

The Offspring of Isaac

Genesis 25:19-35:28

General Overview

In this section, Moses will show how God built on the foundation of His relationship with Abraham. Through Isaac and Jacob, God will demonstrate to the nation of Israel who first heard this account and all the generations of God's people. After that, **He is present with His people and fights for His people.** Moses makes this point by significantly increasing the preposition "*with*" in this section of Genesis to show that God was present with Isaac and Jacob.

The Birth of the Twins - 25:19-36

Just like we saw with Sarah, in Genesis 25, we find that Rebekah, his wife, was barren. A pattern begins to be established in the Bible of women who are **barren** for all their lives until God miraculously opens their wombs. In response to Rebekah's bareness and God's promise of offspring, I want you to notice what Isaac does, 25:21,

Genesis 25:21: "And Isaac entreated Yahweh on behalf of his wife because **she was barren**; and Yahweh was moved by his entreaty. So Rebekah his wife conceived."

Unlike his father, Isaac did not devise some scheme to continue the promises of God by marrying one of Rebekah's servants. The first thing he does is pray to God. God opened Rebekah's womb, and she conceived of twins.

Moses records that the twins wrestled in her womb, and this caused Rebekah some concern - so what does she do? Pray.

Genesis 25:22-23: "But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is so, why then am I this way?" So she went to inquire of Yahweh. And Yahweh said to her, "**Two nations are in your womb**; And two peoples will be separated from your body; And one people shall be stronger than the other; **And the older shall serve the younger.**"

See here how God sovereignly sets the destiny of her children and their future offspring before their birth to accomplish His plan. This was done before either of them was born before either of them committed any act of sin or righteousness. It was God's sovereign plan.

As the Apostle Paul records in Romans, when arguing for God's sovereign and unconditional election,

Romans 9:10–15: “And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that the purpose of God according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, “THE OLDER SHALL SERVE THE YOUNGER.” Just as it is written, “JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED.” What shall we say then? Is there any unrighteousness with God? May it never be! For He says to Moses, “I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION.”

This theological truth is important to keep in the back of our minds as we continue to look at the life of Jacob this morning. 20 years after receiving this promise from God, Rebekah gives birth to her twins

Genesis 25:24–27: “And her days to give birth were fulfilled, and behold, there were twins in her womb. And the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau. Afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau’s heel, so his name was called Jacob; and Isaac was sixty years old when she gave birth to them. And the boys grew up; Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field, but Jacob was a peaceful man, living in tents.”

It is important to comment on the meaning of Jacob’s name. Translated, it means “one who grabs the heel” or, more literally, supplanter — which, according to the dictionary, is “someone who supersedes (another) especially by force, scheme, or treachery.” As we will see, this name will have much correlation with the character of Jacob.

As the twins grew, God’s sovereign plan for their lives began to take shape. Their parents each chose a favorite son, with Isaac choosing Esau and Rebekah choosing the younger of the twins, Jacob. And in verse 25, we see that even in his early years, the younger brother is a schemer.

Gen 25:29-32 “And Jacob had cooked stew. And Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. Then Esau said to Jacob, “Please give me a swallow from the red stuff—this red stuff, for I am famished.” Therefore, his name was called Edom. But Jacob said, “First, sell me your birthright.” And Esau said, “Behold, I am about to die; so of what use then is the birthright to me?”

Now, the birthright in this family wasn't just a nice monetary inheritance. The birthright of Isaac was the right to inherit the covenant promises of God that he inherited from his father, Abraham. And what this text also shows us is that Esau had no interest in continuing the covenant relationship with God. He **despised** this birthright and was willing to sell it for soup.

The Life of Isaac - 26:1-29

As we saw in the previous chapter, Isaac has benefited from learning from his father's failures and faith. In chapter 26, we can see Isaac walk through almost identical life events that his father did. At the beginning of the chapter, he faces a famine in the Land of Canaan. But instead of fleeing to Egypt, God appears to him and commands him to stay verse 3

Genesis 26:3–4: "Sojourn in this Land, **and I will be with you and bless you**, for to you and to your seed **I will give all these lands**, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father, Abraham. "And I will **multiply your seed as the stars of heaven**, and I will give your seed all these lands, and **by your seed, all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.**"

In these verses, God repeats the promises He made with Abraham, signifying that these promises now belonged to Isaac. Moreover, God promises to **be with Isaac and to bless him**.

We also see that Isaac is not immune to failing the same temptations his father did. Just as Abraham did with Sarah, his wife, Isaac lies to Abimelech out of self-preservation, seemingly forgetting God's promise to be with him. But just as God did for Sarah, He protects Rebekah from being taken by Abimelech by revealing Abimelech that she was Isaac's wife. Remembering God's impending judgment from his past encounter with Abraham commands no one to **touch** Rebekah.

Isaac then settles in the Land of Abimelech and becomes incredibly blessed by YHWH, reaping one hundred times more than what he sowed. He became so rich, and his flocks grew so vast that Abimelech told him to leave the region. As his father did before him, Isaac establishes himself officially in the Land by digging **wells** and gaining water rights. And he ends up settling in the Land of **Beersheba**, where Abraham first dug a well in Canaan. It is there that verse 24,

Genesis 26:24 "And Yahweh appeared to him that night and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham; **Do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your seed**, For the sake of My servant Abraham."

Once more, God promises Isaac blessing and presence. He is with Isaac.

Jacob's Scheme for the Birthright 27:1-28:9

As the life of Isaac ends, he sets out to give the paternal **blessing to Esau**. Isaac's desire is that Esau and his descendants carry on the family heritage of a covenant relationship with God. Note that Isaac does this regardless of the promise God made to Rebekah and the fact that Esau sold the right to be blessed to Jacob for a bowl of stew. As Abraham did with Ishmael before Isaac was conceived, he is seeking to take the promise of God into his own hands.

But Rebekah hears of Isaac's scheme, and she and Jacob plan a scheme of their own. Rebekah's industry and efficiency are on full display as she devises a scheme with Jacob to trick her husband. Their plan is fast, and it is foolproof. She will make a quick meal with her super speed, and he will put on his clothes. Somehow, while making a delicious meal, she can take goat skin and make gloves for his hands and something to cover his neck.

Rebekah and Jacob have thought of everything. They beat Esau with speed and cunning. But everything falls apart the minute Jacob must open his mouth. Isaac, whose eyesight has deteriorated, hears the **voice** of his son Jacob. He isn't fully convinced by Jacob's lie and tests him twice to determine if it really is Esau who is before him. After touching Jacob's animal skin-clad arms and smelling the clothes of Esau that Jacob is wearing, Isaac gives the fatherly blessing and official birthright to Jacob.

Jacob and Rebekah's plan should have failed. Their plan was busted the minute Jacob opened his mouth. However, listen to the all-too-true words of Jacob in verse 20,

Genesis 27:20: "Then Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?" And he said, **"Because Yahweh your God caused it to happen to me."**

God caused Isaac to be convinced he was blessing Esau. What will be seen in the rest of Jacob's life is that he will plan many schemes. Most of the schemes that Jacob plans will be terrible. However, God will providentially redeem the situation. ***Jacob schemes, but God redeems.*** After Isaac blesses Jacob, Esau comes home with the meal, but it's too late. When Isaac discovers that he was deceived, he is filled with anger, However, there is no going back, for Isaac blessed Jacob,

and **he shall be blessed**. Upon hearing this, Esau is filled with murderous hate in his heart, verse 41,

Genesis 27:41: “So Esau bore a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him; and Esau said in his heart, “The days of mourning for my father are near; **then I will kill my brother Jacob.**”

This plot to kill Jacob comes to Rebekah, who then sends her son to flee to her brother **Laban**. The author of Hebrews looks back on this moment and gives us instructions on the dangers of bitterness and unrepentance.

Hebrews 12:14–17: “Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord, seeing to it that no one falls short of the grace of God; that **no ROOT OF BITTERNESS SPRINGING UP CAUSES TROUBLE, and by it many be defiled**; that also there be no sexually immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. **For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance,** though he sought for it with tears.”

Before Jacob leaves, his father calls for him and officially **blesses** him with the full knowledge that he is Jacob. Like Abraham once did for him, Isaac commands his son not to marry a **daughter of Canaan** but instead take a wife from his mother’s relative.

Genesis 28:1–3: “So Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and commanded him and said to him, “You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. “Arise, go to Paddan-Aram, to the House of Bethuel your mother’s father; and from there take to yourself a wife from the daughters of Laban your mother’s brother. **“May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become an assembly of peoples.”**

So, then Jacob is sent out of the Land in order to preserve his life and the promise of the seed.

Bethel Part 1 (Gen 28:10-22)

At the opening of Jacob’s journey, he sets up camp in a place near Haran. It is there that he had **a dream**,

Genesis 28:12: “Then he had a dream, and behold, **a ladder stood on the earth with its top touching heaven**; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.”

So we have this picture of a ladder to heaven with Angels going up and down, and at the very top, who do we see? Verse 13,

Genesis 28:13–15: “And behold, Yahweh stood above it and said, “I am Yahweh, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the Land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your seed. “And your seed will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the East and to the north and to the south, and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. “Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go. And I will bring you back to this Land, for I will not forsake you until I have done what I have promised you.”

Like Abraham and Isaac before Him, God speaks to Jacob and promises to carry out the promises He made to Abraham and Isaac. He is faithful for generation after generation. Furthermore, God promises to Jacob that He will be with Jacob, keep him wherever he goes, and bring him back to the Land. After this dream, Jacob awakes and names the place Bethel, which means the House (or dwelling place) of God. However, after this, Jacob decides to make a vow of his own. He states that *he will let the Lord be his God if* God meets a couple of conditions - verse 20,

Genesis 28:20–21: “Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey on which I am going, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear, and I return to my father’s house in peace, then Yahweh will be my God.”

Jacob thinks that he can negotiate a deal with God where he exchanges worship and devotion to God for protection and food from God. What is clear here is that Jacob doesn’t understand or truly believe in God and His promises just yet.

Biblical Theology Connection

This moment connects back and points forward. Thinking back to the events that came just before the calling of Abraham, we saw a man trying to build a tower to heaven, a ladder, if you will, where they could reach God and be just like him. But here, we see the beautiful reality that God is not unreachable. He is not distant. He is the Almighty Creator and One true God. But He has not kept Himself from man but instead is with man. He is caring for them, ministering to them, sending forth His angels down to earth.

What the original readers of Genesis and the generations beyond should see from this is that *God has not left us in our sins. Instead, He is with us.* We will see this message further fleshed out in the theology of the Tabernacle and the Temple. But this message finds its end point not in a place but in a person.

Remember in the Gospel of John, how when Jesus first calls the disciples, He alludes to this passage,

John 1:50–51 “Jesus answered and said to him, “Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these.” And He said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see **THE HEAVENS OPENED AND THE ANGELS OF GOD ASCENDING AND DESCENDING on the Son of Man.**”

In doing so, Jesus is stating that the ladder in Jacob’s dream pointed to Him. He is the bridge between heaven and earth. He is the mediator between God and man. He is Immanuel, which means “God with us.”

Jacob vs. The Scheme Master - 29:1-30:43

In Chapter 29, we see that Jacob has left the Land of Canaan and entered the **Land of the Sons of the East**, where his uncle, Laban, lives. Upon arriving, he meets Rachel, the daughter of Laban, and it’s love at first sight. He is smitten with her and immediately seeks her hand in marriage. When he comes to Laban, he tells him of his situation with his brother, and Laban offers asylum to him. Jacob then asks to marry Laban’s daughter Rachel and happily agrees to work for **seven years** for her hand in marriage.

In doing so, Jacob obeys his father’s command not to marry a Canaanite, and the hope of the seed promise of Genesis 3:15 continues on. Now, Laban is a real schemer, and he sees an opportunity in Jacob. Laban knows about God’s hand of blessing upon Abraham and his family from his past encounter with Abraham’s servant. So he devises a treacherous plot vs. 21-23

Genesis 29:21–23: “Then Jacob said to Laban, “**Give me my wife**, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go into her.” And Laban gathered all the men of the place and made a feast. **Now it happened in the evening that he took his daughter Leah and brought her to him; and Jacob went in to her.**”

When Jacob woke up and realized he was sleeping next to Leah, he was furious at Laban. So, Laban, being the grand schemer that he is, offered to allow Jacob to marry Rachel for seven more years of free labor and a second-hand blessing from God. But it doesn’t stop there. The last layer to Laban’s plan is to introduce family dysfunction. Look how long he makes Jacob wait, verse 27

Genesis 29:27: “**Fulfill the week of this one**, and we will give you the other also for the service which you shall serve with me for another seven years.”

Imagine how bitter and hurt Leah would have been after experiencing such disrespect and disregard from her new husband. He marries her sister a week into

their honeymoon. Laban's plan is to create so much dysfunction in Jacob's family that it won't grow. If Jacob's family doesn't grow, then Jacob won't have enough children to help him shepherd a flock of his own and grow his wealth enough to leave Laban's household. Therefore, Jacob would be forced to work for Laban to survive, allowing Laban to reap the blessings of Jacob's God.

Instead of the internal family turmoil leading to minimal marital bliss and, subsequently, a small family, God blesses Leah with great fertility,

Genesis 29:31: "And **Yahweh saw that Leah was unloved**, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren."

Leah bears Jacob four sons, their names being Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah. And if you go back and read the meaning behind their names, you are intended to feel Leah's pain of being unloved and rejected. And yet, when she bears her fourth son, Judah, she says this,

Genesis 29:35: "And she conceived again and bore a son and said, **"This time I will praise Yahweh."** Therefore she named him Judah. Then she stopped bearing."

And there's a lesson here in what it means for God to be with us. He is with us, and He sees our struggle and our pain. He loves the unloved Leah. He compassionately redeems her situation of rejection by blessing her. But this causes Rachel to become jealous, 30:1,

Genesis 30:1: "Then Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, so she became jealous of her sister; and she said to Jacob, **"Give me children, or else I die."**

Since she is barren, she gives her servant, Bilhah, to Jacob as a wife. Bilhah bears Jacob two sons. After it seems that Leah stopped bearing children, she does the same thing as her sister and gives Jacob her servant, Zilpah to be his wife. Zilpah bears Jacob two more sons. But then God opened Leah's womb again and gave her two more sons and a daughter. And then, God looked upon Rachel's bareness and caused her to conceive, too.

Genesis 30:22–23: "Then **God remembered Rachel**, and God listened to her and opened her womb. So she conceived and bore a son and said, "God has taken away my reproach."

In this twisted story of messed-up family dynamics and broken marriages, we see God simultaneously defeat the scheme of Laban, fulfill His covenant promise to Jacob, and demonstrate compassion for the unloved Leah. ***Jacob and Laban scheme, but God redeems.*** Eventually, Jacob decides that it is time for him to return home to his **own country** and requests that Laban allow him to take his

wives and his children back to Canaan. In that age, a man's children were still considered his possession until they were allowed to leave the household. Since Jacob never left Laban's household, his four wives and 12 children were technically under Laban's headship and authority. But in 30:27, Laban refuses Jacob, saying,

Genesis 30:27: "But Laban said to him, "If now I have found favor in your sight, stay with me; **I have interpreted an omen that Yahweh has blessed me on your account.**"

Jacob agrees on one condition: that he can take sheep from Laban to start a flock of his own made up of the blemished sheep of Laban's flock. Laban agrees to these terms, but then, being the grand schemer that he is, he takes all the spotted, speckled, and black sheep out of his flock, places them in the flocks of his own sons, and sends them far away. Jacob is then left with nothing, for there are only white sheep that remain in his flock.

Not to be out-schemed, Jacob develops a scheme of his own based on ancient myth. During the mating season, he has the strong sheep in the flock mate in front of these poplar and almond sticks that are striped and speckled. This scheme is filled with foolish superstition and faith in a myth, but behind Jacob's scheme, God works through the genetics of conception to cause Jacob's plan to succeed, and his flock grows abundantly, as well as his household of servants and other animals.

Jacob's Flight from Laban (31:1-55)

We witnessed how God overcame the scheme of Laban and worked through the crazy scheme of Jacob so that he became blessed with a large flock. But as God continued to bless Jacob with a large flock and his household began to grow with many servants, Laban began to have an attitude of animosity towards him.

Genesis 31:2-3: "And Jacob saw the face of Laban, and behold, it was not friendly toward him as formerly. Then Yahweh said to Jacob, **"Return to the land of your fathers and to your kin, and I will be with you."**

However, instead of going to Laban as before and separating on good terms, Jacob decides to run away in secret when Laban and his family go to shear their flock. This time of sheering was usually one of great feasting and merriment, which Jacob saw as the perfect opportunity to escape. The flaw in Jacob's plan is that he cannot run fast, for he is traveling with women, children, and animals.

So, when Laban hears that Jacob fled with Laban's children, servants, and grandchildren, he gathers his sons together and hunts Jacob down. And when Laban overtakes Jacob, he has every intention and **right to do him harm**. Jacob has essentially kidnapped Laban's family. However, God intervenes and warns Laban to leave Jacob alone. After hearing this message from God, Laban spares Jacob. And when Jacob recognizes God's intervention, he makes a declaration in verse 42,

Genesis 31:42: "If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the dread of Isaac, **had not been for me**, surely now you would have sent me away empty. God has seen my affliction and the toil of my hands, so He rendered the decision last night."

The scene ends with Laban blessing his children and grandchildren and returning home. **Jacob schemed, but God redeemed the situation by protecting Jacob, just as He promised.**

Jacob vs. Esau Round 2 (32:1-23)

After the final encounter with Laban, God sends angels to meet with Jacob to demonstrate that He is still with Jacob in verse.

Genesis 32:1–2: "Now Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. Then Jacob said when he saw them, **"This is God's camp."** So he named that place Mahanaim."

Jacob's camp is God's camp. He is encamped with Jacob. However, after this sweet reminder of God's presence, Jacob is filled with great **distress** and fear because his brother **Esau** is coming with **400 men** to meet him. Instead of trusting God, who had just sent two angels to him for protection, Jacob begins to scheme. At first, he decides to split his camp in two. However, after he makes this plan, he releases his folly and decides to **pray** to God in verse 9,

Genesis 32:9–12 "And Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Yahweh, who said to me, 'Return to your land and to your kin, and I will prosper you,' **I am unworthy of all the lovingkindness and of all the truth which You have shown to Your slave**; for with my staff only I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps. **"Deliver me, I pray,** from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and strike me down with the mothers and the children. "For You said, 'I will surely prosper you and make your seed as the sand of the sea, which is too great to be numbered.'"

He asks for deliverance from Esau based on the lovingkindness and faithfulness that He showed to his grandfather Abraham, his father Isaac, and himself. Instead of bartering with God for His aid, he prays based on God's character and with a trust that God will be faithful to the promises He made to Jacob to return him to the Land and to prosper him and his descendants there. But sadly, just as we thought Jacob might be done with scheming and just trust God, he decides to send Esau a bribe of over 500 livestock in exchange for safe passage. He then decides to go ahead with his plan to split up his family from the rest of the camp and place them on the other side of the river. Jacob just can't stop scheming. After all this scheming, the scene closes with a wrestling match at night with God. Look at 32:24,

Genesis 32:24–26: "Then Jacob was left alone, and **a man wrestled with him** until the breaking of dawn. And he saw that he had not prevailed against him, so **he touched the socket of his thigh**; and so the socket of Jacob's thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him. Then he said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." But he said, "**I will not let you go unless you bless me.**"

This whole wrestling match was really a method of teaching Jacob about the futility of his schemes and how God was really the one who gained victory for Jacob. He schemed to take his brother's birthright and blessing, but God brought it to pass because He decreed that it would be so before Jacob and Esau were born.

Jacob schemed to allow God to be his God at Bethel even though God already promised His presence. He schemed to take Laban's flock, but God is the one who blessed him with speckled sheep. He schemed to run away from Laban, but God came to Laban in a dream to protect Jacob. Even after God quickly ends the match by dislocating Jacob's hip with a mere touch, he schemes to wrestle a blessing from God by **taking hold** and refusing to let go of Him. God then turns to interrogating Jacob,

Genesis 32:27–28: "So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." Then He said, "**Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel**; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed."

God asks him his name, and he replies that it is Jacob - heel catcher, supplanter, schemer. For all his life, his name has been attached to the stigma of him catching his brother's heel and stealing his brother's birthright. Once Jacob confesses his name, God renames him much like He did with Abraham earlier. God renames

Jacob to become **Israel**, which has two meanings: *One who strives (fights) with God OR God strives — God fights for you*. This later meaning makes the most sense in the context of Jacob's life. He always tried to fight, to strive, to the scheme, but in renaming Jacob to Israel, God declared to him, "I fight for you." The scene ends with Jacob trying to ask a question of his own, "**Please tell me your name.**" God responds by saying, "**Why is it that you ask my name?**" which is a way of saying, "*Jacob, don't you realize who I am?*" In verse 30, Jacob concludes who it is that he was fighting with,

Genesis 32:30: "So Jacob named the place Peniel, for he said, "**I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been delivered.**"

In this naming of the place, we begin to see a change in Jacob. He did not name the place for the fight that occurred; he named it with the emphasis that He saw God, and God shielded him from death. He recognizes that he should have died in that wrestling match with the living God, but God preserved him. Earlier, in verse 12, Jacob prayed that God would preserve him from Esau. Now, he recognizes that his life was preserved by the living God from the death that should have come with seeing God.

However, Jacob is not done with his schemes. When dawn comes, and Esau approaches, we see Jacob divide up his camp once more. Before they met Esau's army, he made up a line of his wives' children based on who he loved most. The maids of his wives and their four children were placed in front, first to die. Then came his first wife, Leah, and her six children, next to die. Lastly, there came his favorite wife and favorite son, Rachel and Joseph, who were placed at the very end of the camp so that they would be most protected if Esau decided to attack. This little event sets up the rest of Jacob's narrative. On top of being a schemer, Jacob is the head of a dysfunctional family.

Yet, in a demonstration of his faith in God's protection, Jacob goes ahead of the entire camp to meet Esau. And just as God promised, Esau does not harm Jacob or his family, and they go their separate ways in peace. In verse 18, Jacob finally returns **safely to Canaan, settling in Shechem**. And just as Abraham and Isaac did before him, Jacob demonstrates faith in God's promise of Land by purchasing property and building an altar. He called **El Elohe Israel**, which means **God is the God of Israel. God is redeeming the schemer**.

The Rape of Dinah (Gen 34:1-31)

However, after settling in Shechem amongst the Canaanites, a horrific conflict arises when Jacob's daughter, Dinah, is raped by the son of the king of Shechem. What is startling is Jacob seems to be unmoved by this crime. He keeps the news to himself until his sons return from shepherding the livestock. When they return, Jacob tells them of the crime against their sister, and they all sit down with the king of Shechem, Hamor.

And when they meet, Hamor makes Jacob and his sons an offer: allow my son to have Dinah as his wife and intermarry with us. What should have been a legal confrontation turns into a peace treaty where Jacob is offered to name his price in exchange for his daughter's hand in marriage. And instead of demanding the just punishment of death for the crime committed against his daughter, Jacob entertains this offer from Hamor. He uses this situation to preserve peace and gain wealth.

However, Jacob's sons have a different idea in mind. They agree to Hamor's deal, but Jacob's sons place one requirement: all the city's men must be circumcised. As we see in verse 25, we see that it was a deceitful scheme,

Genesis 34:25–26: "Now it happened on the third day, **when they were in pain**, that two of Jacob's sons, **Simeon and Levi**, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came upon the unsuspecting city and **killed every male**. And they killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the edge of the sword and took Dinah from Shechem's House and went away."

They should have only taken Shechem's life. That was justice in the legal system of that day. However, guided by wrathful vengeance instead of justice, Simeon and Levi went above and beyond justice and committed a war crime.

Sadly, what is the most pitiful part of this story is the response of Jacob- verse 30, Genesis 34:30: "Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, **"You have brought trouble on me** by **making me odious** among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and my men being few in number, they will gather together against me and strike me, **and I will be destroyed**, I and my household."

Jacob scolds Simeon and Levi for bringing trouble on *him* and making *his* name **odious** amongst the Canaanites. Frustrated and dumbfounded, his sons realize that Jacob was more concerned for his safety and prosperity in the Land than for fighting for the honor and justice of his daughter.

Bethel Pt. 2 (Gen 35:1-28)

After this ordeal, God comes to Jacob and commands him to leave Shechem, return to **Bethel**, and settle there. Remember, Bethel was where Jacob first slept after fleeing his father's House to avoid being murdered by Esau. It was there that he dreamed of the ladder to heaven. And this sparks something within Jacob. Genesis 35:2,

Genesis 35:2–3 "So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "**Put away the foreign gods which are among you** and cleanse yourselves and change your garments; and let us arise and go up to Bethel, and I will make an altar there to God, **who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone.**"

Jacob knows they are going to a holy place, and he knows he serves a holy God, so he instructs his family to leave their foreign gods behind. And they move from Shechem to Bethel, God protects Jacob, verse 5, silencing his fears,

Genesis 35:5: "Then they journeyed on, **and there was a terror from God** upon the cities which were around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob."

Notice also that there is no mention of Jacob dividing his camp or scheming or lying about his wives being his sisters to protect his family somehow. He is trusting God to protect him and fight for him.

When Jacob returns to Bethel, God **appears** to Jacob once more,

Genesis 35:10–12: "And God said to him, "**Your name is Jacob; Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, But Israel shall be your name.**" Thus, He called his name Israel. God also said to him, "I am God Almighty; **Be fruitful and multiply;** A nation and an assembly of nations shall come from you, **And kings shall come forth from your loins.** "And the land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, And **I will give the land to your seed after you.**"

See how God blessed him and officially renamed him Israel. He also gives the command that he gave to Adam and Noah to be fruitful and multiply. In this, we see that Jacob and his sons will bring about the blessings of Abraham and bring about the Edenic rest that was lost when Adam sinned and partially restored with Noah after the flood. They were to be a people who carried the line of the seed and a people who would produce kings.

After this promise from God, Rachel, the wife Jacob loved, bore his last son. However, this was a tragic event for Rachel died after giving birth to her second son, Benjamin.

It is essential to see that this story at Bethel forms the bookend, or inclusio, on the story of Jacob's life. The remaining narrative of Genesis now shifts to his sons. The question then arises: who out of Jacob's 12 sons will carry on the lineage of the Seed of Genesis 3:15?

This section of Genesis ends with Jacob finally returning home to his father, Isaac, before his father's death. Just as Abraham was buried by Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau reunite to bury their father next to Abraham and Sarah in Hebron.

The Offspring of Esau (Genesis 36:1-43)

After burying their father, Esau, and Jacob parted ways, with Esau settling east of the promised Land. This Land became known as Edom, and Edom's descendants became known as Edomites. It is essential to remember that throughout Biblical history, there will be a generational strife between the offspring of Jacob and the offspring of Esau. This strife culminates with the plot of King Herod the Great, the Idumean (i.e., Edomite), attempting to murder the infant Christ and then Herod Antipas participating in the trial to execute Christ on the Cross.

The Genealogy of Jacob - Genesis 37:1-50:26

In Genesis 17, God promised Abraham that kings and princes would come from his offspring, indicating that the line of Abraham would be a royal line. The narrative now shifts focus on Abraham's great-grandsons, the 12 sons of Jacob. The question that this section answers is: *which of Abraham's 12 sons will be the heir of the royal lineage of the Seed?*

In answering this question, God will also demonstrate to the nation of Israel another aspect of their core values as a nation. **Previously God has shown that His people must be a people of faith in light of the Abrahamic Covenant.**

Through Isaac and Jacob, who was renamed Israel, He has demonstrated that **He is a God who is present *with* His people and that He is a God who fights for His people.** But how does God fight?

The main point of this section is to demonstrate how **God fights to turn evil to good for His chosen nation.** And Israel is to be a nation that **has faith in this God.**

Jacob's Favorite Son (Gen 37:1-36)

We pick up the story with a focus on Jacob's son from his favored wife, Rachel. Remember that Rachel, like Sarah and Rebekah before her, was barren until God opened her womb so that she bore Joseph. Look at verse 2,

Genesis 37:2–4 “These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, when **seventeen years of age, was pasturing the flock** with his brothers while he was still a youth, **along with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah,** his father's wives. And Joseph brought back an **evil report about them** to their father. Now **Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons** because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a **varicolored tunic.** And his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, and so **they hated him and could not speak to him in peace.”**

Now contrary to popular thought, Joseph is not some cute, little, innocent child. He is seventeen years old. And at this young age, he was not only his father's favorite, but he was given this varicolored tunic, a long-sleeve shirt made of fine material used to designate royalty. Jacob intends for everyone to see Joseph as his royal heir.

Jacob also gives Joseph authority over the sons of Abraham's least favorite wives, Bilhah and Zilpah, and one day he gives a bad report about them. This all inspires great dysfunction, animosity, and hate between Joseph and his brothers.

Soon after this bad report, Joseph decides to tell his brothers about two separate dreams in which his family bowed down before him. After hearing of this dream, Joseph's brothers are stirred up in anger,

Genesis 37:8: “Then his brothers said to him, **“Are you really going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?”** So **they hated him** even more for his dreams and for his words.”

The Brothers' Evil Plot (Gen 37:12-36)

Moses then moves us forward to a day when the mood in Israel's family goes from tense irritation to murderous hatred. Joseph, who for some reason didn't have to go out and care for the livestock with his brothers, is sent out to supervise them once more. And when he begins to approach them,

Genesis 37:19–20 “Then they said to one another, “**Here comes this dreamer!**” So now, **come and let us kill him** and cast him into one of the pits; and we will say, ‘A wild beast devoured him.’ Then let us see what will become of his dreams!”

They, like Esau and Cain before them, are filled with a desire to murder their brother.

However, **Reuben**, the oldest brother, overrides this plan with a scheme of his own. He compelled his brothers to spare Joseph's life but instead threw him into a pit so that he could come back later and save Joseph and earn his father's good favor. Reuben was desperate to regain the blessing of the firstborn son, for in chapter 35, Reuben asserted his dominance as the oldest brother by engaging in the ancient practice of sleeping with his father's concubines, demonstrating that he was the new head of the household.

But his scheme fails when he leaves his brothers alone with their Joseph. And Reuben's younger brother, **Judah**, comes up with a plan of his own. Look with me at 37:26

Genesis 37:26–28 “And Judah said to his brothers, “What gain is it that we kill our brother and cover up his blood? **“Come and let us sell him** to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.” And **his brothers listened.** Then some Midianite traders passed by, so they pulled him up, lifted Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for **twenty shekels of silver.** Thus, they brought Joseph into Egypt.”

It is here that we start to see who the real leader is in the group. After Judah and his brothers sell Joseph, they take his **robe** and soak in **blood** so that they might deceive their father into thinking that Joseph was killed by a **fierce animal**. In this we see providential justice being served. Jacob experiences the punishment that he deserved for deceiving his father Isaac with Esau's garments. For Jacob is here deceived by his sons with the garnet of their brother, Joseph.

Christ Connection Point

In this instance, we see that Joseph is set up as a type of Christ.

He, like Joseph, was sent by His Father to His kinsmen, who then devised a plot to murder Him. When they saw Joseph approaching, they said to themselves, come let us kill him. This phrase occurs once else in the Bible, in Jesus' parable of the Vineyard Owner's Son. Here the owner of the vineyard sends his son to deal with the wicked vine growers. Matthew records Jesus' words,

Matthew 21:38 "But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; **come, let us kill him** and seize his inheritance.'"

Moreover, Joseph's brother Judah sells him for a few silver coins. The prophet Zechariah alludes back to this moment when he foretells Israel's rejection of their Messiah in Zechariah 11 and fulfilled by one of the 12 disciples, *Judas*, who betrayed the Lord for 30 pieces of silver.

Jacob's Sinful Son (Gen 38:1-30)

After this final note on Joseph's whereabouts in Egypt, the text shifts to focus on the leader of Jacob's sons, Judah. His wickedness comes into focus immediately. The text of verse 1 states that at that same time, Joseph is being sold in Egypt, Judah leaves his family and **goes down** to the Canaanites. This going down is more than moving from a high place to a valley, it is a mirror of his spiritual condition.

While amongst the Canaanites, Judah saw a woman and took her, verse 2

Genesis 38:2 "And **Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite** whose name was Shua; **and he took her** and went in to her."

Notice how the language of marital intimacy is missing here, Judah did not know his wife, he simply satisfied the lust of his eyes by taking the Canaanite woman. This language was used to describe the action of Eve in the garden, seeing that the fruit was good and taking it. It was also used for the wicked son of Cain, Lamech, who took his two wives.

Beyond this example of wicked, uncontrolled lust, Judah was forsaking the pattern set forth for him by his father and grandfather. He wasn't supposed to marry a Canaanite. Judah is wicked and evil. He has no love for his brother. He has no regard for his family, his father's wishes, or for the covenant of God. He is a man who lives only to satisfy his desires.

After some time has passed, Judah bore three sons, and in verse 6, we see him find a wife for his first son, Er.

Genesis 38:6–7 “Then Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. But Er, Judah’s firstborn, **was evil in the sight of Yahweh, so Yahweh put him to death.**”

We don’t know what he did, but it must have been so despicable because this is the first time in the bible that God explicitly kills someone for their sin.

In that culture, if a man dies and leaves behind a widow, his wife is then to marry the dead man’s brother. Now, if the dead man’s brother and wife have a son, that son will become the new first-born heir in the family. We see this responsibility fall to Judah’s second son, Onan. Onan failed to fulfill his duty and was put to death by God as well. Now with two out of three sons dead, Judah doesn’t want this to happen again.

So he put into action a scheme by telling Tamar to return to her father’s house and wait for Judah’s third son to come of age. But Judah had no intention of marrying his third son to this apparently cursed woman. Instead of taking personal responsibility, instead of caring for his daughter, he exiled her to widowhood for the rest of her life.

The story then moves forward to the time of the sheep shearers. With the death of his wife, he was free to enjoy this celebratory festival where there was much drunkenness and debauchery. And it is in this situation that Tamar enters the scene with a scheme of her own, verse 13,

Genesis 38:14 “So she removed her widow’s garments from herself and covered herself with a veil and wrapped herself. And she sat at the entrance of Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah had grown up, and she had not been given to him as a wife.”

She devises a scandalous plan to trick the one who cast her into perpetual widowhood. She put on the costume of a cult prostitute, and she solicited Judah to lie with her. Judah lacked sufficient funds to pay her at that moment, so she expertly leveraged his lack of self-control and lust for immediate gratification against him by demanding a high price as a down payment,

Genesis 38:18 “Then he said, “What pledge shall I give you?” And she said, **“Your signet and your cord** and your staff that is in your hand.” So he gave them to her and went in to her, and **she conceived by him.**”

The signet ring was a stamp seal that was like an ID and a credit card wrapped into one, and it was worn around his neck with a cord. She also requested his staff

which was a symbol of authority in the city, a very prized possession meant only to be passed down as an inheritance to his sons.

Realize how utterly stupid this is. Judah gave such valuable objects for such a fleeting pleasure. He is incredibly careless with his possessions and honor when it comes to paying a prostitute, but when it comes to caring for his widowed daughter-in-law, he is nowhere to be found. But when it comes time for him to pay up and get his staff and ring, she is the one who is nowhere to be found, and Judah doesn't pursue her further to protect his honor.

But when word comes to Judah that Tamar is pregnant, he sees a chance to finally be rid of her verse 24,

Genesis 38:24 "Now it happened about three months later that it was told to Judah saying, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar has played the harlot, and behold, she is also with child by harlotry." Then Judah said, **"Bring her out and let her be burned!"**

He had no guilt about hiring a cult prostitute for himself, but he was eager to burn this woman for acting in the same way he did. But on her way to be executed, with what could be her last words, she provides a shocking revelation in verse 25,

Genesis 38:25–26 "It was while she was being brought out that she sent to her father-in-law, saying, "I am with child **by the man to whom these things belong.**" And she said, "Please recognize this and see, whose signet ring and cords and staff are these?" And Judah recognized them and said, **"She is more righteous than I,** inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Shelah." And he did not know her again."

Neither is righteous, but he is more responsible for the injustice, and he publicly acknowledges his guilt. For the first time in this story, Judah takes responsibility, and what we shall see is that this confession on the part of Judah is the first indication of an inward transformation.

But this dark tale ends with a glimmer of light. She bears twins for Judah. And the account of their birth strikingly parallels the birth of Isaac and Rebekah's twins. The younger brother wrestled with the older. The marking out of the sons with the color red. And the younger brother receives the honor.

The Refinement and Redemption of Joseph (Gen 39:1-41:57)

In Chapter 39, Moses transports us back to Egypt, to the house of Potiphar, who bought Joseph.

Genesis 39:1–3 “Now Joseph was brought **down to Egypt**; and Potiphar, an Egyptian official of Pharaoh, the captain of the bodyguard, bought him from the Ishmaelites, who had brought him down there. **And Yahweh was with Joseph, so he became a successful man.** And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. **Now his master saw that Yahweh was with him** and how Yahweh caused all that he did to succeed in his hand.”

See how, in a foreign land filled with foreign gods and foreign people who did not know the God of Abraham, the **Lord was with Joseph**. God was not only with Joseph, but He also blessed Him. In Joseph, God was being faithful to the covenant He made with Abraham. He blessed Joseph, and He blessed the Egyptian Potiphar through Joseph. Now Potiphar is a very powerful man, he’s the captain of the bodyguard, which can also be translated as Chief Executioner.

However, just when things seemed to be going well, we meet Mrs. Potiphar, verse 7,

Genesis 39:7–9 “And it happened after these events that his master’s wife set her eyes on Joseph and said, “Lie with me.” **But he refused** and said to his master’s wife, “Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has given all that he owns into my hand. “There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has **withheld nothing from me except you** because you are his wife. **How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?”**

Before, Joseph was full of arrogance and had a twisted sense of authority. Now see how he resists the temptress by appealing to the fact that it would wrong his master Potiphar. He has become submissive and loyal to the authority over him. And ultimately, he is resolved to remain faithful and holy unto God.

As we see in verse 11, one day, her commands become a lot more forceful. She assaulted him by physically seizing his clothing and demanding that he satisfy her lusts. But Joseph resisted, fleeing her presence, leaving his tunic behind. In return for his faithfulness to God and to Potiphar, he is framed for attempted rape. This is about the worst situation Joseph could be in, for Potiphar is the royal executioner and chief bodyguard. Potiphar responds to his wife’s false accusation in verse 19,

Genesis 39:19–20 “Now it happened that when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spoke to him, saying, “This is what your slave did to me,” **his anger burned**. So Joseph’s master took him and **put him into the jail**, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined; and he was there in the jail.”

Now the text is ambiguous as to whom Potiphar was **angry** at, and most commentators believe his anger was directed towards his adulterous wife. And the biggest support for this theory is the punishment of Joseph. Rape was a crime punished by immediate execution. Who better to execute him than Potiphar?

However, he places Joseph in the **king's prison**. What is interesting is that in chapter 40:3, we see that this prison is in Potiphar's basement. Instead of being killed, Potiphar just demotes Joseph from the manager of his household upstairs to the manager of his household downstairs, which happens to be a basement prison. And it is even there, in the pit of Egypt, that we see, vs 21,

Genesis 39:21–22 “**Yahweh was with Joseph and extended lovingkindness to him and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer.** So the chief jailer gave into the hand of Joseph all the prisoners who were in the jail; so that whatever was done there, he was the one who did it.”

God was with Joseph there in prison, showing Him steadfast love based on their covenantal relationship.

Remember that earlier in this story, Joseph received two prophetic dreams from God, and he was quite arrogant about them. Now, in prison, he again encounters two prophetic **dreams**, the dream of the cupbearer and the dream of the baker.

Genesis 40:8 “Then they said to him, “We have had a dream, and there is no one to interpret it.” Then Joseph said to them, “**Do not interpretations belong to God?** Recount it to me, please.”

In the place of the arrogant dream master, we see Joseph act quite humbly, pointing to God as the source of his interpretation.

Now his two interpretations are slightly comical in nature. For the cupbearer, Pharaoh will lift his head, a figure of speech for promotion. For the baker, Pharaoh will lift his head...off of him, a figure of speech for execution.

Joseph tells the man who was promoted to be the chief cupbearer to remember him, but sadly he forgets Joseph.

Once again, in chapter 41, we are presented with two dreams. This time it is Pharaoh who is dreaming, and if you remember, he dreams about seven skinny cows and seven fat cows, and then a dream again with stalks of grain, and he has no idea what this all means. All his magicians and wise men attempt to interpret his dream but fail. And this whole situation causes the **cupbearer** to suddenly remember Joseph. To anyone on the outside looking in, these seem like almost

random occurrences, but if you have been following closely, you know that this is the act of God orchestrating Joseph's release from prison. In verse 14, we see Pharaoh called for Joseph,

Genesis 41:14–16 “Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph, and they rushed him out of the pit; and **he shaved himself and changed his clothes**, and he came to Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it; yet I have heard it said about you, that you hear a dream and that you can interpret it.” Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, **“It is not in me; God will answer concerning the welfare of Pharaoh.”**

Notice again that Joseph is no longer the arrogant dream master. He humbly declares to Pharaoh that God will answer Pharaoh through Joseph. Joseph has learned who is sovereign and who is supreme. He knows who deserves all the glory, and he is teaching these truths to the ruler of the world's first great empire.

He then gives the interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams of cows and corn. He tells Pharaoh of the coming of **seven years of good harvest** for Egypt, followed by **seven years of famine**. Joseph then provides counsel to Pharaoh to prepare by taxing 20% of all produce in the seven years of good harvest and storing them up for the years of famine. Pharaoh sees the wisdom in Joseph's plan and appoints him second in command over everything in the land. In an instant, Joseph was raised up from the bowels of Egypt and seated on a throne as its chief prince, a Hebrew ruler over the largest superpower in all the world. God blesses His seed. And He blesses the nations through His seed.

Joseph recognizes God's blessing by naming his two sons **Manasseh** and **Ephraim** out of worship to God - verse 51,

Genesis 41:51–52 “And Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh, “For,” he said, **“God has made me forget all my trouble** and all my father's household.” And he named the second Ephraim, “For,” he said, **“God has made me fruitful** in the land of my affliction.”

In this transformation of Joseph's character and Joseph's circumstance, it is so evidently clear that it is God who is orchestrating it all. God has done it. He alone has the power to transform both the events of history and the hearts of men to bring about His plan and promises - vs 57,

Genesis 41:57 **“Now all the earth** also came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph because the famine was severe in all the earth.”

God promised Abraham that in him, all the nations of the earth would be blessed, and this is exactly what happened through Joseph.

4. The Testing of the Brothers (Gen 42:1-45:28)

As we just read, the famine that Joseph prophesied impacted the whole world, which included Israel and his family. Joseph's brothers were forced to travel to Egypt to trade for grain to survive. The comedy in this scene is great, read with me verse 1,

Genesis 42:1-2 "Now Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, and Jacob said to his sons, **"Why are you staring at one another?"** Then he said, "Behold, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down there and buy some for us from there **so that we may live and not die."**

First, notice that Israel, their father, is unwilling to move to Egypt as Abraham did. He does not want to leave the promised land. Secondly, he keeps Joseph's brother, Benjamin, behind because he has become the new favored son and can't be lost.

And when the ten sons of Israel arrive in Egypt, they come and bow before who else but Joseph. No one recognizes their brother, but Joseph recognizes them. And he is very suspicious of them, vs 9

Genesis 42:9 "And **Joseph remembered the dreams** which he had about them and said to them, **"You are spies;** you have come to look at the nakedness of the land.

He wanted to know if they had changed. He's probing their character by putting them on the spot with the accusation of espionage and then placing them in prison. He wants to see if they will turn on each other, to see if they will try and scheme and lie their way out of his test.

He sets them free and then demands that they bring Benjamin before they can come and get any more food. Why? He knows Benjamin has become the new favorite, and he wants to see if they have turned their target on Benjamin just like they did with him.

But before he sends them back, he keeps Simeon prisoner. Why Simeon? Remember that Reuben, the oldest had a plan to save Joseph from his brothers and regain his father's favor. So Reuben is off the hook. Simeon was the second oldest son, so he should have been responsible for keeping his brothers from selling Joseph into slavery.

Lastly, he fills their sacks with the **money** they used to purchase the grain, which was done as a test to see if they were still just as greedy as when they sold him for silver.

Upon returning to their father, they give their report of Joseph's demands and the imprisonment of Simeon. And Israel is not happy,

Genesis 42:36 "And their father Jacob said to them, "You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, **and you would take Benjamin; all these things are against me.**"

At this, we see **Reuben**, the want-to-be leader, step forward with an amazing solution,

Genesis 42:37 "Then Reuben spoke to his father, saying, **"You may put my two sons to death** if I do not bring him back to you; put him in my hand, and I will return him to you."

What a noble offer! If Benjamin is lost, don't kill me, instead, kill your grandkids. Reuben hasn't changed, he doesn't know how to be a leader, and Israel quickly rejects this stupid suggestion.

But as the famine persists, they run out of grain, and Israel's hand is forced. In that moment, we see another one of Leah's sons step forward: Judah. Now remember the Judah of Genesis 38. He was a man who never took personal responsibility. He was selfish, and he avoided harm to himself at all costs. But now, in Chapter 43:8, we find a very different man,

Genesis 43:8–9 "Then Judah said to his father Israel, "Send the boy with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, we as well as you and our little ones. **"I myself will be the guarantee for him;** from my hand you may require him. **If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then I shall bear the sin before you all my days.**"

Judah makes himself the pledge of Benjamin's safety. He isn't volunteering his grandsons, like Reuben. He is volunteering himself. He declares that if he does not return, he will bear the guilt of his brother's life forever. Essentially, he is saying let me be to you as sin for as long as I live. If you are as sin to someone, you are shameful, you are cut off, it as if you are a walking dead man in the eyes of your family and tribe. Surely, this is not the same Judah! What has caused this transformation? What we see here is God fighting to transform an evil, wicked heart into a good and righteous one.

Israel relents and sends his sons, with Benjamin, to go down again to Egypt. They come to Joseph, and the first thing they do is attempt to return the money Joseph put in their sacks. They have become men who do not seek dishonest wealth. Joseph then invites them to his **house**, where they sit down to eat together, and Joseph can barely hold himself together. He sees his full brother, Benjamin, and is so moved he must leave the room to cry.

Then he sets one final test before his brothers. Verse 1 of chapter 44,

Genesis 44:1–2 “Then he commanded his house steward, saying, “Fill the men’s sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man’s money in the mouth of his sack. “Now **put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest**, and his money for the grain.” And he did as Joseph had told him.”

Joseph was sold into slavery to die for silver, and here he tests if the same precious metal will cause his brothers to turn on Benjamin. He sends his officers after Israel’s sons, brings them in, condemns the man who has the silver cup, and then pulls it out of Benjamin’s bag. But then Judah, the same brother who came up with the plan to sell Joseph, comes forward to substitute himself for Benjamin.

Judah pleads for Joseph’s mercy saying, verse 32

Genesis 44:32–34 “For your servant became a guarantee for the boy to my father, saying, ‘If I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the sin before my father all my days.’ “So now, please let your servant remain **instead of the boy as a slave to my lord**, and let the boy go up with his brothers. “**For how shall I go up to my father** if the boy is not with me, lest I see the evil that would overtake my father?”

The man who went down from his father’s house to marry a Canaanite now pleads for Joseph to spare Benjamin out of compassion and concern for his father. The man who would not take responsibility for anything and who only sought to protect himself at all costs goes out of his way to recount the pledge he made to his father and seeks to redeem Benjamin with his own life.

Judah behaves as a true leader, as a true king. He acts as the corporate head over his brothers. He is essentially saying, *“I am his representative substitute, and I will bear his punishment. “Put all of his guilt on me so that when you see Benjamin, you see an innocent man, and when you see me, you see a guilty man.”*

This is a powerful transformation! And surely Judah was not responsible for such a change. It was God who transformed wicked Judah into the righteous leader of Israel's sons.

Upon witnessing the amazing change in the heart of the brother who sold him into slavery, Joseph is overcome with grief and can no longer keep testing his brothers he reveals to them that he is Joseph their brother, and compels them not to be filled with fear at his revelation with one powerful message,

Genesis 45:5–8 “So now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for **God sent me before you to preserve life.** “For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. “So **God sent me before you to establish for you a remnant** in the earth and to keep you alive for a great remnant of survivors. “So now, **it was not you who sent me here, but God**; and He has set me as a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.”

Joseph recognizes the hand of God orchestrating good out of their evil actions. God sent him, and God made him lord of all of Egypt. God worked through their evil acts to save his people.

Israel's sons return to him with this good news, as well as wagons from Egypt to reunite him with his lost son,

Genesis 45:25–28 “Then they went up from Egypt, and came to the land of Canaan to their father Jacob. And they told him, saying, “Joseph is still alive, and indeed he is ruler over all the land of Egypt.” But his heart was stunned, **for he did not believe them.** Yet they told him all the words of Joseph that he had spoken to them, and he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him. **Then the spirit of their father Jacob revived. And Israel said, “It is enough! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.”**

Christ Connection Point

Do you see the parallel between Judah and His Messianic Offspring, Jesus Christ? The same thing has happened for us who are in Christ. When God the Judge of the universe looks on us, He sees: Innocent: ransom price fully paid. Why? He sees the blood of the Lamb, the Lion of the tribe of Judah! We have been declared righteous, why? Because He redeemed us, He paid the price for us with His blood.

The typology of Christ is also seen in Joseph, who was sent by God to preserve life, to establish a remnant, and to rule as a Servant King so that His chosen people might be saved, both Jew and Gentile. And when His people finally see Him whom they betrayed, He forgives them, dispels their fears, and brings them to Himself to live with Him in His kingdom.

5. God's Power to Preserve and Prosper Israel (Gen 46:1-47:31)

If you remember, God came to Israel when he first left Canaan as a young man and promised that he would prosper his offspring and that He would be with him.

Now, as an old man leaving Canaan, God comes to Jacob once more,

Genesis 46:2–4 “And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, “Jacob, Jacob.” And he said, “Here I am.” And He said, “I am God, the God of your father; **do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there. “I Myself will go down with you** to Egypt, and I Myself will also bring you up again; and Joseph will close your eyes with his hand.”

God reassures Israel that He will cause them to multiply and that He will bring them back to the land. And then, with great emphasis, He promises to be with Israel. Think of the life of Israel. Think of when he first heard those words at Bethel. He's a young schemer fleeing the promised land for his life, and he hears, “*I will be with you.*” And now here he is, with a family numbering 70, riding in a caravan sent by the ruler of the largest superpower in the world to bring him to Egypt like a king, and he hears that wonderful promise once more.

After finally reuniting with his father, Joseph instructs his family to tell **Pharaoh** that they are **shepherds** and **keepers of livestock** so that they might be given the fruitful land of Goshen. In Egyptian culture, shepherds were considered one of the lowest people groups in society and were usually kept outside of the royal cities. So, when they come before Pharaoh and request the land of **Goshen**, Pharaoh is happy to oblige,

Genesis 47:6 “The land of Egypt is at your disposal; have your father and your brothers settle in the best of the land, let them settle in the land of Goshen; and if you know any excellent men among them, **then put them in charge of my livestock.”**”

The meeting ends with Israel blessing Pharaoh, pointing to the promise of worldwide blessing made to Abraham, and to the king-like status that Israel held.

When the years of famine continue, the people of Egypt begin to sell what they own to Pharaoh. In one year, they sell all their livestock to Pharaoh. And remember who's in charge of the royal livestock? Israel and his family.

See here God's fulfillment of the promise to bless those who bless His people. Pharaoh blessed Joseph, and then God blessed Pharaoh by giving complete ownership of all the land of Egypt. Furthermore, God blesses all of Egypt by prospering Israel in the land of Goshen and multiplying all their endeavors. You see, since Israel's family cared for the livestock of all of Egypt, which belonged to Pharaoh, the livestock in Egypt prospered amid the famine. Therefore, the food supply was kept in abundance through the blessing of God. After experiencing this prosperity for 17 years, the same time span he was able to enjoy Joseph's life before he was sold, Israel comes to the end of his life and makes Joseph promise to return him to the land to be buried with his fathers.

6. Jacob's Prophetic Pronouncement (Gen 48:1-49:33)

Before Israel's death, Joseph brings his sons to receive his father's blessing. Because Joseph was the favored son, he received the double blessing that was normally reserved for the oldest son, and this double blessing was passed to each of his sons, whom Israel essentially adopted as his own. But when **Manasseh** and his younger brother **Ephraim** are brought before Israel, Israel gives Ephraim the greater blessing.

Genesis 48:14-16 "But Israel stretched out his **right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger**, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, crossing his hands, although Manasseh was the firstborn. And he blessed Joseph and said, "**May the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has been my shepherd throughout my life to this day, The angel who has redeemed me from all evil**, Bless these boys; And may my name live on in them, And the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; And may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

In doing this, Israel attempts to pass the covenant blessing of Abraham down to the younger brother, just as he received it instead of Esau. Ephraim is Israel's choice to carry on the royal line of the seed. Even in his last moments, Israel has a scheme. In a way, Israel's desires for Ephraim are honored by God, for the man who was to lead the entire nation of Israel back to the promised land was an Ephraimite named Joshua.

But after blessing the sons of Joseph, Israel receives a prophetic word as he blesses the rest of his sons. Here he tells each of his sons of the destiny of each of their descendants. What is clear from this is that God's nation will not arise out of one of Israel's sons but that it will be comprised of the descendants of all of

Israel's sons. This moment sets the destiny for the future of the Nation of Israel and, by extension, all the world. The most important of these prophecies starts in verse 8,

Genesis 49:8–12 “Judah, as for you, **your brothers shall praise you**; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; **Your father's sons shall bow down to you.** “Judah is a **lion's** whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He crouches, he lies down as a **lion**, And as a **lioness**, who dares rouse him up? **The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the nations.** “He ties his foal to the vine, And his donkey's colt to the choice vine; He washes his garments in wine, And his robes in the blood of grapes. “His eyes are dark from wine, And his teeth white from milk.”

He starts by likening Judah to a lion and declares to him that his **father's sons shall bow down** to him, signifying that Judah's descendants will rule in the promised land. It will not be Ephraim who rules, nor will his brothers bow down to him. Instead, they will bow to Judah, whose rule will never end. Israel says in verse 10 that the **scepter** and the **ruling staff shall not depart from Shiloh**, a descendant of Judah. Furthermore, the nations shall obey Him, for not only will this Shiloh rule over Israel, but He will also rule all the earth. Lastly, His kingdom will be one of Eden-like prosperity. Grapevines will be so strong that He will be able to tie his **donkey** to them. **Wine** and **milk** will be so abundant that you could wash your clothes with wine and drink so much milk it might just make your teeth white. This prophecy indicates that God has chosen Judah's descendants to be the kingly line. There will be a descendent of Judah, **Shiloh** (a Messianic term whose Hebrew root means Peace), who will come and rule over all the people, not just of Israel but all the world and His Kingdom will be Eden-like. This Shiloh is the Seed that was promised in Genesis 3:15, the Prince of Peace foretold by the prophet Isaiah. This is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, who will sacrifice Himself for His brethren just as Judah did for Benjamin.

7. Finale (Gen 50:1-26)

The final chapter of this book ends with the death of Israel. What is amazing here is that Israel was **mourned** for and **embalmed**. He acted like a king in life when he blessed Pharaoh himself, and he was treated like a king in death by the Egyptians. Moreover, not only did his sons **weep** for him, but the Egyptians wept as well and

went with Israel's sons to bury him in Canaan. The sight of this large burial party was so vast that the neighboring nations noticed and were amazed.

However, after their father's death, Joseph's brothers were once more filled with fear of Joseph and his just retribution. So, they come to Joseph and pledge their servitude. But Joseph responds in verse 19,

Genesis 50:19–20 “But Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, **for am I in God's place? “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to do what has happened on this day, to keep many people alive.”**

God fights for His people by transforming evil into good. He preserves them by transforming tragedy into triumph, and he refines them by transforming wickedness into righteousness. And as we move forward from Genesis, God's work of transforming evil into good will be on display, century after century. Evil began with the fall, but in the end, God will transform evil into good through the work of His Son, Shiloh, the Prince of Peace, the Seed who was promised.

As Joseph's life draws to a close, we are left with a problem. God has promised Abraham that his descendants will inherit the Promised Land of Canaan. God has promised Israel that His family will become a great nation. But as we come to the final verses of this book, we are left with a large family in a foreign land. This is the end of Genesis, but it is not the end of the story. As Joseph reminds his brothers before his death,

Genesis 50:24 “And Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die, but **God will surely take care of you and bring you up from this land** to the land which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.”