angels' questions about other in his household, Lot goes out to speak with the two men who have been pledged to his daughters to be their husbands because they are his sons-in-law to be. He tells them to hurry and get out of the city because it is about to be destroyed but they think he is joking. When dawn comes (about 5 to 6 a.m.), the angels tell Lot to hurry and get his wife and daughters out of the city or they will be swept away when the city is punished. Remember in the last chapter in Abraham's prayer conversation with God he asked if God would sweep away the righteous with the wicked. The angels' statement tells us that God will protect the righteous from being swept away if they obey him. When Lot hesitates, the angels grasp all four individuals by their hands and lead them safely out of the city. Then one of the angels tells them to flee for their lives, don't stop anywhere in the plains but go to the mountains, and not to look back or they will be swept away. Lot tells the angels that he appreciates their kindness in sparing his life, but complains that he can't flee into the mountains because the disaster will overtake him and he'll die. So he asks that they let him flee to a small town nearby (probably about the distance of a one to two hour journey) and there have his life spared. The angels agree to let him flee to the small town and not overthrow it, but they tell him to hurry because they can't do anything until he reaches the town. The name of the town is Zoar which means "small." Zoar was a small town in the plains but it was spared just as the angels said.

Verses 23 – 29. We are told that by the time Lot reached Zoar the sun had risen over the land (that could be as early as 7 a.m.) and that’s when the Lord (YHWH) rained down burning sulfur (brimstone and fire) from the heavens on Sodom and Gomorrah. We are told that by this rain of burning sulfur all the cities of the plain (except Zoar) were overthrown (swept away) including all the people and vegetation. (Deut 29:23 informs us that the cities of Admah and Zeboiim were also destroyed.) While this was happening, Lot’s wife turned and looked back at Sodom. She might have been curious about what was happening or couldn’t believe that everything they had gained by Lot choosing to live in the fertile land of the plain near Sodom was now lost. We don’t know why she looked after the angel had told them not to look back, but she did and as a result she was turned into a pillar of salt. I know of no scientific explanation for how that could happen so it had to be a miraculous act of God judging her disobedience. Abraham rose from sleep early that morning and walked back to the place where he and God had talked about what the Lord was going to do. As he looked down toward Sodom and all the land of the plain, he saw dense smoke like from a furnace rising from all over the land. So Abraham would know from the rising smoke that God didn’t find ten righteous people in the city, but he wouldn’t know that God had spared Lot and his family until he later had contact with Lot (which we are not told when that happened – it might not have been face-to-face but only a messenger).

Verses 30 – 38. It appears that Lot didn’t stay long in Zoar, but quickly went up into the nearby mountains east of Zoar to live in a cave with his two daughters. We are told that he was afraid to live in Zoar. He may have been afraid of what the people might do to them if they stayed because the people feared that what happened to Sodom might also happen to them if Lot lived there like he did in Sodom before it was destroyed. Lot may have been afraid that what happened in Sodom might also happen in Zoar because the people were living in the same manner as those in Sodom. We might be able to come up with some other speculations as to why Lot was afraid, but they would be just that – speculations – because the exact reason is not given to us and we don’t need to know the reason, just that his fear caused him to live in a cave in the mountains. After living there a few days to a few months, Lot’s older daughter talks with her sister about the fact that their father is old and there is no man around to lie with them (have sexual relations) like it is the custom all over the earth. So she suggests that they get their father drunk, lie down with him, and in that way preserve their family line. That night they carried out their plan and their father didn’t even know when one got up and the other lay down with him. Whether that happened just one night or it took many such nights, both daughters became pregnant by their father and both had sons. The older daughter named her son Moab which sounds like the Hebrew for “from father.” He became the father of all the Moabites. The younger daughter named her son Ben-Ammi which means “son of my people.” He became the father of all the Ammonites. (See map above for where those descendants lived.)



Chapter 20

Verses 1 – 2. Abraham does not have a house with land around it. He is a nomad, moving around as necessary to provide pasture for his extensive flocks

and herds. So after living near the great oaks of Mamre for some time, Abraham moved south into the Negev area and lived between Kadesh and Shur. On the way to Kadesh he stayed for a time in Gerar which is southwest of Mamre and due north of Kadesh. While staying near Gerar, Abraham did the same thing as he did when he went down to Egypt shortly after he entered Canaan for the first time 24 years earlier (1921 BC). It is now less than a year from the time that Sarah is to give birth to the son God has promised Abraham will have by her. And again he identifies Sarah as his sister and not his wife. And when Abimelech, the king of Gerar, hears this he sends some of his people to fetch her to become part of his harem of wives. Obviously, at 89 years old Sarah is still a beautiful woman and it must have been early enough in the pregnancy that it was known that she was carrying a child.

Verses 3 – 7. Right after Abimelech took Sarah into his house, God appeared to him in a dream. This is one of the ways God interacted with people in the Old Testament times to communicate his will to them. This still happens today in areas where people do not have God's written word, or a believer to tell them God's word. In the dream God told Abimelech that he was as good as dead because the woman he had taken was a married woman. Abimelech had not gone near Sarah so in the dream he asked God if he would destroy an innocent nation. He obviously believed that God had the power and would destroy not only him but his whole family and all the people he ruled if he had committed adultery and defiled another man's marriage. Then he explained his innocence by recounting that Abraham had said she was his sister and she had said that he was her brother. So he claimed to have a clear conscience and clean hands because he had done nothing wrong. God agreed that Abimelech had taken Sarah with a clear conscience and that is the reason he had not let Abimelech do what would be a sin by touching her. God tells Abimelech to return Sarah to Abraham because he is a prophet and will pray for him so he will live. But if Abimelech does not do what God has said, he is warned that he and all of his will die. This is the first time that anyone has been identified as a prophet. A prophet is not just an individual who foretells the future but someone God uses to speak for him with other people to tell them his will and explain how to live according to God's will.

Verses 8 – 17. Early the next morning, Abimelech calls all his officials and tells them about the dream. They are all afraid of what God might do to them based on what Abimelech decides to do. Abimelech has Abraham brought to him and asks what he has done and what wrong has been done to Abraham that he would cause such great guilt upon him and the entire kingdom. Abraham explains that he had said to himself that there was surely no fear of God in this place and that they will kill him to take his wife. Sarah really is Abraham's sister by his father but not by his mother. So when God told Abraham to leave his father's household and led him into Canaan, Abraham told Sarah that she could show her love to him by telling people everywhere they go that he is her brother. Even though it is the truth that Sarah is his sister, it is not the whole truth and is meant to deceive people. Abimelech responds by returning Sarah to Abraham as God had directed but goes beyond that by giving him sheep, cattle, and male and female slaves. And then he turns to Sarah and gives her a thousand shekels of silver to cover the offense against her and to completely vindicate her before everyone. (1000 shekels of silver would be about 25 pounds = 400 ounces, and would be about \$6,000 at the current price of \$15 per ounce). Abimelech also gives Abraham permission to live anywhere he would like within his kingdom. When Abraham prays for Abimelech, God heals him and all the females in his household so that they can again have children. What we are not told before this is that God had sealed up the womb of every woman in Abimelech's household because he had taken Sarah to become one of his wives. After this event, we are not told where Abraham chooses to live but probably not in the city of Gerar but somewhere else in the area between the Wilderness of Shur and the Negev, probably near Beersheba as we will see later.

Chapter 21

Verses 1 – 7. In the fullness of time, God is gracious to Sarah and she gives birth to a son just as he had promised her a year earlier. Sarah is 90 years old and Abraham is 100 years old. Abraham names his son, Isaac which means "he laughs." When Isaac is eight days old, Abraham circumcises him just as God had commanded. Sarah says that God has brought her laughter and everyone who hears about this will also laugh because who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children. This reaffirms for everyone that

what God says will happen will come to pass in the proper time. Ishmael would be 14 years old at this time.

Verses 8 – 21. We are told that Isaac grew and was weaned from being nursed. Weaning normally occurred when a child was between 2 and 3 years old. So Ishmael would be sixteen or seventeen years old at this time. To celebrate the weaning, Abraham holds a great feast (party) for the entire household. But Sarah notices that Ishmael was mocking. We're not told who he was mocking or how but considering he was a teenager and the first child of Abraham, he was probably mocking Isaac and maybe even "rolling" his eyes about a celebration because Isaac was weaned. The son of a concubine would not be considered a man's legal heir if the man's wife gave him a son, but he could inherit property that came from his concubine mother. (see similar situation in Judges 9:1-3) Sarah is upset by the mocking and doesn't want Ishmael to inherit anything of Abraham's household so she tells Abraham to get rid of Hagar. Remember that Sarah had become upset because Hagar despised her after she became pregnant with Ishmael (Gen 16:4-6) and Abraham responded by telling Sarah to do whatever she thought was best. Sarah responded by mistreating Hagar until she fled from Mamre toward Egypt along the road through the Wilderness of Shur. Now Sarah wants Abraham to get rid of Hagar (sell her or just send her out into the wilderness) because that would mean Hagar would no longer have anything of Abraham's which could be given to Ishmael. The whole matter upset Abraham because he was concerned for his son Ishmael even though he was the son from a concubine. God speaks to Abraham and tells him not to be distressed but do whatever Sarah says because the promised blessing of descendants will come through Isaac. But God says he will also make Ishmael into a nation because he is Abraham's son. This is the first Abraham has been told what God had said to Hagar sixteen years earlier. Ishmael will be blessed because he is Abraham's son but he will not be the conduit for the blessing of numerous descendants who will inherit the land forever (Gen 15:4 -20).

Early the next morning Abraham gave food and water to Hagar and sent them away into the desert around Beersheba. He knows God has said he will make Ishmael a great nation so he no longer is distressed over the idea of sending Hagar and Ishmael away. He knows from experience that God's word can be trusted so he knows Ishmael will somehow survive. When the water was gone, Hagar put Ishmael under a bush and sat down a bowshot away. The exact distance is not relevant. Hagar wants to be away from Ishmael because she doesn't want to watch him die. And as she sits there she sobs. But apparently Ishmael was also crying because God heard him and calls to Hagar for her to tell him what is wrong. Then he tells her not to be afraid but take him by the hand because he will be made into a great nation. Then God opens Hagar's eyes so she sees a well of water and she goes to it, gets some, and gives it to Ishmael to drink.



The information about Ishmael is concluded by saying God was with him as he grew up living in the desert and that he became an archer. While Ishmael was living in the Wilderness of Paran, which is south of Kadesh at the northern part of the Sinai Peninsula, Hagar got a wife for him from Egypt where she was living when she became a servant in Abraham's household. Later in chapter 25 we will learn more about Ishmael and discover that he lives to be 137 years old.

Verses 22 – 34. At the time of the celebration of the weaning of Isaac and the sending away of Hagar and Ishmael, Abraham is approached by Abimelech, the king of Gerar, and his commander of forces, Phicol, with a request for a treaty. Scholars, like Ray and Wenham, explain that "Phicol" may not be a proper name but a title. Abimelech has recognized that Abraham is blessed by God in everything he does so he wants to make a treaty

with him that Abraham will deal truthfully with him and his descendants and show them the kindness that he has shown him. Abraham swears the agreement and then complains about a well of water that Abimelech's servants have seized. "Servants" here probably means some of the king's subjects rather than servants of his household whose activities would have been readily known by Abimelech, because he disavows any prior knowledge of such a seizure. As Abraham brings cattle and sheep to give to Abimelech to seal the treaty, he sets apart seven ewe lambs (young female sheep) and Abimelech wants to know the meaning of separating these ewe lambs from the rest. Abraham replies that Abimelech should accept those seven as a witness (proof) of his claim that he had dug the well. Some scholars believe the lambs also are a purchase price for the well and the land surrounding it. Abimelech must have agreed because they both swore an oath with each other before Abimelech and Phicol departed for their home (Gerar). If the giving of the ewe lambs was indeed a sale of the well and the surrounding area it would be the first parcel that he owned of all the land God had promised to give Abraham and his descendants. We are told that the place of that well and surrounding area where Abraham had been living in his tent was from that time on called Beersheba which can mean "well of seven" or "well of the oath." After they left, Abraham planted a tamarisk tree there and called upon (worshipped) the name of the Lord (YHWH), the God Eternal (El Olam). Abraham continued to live in the land of the Philistines for the remainder of his life.

Chapter 22

Verses 1 – 8. We are told that sometime later God (Elohim) tested Abraham. We aren't told how many years later, but Josephus gives Isaac's age as 25 and that would be in 1871 BC. (Flavius Josephus, "Antiquities of the Jews" Book 1 Chapter 13) God spoke to Abraham during the night (whether audibly or in a dream is not given) and tells him to take Isaac to the region of Moriah and sacrifice him on a mountain which will be shown to him at a later time. The region of Moriah was the mountainous terrain around what would later be called Jerusalem. In 2 Chronicles 3:1 we are told that "Solomon began to build the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah" and that this was the "threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite."

Early the next morning after hearing this command from God, Abraham arises, gets two servants and Isaac, cuts wood for the burnt offering, and with his donkey saddled sets off for the region of Moriah. On the third day of their journey, Abraham looks up and sees the place where God wants him to make the burnt offering sacrifice. He tells the two servants to stay with the donkey while he and the boy go over there.

"Boy" doesn't mean Isaac was young like a preteen. The Hebrew word "na'ar" is used to refer to a child from infancy (birth) to young adulthood (20 to 25). Abraham emphatically says that "We will worship and then we will come back to you." He knows that worship is to be the offering of Isaac as a burnt offering sacrifice to the Lord but emphatically states that they will both return. That can only mean that Abraham trusts God explicitly to somehow fulfill his promise of numerous descendants through Isaac and may indicate that he believes God can raise Isaac from the ashes of that burnt offering is that is what he wants to do. His actions show a total trust



and obedience of God even when what is being commanded doesn't make logical, human sense.

Abraham takes the wood and places it on Isaac to carry (obviously a little child couldn't carry enough wood for a burnt sacrifice) while he carries the knife to kill the offering and the firepot to light the flames to burn it. And the two of them start up the mountain together. Isaac speaks, calling Abraham "abi" which means "father" and is like the Aramaic term "abba" which Jesus used to refer to God, his Father. Both are terms of great endearment that a child would only use when speaking to their father and would be like a child today calling their father "daddy." Isaac says he can see the wood and fire but asks where the lamb for the offering is. Obviously, from his experience in seeing Abraham offer burnt offerings in worship of God, he recognizes that they do not have an important part of a burnt offering, namely the lamb that will be sacrificed and then burned. Abraham replies that God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering. Some people may try to see this statement as just avoiding the issue or placating Isaac for the time being. But in light of Abraham's statement to his servants that **we** will return, it should be seen as evidence that Abraham is fully trusting God to provide the sacrifice so he won't have to actually kill and burn Isaac.

Verses 9 – 19. When Abraham and Isaac reach the place God had told him about, the first task is to build an altar on which the wood would be placed and then the sacrificial animal would be burnt. Remember that Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 years old so he would be 125 years old at this time. That means Isaac, a young man of 25, would probably do most of the carrying of the rocks and even lifting of some of them to make the altar. Then Abraham arranged the wood on the altar in preparation for the sacrifice to be placed on it. Remembering that Abraham is 125 and Isaac is 25, when we are told that Abraham bound Isaac and laid him on the altar on top of the wood, we can understand that Isaac has had to agree to let his father bind him for sacrifice. This indicates that Isaac is also trusting God and willingly becoming the sacrifice for this worship. In this we see a foreshadowing of Jesus willingly becoming the sacrifice on the cross to pay the price of disobedience of God for everyone who accepts it and asks Jesus to make it apply to their life.

As Abraham reaches out with the knife in his hand to kill Isaac, the angel of the Lord calls to him from heaven and tells him not to lay a hand on the boy and do not do anything to him. Now he knows Abraham fears God because he has not withheld his only son from him. Since God is the one who commanded Abraham to offer Isaac as a burnt offering, this statement of the angel of the Lord shows that the angel is not just a messenger of God but God himself speaking to Abraham. At this point, Abraham looks up and sees a ram caught by his horns in a thicket so he takes the ram and sacrifices it as a burnt offering instead of Isaac. So Abraham called that place "YHWH Jireh" which means "Jehovah will provide" and is the origin of the saying about the temple mount that "on the mountain of the Lord (YHWH) it will be provided."

Again God speaks to Abraham from heaven and restates his promises that Abraham's descendants will be as numerous as the stars in the sky and as numerous as the sand on the seashore; that they will take possession of the land; and that through his offspring all nations on earth will be blessed. And all of this he swears by himself because Abraham has been obedient and has not withheld his son from him. All these promises have been made previously to Abraham but here they are based on the fact of Abraham's obedience. Since God exists outside of time and knows all of the future before he created the universe, it means this whole command to offer Isaac as a burnt offering was not so God could know that Abraham trusted him but as proof to Abraham that he really trusted God with everything in his life. Note that what God asked Abraham to give back to him by way of sacrifice was what God had provided supernaturally in faithfulness to his promised blessing of a son by Sarah. God may also prove to us our trust of him by asking us to give back to him something that he has supernaturally provided to us. After this, Abraham and Isaac return to the servants and they all return to Beersheba where Abraham had dug the well and was staying in the promised land.

Verses 20 – 24. Sometime after this Abraham gets word from relatives that Milcah has borne sons to his brother Nahor. Milcah was the daughter of Abraham's brother, Haran, and the sister of Lot. When Abraham and Lot left the area of Haran where they had lived with Abraham's father, Terah, Nahor stayed in that area and married his niece, Milcah. The sons of Nahor are given as: Uz (the first born), Buz, Kemuel (the father of

Aram), Kesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel (who became the father of Rebekah or Rebecca). In chapter 24 we will find that Abraham sends his servant to the land of his extended family to get a wife for Isaac. That wife will be Rebekah. We are also told that Nahor's concubine bore him four sons.

Chapter 23

Verses 1 – 20. We are told that Sarah lived to be 127 years old when she died at Kiriath Arba (which is also called Hebron). Hebron is near where Abraham and Sarah had stayed in Mamre and is about 24 miles north of Beersheba. This is in the land of Canaan (land where the descendants of Canaan, son of Ham, lived) and where the Hittites (sons of Heth, a son of Canaan) lived. Abraham is 137 years old and Isaac is 37 at this time and it is 1859 BC.

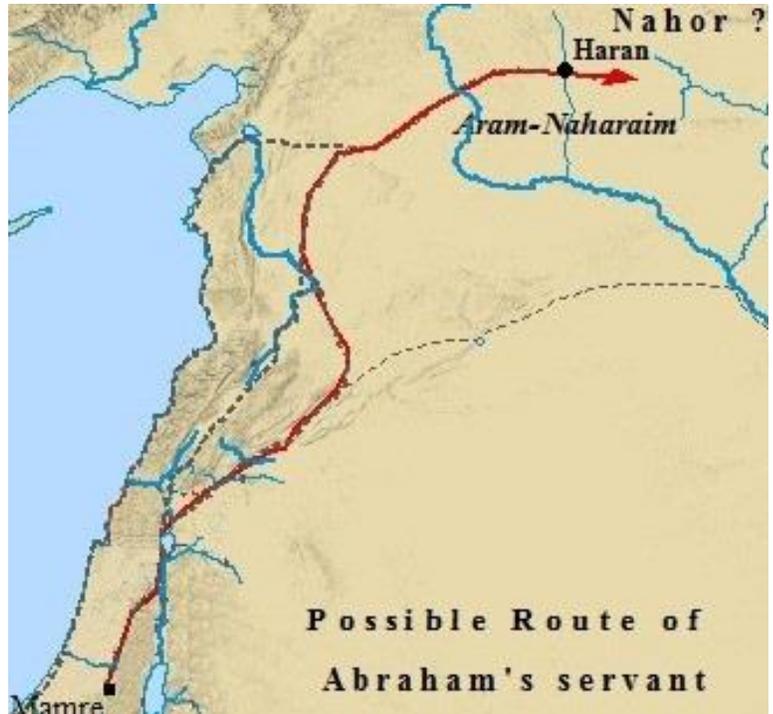
Abraham rises from weeping and mourning for Sarah and speaks to the Hittites living in the area at the gate of their city and asks them to sell him some property so he can bury his dead. The Hittites reply that Abraham is a mighty prince among them and offer that he can bury his dead in the choicest of their tombs and none of them will refuse him the use of their tomb. Remember that Abraham was wealthy, and had so many servants several 54 years earlier that he could send 318 fighting men to lead the rescue of Lot from the armies of four kings from eastern Mesopotamia, so they recognize him as an individual of much influence in the area. But Abraham rises and bows in respect to them and asks them to intercede for him with Ephron, the son of Zohar, so that Ephron will sell him the cave of Machpelah which is in the end of his field and at the full price so that he can own it and bury his dead there. Ephron is sitting there and hears Abraham's words and replies that he will give him the field along with the cave. But Abraham again bows in respect and says that he will take the cave in which to bury his dead if Ephron will accept the full price of the field. Ephron replies that the field is worth 400 shekels of silver but exclaims "what is that between the two of them." So Abraham weighs out the 400 shekels of silver to buy the field and the field along with the cave and all the trees within the border of the field are deeded to Abraham. All the Hittites sitting at the gate of the city were witness to the transaction between Abraham and Ephron. Then Abraham buries Sarah in the cave. Later, we will see Abraham is also buried there.

Chapter 24

Verses 1 – 9. The recording of Abraham sending his servant to find a wife for Isaac begins by saying Abraham was old and well advanced in years. We learn in chapter 25 that Isaac was 40 when he married so, based on his birth when Abraham was 100, that means Abraham is 140 years old. Isaac's birth was in 1896 BC so that makes this sometime in 1855 or 1856 BC. In the Hebrew text of this passage it says Abraham called in the oldest of his servants who ruled in all that he owned. That servant would be the most loyal and most responsible of all Abraham's servants and so had been entrusted to direct the entire activities of everyone who had responsibility to care for everything that Abraham owned. That would be the reason some translations refer to him as the "chief" servant. Now Abraham has a particularly important thing for him to do and does not want anyone else to be in charge of it. He gives this servant the responsibility of finding a woman to become Isaac's wife. To emphasize the importance of this assignment that involves all the future generations of Abraham's descendants, he wants the servant to place his hand under his thigh and promise that he will not get a wife from the Canaanites but from among his relatives in the country from which he and Sarah left to enter the land of Canaan that God promised to give to Abraham and his descendants. So Abraham doesn't want a wife from among the Canaanites who were the descendants of Ham and cursed by Noah because that would bring an entanglement with the very people that his descendants would need to displace from the land and that could jeopardize everything. The servant poses a potential problem in going so far away to procure a wife because she might not want to return with him and asks if that happens if he should take Isaac back to that country to meet the potential wife so she would be willing to leave her family. Abraham is emphatic in his answer that under no circumstances should Isaac be taken back to the country from which Abraham left and he tells the servant that God will send an angel before him so that he will be able to get a wife for Isaac. This again shows Abraham's faith that God will provide whatever is necessary to fulfill his promise. So there is no reason for Isaac to go to Haran and possibly become entangled with his distant relatives and not return to Canaan.

Abraham also says that if the woman is unwilling to return with him, the servant will be released from the oath. So the servant placed his hand under Abraham's thigh and swears as he was asked to do.

Verses 10 – 28. So Abraham's servant took 10 camels and all kinds of his master's goods and set out for Aram Naharaim and the town of Nahor, somewhere near the town of Haran (Harran in modern Turkey – about 430 miles). He arrives near the time of the evening when the women come to the town well to draw water so he has the camels kneel near the well outside of the town of Nahor and waited for the women to arrive. This would be the logical place for him to find the women of the town and perhaps find one suitable to become Isaac's wife. Obviously, Abraham has talked with all his servants about God and trusting him in all situations, so this trusted servant prays and asks God to show mercy to Abraham and cause him to meet the woman to be Isaac's wife. His plan is to ask a girl (maiden – a young unmarried woman) to give him a drink from her jar of water and if she is the maiden to become Isaac's wife, the servant asks that she offer to water his camels. That would involve quite an effort because camels can drink a lot of water (as much as 25 gallons). If the maiden shows that willingness to help him, then he will know that she is the one to become Isaac's wife and that God's kindness will have been shown to Abraham.



Before the servant finishes his prayer, Rebekah comes out with her water jar. She is the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah and Abraham's brother, Nahor. Her name means "ensnaring beauty." He watches as she goes down to the spring (well), fills her jar and comes up again. He hurries to meet her and asks for a drink. She is quick to lower her jar and give him a drink. Then she offers to also give his camels a drink and hurries between the well and an animal watering trough to fill it for them to drink. The servant watches her without speaking until she is finished watering the camels. Then he takes some gold jewelry (a nose ring and bracelets) from what he has brought with him and asks whose daughter she is and if her father's household has room for him to spend the night. She replies with her parents' names and says that they have food for the camels and room for him to stay. The servant bows down in worship of God, praising his name because God has not abandoned his faithfulness and kindness to his master, Abraham, and that God has led him on his journey to find his master's relatives. Rebekah runs home to tell everyone about these things.

Verses 29 – 61. After Rebekah has gone home and told everyone what has happened and shown the jewelry she has been given, her brother, Laban, runs out to meet the servant with his camels at the spring (well). He invites the servant, who he says is blessed by the Lord, to come to the house where a place is prepared for the camels. When they reach the house, the camels are unloaded of all the goods Abraham has sent, and they are given food and water. Then the servant and the men with him are given water to wash their feet. Food is set before the servant but he refuses to eat until he has told them everything that has occurred from the time Abraham sent him off until he talked with Rebekah, gave her gifts and she hurried off to her home. What we learn new from his account is that he placed the ring in her nose and the bracelets on her arms before she hurried off home to tell everyone about him. At the end of his account, the servant asks if they will or will not show kindness to his master so he will know which way to go. He is asking if Rebekah will be given to become Isaac's wife.

Laban and his father, Bethuel, reply that this is from the Lord so they can say nothing. Note that her brother and not her father takes the lead in giving her for marriage. They say for him to take Rebekah and let her

become the wife of his master's son as God has directed. Then the servant brings out all the gold and silver jewelry and articles of clothing and gives them to Rebekah, and he gives costly gifts to her brother (Laban) and mother (Milcah). Then he and the other servants of Abraham who were with him ate and drank and spent the night.

When he got up the next morning, the servant asked to be sent on his way, but Laban and Milcah say Rebekah should stay with them for 10 days and then she and the servant's party may depart. The servant asks that they not delay their departing in this way. Note that the mother joins the brother (but not the father) in dealing with the servant. It may be that Bethuel is so old and infirm to take part in giving Rebekah in marriage or that he has allowed his activities to be directed by his wife and son. Rebekah is called and asked if she will go with the servant. The fact that she readily agrees shows her trust in God. Rebekah is sent off with her nurse and the servant and his men with a blessing that Rebekah may be blessed with many offspring and that her descendants will possess the gates of their enemies. So the traveling party begins their return to Abraham's household.

Verses 62 – 67. While the servant was in Aram Naharaim looking for a wife for him, Isaac was in the area of Beer Lahai Roi (well of the Living One who sees me) – the place where God had met Hagar on the way to the Wilderness of Shur when she was running away from Sarah (Gen 16:14). He came home from there and went out into the field one evening to meditate. He looked up and saw camels approaching. The camels, with one carrying Rebekah, were obviously close enough that she could see Isaac in the field meditating. She gets down off the camel and asks the servant who the man is that is approaching them. When the servant says it is his master (Isaac – not Abraham) she lets her veil down over her face because it was custom for a bride to be veiled at her marriage ceremony. After the servant has told Isaac all that he has done, Isaac brings Rebekah into the tent of Sarah and marries her. Remember that Sarah has already died so this may be seen as symbolic of bringing Rebekah to meet his mother. And this story of how Rebekah becomes Isaac's wife ends with the statement that he loved her and was thus comforted after his mother's death.



Chapter 25

Verses 1 – 11. After Sarah died, the Hebrew text says Abraham “added and took” another wife named Keturah. The writer of 1 Chronicles (1:32) calls her a concubine – not a wife – so we don't really know her true status. But the children of concubines were considered the children of the father which in this case was Abraham. There is a Jewish tradition that identifies Keturah as Hagar. That would only be possible if she had the children listed before Sarah got upset with Ishmael and had Abraham send Hagar and Ishmael away (Gen 21) because she didn't want Hagar's son to have any part of Isaac's inheritance. This passage says Abraham wanted everything he owned to go to Isaac so he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them away to the land of the east. Apparently Abraham had more than one concubine and that would agree with Hagar being the first concubine and Keturah being the second. Since Sarah was not concerned about other children Abraham had with any other concubine receiving any of the inheritance, it stands to reason that Abraham didn't have those children until after Sarah died in 1859 BC when Abraham was 137 years old. Abraham lived to be 175 years

old, which means he lived 100 years in the land that God promised to his descendants through Isaac and it also means he had 38 years after Sarah's death to have more children. The list of Keturah's children includes some who will be important in the future of the descendants of Isaac. The land of Midian is where Moses flees to get away from the Egyptian Pharaoh who sought to kill him (Exodus 2:15). A descendant of Midian (Reuel, also known as Jethro – Exodus 2:18; 3:1) will be the individual with which Moses stays for forty years and the daughter (Zipporah – Exodus 2:22) of whom he marries and has two sons, Gershom and Eliezer (Exodus 2:22; 1 Chronicles 23:15). Much later, Solomon will receive a visit from the Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:1).

We will see later (in verse 26) that Isaac was 60 years old when Jacob and Esau were born. So at Abraham's death in 1821 BC Isaac was 75 years old, Ishmael was 89 years old, and Jacob and Esau were 15 years old. After Abraham died, both Isaac and Ishmael took his body and buried it in the Cave of Machpelah in the field which he had bought from Ephron, the son of Zohar the Hittite and where Sarah had been buried. At this time Isaac was living near Beer Lahai Roi on the road to Egypt through the Desert of Shur and we are told that God blessed him.

Verses 12 – 18. This passage is the eighth section of our outline of Genesis and lists the sons of Ishmael. We note that he had 12 sons just as we will see that Isaac's son, Jacob, will. This shows God fulfilled his promise to make Ishmael into a great nation (Gene 21:18). What isn't told until Genesis 36:3 is that Ishmael had a daughter named Basemath. The descendants of these 12 sons lived in the area from Havilah (present day Saudi Arabia from the Euphrates River to the Red Sea) to Shur near the border of Egypt (north western part of the Sinai Peninsula) as one goes to Asshur (Assyria). In the NIV translation we are told that they lived in hostility toward all their brothers, but the Hebrew interlinear translation reads: "They settled from Havilah to

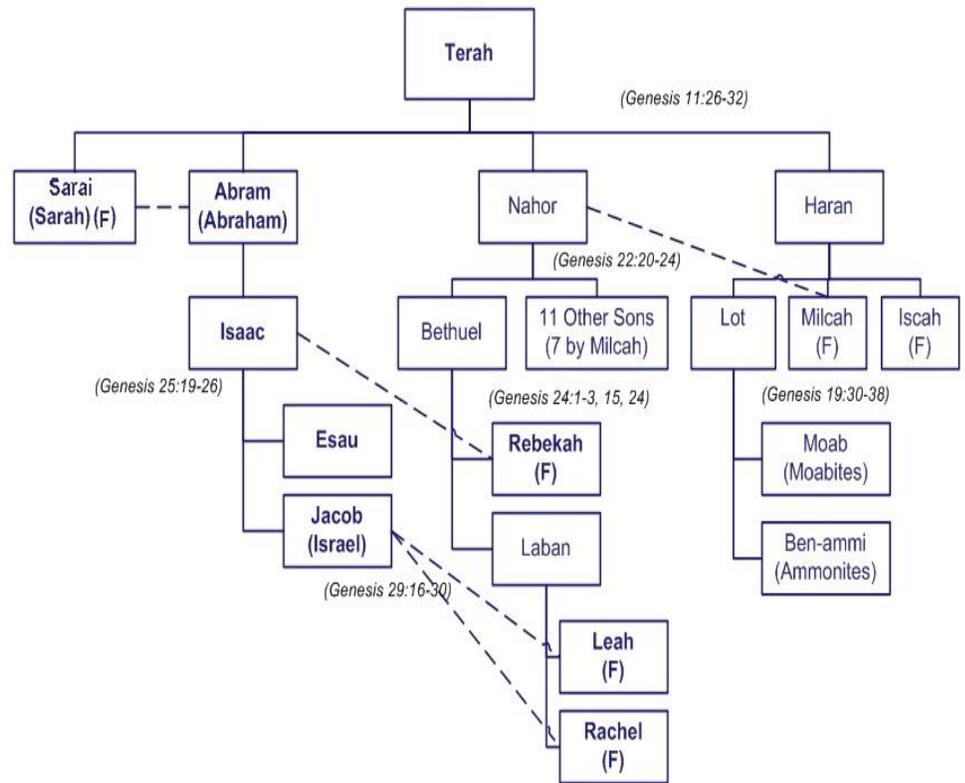


Shur which is before Egypt as one goes toward Assyria; he settled before all his brothers." That doesn't indicate they lived in hostility toward their brothers. We do know God said in Genesis 16:12 that Ishmael would live in hostility toward all his brothers. In the history from this time to the present we can see that the descendants of Ishmael who are the present day Arabs living in the Middle East have lived in hostility toward all the descendants of Isaac, the descendants of Keturah, and even in hostility toward each other, but the Hebrew of this passage doesn't directly indicate hostility among the descendants of Ishmael. We also learn that Ishmael lived to be 137 years old, 48 years after Abraham died, and that would put his death in 1773 BC.

Verses 19 – 26. This passage begins the ninth section of our outline of Genesis that is the account of Isaac’s life. The first statement is a recounting of what we have learned previously: Isaac was the son of Abraham; at the age of 40 (1856 BC) he married Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel and sister of Laban who were Arameans from Paddan Aram (also referred to as Aram Naharaim – see map on page 54). According to the way genealogists identify family relationships, Rebekah was Isaac’s first cousin once removed. We find in verse 26 that Isaac was 60 when Rebekah gives birth to twin boys. So Rebekah didn’t become pregnant for 19 years after their marriage. That’s why Isaac prayed for the Lord to bless her with children. When the twins jostled each other

within her womb, Rebekah asked the Lord why this was happening. The Lord’s reply indicated that there would be two nations that descend from her twins and that they would be separated with one being the stronger and that the descendants of the older would serve the descendants of the younger. When it came time for the birth of the twins, the first to come out had a ruddy or reddish (Heb. *ʿad’moni*) complexion and a lot of hair so they named him Esau which means “hairy.” Esau’s brother came out immediately with his hand grasping Esau’s heel so they named him Jacob which means “he grasps the heel” which is a figurative term to mean “he deceives.” Jacob (*Ya’aqob*) is similar to the Hebrew *ʿaqeb* (heel).

Verses 27 – 34. The twin boys grew up knowing their grandfather Abraham and surely hearing stories from him about God’s promises to their family. Esau grew up to be a good hunter which is a way of life that is nomadic (a man of the open country or roaming). Jacob grew up to be a quiet or simple man staying among the tents which is typical of a herdsman. The Hebrew word “*tam*” which is translated as “quiet” or “simple” or “plain” is translated in other texts as “perfect” or “blameless” (see Job 1:1, 8; 8:20; Ps 37:37; Prov 29:10) so it may indicate Jacob was more of an introvert and a homebody. Isaac liked the flavor of wild game (meats) so he had a special love for Esau, the hunter. Rebekah had a special love for Jacob, most likely because she enjoyed his staying at home among the tents rather than roaming the country in search of wild game. By spending time among the tents, Jacob learned to cook. The boys have grown so it would be about 1816 BC. One day while Jacob was cooking some stew Esau came back from the open country very hungry (famished) so he asked Jacob to quickly give him some of that red (*ha’adom*) stew. Red probably means it was a red lentil (bean) based mixed with vegetables or that the vegetables made it red. For this desire to have the “red” stew Esau was also called Edom. Jacob wants Esau to sell him the birthright which was Esau’s because he was the firstborn son and would mean that he would get a double share of his father’s estate when Isaac died. Esau exaggerates his condition saying, “I am about to die. ... What good is the birthright to me?” But Jacob wants him to swear so Esau swears an oath selling him the birthright. His quickness in asking for this indicates he treasured the birthright and had spent time thinking about how he might get it if and when the opportunity arose. So Jacob gave Esau some of the lentil stew and after Esau had eaten and drunk, he got up and left. The statement that Esau despised his birthright is obvious from his willingness to sell what would have been double share of Isaac’s wealth for a single bowl of stew.

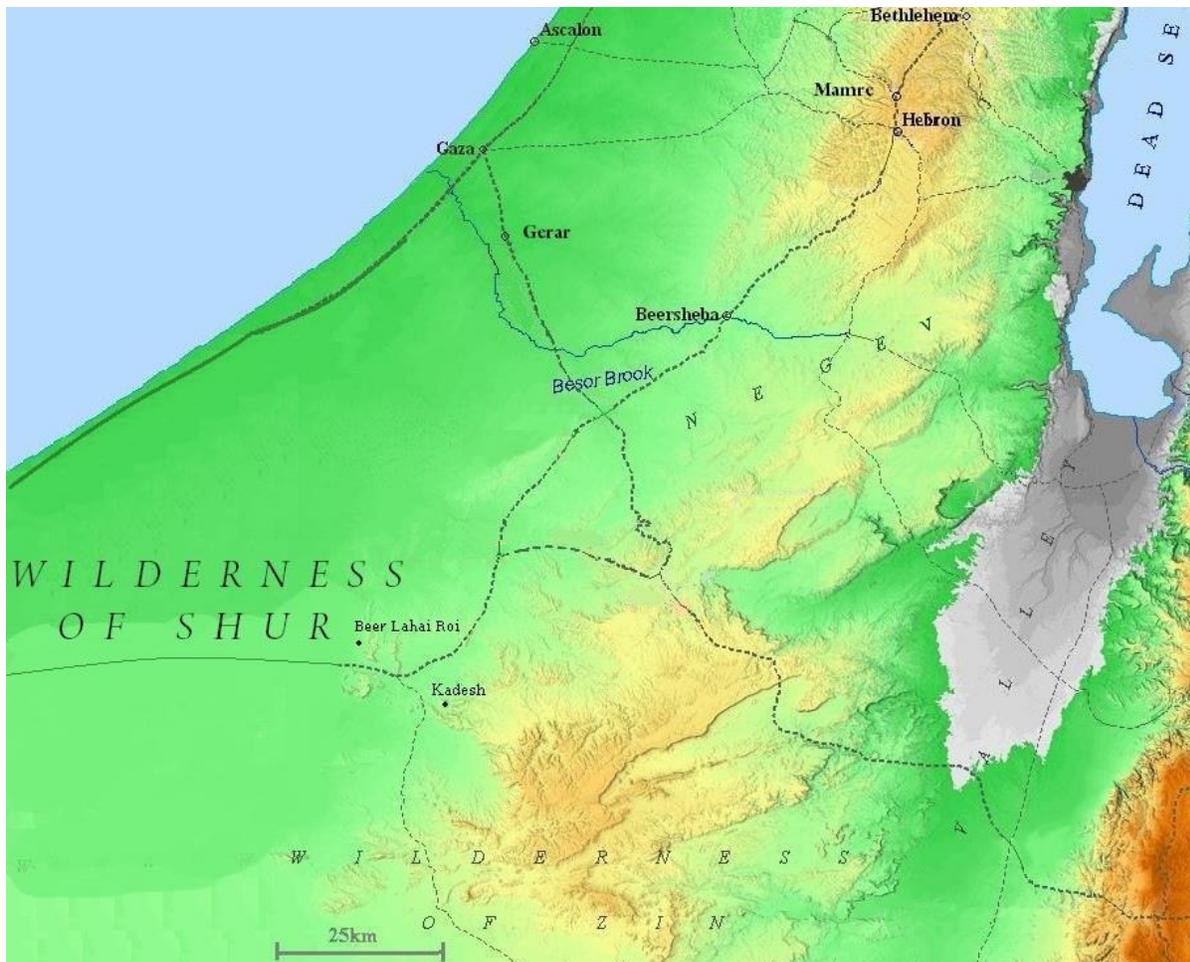


Birthright was the privilege of being the head of the family and possibly even the chief of the tribe. For Abraham's descendants it also meant receiving God's promised blessing and the priest (spiritual leader and go between with God) for the family. Later, in Jacob's sons, we see the birthright privileges divided up. Judah received the leadership among the tribes. Joseph received the double portion through his sons Ephraim and Manasseh. Levi becomes the priest for the tribes. In the New Testament we learn that Jesus, a descendant of Judah, is the firstborn among many brothers (Rom 8:29; Col 1:15, 18; Heb 12:23), the perpetual leader (king), and the priest for all his family. Thus the birthright that was divided is rejoined together in him.

Chapter 26

Verses 1 – 11. Now we are told of a famine in the land which was not the one in Abraham's time. So this places it after Abraham's death in 1821 BC. The previous famine that we were told about was when Abraham left his extended family in Haran and entered Canaan in 1921 BC. At that time he went to Egypt and misled Pharaoh by only saying Sarah was his sister instead of also saying that she was his wife. Then 24 years later (1897 BC) he misled Abimelech, the king of Gerar in the same fashion. This was one year before Isaac was born in 1896 BC. Isaac was 60 years old when Rebekah gave birth to his twin sons (1836 BC), Esau and Jacob, and now that the boys have grown up (probably 20 to 35) but before they are 40 years old, Isaac decides to leave the land of Canaan to escape a famine. So the events of this passage occur between 1816 and 1801 BC and most likely around 1804 BC because Isaac and his family live there for a long time. So Isaac would be 92 years old.

First, Isaac goes to Gerar in the land of the Philistines, most probably intending to take the coastal road to Egypt. Since Beer Lahai Roi is the last place we were told that Isaac lived, it appears that he had moved north toward Beersheba which is closer to Gerar because Beer Lahai Roi is on the road through the wilderness of Shur and a direct route to Egypt.



While he is in Gerar, God warns him not to go down to Egypt but to live in the land for a while and he will be blessed because he will give his descendants all these lands just as he swore to his father Abraham. And God promises Isaac the same as he did Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and through them all nations on earth will be blessed because Abraham obeyed and kept the Lord's commands, decrees, and laws. So Isaac obeyed and stayed in Gerar. Although God's Law was not given to the people until the Exodus in 1491 BC at Mount Sinai, this would indicate that, by faith in God's promise and obeying what God told him to do, Abraham's life showed an example of obedience to the Law.

When the men of Gerar asked about his wife, Isaac did the same as his father and said that she was his sister because he was afraid to say she was his wife, thinking that they might kill him and take her because she was beautiful. This was a complete lie because Rebekah was not his sister but the daughter of his first cousin, Bethuel, and thus his first cousin once removed. Then, after Isaac had been in Gerar a long time (length not identified), Abimelech the king of the Philistines looked down from a window and saw Isaac caressing Rebekah. So he summoned Isaac and asked why he said she was his sister when she is really his wife. When Isaac responds he feared for his life, Abimelech says that what he has done might have resulted in one of his men sleeping with her and bringing guilt upon all the people. So Abimelech gives an order to all the people that if anyone molests Isaac's wife the person will be put to death. This whole sequence of events mirrors the events that Abraham had with a king of Gerar named Abimelech in 1897 BC. So is this the same man who interacted with Abraham? Since these events occur about 93 years after the similar events with Abraham, it is highly unlikely that the two Abimelechs are the same. It is possible that Abimelech (which means my father a king or father of a king) is a title like the kings of Egypt were all called Pharaoh. Sons are often named after their father, so it is more probable that the Abimelech of Abraham's time is the father of this Abimelech.

Verses 12 – 25. After this, Isaac planted crops that within the same year produced a hundredfold because the Lord blessed him for his obedience in staying. We are told that his wealth continued to grow until he became very wealthy. Remembering that Abraham was already wealthy and considered a mighty prince among the Hittites (Gen 23:5 – 6) living in Mamre where Abraham bought a field with a cave where he buried Sarah and was himself later buried, that would mean Isaac's wealth now grew so large that the Philistine people envied him. So they proceeded to fill in all the wells that Abraham's servants had dug during his time. This is the same problem that Abraham had with the Philistines and which was ended by a treaty between Abraham and Abimelech's father, Abimelech, around 1893 BC. So, because the people envied Isaac's power and did these bad things, Abimelech asks Isaac to move away. Isaac follows Abimelech's request, moves away out of Gerar and into a valley nearby, and begins reopening the wells and giving them the same name given by Abraham. When Isaac's servants dug a well in the valley which produced fresh water, the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, claiming the water was theirs. So this well was named *Esek* which means "dispute." Instead of overpowering the herdsmen of Gerar which Isaac was certainly capable of doing, he moves on from there and has his servants dig another well. Another quarrel ensues, so that well was named *Sitnah* which means "opposition" and again Isaac moves on and digs another well. Since there was no quarreling or opposition to this well he named it *Rehoboth* which means "room or broad plains." This move apparently took Isaac closer to Beersheba and possibly where he was living before the start of this trip to Egypt to escape the famine. So Isaac goes up to Beersheba where he had lived with Isaac many years before. It is possible that he went to Beersheba to seek the counsel of God because he recognized that God had been there with Abraham. There, in the night, the Lord appeared to Isaac to announce he was the God of his father, Abraham, and that he would bless him and increase the number of his descendants for the sake of Abraham (that is to fulfill God's promise to Abraham). So Isaac builds an altar there to worship (call on the name of) the Lord, pitches his tent in this location, and has his servants start to dig a well (showing his intent to settle in this place).

Verses 26 – 33. After Isaac has moved from place to place and decides to live in Beersheba, Abimelech comes from Gerar with his personal advisor, Ahuzzath, and the commander of his army, Phicol. When Isaac asks why he has come since he had asked him to leave and his herdsmen had quarreled with his herdsmen over two wells, Abimelech answers that they had clearly seen that God was with Isaac (God had blessed his crops a hundredfold and brought him fresh water in two wells) and so he is seeking a treaty between them (just like there had been a

treaty with Abraham) that neither would do harm to the other. So Isaac makes a feast for them to all eat and drink together. Then the next morning the two men swear an oath and Isaac sends them on their way in peace. That same day, Isaac's servants hurry to announce that the well has produced water. This is not the first well in Beersheba because Abraham had dug a well there over which he and his Abimelech had sworn an oath of peace in 1893 BC (89 years previously).

These stories about Abraham's and Isaac's faith (trust in the Lord's promise and acting upon that trust) are the basis of Paul's claim in Hebrews 11:6 that "without faith it is impossible to please God." We have previously been told in Genesis 15:6 that "Abram believed the Lord and he credited it to him as righteousness." Belief or trust in the Lord that is acted upon to try and obey God is the definition of faith. It is from faith stories like these that we know the Old Testament saints who believed and tried to obey God will join the Church believers in the new heavens and new earth described in Revelation 21.

Verses 34 - 35. At the end of this passage we are told that Esau married two Hittite women and that they were a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah. This verse doesn't have anything to do with the story of Isaac and Abimelech but it does set the stage for the next story. The Hittites were descendants of Canaan and all the Canaanites are known through biblical and extra biblical accounts as people whose religious practices included sacrificing their children, prostitution with their priests and priestesses, and worship of a pantheon of gods and goddesses who demanded these things. (For more about the Canaanite religious practices see "*The Religion of the Canaanites*" article by the Quartz Hill School of Theology at <http://www.theology.edu/canaan.htm>.)

Chapter 27

Verses 1 – 4. This event takes place about 39 years after the famine that led Isaac to go leave from his home and start toward Egypt. Now Isaac is 136 years old (1760 BC). His eyesight is failing and he doesn't know how much longer he will live so he decides it is time to give the blessing to his sons and pass on the birthright blessing. So he calls for Esau, his oldest son (oldest by seconds only), and tells him to take his bow and arrows and hunt for some wild game to prepare for him to eat before he gives him the blessing (birthright).

Verses 5 – 17. Rebekah is listening as Isaac gives his instructions to Esau. She knows that God has said the older twin will serve the older (Gen 25:23). She apparently doesn't trust God to bring about what he said would happen, so she decides to take matters into her own hands to make God's prophecy come true. She tells Jacob, her favorite, to get two goats from the herd and bring them to her so she can prepare them just the way Isaac loves to eat them. Then she wants Jacob to take the food to Isaac so he will give him the birthright blessing. Jacob sees a problem with her plan because Esau is hairy while his own skin is smooth so Isaac would be able to tell that he was being tricked and would call down a curse instead of giving the blessing. Rebekah says to let the curse fall on herself, but Jacob should go and get the goats. After Jacob brings the goats and Rebekah prepares them, she takes some of Esau's clothes, puts them on Jacob, and covers his hands and neck with the skin of the goats so Isaac will not recognize it is Jacob bringing him the food. She gives him the prepared food and sends him to Isaac with it.

Verses 18 – 29. Jacob follows Rebekah's instructions, goes into Isaac's presence, and addresses him, "My Father." Isaac responds "My son," but asks who is talking to him because he questions whether it is Esau. Jacob lies and tells his father that he is Esau and asks him to eat some of the food so he can give him the blessing. Again, Isaac questions that it is Esau and wants to know how he found the game so quickly. Again, Jacob lies, saying "the Lord your God gave me success." Notice that Jacob knows about the Lord but considers him to be Isaac's God and not his own God. Again, Isaac doubts it is Esau so he asks him to come close so he can touch him and know whether it is Esau. When Jacob comes close, Isaac touches him and says that he sounds like Jacob but his hands feel like Esau's, but again he asks if he is really Esau. Again Jacob lies and says he is Esau. So Isaac asks Jacob to give him some of the meat and he eats and drinks. Then again, Isaac asks Jacob to come near and kiss him. When Jacob does, Isaac smells that the clothes are Esau's. So, he proceeds to bless Jacob and give him the birthright blessing. The blessing Isaac gives is obviously inspired by

God because it proves to be prophetic. Isaac asks that God will give him heaven's dew, earth's richness in abundance of grain and wine, that nations will serve him and people bow down to him, that he will be lord over his brothers and that they will bow down to him, and finally that God's curse will be on those who curse him and God's blessing will be on those who bless him. The blessing incorporates what God had promised to Isaac: inheritance of the land, descendants, and that all nations would be blessed through him.

Verses 30 – 40. Right after Jacob receives the blessing, Esau returns from hunting, prepares savory food for his father, brings it to him, and asks him to sit up and eat and then give him the blessing. Isaac asks who he is and Esau replies he is Isaac's firstborn son. Upon hearing this, Isaac trembles and asks who it was that he had just blessed. Although Esau didn't have any regard for the birthright blessing when he wanted bean stew from Jacob to quench his hunger, and he had no desire to seek a wife from among his own people rather than mixing with the peoples that his descendants were going to have to drive out of the land before he could control it, he now burst out with a bitter cry and asks that his father would also give him a blessing. He really isn't concerned about the blessing of God's promises to Abraham but the receiving of a double portion of Isaac's wealth and the right to rule over his extended clan.

Isaac says that Jacob deceitfully came in and took Esau's blessing. Esau bemoans that Jacob is rightfully named (Jacob means deceiver) because he has taken his birthright (for some stew) and now the blessing (as firstborn son). And Esau asks if Isaac hasn't reserved any blessing for him. Isaac recounts that he has made Jacob lord over Esau, all Jacob's relatives his servants, and God's blessing of grain and wine, so what could he possibly do for Esau. Again Esau asks for some kind of blessing and weeps openly. So Isaac give Esau this blessing: that Esau will dwell away from the earth's richness and the dew of heaven (God's blessing); that he will live by the sword; that he will serve his brother; but that when he grows restless he will throw off Jacob's yoke from his neck. This is not a good blessing. In fact it is more of a disturbing prophecy. Remember that Esau was also called Edom. The mountains where his descendants lived are very desolate, laying to the southeast of the Dead Sea. Later in the biblical story, we will see that the Edomites served, revolted from and were conquered repeatedly by the Israelite people. In 1 Samuel 14:47 there was a period of independence after Saul defeated them. In 2 Samuel 8:14 David makes them his vassals (servants). There was an attempt at revolt against Solomon that failed (1 Kings 9:14) and the Edomites continued to be subject to Judah until the time of King Joram when they successfully rebelled. Then in Amaziah's reign (2 Kings 14:7) they were again subjected to Judah and remained that way until they finally became free during Ahaz' reign (2 Kings 16:6). Much later, in 129 BC, John Hyrcanus conquered the Edomites, forced them to submit to circumcision, and incorporated them into the Jewish nation. Through Antipater and Herod they were established as the Idumean dynasty which had rule under the Romans over the Jews until the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. So we see the Edomites had a long history of conflict with other peoples and especially the Jewish people.



EDOM

Verses 41 – 45. It is quite within Esau's character to have a grudge against Jacob for taking the birthright. He thinks that Isaac's death must be going to happen soon, so he plans to take revenge against Jacob by killing him as soon as the days of mourning after Isaac's death are completed. Someone overheard Esau talk about his plan and told Rebekah about it. Fearing that she would lose Isaac and Jacob almost the same day, she calls Jacob and tells him of Esau's plan. Then she tells him to flee to her brother's house in Haran and stay with him until

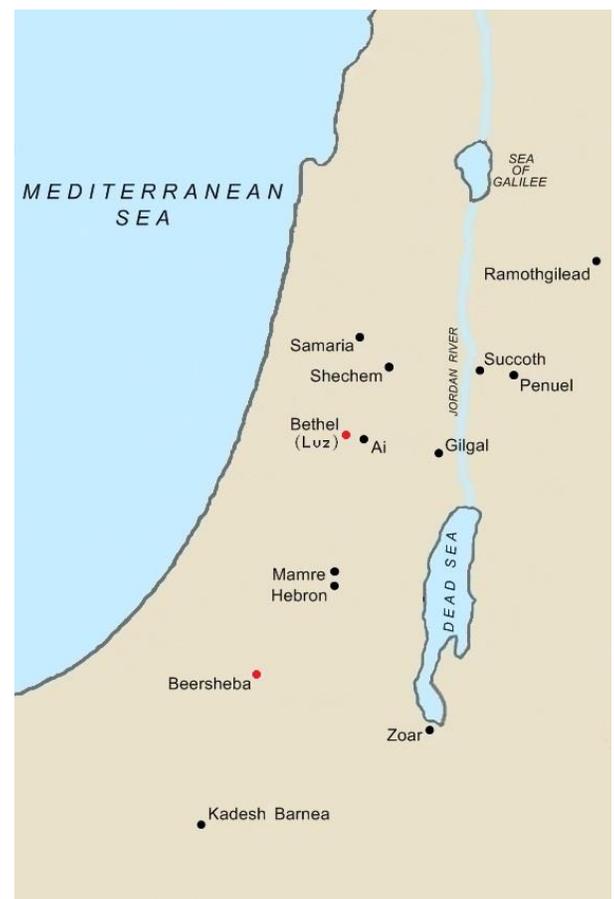
Esau's fury subsides. When that happens, she will send word and Jacob can return.

Verse 46. This verse could fit with the next chapter because it gives the reason for Isaac sending Jacob away to Laban's house. Rebekah complains to Isaac that she is disgusted with living with the Hittite women Esau has married and doesn't want Jacob to also take a wife from among them.

Chapter 28

Verses 1 – 9. So Isaac calls Jacob in and commands him not to marry a Canaanite woman but go to the house of his mother's brother (Laban) and take a wife from among his daughters. And he repeats the patriarchal blessing God gave Abraham and that was passed down to him and now to Jacob: "May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples. May he give you and your descendants the blessing of Abraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now live as an alien, the land God gave to Abraham." Then Isaac sent Jacob on his way to Paddan Aram, to Laban who is his uncle. When Esau learns that Isaac has again pronounced the blessing on Jacob and sent him to get a wife from among the daughters of his mother's brother instead of a Canaanite woman, he realized how much the Canaanites were displeasing to Isaac. So he decides to hurt his father and mother by going to Ishmael, his father's half-brother, and marries Mahalath, one of his daughters. She is not a Canaanite woman but a first half-cousin of his. We are told in Genesis 36:3 that Ishmael had a daughter named Basemath so it is possible that she and Mahalath are the same individual. It appears that women living in the land of Canaan were called Canaanite women even though they were descended from someone that was not a Canaanite (like Mahalath) and thus were not connected with the curse that Noah had made upon Ham's son, Canaan.

Verses 10 – 22. Jacob left Beersheba for Haran (Paddan Aram) and at sunset stopped for the night. He took a stone and put it under his head for a pillow and went to sleep. During the night he had a dream in which he saw a stairway reaching from earth to heaven on which the angels of God were going up and down. At the top of the stairs stood the Lord who announces that he is the God of your father (ancestor) Abraham and God of Isaac. Then God tells Jacob that he will give him the land on which he is laying; your descendants will be like the dust of the earth; you will spread out to the west, east, north, and south; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. Then God tells Jacob that he will be with him, watch over him wherever he goes, and bring him back to this land. God promises he will not leave him until he has done what he has promised to him. This is a reiteration of the promise God made to Abraham. Jacob wakes up from the dream and thinks that God surely is in this place even though he was not aware of it. Then he is afraid for this is an awesome place and the house of God and gate to heaven. So early in the morning he took the stone that had been under his head, set it up as a pillar, poured oil on top of it (an act of worship), and names the place Bethel which means house of God. The place had previously been a city that had been named Luz (the name of a Hazelnut tree that must have grown there). Then Jacob made a vow to God that if God would be with him and watch over him on this journey and give him food and water and return him safely to his father house, then the Lord will be his God. He says that the stone he has set up will be God's house and Jacob pledges to give God a tenth of all that he has. Other than Abraham giving Melchizedek a tenth of the spoils of the battle, this is the first pledge of a tenth of an individual's possessions to be given to honor God. It was not a legal requirement but a way of honoring God.



Chapter 29

Verses 1 – 14a. After worshipping God, Jacob continued on his journey to Haran. His total trip from Beersheba to Haran would have been about 450 miles and taken about 3 weeks on foot. (We have no indication that he had any animal to ride which would have made the journey quicker.) When Jacob finally arrives in the area of Haran, he sees a well in a field with three flocks of sheep where their shepherds have them lying while waiting for another shepherd to arrive. Jacob notices that the stone over the mouth of the well was large and would take several shepherds to move it so they could get water for their flocks. And the stone would have to be returned as a cover for the well to keep the water clean and protected. Jacob asks the male shepherds where they are from because he wants to know if he has arrived in the correct place. When they say they are from Haran, Jacob asks if they know Laban. Most translations read “Laban, Nahor’s son,” but that would be incorrect. The Hebrew phrase is “Laban ben Nachor.” In Hebrew “ben” can mean “son or” or “descendant of.” In this case, it should be translated descendant of because Laban is Nahor’s grandson (as the NIV translates it) as we noted in a diagram of Terah’s family when we studied chapter 25 verse 19. The male shepherds respond that they know Laban and, when asked, say that he is well. Then they add that his daughter Rachel is leading the flock of sheep that is approaching the well. When Jacob notes that the sun is high so that it is not the normal time for gathering the sheep, he is referring to the evening time when shepherds would gather the sheep and put them in a pen or walled area for safety through the night. So he is telling them to water the sheep and take them back into the pastures. But the shepherds reply that they can’t do that until the sheep are all gathered and the stone rolled away from the mouth of the well. There are two reasons why they can’t water the sheep until all the sheep are gathered at the well. One reason could be that they needed four people to roll the stone away and they only had three shepherds with their flocks so they needed another person to help with moving the stone. The second reason could be that the well belonged to Laban so they had to wait until his shepherd brought his sheep before they could legally use the well. While Jacob and the three male shepherds are talking, Rachel arrives with Laban’s sheep because she is a shepherdess who was arriving with Laban’s sheep. We are told that when Jacob saw Rachel he went over and rolled the stone away from the well. That would seem to indicate that the second reason is why the male shepherds had to wait to water their sheep. Apparently after he waters the flock Rachel is shepherding, he tells her that he is a relative of her father and the son of Rebekah and then kisses her. That kiss should not be seen as a romantic kiss but the greeting type of kiss that was the touching but the touching of the faces on one side and then the other. After Jacob kisses Rachel he begins weeping and she then runs home to tell her father Laban. When Laban hears that his sister’s son is at the well, he runs to meet him and greet him with a kiss, and then bring him back to his home. After Jacob tells Laban what has happened, Laban replies that Jacob is his own flesh and blood (relative). Notice the difference in Jacob’s journey and that of Abraham’s servant. The servant asked God to guide him in finding a wife for Isaac and when he discovered that Rebekah was a relative, he praised God. In Jacob’s journey we do not find that he asked for God’s help, but only promised to honor God since God had promised to protect him and bring him back to the land of Canaan. And when Jacob discovered that he had arrived in Haran and even meets the daughter of his mother’s brother, Laban, from whom Isaac told him to go and seek a wife, he weeps but doesn’t praise God for his help. We aren’t told at this time, but it is likely that Jacob liked what he was of Rachel and joyed to the point of weeping that she might become his wife.

Verses 14b – 30. Jacob stayed with Laban a full month before Laban suggested that Jacob should be paid for the work he was doing and asked what Jacob thought his wages should be. Laban had two daughters, the older named Leah and the younger named Rachel. We are told that Leah had “weak” or “delicate” eyes. That could mean her eyes were dull and lacking in luster or, as we might conclude, that she needed glasses to correct her vision. We are also told that Rachel was lovely in form and beautiful which would mean that she would catch the eye or be noticed quicker by men. Since Jacob had only been in Laban’s house for one month and we are told he loved Rachel, that probably means he determined when he first saw her at the well that he had decided she was the one he wanted to marry. So Jacob says he would work for Laban for seven years and his payment should be to have Rachel as his wife. Tablets discovered and unearthed from 1925 to 1931 at a location in Iraq which was identified as the ancient city of Nuzi describe what Jacob was suggesting. They record that if a man worked for a period of time for the father of a girl that he wished to marry, that he would have the right to take

her as his wife. The seven years that Jacob suggests is a greater offer than would normally be expected so obviously he really wanted her as his wife and was making an offer that he didn't think Laban could refuse. Laban quickly agrees and thus Jacob started a life in Laban's house where he was near Rachel but not intimate with her. Seven years would seem to be a long time, but because of Jacob's love for Rachel it only seemed like a short time. Since this whole event began when Isaac was 136 years old that means the beginning of the years would have been in 1760 BC and the end of it would be 1753. Jacob was born when Isaac was 60 years old so Jacob would have been 76 years old at the beginning of the seven years and 83 years old at the end.

At the end of the seven years (1753 BC) Jacob says to Laban that the time they agreed he would work for Rachel has ended so he wants to lie with her as husband and wife. Laban gathers all the people of the area for a wedding feast, but when evening came he secretly substituted Leah for Rachel and it was Leah whom Jacob lay with in his marriage bed. Normally, a father would make sure the oldest daughter was married before the younger was allowed to be married. This would seem to be one of the reasons for Laban's deception, but he has seen how much Jacob loves Rachel so if this deception succeeds he can presume that Jacob will work for him some additional time to get Rachel also. The deception can't be accomplished without Leah agreeing to it. Even if Rachel doesn't agree she will not say anything and allow it to happen just because her father has commanded that it happen. So, when night comes Leah substitutes for Rachel and Jacob has his wedding night with her and thus she becomes his wife instead of Rachel. In the morning light of the next day Jacob wakes up to find out that Laban has deceived him and Leah is now his wife. When he confronts Laban about the deception, Laban notifies him that it is not their custom to allow a younger daughter to marry first. He could have told Jacob about that custom before he agrees to the work for wife plan seven years earlier, but he is just as much a deceiver as Jacob has been so he waits until Leah is married. Now he proposes that after Jacob completes the bridal week with Leah he will allow Jacob to lay with Rachel so that she will also become his wife, providing he agrees to work another seven years for her. Jacob agrees, finishes the week with Leah, and then takes Rachel as his wife and begins working another seven years for her. We are told that Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah. This could mean that Jacob showed favoritism for Rachel over Leah as we will discover in a later passage. Or it could just mean that God knows that Jacob loved Rachel and only treated Leah as was proper for a husband to treat his wife. In this passage we are told that Laban gave Zilpah to be Leah's maidservant and gave Bilhah to be Rachel's maidservant. This will become important to know in the next few verses.

Verses 31 – 35. God knows that Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah whether others knew it at this time or not. That is obvious since God, who exists outside of time, knows the thoughts of a person before they are thought. So God opened Leah's womb while Rachel did not conceive any children. In the next four years, Leah gives birth to four sons. The first would have been born in 1752 BC and she named him Reuben which means "see, a son" because she thought that now Jacob would love her. Then she conceived and gave birth in 1751 BC to a son she named Simeon which probably means "one who hears" because she said the Lord heard that she was not loved so he sent her this one too. Again she conceived and gave birth in 1750 BC to a son she named him "attached" because she said her husband would become attached to her now that she had given him three sons. And again she conceived and gave birth in 1749 BC to a son she named Judah which may mean "praise" because she gave praise to the Lord this time. Then she stopped having children. God has been faithful to his promise to bless Jacob and has given him four sons in four years and he has blessed Leah with sons even though Jacob doesn't love her like he loves Rachel.

Chapter 30

Verses 1 – 8. When Rachel sees that she is not bearing children while Leah is, she becomes jealous of her sister and demands of Jacob that he give her children. Jacob becomes angry with her and asks if he is in the place of God who has kept her from having children. He is claiming that it is God's fault she hasn't had children and not his. Rachel responds by giving him her maidservant, Bilhah, for him to lay with so she can bear children for her. This is the same thing that Sarah did with Abraham instead of waiting on the Lord to provide her a son. So Jacob sleeps with Bilhah and she conceives and bears him a son probably also in 1749 BC and Rachel names

him Dan which can mean “vindicated” because she said that God has vindicated her plea and given her a son. Then Bilhah conceives again and gives birth to a son in 1748 BC and Rachel names him Naphtali which means “my struggle” because she said she had a struggle with her sister and won.

Verses 9 – 12. When Leah sees that she is not giving Jacob children, she also sent her maidservant, Zilpah, to have children by Jacob. So Zilpah conceives and gives birth to a son in probably also in 1748 BC and Leah names him Gad which can mean “good fortune” because she exclaimed him to be good fortune in her having another son. Then Zilpah conceives again and gives birth to a son in 1747 BC and Leah names him Asher which means “happy” because women will now call her happy.

Verses 14 – 21. During the wheat harvest which occurs in May, Reuben, who would be 5 years old, went out into the fields and gathered some Mandrakes for his mother. “Mandrake in Hebrew is דודאים (dūdā'im), meaning ‘love plant.’ From ancient times, the root was promoted for such uses as an aphrodisiac and for fertility.” ([http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=Mandrake_\(plant\)&oldid=863454](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=Mandrake_(plant)&oldid=863454)) Apparently he was bringing them to his mother to help with her fertility. Rachel asks Leah for some of the Mandrakes, but Leah asks if it wasn't enough that she took her husband and now does she want to take her son's Mandrakes as well. Rachel offers that Jacob can sleep with Leah that night in return for the Mandrakes. When Jacob comes in from the fields, Leah tells him that he must sleep with her because she has bought it with her son's Mandrakes. So Jacob sleeps with Leah and we are told that God listened to Leah so that she became pregnant and gave birth to a fifth son in 1747 BC and she named Issachar which means “reward” because she said God has rewarded her. Then Leah again conceived and gave birth to a son in 1746 BC and she named him Zebulun which means “honor” because she thought that Jacob would treat her with honor for bearing him six sons. And then we are told that sometime later (maybe 1745 to 1744 BC) she gave birth to a daughter and she named her Dinah which means “judged.” We can't know for certain, but Dinah may be the only daughter that was born to Jacob.

Verses 22 – 24. Then God opened Rachel's womb so that she became pregnant and gave birth to a son in 1746 BC and she named him Joseph which means “may he add” because God had removed her disgrace and wanted him to add to her another son. Joseph's birth was 14 years after Jacob made his agreement to work seven years for Rachel, was deceived by Laban who gave him Leah, and then an additional seven years to have Rachel as his wife.

Verses 25 – 43. After Joseph's birth in 1746 BC, Jacob went to Laban with a request that he be allowed to return with his wives and children to his homeland (14 years after working for Laban for his two wives). Laban replies that he has learned by divination that the Lord has blessed him because of Jacob. So he requests Jacob stay and he will pay whatever wages Jacob names. Laban didn't really need divination to know that he was blessed because of Jacob because Jacob has produced eleven grandchildren for Laban and that is a blessing. But this shows Laban is worshipping and following the practices of pagan gods. That is not a surprise since his grandfather, Nahor, and Abraham had lived with their father, Terah, in the land called the Ur of the Chaldeans and worshipped pagan gods before Abraham heard and responded to God's call to leave and go to a land God would give him.

Jacob responds that Laban should recognize that God has blessed him because of the way his flocks have increased under his care. But now he wants to do something for his own household. Again, Laban asks what he should give Jacob for him to stay and work for him. Jacob, the schemer, proposes this plan. He asks Laban to allow him to remove from Laban's flocks every goat or sheep that was speckled, spotted, or dark colored and those will be his wages for taking care of Laban's flocks. And in the future any animal found among Jacob's flocks that is not spotted, speckled, or dark colored should be considered stolen. In this way his honesty would be proven as he continued to care for Laban's flocks. So Laban separated all the speckled, spotted and dark colored from his flocks and put them under his son's care. Then he put a three-day journey between his and Jacob's flocks and let Jacob continue to care for his flocks.

As Jacob cared for Laban's flocks, he implemented a devious plan to increase his flocks at Laban's expense. He took fresh-cut branches from some trees. The Hebrew lists them as "livneh" (a white looking tree – much like a poplar), "luz" (a nut tree – possible almond), and "ermon" (a plane tree which may mean smooth bark – much like a chestnut tree). Jacob peeled some of their bark to produce white stripes on them. Then he placed the striped branches in the watering troughs so that when the animals were in heat and came to drink they would then bear young that were speckled, spotted or streaked. The speckled, spotted, and streaked Jacob set apart for himself but the weak animals he would not let near the branches so that they didn't bear young that were speckled, spotted or streaked. In this way Laban's animals became weak while Jacob's animals were strong. In this way Jacob became prosperous and he owned large flocks, maidservants, menservants, camels and donkeys. He may have been relying on a superstition of the time which proposed that what a mother experienced during her pregnancy affected her offspring to mislead (deceive) Laban and use that to further increase his wealth. After knowing how his father, Isaac, was saved from sacrifice by God and his own experience seeing God at the top of a ladder between earth and heaven, Jacob surely should have trusted God rather than pagan superstitions. But whether Jacob was trusting God or pagan superstition to cause the lambs to be born spotted rather than white, ultimately it was God who provided the blessing for Jacob just as Jacob understood God had promised to him during the vision (Gen 28:20-21). God didn't bless Jacob because of his actions which sought to prosper him at Laban's expense but God prospered Jacob in spite of his actions. God might have prospered Jacob in more ways than materially if he had just trusted God for everything. Anyone who receives material blessings needs to acknowledge that it comes from God and not his own actions.

Chapter 31

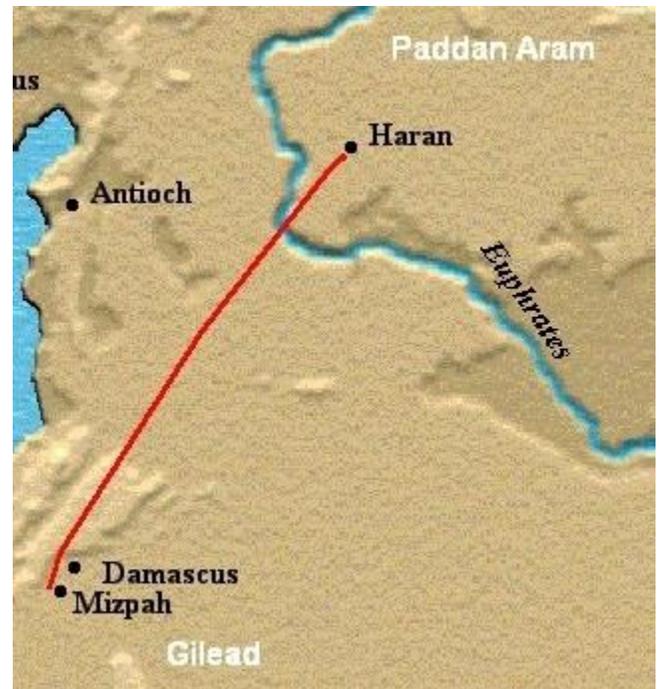
Verses 1 – 21. After a few years, Jacob hears that Laban's sons are saying Jacob has become wealthy at their father's expense and he noticed that Laban's attitude toward him had changed. God had promised during Jacob's vision of the ladder that he would bring Jacob back to the land. So God tells him to leave and return to the land of his father. Jacob, in turn, sends word to Rachel and Leah to come to him in the fields where he is with the flocks. Then he tells them about their father's change in attitude toward him. He says Laban has cheated him by changing his wages ten times. But he says God has not allowed Laban to harm him but has taken Laban's livelihood from him and given it to himself (Jacob). This is the first time we find that Jacob has admitted that God has been taking care of and prospering him. Jacob claims that once in a breeding season he had a dream about the mating of male goats with females that were streaked, speckled, or spotted and the offspring were likewise streaked, speckled or spotted. He says that an angel has seen what Laban had been doing to him and has commanded him to return to his native land. Leah and Rachel reply that they do not have any inheritance in their father's estate (which was true of all females in that time), he regards them as foreigners, and he has used up what was paid for them (Jacob working for Laban for 14 years). Then they state that what God has taken away from their father belongs to them and their children, so Jacob should do whatever God has told him to do. So Jacob puts his wives and children on camels and, driving his livestock ahead of him, sets off to the land of Canaan and his father. While everything was being prepared for their departure, Laban leaves his household to attend to the shearing of his sheep. At the same time, Rachel goes to her father's house and steals the household gods (without Jacob's knowledge) and prepares to take them with her as they leave for Canaan. So Jacob flees from Laban, taking all he had and crossing the river (Euphrates) and headed for the hill country of Gilead without telling Laban that he was leaving. The significance of Rachel taking the household gods (usually 2 to 3 inch tall figurines) is debated. Some commentators think the individual who possessed the household gods was considered to be the legitimate family heir. Others think she took them because she thought they would protect her and perhaps cause her to have more children. Because Rachel and Leah recognized that their father had treated them and Jacob wrongly, it may be that Rachel was just trying to hurt Laban in return.

Verses 22 – 55. Three days after Jacob takes his family, servants, and livestock, and crosses the Euphrates River and heading for Gilead, Laban learns that they have gone. Laban takes his other relatives, probably his sons and their male children and servants, and pursues Jacob for seven days. Since Jacob has family, maidservants, and many livestock as part of his caravan he can't travel as fast as Laban. When Laban finally

catches up with Jacob's caravan it is in the hill country of Gilead. Before Laban can confront Jacob, he is confronted by God in a night dream and tells him to be careful not to say anything to Jacob that is either good or bad. When Laban confronts Jacob, he accuses him of carrying off his daughters like captives, and leaving secretly so that he was unable to prepare a proper, joyful send off with music and singing. He also says Jacob didn't give him the opportunity to kiss his daughters and grandchildren goodbye. Laban didn't really want to do any of these things but is using them as an excuse to confront Jacob and try to force his return into his service. He says he has the power to harm Jacob, but that God has visited him in a dream and told him not to say anything bad or good to Jacob. Fear of God is the reason Laban is speaking so kindly.

But then he asks why Jacob has stolen his gods. Jacob doesn't know Rachel has stolen the household gods, so when Laban says Jacob has taken his daughters like captives and accuses him of taking his household gods, Jacob replies that he feared Laban would take his daughters by force to keep them from leaving, but that he can search everywhere to see if anyone took the gods and if anyone did that person will die. So Laban searches in Jacob's tent, Leah's tent, the tents of Bilhah and Zilpah and found nothing. Then he goes into Rachel's tent to search. Rachel had taken the gods and put them in the saddle she used to sit upon her camel and she was sitting on them when Laban came in. She told her father not to be angry that she doesn't stand up in his presence but that she is having her period. Thus Laban searched everywhere else and did not find his gods. So Jacob was angry and confronted Laban about not finding anything of his among Jacob's things. Jacob recounts the ways that for 20 years Laban has been blessed because of Jacob; that he has not taken anything that belonged to Laban and even bore losses that should have rightfully been born by Laban. (Jacob was 76 when he left home after deceiving Isaac and getting the blessing so he is 96 now in 1740 BC.) He reminds him that he worked fourteen years for Laban's two daughters and another six years for the flocks and that Laban changed his wages 10 times during those years. Then Jacob concludes that if it were not for Laban's fear of the God of Abraham and of Isaac, he would have been sent away from Laban empty-handed. But God has seen his hardship and toil, and that is the reason God visited Laban and rebuked him.

Laban replies that the women, the children, and the flocks belong to him, but what can he do that day about the daughters or the children they have borne. He has given up at this point in his quest to get them back in his house and control. So he proposes they make a covenant and let it serve as a witness between them. So Jacob took a stone and placed it as a pillar and then all the relatives also took stones and piled them in a heap on Jacob's stone and they ate together. Laban called the pile of stones Jegar Sahadutha, which means "witness heap" in Aramaic. And Jacob called the stones Galeed, which means "witness heap" in Hebrew (that is the reason the area become known as Gilead). The pile of stones was also called Mizpah, which means "watchtower." Laban said the pile of stones would be a witness between them even when they are away from each other. Laban says that if Jacob mistreats his daughters or takes any wives besides his daughters that Jacob should remember that God is also a witness. Then he says that the pile of stones is a witness that neither of them will cross from their side to the other side to do harm to the other person (which included their families and possessions).



Then Laban ends with an oath that the God of Abraham, the God of Nahor (his grandfather and Abraham's brother), and the God of their father (Terah) is to be the judge between them if they don't keep the covenant. Jacob also takes the oath in the name of the fear of his father, Isaac. The Hebrew word (*phachad*) which is translated "fear" can also be translated "awesome one." In the latter translation it would mean Jacob was making the oath in the name of the Awesome One of Isaac and thus God. Then he offered a sacrifice, everyone ate, and they spent the night there.

This was not a covenant or promise between friends but a watchtower between two individuals who did not trust the other. It called upon God to make sure they each kept the covenant because neither could check on the other without breaking the covenant. Thus, in today's terminology, it would be called a nonaggression pact. Early the next morning Laban kissed his grandchildren and his daughters, blessed them, and returned home.

Chapter 32

Verses 1 – 21. As Laban leaves to return to Haran, Jacob and his caravan depart for Canaan and as they went angels of God met him. When he saw them he said it was the camp of God, so he named it Mahanaim which means two camps. Obviously the individuals he saw looked like the angels he saw climbing the ladder to heaven on his trip to Haran 20 years previously. We aren't told that the angels said anything to Jacob, but he must have seen that they camped with his camp as a comfort that God was fulfilling the promise he had received from God during his ladder vision that he would return to his homeland. But Jacob must have understood that returning to Canaan meant he needed to settle things with his brother, Esau, before he could live peacefully and quietly in the land. So he sends messengers to find Esau in the



land of Seir, the country of Edom (Esau was also called Edom so it is Esau's land). He instructed them to tell Esau that he has been living in Haran with Laban all these years and has gained cattle, donkeys, sheep, goats, men servants, and maid servants. So he is sending this message to find favor in Esau's eyes. The messengers returned with the news that Esau was coming with 400 men to meet Jacob. This news brought fear to Jacob so he divided his caravan into two groups with the idea that if Esau attacks perhaps one group can escape. Like he has done before, Jacob prepares to face what is happening by looking at what he can do and taking the actions that he thinks will manage the situation to his advantage. Remember how he responded to Esau to get the birthright and blessing and how he responded to Laban's deceptions. Finally he remembers that God had told him to return to the land and that he would be with him, so he turns to God for help. He addresses God as the God of Abraham and of his father, Isaac, which means he hasn't yet really accepted God as the one who has the right to lead his life. He reminds God of his promise to prosper him and that he said to return to his country and relatives. Then he acknowledges that as a servant he is unworthy of all of God's kindness and faithfulness that has prospered him from just a staff when he crossed the Jordan River 20 years ago to become two groups now. He asks God to save him from Esau because he is afraid Esau will attack not only him but his wives and children. Then he reminds God of his promise to make him prosper and make his descendants like the sand of the sea. Waltke, in his study of Genesis (p. 443) likens Jacob's prayer to the form of a penitential psalm in that he reminded God of what he has done in the past, confessed his unworthiness to claim God's favor and calls himself God's servant, acknowledged his fear and asked for divine deliverance, and ended by claiming God's promise of a continuing line of descendants. (Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001)

After praying, Jacob selects a gift of his animals that he plans to send ahead of him to pacify Esau with that idea that then he won't attack. The gift is quite grand: 200 female goats, 20 male goats, 200 female sheep, 20 male sheep, 30 female camels with their young, 40 cows, 10 bulls, 20 female donkeys, and 10 male donkeys. Jacob assigns some of his servants to drive each group of animals ahead of him, his family, and remaining servants and animals and instructs them to say to Esau, as each group meets him, that the animals are a gift from their master, Jacob, for him and that Jacob is coming behind. Jacob sends the servants and animals on toward Esau.

Verses 22 – 32. That night, Jacob packs up his family and crossed the Jabbok River (really a small stream). Then he also sent the rest of his possessions across which left him alone on the north bank. That night a man approached Jacob and wrestled with him until daybreak. While he wrestled with the man, Jacob didn't know it was God. It appeared that the man could not overcome Jacob so he touched Jacob's hip socket so that it was wrenched out of place as they wrestled. It seems that the dislocation of his hip caused Jacob to recognize it was

not just a man with whom he wrestled. Then the man told Jacob to let him go because it was daybreak, but Jacob replied that he would not unless the man would bless him. The man asked to know Jacob's name. Then he said that would no longer be Jacob's name, but that he would be called Israel because he had struggled with men and with God (Israel means he wrestles with God or God's warrior). When Jacob asked the man for his name, the man didn't give Jacob his name but blessed him. So Jacob called the place Peniel which means "face of God" because he saw God face to face and his life was spared. As the sun rose, Jacob limped away from his encounter with God. Then, we are told that from that day, the Jews did not eat the tendon attached to the socket of the hip of an animal because the socket of Jacob's hip was touched (by God) near the tendon.

Jacob's wrestling with God began a new stage in his life at 96 years old. This encounter with God didn't mean that from that day on Jacob always responded in a spiritual manner and never failed to follow God's will. But from this point forward in Genesis, whenever Jacob acted to follow God's will, Moses refers to him as Israel and whenever he acted like his old self, Moses refers to him as Jacob. Jacob's situation is like ours. After we accept Jesus' death on the cross to restore us to a right relationship with God we don't always follow God's will but follow our old ways of acting. But that doesn't keep God from blessing us and working with us to guide us back to following his will. This change in Jacob's life was evident from then on because everyone could see his limp.

Chapter 33

Verses 1 – 29. As Jacob limped toward his family he looked up and saw Esau coming with his 400 men. So he paired the children with their mothers and had the two maid servants and their children lead the way followed by Leah and her children and then Rachel and Joseph brought up the rear. As is obvious, Jacob was arranging them according to how precious they were to him. This arranging of his family was not a lack of faith in God but simply being careful and responsible with what God had given him. Then Jacob went ahead of them and bowed to the ground seven times to honor his brother as he approached him. The old Jacob would have tried to deceive his brother in some way, but the new Israel overcame his fear and approached his brother in humility. Esau's response wasn't to wait for Jacob to reach him but ran to meet him, embraced him, threw his arms around Jacob's neck and kissed him. As Esau greeted Jacob this way, they both wept. Esau noticed the women and children and asked who they are, and, as the women came toward them, Jacob replied that they are the children God has graciously given him. Notice that Jacob gave God the glory as he confessed that his family was a gift from God.

Esau then wanted to know the meaning of all the droves "succession" of animals that had met him on his way. The servants must have given Esau the message Jacob had told them to say, so his question is why Jacob would give him so much. Jacob responds that they are a gift to find favor in Esau's eyes which really means to make amends for all that has happened in the past. Esau replies that he already has plenty so Jacob should keep the animals. But Jacob pleads with Esau that if he has found favor with him, he should accept the gift because seeing his face is like seeing the face of God. So Esau relents and accepts the gift. Previously Jacob had stolen Esau's blessing, now he has provided a blessing to him. Then Esau wants Jacob to accompany him to his home but Jacob replies that his children are young and he must also care for the female animals and their young which can't be driven hard even one day or they will die so Esau should go on while He travels slower. Esau offers to leave some of his men with them, but Jacob replies that isn't necessary if he has found favor with Esau. So that day Esau started back to his home in Seir. But Jacob turned to the west to Succoth (means "shelters") on the east of the Jordan River and built a temporary place for himself and his animals. How long he stayed there we don't know. Jacob's actions may indicate he didn't trust Esau but it could also be that he was following what God told him to do which didn't include living in Seir. Jacob then entered Canaan, bought a piece of land from the son of Hamor, the father of Shechem, and pitched his tents near the city of Shechem (which means "peaceful"). There he also built an altar to worship God, like Abraham did when he first entered Canaan (Gen 12:6-7), and called it El Elohe Israel which can mean either "God, the God of Israel" or "mighty is the God of Israel."

Chapter 34

Verses 1 – 17 This chapter starts with Dinah, whom Leah had borne to Jacob, going out to visit the women of the land. Leah gave birth to Dinah between 1745 and 1744 BC, so she was about 4 to 5 years old when Jacob settled near Shechem in 1740 BC. These facts mean Jacob is 104 years old. For Dinah to be allowed to visit the women of the area she would have to be a teenager or at least 12 years old which was the age when some young girls were given in marriage. That would mean this event happened at least seven to eight years after Jacob settled near Shechem and would put the date at about 1732 BC. When Shechem, the son of Hamor (who was a Hivite, a descendant of Ham's son Canaan) saw Dinah, he lusted for her, took her by force, and raped her. After violating Dinah, Shechem spoke tenderly to her and asked his father, Hamor, to get her for his wife. I guess he thought that after she had been violated, it would be easier to get her as his wife and for a lesser price.

When Jacob heard that Dinah had been raped, he did nothing about it because his sons were in the field with the livestock. This was in keeping with the practice of the time that a girl's brothers had an active part in approving their sister's marriage. While the boys were still in the field, Hamor came to talk with Jacob about a marriage between Shechem and Dinah. While that is happening, the boys come in from the field because they had heard what had happened to their sister. They were filled with grief and fury because she had been raped. Moses' reference that "Shechem had done a disgraceful thing in Israel" relates to the later laws that God gave to the Israelites in Deuteronomy (Deut 22:13 – 30). Hamor spoke to Jacob's sons saying that his son had his heart set on her and asked them to give her to be his wife. In addition, he proposed a wider intermarriage between the two families and that this would open the way for them to acquire property in the land and prosperity from it. Then Shechem offered to pay to Jacob and his sons whatever price they asked, no matter how great, if only they would give Dinah to be his wife.

Because Dinah had been defiled, Jacob's son spoke deceitfully to Shechem and his father. They were correct in opposing the proposal to blend their families (or it could be said to mix their seed) but doing it deceitfully was wrong and as we will see their actions were also wrong. They used the covenant of circumcision as an excuse for why they could not approve Dinah's marriage to a man who was not circumcised. Circumcision had been commanded by God to Abraham and all the males of his house then and in the future to set them apart from the other nations and confirm his covenant with them to be his people and heir to all the promises he made to Abraham (Gen 17). They proposed that Shechem and all the males of his relatives be circumcised and then they would be willing for Dinah and their other girls to be given to those men in marriage. By this time Reuben, the first born, was 32 years old and could have a daughter, but they were promising that future daughters would also be available to be wives. They also said they would settle among the Shechemites and become one people with them. But if Shechem and the Shechemite males would not make this agreement, they would take Dinah and leave. For them to make and follow through with this agreement would have broken the covenant they had with God and thus they would not receive his blessing and promises. So, from the beginning of their proposal they lied and did not intend to keep their word. Notice that Jacob (the deceiver) did not interrupt what they were saying to speak the truth. There is no way of knowing if he knew what his sons intended to do, but his silence made him complicit with their deception.

Verses 18 – 31. What Jacob's sons proposed sounded good to Shechem because he really wanted Dinah as his wife, so he and his father, Hamor, went to the city gates and told the proposal to the town's males. They encouraged them with the promise of intermarriage and the idea that would mean the gaining of their livestock and property becoming theirs through the intermarriages. The men of the city also thought that was a good plan so Shechem, Hamor and all the males of the city were circumcised that day. Three days later, while they were all still in pain from the circumcision, Simeon and Levi (Leah's second and third sons, who were 19 and 18 years old) took their swords and attacked the unsuspecting city, killing every male. They killed Hamor and Shechem and took Dinah from their house. The other sons of Jacob came upon the dead bodies and took it upon themselves to loot the city, taking all their animals as well as their women and children and everything in their houses. At this point, Jacob speaks to Simeon and Levi to point out that they have brought trouble upon their entire family and made them a stench to the Canaanites and Perizzites and if they banded together to revenge what had been done it would mean the destruction of the family. Notice that Jacob still wasn't

concerned about the rightness or wrongness of their actions or even what had happened to Dinah, but only how all of it would affect him and the family. But Simeon and Levi pointed out was it right for their sister to be treated like a prostitute. Since Jacob had not initially showed any concern for what had happened to Dinah, Simeon and Levi (who were also children of Leah as was Dinah) probably felt it was their duty to avenge the wrong done to her. What all this shows is that Jacob's family had started to show how dysfunctional it really was because of Jacob's favoritism of Rachel over Leah and his deception of Laban as the boys had grown up.

Chapter 35

Verses 1 – 8. Now Jacob is reminded of how he committed himself to God after viewing him at the top of a ladder from heaven to earth near a city called Luz and renamed Bethel (house of God) when he was fleeing from his brother Esau. It has been eight years since Jacob brought his family into Canaan and he has not returned to Bethel or his father's house as he had made a commitment to do. God's appearance and command to return to Bethel and settle there spurred Jacob to action. In the eight years they had been staying near Shechem, he had not made his family and servants get rid of the household gods they had brought with them from Haran. In addition to the household gods they may have brought with them, when he sons looted the Shechemite homes they would have taken the household idols as part of the treasures. He knew this was wrong because his vow when he was last at Bethel was that God would be his God and the household gods would be a conflict with this. So Jacob tells his family (which would include servants and the captured Shechemite women) to get rid of all the foreign gods that were with them, to purify themselves and change their clothes, and then they would go to Bethel where he would build an altar to God. The people obeyed by bringing all the foreign gold and the rings in their ears to Jacob and he buried them under the oak tree at Shechem. They set out toward Bethel and as they went, God provided protection against them being pursued by having the fear of God fall upon all the towns around them. When they arrived at Bethel, Jacob built an altar to worship God and called the place El Bethel (which means God of the house of God) because that was where God had revealed himself to Jacob as Jacob fled from Esau.

We know from Genesis 24:59-61 that Jacob's mother Rebekah had a nurse, but until now we had not been told her name. Since her death is mentioned and that she was buried under an oak below Bethel which was then named Allon Bacuth, which means oak of weeping, it is evident that she left Isaac's house at some time and traveled to Haran and became part of Jacob's house. That may mean that Rebekah died sometime during Jacob's 28 year absence.

Verses 9 – 15. Now that Jacob has obeyed and returned to Bethel, God again appears to him, announces himself as "El Shaddai" (God Almighty) and blesses Jacob. God again tells Jacob (as he did at Peniel when Jacob wrestled with him all night) that he was changing Jacob's name to Israel. Then God tells him to be fruitful and increase in number, that a community of nations will come from him and kings will come from his body. God promises to give the land he promised to Abraham



and then to Isaac to Jacob and his descendants after him. Then God went up to heaven from where he had been

talking with Jacob. So Jacob set up a pillar at that place, poured a drink offering and oil on it and worshipped God. And again we are told that the place was named Bethel.

Verses 16 -20. Jacob then left Bethel, but before they had reached Ephrath (which means fruitful) Rachel began to give birth. She had great difficulty with the childbirth and the midwife encouraged her by telling her that she had another son. With her dying breaths, Rachel named him Ben-Oni, which means “son of my trouble.” But Jacob renamed him Benjamin which means “son of my right hand.” So Rachel was buried on the way to Ephrath (which was later known as Bethlehem) and Jacob set up a pillar over her tomb which to the day of Moses’ writing this account still marked the spot.

Verses 21 – 29.

Note that Moses now begins to refer to Jacob as Israel, and say he moved on and pitched his tent beyond Migdal Eder (which means “flock tower”). Apparently this was near Ephrath to the east and was a place where shepherds could spend the night with their flocks and watch them. It is reported to be the place where the shepherds were watching their sheep when the angel announced the birth of the Messiah to them. While camped at this location, Reuben, Jacob’s oldest son by Leah, went in and slept (had sex) with Bilhah who was Rachel handmaiden and considered Jacob’s concubine since she bore him two sons. Some commentators suggest Reuben did this to try to prevent her from becoming Jacob’s favorite wife now that Rachel was dead. Others suggest that he resented that Jacob did not honor his mother (Leah). But whatever the reason, it was a claim against his father as well as an immoral act. In the Near East, if a man wanted to assert his superiority over another man he might do so by having sexual relations with the man’s wife or concubine (see an example in 2 Sam 16:21-22). So Reuben’s act was rebellion against Jacob’s authority as well as lust. Jacob heard what had happened but he didn’t do anything about it at that time, but later Jacob responded by not giving to Reuben the birthright blessing of becoming the leader of the family as well as his double portion of the inheritance.

Now we are given a recounting of the sons born to Jacob and by which wife or concubine.

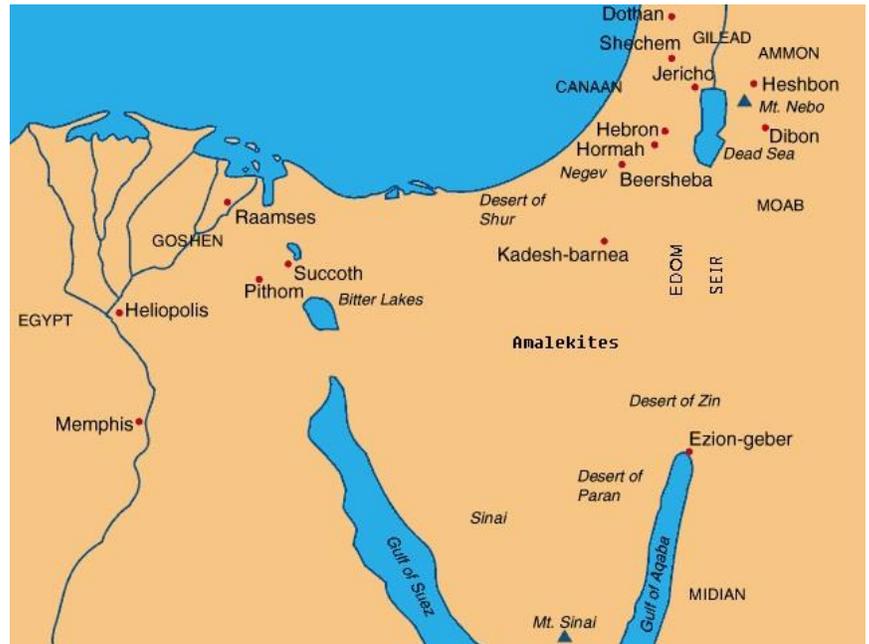
This story concludes with Jacob finally returning to his father’s home in Mamre, near Kiriath Arba (Hebron) where both Abraham and Isaac had stayed. This shows the fulfillment of the vow he made to God after his vision at Bethel and indicates that he established himself as Isaac’s heir in Isaac’s household (the birthright he had bought from Esau). We are told that Isaac died at the age of 180 years, which would be in 1716 BC, just 16 years after Jacob returned to Isaac’s home. Jacob and Esau, who were the age of 120 years, came together to bury Isaac. We are not told, but it is reasonable to conclude that Isaac was buried in the Cave of Machpelah which Abraham had bought near Mamre and in which Sarah and he were buried. At the time of Isaac’s death Joseph would be 30 years old. We will see (Gen 37) that Joseph was 17 years old when he was sold into slavery and his brothers tricked Jacob into believing that he had been killed by a ferocious animal. That means Isaac would have known about that incident and probably mourned the loss with Jacob.

Chapter 36

Verses 1 – 8. Now we have a short *toledot* (generations) to give us the descendants of Jacob’s brother, Esau who was also known as Edom. First we are told about his three wives, those who distressed his mother, Rebekah. They are called Canaanite women but only two of the three are from descendants of Ham’s son Canaan. Adah was the daughter of Elon, the Hittite, and Oholibamah was the daughter of Anah and granddaughter of Zibeon, the Hittite. His third wife, Basemath, was the daughter of Ishmael and his Egyptian wife who would have been a descendant of Mizraim, a brother of Canaan. Since Ishmael was the son of Abraham, a descendant of Shem, that would mean Basemath would have been descended from both Shem and Ham, the father of Mizraim, but she was not a Canaanite woman by descent. But, because Ishmael was living in Canaanite land, she could be called a Canaanite woman. Back in Genesis 26:34, we were told that Esau was 40 years old (1796 BC) when he married Judith, the daughter of Beeri the Hittite and Basemath, the daughter of

Elon the Hittite. We can't be positive why the two Hittite women are called by different names in these two places, but it is possible that Esau called them by different names after he married them to indicate that they were no longer Hittite descendants because they had become part of his family which was a descendant of Abraham and Isaac.

While Esau was living in Canaan, Adah bore him a son who was named Eliphaz. Basemath bore him a son who was named Reuel. Oholibamah bore him three sons who were named Jeush, Jalam and Korah. Esau had sold his birthright of the double portion of Isaac's possessions for a bowl of bean stew (1816 BC). Then Jacob had deceived Isaac into giving him the blessing that should go to the firstborn, so that probably indicates Esau might have been given the third of Isaac's possessions that would be his right to have, but before Isaac had died because he had married Canaanite women and thus had distressed his mother. Even though Jacob had fled to Haran, the remaining two thirds of Isaac's possessions would be his. So, when we



are told that Esau moved his family and possessions to the hill country of Seir because they were too great for the land to support both his and Jacob's flocks, his move would have happened while Jacob was in Haran. This agrees with Esau coming from Seir to meet Jacob as he was returning to Canaan and asking him to return to Seir with him.

Verses 9 – 19. Now we learn about Esau's sons and grandsons. Esau's son, Eliphaz (his mother would be Adah who is listed as Basemath in Gen 26:34), had five sons named Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam and Kenaz. In Numbers 13 when a leader of each tribe was being selected to be one of twelve "spies" to investigate the Promised Land, Caleb was selected for Judah and it is noted that he was the son of Jephunneh, and in Joshua 14:6 he is noted to be a Kenizzite. So many commentators see this as showing that the descendants of Kenaz were incorporated as part of the tribe of Judah. But in Genesis 15:18-21, Abraham was told that God was giving him and his descendants the land from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates which was inhabited by several tribes including the Kenites, Kenizzites and the Canaanites. These Kenites and Kenizzites of Abraham's time could not be descendants of Kenan born to Esau. Luke lists a Cainan (variation of Kenan) in his genealogy of Jesus and says he was the son of Arphaxad and the father of Shelah. Cainan is not listed in the genealogy in Genesis 10:21-29 of the descendants of Shem. So we can't definitely say from whom the Kenites and Kenizzites of Abraham's time were descended, but they would not be descended from Esau. So Caleb, the Kenizzite could be a descendant of Esau but it is also likely that he is a descendant of the Kenizzites of Abraham's time. Eliphaz also had a concubine named Timna, who bore him a son named Amalek. The descendants of Amalek were known as the Amalekites and lived southwest of the Dead Sea in the Sinai Peninsula. They are the Amalekites who attacked the Hebrew people on their exodus from Egypt (Gen 17:8-15). Esau's son, Reuel (his mother would be Basemath who is listed in this chapter as the daughter of Ishmael), had four sons named Nahath, Zerah, Shammah and Mizzah. There are no grandsons listed from his sons Jeush, Jalam and Korah who were born to Oholibamah. Then we are given a list of the chiefs (kings) among Esau's descendants. From Eliphaz the chiefs were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz, Korah, Gatam and Amalek. From Reuel the chiefs were Nahath, Zerah, Shammah and Mizzah. From Oholibamah the chiefs were Jeush, Jalam and Korah. Note that these are the grandsons and sons of Esau.

Verses 20 – 30. This lists the descendants of Seir who was a Horite. The Bible doesn't tell us from whom the

Horites were descended, but some commentators see the Horites as being “cave dwellers” because the Hebrew word for cave is *hor*. Seir was the area to which Esau moved and we know that the descendants of Esau intermarried with the Horites because Esau’s wife, Oholibamah, was a Horite.

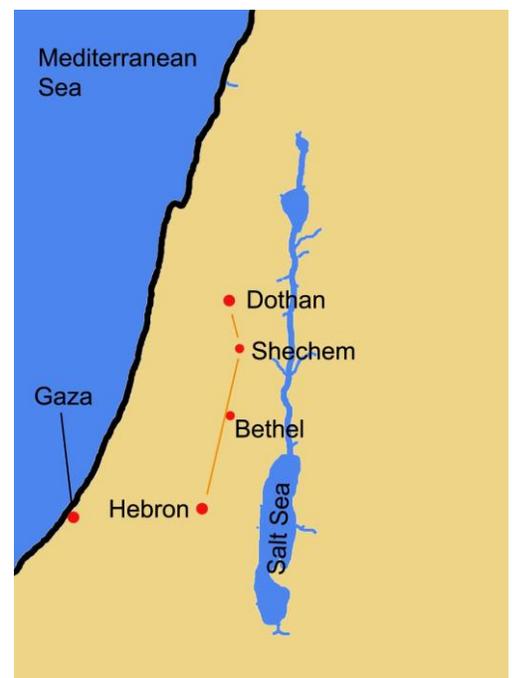
Verses 31 – 43. This section lists the kings who reigned in Edom before any Israelite reigned. Since Samuel anointed Saul as Israel’s first king in 1095 BC (1 Samuel 9 – 10) Moses could not have known that the Hebrews whom he led out of Egypt would have a king unless God had revealed that to him. Not only does it list the kings but gives information about their successors and where they reigned. That makes it possible for archeologists to search for and show the areas of the Sinai and Arabia in which they lived and reigned. This confirms God’s promise to Abraham (Gen 17:16) that kings would come from him.

Chapter 37

Verses 1 – 11. From this point to the end of Genesis, is the last *toledot* (generations) which is about Jacob, although a good portion of it is about what happens to Joseph. At this time Joseph is a young man of seventeen. Since he was born in 1746 BC, that means it is 1729 BC. Isaac is still living and will for another thirteen years. While Joseph with his brothers who were the sons of Zilpah (Gad and Asher) and Bilhah (Dan and Naphtali) he returned and gave his father (Jacob) a bad report about them. Jacob loved Joseph more than his other sons because he was born in his old age. Jacob was 83 when he first began having children and 90 when Joseph was born. Joseph was also the first born of his favorite wife, Rachel, so that may also have played a part in his being Jacob’s favorite. Jacob showed his favoritism by having a richly ornamented robe made for Joseph. This favoritism caused his brothers to hate him so that they could not speak a kind word about Joseph.

Joseph had a dream that he and his brothers were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when his brothers’ sheaves bowed down to his sheaf that was standing upright. Telling his brothers about the dream made them hate him even more and ask if he intended to reign over them. That right should go to the eldest son who was Reuben and he would also get a double portion of Jacob’s possessions when Jacob died. Then Joseph had another dream that the sun, moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to him. When he told his dream to his father and brothers, Jacob rebuked him and asked if he, Joseph’s mother (Rachel died in 1732 BC giving birth to Benjamin so this has to refer to Leah), and Joseph’s brothers would actually bow to the ground before Joseph. His brothers were jealous of Joseph, but Jacob kept the matter in his mind.

Verses 12 – 36. Israel (Jacob, aged 107) sends Joseph (aged 17) out to check on his brothers somewhere out in the fields watching their flocks. Israel thinks they are near Shechem which is about 70 miles north of Mamre, near Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac had lived. Israel had bought land near Shechem and stayed there eight years (1740 BC to 1732 BC) so it is not unexpected that he would have the boys take the flocks there to graze. But he should have known that Joseph’s older brothers were jealous of him and that could cause trouble if he went to check on them. He has already brought a bad report about his four brothers who were sons of Bilhah and Zilpah so if he brings a bad report about them and the other brothers, then Joseph is really going to be hated by his brothers. In spite of this, he sends Joseph to check on them. When Joseph gets to Shechem, he ends up wandering around looking for his brothers and can’t find them. A man notices his wandering and asks what he is looking for. Joseph replies he is looking for his brothers and wonders if the man knows where they might be. He says he overheard them plan to go to Dothan which is 17 miles further north. So Joseph went to look for them at Dothan.



The brothers saw him from a distance, so before he reached them they made a plan to kill him. They called him

“that dreamer” and planned to throw him into a nearby cistern (a hole dug in the ground to hold rain water) after killing him and then say a ferocious animal killed ate him. But when Reuben listened to what the others wanted to do he tried to rescue his life and told them not to kill Joseph but only thrown him in the cistern. We are told that he wanted to come back later to get him from the cistern and take him back to their father (Jacob). When Joseph reached the place where his brothers were with the flocks, they stripped him of his richly ornamented robe which signified his special treatment by their father and threw him into the empty cistern. Then they sat down to eat their meal.

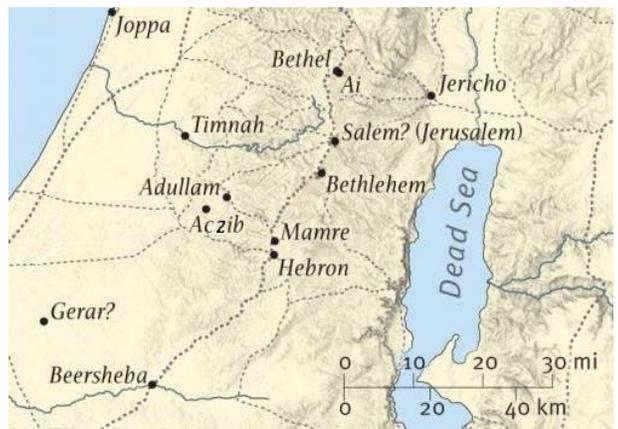
While they were eating they saw an Ishmaelite caravan coming from the direction of Gilead. Dothan was on a well-used route from north to south and had a connecting route coming from the east. So it would not be unexpected for a caravan to be seen in the area. In fact, if they had been there for many days they may have already seen one come by. Somehow they expected that the people of the caravan were Ishmaelites. The Ishmaelites were descended from their grandfather’s (Isaac’s) half-brother Ishmael who had married an Egyptian woman so they were essentially cousins but they probably didn’t know it. Being a caravan, the brothers would have supposed that they were traders who had goods, probably spices, from lands to the east and were headed somewhere to sell or trade them, probably Egypt. So Judah (the fourth oldest and son of Leah) suggests to his brothers that they have nothing to gain by killing Joseph and covering up his blood, but they can gain by selling him to the Ishmaelites. Now the text uses a connecting word that is used to mean many things, such as “and,” “then,” “when,” “thus,” and so forth. So we are not certain whether this is another caravan of merchants who happened to come by while the brothers were talking to the Ishmaelites or whether the Ishmaelite caravan also had Midianite merchants traveling with them. The Midianites were descended from Midian who was the son of Abraham and Keturah, whom he married after Sarah died. So, they would be cousins of the brothers (just like the Ishmaelites) but they probably also didn’t know that. Whether it is another caravan or not, the brothers took this particular time to pull Joseph out of the cistern and sell him to the Ishmaelites for 20 shekels of silver (about 8 ounces and the price that the Mosaic Law would later specify should be paid for a slave between 5 and 20 years of age – Lev 27:5). Thus the merchants proceeded to take Joseph to Egypt.



We now learn that Reuben was not present when the brothers sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites. We don’t know why he wasn’t present but when he returns and finds the cistern empty, he tore his clothes as a sign of distress and mourning because of what they might have done to him. He confronts them with the question of where he can turn now. He obviously was thinking of his father when he planned to rescue Joseph later and now he can imagine his father’s anger and condemnation upon himself that he didn’t take care of Joseph. So the brothers proceed with the plan they had made to deceive their father. They tore the ornamented robe, dipped it in the blood of a goat that they killed, and took it home with them to Israel (Jacob). When they show it to their father, they lie and say that they found it and ask him to examine it to see if it is his son’s robe (they don’t even use Joseph’s name). Jacob readily recognizes the robe as Joseph’s and immediately jumps to the conclusion that a wild animal tore it to pieces and ate Joseph. The brothers quietly let him believe exactly what they had planned to tell him. Withholding the truth was the same as telling the lie. So for many days Jacob mourned for Joseph and all his family came to try and comfort him. But Jacob would not be comforted by all his sons and daughters (so there were more daughters other than just Dinah) and exclaims that he will go down to sheol (grave) to be with his son. While this is happening, the Midianite merchants sell Joseph to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh’s officials who is the captain of his guard. That position would be the individual in charge of the people who provided protection for Pharaoh, his palace, and everyone around him.

Chapter 38

Verses 1 – 11. Now, since this is a *toledot* of Jacob and not of Joseph, what appears to be an interruption of the story about Joseph is really setting the stage to explain what happens later when Jacob pronounces a blessing upon his sons. This account begins with “at that time” which places it in 1729 BC just as the events about Joseph’s being sold into slavery. So after the brothers have let Jacob believe Joseph was eaten by a wild animal, Judah (aged 20) decides to leave and go stay with a man named Hirah who lived in Adullam. We don’t know why he went or why he stayed with this man, but while he is there he meets the daughter of a Canaanite man named Shua, marries her and has a son named Er (born 1729 BC). Then she gives birth to another son and he is named Onan (born 1728 BC). Again she gives birth and has another son who is named Shelah (born 1727 BC at Aczib).



Later, Judah, gets a wife for his oldest son, Er, and the woman is named Tamar. Connecting the events in this chapter which have Judah having twin sons by the end of it and chapter 46 which has one of those sons having two children by the time Jacob’s family goes to Egypt in 1706 BC, it makes Er 10 years old when Judah (age 30) gets a wife for him and that makes the date 1719 BC. Er was wicked in the Lord’s sight so the Lord put him to death. So Judah tells his second son, Onan, to lay with his brother’s wife (Tamar) and produce children as his brother’s descendants. This practice is later mentioned in Deuteronomy 25:5-6 and is known as levirate marriage. But Onan (age 9) refuses to complete the sex act and withdraws early to spill his semen on the ground. This, also, was wicked in the Lord’s sight, so the Lord put him to death. Not wanting his youngest son, Shelah, to die like his brothers, Judah tells Tamar to return to the house of her father Shua until Shelah grows up. He is age 8 at this time. With the understanding he would then be her husband.

Verses 12 – 23. We are told that after a long time Judah’s wife who gave him three sons died. Apparently this had to happen around 1718 BC. After mourning for his wife, Judah goes to Timnah with his friend Hirah to where men are shearing his sheep. When Tamar hears that her father-in-law is heading to Timnah, she takes off her widow’s clothes, covers her face with a veil, and goes to sit at the entrance to Enaim which is on the road to Timnah. She considers that Shelah is grown up (age 9) and knows that he has not become her husband so she plans to take matters into her own hands and get her dead husband’s father to lie with her so she can have children by him. When Judah sees her he thinks she is a prostitute because she has her face veiled and he can’t recognize her. Canaanite temples had temple prostitutes so that the men could have sex with them as an offering to please their god and get a good harvest, abundance of flocks, or generally prosper. Judah approaches Tamar and asks if she will sleep with him. She asks what he will give her for this. Judah replies that he will give her a young goat from his flock but since he doesn’t have it with him, she asks him to give something as a pledge until he sends the goat. When Judah asks what he should give, Tamar requests his seal with its cord and the staff in his hand. He agrees and sleeps with her and she becomes pregnant. Then, after he is gone, Tamar takes off her veil, puts on her widow’s clothes and returns to her father’s house. Judah sends a young goat with his Adullamite friend (Hirah) to where he met Tamar but she is not there. Hirah asks where the temple prostitute is and learns that there is no temple prostitute, so he returns and tells that news to Judah. Judah replies that she can keep what she has or he will be laughed at for being tricked by a woman.

Verses 24 – 30. About three months later Judah learns that Tamar is pregnant so she is guilty of prostitution. Judah calls for her to be brought out so she can be put to death. As she is being brought out she sends Judah a message that she is pregnant by the man who owns these things and asks if he recognizes whose seal and staff they belong to. When Judah sees them he pronounces that she is more righteous than he is because he would not give her his son Shelah. He does not sleep with her again, but when it is the time for her to give birth, twin boys are born. As she is delivering the boys, one puts his hand out and the midwife ties a red thread to it to prove which one was born first. But the boy draws his hand back in and the other boy comes out first. The

midwife exclaims to this boy that this is how he has broken out, so he is named Perez which means “broken out.” Then his twin is born and he is named Zerah which means scarlet because he had the red thread on his hand. These twins are born in 1718 BC and by the time Jacob takes his family to Egypt in 1706 BC (see chapter 46:12), Perez has two boys (probably twins). So that means he must have also been married when he was 10 or 11 years old.

Judah is seen in these events as callous and promiscuous. He gets a wife for his oldest son when the boy is only 10 and when he dies because of his wickedness, he pushes the next younger boy (age 9) to marry the girl and he also dies because of his wicked actions. In the case of neither boy does Judah recognize that wickedness caused the death, but somehow thinks it is Tamar’s fault so he doesn’t want to give the youngest to be her husband for fear he will also die. Then, after his wife dies, Judah is promiscuous and decides to sleep with a woman he thinks is a prostitute without knowing that it is his daughter-in-law. So he sins by his actions in both events. Tamar also sins by deceiving Judah and acting as a prostitute in order to have children. Judah acts with indignation when he thinks Tamar has acted as a prostitute, but when confronted with the fact that he is the one who made her a prostitute, he genuinely repents of his sins and tries to make everything as right as possible. Because of this, when it is time for Jacob to give blessings to his sons and give the leadership of the family to a son, he skips over Reuben who slept with his concubine, and Simeon and Levi who deceived and led in the murder of the Shechemites, and chooses Judah, his fourth son, to bless as the leader of the Israelites.

Chapter 39

Verses 1 – 6a. The previous chapter was a break in telling about Joseph to record Judah’s failure as he tried to live away from his family, his recognition of his sinful ways, his repentance and his return to living righteously. Now the story returns to what happens in Joseph’s life and how as a young man he set his heart on trusting and obeying God. We are first reminded that he had been brought to Egypt by the Ishmaelites (or Midianites) and sold as a slave to Potiphar, who was the captain of the guard for Pharaoh. Then we are told that the Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered as he lived in Potiphar’s house. When Potiphar saw that Joseph was successful in all that he did because the Lord blessed him, Potiphar decided to make Joseph his attendant. Whether or not being an attendant was just being a valet or a personal servant, it definitely led to being the overall manager of Potiphar’s household affairs and everything that he owned. From that time, the Lord blessed Potiphar’s household and fields (everything he owned) because of Joseph. So Potiphar didn’t concern himself with anything about the running of his household (other slaves included) or anything else he owned. The only thing Potiphar was concerned about was what he ate. This doesn’t necessarily indicate that Joseph had any part in Potiphar’s affairs as the captain of Pharaoh’s guard. From Genesis 40:3 we discover that the captain of guard for Pharaoh was also in charge of a prison in which Pharaoh would send individuals with whom he was upset. This information will become relevant to the story in this next section.

Verses 6b – 23. We are told that Joseph was well-built and handsome. Having been sold as a slave at the age of 17 and accounting for it to take a little time for Potiphar to recognize the Lord’s blessing upon Joseph’s work before he put him in charge of everything, we see that Joseph would be 19 or 20 at this time. The phrase “after a while” doesn’t necessarily indicate that Potiphar’s wife started admiring Joseph’s body after he was put in charge of the household. She could have taken note of him before as a slave, but until he was put in charge of the household and was there all the time running things, she wouldn’t have had the opportunity to take advantage of him. But now that he is around all the time and can even be alone with her, she invites him to come to bed with her. Now we see the character of Joseph. He not only refuses because it would be wrong to break the trust Potiphar has in him, but also indicates that such a thing would be wicked and a sin against God. Consequently, since Mrs. Potiphar tried daily to get him into bed, Joseph repeatedly refused and even started making it a point to avoid being with her.

One day when Joseph entered the house to perform his duties, he found that none of the other household slaves were around. We aren’t told but it is highly likely that Mrs. Potiphar arranged for them to be gone when Joseph arrived just so she could be alone with him. Joseph must have suspected that something was wrong by the

absence of the household slaves and started to leave because Mrs. Potiphar had to grab him by his cloak as she again invited him come to bed with her. Joseph's response was to flee quickly from the temptation to take advantage of what she was offering. In fleeing, his cloak was pulled off of him and that provided Mrs. Potiphar an opportunity to get back at Joseph for refusing her advances. She calls the household slaves in so she can claim that Joseph was the one who was trying to get her to go to bed with him and only ran away without his cloak because she screamed. Even though the household slaves probably knew she had been making advances toward Joseph, by calling them in and telling them this story, if they were asked by Potiphar if her story was what happened, they would have had to say that was what she told them when she called them in. And unless Potiphar directly asked them other questions to reveal what really happened, he would never know the truth. But even knowing the truth, the word of a slave would not have had the power to counter the word of a free Egyptian woman. So when Mrs. Potiphar told her husband the story and showed him Joseph's cloak he really had no option but to punish Joseph in some way. When we are told that Potiphar "burned with anger" it doesn't specifically indicate that his anger was against Joseph. It could just as well be that he was angry with his wife for her actions that were going to force him to punish Joseph and lose his service in managing everything. Had Potiphar believed his wife's story, or even if he didn't believe her but wanted to make an example of a slave to keep the other slaves under control and maybe even wanted to show his Egyptian friends how harsh he could treat a slave, he could have put Joseph to death. But instead of doing that, he put Joseph in the prison where the king's (Pharaoh's) prisoners were kept. Since that would be the prison over which he had control, it would appear that he didn't believe his wife's story and decided that since he could no longer have Joseph controlling all his household, he would put him where he could still use his managing skills and still receive God's blessing. So, we are told that God granted Joseph favor in the eyes of the warden of the prison and that the warden made Joseph responsible for everything that was done in the prison. It appears likely that the warden of the prison is also the captain of Pharaoh's guard who was in control of the prison, because in the next chapter we are told (Gen 40:4) that the captain of the guard assigned two new prisoners to be attended by Joseph. We are also told that the warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care because the Lord was with him and gave him success in whatever he did. That is the same thing that was said of Potiphar's putting his whole household and everything he owned under Joseph's care.

Chapter 40

Verses 1 – 5. We know from Gen 41:46 that Joseph was 30 years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh and had spent two years in prison after the events about which we are going to learn. So that means Joseph was 28 when these events happened. It also means he has spent eight years managing everything in the prison for Potiphar. That's why the story of these events begins with "Some time later." We don't know what happened to cause Pharaoh to be angry with his chief cup bearer and chief baker but it resulted in both of them being put in the custody of the captain of the guard (Potiphar) in the prison where Joseph was confined. The chief baker would have been responsible for the food that was prepared for Pharaoh to eat. The cup bearer would have been responsible bringing the food and drink to Pharaoh. It is very possible that there was a claim that someone had tried to poison Pharaoh and he didn't know which man had failed in his duty to protect their king, so he was angry at both of them and sent them to prison. When they arrived at the prison, Potiphar assigned them into Joseph's care. We are told that they had been for custody for some time before they both had dreams on the same night. We aren't told exactly how long that was so they could have been there for a few years, but I would expect only one to two.

Verses 6 – 19. The morning after the men had their dreams Joseph saw them and knew by the look of their faces that something was disturbing them so he asked why their faces were so sad. They said that they had both had a dream but that there was no one to interpret them. If they had not been in prison they would have gone to their priest to seek and interpretation, but where in the prison would there be an Egyptian priest. Joseph must have realized that God had given him the ability to interpret the dreams so he explained to them that only God (Elohim – plural name of God) could provide an interpretation and he asked them to tell him their dreams. Thus he gave God the glory for what he was going to do. In the chief cup bearer's dream he saw a vine before him with three branches. As he watched, the branches

budded, blossomed, formed clusters and the clusters ripened into grapes. He took the grapes and squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup which was in his hand. Joseph told him the dream meant that within three days Pharaoh would lift up his head and restore him to his position as cup bearer. Then Joseph asked the cup bearer to show him kindness and tell Pharaoh about him and the fact that he was forcibly carried from the land of the Hebrews and that even here he has done nothing to deserve his being put in prison.

The chief baker heard what Joseph told the chief cup bearer and that he had been given a favorable interpretation so he was eager to tell his dream to Joseph. In the chief baker's dream he saw three baskets of bread on his head for Pharaoh, but that there were birds eating the bread out of the top basket. Joseph told him the dream meant that within three days Pharaoh would lift off his head and hang him on a tree where the birds would eat his flesh.

Verses 20 – 23. Three days from when Joseph gave the chief cup bearer and chief baker the interpretations of their dreams, there was a birthday party for Pharaoh and all his officials. In the presence of everyone Pharaoh lifted up the heads of the chief cup bearer and chief baker. Just as Joseph had told them, Pharaoh restored the chief cup bearer to his former position in charge of bringing Pharaoh's food and drink to him. But the chief baker he hanged. According to Josephus in his *Antiquities of the Jews* (2:5:3-4), this was not a simple hanging but was what he called a crucifixion, so apparently after the hanging the chief baker's body was impaled on a pole and left out for everybody to observe and see the birds eat the flesh of his body.

The story has a sad ending because the chief cup bearer didn't remember to tell Pharaoh about Joseph. This must have disappointed Joseph as he continued to stay in prison, even though he was in charge of everything that happened in the prison. But as we will see in the next chapter, God was using this to prepare Pharaoh and even Joseph for what he wanted Joseph to do.

Chapter 41

Verses 1 – 8. Two full years passed with Joseph continuing to serve by administrating everything that happened in the prison that Potiphar was in charge of for Pharaoh. Then Pharaoh had a dream where he was standing by the Nile River when seven sleek, fat cows came up out of the river and grazed among the reeds. Then he saw seven ugly, gaunt cows come up out of the river and these cows ate the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up. Soon he fell asleep and had another dream where he saw seven heads of grain that were healthy growing on a single stalk. Then seven other heads that were thin and scorched by hot winds grew up on the same stalk. The seven thin heads of grain ate the seven healthy heads of grain. And again Pharaoh woke up. Pharaoh was disturbed by the dreams and wanted to know their meaning so he called all his magicians and wise men to come and interpret them for him. Even though he told them the dreams, they could not interpret them. Magicians and wise men in ancient countries were usually members of the priestly caste. They were the scientists of their day, studying mathematics, astronomy, chemistry (alchemy), medicine, and mechanics. Their job was to advise their king whenever he had a question about anything. They were also priests of their god and sought to know the future by consulting their god using divination and astrology. Since God, the Creator of the universe, exists outside of what he created (including time), it stands to reason that he knows the future. But other gods, created from the minds and desires of man, could not possibly know the future. Even angelic beings being (who often masquerade as one of the gods created by man) cannot know the future because they are created by God. But demons masquerading as gods can give their interpretation of a dream and then work in the lives of men to attempt to cause the interpretation to come to pass. In this way the demons can mimic what God can truly do and get men to worship them instead of the one true God. But in this instance, God prevented the magicians and wise men from understanding Pharaoh's dream.

Verses 9 – 24. The cupbearer, who was in charge of everything Pharaoh wanted, would have been the individual to bring the magicians and wise men to Pharaoh at his request so he would have heard that they couldn't interpret the dreams. It was this event that caused him to remember how Joseph interpreted his and the baker's dreams and he quickly told Pharaoh all about it. This news caused Pharaoh to send word to the prison

to have Joseph brought to him. Even though it was Pharaoh's command the Joseph be brought to him immediately, it would not have been appropriate for him to be brought in dirty clothes and unshaven so he would have been quickly cleaned and clothed appropriately for his appearance.

When Joseph arrived before Pharaoh, the king tells him that no one can interpret his dream but that he has been told Joseph can. Joseph replied that he couldn't interpret dreams but that God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires. Then Pharaoh tells Joseph the two dreams that he had and that his magicians and wise men were not able to give an interpretation.

Verses 25 – 32. Once Pharaoh is finished, Joseph begins to explain what God has revealed to him as Pharaoh spoke. He says that the two dreams are really one and that God has used them to reveal to Pharaoh what God is about to cause to happen. The seven good cows and the seven good heads of grain are seven years. The seven lean cows that ate the good cows and the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind are seven years of famine. Joseph says that God has shown Pharaoh that he is going to cause seven years of abundance followed by seven years of famine. The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms was to show that what is to happen has been firmly established by God.

Verses 33 – 39. After giving Pharaoh the interpretation, Joseph goes on to explain how to handle what God has shown him would happen. He suggests that Pharaoh appoint commissioners (officials) throughout the land to take a fifth of the harvest during all the good years and store it in cities so it can be used during the years of famine so the country would not be ruined. Joseph's plan sounded good to Pharaoh and all his officials who had heard it, so Pharaoh asked if they could find anyone like Joseph in whom is the spirit of God. Essentially, Pharaoh was asking if his officials knew of anyone better qualified than Joseph was to be in charge of what had been suggested.

Pharaoh's statement about the spirit of God being in Joseph doesn't mean he understood the concept of the trinity. It does suggest that Pharaoh thought a powerful god was living in Joseph and giving him the ability to interpret his dreams. In Egyptian culture Pharaoh was considered a god. God, through Joseph, was establishing that Pharaoh was not god and had no control over what happens. The fact that Pharaoh accepted Joseph's interpretation of the dreams and would do what Joseph suggested meant that Pharaoh was choosing to place himself under Joseph's God.

Verses 40 – 45. Then, in response to Joseph's interpretation and his suggestion for how to deal with it, Pharaoh announces that there is no one as discerning and wise as Joseph and makes him the greatest individual in Egypt other than Pharaoh himself. He says that Joseph shall be in charge of the palace and everyone in Egypt will submit to Joseph's orders. To make the appointment official so that no one would argue with Joseph's orders, Pharaoh gives Joseph his signet ring, dresses him in royal robes, and has Joseph ride in a chariot as his second in command. Pharaoh makes sure Joseph knows the power of his new position by saying that from that time forward, no one in Egypt will lift a hand or foot without Joseph's word. Then to show his power over Joseph, Pharaoh gives Joseph a new name, Zaphenath-Paneah. We don't know for certain what the Egyptian name really was because what we have is the Hebrew way of writing how the name sounded. Thus we don't know the meaning of the name, but some scholars have suggested that it means "the man to whom mysteries are revealed" or "revealer of a secret" or "the god speaks and he lives." This name change would make it easier for all the people of Egypt to accept Joseph and that his orders were really Pharaoh's orders. Pharaoh also gave Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara, priest of On, to be Joseph's wife. Some scholars suggest that the meaning of Asenath is "belonging to or follower of (goddess) Neith." Some scholars suggest that the meaning of Potiphara is "he whom the Ra (Egyptian sun god) gave." The city of On where there was a temple to the sun god was located 10 miles NE of modern Cairo and was known by the Greeks as Heliopolis.

Verses 46 – 49. We now learn that Joseph was 30 years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh. That would put the date at 1716 BC. The question has been raised by some people as to why Joseph didn't immediately send word to his father that he was alive. There is nothing in the story to explain why but perhaps

it was because he trusted God to bring about the completion of the dreams he had been given that his brothers and father and mother would bow down to him. During the seven years of abundance that God promised, the land produced plentifully and Joseph had a fifth of all the produce collected and put in the cities near where it was grown. The land produced so much that Joseph stopped keeping records of the amount because it was so large.

Verses 50 – 52. During the years of plenty two sons were born to Joseph and Asenath. Joseph named the first born Manasseh which sounds like the Hebrew word meaning “forget” and said it was because God had made him forget all his troubles and his father’s household. Forget doesn’t mean Joseph no longer remembered what had happened but that he would no longer put his trust in his father’s household but only in God. He named the second son Ephraim which sounds like the Hebrew word for “twice fruitful” and said it was because God had made him fruitful in the land of his suffering. These two names focus on a God who preserves and a God who provides.

Verses 53 -57. Finally, the seven years of abundance came to an end (1716 – 1709 BC) and the seven years of famine began (1709 – 1702 BC). We learn that the famine was not just in the land of Egypt but extended to other lands as well. But in Egypt, because of what Joseph had done by God’s direction, there was plenty of food stored up. When the Egyptians began to feel the famine, they cried out to Pharaoh for food and Pharaoh told them all to do whatever Joseph told them to do. When the famine had spread over the entire land of Egypt, Joseph opened up the storehouses of grain and sold it to the people. And other countries who heard about grain being available in Egypt came to buy it.

Chapter 42

Verses 1 – 7. When Jacob learned about grain being available in Egypt, he told his sons to go down and buy some so the family wouldn’t die. This was probably around 1707 BC so Jacob would be 129 years old and his sons would be from 39 to 45 years old except for Benjamin who was 25. Jacob was afraid harm would come to Benjamin so he sent the other ten sons to Egypt to buy the grain because the famine had extended to the land of Canaan. Since Joseph was the highest official in Egypt except for Pharaoh, he was the one to whom everyone (at least those from other countries) had to come to buy grain. So when his brothers arrived they bowed down to him in respect of his position with their faces to the ground. This fulfilled the first dream that God had given Joseph.

Verses 8 – 20. Joseph recognized them immediately, even though 22 years had passed since he had been sold into slavery by them. Being dressed as and speaking as an Egyptian, the brothers didn’t recognize Joseph and he didn’t make himself known to them. He pretended to be a stranger to them and spoke harshly to them asking where they came from. When they responded that they came from Canaan to buy food, he accused them of being spies and had come to see where the land was unprotected. They denied that they were spies and said they were the sons of one father and honest men. Joseph again accused them of being spies and this time they replied they were part of twelve son of one man living in Canaan and that the youngest was still with their father while the other son was no longer living. Again, Joseph accused them of being spies and told them that they would be tested by having one of their number return home and bring the youngest son back while the others remained in prison. In that way their words would be tested to see if they were true. Then Joseph decided to put them all in custody for three days, possibly to give them time to make a decision. On the third day, Joseph spoke with them again and said that if they were honest men, one of them could stay in prison in Egypt while the others take grain back to their starving family. But he said that they must return with their youngest brother so their words would be verified as true and so that they may not die. The brothers had no recourse but to proceed to do as Joseph had commanded.

Verses 21 – 38. The brothers think this is happening to them because of what they did to Joseph and remember how distressed he was and pleaded for his life but they wouldn’t listen. Reuben, the oldest, points out that he warned them not to sin against Joseph but that they wouldn’t listen. And he says that now they have to give

account for his blood (because they think that Joseph is dead). They had no way of realizing that as they spoke to each other in Hebrew that the Egyptian official (Joseph) understood every word they were saying. Joseph even had to turn away from them because he began to weep at what they were saying. But he composed himself, turned back to speak to them, and had Simeon taken and bound in front of them. Joseph gave orders to his servants for the brother's sacks to be filled with grain and the silver with which they had paid for the grain to be put in their sacks as well. After this, the brothers were given provision for their trip home, the sacks were put on their donkeys, and they were sent on their way home.

The first night when they stopped, one of the brothers opened his sack to get grain for the donkeys and found the silver in his sack. He announced to his brothers that he found his silver in his sack and they all turned to each other trembling and wondered what it is that God has done to them. When they get home to their father, they explain all that has happened and that they must return with Benjamin so that Simeon can return home. When each brother opened their grain sack, they found that all their silver had been hidden in their sacks. Jacob and all the brothers are frightened and Jacob considers that Simeon is now dead just as Joseph has been from many years. And he is upset that they want to take Benjamin to Egypt and figures that he will lose him also. But Reuben tells Jacob that he may put to death his own two sons if he doesn't bring Benjamin back to him. Jacob replies that Benjamin will not go down with them because if something happened to him it would cause him to die.

Chapter 43

Verses 1 – 14. Even though Jacob's family had brought food back from Egypt, the famine did not lessen but continued to be severe. Consequently, they finished the food and needed more. The amount of food they could have bought was most likely not enough to last an entire year so the time would most likely still be 1707 BC. With the food gone Jacob tells the boys to go back and buy more food. Notice that Reuben had talked for the brothers when they returned without Simeon and his offer that Jacob could kill his two sons if he didn't bring Benjamin back was rejected. Simeon, the second born, was in Egypt and Levi, the third born, had lost Jacob's confidence when he and Simeon had killed all the males in Shechem and taken all their possessions. So, Judah, the fourth born, was next in line to be the leader of the family. So Judah reminds Jacob that the Egyptian official had warned them that they would not see him again unless Benjamin was with them. Judah said that if Jacob would send Benjamin with them they would go to Egypt to buy food but if he won't send Benjamin they won't go because they won't be able to buy food. So Jacob asks why they (the brothers) had brought this trouble on him by telling the Egyptian they had another brother. Judah tells him all they did was answer the Egyptian's questions, but that wasn't the story we heard in chapter 42 where Joseph's continued accusation that they were spies led them to say that they were twelve brothers, one was at home and the other was dead. But he was correct in asking how they would know that the man would say to bring that brother to Egypt. Then Judah shows his leadership by saying that if Jacob sends Benjamin and he doesn't return with him, then he will bear the blame before Jacob for all his life. Then he adds that if they had not delayed they could have gone and returned two times.

Finally Jacob says that if this is what has to happen then do it, but he gives them some instructions for how they should prepare to meet the Egyptian official again. He tells them things to take as gifts for the official. And he tells them to take double the silver because they have to return what they found in their sacks after their first trip. He says perhaps it was a mistake that the silver got into their sacks. Then he says to take their brother and go at once and prays that God will grant them mercy so that the man will let them come back with their brother and Simeon. Then he ends with the fatalist thought that if he is bereaved (because Benjamin dies) then he will be bereaved. He asks for God's mercy but it doesn't seem like he really expects to get it.

Verses 15 – 25. The brothers took the gifts, the silver, and Benjamin and hurried off to Egypt. When Joseph saw them arrive with Benjamin, he ordered the steward of his house to take them to his house, slaughter an animal and prepare dinner (a meal) so they could eat with him at noon. The steward took the brothers to the house and this caused them fear because they thought he wanted to attack and overpower them because of the

silver they had found in their sacks after they left Egypt the last time. So they went to the steward at the entrance of the house and explained that they had found the silver on the evening after they left and had brought it all back with additional silver with which to buy more food this time. The steward tells them not to be afraid because their God and the God of their father had given them the treasure in their sacks and said he had received their silver. That meant they were not guilty of anything and the silver they found was theirs. The steward had Simeon brought out to them, then he took the men inside the house, gave them water to wash their feet and provided fodder for their donkeys. He must have told them that they would be eating with the Egyptian official at noon because the brothers got their gifts out and prepared to give them to the official when he arrived for lunch.

Verses 26 – 34. When Joseph came home the brothers were ready and presented him with the gifts their father had told them to bring. And when they presented the gifts, all the brothers bowed in respect before Joseph. When they first came to Egypt and bowed before Joseph, it was only ten of the brothers and was only a partial fulfillment of Joseph's dream of his brothers bowing before him. Now that it is all ten brothers, it is a complete fulfillment of the dream. Joseph speaks to them and asks if their aged father is still alive and well. They reply he is well and again bow low to pay honor to Joseph. Joseph then looked around, saw Benjamin, and asked if he is the youngest brother they had told him about. Then he spoke to Benjamin with a blessing for God to be gracious to him. At this point, Joseph becomes deeply moved at seeing his brother and leaves the room so he can weep in private. After Joseph has composed himself and washed his face, he came back into the room, and controlling himself ordered the food to be served.

Egyptians had a caste system and this required that Joseph, who as the most important official in Egypt and thus the highest of the upper class, was to eat by himself. Foreigners ate foods that Egyptians regarded as sacred, thus the Egyptians considered it detestable to eat alongside of foreigners. So the brothers and the Egyptians invited to lunch were seated at different tables. Not only were they served separately, but the brothers were seated before Joseph according to their ages from firstborn to youngest. This seating arrangement surprised the brothers and they look at one another in astonishment. When the brothers were served the food, Benjamin's portion was five times greater than the others. This was a way of showing Benjamin special favor just as Jacob had shown Joseph special favor and caused the brothers to hate him. Perhaps, Joseph wanted to see if the brothers would be jealous of Benjamin as they had of their father's favor of him. This was the way the Egyptians and the brothers feasted with Joseph.

Chapter 44

Verses 1 – 5. After the meal, Joseph ordered his steward to fill the brothers' sacks with as much food as they could carry and to put each man's silver in the mouth of his sack. Then he instructed that his silver cup be put in the mouth of the sack of the youngest brother along with the silver that had been brought for the food. The steward obeyed and as the next morning dawned, all ten of the brothers were sent on their journey home. After the brothers had journeyed a short distance out of the city, Joseph instructed his steward to go after the brothers and, when he catches up with them, ask why they have repaid good with evil by taking the cup his master drink from and also uses for divination. This statement about Joseph using the cup for divination doesn't mean he actually did that. It seems more intended to put in the brothers' minds the importance of the cup.

Verses 6 – 17. When the steward caught up with the brothers, he repeated what Joseph had told him to say. The brothers quickly denied doing such as thing, reminding the steward that they had brought back the silver they had found in their sack after their last visit to buy food. Then they rashly promise that if any of them are found to have the cup, that brother will be killed and the rest will become slaves of the steward. The steward changes their promise so that the one found with the cup will become his slave and the rest will be free from blame. This sets the brothers up with an excuse to abandon Benjamin and save themselves. So each of the brothers puts his sack on the ground and opened it for the steward to search for the cup. The steward began with the sack of the oldest and worked his way down to the sack of the youngest. When he found the cup in Benjamin's sack, the brothers tore their clothes to show their great distress because now Benjamin would be

kept behind and their father would die if they returned without him. But, regardless of their great distress, they reloaded the sacks on their donkeys and returned to the city with the steward to stand beside Benjamin before the Egyptian official.

When they arrived at the house, Joseph was still there and the brothers threw themselves to the ground before him. This time they were not just showing him honor, but seeking his mercy. Joseph asked what it is that they have done and didn't they know a man like him could find out things by divination. Judah steps forward as the leader to ask what they can do to prove their innocence. He says that God has uncovered their guilt and says that they are now his slaves. This is his way of offering an alternative to what he must believe the official will do which is kill Benjamin for whom he has promised his father to protect. But Joseph replies that is the furthest thing from what he will do and that only the man who was found to have the cup shall become his slave and the rest should go back home. Again, this tests whether the brothers have changed from their attitudes when they sold Joseph into slavery. Will they now stand up for Benjamin.

Verses 18 – 34. Judah goes up to the official and recounts what has happened from their first visit to Egypt until now and how it was at the official's demand that their youngest brother, whom their father feared would be harmed, has been brought to Egypt with them. He then explains that he has guaranteed his father that he would be responsible to see that Benjamin returns home so that their father's heart will not be broken and cause him to die. He says that if he does not bring Benjamin home he will bear the blame before everyone for all his life. Finally, he offers to remain as the official's slave in place of Benjamin so that Benjamin can return and his father will be spared grief. How could he return and see the misery that would come upon his father. The brothers' return to plead for Benjamin shows their change of heart and shows that they no longer hate their father for showing favoritism first to Joseph and then to Benjamin. By his request, Judah has demonstrated that his attitude has changed and he is willing to sacrifice himself for his brother. This is the first time a human has offered himself to be a substitute for another human that is guilty of some sin. It is altogether fitting that Judah would be the one who would do this since it is his descendant, Jesus, who offers himself as a substitute for everyone who has ever or will ever sin against God.

Chapter 45

Verses 1 – 15. After Judah has recounted what has happened and plead with the Egyptian official (Joseph) to be allowed to remain as his slave in place of Benjamin (in whose sack the official's silver cup was found), Joseph could no longer maintain the pretense of not being their brother. So he told all his servants and any other Egyptians present to leave. When he was left alone with his brothers he made himself known to them and wept so loudly that the Egyptians in nearby rooms heard his cries and reported it to Pharaoh's household servants. Although this Egyptian official says he is Joseph and asks whether his father is still living, the brothers are put at ease but are terrified because of what he could and might do to them. So Joseph asks them to come close to him and tells them he is the brother they sold into slavery. He tells them not to be distressed or angry with themselves because God sent him ahead of them to save lives. Joseph states that the famine has been going on for two years and will last another five years, but God has sent him to save them by a great deliverance (as a great band of survivors) and preserve for them a remnant on earth. Use of the words "survivors" and "remnant" indicates that what is at stake is more than just the lives of the twelve brothers. It is the plan of redemption announced to Abraham. When Joseph says that God has made him father to Pharaoh he is saying that he is an advisor to Pharaoh just as a father is an advisor to his son. It may also mean that the Pharaoh was young, having been made the ruler after his father died. It is also probable that this Pharaoh is one of the Hyksos rulers of Egypt during the period of 1720 – 1560 BC. He is also acknowledging that God has given him authority over all of Pharaoh's household and over all of Egypt. That is quite a change from being a slave and not something that any person could accomplish on his own. Only God could cause such a transformation to happen.

Joseph wants his brothers to hurry back to their father and let him know that he is lord over all Egypt and have him bring the family down to the land (region) of Goshen where he will provide for them for the duration of the

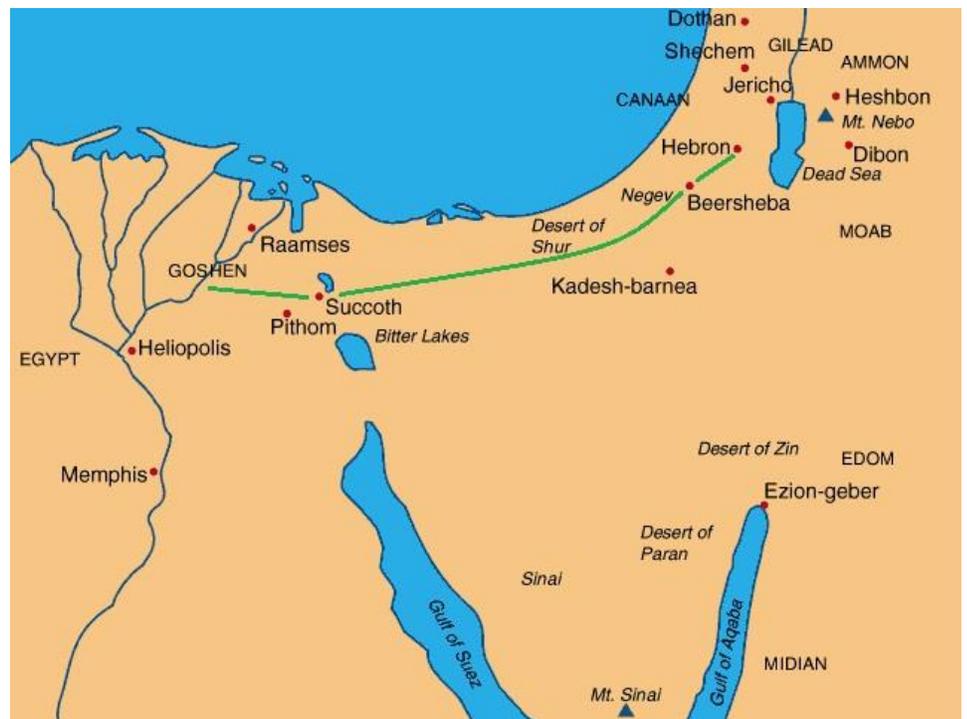
famine. He says they can see for themselves, and especially Benjamin, that he is really their brother. He wants them to bring his father down as quickly as possible. Then Joseph threw his arms around Benjamin and wept with his brothers. After that, his brothers were willing to talk with him.

Verses 16 – 24. Pharaoh learned that Joseph’s brothers have come to Egypt and is pleased, so he tells Joseph to have the brothers’ animals loaded for a trip back to their father and that they should bring the entire family to Egypt and he will give them the best land in Egypt. This again shows the high regard Pharaoh has for Joseph and that he treats him like he would a father. Pharaoh even says that the family should not bother bringing all their belongings because he will give them the best of all of Egypt. In accordance with Pharaoh’s wishes, Joseph gives his brothers new carts for the journey back to Canaan and new clothes. To Benjamin, Joseph gave five sets of clothes and 300 shekels of silver (about 7 ½ pounds). And for his father, Joseph sent with them ten donkeys loaded with the best things of Egypt and ten female donkeys loaded with grain, bread, and other provisions for the journey. Then he sent his brothers away with the admonition not to quarrel on the way.

Verses 25 – 28. The brothers leave and return to their father in Hebron with the word that Joseph is still alive. Jacob is stunned and can’t really believe what they are saying, but when he hears all that Joseph told them to tell him and see the carts that Joseph sent, he finally believes and rejoices. Being convinced that Joseph is alive, Jacob decides that he will go to Egypt before he dies and see Joseph.

Chapter 46

Verses 1 – 7. Jacob packed up everything that was his (family, servants, possessions) and set out for Egypt. His journey would take him by the city of Beersheba, through the Desert (Wilderness) of Shur, by the city of Succoth, and to the area of Goshen. Beersheba is where Abraham had planted a tamarisk tree and where Isaac had built an altar to worship God. So Jacob took the opportunity to offer sacrifices to worship God in that place. God responded by speaking to Jacob in a dream at night and told him not to be afraid to go to Egypt because he will go to Egypt with him, make him into a great nation, and bring him back again. He also told Jacob that Joseph’s own hand will close Jacob’s eyes in death. God’s statement promised Jacob that God would be with him, take care of him, and give him the promised blessing of being a great nation that was first given to Abraham, then to Isaac, and now to him and his descendants. With such a promise, Jacob could have no problem in going to Egypt and enjoying however long he lived there. So Jacob took his sons and grandsons, daughters and granddaughters, and everything he had acquired in Canaan and proceeded to Egypt.



Verses 8 – 27. Here are listed the names of the Israelites (Jacob and his descendants) who went into Egypt. The list most likely includes grandsons who were later born to his sons in Egypt because his youngest son, Benjamin, is 26 years old and is listed as having ten sons. These individuals were the leaders of the clans that made up the 12 tribes (descendants) of Israel throughout their history.

Verses 28 -34. Jacob sent Judah ahead of the caravan to get directions from Joseph so they could arrive in

Goshen. Joseph met them in Goshen, threw his arms around his father, and wept for a long time (tears of joy). Jacob responded that now he is ready to die because he has seen that Joseph is still alive. Then Joseph tells them that he will go to Pharaoh and prepare him to meet them and let them settle in the land of Goshen. Joseph says he will tell Pharaoh that they are shepherds and have brought all their livestock with them. He tells Jacob and his brothers that when Pharaoh calls them in and asks them what their occupation is, that they should reply that they are shepherds just as their fathers before them have been. And he says that they will be allowed to live in Goshen because shepherds are detestable to the Egyptians.

Chapter 47

Verses 1 – 12. After meeting his family and preparing them to meet Pharaoh, Joseph goes to Pharaoh with his father and five of his brothers to introduce them to Pharaoh. After he presents the five brothers, Pharaoh asks them what their occupation is and they reply, as Joseph has instructed them, that they are shepherds just as their fathers (ancestors) were. They go on to say that because the famine is severe and their flocks have no pasture that they have come to live in Egypt for a while and ask to be allowed to settle in Goshen. Pharaoh tells Joseph to settle them in the best part of Egypt, the land of Goshen, and that if any of them have a special ability to put them in charge of the royal livestock.

Then Joseph presents his father before Pharaoh and Jacob proceeds to bless Pharaoh. Pharaoh asks how old Jacob is and Jacob replies that his pilgrimage has been 130 years but that the years are few and difficult and do not equal those of his fathers. Abraham lived 175 years and Isaac lived 180 years so at this point he has not lived nearly as long as they did. In fact, Jacob will only live another 17 years and die at the age of 147. Jacob describing his life as a pilgrimage recognizes that he has not come into final possession of the land that God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and himself. Then Jacob blesses Pharaoh again and leaves. Jacob's blessing of Pharaoh is somewhat unique because in most cases the greater individual is the one to bless the lesser individual. (Example: Melchizedek blessing Abraham Gen 14:18-20 and Heb 7:7) In this case, Jacob who is a servant of God Most High is partially fulfilling God's promise to Abraham that he would be a blessing to all nations. Joseph settles Jacob and his brothers in the area of Goshen in the district of Rameses and provides them with food according to the number of the children. Pharaoh Rameses I reigned from about 1345 to 1320 BC. This is over 350 years after the time of Jacob entering Egypt because of the famine so why is the district (or land) of Rameses identified in this way? Some people believe that Moses calls it this because it had become known in this way by the time he wrote the account. While that is possible, there is no evidence to support the idea. Other people propose that a scribe after the time of Rameses substituted this in to identify the region to people of his time. That totally undercuts the principle that God is the true author and accurately preserves his Word for future generations. Another possibility comes from knowing that Rameses (also spelled Raames) simply means "Ra (the sun god) has created it" and since the area was supposed to be the best part of the land of Egypt, it would be natural to refer to the region as what the sun god has created.

Verses 13 – 27. We learn that the famine was so great that all of Egypt and Canaan was affected. As a result, Joseph collected all the money there was in Egypt and Canaan from people buying grain from his storehouses. That money became the property of Pharaoh. When all the money was gone, the people came to Joseph and said that even though all their money was gone they were asking him to give them food or else they would die before him. Joseph agreed to sell them food in exchange for their livestock (horses, sheep, goats, cattle, and donkeys). And for the next year that is how the people paid for their food as all the livestock in Egypt became the property of Pharaoh. When the year was over the people came again to Joseph to get grain, complaining that they had nothing left with which to buy grain except their land and their bodies. So Joseph sold them grain in exchange for their land and therefore all the land in Egypt became Pharaoh's property except for the land of the priests. It was Pharaoh's normal practice to support the priests of the land with an allotment of food so they had enough throughout the famine and had no need to sell anything to Joseph for grain. But as for the people, with their land sold to Pharaoh, the people had no place to live so Joseph moved them into the cities and thus all the people of Egypt were essentially in servitude to Pharaoh. Joseph gave them grain to plant on the land belonging to Pharaoh with the provision that when the crop was brought in, one-fifth would be given to Pharaoh

and the other four-fifths would be theirs for food for their family and for planting the next crop on the land.

“Early Greek writers, as well as monument evidence, seem to confirm Joseph's political reforms and redistribution of land in Egypt.” (*Notes on Genesis*, Dr. Thomas L. Constable, p. 285, Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, and Strabo. See Keil, C. F. and Franz Delitzsch. *The Pentateuch*. 3 vols. Translated by James Martin. Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament. N.p.; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., n.d., vol 1 p. 379, and *Cambridge Ancient History*, vol 1 pp. 306-310.)

“Both Egyptian and Mesopotamian slavery differentiated generally between formerly free people who became debt slaves and foreigners (usually war captives) who were bought and sold as chattel. Mesopotamian laws and contracts indicate that creditors obtained the service of the debt slave until the debt was covered, but chattel slaves belonged to their owners without much chance of release. Although we cannot know from Genesis, there is reason to believe that the voluntary submission of the people assumes that the enslavement was not permanent (cp. the law established by Joseph, 47:26).” (*Notes on Genesis*, Dr. Thomas L. Constable, p 284, Mathews, Kenneth A. *Genesis 11:27—50:26*, New American Commentary series. N.c.:Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006 p. 851.)

Verses 28 – 31. Meanwhile, the Israelites (Jacob’s family) were settled in the land of Goshen and the family grew larger. Jacob lived in Egypt for seventeen years and died when he was 145 years old (1689 BC). When he was nearing death, Jacob called Joseph to him and asked him to promise not to bury him in Egypt but to bury him with his fathers (Isaac and Abraham in the cave of Machpelah). Joseph swore to do as Jacob asked and Jacob worshipped God while leaning on his staff. The normal posture in worship would be kneeling on the ground and bowing the head to the ground. That Jacob doesn’t do this but leans on his staff probably means he is too feeble to get in that posture.

Chapter 48

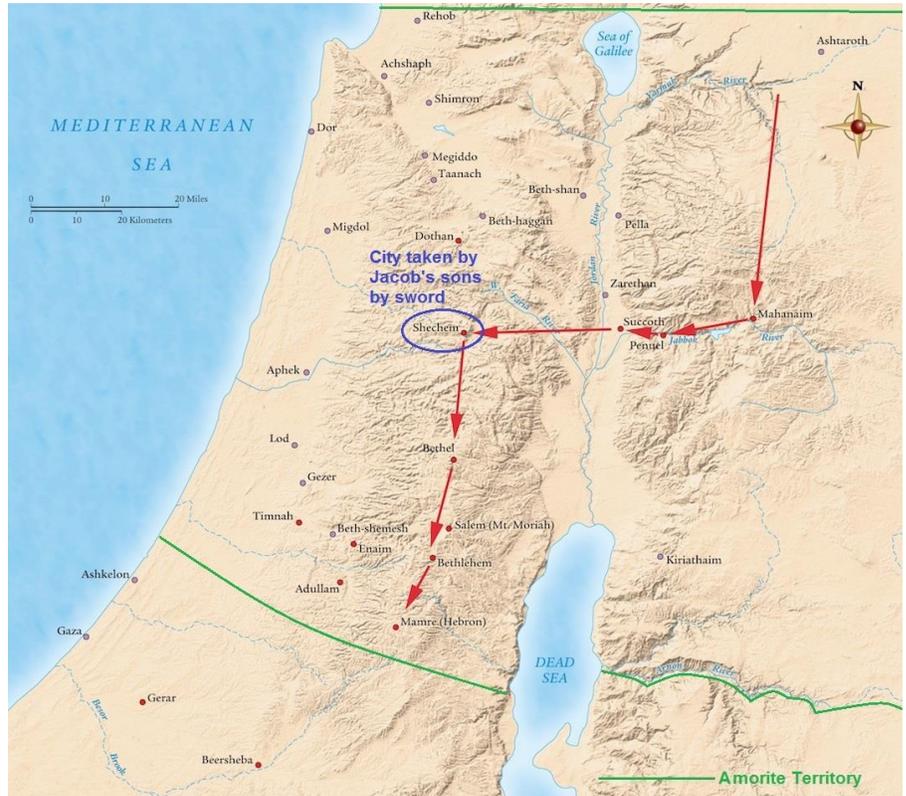
Verses 1 – 11. A little while later Jacob is lying ill on his bed (much closer to dying) and Joseph is informed about his father’s condition. So he takes his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, and goes to see him. At that knowledge of their arrival, Jacob gains enough strength to sit up on his bed. Jacob recounts to Joseph God’s appearance to him at Luz (that is the older name of Bethel where God appeared to Jacob in a dream about a ladder reaching to heaven chapter 27) and promised he would have many descendants and they would inherit the land as promised to Abraham and Isaac. Then Jacob proceeds to make Joseph’s two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, his adopted sons with inheritance rights just like his other sons. This effectively gives Joseph a double portion of his father’s inheritance just as the first-born son would normally receive. And he says that any future sons born to Joseph will be reckoned (counted) under one of these two boys. And he recalls that Joseph’s mother, Rachel, dies on their trip from Paddan (Paddan Aram where her father, Laban who was Jacob’s second cousin, lived) and he buried her beside the road to Ephrath (Bethlehem). Then Jacob asks who the boys are that are with him. His eyes were failing because of old age and he couldn’t see clearly who they were. When told they are Joseph’s sons, he asks for them to be brought close so he can bless them and says that he never expected to see Joseph’s face again and now God has allowed him to also see his children.

This account explains why Manasseh and Ephraim become heads of tribes on equal standing with Jacob’s other sons and why Joseph does not become the head of a tribe. Manasseh would be between 22 and 26 years old and Ephraim between 21 and 25 years old at this time. In this act and the blessing of his other sons in the next chapter, Jacob acknowledges God’s providential work in his life in spite of his unfaithfulness.

Verses 12 – 20. The boys apparently have been standing near or between Jacob’s knees as would have been the

nearest thing that boys of that age could have done to accommodate the normal ritual of putting a child on the knee of the man adopting them into his family. So now, for the blessing of the boys, Joseph takes them back to a position in front of Jacob and places them in the proper order according to birth (oldest toward the right hand of Jacob and youngest toward the left hand) and moves them into his reach so Jacob can place his right hand on Manasseh's head and his left hand on Ephraim's head. But Jacob reaches out and crosses his arms so that his right hand is on Ephraim and his left is on Manasseh. Then he proceeds to bless Joseph asking that God will bless the boys, that they will be called by his name (that is, his sons), and that they may increase greatly upon the earth (have many descendants). Joseph interrupts to correct Jacob's placement of his hands, but Jacob refuses, saying that he knows which is which and that the younger will be greater than the older but that both will become great. Then he pronounces the blessing putting Ephraim ahead of Manasseh.

Verses 21 – 22. Jacob says he is about to die but says God will be with you (plural) and take you (plural) back to the land of your (plural) fathers. The use of the plural indicates that Jacob is referring not just to Joseph but to all his children. Then Jacob proclaims what portion of the Promised Land will belong to Joseph (that is his sons) as his birthright. It is to be the ridge of land he took from the Amorites with his sword and bow. Since Shechem was taken by Jacob's sons by sword, this would be the major city of his area. Later, after Joseph dies, his bones are brought back with the Israelites through the Exodus and the capturing of the Promised Land and are buried at Shechem (Joshua 24:32) because this is his inheritance.



Chapter 49

Verses 1 – 28. After performing the adoption ceremony to make Ephraim and Manasseh his legal sons so that Joseph would receive a double portion of his inheritance, Jacob calls the rest of his sons in to give them his blessing. The blessing was based on God's promises starting with Abraham that his name would be made great and he would be a blessing to all the peoples on earth (Gen 12:1-3). Each son would learn how he and his branch of the family would benefit from God's promises and how they would be a channel through which God would bless the whole world. Not only that, but God revealed to Jacob what would happen with his sons and their families in the future so that he could bless them according to their future. Jacob believed God's promise that his descendants would inherit (possess) the land promised to Abraham (Gen 12:7). Remember that God told Abraham that his descendants would be "strangers in a country not their own" and that they would be "mistreated and enslaved four hundred years" before they would come out with great possessions. God said he would punish the nation that enslaved them. He also said that in their fourth generation his descendants would come back to the land after the sin of the Amorites had reached its full measure. (Gen 15:13 – 16) Even knowing these things from his grandfather, Jacob trusted God to take care of his descendants through the mistreatment and slavery and to fulfill the promise in some way to bring them out and into the land promised. The promise was not fulfilled completely during the lifetime of Jacob's sons nor even during the years from their entry into the land until the captivity of the northern tribes in 722 BC and the captivity of the southern

tribes in 605 BC. In fact, the promise has yet to be completely fulfilled. We have to read these verses with the knowledge of this context in order to be able to understand Jacob's blessings of his sons.

As the first-born, Reuben could have expected to have the most prominent position in the family and be the leader of all the tribes of Israel, recognized as the priest for the family, and a double portion of the possessions when Jacob died. Although Jacob recognized that Reuben was the first born and excelling in honor and power (at one time), he called him turbulent as the waters and said that he would no longer excel because he had given free rein to his lust and slept with Jacob's concubine, Bilhah. (Gen 35:22) For that sin he lost his rights as the first-born and his sin affected all of his descendants.

Simeon and Levi are addressed together. They were the second and third born and Jacob has nothing good to say about them. They were of the same temperament – violent, angry, and cruel. They plotted to deceive the Shechemites into thinking there would be intermarriage between them and Jacob's sons and daughters if they submitted to circumcision but then killed all the males while they were recovering and took all their wives, children and possessions. Because of their sin Jacob says they would be scattered among the tribes and thus have no allotment of the land for themselves. By the time the Israelites were ready to enter the Promised Land, the Simeonites were the smallest number of all the tribes and when Joshua divided the land, they only received a few cities within the allotment of land for Judah. (Josh 19:1-9) The Levites also received no land grant, but because they later supported Moses at Mt. Sinai when the other tribes opposed him to turn to worshipping a golden calf, they received the blessing of becoming the priests for the whole nation and had cities scattered throughout the Promised Land. (Josh 21:1-42)

Jacob praises Judah for having a lion-like nature and says that his brothers will praise him and bow down to him. Jacob says that the scepter and the ruler's staff will not depart from Judah until Shiloh comes and the obedience of the nations is his. Shiloh is a proper name and means "bearer of rest." There is a city in Canaan by that name but this is a reference to an individual from the lineage of Judah who would bring peace (rest) to the world and would rule it. This is a reference to the Messiah. Thus Judah receives the leadership of the tribes. Jacob obviously forgave Judah's earlier sins of adultery with his dead son's wife (Gen 38 - Tamar deceived him into thinking she was a prostitute) and his leading his brothers to sell Joseph into slavery instead of killing him (Gen 37:26) because he repented and later offered to sacrifice himself into slavery in Egypt so that his brothers and especially Benjamin might return to Jacob and spare him more grief. (Gen 44:33-34)

The other sons, except for Joseph, are given a very short blessing. Zebulun will live by the seashore, become a haven (safe harbor) for ships, and his territory would extend toward Sidon (a Phoenician city). Issachar was to have pleasant (productive) land and would submit to forced labor. Dan would provide justice as one of the tribes and this came to pass during the time when Samson judged the tribes. But Dan was also a serpent and would lead the other tribes into idolatry (Judges 18). Jacob said he looked for God's deliverance and this would seem to be from Dan's leading into idolatry. Gad would be attacked by raiders but would be effective in battle. Asher would receive very fruitful soil that would provide rich delicacies. Naphtali would be like a doe set free that bears beautiful fawns (the Hebrew for "bears beautiful fawns" may also be translated "utters beautiful words"). Joseph's blessing is especially abundant because he steadily trusted God when attacked with hostility and therefore was blessed mightily by God and receives the double portion of Jacob's possessions. Benjamin being a ravenous wolf devouring his prey and dividing the plunder would indicate a war-like character and is demonstrated by producing many of Israel's warriors like Ehud, Saul, Jonathan (to mention a few) (Judges 5:14; 20:16; 1 Chron 8:40; 12:1-2; 2 Chron 14:8; 17:17).

The blessing Jacob gave to his sons was appropriate for each according to their character and especially according to how they trusted God or strayed from him. We see from this that what a person does affects their descendants for generations after them, so someone greatly trusting God and attempting to live in such a way as to glorify him and teach his children to do the same will bring blessing upon his descendants for generations.

Verses 29 – 33. After blessing his sons, Jacob instructs them to bury him in the cave in the field of Machpelah,

near Mamre, which Abraham bought and where Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Rebekah are buried and where Jacob had buried Leah. Then he died (age 147 in 1689 BC).

Chapter 50

Verses 1 – 14. When Jacob died, Joseph wept for him and then directed the Egyptian physicians to embalm his father. Jacob is the first descendant of Abraham to be embalmed. Embalming was an elaborate procedure that took 40 days during which the deceased would be mourned. That the Egyptians mourned him for seventy days indicates the great respect they had for him as Joseph's father and their respect for Joseph. "The Egyptians mourned for Jacob just two days less than they normally mourned the death of a Pharaoh." (*Notes on Genesis*, Dr. Thomas L. Constable, p 297) When the time of mourning had passed, Joseph requested that he be allowed to take his father and bury him as his father had requested. Not only did Pharaoh agree but he allowed his officials to accompany Joseph and his entire family, except the children, on the journey. When they reached the threshing floor of Atad near the Jordan River (some think it is east and some think it is west of the river, but it is most likely west and somewhere near Mamre and the cave of Machpelah). It became known as Abel Mizraim which means "mourning of the Egyptians" because they mourned there for seven days. After this additional mourning period, Joseph and his brothers buried Jacob and then returned with all the Egyptian officials to Egypt.

Verses 15 – 21. After Jacob has been buried, Joseph's brothers are concerned that Joseph might take revenge on them for selling him into slavery 40 years earlier. So they send word to Joseph that before his death their father had told them to ask Joseph to forgive his brothers the sins they had done to him. When Joseph received their message, he wept. Then the brothers come to Joseph, threw themselves down before him and claimed to be his slaves. But Joseph asked if he was in the place of God (meaning the judge of their sins) and told them not to be afraid. He said that what they had intended for harm God had intended for good to accomplish what is now happening (the saving of his brothers and the Egyptians). Then he promised that he would provide for them and their children.

Verses 22 – 26. These verses tell the subsequent story about Joseph. He stayed in Egypt along with all of his father's family and lived to the age of 110 years. That was 53 years after Jacob died and would be 1636 BC. He lived to see the third generation of Ephraim's children. When he was about to die, Joseph said to his brothers (we don't know which were still living) that God will surely come to their aid and take them to the land he had promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Then he has them swear an oath that when God takes them up out of the land of Egypt that they will carry his bones along with them. After he died, Joseph was embalmed and placed in a coffin. Joseph is the second descendant of Abraham to be mentioned as being embalmed.

As important as Joseph was in the life of Egypt, he could have been buried in a pyramid, but he chose to be buried in the Promised Land as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had. But his final burial would not take place until Joshua had essentially conquered the Promised Land and divided it among the descendants of Jacob's sons. That would be sometime around 1427 BC (209 years later) when the tribes renewed their covenant to follow God at Shechem. And it is at Shechem that they buried Joseph (Josh 24:32).

According to the dating of the birth of Moses in Exodus at 1571 BC we see that the time from Joseph's death to the time that a Pharaoh arose who did not know Joseph (Ex 1:8) was 65 years. This time will be examined in a study about Exodus.

Appendix 1

Comparison of Flood Stories					
	Biblical	Berossus (Greek)	Atrahasis (Akkadian)	Gilgamesh (Akkadian)	Sumerian
Date of Account	Earliest possible: 15 th century BC	ca. 275 BC	16 th century (copy of earlier work)	ca. 1500 BC (copies, not the original)	19 th century BC (copy, not the original)
Author of Flood	Yahweh		Enlil	Council of gods	Assembly of gods
Intercessor	Yahweh	Kronos	Ea	Ea	Enki (probably)
Reason for Flood	Wickedness of mankind, violence, corruption		The clamor, uproar of man disturbs Enlil's sleep	No reason given at first. In the end, the "sin of man" implied as the cause	None given
Hero	Noah	Xisouthros (Greek for Ziusudra)	Atrahasis (all wise)	Utnapishtim (finder of life)	Ziusudra (he saw life)
Intended for whom	All mankind		All mankind	City of Shurippak particularly, but all mankind	All mankind
Reason Hero Spared	"Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord," "A righteous man. Blameless. Walked with God."				Ziusudra was "humbly obedient," reverent; one who seeks revelation by dreams and incantations.
Means of Escape	Ark	Boat	Large ship	Ship	Huge boat
Description	Detailed: 3 stories, 1 door, 1 window at least		(Text destroyed)	Detailed: 6 stories, 1 door, 1 window at least	
Occupants	Noah, wife, 3 sons, their wives. 7 pair of all clean animals (Male and female). 1 pair of all unclean animals (male and female).	Xisouthros, family, others, all species of animals.	Atrahasis, wife, family, relations, craftsmen. Grain, possessions, foods. Beasts and creatures of the field.	Utnapishtim and all his family and kin. Craftsmen. Beasts and wild creatures of the field.	
Duration of Storm	40 days and nights		7 days and nights	6 days and nights	7 days and nights

Landing Place	Mountains of Ararat	Mountains of Armenia	(Text missing)	Mt. Nisir (Mt. of Salvation)	
Birds Released	Raven, dove, dove, dove	Birds	(Text missing)	Dove, swallow, raven	
Sacrifice	Hero offer. "Lord smelled the pleasing odor."	Hero offers	(Text missing)	Hero offers. "Gods smelled the sweet savor."	Hero offers, bows to Utu, Anu, Enlil.
Blessing	God blesses Noah and charged him to populate the earth.	Hero disappears but his voice instructs others		Enlil blesses Utnapishtim. Hero and his wife then become as gods.	Ziusudra granted "Life as a god" and "breath eternal"; called "preserver of seed of mankind."

Chart presented in Dr. Thomas Constable's study on Genesis and attributed to O'Brien, J. Randall. "Flood Stories of the Ancient Near East." *Biblical Illustrator* 13:1 (Fall 1986): 62-63. See also Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, pp. 159-66; and Kerry L. Hawkins, "The Theology of the Flood," *Seminary Review* 34:2 (December 1988): 69-88.

Appendix 2

Great Discoveries in Biblical Archaeology: The Nuzi Tablets

By Bryant G. Wood, PhD

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Nuzi was a Hurrian administrative center not far from the Hurrian capital at Kirkuk in northern Iraq. The Hurrians are equivalent to the Horites in the Old Testament, also called Hivites and Jebusites. Excavations were carried out at Nuzi by American teams from 1925 to 1933. The major find was more than 5,000 family and administrative archives spanning six generations, ca. 1450-1350 BC. They deal with the social, economic, religious and legal institutions of the Hurrians.

The tablets tell of practices similar to those in Genesis such as adoption for childless couples (Gen 15:2 children by proxy (Gen 16; 21:1, inheritance rights (Gen 25:29, marriage arrangements (Gen 28 and levirate marriage (Gen 38; Deut 25:5. They also demonstrate the significance of the deathbed blessing (Gen 27; 48 and household gods (Gen 31:14-30. Some Nuzi tablets, called "tablets of sistership" have agreements in which a man adopted a woman as a sister. In the society of the Hurrians, a wife enjoyed both greater protection and a superior position when she also had the legal status of a sister. In such a case, two separate documents were drawn up, one for marriage and the other for sistership. This may explain why both Abraham (Gen 12:10-20:1) and Isaac (Gen 26:7) said their wives were their sisters. It is possible that they had previously adopted them to give them higher status, in accordance with the custom of the day.

Family records were highly valued at Nuzi, being passed down from father to son for as many as six generations. Nowhere else in the ancient Near East is this kind of reverence for family documents illustrated, except in the Old Testament. Indirectly, the practice at Nuzi supports the position that Genesis and the other books of history in the Old Testament are grounded in actual family, clan and tribal records carefully passed from generation to generation.

As with Mari, the Nuzi records demonstrate that the cultural practices recorded in the book of Genesis are authentic. The accounts are not fictional stories written at a much later time, as some critics claim, since the customs were unknown in later periods.