Genesis

HEBREW BIBLE

Genesis

בְּרֵאשִׁית

Translated from the Hebrew with AI (Claude) and edited



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Genesis · Hebrew Bible

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CONTENTS

Introduction ix

Primeval History 1

Chapter 1 1
Chapter 2 3
The garden of Eden 3
The first woman 4
Chapter 3 5
Chapter 4 7
Chapter 5 9
Chapter 6 10
The flood 11
Chapter 7 12
Chapter 8 14
Chapter 9 15
Noah's drunkenness 16
Chapter 10 17
Chapter 11 19
The line of Shem 19

Abraham 23

Chapter 12 23
Abram in Egypt 24
Chapter 13 24
Chapter 14 26
Melchizedek 27
Chapter 15 27
Chapter 16 29
Chapter 17 30
Chapter 18 32
Abraham pleads for Sodom 33

Chapter 19 34
Lot and his daughters 36
Chapter 20 37
Chapter 21 38
Hagar and Ishmael sent away 39
Chapter 22 40
Chapter 23 42
Chapter 24 43
Chapter 25 48

Jacob 49
Jacob and Esau 49
Chapter 26 50
Chapter 27 52
Chapter 28 55
Jacob's ladder 56
Chapter 29 57
Chapter 30 59
Chapter 31 62
Chapter 32 65
Jacob wrestles 67
Chapter 33 68
Chapter 34 69
Chapter 35 71
Chapter 36 73

Joseph 77
Chapter 37 77
Joseph sold 78
Chapter 38 79
Chapter 39 81
Chapter 40 83
Chapter 41 84
Joseph rules Egypt 87
Chapter 42 88
Chapter 43 90

Chapter 44 93
Judah's plea 94
Chapter 45 95
Chapter 46 97
Chapter 47 99
The famine in Egypt 100
Chapter 48 101
Chapter 49 103
Chapter 50 105
Joseph forgives his brothers 106

INTRODUCTION

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Genesis, the first book of the Hebrew Bible, tells of the world's creation and of the first humans, Adam and Eve, and their expulsion from the garden of Eden; of Cain's murder of his brother Abel; of the flood, from which only Noah and his family are saved; and of the tower of Babel, where the languages of humankind are confused.

From chapter 12 the story narrows to a single family. God calls Abraham to leave his homeland for Canaan and promises him the land and countless descendants. The promise passes, through rivalries, deceptions and reconciliations, to his son Isaac, to Isaac's son Jacob, who is renamed Israel, and to Jacob's twelve sons. The book ends in Egypt, where Joseph, sold into slavery by his brothers, has risen to govern the country and saves his family from famine.

Genesis took shape over centuries; most scholars think it combines several older sources and traditions, brought together in roughly its present form in the sixth or fifth century BC. Its Hebrew prose is spare and concrete, and much of its meaning lies in repetitions, wordplay and what it leaves unsaid.

Primeval History

Creation, the garden of Eden, Cain and Abel, the flood, and the tower of Babel.

CHAPTER 1

God creates the heavens and the earth, light, sky, land and plants.

Gen 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and empty, darkness lay over the surface of the deep, and the spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.[1]

Gen 1:6 Then God said, “Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters, and let it separate waters from waters.” So God made the dome and separated the waters under the dome from the waters above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.[2]

Gen 1:9 Then God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the gathered waters he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Gen 1:11 Then God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit of each kind, with their seed in

1 The Hebrew *tohu wa-bohu*, “formless and empty,” is a rhyming pair. *Ruach* can mean “spirit,” “wind” or “breath.”

2 The Hebrew *raqia* suggests a hammered-out surface. It was pictured as a solid vault holding back the waters above.

it." And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of each kind, and trees bearing fruit with their seed in it, of each kind. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

Gen 1:14 Then God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them serve as signs, and for set times, and for days and years. Let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. Gen 1:16 God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night, and he made the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light on the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

Gen 1:20 Then God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, each according to its kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Gen 1:22 God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth." And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

Gen 1:24 Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of each kind: livestock, creeping things and wild animals of the earth, each of its kind." And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth according to their kind, the livestock according to their kind, and every creeping thing of the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Gen 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness. Let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created humankind in his image. In the image of God he created it;

male and female he created them.[3] Gen 1:28 God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that creeps on the earth." And God said, "Look, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree that has seed-yielding fruit in it; they will be yours for food. Gen 1:30 And for every wild animal of the earth, for every bird of the sky, and for everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has life in it, every green plant is for food." And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good indeed. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

CHAPTER 2

The heavens and the earth are finished, and God rests on the seventh day.

Gen 2:1 So the heavens and the earth were finished, with all their array. On the seventh day God finished the work he had been doing, and on the seventh day he rested from all the work he had done. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work that God had done in creating.[4]

THE GARDEN OF EDEN

The LORD God forms the human from the ground and plants a garden in Eden.

Gen 2:4 These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created. On the day the LORD God made earth and heavens, no shrub of the field was yet on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up. The LORD God had not sent

3 The plural "us" has been read in different ways. Some take it as God addressing a heavenly court, and others as a plural of majesty.
4 "Rested" (*shavat*) shares its root with "Sabbath," although the noun itself does not appear here.

rain on the earth, and there was no human to work the ground.[5]
Gen 2:6 But a stream would rise from the earth and water the whole
surface of the ground. Then the LORD God formed the human
from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the
breath of life, and the human became a living being. The LORD
God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the
human he had formed.[6] Gen 2:9 Out of the ground the LORD God
made every tree grow that is pleasing to look at and good for
food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden, and the
tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A river flows out of Eden
to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four
branches. The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that winds
through the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. Gen 2:12
The gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are found
there. The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one that
winds through the whole land of Cush. The name of the third
river is Tigris; it is the one that flows east of Assyria. And the
fourth river is the Euphrates.[7] Gen 2:15 The LORD God took the
human and settled him in the garden of Eden to work it and to
keep it. And the LORD God commanded the human, "You may
freely eat from every tree of the garden, but from the tree of the
knowledge of good and evil you must not eat, for on the day you
eat from it you will surely die."

THE FIRST WOMAN

God makes the animals and then the woman from the human's rib.

Gen 2:18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the human to
be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him." So out of the

5 "The LORD" in capitals stands for the divine name YHWH, traditionally not pronounced aloud. It appears here for the first time, joined with "God."
6 The human (*adam*) is formed from the ground (*adamah*), a wordplay that runs through the story. The word rendered "stream" (*ed*) is uncertain and may mean "mist."
7 Bdellium is an aromatic resin, and the *shoham* stone (here "onyx") is uncertain. Cush usually means the region south of Egypt, and the Hebrew names *Hiddekel* and *Perat* are the Tigris and Euphrates.

ground the LORD God formed every wild animal of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the human to see what he would call them. Whatever the human called each living creature, that was its name.[8] Gen 2:20 The human gave names to all the livestock, to the birds of the sky and to every wild animal of the field, but for the human no helper fit for him was found. So the LORD God cast a deep sleep on the human, and he slept. He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the LORD God built the rib that he had taken from the human into a woman, and he brought her to the man.[9] Gen 2:23 Then the man said, "This one at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for from Man this one was taken." That is why a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. The two of them, the man and his wife, were naked, and they felt no shame.[10]

CHAPTER 3

The snake persuades the woman to eat the forbidden fruit, and the humans are driven from the garden.

Gen 3:1 Now the snake was shrewder than any wild animal of the field that the LORD God had made. It said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" The woman said to the snake, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden,[11] Gen 3:3 but about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden God said, 'You shall not eat from it, and you shall not touch it, or you will die.'" The snake said to the woman, "You will not surely die. God knows that on the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."[12] Gen 3:6 The woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desir-

8 Literally "a helper corresponding to him," a counterpart. The word for "helper" (*ezer*) is often used of God elsewhere.
9 The word for "rib" (*tsela*) can also mean "side."
10 In Hebrew *ishah*, "woman," sounds like *ish*, "man."
11 "Shrewd" (*arum*) plays on "naked" (*arummim*) in the verse just before.
12 "Like God" could also be read "like gods"; the Hebrew word is plural in form.

able for gaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. Gen 3:8 They heard the sound of the LORD God walking about in the garden in the breeze of the day, and the man and his wife hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. The LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" He said, "I heard your sound in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid." Gen 3:11 He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman you gave to be with me—she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The snake deceived me, and I ate." Gen 3:14 The LORD God said to the snake, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above every wild animal of the field. On your belly you will go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life. I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. It will strike your head, and you will strike its heel."[13]

Gen 3:16 To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your painful toil and your pregnancies; in pain you will bear children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."[14]

Gen 3:17 And to the man he said, "Because you listened to your wife's voice and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat from it,' cursed is the ground because of you. In painful toil you will eat from it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it will sprout for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. Gen 3:19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat bread until you return to the ground, for from it you were taken. Dust you are, and to dust you will return." The man named his

13 The same verb (*shuf*, perhaps "strike" or "crush") is used for both blows.
14 The word for "painful toil" (*itsavon*) is used again of the man's labor in 3:17.

wife Eve, because she was the mother of all the living. The LORD God made garments of skin for the man and his wife, and he clothed them.[15]

Gen 3:22 Then the LORD God said, "Look, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil. Now, so that he does not reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever—" So the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. He drove the man out, and east of the garden of Eden he stationed the cherubim and the flame of the whirling sword to guard the way to the tree of life.[16]

CHAPTER 4

Cain kills his brother Abel and is sent away; Cain's descendants and the birth of Seth.

Gen 4:1 The man knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. She said, "I have gotten a man with the LORD." She gave birth again, this time to his brother Abel. Abel became a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruit of the ground as an offering to the LORD.[17] Gen 4:4 Abel, for his part, brought some of the firstborn of his flock and some of their fat. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? Gen 4:7 If you do well, will there not be a lifting up? But if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, and you must rule over it." Cain said to his brother Abel—and when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. The LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know. Am I my

15 Eve (*Chavvah*) sounds like *chai*, "living."
16 Cherubim are winged guardian beings. Ancient Near Eastern art often shows such figures as composite creatures.
17 Cain (*Qayin*) echoes *qaniti*, "I have gotten." The sense of "with the LORD" is uncertain; it may mean "with the LORD's help."

brother's keeper?"[18] Gen 4:10 And he said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground. Now you are cursed from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you. You will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth." Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is too great to bear. Gen 4:14 Look, today you have driven me from the face of the ground, and from your face I will be hidden. I will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." The LORD said to him, "Therefore, whoever kills Cain will suffer vengeance sevenfold." And the LORD put a mark on Cain, so that no one who found him would strike him down. Gen 4:16 So Cain went out from the LORD's presence and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Enoch. Cain was building a city, and he named the city after his son Enoch. To Enoch was born Irad. Irad fathered Mehujael, Mehujael fathered Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech.[19] Gen 4:19 Lamech took two wives. The name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other was Zillah. Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who live in tents and keep livestock. His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all who play the lyre and pipe. Gen 4:22 Zillah, too, gave birth, to Tubal-cain, who forged every tool of bronze and iron. Tubal-cain's sister was Naamah. Lamech said to his wives, "Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; wives of Lamech, listen to what I say: I have killed a man for wounding me, a boy for striking me. If Cain is avenged sevenfold, then Lamech seventy-sevenfold." Gen 4:25 Adam knew his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, "for God has granted me another offspring in place of Abel, because Cain killed him." To Seth also a son was born, and he named him

18 Verse 7 is obscure; "lifting up" may mean acceptance or a lifted face. In verse 8 the Hebrew does not report what Cain said, and some ancient versions add, "Let us go out to the field."

19 Nod means "wandering," echoing *nad*, "wanderer," in 4:12 and 4:14.

Enosh. At that time people began to call on the name of the LORD.[20]

CHAPTER 5

The line of Adam through Seth, from Adam to Noah.

Gen 5:1 This is the book of the line of Adam. When God created humankind, he made it in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Humankind on the day they were created.[21]

Gen 5:3 When Adam had lived a hundred and thirty years, he fathered a son in his likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth. After he fathered Seth, Adam lived eight hundred years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether Adam lived nine hundred and thirty years; then he died.

Gen 5:6 When Seth had lived a hundred and five years, he fathered Enosh. After he fathered Enosh, Seth lived eight hundred and seven years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether Seth lived nine hundred and twelve years; then he died.

Gen 5:9 When Enosh had lived ninety years, he fathered Kenan. After he fathered Kenan, Enosh lived eight hundred and fifteen years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether Enosh lived nine hundred and five years; then he died.

Gen 5:12 When Kenan had lived seventy years, he fathered Mahalalel. After he fathered Mahalalel, Kenan lived eight hundred and forty years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether Kenan lived nine hundred and ten years; then he died.

Gen 5:15 When Mahalalel had lived sixty-five years, he fathered Jared. After he fathered Jared, Mahalalel lived eight hundred and thirty years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether Mahalalel lived eight hundred and ninety-five years; then he died.

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20 Seth (*Shet*) echoes *shat*, "has granted." From here on *adam* is used as a personal name, Adam.

21 The Hebrew *adam* serves both as the word for "humankind" and as the name Adam.

Gen 5:18 When Jared had lived a hundred and sixty-two years, he fathered Enoch. After he fathered Enoch, Jared lived eight hundred years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether Jared lived nine hundred and sixty-two years; then he died.

Gen 5:21 When Enoch had lived sixty-five years, he fathered Methuselah. After he fathered Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether Enoch lived three hundred and sixty-five years. Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him.[22]

Gen 5:25 When Methuselah had lived a hundred and eighty-seven years, he fathered Lamech. After he fathered Lamech, Methuselah lived seven hundred and eighty-two years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether Methuselah lived nine hundred and sixty-nine years; then he died.

Gen 5:28 When Lamech had lived a hundred and eighty-two years, he fathered a son. He named him Noah, saying, "This one will bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands, from the ground that the LORD has cursed." After he fathered Noah, Lamech lived five hundred and ninety-five years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether Lamech lived seven hundred and seventy-seven years; then he died.[23]

Gen 5:32 When Noah was five hundred years old, Noah fathered Shem, Ham and Japheth.

CHAPTER 6

Humankind grows corrupt, and God tells Noah to build an ark.

Gen 6:1 When humankind began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of humankind were beautiful, and they took as wives any of them they chose.[24] Gen 6:3 Then the LORD said, "My

22 Enoch's entry breaks the pattern of the list. Instead of "then he died," it says he "was no more."

23 Noah (*Noach*) echoes *yenachamenu*, "he will bring us relief."

24 Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible "sons of God" refers to heavenly beings (Job 1:6). The episode is very brief and its meaning has long been debated.

spirit shall not remain in humankind forever, since they are flesh; their days shall be a hundred and twenty years." The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God went in to the daughters of humankind and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men of old, the men of renown.[25]

Gen 6:5 The LORD saw that the wickedness of humankind on the earth was great, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil all the time. And the LORD regretted that he had made humankind on the earth, and he was pained to his heart. So the LORD said, "I will wipe out humankind, whom I created, from the face of the ground—humans and livestock, creeping things and birds of the sky—for I regret that I made them." But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

THE FLOOD

God tells Noah, a righteous man, to build an ark before the coming flood.

Gen 6:9 This is the story of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time; Noah walked with God. Noah fathered three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. God looked at the earth and saw that it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted its way on the earth.

Gen 6:13 God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before me, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am about to destroy them along with the earth. Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make the ark with compartments, and coat it inside and outside with pitch.[26] Gen 6:15 This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. Make a roof for

25 *Nephilim* may mean "fallen ones." Numbers 13:33 uses the word for giants. The verb rendered "remain" in 6:3 is uncertain.

26 "Destroy" renders the same verb as "corrupt" in 6:11–12 (*shachat*, "ruin"): the earth had ruined itself, and God will ruin it. "Gopher wood" is an unknown kind of timber.

the ark and finish it to a cubit from the top, and put the door of the ark in its side. Make it with lower, second, and third decks.[27] Gen 6:17 As for me, I am about to bring the flood, waters upon the earth, to destroy from under the sky all flesh that has the breath of life in it; everything on the earth will perish. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall go into the ark, you and your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing, of all flesh, you shall bring two of each into the ark to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. Gen 6:20 Of the birds according to their kinds, of the livestock according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground according to its kind, two of each shall come to you to be kept alive. And you, take with you some of every kind of food that is eaten, and store it up with you; it shall be food for you and for them." Noah did everything just as God had commanded him; so he did.

CHAPTER 7

Noah, his family and the animals enter the ark, and the flood covers the earth.

Gen 7:1 Then the LORD said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation. Of every clean animal take with you seven pairs, a male and its mate, and of the animals that are not clean, one pair, a male and its mate. Of the birds of the sky also, seven pairs, male and female, to keep offspring alive on the face of all the earth.[28] Gen 7:4 For in seven days' time I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe out from the face of the ground every living thing that I have made." And Noah did everything just as the LORD had commanded him. Noah was six hundred years old when the flood came, waters

27 A cubit, the length of a forearm, was about 18 inches (45 cm). The word rendered "roof" (*tsohar*) is uncertain; it may mean an opening for light.
28 "Clean" animals are those fit for sacrifice and food under Israel's later laws (Leviticus 11).

upon the earth. Gen 7:7 Noah went into the ark with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives, to escape the waters of the flood. Of the clean animals and of the animals that are not clean, of the birds and of everything that creeps on the ground, two by two they came to Noah into the ark, male and female, as God had commanded Noah. Gen 7:10 When the seven days were over, the waters of the flood came upon the earth. In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the springs of the great deep burst open, and the windows of the sky were opened. And the rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.[29] Gen 7:13 On that very day Noah and Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, together with Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons, went into the ark—they, and every wild animal according to its kind, all the livestock according to their kinds, every creeping thing that creeps on the earth according to its kind, and every bird according to its kind, every bird, every winged thing. They came to Noah into the ark, two by two of all flesh that has the breath of life in it. Gen 7:16 Those that came in, male and female of all flesh, came in as God had commanded him. Then the LORD shut him in. The flood was on the earth forty days. The waters increased and lifted up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. The waters swelled and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark drifted on the face of the waters. Gen 7:19 The waters swelled more and more over the earth, and all the high mountains under the whole sky were covered. The waters swelled fifteen cubits higher, and the mountains were covered. All flesh that moved on the earth perished—birds, livestock, wild animals, every swarming thing that swarms on the earth, and every human being. Gen 7:22 Everything that had the breath of the spirit of life in its nostrils, everything on dry land, died. So he wiped out every living thing on the face of the ground, humans and livestock, creeping things and birds of the sky; they were wiped out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark.

29 The "great deep" (*tehom*, as in 1:2) is the water beneath the earth; the "windows of the sky" let through the waters above the dome (1:7).

And the waters swelled on the earth for a hundred and fifty days.

CHAPTER 8

The waters recede, Noah sends out a raven and a dove, and offers a sacrifice.

Gen 8:1 Then God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. God made a wind pass over the earth, and the waters subsided. The springs of the deep and the windows of the sky were closed, and the rain from the sky was held back. The waters steadily receded from the earth, and at the end of a hundred and fifty days the waters had gone down. Gen 8:4 In the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. The waters went on going down until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains appeared. At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made.[30] Gen 8:7 He sent out the raven, and it went to and fro until the waters had dried up from the earth. Then he sent out the dove from him, to see whether the waters had subsided from the face of the ground. But the dove found no resting place for the sole of its foot, and it came back to him to the ark, for there was water over the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand, took it, and brought it back to him into the ark. Gen 8:10 He waited another seven days, and again he sent the dove out from the ark. The dove came back to him toward evening, and there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. He waited yet another seven days and sent out the dove, and it did not come back to him again. Gen 8:13 In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, on the first day of the month, the waters had dried up from the earth. Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and saw that the face of the ground

30 Ararat is ancient Urartu, the mountain country around Lake Van in eastern Turkey and Armenia. "Came to rest" (*tanach*) echoes the name Noah.

had dried. In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry.

Gen 8:15 Then God spoke to Noah: "Come out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. Bring out with you every living creature that is with you, of all flesh—birds, livestock, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—so that they may swarm on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth." Gen 8:18 So Noah came out, with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives. Every living creature, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, came out of the ark by their families. Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, took some of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. Gen 8:21 The LORD smelled the soothing aroma, and the LORD said to himself, "I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth; and I will never again strike down every living thing as I have done. As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease."

CHAPTER 9

God blesses Noah and makes a covenant with every living creature, with the rainbow as its sign.

Gen 9:1 God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. The fear and dread of you shall fall on every wild animal of the earth and on every bird of the sky, on everything that creeps on the ground and on all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are given. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything. Gen 9:4 Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood, in it. And for your own blood, for your lives, I will demand an accounting: from every animal I will demand it, and from humans; from each person I will demand an accounting for the life of a fellow human. Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that one's blood

be shed; for in the image of God he made humankind. As for you, be fruitful and multiply; swarm on the earth and multiply on it."

Gen 9:8 Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and with your offspring after you, and with every living creature that is with you —the birds, the livestock, and every wild animal of the earth with you, all that came out of the ark, every animal of the earth. Gen 9:11 I will establish my covenant with you: never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I am making between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all generations to come: Gen 9:13 I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the bow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and every living creature of all flesh, and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.[31] Gen 9:16 When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." And God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

NOAH'S DRUNKENNESS

Noah gets drunk; Ham sees his nakedness, and Noah curses Canaan and blesses Shem and Japheth.

Gen 9:18 The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth; Ham was the father of Canaan. These three were the sons of Noah, and from them the whole earth was peopled. Noah, a man of the soil, was the first to plant a vineyard. He drank some of the wine and became drunk, and he lay

31 The Hebrew word for "bow" (*qeshet*) is the ordinary word for a warrior's bow; here it is the rainbow.

uncovered inside his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside. Gen 9:23 Then Shem and Japheth took the cloak, laid it across the shoulders of both of them, walked in backward, and covered their father's nakedness. Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness. When Noah woke up from his wine and learned what his youngest son had done to him, he said, "Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves shall he be to his brothers." Gen 9:26 He also said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem, and let Canaan be his slave. May God make room for Japheth, and let him live in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his slave." After the flood Noah lived three hundred and fifty years. Altogether Noah lived nine hundred and fifty years; then he died.[32]

CHAPTER 10

The peoples descended from Noah's sons Japheth, Ham and Shem.

Gen 10:1 This is the line of Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth; sons were born to them after the flood. The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. The sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, the Kittim, and the Dodanim.[33] Gen 10:5 From these the coastland peoples spread out into their lands, each with its own language, by their clans, in their nations. The sons of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The sons of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan.[34] Gen 10:8 Cush fathered Nimrod; he was the first to become a mighty warrior on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; that is why it is said, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD." The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Akkad, and Calneh, in the land of

32 "Make room" (*yapht*) plays on the name Japheth (*Yephet*).
33 Many names in this list are peoples and places: Madai is Media, Javan the Greeks (Ionia), and the Kittim the people of Cyprus.
34 Cush is the land south of Egypt along the Nile (ancient Nubia); Put is probably Libya.

Shinar.[35] Gen 10:11 From that land he went out to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, and Calah, and Resen, between Nineveh and Calah—that is the great city. Egypt fathered the Ludim, the Anamim, the Lehabim, the Naphtuhim, the Pathrusim, the Casluhim, from whom the Philistines came, and the Caphtorim.[36]

Gen 10:15 Canaan fathered Sidon, his firstborn, and Heth, and the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. Afterward the clans of the Canaanites spread out. The territory of the Canaanites extended from Sidon in the direction of Gerar, as far as Gaza, and in the direction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha. These are the sons of Ham by their clans, by their languages, in their lands, in their nations.

Gen 10:21 To Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber and the elder brother of Japheth, children were born. The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram. The sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash. Arpachshad fathered Shelah, and Shelah fathered Eber.[37] Gen 10:25 To Eber two sons were born. The name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided, and his brother's name was Joktan. Joktan fathered Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, Obal, Abimael, Sheba,[38] Gen 10:29 Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab; all these were the sons of Joktan. The region where they lived extended from Mesha in the direction of Sephar, the hill country of the east. These are the sons of Shem by their clans, by their languages, in their lands, by their nations. These are the clans of Noah's sons, according to their lines, in their nations; and from these the nations spread out over the earth after the flood.

35 Shinar is Mesopotamia (Babylonia); Babel is Babylon, and Erech is Uruk.
36 Or "From that land Asshur went out"; the Hebrew can be read either way.
37 The name Eber is traditionally linked with the word "Hebrew" (*'ivri*).
38 Peleg sounds like the Hebrew for "was divided" (*niflegah*).

CHAPTER 11

People build a city and a tower at Babel, and the LORD confuses their language.

Gen 11:1 Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. As people journeyed from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. They said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and fire them thoroughly." So they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Gen 11:4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the sky, and let us make a name for ourselves, so that we are not scattered over the face of the whole earth." The LORD came down to see the city and the tower that humankind had built. And the LORD said, "Look, they are one people, and they all have one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do; now nothing they plan to do will be beyond them. Gen 11:7 Come, let us go down and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another's speech." So the LORD scattered them from there over the face of the whole earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth, and from there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.[39]

THE LINE OF SHEM

The generations from Shem to Terah, Abram's father, and the family's move to Haran.

Gen 11:10 This is the line of Shem. When Shem was a hundred years old, he fathered Arpachshad, two years after the flood. After he fathered Arpachshad, Shem lived five hundred years and had other sons and daughters.

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39 Babel (Babylon) sounds like *balal*, "confuse." God's "Come, let us" answers the people's "Come, let us" of 11:3–4.

Gen 11:12 When Arpachshad had lived thirty-five years, he fathered Shelah. After he fathered Shelah, Arpachshad lived four hundred and three years and had other sons and daughters.
Gen 11:14 When Shelah had lived thirty years, he fathered Eber. After he fathered Eber, Shelah lived four hundred and three years and had other sons and daughters.
Gen 11:16 When Eber had lived thirty-four years, he fathered Peleg. After he fathered Peleg, Eber lived four hundred and thirty years and had other sons and daughters.
Gen 11:18 When Peleg had lived thirty years, he fathered Reu. After he fathered Reu, Peleg lived two hundred and nine years and had other sons and daughters.
Gen 11:20 When Reu had lived thirty-two years, he fathered Serug. After he fathered Serug, Reu lived two hundred and seven years and had other sons and daughters.
Gen 11:22 When Serug had lived thirty years, he fathered Nahor. After he fathered Nahor, Serug lived two hundred years and had other sons and daughters.
Gen 11:24 When Nahor had lived twenty-nine years, he fathered Terah. After he fathered Terah, Nahor lived a hundred and nineteen years and had other sons and daughters.
Gen 11:26 When Terah had lived seventy years, he fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran. This is the line of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran, and Haran fathered Lot. Haran died in the lifetime of his father Terah, in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans.[40] Gen 11:29 Abram and Nahor took wives for themselves. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and Iscah. Now Sarai was barren; she had no child. Gen 11:31 Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and they set out together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled

40 Ur was an ancient city in southern Mesopotamia; "Chaldeans" is a later name for the people of that region.

there. Altogether Terah lived two hundred and five years; then Terah died in Haran.[41]

41 The town of Haran (*Charan*) is spelled differently in Hebrew from the name of Terah's son Haran.

Abraham

God calls Abraham and promises him land and descendants; Sodom and Gomorrah; the birth of Isaac and the binding of Isaac; the deaths of Sarah and Abraham.

CHAPTER 12

The LORD calls Abram to leave his homeland for Canaan, promising to make him a great nation.

Gen 12:1 The LORD said to Abram, "Go from your land, from your
kindred and from your father's house, to the land that I will
show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you
and make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will
bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will
curse; and all the families of the earth will be blessed through
you."[1] Gen 12:4 So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot
went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left
Haran. Abram took Sarai his wife, Lot his brother's son, all the
possessions they had gathered and the people they had acquired
in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan. And they
came to the land of Canaan. Gen 12:6 Abram passed through the
land as far as the place of Shechem, as far as the oak of Moreh.
At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then the LORD
appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this
land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared
to him.[2] Gen 12:8 From there he moved on to the hill country east of

1 The last clause can also mean "will bless themselves by you," that is, use Abram's name when they bless one another.

2 Or "terebinth." The tree was probably a well-known landmark, and *moreh* can mean "teacher," which suggests a place where oracles were sought.

Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel to the west and Ai to the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD. Then Abram journeyed on, moving by stages toward the Negev.[3]

ABRAM IN EGYPT

During a famine Abram passes Sarai off as his sister, and Pharaoh takes her.

Gen 12:10 There was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there as a foreigner, because the famine was severe in the land. As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, "Listen, I know that you are a beautiful woman. Gen 12:12 When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me but let you live. Please say that you are my sister, so that it may go well with me because of you, and my life will be spared thanks to you." When Abram came into Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. Gen 12:15 Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh, and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. He treated Abram well because of her, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male donkeys, male slaves and slave women, female donkeys and camels. But the LORD struck Pharaoh and his household with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.[4] Gen 12:18 Pharaoh summoned Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why didn't you tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her as my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go." Pharaoh gave his men orders about him, and they sent him away with his wife and all that he had.

CHAPTER 13

Abram and Lot part ways, and Lot settles near Sodom.

Gen 13:1 So Abram went up from Egypt into the Negev, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him. Abram was very rich

3 The Negev is the dry region in the south of the land.

in livestock, in silver and in gold. He went on from stage to stage, from the Negev as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at first, between Bethel and Ai, Gen 13:4 to the place of the altar he had made there before; and there Abram called on the name of the LORD. Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. The land could not support them living together, for their possessions were so great that they could not live together. Gen 13:7 There was quarreling between the herders of Abram's livestock and the herders of Lot's livestock. At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites were living in the land. Abram said to Lot, "Please, let there be no quarrel between me and you, or between my herders and your herders, for we are kinsmen. Isn't the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you go to the left, I will go to the right; if you go to the right, I will go to the left." Gen 13:10 Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered everywhere—this was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah—like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as far as Zoar. So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. So they separated from each other. Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the plain and moved his tent as far as Sodom. Gen 13:13 Now the people of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD. After Lot had separated from him, the LORD said to Abram, "Lift up your eyes and look out from the place where you are, north and south, east and west. For all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. Gen 13:16 I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust of the earth, your offspring too could be counted. Get up, walk through the land, its length and its breadth, for I will give it to you." So Abram moved his tent and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron, and there he built an altar to the LORD.

4 "Pharaoh" is the title of the king of Egypt, not a personal name.

CHAPTER 14

Four kings raid the cities of the plain and capture Lot; Abram pursues them and rescues him.

Gen 14:1 It happened 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 on Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). All these joined forces in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea).[5] Gen 14:4 For twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled. In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, and the Horites in their hill country of Seir, as far as El-paran, which is by the wilderness. Gen 14:7 Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and they defeated the whole territory of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who lived in Hazazon-tamar. Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) went out and drew up their battle lines against them in the Valley of Siddim, Gen 14:9 against Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goiim, Amraphel king of Shinar and Arioch king of Ellasar—four kings against the five. Now the Valley of Siddim was full of tar pits. As the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, they fell into them, and the rest fled to the hills. Gen 14:11 The enemy took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food, and went away. They also took Lot, Abram's brother's son, and his goods, and went away; for he was living in Sodom. A survivor came and told Abram the Hebrew, who was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner; these men had a covenant with Abram. Gen 14:14 When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he called out his trained men, born in his house-

5 Shinar is Babylonia. The Salt Sea is the Dead Sea.

hold, three hundred and eighteen of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. He divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and struck them and pursued them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. He brought back all the goods, and he also brought back his kinsman Lot and his goods, and the women and the people as well.

MELCHIZEDEK

Melchizedek king of Salem blesses Abram, who refuses the spoils from the king of Sodom.

Gen 14:17 After he returned from defeating Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was a priest of God Most High. He blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth.[6] Gen 14:20 And blessed be God Most High, who has handed your enemies over to you." And he gave him a tenth of everything. The king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the people, and take the goods for yourself." But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I raise my hand in an oath to the LORD, God Most High, maker of heaven and earth, Gen 14:23 that I will not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, so that you will never say, 'I made Abram rich.' Nothing for me—only what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshcol and Mamre. Let them take their share."

CHAPTER 15

God promises Abram countless offspring and makes a covenant with him over divided animals.

Gen 15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield; your reward will be very great." But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what

6 Salem is often identified with Jerusalem.

will you give me, when I go on childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "Look, you have given me no offspring, so a member of my household will be my heir."[7] Gen 15:4 But then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir. One who comes from your own body will be your heir." He brought him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can count them." Then he said to him, "So will your offspring be." And he trusted the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness. Gen 15:7 He said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess." But he said, "Lord GOD, how am I to know that I will possess it?" He said to him, "Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove and a young pigeon." Gen 15:10 He took all these for him, cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but the birds he did not cut in two. Birds of prey came down on the carcasses, and Abram drove them away. As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram, and a dread, a great darkness, fell upon him. Gen 15:13 Then he said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be foreigners in a land not their own, and they will be enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years. But I will judge the nation they serve, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. Gen 15:15 As for you, you will go to your ancestors in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation they will come back here, for the guilt of the Amorites is not yet complete." When the sun had set and it was dark, there was a smoking firepot and a flaming torch passing between these pieces.[8] Gen 15:18 On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates—the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the

7 The divine name after "Lord" is printed GOD to avoid "Lord LORD." The phrase "heir of my house" is obscure in Hebrew and seems to play on the name Damascus.
8 Parties to a treaty might pass between the halves of slain animals, calling the same fate down on themselves if they broke it (compare Jer 34:18).

Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites."[9]

CHAPTER 16

Sarai gives Hagar to Abram; Hagar flees and bears Ishmael.

Gen 16:1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had an Egyptian slave woman named Hagar. Sarai said to Abram, "Look, the LORD has kept me from bearing children. Please sleep with my slave woman; perhaps I can build a family through her." And Abram listened to Sarai.[10] Gen 16:3 So Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her slave woman—after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan—and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife. He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she saw that she had conceived, her mistress lost standing in her eyes. Gen 16:5 Then Sarai said to Abram, "The wrong done to me is on you! I myself put my slave woman in your arms, and now that she sees she has conceived, I have lost standing in her eyes. May the LORD judge between me and you." Abram said to Sarai, "Look, your slave woman is in your hands. Do to her whatever is good in your eyes." Then Sarai treated her harshly, and she ran away from her. Gen 16:7 The angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the road to Shur. He said, "Hagar, Sarai's slave woman, where have you come from, and where are you going?" She said, "I am running away from my mistress Sarai." The angel of the LORD said to her, "Go back to your mistress, and humble yourself under her hand." Gen 16:10 The angel of the LORD said to her, "I will greatly multiply your offspring, so that they will be too many to count." And the angel of the LORD said to her, "Look, you are pregnant and will bear a son, and you shall name him Ishmael, for the LORD has heard your misery.[11] Gen 16:12 He will be a wild

9 The Hebrew idiom for making a covenant is literally "to cut" one.
10 "Build a family" is literally "be built up," a play on *ben*, "son."
11 Ishmael means "God hears." "Treated harshly," "humble yourself" and "misery" come from one Hebrew root.

donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live over against all his brothers." She called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, "You are El-roi," for she said, "Have I really seen here the one who sees me?"[12] Gen 16:14 That is why the well is called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered. Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.[13]

CHAPTER 17

God renames Abram and Sarai, promises Isaac, and commands circumcision.

Gen 17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Shaddai. Walk before me and be blameless, and I will set my covenant between me and you, and I will multiply you very greatly." Abram fell on his face, and God spoke with him, saying:[14] Gen 17:4 "As for me, this is my covenant with you: you will be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you very, very fruitful. I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you.[15] Gen 17:7 I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you, throughout their generations, as an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land where you now live as a foreigner, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting holding, and I will be their God." Gen 17:9 God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you

12 *El-roi* means "God of seeing" or "God who sees me"; the rest of verse 13 is obscure in Hebrew. "Over against" may also mean "east of."
13 Beer-lahai-roi means "well of the Living One who sees me."
14 Shaddai is an ancient divine title, traditionally rendered "the Almighty."
15 Abram means "exalted father"; Abraham is explained by its sound, like *av hamon*, "father of a multitude."

shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. Gen 17:12 Throughout your generations every male among you shall be circumcised when he is eight days old, including the slave born in your house and the one bought with money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring. Both the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money must be circumcised. So my covenant will be in your flesh as an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin—that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."

Gen 17:15 God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai; Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and I will also give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she will become nations; kings of peoples will come from her." Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, "Can a child be born to a man a hundred years old? Can Sarah, at ninety, give birth?"[16] Gen 17:18 Abraham said to God, "If only Ishmael might live before you!" God said, "No, Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. Gen 17:20 As for Ishmael, I have heard you. Look, I will bless him and make him fruitful and multiply him very greatly. He will father twelve chieftains, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year." Gen 17:22 When he had finished speaking with him, God went up from Abraham. Then Abraham took Ishmael his son and all the slaves born in his house and all those bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's household, and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very day, as God had told him. Gen 17:24 Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his fore-

16 Sarai and Sarah are forms of a name meaning "princess." "Laughed" (*yitshaq*) anticipates the name Isaac, "he laughs."

skin, and Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. On that very day Abraham and Ishmael his son were circumcised; and all the men of his household, those born in the house and those bought with money from foreigners, were circumcised with him.

CHAPTER 18

Three visitors come to Abraham at Mamre and promise that Sarah will have a son.

Gen 18:1 The LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre as he sat at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to meet them, bowed down to the ground, and said, "My lord, if I have found favor in your eyes, please do not pass your servant by.[17] Gen 18:4 Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest under the tree. Let me bring a bit of bread, so you can refresh yourselves; after that you can go on—since that is why you have come your servant's way." They said, "Do as you have said." Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quick, three measures of fine flour! Knead it and make cakes." Gen 18:7 Abraham ran to the herd, took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the young man, who hurried to prepare it. Then he took curds and milk and the calf he had prepared and set them before them, and he stood by them under the tree while they ate. They said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" He said, "There, in the tent." Gen 18:10 Then he said, "I will surely come back to you at this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son." Sarah was listening at the entrance of the tent, which was behind him. Abraham and Sarah were old, well on in years; Sarah no longer had the monthly periods of women. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I am worn out, shall I have pleasure, and my lord so old?" Gen 18:13 The LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I really give

17 The Hebrew vowels here point to "Lord," meaning God, though Abraham may simply be greeting a guest with courtesy.

birth, old as I am?' Is anything too wonderful for the LORD? At the appointed time I will come back to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son." But Sarah denied it, saying, "I didn't laugh," for she was afraid. He said, "No, you did laugh."

ABRAHAM PLEADS FOR SODOM

Abraham bargains with the LORD to spare Sodom for the sake of the righteous.

Gen 18:16 The men set out from there and looked down over Sodom, and Abraham went with them to see them on their way. The LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him? Gen 18:19 For I have singled him out, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring about for Abraham what he has promised him." Then the LORD said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah—how great it is! And their sin—how very grave! Gen 18:21 I will go down and see whether they have done altogether as the outcry that has come to me says; and if not, I will know." The men turned from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before the LORD. Abraham came near and said, "Will you really sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Gen 18:24 Suppose there are fifty righteous people within the city. Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare like the wicked! Far be it from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do justice?" Gen 18:26 The LORD said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous people within the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake." Abraham answered, "Look, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord, though I am dust and ashes. Suppose the fifty righteous are five short. Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?" He said, "I will not destroy it if I

find forty-five there." Gen 18:29 Once again he spoke to him and said, "Suppose forty are found there." He said, "For the sake of the forty I will not do it." Then he said, "Please, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Suppose thirty are found there." He said, "I will not do it if I find thirty there." Gen 18:31 He said, "Look, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there." He said, "For the sake of the twenty I will not destroy it." He said, "Please, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak just once more. Suppose ten are found there." He said, "For the sake of the ten I will not destroy it." When the LORD had finished speaking to Abraham, he went his way, and Abraham returned to his place.

CHAPTER 19

Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed; Lot escapes, and his wife looks back.

Gen 19:1 The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, while Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed with his face to the ground. He said, "Please, my lords, turn aside to your servant's house. Spend the night and wash your feet; then you can rise early and go on your way." They said, "No, we will spend the night in the square." Gen 19:3 But he pressed them hard, so they turned aside to him and came into his house. He made them a feast and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. Before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, surrounded the house, young and old, all the people from every quarter. They called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, so that we can have sex with them."[18] Gen 19:6 Lot went out to them at the doorway and shut the door behind him. He said, "Please, my brothers, do not do such evil. Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and do to them whatever is good in your eyes.

18 Literally "know them," a common Hebrew euphemism for sexual relations; the same verb appears in verse 8.

Only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof." Gen 19:9 But they said, "Stand back!" And they said, "This one came here as a foreigner, and now he wants to play the judge! Now we will do more evil to you than to them." They pressed hard against the man, against Lot, and came close to break down the door. But the men reached out their hands, brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. Gen 19:11 And the men who were at the doorway of the house they struck with blindness, from the smallest to the greatest, so that they wore themselves out trying to find the doorway. Then the men said to Lot, "Whom else do you have here? A son-in-law, your sons, your daughters, anyone you have in the city—bring them out of this place. For we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has grown great before the LORD, and the LORD has sent us to destroy it." Gen 19:14 So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, and said, "Get up, get out of this place, for the LORD is about to destroy the city." But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking. As dawn was breaking, the angels urged Lot on, saying, "Get up, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away because of the city's guilt." Gen 19:16 But he lingered. So the men seized his hand and the hands of his wife and his two daughters—because the LORD had pity on him—and brought him out and set him down outside the city. When they had brought them outside, one of them said, "Run for your life! Do not look behind you, and do not stop anywhere in the plain. Run to the hills, or you will be swept away." But Lot said to them, "Oh no, my lord! Gen 19:19 Look, your servant has found favor in your eyes, and great is the steadfast love you have shown me in saving my life. But I cannot escape to the hills; the disaster will overtake me, and I will die. Look, this city here is near enough to flee to, and it is a small one. Let me escape there—it is only small, isn't it?—and my life will be saved." Gen 19:21 He said to him, "Very well, I grant you this request too: I will not overthrow the city you speak of. Hurry, escape there, for I can do nothing until you arrive there." That is why the city was called Zoar. The sun

had risen over the land when Lot came to Zoar.[19] Gen 19:24 Then the LORD rained sulfur and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens. He overthrew those cities and the whole plain, with all the inhabitants of the cities and what grew from the ground. But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt. Abraham rose early in the morning and went to the place where he had stood before the LORD. Gen 19:28 He looked down over Sodom and Gomorrah and over all the land of the plain, and he saw smoke rising from the land like the smoke of a kiln. So when God destroyed the cities of the plain, God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities where Lot had lived.

LOT AND HIS DAUGHTERS

Lot's daughters make him drunk and bear the ancestors of Moab and Ammon.

Gen 19:30 Lot went up from Zoar and settled in the hills with his two daughters, for he was afraid to stay in Zoar; and he lived in a cave, he and his two daughters. The firstborn said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is no man in the land to sleep with us, as is the way of all the earth. Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, so that we may keep offspring alive through our father." Gen 19:33 So they made their father drink wine that night, and the firstborn went in and lay with her father; he did not know when she lay down or when she rose. The next day the firstborn said to the younger, "Look, last night I lay with my father. Let us make him drink wine tonight as well, and then you go in and lie with him, so that we may keep offspring alive through our father." Gen 19:35 So that night too they made their father drink wine, and the younger rose and lay with him; he did not know when she lay down or when she rose. So both of Lot's daughters became pregnant by their father. The firstborn bore a son and named him Moab; he is the

19 Zoar sounds like *mits'ar*, "a small one."

ancestor of the Moabites to this day. The younger also bore a son and named him Ben-ammi; he is the ancestor of the Ammonites to this day.[20]

CHAPTER 20

Abraham again calls Sarah his sister, this time to Abimelech of Gerar.

Gen 20:1 Abraham set out from there for the land of the Negev. He settled between Kadesh and Shur, and he lived for a time as a foreigner in Gerar. Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." So Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, "You are a dead man because of the woman you have taken, for she is a married woman."[21] Gen 20:4 Now Abimelech had not come near her. He said, "Lord, will you kill a nation even if it is righteous? Did he not say to me himself, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my brother.' I did this with a blameless heart and clean hands." Gen 20:6 God said to him in the dream, "I too know that you did this with a blameless heart. It was I who kept you from sinning against me. That is why I did not let you touch her. Now give the man's wife back, for he is a prophet. He will pray for you, and you will live. But if you do not give her back, know that you will surely die, you and everyone who belongs to you." Gen 20:8 Abimelech rose early in the morning. He called all his servants and told them all these things, and the men were very much afraid. Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, "What have you done to us? How have I sinned against you, that you have brought so great a sin on me and on my kingdom? You have done things to me that ought not to be done." Gen 20:10 And Abimelech said to Abraham, "What were you thinking of, that you did this thing?" Abraham said, "I thought, 'Surely there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.' Besides, she really is my sister—my father's daughter,

20 Moab sounds like *me-av*, "from father"; Ben-ammi means "son of my kin." Moab and Ammon were Israel's neighbors east of the Jordan.
21 Gerar was a town in the western Negev.

though not my mother's daughter—and she became my wife. Gen 20:13 When God made me wander from my father's house, I said to her, 'This is the loyalty you must show me: everywhere we go, say of me, "He is my brother."'" Then Abimelech took sheep and cattle, and male slaves and slave women, and gave them to Abraham, and he returned his wife Sarah to him. And Abimelech said, "Look, my land lies before you. Settle wherever you please." Gen 20:16 To Sarah he said, "Look, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver. Let it be a covering of the eyes for you before all who are with you; before everyone you are set right." Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife and his slave women, so that they bore children. For the LORD had closed every womb in Abimelech's household because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.[22]

CHAPTER 21

Sarah gives birth to Isaac in her old age.

Gen 21:1 The LORD took note of Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as he had promised. Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time God had spoken of to him. Abraham gave the son born to him, the son Sarah bore him, the name Isaac. Gen 21:4 Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me." And she said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."[23]

22 "A covering of the eyes" seems to mean a payment that publicly clears her honor; the Hebrew at the end of the verse is uncertain.
23 "Laughter" (*tsehoq*) and "will laugh" (*yitshaq*) play on the name Isaac (*Yitshaq*), "he laughs."

HAGAR AND ISHMAEL SENT AWAY

Abraham sends Hagar and Ishmael into the wilderness, where God saves the boy.

Gen 21:8 The child grew and was weaned, and Abraham held a great
feast on the day Isaac was weaned. But Sarah saw the son whom
Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham laughing. So she said
to Abraham, "Drive out this slave woman and her son, for the
son of this slave woman will not share the inheritance with my
son, with Isaac."[24] Gen 21:11 The matter seemed very bad in Abra-
ham's eyes because of his son. But God said to Abraham, "Do not
let it seem bad in your eyes because of the boy and your slave
woman. Whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her voice, for it is
through Isaac that offspring will be named for you. Gen 21:13 As for
the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him too, for
he is your offspring." Abraham rose early in the morning, took
bread and a skin of water, and gave them to Hagar, putting them
on her shoulder, along with the child, and he sent her away. She
went off and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. When
the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of
the bushes. Gen 21:16 Then she went and sat down by herself opposite
him, a good way off, about a bowshot away, for she said, "Let
me not look on the death of the child." As she sat opposite him,
she raised her voice and wept. God heard the voice of the boy,
and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to
her, "What is wrong, Hagar? Do not be afraid, for God has heard
the voice of the boy where he is. Gen 21:18 Get up, lift the boy, and
hold him firmly by the hand, for I will make him a great nation."
Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. She
went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.
God was with the boy, and he grew up. He lived in the wilderness and became an archer. He lived in the wilderness of Paran,
and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

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24 The word for "laughing" (*metsaheq*), another play on Isaac's name, can also mean "playing" or "mocking"; the text does not say which.

Gen 21:22 At that time Abimelech, with Phicol the commander of his army, said to Abraham, "God is with you in all that you do. Now swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me, or with my children, or with my descendants. As I have shown you loyalty, so you will show it to me and to the land where you have lived as a foreigner." And Abraham said, "I swear it." Gen 21:25 Then Abraham reproached Abimelech about the well of water that Abimelech's servants had seized. Abimelech said, "I do not know who did this thing. You did not tell me, and I myself heard nothing of it until today." So Abraham took sheep and cattle and gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them made a covenant. Gen 21:28 Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock apart by themselves. Abimelech said to Abraham, "What are these seven ewe lambs that you have set apart by themselves?" He said, "You are to take these seven ewe lambs from my hand, so that they may be a witness for me that I dug this well." Gen 21:31 That is why that place was called Beersheba, because there the two of them swore an oath. When they had made a covenant at Beersheba, Abimelech rose, with Phicol the commander of his army, and they returned to the land of the Philistines. Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the LORD, God Everlasting. And Abraham lived as a foreigner in the land of the Philistines for many days.[25]

CHAPTER 22

God tells Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, then stops him.

Gen 22:1 After these things, it happened that God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Take your son, please—your only son, whom you love, Isaac—and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt

25 Beersheba can mean "well of seven" or "well of the oath"; the story plays on both (*sheva,* "seven"; *nishbe'u,* "they swore").

offering on one of the mountains that I will tell you of."[26] Gen 22:3 Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. He split the wood for the burnt offering, then set out and went to the place God had told him of. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place far away. Gen 22:5 Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go over there; we will worship and then come back to you." Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he took the fire and the knife in his own hand. And the two of them walked on together. Gen 22:7 Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Here are the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will see to the lamb for a burnt offering himself, my son." And the two of them walked on together. Gen 22:9 They came to the place God had told him of. Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham! Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."[27] Gen 22:12 He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and there was a ram behind him, caught in the thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering in place of his son. Gen 22:14 Abraham called that place "The LORD will see," as it is said to this day, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be seen." The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, "By myself I swear, says the LORD: because you have done

26 "Go" renders the same unusual phrase (*lekh-lekha*) with which God first called Abraham in 12:1.

27 The verb "bound" (*'aqad*) gives the episode its traditional Jewish name, the *Aqedah*, "the Binding."

this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son,[28]
Gen 22:17 I will surely bless you, and I will greatly multiply your offspring, like the stars of the sky and like the sand on the seashore, and your offspring will take possession of the gate of their enemies. And all the nations of the earth will bless themselves by your offspring, because you have listened to my voice."
Then Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose and went together to Beersheba. And Abraham lived in Beersheba.

Gen 22:20 After these things Abraham was told, "Milcah too has borne children to your brother Nahor: Uz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram, Gen 22:22 Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph and Bethuel." Bethuel fathered Rebekah. These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother. His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore children: Tebah, Gaham, Tahash and Maacah.

CHAPTER 23

Sarah dies, and Abraham buys the cave of Machpelah to bury her.

Gen 23:1 Sarah's life lasted a hundred and twenty-seven years; these were the years of Sarah's life. Sarah died at Kiriath-arba—that is, Hebron—in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. Then Abraham rose from beside his dead and spoke to the Hittites, saying, Gen 23:4 "I am a foreigner and a resident among you. Give me property among you for a burial site, so that I may bury my dead out of my sight." The Hittites answered Abraham, saying to him, "Hear us, my lord: you are a mighty prince among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will withhold his tomb from you for burying your dead."[29] Gen 23:7 Abraham rose and bowed down to the people of the land, the Hittites. He spoke with them, saying, "If it is your wish that I bury my dead out of my sight,

28 The name echoes Abraham's words in 22:8, "God will see to it"; the saying can also be read "on the mountain the LORD appears."
29 "A mighty prince" is literally "a prince of God," probably an idiom for someone very great.

hear me, and speak for me to Ephron son of Zohar, so that he will give me the cave of Machpelah, which belongs to him and lies at the end of his field. Let him give it to me for the full price in your presence, as property for a burial site." Gen 23:10 Now Ephron was sitting among the Hittites, and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the Hittites, of all who went in at the gate of his city, saying, "No, my lord, hear me. I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. In the sight of my people I give it to you. Bury your dead." Abraham bowed down before the people of the land. Gen 23:13 He spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, "If only you would hear me: I will give the price of the field. Take it from me, so that I may bury my dead there." Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, "My lord, hear me: a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver—what is that between me and you? Bury your dead."[30] Gen 23:16 Abraham listened to Ephron, and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver he had named in the hearing of the Hittites: four hundred shekels of silver at the rate current among merchants. So Ephron's field in Machpelah, facing Mamre—the field and the cave that was in it, and all the trees in the field throughout its whole boundary all around—were made over Gen 23:18 to Abraham as his purchase in the sight of the Hittites, of all who went in at the gate of his city. After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah facing Mamre—that is, Hebron—in the land of Canaan. So the field and the cave that was in it were made over to Abraham by the Hittites as property for a burial site.

CHAPTER 24

Abraham's servant finds Rebekah in Aram as a wife for Isaac.

Gen 24:1 Abraham was old, well on in years, and the LORD had blessed Abraham in everything. Abraham said to his servant, the elder of his household, who managed all that he had, "Please put your hand under my thigh, and I will make you swear by the

30 A shekel was a unit of weight, about 11 grams (0.4 ounce).

LORD, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living,[31] Gen 24:4 but will go to my country and my kindred and take a wife for my son Isaac." The servant said to him, "Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I then take your son back to the land you came from?" Abraham said to him, "Take care that you do not take my son back there. Gen 24:7 The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my kindred, and who spoke to me and swore to me, saying, 'To your offspring I will give this land'—he will send his angel before you, and you will take a wife for my son from there. But if the woman is not willing to follow you, you will be free of this oath of mine. Only do not take my son back there." Gen 24:9 So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master and swore to him concerning this matter. Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and went, with all kinds of his master's goods in his hand. He set out and went to Aram-naharaim, to the city of Nahor.[32] Gen 24:11 He made the camels kneel outside the city by the well of water, at evening, the time when the women go out to draw water. And he said, "LORD, God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today, and show steadfast love to my master Abraham. Here I am, standing by the spring of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. Gen 24:14 Let it be that the girl to whom I say, 'Please lower your jar so that I may drink,' and who says, 'Drink, and I will water your camels too'—let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown steadfast love to my master." Before he had finished speaking, there was Rebekah coming out—she had been born to Bethuel son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother—with her jar on her shoulder. Gen 24:16 The girl was very beautiful to look at, a virgin; no man had slept with her. She went down to the

31 Placing a hand under the thigh (perhaps a euphemism for the genitals) was a solemn gesture accompanying an oath.
32 Aram-naharaim, "Aram of the two rivers," lay in northern Mesopotamia.

spring, filled her jar and came up. The servant ran to meet her and said, “Please let me sip a little water from your jar.” She said, “Drink, my lord,” and she quickly lowered her jar onto her hand and gave him a drink. Gen 24:19 When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, “I will draw water for your camels too, until they have finished drinking.” She quickly emptied her jar into the trough, ran back to the well to draw, and drew for all his camels. The man stood gazing at her in silence, waiting to know whether the LORD had made his journey successful or not. Gen 24:22 When the camels had finished drinking, the man took a gold nose ring weighing half a shekel, and two bracelets for her arms weighing ten shekels of gold. He said, “Whose daughter are you? Please tell me: is there room in your father’s house for us to spend the night?” She said to him, “I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son whom Milcah bore to Nahor.” Gen 24:25 And she said to him, “We have plenty of straw and fodder, and room to spend the night as well.” The man bowed his head and worshiped the LORD. He said, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his steadfast love and faithfulness toward my master. As for me, the LORD has led me on the way to the house of my master’s kinsmen.” Gen 24:28 The girl ran and told her mother’s household about these things. Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban, and Laban ran out to the man at the spring. When he saw the nose ring and the bracelets on his sister’s arms, and when he heard his sister Rebekah say, “This is what the man said to me,” he went to the man; and there he was, standing by the camels at the spring. Gen 24:31 He said, “Come in, you who are blessed by the LORD. Why are you standing outside? I have made the house ready, and a place for the camels.” So the man came into the house. He unloaded the camels and gave straw and fodder to the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him. Gen 24:33 Food was set before him to eat, but he said, “I will not eat until I have said what I have to say.” And he said, “Speak.” So he said, “I am Abraham’s servant. The LORD has greatly blessed my master, and he has become great. He has given him sheep and cattle, silver and

gold, male slaves and slave women, camels and donkeys. Gen 24:36 Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master when she was old, and he has given him all that he has. My master made me swear, saying, 'You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I am living. Instead you shall go to my father's house and to my family, and take a wife for my son.' Gen 24:39 I said to my master, 'Perhaps the woman will not follow me.' He said to me, 'The LORD, before whom I have walked, will send his angel with you and make your journey successful, and you will take a wife for my son from my family and from my father's house. Then you will be free of my oath, when you come to my family; and if they will not give her to you, you will be free of my oath.' Gen 24:42 Today I came to the spring and said, 'LORD, God of my master Abraham, if you will indeed make successful the journey I am on—here I am, standing by the spring of water. Let it be that the young woman who comes out to draw water, to whom I say, "Please give me a little water from your jar to drink," Gen 24:44 and who says to me, "Drink, and I will draw water for your camels too"—let her be the woman the LORD has chosen for my master's son.' Before I had finished speaking in my heart, there was Rebekah coming out with her jar on her shoulder. She went down to the spring and drew water, and I said to her, 'Please give me a drink.' Gen 24:46 She quickly lowered her jar from her shoulder and said, 'Drink, and I will water your camels too.' So I drank, and she watered the camels too. Then I asked her, 'Whose daughter are you?' She said, 'The daughter of Bethuel son of Nahor, whom Milcah bore to him.' So I put the ring on her nose and the bracelets on her arms. Gen 24:48 Then I bowed my head and worshiped the LORD, and I blessed the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me by the right way to take the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son. Now, if you will deal loyally and faithfully with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so that I may turn to the right or to the left." Gen 24:50 Laban and Bethuel answered, "This thing comes from the LORD; we cannot say anything to you, bad or good. Here is Rebekah before you. Take her and go,

and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the LORD has spoken." When Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed down to the ground before the LORD. Gen 24:53 The servant brought out objects of silver and of gold, and garments, and gave them to Rebekah; and he gave costly gifts to her brother and her mother. Then he and the men who were with him ate and drank, and they spent the night there. When they rose in the morning, he said, "Send me back to my master." Her brother and her mother said, "Let the girl stay with us a few days, ten or so; after that she may go." Gen 24:56 He said to them, "Do not delay me, now that the LORD has made my journey successful. Send me away, so that I may go to my master." They said, "Let us call the girl and ask what she says." They called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" She said, "I will go." So they sent off their sister Rebekah and her nurse, with Abraham's servant and his men. Gen 24:60 They blessed Rebekah and said to her, "Our sister, may you become thousands of ten thousands, and may your offspring take possession of the gate of those who hate them." Then Rebekah and her young women rose, mounted the camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and went on his way. Gen 24:62 Now Isaac had come in from the way to Beer-lahai-roi, for he was living in the land of the Negev. Isaac went out to walk in the field toward evening. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and there were camels coming. Rebekah lifted up her eyes and saw Isaac, and she slipped down from the camel.[33] Gen 24:65 She said to the servant, "Who is that man walking in the field to meet us?" The servant said, "It is my master." So she took her veil and covered herself. The servant told Isaac all the things he had done. Then Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah his mother. He took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after the loss of his mother.

33 The Hebrew word rendered "to walk" occurs only here and is uncertain; it may mean "to stroll," "to meditate" or "to lament."

CHAPTER 25

Abraham's sons by Keturah; his death and burial; the line of Ishmael.

Gen 25:1 Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. She
bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah.
Jokshan fathered Sheba and Dedan. The sons of Dedan were the
Asshurim, the Letushim and the Leummim. The sons of Midian
were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida and Eldaah. All these were
the sons of Keturah. Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac. Gen 25:6
But to the sons of his concubines Abraham gave gifts, and while
he was still living he sent them away from his son Isaac, east-
ward, to the land of the East. These are the days of the years of
Abraham's life that he lived: a hundred and seventy-five years.
Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, old and
full of years, and he was gathered to his people. Gen 25:9 His sons
Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the
field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite, which faces Mamre—the
field Abraham had bought from the Hittites. There Abraham
was buried, with Sarah his wife. After Abraham's death, God
blessed his son Isaac. And Isaac lived near Beer-lahai-roi.

Gen 25:12 This is the line of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar
the Egyptian, Sarah's slave woman, bore to Abraham. These are
the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, in the order of
their birth: Nebaioth, Ishmael's firstborn; then Kedar, Adbeel,
Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish
and Kedemah. Gen 25:16 These are the sons of Ishmael, and these
are their names, by their villages and their encampments:
twelve chieftains according to their tribes. These are the years of
Ishmael's life: a hundred and thirty-seven years. He breathed his
last and died, and he was gathered to his people. They settled
from Havilah to Shur, which is opposite Egypt, in the direction
of Asshur. He settled down alongside all his kin.[34]

34 The last phrase echoes 16:12; it can mean he settled "alongside" or "in defiance of" all his kin.

Jacob

Jacob and Esau; the stolen blessing; Jacob's dream at Bethel, his years with Laban, the wrestling at the Jabbok, and his return to Canaan.

JACOB AND ESAU

Rebekah bears twins, and Esau sells his birthright for a bowl of stew.

Gen 25:19 This is the line of Isaac son of Abraham. Abraham fathered Isaac. Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah as his wife. She was the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan-aram and the sister of Laban the Aramean. Isaac pleaded with the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren. The LORD granted his plea, and his wife Rebekah conceived.[1] Gen 25:22 The children crushed against each other inside her, and she said, "If this is how it is, why am I—?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples will separate from your body. One people will be stronger than the other, and the elder will serve the younger." When her days to give birth were complete, there were twins in her womb.[2] Gen 25:25 The first came out red, all of him like a hairy cloak, and they named him Esau. After that his brother came out with his hand gripping Esau's heel, and he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them. The boys grew up. Esau became a skilled hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was a quiet man who stayed among the

1 Paddan-aram is the region of northern Mesopotamia around Haran, where Abraham's relatives had settled.

2 Rebekah's words are terse in the Hebrew, literally "If so, why this I?"; their exact sense is uncertain.

tents.[3] Gen 25:28 Isaac loved Esau, because he had a taste for game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. Once Jacob was cooking a stew when Esau came in from the open country, exhausted. Esau said to Jacob, "Let me gulp down some of that red stuff, that red stuff there, because I'm exhausted." That is why he was called Edom. Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright."[4] Gen 25:32 Esau said, "Look, I'm about to die. What use is a birthright to me?" Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew. He ate and drank, got up and went away. So Esau despised the birthright.

CHAPTER 26

Isaac in Gerar: the wife-sister story again and quarrels over wells.

Gen 26:1 There was a famine in the land, besides the earlier famine that had happened in Abraham's days, and Isaac went to Abimelech, king of the Philistines, at Gerar. The LORD appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt. Settle in the land I tell you of. Gen 26:3 Stay in this land as a foreigner, and I will be with you and bless you. To you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will fulfill the oath that I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your offspring as many as the stars of the sky, and I will give your offspring all these lands, and all the nations of the earth will bless themselves by your offspring, Gen 26:5 because Abraham listened to my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes and my teachings." So Isaac settled in Gerar. When the men of the place asked about his wife, he said, "She is my sister." He was afraid to say, "My wife," thinking, "The men of the place might kill me over Rebekah, because she is beautiful." Gen 26:8 When he had been there a long time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked down through the window and saw Isaac caressing his wife

3 "Red" (*admoni*) recalls Edom, and "hairy" (*se'ar*) recalls Seir, Esau's later homeland. Jacob (*Ya'aqov*) sounds like *'aqev*, "heel."
4 Edom sounds like *adom*, "red."

Rebekah. Abimelech summoned Isaac and said, “So she is your wife! How could you say, ‘She is my sister’?” Isaac said to him, “Because I thought, ‘I might die on account of her.’”[5] Gen 26:10 Abimelech said, “What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have slept with your wife, and you would have brought guilt on us.” Then Abimelech commanded all the people: “Whoever touches this man or his wife shall be put to death.” Isaac sowed seed in that land, and that year he reaped a hundredfold. The LORD blessed him, Gen 26:13 and the man became great. He went on growing greater until he was very great indeed. He had flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle and a large household of servants, and the Philistines envied him. The Philistines had stopped up all the wells that his father’s servants had dug in the days of his father Abraham, and they had filled them with dirt. Abimelech said to Isaac, “Go away from us, for you have become much too powerful for us.” Gen 26:17 So Isaac left there, camped in the valley of Gerar and settled there. Isaac dug again the wells of water that had been dug in the days of his father Abraham, which the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham’s death, and he gave them the same names his father had given them. Isaac’s servants dug in the valley and found there a well of fresh, flowing water. Gen 26:20 The herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac’s herdsmen, saying, “The water is ours.” So he named the well Esek, because they had contended with him. They dug another well, and they quarreled over that one too, so he named it Sitnah. He moved on from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. So he named it Rehoboth, saying, “Now the LORD has made room for us, and we will be fruitful in the land.”[6] Gen 26:23 From there he went up to Beersheba. That night the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your offspring for the sake of my servant Abraham.” He built an altar

5 “Caressing” (*metsaheq*) plays on Isaac’s name, *Yitshaq*, “he laughs.”
6 Esek means “contention,” Sitnah “hostility,” and Rehoboth “wide spaces,” echoing “made room.”

there and called on the name of the LORD. He pitched his tent there, and Isaac's servants dug a well there. Gen 26:26 Then Abimelech came to him from Gerar, with his adviser Ahuzzath and Phicol the commander of his army. Isaac said to them, "Why have you come to me, when you hate me and sent me away from you?" They said, "We have clearly seen that the LORD has been with you. So we said, 'Let there be a sworn agreement between us, between us and you, and let us make a covenant with you Gen 26:29 that you will do us no harm, just as we have not touched you, and just as we have done you nothing but good and sent you away in peace.' You are now the one blessed by the LORD." He made them a feast, and they ate and drank. They rose early in the morning and swore an oath to one another. Then Isaac sent them off, and they left him in peace. Gen 26:32 That same day Isaac's servants came and told him about the well they had dug. "We have found water," they said. He named it Shibah. That is why the name of the city is Beersheba to this day.[7]

Gen 26:34 When Esau was forty years old, he took as wives Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite and Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite. They were a source of bitter grief to Isaac and Rebekah.

CHAPTER 27

Rebekah and Jacob trick blind Isaac into blessing Jacob instead of Esau.

Gen 27:1 When Isaac was old and his eyes had grown too dim to see, he called his elder son Esau and said to him, "My son." He answered, "Here I am." Isaac said, "Look, I am old, and I do not know the day of my death. So now take your gear, your quiver and your bow, and go out into the open country and hunt some game for me. Gen 27:4 Then make me a tasty dish, the kind I love, and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die." Rebekah was listening while Isaac spoke to his son Esau. When Esau went out to the open country to hunt game and

7 Shibah sounds like the Hebrew for both "seven" and "oath"; Beersheba means "well of seven" or "well of the oath" (compare 21:31).

bring it back, Rebekah said to her son Jacob, “Listen, I heard your father speaking to your brother Esau. He said, Gen 27:7 ‘Bring me some game and make me a tasty dish to eat, so that I may bless you in the presence of the LORD before I die.’ Now, my son, listen to me and do what I tell you. Go to the flock and bring me two good young goats from there, and I will make them into a tasty dish for your father, the kind he loves. Gen 27:10 Then you will bring it to your father to eat, so that he may bless you before he dies.” But Jacob said to his mother Rebekah, “Look, my brother Esau is a hairy man, and I am a smooth-skinned man. What if my father touches me? I would seem to him like a fraud, and I would bring a curse on myself instead of a blessing.” Gen 27:13 His mother said to him, “Let your curse be on me, my son. Just listen to me. Go and get them for me.” So he went and got them and brought them to his mother, and his mother made a tasty dish, the kind his father loved. Then Rebekah took the finest clothes of her elder son Esau, which she had with her in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob. Gen 27:16 She put the skins of the young goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. Then she placed the tasty dish and the bread she had made in the hand of her son Jacob. He went in to his father and said, “My father.” Isaac said, “Here I am. Who are you, my son?” Gen 27:19 Jacob said to his father, “I am Esau, your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing.” Isaac said to his son, “How did you find it so quickly, my son?” He said, “Because the LORD your God put it in my way.” Gen 27:21 Isaac said to Jacob, “Come close, so that I may touch you, my son, and know whether you really are my son Esau or not.” So Jacob came close to his father Isaac, who touched him and said, “The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.” He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like the hands of his brother Esau, so he blessed him. Gen 27:24 He said, “Are you really my son Esau?” He answered, “I am.” Then Isaac said, “Bring it to me, and let me eat some of my son’s game, so that I may give you my blessing.” So Jacob brought it to him, and he ate. He brought

him wine, and he drank. Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come close and kiss me, my son." Gen 27:27 So he came close and kissed him. When Isaac smelled the smell of his clothes, he blessed him and said, "See, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed. May God give you of the dew of heaven and of the richness of the earth, plenty of grain and new wine. May peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be those who curse you, and blessed be those who bless you." Gen 27:30 Just as Isaac finished blessing Jacob, when Jacob had barely left the presence of his father Isaac, his brother Esau came in from his hunting. He too made a tasty dish and brought it to his father. He said to his father, "Let my father sit up and eat some of his son's game, so that you may give me your blessing." Gen 27:32 His father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" He said, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau." Isaac trembled violently, beyond all measure, and said, "Who was it, then, who hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it all before you came, and I blessed him. And blessed he will be!" Gen 27:34 When Esau heard his father's words, he cried out with a great and exceedingly bitter cry and said to his father, "Bless me, me too, my father!" But Isaac said, "Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing." Esau said, "Isn't he rightly named Jacob? He has cheated me these two times. He took my birthright, and look, now he has taken my blessing." Then he said, "Haven't you kept back a blessing for me?"[8] Gen 27:37 Isaac answered Esau, "Look, I have made him lord over you. I have given him all his brothers as servants, and I have sustained him with grain and new wine. What then can I do for you, my son?" Esau said to his father, "Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me, me too, my father!" And Esau lifted up his voice and wept. Gen 27:39 Then his father Isaac answered him, "Look, away from the richness of the earth will be your dwelling, and away from the dew of heaven above. By your sword you

8 "He has cheated me" (*ya'qeveni*, literally "he has grabbed my heel") plays on the name Jacob.

will live, and your brother you will serve. But when you break loose, you will tear his yoke from your neck." Esau bore a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. Esau said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are near. Then I will kill my brother Jacob."[9] Gen 27:42 When the words of her elder son Esau were reported to Rebekah, she sent for her younger son Jacob and said to him, "Look, your brother Esau is consoling himself by planning to kill you. Now, my son, listen to me. Get up and flee to my brother Laban in Haran. Stay with him a while, until your brother's fury subsides— Gen 27:45 until your brother's anger turns away from you and he forgets what you did to him. Then I will send and bring you back from there. Why should I lose the two of you in one day?" Then Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am sick of my life because of the Hittite women. If Jacob takes a wife from among the Hittite women like these, from the women of this land, what good will my life be to me?"

CHAPTER 28

Isaac sends Jacob to Paddan-aram to find a wife; Esau marries a daughter of Ishmael.

Gen 28:1 So Isaac called Jacob and blessed him. He gave him this command: "You shall not take a wife from the Canaanite women. Get up, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel, your mother's father, and take a wife from there, from the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother. Gen 28:3 May God Shaddai bless you and make you fruitful and numerous, so that you become an assembly of peoples. May he give the blessing of Abraham to you and to your offspring with you, so that you may take possession of the land where you now live as a foreigner, the land God gave to Abraham." Then Isaac sent Jacob off, and he went to Paddan-aram, to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau. Gen 28:6 Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him to Paddan-aram

9 The Hebrew "from the richness ... from the dew" echoes Jacob's blessing in v. 28. It can mean either "of" or "away from"; most readers take it here as "away from."

to take a wife from there, and that as he blessed him he had commanded him, "You shall not take a wife from the Canaanite women," and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and gone to Paddan-aram. Gen 28:8 Esau saw that the Canaanite women displeased his father Isaac. So Esau went to Ishmael and took as his wife Mahalath daughter of Ishmael son of Abraham, the sister of Nebaioth, in addition to the wives he had.

JACOB'S LADDER

Jacob dreams of a stairway to heaven and names the place Bethel.

Gen 28:10 Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. He came upon a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set. He took one of the stones of the place, put it under his head and lay down in that place. He had a dream: there was a stairway set up on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and there were angels of God going up and coming down on it.[10] Gen 28:13 And there was the LORD, standing over him. He said, "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. The land on which you are lying I will give to you and to your offspring. Your offspring will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. Gen 28:15 Look, I am with you. I will keep you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land, for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." Jacob woke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." Gen 28:17 He was afraid and said, "How awesome this place is! This is nothing other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Jacob rose early in the morning, took the stone he had put under his head, set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. He named that place

10 The word for "stairway" (*sullam*) occurs only here; it is traditionally rendered "ladder" but may mean a stairway or ramp.

Bethel, though the city had earlier been called Luz.[11] Gen 28:20 Then Jacob made a vow: "If God will be with me and keep me on this journey I am making, and give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, and if I come back in peace to my father's house, then the LORD will be my God, and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be a house of God, and of everything you give me I will surely give you a tenth."

CHAPTER 29

Jacob meets Rachel, serves Laban seven years, and is given Leah instead.

Gen 29:1 Then Jacob set out and went to the land of the people of the East. He looked, and there in the open country was a well, with three flocks of sheep lying beside it, for the flocks were watered from that well. The stone over the mouth of the well was large. When all the flocks had gathered there, they would roll the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep, and then put the stone back in its place over the mouth of the well. Gen 29:4 Jacob said to them, "My brothers, where are you from?" They said, "We are from Haran." He said to them, "Do you know Laban son of Nahor?" They said, "We know him." He said to them, "Is he well?" They said, "He is well. And look, here comes his daughter Rachel with the sheep." Gen 29:7 He said, "Look, it is still broad daylight; it is not time for the livestock to be gathered. Water the sheep, and go and pasture them." They said, "We cannot, until all the flocks have gathered and the stone has been rolled from the mouth of the well. Then we water the sheep." While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherd. Gen 29:10 When Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of his mother's brother Laban, and the sheep of his mother's brother Laban, Jacob went up, rolled the stone from the mouth of the well and watered the sheep of his mother's brother Laban. Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and he lifted

11 Bethel means "house of God." The pillar (*matsevah*) was a stone set upright as a memorial or sacred marker.

up his voice and wept. Gen 29:12 Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's relative and that he was Rebekah's son, and she ran and told her father. As soon as Laban heard the news about Jacob, his sister's son, he ran to meet him. He embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his house, and Jacob told Laban all these things. Gen 29:14 Laban said to him, "You are truly my bone and my flesh!" And Jacob stayed with him for a full month. Then Laban said to Jacob, "Just because you are my relative, should you serve me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be." Now Laban had two daughters. The name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Gen 29:17 Leah's eyes were delicate, but Rachel was shapely and beautiful. Jacob loved Rachel, and he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than give her to another man. Stay with me."[12] Gen 29:20 So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him like a few days because of his love for her. Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife, for my time is completed, so that I may sleep with her." So Laban gathered all the people of the place and made a feast. Gen 29:23 In the evening he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and Jacob slept with her. Laban gave his slave woman Zilpah to his daughter Leah as her slave woman. In the morning, there she was: Leah! Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Wasn't it for Rachel that I served you? Why have you deceived me?" Gen 29:26 Laban said, "It is not done in our place to give the younger before the firstborn. Complete this one's week, and we will give you the other one too, in return for serving me another seven years." Jacob did so. He completed this one's week, and Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife.[13] Gen 29:29 Laban gave his slave woman Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her slave woman. Jacob slept with Rachel too, and he loved Rachel more than Leah. He served Laban another seven years. When the LORD

12 The word for "delicate" literally means "soft" or "tender"; whether it praises Leah's eyes or calls them weak is uncertain.
13 The "week" is the seven days of wedding celebration.

saw that Leah was unloved, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. Gen 29:32 Leah conceived and bore a son, and she named him Reuben, for she said, "The LORD has seen my misery. Surely now my husband will love me." She conceived again and bore a son and said, "Because the LORD heard that I am unloved, he has given me this one too." So she named him Simeon.[14] Gen 29:34 She conceived again and bore a son and said, "Now this time my husband will be joined to me, because I have borne him three sons." That is why he was named Levi. She conceived again and bore a son and said, "This time I will praise the LORD." That is why she named him Judah. Then she stopped bearing children.[15]

CHAPTER 30

Jacob's children are born, and Jacob grows rich from Laban's flocks.

Gen 30:1 When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister. She said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I will die!" Jacob became angry with Rachel and said, "Am I in the place of God, who has kept you from bearing children?" Gen 30:3 She said, "Here is my slave woman Bilhah. Sleep with her, so that she may give birth on my knees and I too may have children through her." So she gave him her slave woman Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob slept with her. Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. Rachel said, "God has judged in my favor. He has heard my voice and given me a son." That is why she named him Dan.[16] Gen 30:7 Rachel's slave woman Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. Rachel said, "I have wrestled mighty wrestlings with my sister, and I have won." So she named him Naphtali. When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing children,

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14 Reuben sounds like "See, a son!" and echoes "the LORD has seen"; Simeon sounds like *shama',* "he heard."

15 Levi sounds like *yillaweh,* "will be joined"; Judah sounds like *odeh,* "I will praise."

16 Giving birth on another woman's knees seems to have been a sign of adoption. "Have children" is literally "be built up," a play on *ben,* "son"; Dan sounds like *dan,* "judged."

she took her slave woman Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife.[17] Gen 30:10 Leah's slave woman Zilpah bore Jacob a son. Leah said, "Good fortune has come!" So she named him Gad. Leah's slave woman Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. Leah said, "How happy I am! Women will call me happy." So she named him Asher.[18] Gen 30:14 In the days of the wheat harvest Reuben went out, found mandrakes in the field and brought them to his mother Leah. Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes." But Leah said to her, "Isn't it enough that you have taken my husband? Will you take my son's mandrakes too?" Rachel said, "Then he may sleep with you tonight in exchange for your son's mandrakes."[19] Gen 30:16 When Jacob came in from the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, "You must sleep with me, for I have hired you with my son's mandrakes." So he slept with her that night. God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. Gen 30:18 Leah said, "God has given me my wages, because I gave my slave woman to my husband." So she named him Issachar. Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son. Leah said, "God has given me a fine gift. This time my husband will honor me, because I have borne him six sons." So she named him Zebulun.[20] Gen 30:21 Afterward she bore a daughter and named her Dinah. Then God remembered Rachel. God listened to her and opened her womb. She conceived and bore a son and said, "God has taken away my disgrace." She named him Joseph, saying, "May the LORD add another son for me."[21] Gen 30:25 After Rachel had borne Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, so that I may go to my own place and my own country. Give me my wives and my children, for whom I have served you, and let me go, for you know the service I have given you." Gen 30:27 Laban said to him, "If I have

17 Naphtali sounds like *niftalti*, "I have wrestled." "Mighty" is literally "of God."
18 Gad means "fortune"; Asher sounds like *osher*, "happiness."
19 Mandrakes are plants with fragrant fruit and forked roots, widely believed in the ancient world to promote fertility.
20 Issachar sounds like *sakhar*, "wages, hire." Zebulun plays on *zeved*, "gift," and on a verb that may mean "honor" or "dwell with"; its sense is uncertain.
21 Joseph sounds like both *asaf*, "he has taken away," and *yosef*, "may he add."

found favor in your eyes—I have learned by divination that the LORD has blessed me because of you." He said, "Name your wages, and I will pay them." Jacob said to him, "You know how I have served you and how your livestock has fared with me.[22] Gen 30:30 The little you had before I came has grown into a great deal, and the LORD has blessed you wherever I set foot. But now, when shall I provide for my own household too?" Laban said, "What shall I give you?" Jacob said, "You don't need to give me anything. If you will do this one thing for me, I will again pasture your flock and keep it. Gen 30:32 Let me go through your whole flock today and remove from it every speckled and spotted animal, every dark one among the lambs, and the spotted and speckled among the goats. They will be my wages. My honesty will answer for me later, when you come to check my wages: any goat with me that is not speckled and spotted, and any lamb that is not dark, will count as stolen." Gen 30:34 Laban said, "Good! Let it be as you say." That same day he removed the streaked and spotted male goats and all the speckled and spotted female goats, every one with white on it, and every dark one among the lambs, and he put them in the care of his sons. Then he put a distance of three days' journey between himself and Jacob, while Jacob pastured the rest of Laban's flock. Gen 30:37 Then Jacob took fresh rods of poplar, almond and plane trees and peeled white stripes in them, exposing the white of the rods. He set the rods he had peeled in the troughs, the watering channels where the flock came to drink, right in front of the flock, and the animals mated when they came to drink.[23] Gen 30:39 The flock mated in front of the rods, and the flock bore young that were streaked, speckled and spotted. Jacob separated out the lambs and made the flock face the streaked and all the dark animals in Laban's flock. So he set apart flocks of his own and did not put them with Laban's flock. Gen 30:41 Whenever the stronger animals of the flock were mating, Jacob would put the rods in the troughs before the

22 The verb rendered "learned by divination" may instead mean "grown rich." Laban's opening sentence is left unfinished in the Hebrew.
23 "Poplar" (*livneh*) and "white" (*lavan*) play on the name Laban.

eyes of the flock, so that they would mate among the rods. But when the animals were feeble, he would not put them there. So the feeble ones went to Laban and the stronger ones to Jacob. The man grew exceedingly rich. He had large flocks, slave women and slave men, camels and donkeys.

CHAPTER 31

Jacob flees from Laban, Rachel steals the household gods, and the two men make a covenant.

Gen 31:1 Jacob heard what Laban's sons were saying: "Jacob has taken everything that belonged to our father. He has made all this wealth out of what was our father's." And Jacob saw Laban's face, and it was not toward him as it had been before. Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Go back to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you." Gen 31:4 So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah out to the field where his flock was. He said to them, "I see your father's face, and it is not toward me as it was before. But the God of my father has been with me. You yourselves know that I have served your father with all my strength. Gen 31:7 Yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times. But God did not let him do me harm. If he said, 'The speckled shall be your wages,' then the whole flock bore speckled young. If he said, 'The streaked shall be your wages,' then the whole flock bore streaked young. So God has taken your father's livestock away and given it to me. Gen 31:10 In the season when the flock was mating, I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream that the male goats mounting the flock were streaked, speckled and mottled. And the angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob!' and I said, 'Here I am.' He said, 'Lift up your eyes and see: all the male goats mounting the flock are streaked, speckled and mottled, for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. Gen 31:13 I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to me. Now get up, leave this land and go back to the land of your birth.'" Then Rachel and Leah answered him, "Do we still have any share or inheritance in our

father's house? Gen 31:15 Doesn't he regard us as foreigners? For he sold us, and what is more, he has eaten up the money paid for us. All the wealth that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and to our children. So now, do whatever God has told you." Then Jacob got up and set his children and his wives on the camels. Gen 31:18 He drove off all his livestock and all the property he had acquired, the livestock he had gained in Paddan-aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan. Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel stole the household gods that belonged to her father. And Jacob stole the heart of Laban the Aramean by not telling him that he was fleeing.[24] Gen 31:21 So he fled with all that he had. He set out, crossed the River and headed for the hill country of Gilead. On the third day Laban was told that Jacob had fled. He took his kinsmen with him, pursued him for seven days' journey and caught up with him in the hill country of Gilead.[25] Gen 31:24 But God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream by night and said to him, "Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, whether good or bad." Laban overtook Jacob. Jacob had pitched his tent on the mountain, and Laban pitched camp with his kinsmen in the hill country of Gilead. Gen 31:26 Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done? You have stolen my heart and carried off my daughters like captives of the sword. Why did you flee in secret and steal away from me? You did not tell me, or I would have sent you off with celebration and songs, with tambourine and lyre. You did not even let me kiss my sons and my daughters goodbye. Now you have acted foolishly. Gen 31:29 It is in my power to do you harm. But the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, whether good or bad.' Now, you have gone away because you longed so much for your father's house—but why did you steal my gods?" Jacob answered Laban, "Because I was afraid. I thought you would take your daughters away from me by force. Gen 31:32 Anyone you find with your gods shall not

24 Household gods: Hebrew *teraphim*, small figures kept in the home. "Stole the heart" is an idiom for deceiving; the text uses the same verb as for Rachel's theft.
25 The River is the Euphrates; Gilead is the hill country east of the Jordan.

live. In the presence of our kinsmen, point out what of yours is with me, and take it." Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them. So Laban went into Jacob's tent, into Leah's tent and into the tent of the two slave women, but he did not find them. He came out of Leah's tent and went into Rachel's tent. Gen 31:34 Now Rachel had taken the household gods, put them in the camel's saddle and sat on them. Laban felt through the whole tent but did not find them. She said to her father, "Let my lord not be angry that I cannot rise before you, for the way of women is upon me." So he searched but did not find the household gods. Gen 31:36 Then Jacob became angry and quarreled with Laban. Jacob said to Laban, "What is my offense? What is my sin, that you have hotly pursued me? You have felt through all my belongings—what have you found of all your household goods? Set it here before my kinsmen and your kinsmen, and let them decide between the two of us. Gen 31:38 These twenty years I have been with you. Your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried, and I have not eaten the rams of your flock. What was torn by wild animals I did not bring to you; I bore the loss myself. You demanded it from me, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. This is how I was: by day the heat consumed me, and the cold by night, and sleep fled from my eyes. Gen 31:41 These twenty years I have been in your house. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flock, and you changed my wages ten times. If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been on my side, you would surely have sent me away empty-handed by now. God saw my hardship and the toil of my hands, and he gave judgment last night."[26] Gen 31:43 Laban answered Jacob, "The daughters are my daughters, the children are my children, the flock is my flock; all that you see is mine. But what can I do today about these daughters of mine, or about the children they have borne? So now come, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between me and you." Gen 31:45 So Jacob took

26 "The Fear of Isaac" is a title of God found only here and in 31:53; the exact sense of the Hebrew is debated.

a stone and set it up as a pillar. And Jacob said to his kinsmen, "Gather stones." They took stones and made a heap, and they ate there beside the heap. Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha, and Jacob called it Galeed. Laban said, "This heap is a witness between me and you today." That is why it was named Galeed.[27]
Gen 31:49 It was also called Mizpah, because he said, "May the LORD keep watch between me and you when we are out of each other's sight. If you mistreat my daughters, or if you take wives besides my daughters—though no one is with us, see, God is witness between me and you." Then Laban said to Jacob, "Here is this heap, and here is the pillar that I have set up between me and you.[28] Gen 31:52 This heap is a witness, and the pillar is a witness, that I will not pass beyond this heap to you, and that you will not pass beyond this heap and this pillar to me, to do harm. May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor—the God of their father—judge between us." So Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac. Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain and invited his kinsmen to eat bread. They ate bread and spent the night on the mountain.

CHAPTER 32

Jacob sends messengers and gifts ahead to placate his brother Esau.

Gen 32:1 Early in the morning Laban got up, kissed his sons and his daughters and blessed them. Then Laban left and went back home. Jacob went on his way, and angels of God met him. When Jacob saw them, he said, "This is God's camp!" So he named that place Mahanaim.[29]

Gen 32:4 Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. He instructed them, "This is what you shall say to my lord Esau: 'This is what your servant Jacob says: I have been staying with Laban, and I have

27 Jegar-sahadutha is Aramaic and Galeed is Hebrew; both mean "heap of witness," and Galeed echoes the name Gilead.
28 Mizpah means "watchpost," echoing the verb *yitsef*, "keep watch."
29 Mahanaim means "two camps," from *mahaneh*, "camp."

stayed on until now. I have oxen and donkeys, flocks, male and female slaves, and I have sent to tell my lord, in order to find favor in your eyes.'"[30] Gen 32:7 The messengers came back to Jacob and said, "We went to your brother Esau, and he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men with him." Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. He divided the people who were with him, and the flocks, the herds and the camels, into two camps. He thought, "If Esau comes to one camp and attacks it, the camp that is left will escape." Gen 32:10 Then Jacob said, "God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, LORD, who said to me, 'Go back to your land and to your kindred, and I will deal well with you': I am too small for all the steadfast love and all the faithfulness you have shown your servant. With only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps. Gen 32:12 Rescue me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I am afraid of him, that he will come and attack me, the mothers along with the children. Yet you said, 'I will surely deal well with you and make your offspring like the sand of the sea, too many to be counted.'" He spent the night there. Then from what he had with him he took a gift for his brother Esau: Gen 32:15 two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty nursing camels with their young, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. He put them in the charge of his servants, each herd by itself, and said to his servants, "Go on ahead of me, and keep a space between one herd and the next." Gen 32:18 He instructed the first, "When my brother Esau meets you and asks you, 'Whose are you? Where are you going? And whose are these ahead of you?' then you shall say, 'They belong to your servant Jacob. They are a gift sent to my lord Esau, and look, he himself is behind us.'" Gen 32:20 He instructed the second as well, and the third, and all who followed the herds: "You shall say the same thing to Esau when you meet him. And you shall say, 'Look, your servant Jacob is behind us too.'" For he thought, "I will appease

30 The Hebrew word for "messengers" is the same as the word for "angels" in 32:2.

his face with the gift that goes ahead of me, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will lift up my face."[31]

JACOB WRESTLES

Jacob wrestles with a man until dawn and is renamed Israel.

Gen 32:22 So the gift went on ahead of him, while he himself spent that night in the camp. That same night he got up, took his two wives, his two slave women and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. He took them and sent them across the stream, and sent across everything he had.[32] Gen 32:25 Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When the man saw that he could not prevail against him, he touched the socket of his hip, and the socket of Jacob's hip was wrenched as he wrestled with him. Then he said, "Let me go, for day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."[33] Gen 32:28 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 humans, and have prevailed." Jacob asked, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And he blessed him there.[34] Gen 32:31 Jacob named the place Peniel, "for I have seen God face to face, and my life has been spared." The sun rose on him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip. That is why to this day the Israelites do not eat the thigh sinew that is on the hip socket, because he touched the socket of Jacob's hip at the thigh sinew.[35]

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31 The word "face" runs through this episode: "appease his face" means win him over, and "lift up my face" means accept me kindly.
32 The Jabbok is a river that flows into the Jordan from the east.
33 The Hebrew verb "wrestled" (*yeaveq*) sounds like the names Jabbok and Jacob (*Yaaqov*).
34 The name Israel is explained here as "he strives with God."
35 Peniel means "face of God"; Penuel is another form of the same name.

CHAPTER 33

Jacob and Esau meet and are reconciled; Jacob settles near Shechem.

Gen 33:1 Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and there was Esau coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel and the two slave women. He put the slave women and their children in front, Leah and her children behind them, and Rachel and Joseph at the back. Gen 33:3 He himself went on ahead of them and bowed to the ground seven times until he came near his brother. But Esau ran to meet him, embraced him, fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. When Esau lifted up his eyes and saw the women and the children, he said, "Who are these with you?" He said, "The children with whom God has graciously favored your servant."[36] Gen 33:6 Then the slave women came near, they and their children, and bowed down. Leah too came near with her children, and they bowed down; and after that Joseph and Rachel came near, and they bowed down. Esau said, "What do you mean by all this camp that I met?" He said, "To find favor in the eyes of my lord." But Esau said, "I have plenty, my brother. Let what is yours remain yours." Gen 33:10 Jacob said, "No, please! If I have found favor in your eyes, accept my gift from my hand. For indeed, seeing your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me kindly. Please take my blessing that has been brought to you, for God has been gracious to me, and I have everything." He urged him, and Esau took it. Then Esau said, "Let us set out and go, and I will go alongside you."[37] Gen 33:13 But Jacob said to him, "My lord knows that the children are frail, and that the flocks and herds nursing their young are in my care. If they are driven hard for a single day, all the flocks will die. Let my lord go on ahead of his servant, and I will lead on

36 In the Hebrew manuscript tradition the word "kissed him" is marked with dots above its letters, a feature much discussed by ancient interpreters.
37 "My blessing" here means a gift, but it recalls the blessing Jacob took from Esau in chapter 27.

slowly, at the pace of the livestock ahead of me and at the pace of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir." Gen 33:15 Esau said, "Let me leave with you some of the people who are with me." But he said, "What need is there? Let me only find favor in the eyes of my lord." So that day Esau went back on his way to Seir. But Jacob journeyed to Succoth. He built himself a house and made shelters for his livestock; that is why the place is called Succoth.[38]

Gen 33:18 Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, on his way from Paddan-aram, and he camped in front of the city. He bought the plot of land where he had pitched his tent from the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, for a hundred *kesitah*. There he set up an altar and called it El-elohe-Israel.[39]

CHAPTER 34

Shechem violates Dinah, and Simeon and Levi take revenge on the city.

Gen 34:1 Dinah, the daughter whom Leah had borne to Jacob, went out to see the women of the land. Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her; he took her, lay with her and violated her. But he became deeply attached to Dinah, Jacob's daughter; he loved the young woman and spoke tenderly to her. Gen 34:4 Shechem said to his father Hamor, "Get me this girl as my wife." Jacob heard that he had defiled his daughter Dinah, but his sons were with his livestock in the field, so Jacob kept silent until they came. Then Hamor, Shechem's father, went out to Jacob to speak with him. Gen 34:7 Jacob's sons came in from the field when they heard of it. The men were distressed and very angry, because he had committed an outrage in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter—a thing that ought not to be done. But Hamor spoke with them, saying, "My son Shechem's heart longs

38 Succoth means "shelters" or "booths."
39 "Safely" (*shalem*) can also be read as a place name, Shalem. A *kesitah* was a unit of value of uncertain amount; El-elohe-Israel means "God, the God of Israel."

for your daughter. Please give her to him as his wife. Gen 34:9 Intermarry with us: give your daughters to us, and take our daughters for yourselves. You shall live with us, and the land will be open before you. Live in it, trade in it and acquire property in it." Shechem also said to her father and her brothers, "Let me find favor in your eyes, and whatever you tell me, I will give. Ask of me ever so great a bride-price and gift, and I will give whatever you tell me; only give me the young woman as my wife."[40] Gen 34:13 Jacob's sons answered Shechem and his father Hamor deceitfully, speaking as they did because he had defiled their sister Dinah. They said to them, "We cannot do this thing, giving our sister to a man who is uncircumcised, for that would be a disgrace to us. Only on this condition will we agree with you: that you become like us, every male among you being circumcised. Gen 34:16 Then we will give our daughters to you and take your daughters for ourselves, and we will live with you and become one people. But if you will not listen to us and be circumcised, we will take our daughter and go." Their words pleased Hamor and Hamor's son Shechem. The young man did not delay to do the thing, for he delighted in Jacob's daughter. And he was the most honored of all his father's house. Gen 34:20 So Hamor and his son Shechem came to the gate of their city and spoke to the men of their city: "These men are at peace with us. Let them live in the land and trade in it; look, the land is wide enough for them. Let us take their daughters as our wives, and give them our daughters. Gen 34:22 Only on this condition will the men agree to live with us and become one people: that every male among us be circumcised as they are circumcised. Their livestock, their property and all their animals—will they not be ours? Only let us agree with them, and they will live with us." Gen 34:24 All who went out of the gate of his city listened to Hamor and his son Shechem, and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city. On the third day, while they were in pain, two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword, fell on the unsuspecting city and killed

40 The bride-price was a payment from the groom to the bride's family.

every male. Gen 34:26 They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the sword, took Dinah out of Shechem's house and left. Jacob's sons came upon the slain and plundered the city, because they had defiled their sister. They took their flocks, their herds and their donkeys, and whatever was in the city and in the field. Gen 34:29 All their wealth, all their little ones and their wives they took captive and plundered, along with everything in the houses. Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought trouble on me, making me a stench to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites. I am few in number; if they gather against me and attack me, I will be destroyed, I and my household." But they said, "Should he treat our sister like a prostitute?"

CHAPTER 35

Jacob returns to Bethel and is renamed Israel; Rachel and Isaac die.

Gen 35:1 God said to Jacob, "Get up, go up to Bethel and settle there, and make an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau." So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you; purify yourselves and change your clothes. Gen 35:3 Then let us get up and go up to Bethel, so that I can make an altar there to the God who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me on the way I have gone." So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had, and the rings in their ears, and Jacob buried them under the oak near Shechem. Gen 35:5 As they set out, a terror from God fell on the cities around them, and they did not pursue Jacob's sons. Jacob came to Luz in the land of Canaan—that is, Bethel—he and all the people who were with him. Gen 35:7 There he built an altar and called the place El-bethel, because it was there that God had revealed himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother. Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died and was buried below Bethel under the oak; so it was named Allon-bacuth.[41]

41 El-bethel means "God of Bethel"; Allon-bacuth means "oak of weeping."

Gen 35:9 God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name." So he named him Israel. Gen 35:11 God said to him, "I am God Shaddai. Be fruitful and multiply. A nation, indeed a company of nations, shall come from you, and kings shall come from your body. The land that I gave to Abraham and to Isaac I will give to you, and to your offspring after you I will give the land." Then God went up from him at the place where he had spoken with him. Gen 35:14 Jacob set up a pillar at the place where he had spoken with him, a pillar of stone, and he poured a drink offering on it and poured oil on it. Jacob named the place where God had spoken with him Bethel. Then they set out from Bethel. When there was still some distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel went into labor, and her labor was hard. Gen 35:17 When her labor was at its hardest, the midwife said to her, "Do not be afraid, for this one too is a son for you." As her life was departing—for she was dying—she named him Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin. So Rachel died, and she was buried on the road to Ephrath, that is, Bethlehem.[42] Gen 35:20 Jacob set up a pillar over her grave; it is the pillar of Rachel's grave to this day. Israel set out and pitched his tent beyond Migdal-eder. While Israel was living in that land, Reuben went and lay with Bilhah, his father's concubine, and Israel heard of it. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve.

Gen 35:23 The sons of Leah: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun. The sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's slave woman: Dan and Naphtali. And the sons of Zilpah, Leah's slave woman: Gad and Asher. These are the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paddan-aram. Gen 35:27 Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, at Kiriath-arba—that is, Hebron—where Abraham and Isaac had lived as foreigners. Isaac's days came to a hundred and eighty years. Then Isaac breathed his last and died, and he was

42 Ben-oni means "son of my sorrow" (or possibly "son of my strength"); Benjamin means "son of the right hand."

gathered to his people, old and full of days; and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

CHAPTER 36

The descendants of Esau, the chiefs and kings of Edom.

Gen 36:1 This is the line of Esau, that is, Edom. Esau took his wives from the women of Canaan: Adah daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Oholibamah daughter of Anah, daughter of Zibeon the Hivite, and Basemath daughter of Ishmael, sister of Nebaioth. Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau, and Basemath bore Reuel. Gen 36:5 Oholibamah bore Jeush, Jalam and Korah. These are the sons of Esau who were born to him in the land of Canaan. Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters and all the people of his household, his livestock, all his animals and all the property he had acquired in the land of Canaan, and went to a land away from his brother Jacob. Gen 36:7 For their possessions were too great for them to live together; the land where they were staying could not support them because of their livestock. So Esau settled in the hill country of Seir; Esau is Edom. This is the line of Esau, the father of Edom, in the hill country of Seir. These are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz son of Adah, Esau's wife; Reuel son of Basemath, Esau's wife. Gen 36:11 The sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam and Kenaz. Timna was a concubine of Eliphaz, Esau's son, and she bore Amalek to Eliphaz. These are the sons of Adah, Esau's wife. These are the sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah and Mizzah. These were the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife. Gen 36:14 These were the sons of Oholibamah daughter of Anah, daughter of Zibeon, Esau's wife: she bore Jeush, Jalam and Korah to Esau. These are the chiefs of the sons of Esau. The sons of Eliphaz, Esau's firstborn: Chief Teman, Chief Omar, Chief Zepho, Chief Kenaz,[43] Gen 36:16 Chief Korah, Chief Gatam and Chief Amalek. These are the chiefs of Eliphaz in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Adah. These are the sons of Reuel, Esau's son: Chief Nahath, Chief Zerah,

43 "Chief" (Hebrew *alluf*) is the head of a clan or tribal group.

Chief Shammah and Chief Mizzah. These are the chiefs of Reuel in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife. Gen 36:18 These are the sons of Oholibamah, Esau's wife: Chief Jeush, Chief Jalam and Chief Korah. These are the chiefs of Oholibamah daughter of Anah, Esau's wife. These are the sons of Esau, and these are their chiefs; that is, Edom.

Gen 36:20 These are the sons of Seir the Horite, the inhabitants of the land: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer and Dishan. These are the chiefs of the Horites, the sons of Seir in the land of Edom. The sons of Lotan were Hori and Hemam, and Lotan's sister was Timna. These are the sons of Shobal: Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho and Onam.[44] Gen 36:24 These are the sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah. This is the Anah who found the *yemim* in the wilderness while he was pasturing the donkeys of his father Zibeon. These are the children of Anah: Dishon, and Oholibamah daughter of Anah. These are the sons of Dishan: Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran and Cheran. These are the sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan and Akan.[45] Gen 36:28 These are the sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran. These are the chiefs of the Horites: Chief Lotan, Chief Shobal, Chief Zibeon, Chief Anah, Chief Dishon, Chief Ezer and Chief Dishan. These are the chiefs of the Horites, chief by chief, in the land of Seir.

Gen 36:31 These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the Israelites. Bela son of Beor reigned in Edom; the name of his city was Dinhabah. Bela died, and Jobab son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his place. Jobab died, and Husham of the land of the Temanites reigned in his place. Gen 36:35 Husham died, and Hadad son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the country of Moab, reigned in his place; the name of his city was Avith. Hadad died, and Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his place. Samlah died, and Shaul of Rehoboth on the River reigned in his place. Shaul died, and Baal-hanan son of Achbor reigned in his place. Gen 36:39 Baal-hanan son of Achbor died, and Hadar reigned in his place; the name of his

44 The Horites were earlier inhabitants of the region of Seir.
45 The meaning of *yemim* is uncertain; suggestions include hot springs or mules.

city was Pau, and his wife's name was Mehetabel daughter of Matred, daughter of Me-zahab. These are the names of the chiefs of Esau, by their clans and their places, name by name: Chief Timna, Chief Alvah, Chief Jetheth, Gen 36:41 Chief Oholibamah, Chief Elah, Chief Pinon, Chief Kenaz, Chief Teman, Chief Mibzar, Chief Magdiel and Chief Iram. These are the chiefs of Edom, by their settlements in the land they possessed. This is Esau, the father of Edom.

Joseph

Joseph is sold into Egypt by his brothers, rises to rule the land, and is reunited with his family; Jacob's blessing and death.

CHAPTER 37

Jacob favors Joseph, whose dreams of his family bowing to him make his brothers hate him.

Gen 37:1 Jacob settled in the land where his father had lived as a foreigner, the land of Canaan. This is the story of Jacob. Joseph, at seventeen years old, was tending the flock with his brothers. He was a young helper with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and Joseph brought a bad report about them to their father. Gen 37:3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his other sons, because he was the son of his old age, and he made him a long robe with sleeves. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak a peaceable word to him.[1] Gen 37:5 Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. He said to them, "Please listen to this dream I have had. There we were, binding sheaves out in the field, and suddenly my sheaf rose up and stood upright, and then your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf." Gen 37:8 His brothers said to him, "Are you really going to be king over us? Are you really going to rule over us?" And they hated him even more because of his dreams and because of what he said. Then he had yet another dream and told it to his brothers.

1 Traditionally "a coat of many colors." The Hebrew phrase probably means a robe reaching to the wrists or ankles, but its exact sense is uncertain.

"Look," he said, "I have had another dream, and there were the sun and the moon and eleven stars, bowing down to me." Gen 37:10 He told it to his father as well as to his brothers, and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream you have had? Are we really going to come, I and your mother and your brothers, and bow down to the ground before you?" His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind. His brothers went off to tend their father's flock at Shechem.

JOSEPH SOLD

The brothers throw Joseph into a pit and sell him to traders bound for Egypt.

Gen 37:13 Israel said to Joseph, "Aren't your brothers tending the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." He answered, "Here I am." So he said to him, "Go now and see whether all is well with your brothers and with the flock, and bring word back to me." So he sent him off from the valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem. A man found him wandering in the countryside, and the man asked him, "What are you looking for?" Gen 37:16 "I am looking for my brothers," he said. "Please tell me where they are tending the flock." The man said, "They have moved on from here. I heard them say, 'Let's go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan. They saw him from a distance, and before he reached them they plotted to kill him. Gen 37:19 They said to one another, "Here comes that master of dreams! Now come, let's kill him and throw him into one of the pits. We will say a wild animal devoured him, and we will see what becomes of his dreams." But Reuben heard it and rescued him from their hands. He said, "Let's not take his life." Gen 37:22 "Don't shed blood," Reuben said to them. "Throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but don't lay a hand on him." He meant to rescue him from their hands and bring him back to his father. So when Joseph reached his brothers, they stripped Joseph of his robe, the long robe with sleeves that he was wearing, and they took him and threw him into the pit. The pit was

empty; there was no water in it. Gen 37:25 Then they sat down to eat a meal. They lifted up their eyes and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, their camels loaded with gum, balm, and resin, on their way to take it down to Egypt. Judah said to his brothers, "What do we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him. After all, he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers agreed. Gen 37:28 Midianite traders passed by, and they pulled Joseph up out of the pit and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver, and they brought Joseph to Egypt. When Reuben went back to the pit, Joseph was not in the pit! He tore his clothes, went back to his brothers, and said, "The boy is gone! And I—where can I go?"[2] Gen 37:31 They took Joseph's robe, slaughtered a male goat, and dipped the robe in the blood. Then they sent the long robe with sleeves to their father and said, "We found this. See if you recognize it: is it your son's robe or not?" He recognized it and said, "It is my son's robe! A wild animal has devoured him. Joseph has been torn to pieces!" Gen 37:34 Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth around his waist, and mourned for his son for many days. All his sons and all his daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. He said, "No, I will go down to Sheol to my son, mourning." And his father wept for him. Meanwhile the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an official of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard.[3]

CHAPTER 38

Judah and his daughter-in-law Tamar; the birth of Perez and Zerah.

Gen 38:1 At that time Judah went down from his brothers and turned aside to stay with a man of Adullam named Hirah. There Judah saw the daughter of a Canaanite man named Shua. He married her and slept with her, and she conceived and bore a

2 The story names both Midianites and Ishmaelites here and in 37:36 and 39:1; just who sold Joseph to whom has long been debated by readers.
3 Sheol is the shadowy realm of the dead.

son, and he named him Er. She conceived again and bore a son, and she named him Onan. Gen 38:5 Yet again she bore a son, and she named him Shelah. Judah was at Chezib when she bore him. Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. But Er, Judah's firstborn, was evil in the eyes of the LORD, and the LORD put him to death. Gen 38:8 Then Judah said to Onan, "Sleep with your brother's wife and do your duty as her brother-in-law; raise up offspring for your brother." But Onan knew that the offspring would not count as his, so whenever he slept with his brother's wife, he spilled his semen on the ground, so as not to give offspring to his brother. What he did was evil in the eyes of the LORD, and he put him to death as well.[4] Gen 38:11 Then Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law, "Live as a widow in your father's house until my son Shelah grows up." For he thought, "He too might die, like his brothers." So Tamar went and lived in her father's house. A long time passed, and Shua's daughter, Judah's wife, died. When Judah had been comforted, he went up to Timnah to his sheepshearers, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite. Gen 38:13 Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep." So she took off her widow's clothes, covered herself with a veil, wrapped herself up, and sat down at the entrance to 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 his wife. Gen 38:15 When Judah saw her, he took her for a prostitute, because she had covered her face. He turned aside to her by the road and said, "Come, let me sleep with you," for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. She said, "What will you give me for sleeping with me?" He said, "I will send you a young goat from the flock." She said, "Only if you give me a pledge until you send it." Gen 38:18 He said, "What pledge shall I give you?" She said, "Your seal and its cord, and the staff in your hand." So he gave them to her and slept with her, and she conceived by him. Then she got up and went away, took off her veil, and put on her widow's clothes again. Judah sent the

4 When a man died without a son, his brother was expected to father a child with the widow, who would carry on the dead man's name (compare Deut 25:5–10).

young goat by his friend the Adullamite to get the pledge back from the woman, but he could not find her.[5] Gen 38:21 He asked the men of the place, "Where is the consecrated woman who was at Enaim by the road?" They said, "There has been no consecrated woman here." So he went back to Judah and said, "I could not find her. The men of the place also said, 'There has been no consecrated woman here.'"[6] Gen 38:23 Judah said, "Let her keep them, or we will become a laughingstock. I did send this young goat, and you could not find her." About three months later Judah was told, "Tamar your daughter-in-law has prostituted herself, and what is more, she is pregnant from her prostitution." Judah said, "Bring her out, and let her be burned." Gen 38:25 As she was being brought out, she sent word to her father-in-law: "I am pregnant by the man to whom these belong." And she said, "See if you recognize whose these are: the seal, the cords, and the staff." Judah recognized them and said, "She is more in the right than I am, since I did not give her to my son Shelah." And he was not intimate with her again. When the time came for her to give birth, there were twins in her womb.[7] Gen 38:28 While she was giving birth, one put out a hand, and the midwife took a crimson thread and tied it on his hand, saying, "This one came out first." But as he drew back his hand, out came his brother, and she said, "What a breach you have made for yourself!" So he was named Perez. Afterward his brother came out, the one with the crimson thread on his hand, and he was named Zerah.[8]

CHAPTER 39

Joseph prospers in Potiphar's house until Potiphar's wife accuses him.

Gen 39:1 Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an official of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian,

5 A seal worn on a cord was used to sign documents; with the staff, it identified its owner.
6 Hirah uses a different word from the "prostitute" of 38:15: *qedeshah*, related to "holy." Its exact meaning is debated.
7 "See if you recognize" echoes the brothers' words to Judah's father in 37:32.
8 Perez sounds like the Hebrew for "breach" or "breaking through."

bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there. The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man; he lived in the house of his master, the Egyptian. His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made everything he did succeed in his hands. Gen 39:4 Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his personal attendant. He put him in charge of his household and placed everything he owned in his hands. From the time he put him in charge of his household and of everything he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's household because of Joseph. The LORD's blessing was on everything he owned, in the house and in the field. Gen 39:6 So he left everything he owned in Joseph's hands, and with him there he gave no thought to anything except the food he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and handsome in appearance. Some time after these things, his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me." But he refused, and he said to his master's wife, "Look, with me here my master gives no thought to anything in the house, and he has placed everything he owns in my hands. Gen 39:9 No one in this house is greater than I am, and he has kept nothing back from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great wrong and sin against God?" She spoke to Joseph day after day, but he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her. Gen 39:11 One day he went into the house to do his work, and none of the household staff were there in the house. She caught hold of him by his garment and said, "Lie with me!" But he left his garment in her hand and fled and went outside. When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and fled outside, Gen 39:14 she called the men of her household and said to them, "Look, he has brought us a Hebrew to make sport of us! He came in to me to lie with me, and I screamed loudly. When he heard me raise my voice and scream, he left his garment beside me and fled and went outside." Gen 39:16 She kept his garment beside her until his master came home. Then she told him the same story: "The Hebrew slave you brought us came in to me to make sport of me. But when I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside

me and fled outside." Gen 39:19 When his master heard the words his wife spoke to him—"This is what your slave did to me"—he burned with anger. Joseph's master took him and put him in the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he stayed there in the prison. Gen 39:21 But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love, and he gave him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. The prison warden put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison; whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. The prison warden paid no attention to anything in his charge, because the LORD was with him, and whatever he did, the LORD made it succeed.

CHAPTER 40

In prison Joseph interprets the dreams of Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker.

Gen 40:1 Some time after these things, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker offended their lord, the king of Egypt. Pharaoh was angry with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined. Gen 40:4 The captain of the guard assigned Joseph to them, and he attended them. They had been in custody for some time when they both had a dream on the same night, each his own dream, and each dream with its own meaning—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison. Gen 40:6 When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were downcast. So he asked Pharaoh's officials who were with him in custody in his master's house, "Why do you look so troubled today?" They said to him, "Each of us has had a dream, and there is no one to interpret it." Joseph said to them, "Don't interpretations belong to God? Please tell me." Gen 40:9 So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph. He said to him, "In my dream, there was a vine in front of me, and on the vine were three branches. As soon as it budded, its blossoms shot up, and its clusters ripened into grapes. Pharaoh's cup was in my hand. I

took the grapes, squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup, and put the cup in Pharaoh's hand." Gen 40:12 Joseph said to him, "This is its interpretation: the three branches are three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your post, and you will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand, as you used to do when you were his cupbearer.[9] Gen 40:14 Only remember me when things go well for you, and please show me loyalty: mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this place. For I was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and here too I have done nothing for which they should have put me in the pit." When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was favorable, he said to Joseph, "I too had a dream, and there were three baskets of white bread on my head. Gen 40:17 In the top basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, and the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head." Joseph answered, "This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head—right off you—and hang you on a pole, and the birds will eat the flesh off you." Gen 40:20 On the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, he gave a feast for all his servants, and he lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants. He restored the chief cupbearer to his cupbearing, and he put the cup in Pharaoh's hand; but the chief baker he hanged, just as Joseph had interpreted to them. Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.

CHAPTER 41

Pharaoh dreams of cows and ears of grain, and Joseph interprets the dreams.

Gen 41:1 At the end of two full years, Pharaoh had a dream. He was standing by the Nile, and there, coming up out of the Nile, were seven cows, fine-looking and fat, and they grazed among the reeds. Then seven other cows came up out of the Nile after

9 To "lift up someone's head" means to restore them to favor; in 40:19 Joseph turns the phrase grimly.

them, ugly and thin, and stood beside the other cows on the bank of the Nile. Gen 41:4 And the ugly, thin cows ate up the seven fine-looking, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up. He fell asleep and dreamed a second time: there were seven ears of grain, plump and good, growing on a single stalk. Then seven ears, thin and scorched by the east wind, sprouted after them. Gen 41:7 And the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump, full ears. Then Pharaoh woke up—and it was a dream. In the morning his spirit was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for Pharaoh. Gen 41:9 Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "Today I must call my offenses to mind. Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and he put me in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, me and the chief baker. We had dreams on the same night, he and I, each of us a dream with its own meaning. Gen 41:12 A young Hebrew was there with us, a slave of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us, giving each man the interpretation of his own dream. And just as he interpreted for us, so it turned out: me Pharaoh restored to my post, and him he hanged." Then Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and they rushed him out of the pit. He shaved, changed his clothes, and came in to Pharaoh. Gen 41:15 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream, you can interpret it." Joseph answered Pharaoh, "It is not in me. God will give Pharaoh an answer for his well-being." Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "In my dream, there I was, standing on the bank of the Nile. Gen 41:18 And there, coming up out of the Nile, were seven cows, fat and fine-looking, and they grazed among the reeds. Then seven other cows came up after them, scrawny, very ugly, and lean—I have never seen such ugly ones in all the land of Egypt. And the lean, ugly cows ate up the first seven, the fat cows. Gen 41:21 But when they had gone into their bellies, no one could have told that they had gone into their bellies, for they looked just as ugly as before. Then I woke up. In my dream I also saw seven ears of grain, full and good, growing on a single

stalk. Then seven ears, withered, thin, and scorched by the east wind, sprouted after them. Gen 41:24 And the thin ears swallowed up the seven good ears. I told the magicians, but no one could explain it to me." Joseph said to Pharaoh, "Pharaoh's dreams are one and the same. God has told Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years; it is one dream. Gen 41:27 The seven lean, ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty ears scorched by the east wind will be seven years of famine. It is just as I told Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. Seven years are coming of great plenty throughout the land of Egypt. Gen 41:30 After them will come seven years of famine, and all the plenty in the land of Egypt will be forgotten; the famine will consume the land. The plenty in the land will leave no trace because of the famine that follows, for it will be very severe. As for the dream being repeated to Pharaoh twice, it means that the matter is firmly settled by God, and God will soon bring it about. Gen 41:33 Now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh act: let him appoint overseers over the land and take a fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven years of plenty. Let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming and store up grain under Pharaoh's authority, food in the cities, and let them guard it. Gen 41:36 That food will be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that are coming upon the land of Egypt, so that the land will not be wiped out by the famine." The plan seemed good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants. Pharaoh said to his servants, "Could we find anyone like this, a man in whom is the spirit of God?"

JOSEPH RULES EGYPT

Pharaoh sets Joseph over Egypt, and Joseph stores grain for the famine.

Gen 41:39 So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one as discerning and wise as you. You shall be over my household, and all my people shall obey your command. Only in the throne will I be greater than you." Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt."[10] Gen 41:42 Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put it on Joseph's hand. He dressed him in garments of fine linen and put the gold chain around his neck. He had him ride in the chariot of his second-in-command, and they called out before him, "Abrek!" So he set him over all the land of Egypt.[11] Gen 41:44 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, but without your consent no one shall lift hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-paneah, and he gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, as his wife. And Joseph went out over the land of Egypt.[12] Gen 41:46 Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. Joseph went out from Pharaoh's presence and traveled throughout the land of Egypt. During the seven years of plenty the land produced by the handful. He gathered all the food of the seven years that came to the land of Egypt and stored the food in the cities; in each city he stored the food from the fields around it. Gen 41:49 Joseph stored up grain like the sand of the sea, so very much that they stopped counting, for it was beyond counting. Before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph, whom Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, bore to him. Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh, "for God has made me

10 The Hebrew is uncertain; literally "on your mouth all my people shall kiss."
11 *Abrek* is probably an Egyptian word, perhaps a cry like "Make way!"; its meaning is uncertain.
12 Zaphenath-paneah is an Egyptian name of debated meaning. On is the city later known as Heliopolis.

forget all my hardship and all my father's house."[13] Gen 41:52 The second he named Ephraim, "for God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction." The seven years of plenty in the land of Egypt came to an end, and the seven years of famine began to come, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in all the lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.[14] Gen 41:55 When all the land of Egypt grew hungry, the people cried out to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph; do whatever he tells you." The famine spread over the whole face of the earth, and Joseph opened up all the places where there was grain and sold it to the Egyptians, and the famine grew severe in the land of Egypt. And people from all the earth came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe throughout the earth.

CHAPTER 42

Joseph's brothers come to Egypt to buy grain, and he accuses them of spying.

Gen 42:1 When Jacob saw that there was grain for sale in Egypt, Jacob said to his sons, "Why do you keep looking at one another?" He said, "I have heard that there is grain for sale in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die." So ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. Gen 42:4 But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with his brothers, for he thought, "Harm might come to him." So the sons of Israel came to buy grain along with the others who came, for the famine had reached the land of Canaan. Now Joseph was the governor over the land; he was the one who sold grain to all the people of the land. Joseph's brothers came and bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. Gen 42:7 When Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he made himself a stranger to them and spoke harshly to them. He said to them, "Where have you come from?" They said, "From

13 Manasseh sounds like the Hebrew for "making forget."
14 Ephraim sounds like the Hebrew for "made fruitful."

the land of Canaan, to buy food." Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him.[15] Gen 42:9 Joseph remembered the dreams he had dreamed about them, and he said to them, "You are spies! You have come to see where the land is undefended." They said to him, "No, my lord, your servants have come to buy food. We are all sons of one man. We are honest men; your servants are not spies." Gen 42:12 But he said to them, "No, you have come to see where the land is undefended." They said, "We, your servants, are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan. The youngest is with our father today, and one is no more." Joseph said to them, "It is just as I told you: you are spies. Gen 42:15 This is how you will be tested: as Pharaoh lives, you will not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here. Send one of you to get your brother, while the rest of you are kept in prison, so that your words may be tested to see whether there is truth in you. If not, as Pharaoh lives, you are spies!" Gen 42:17 And he put them all in custody for three days. On the third day Joseph said to them, "Do this and you will live, for I fear God. If you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay confined where you are held, and the rest of you go and take grain to your starving households. Gen 42:20 But bring your youngest brother to me, so that your words may be verified and you will not die." And they did so. They said to one another, "Truly we are guilty because of our brother. We saw his distress when he pleaded with us, and we would not listen. That is why this distress has come upon us." Gen 42:22 Reuben answered them, "Didn't I tell you, 'Don't sin against the boy'? But you would not listen. Now his blood is being demanded of us." They did not know that Joseph understood, for there was an interpreter between them. He turned away from them and wept. Then he came back to them and spoke to them, and he took Simeon from among them and had him bound before their eyes. Gen 42:25 Joseph gave orders to fill their containers with grain, to return each man's silver to his sack, and to give them provisions for the jour-

15 "Recognized" and "made himself a stranger" come from the same Hebrew root, a play on words.

ney, and this was done for them. They loaded their grain on their donkeys and left. When one of them opened his sack at the lodging place to give his donkey feed, he saw his silver—there it was at the mouth of his bag. Gen 42:28 He said to his brothers, "My silver has been returned! Here it is in my bag!" Their hearts sank, and they turned trembling to one another, saying, "What is this that God has done to us?" When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them, saying, Gen 42:30 "The man who is lord of the land spoke harshly to us and treated us as men spying on the land. We said to him, 'We are honest men; we are not spies. We are twelve brothers, sons of our father. One is no more, and the youngest is with our father today in the land of Canaan.' Gen 42:33 Then the man, the lord of the land, said to us, 'This is how I will know that you are honest men: leave one of your brothers with me, take grain for your starving households, and go. Then bring your youngest brother to me, and I will know that you are not spies but honest men. I will give your brother back to you, and you may trade in the land.'" Gen 42:35 As they were emptying their sacks, there was each man's bundle of silver in his sack! When they and their father saw their bundles of silver, they were afraid. Their father Jacob said to them, "You have robbed me of my children. Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and now you would take Benjamin. All this has fallen on me!" Gen 42:37 Then Reuben said to his father, "You may put my two sons to death if I do not bring him back to you. Put him in my care, and I will bring him back to you." But he said, "My son shall not go down with you. His brother is dead, and he alone is left. If harm should come to him on the journey you are making, you would bring my gray head down to Sheol in grief."

CHAPTER 43

The brothers return to Egypt with Benjamin and dine with Joseph.

Gen 43:1 The famine was severe in the land. When they had eaten up the grain they had brought from Egypt, their father said to

them, “Go back and buy us a little food.” But Judah said to him, “The man solemnly warned us, ‘You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.’ Gen 43:4 If you will send our brother with us, we will go down and buy food for you. But if you will not send him, we will not go down, for the man said to us, ‘You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.’” Israel said, “Why did you bring this trouble on me by telling the man that you had another brother?” Gen 43:7 They said, “The man questioned us closely about ourselves and our family: ‘Is your father still alive? Do you have another brother?’ And we answered him according to these questions. How could we possibly have known that he would say, ‘Bring your brother down’?” Then Judah said to his father Israel, “Send the boy with me, and let us get up and go, so that we may live and not die—we and you and our little ones. Gen 43:9 I myself will be surety for him; you may hold me responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, let me bear the guilt before you all my life. If we had not delayed, we could have gone and come back twice by now.” Their father Israel said to them, “If it must be so, then do this: take some of the best products of the land in your containers, and carry them down to the man as a gift—a little balm and a little honey, gum and resin, pistachio nuts and almonds. Gen 43:12 Take double the silver with you, and carry back with you the silver that was returned in the mouths of your bags; perhaps it was a mistake. Take your brother too, and get up and go back to the man. May God Shaddai grant you mercy before the man, so that he will release your other brother and Benjamin to you. As for me, if I am bereaved, I am bereaved.” Gen 43:15 So the men took this gift, and they took double the silver with them, and Benjamin. They got up and went down to Egypt and stood before Joseph. When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, “Bring the men into the house, slaughter an animal, and prepare it, for the men are to eat with me at noon.” Gen 43:17 The man did as Joseph said and brought the men into Joseph’s house. The men were afraid because they had been brought into Joseph’s house, and they

said, “It is because of the silver that was put back in our bags the first time that we are being brought in, so that he can turn on us and fall upon us and take us as slaves, along with our donkeys.” Gen 43:19 So they went up to the steward of Joseph’s house and spoke to him at the entrance to the house. They said, “Please, my lord, we came down the first time to buy food. But when we reached the lodging place and opened our bags, there was each man’s silver in the mouth of his bag, our silver in full weight. So we have brought it back with us. Gen 43:22 We have also brought down other silver with us to buy food. We do not know who put our silver in our bags.” He said, “Peace be with you; don’t be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has put treasure in your bags for you. I received your silver.” Then he brought Simeon out to them. Gen 43:24 The man brought the men into Joseph’s house and gave them water, and they washed their feet, and he gave feed to their donkeys. They got the gift ready for Joseph’s arrival at noon, for they had heard that they were to eat a meal there. When Joseph came home, they brought him the gift they had with them into the house and bowed down to the ground before him. Gen 43:27 He asked about their well-being and said, “Is your father well, the old man you spoke of? Is he still alive?” They said, “Your servant our father is well; he is still alive.” And they bowed their heads and prostrated themselves. Then he lifted up his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother’s son, and said, “Is this your youngest brother, the one you told me about?” And he said, “May God be gracious to you, my son.” Gen 43:30 Joseph hurried out, for his heart was overcome with tenderness for his brother, and he was close to tears. He went into an inner room and wept there. Then he washed his face, came out, and, holding himself back, said, “Serve the meal.” They served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat with the Hebrews, for that is abhorrent to the Egyptians. Gen 43:33 They were seated before him, the first-born according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth, and the men looked at one another in amazement.

Portions were carried to them from his table, and Benjamin's portion was five times larger than any of theirs. So they drank with him and grew merry.

CHAPTER 44

Joseph has his silver cup hidden in Benjamin's sack and accuses the brothers of theft.

Gen 44:1 Then Joseph commanded the man in charge of his house, "Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's silver in the mouth of his sack. And my cup, the silver cup, put in the mouth of the youngest one's sack, along with the silver for his grain." He did as Joseph had told him. At first light the men were sent off, they and their donkeys. Gen 44:4 They had left the city and had not gone far when Joseph said to the man in charge of his house, "Up, go after the men! When you catch up with them, say to them, 'Why have you repaid good with evil? Is this not what my lord drinks from, and what he uses for divination? You have done wrong in doing this.'"[16] Gen 44:6 He caught up with them and spoke these words to them. They said to him, "Why does my lord speak such words? Far be it from your servants to do such a thing! Look, the silver we found in the mouths of our sacks we brought back to you from the land of Canaan. How then could we steal silver or gold from your master's house? Gen 44:9 Whichever of your servants it is found with shall die, and the rest of us will become my lord's slaves." He said, "Very well, let it be as you say: the one it is found with shall be my slave, and the rest of you shall go free of blame." Each of them quickly lowered his sack to the ground, and each opened his sack. He searched, beginning with the oldest and finishing with the youngest, and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. Gen 44:13 They tore their clothes, each loaded his donkey, and they went back to the city. Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house—he was still there—and they threw themselves to the

16 Divining with a cup, reading signs in a liquid poured into it, is attested in the ancient Near East.

ground before him. Joseph said to them, "What is this thing you have done? Did you not know that a man like me can practice divination?" Gen 44:16 Judah said, "What can we say to my lord? What can we speak? How can we clear ourselves? God has found out your servants' guilt. Here we are, my lord's slaves—we ourselves as well as the one in whose hand the cup was found." But he said, "Far be it from me to do this! The man in whose hand the cup was found, he shall be my slave. As for the rest of you, go up in peace to your father."

JUDAH'S PLEA

Judah begs to stay as a slave in Benjamin's place for their father's sake.

Gen 44:18 Then Judah came up to him and said, "Please, my lord, let your servant speak a word in my lord's ears, and do not let your anger burn against your servant, for you are like Pharaoh himself. My lord asked his servants, 'Do you have a father or a brother?' Gen 44:20 And we said to my lord, 'We have an old father, and a young son born in his old age. His brother is dead; he alone is left of his mother's children, and his father loves him.' Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me, so that I may set my eyes on him.' We said to my lord, 'The boy cannot leave his father; if he were to leave his father, he would die.' Gen 44:23 But you said to your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall not see my face again.' When we went up to your servant my father, we told him my lord's words. Then our father said, 'Go back and buy us a little food.' Gen 44:26 We said, 'We cannot go down. If our youngest brother is with us, then we will go down, for we cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us.' Then your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two. One went away from me, and I said, "Surely he has been torn to pieces," and I have not seen him since. Gen 44:29 If you take this one from me too, and harm comes to him, you will bring my gray head down to Sheol in misery.' So now, if I come to your servant my father and the boy is not with us—his life is bound up

with the boy's life—when he sees that the boy is not there, he will die, and your servants will bring the gray head of your servant our father down to Sheol in grief. Gen 44:32 For your servant pledged himself to my father for the boy, saying, 'If I do not bring him back to you, I will stand guilty before my father all my days.' So now, please let your servant stay as my lord's slave instead of the boy, and let the boy go up with his brothers. For how can I go up to my father if the boy is not with me? I could not bear to see the misery that would come upon my father."

CHAPTER 45

Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and sends for his father.

Gen 45:1 Joseph could no longer control himself in front of all those standing around him, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave me!" So no one stood with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. He wept aloud, and the Egyptians heard it, and Pharaoh's household heard it. Gen 45:3 Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were terrified at the sight of him. Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me, please." They came close, and he said, "I am Joseph your brother, the one you sold into Egypt. Gen 45:5 And now, do not be distressed, and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, for it was to save life that God sent me ahead of you. The famine has been in the land these two years, and there are five more years in which there will be no plowing or harvest. God sent me ahead of you to keep a remnant of you on the earth and to keep you alive for a great deliverance. Gen 45:8 So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, lord of all his household, and ruler over the whole land of Egypt. Hurry, go up to my father and say to him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not delay.[17] Gen 45:10 You shall live in the land of Goshen and be near me—you, your children and your grandchildren, your flocks and your

17 "Father" here is a title for a ruler's chief adviser.

herds, and all that you have. I will provide for you there, for there are still five years of famine to come, so that you and your household and all that you have will not fall into poverty.' Look, you can see with your own eyes, and my brother Benjamin can see, that it is my own mouth speaking to you.[18] Gen 45:13 Tell my father about all my glory in Egypt and all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here." Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. He kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and after that his brothers talked with him. Gen 45:16 The news reached Pharaoh's house: "Joseph's brothers have come." It pleased Pharaoh and his servants. Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say to your brothers, 'Do this: load your animals and go back to the land of Canaan. Take your father and your households and come to me. I will give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you shall eat the fat of the land.' Gen 45:19 You, too, have your orders: do this —take wagons from the land of Egypt for your little ones and your wives, and bring your father, and come. Give no thought to your belongings, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours." The sons of Israel did so. Joseph gave them wagons, as Pharaoh had ordered, and he gave them provisions for the journey. Gen 45:22 To each of them he gave a change of clothes, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of clothes. And to his father he sent the following: ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain, bread, and provisions for his father for the journey. Gen 45:24 Then he sent his brothers off, and as they went he said to them, "Do not quarrel on the way." They went up from Egypt and came to the land of Canaan, to their father Jacob. They told him, "Joseph is still alive! He is ruler over the whole land of Egypt." His heart went numb, for he did not believe them. Gen 45:27 But when they told him all the words Joseph had spoken to them, and when he saw the wagons Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. Israel said, "Enough! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."

18 Goshen is a region in the eastern Nile Delta.

CHAPTER 46

Jacob and his family, seventy persons, go down to Egypt.

Gen 46:1 So Israel set out with all that he had and came to Beer-
sheba, and he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.
God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob,
Jacob." He said, "Here I am." He said, "I am God, the God of your
father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will
make you a great nation. Gen 46:4 I myself will go down with you to
Egypt, and I myself will surely bring you up again; and Joseph's
own hand will close your eyes." Then Jacob set out from Beer-
sheba. The sons of Israel carried their father Jacob, their little
ones, and their wives in the wagons Pharaoh had sent to carry
him. Gen 46:6 They took their livestock and the possessions they
had acquired in the land of Canaan, and they came to Egypt,
Jacob and all his offspring with him. His sons and his grandsons
with him, his daughters and his sons' daughters—all his off-
spring he brought with him to Egypt.

Gen 46:8 These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to
Egypt, Jacob and his sons: Jacob's firstborn, Reuben. The sons of
Reuben: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. The sons of Simeon:
Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul the son of the
Canaanite woman. The sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Mer-
ari. Gen 46:12 The sons of Judah: Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah
—but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan; and the sons of
Perez were Hezron and Hamul. The sons of Issachar: Tola,
Puvah, Iob, and Shimron. The sons of Zebulun: Sered, Elon, and
Jahleel. Gen 46:15 These are the sons of Leah, whom she bore to
Jacob in Paddan-aram, together with his daughter Dinah; all the
persons, his sons and his daughters, numbered thirty-three. The
sons of Gad: Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli.
The sons of Asher: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, Beriah, and their sister
Serah. The sons of Beriah: Heber and Malchiel. Gen 46:18 These are
the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to his daughter Leah; she
bore these to Jacob—sixteen persons. The sons of Rachel, Jacob's

wife: Joseph and Benjamin. To Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, whom Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, bore to him. Gen 46:21 The sons of Benjamin: Bela, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard. These are the sons of Rachel who were born to Jacob—fourteen persons in all. The sons of Dan: Hushim. The sons of Naphtali: Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem. Gen 46:25 These are the sons of Bilhah, whom Laban gave to his daughter Rachel; she bore these to Jacob—seven persons in all. All the persons belonging to Jacob who came to Egypt, his own descendants, not counting the wives of Jacob's sons, numbered sixty-six persons in all. The sons of Joseph who were born to him in Egypt were two persons. All the persons of the house of Jacob who came to Egypt numbered seventy.[19]

Gen 46:28 Jacob sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph, to show the way before him to Goshen, and they came to the land of Goshen. Joseph harnessed his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel. When he appeared before him, he threw his arms around his neck and wept on his neck a long time. Gen 46:30 Israel said to Joseph, "Now I can die, now that I have seen your face and know that you are still alive." Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, "I will go up and tell Pharaoh. I will say to him, 'My brothers and my father's household, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me. Gen 46:32 The men are shepherds, for they have always kept livestock, and they have brought their flocks and their herds and all that they have.' When Pharaoh calls you and asks, 'What is your occupation?' you shall say, 'Your servants have kept livestock from our youth until now, both we and our fathers'—so that you may live in the land of Goshen, for every shepherd is detestable to the Egyptians."

19 The total of seventy apparently adds Jacob himself, Joseph, and Joseph's two sons to the sixty-six.

CHAPTER 47

Jacob meets Pharaoh, and the family settles in the land of Goshen.

Gen 47:1 Joseph went in and told Pharaoh, "My father and my brothers, with their flocks and their herds and all that they have, have come from the land of Canaan, and they are now in the land of Goshen." From among his brothers he took five men and presented them to Pharaoh. Pharaoh said to his brothers, "What is your occupation?" They said to Pharaoh, "Your servants are shepherds, both we and our fathers." Gen 47:4 They said to Pharaoh, "We have come to live for a while in the land, for there is no pasture for your servants' flocks, because the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. So now, please let your servants live in the land of Goshen." Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Your father and your brothers have come to you. Gen 47:6 The land of Egypt is before you; settle your father and your brothers in the best part of the land. Let them live in the land of Goshen. And if you know of capable men among them, put them in charge of my own livestock." Then Joseph brought in his father Jacob and presented him to Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. Gen 47:8 Pharaoh said to Jacob, "How many are the days of the years of your life?" Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my wandering are a hundred and thirty years. Few and hard have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not reached the days of the years of the lives of my fathers in the days of their wandering." Gen 47:10 Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh and went out from Pharaoh's presence. Joseph settled his father and his brothers and gave them a holding in the land of Egypt, in the best part of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. And Joseph provided his father and his brothers and all his father's household with food, according to the number of their little ones.

THE FAMINE IN EGYPT

The Egyptians sell their livestock, land and selves to Pharaoh for food.

Gen 47:13 There was no food in all the land, for the famine was very
severe, and the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished
because of the famine. Joseph gathered up all the silver to be
found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan in
exchange for the grain they were buying, and Joseph brought
the silver into Pharaoh's house. Gen 47:15 When the silver from the
land of Egypt and from the land of Canaan was used up, all the
Egyptians came to Joseph and said, "Give us food! Why should
we die in front of you? For our silver is gone." Joseph said, "Give
me your livestock, and I will give you food in exchange for your
livestock, since your silver is gone." Gen 47:17 So they brought their
livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them food in exchange for
the horses, the flocks of sheep and goats, the herds of cattle, and
the donkeys. He sustained them with food in exchange for all
their livestock that year. When that year was over, they came to
him the next year and said to him, "We will not hide it from my
lord: our silver is spent, and the herds of animals belong to my
lord. Nothing is left for my lord but our bodies and our land.
Gen 47:19 Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our
land? Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we with our
land will be slaves to Pharaoh. Give us seed, so that we may live
and not die, and so that the land does not become desolate." So
Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for every Egyp-
tian sold his field, because the famine was too severe for them.
And the land became Pharaoh's. Gen 47:21 As for the people, he
moved them into the cities, from one end of Egypt's territory to
the other. Only the land of the priests he did not buy, for the
priests had a fixed allowance from Pharaoh, and they lived on
the allowance that Pharaoh gave them; that is why they did not
sell their land.[20] Gen 47:23 Joseph said to the people, "Now that I

20 Some ancient versions read "he made them slaves" instead of "he moved them into the cities."

have bought you and your land today for Pharaoh, here is seed for you; sow the land. At the harvests you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh, and four parts shall be yours, as seed for the field and as food for yourselves and those in your households, and food for your little ones." Gen 47:25 They said, "You have saved our lives! May we find favor in my lord's eyes; we will be slaves to Pharaoh." So Joseph made it a law concerning the land of Egypt, which stands to this day, that a fifth belongs to Pharaoh. Only the land of the priests did not become Pharaoh's. Gen 47:27 So Israel lived in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen. They acquired property there, and they were fruitful and multiplied greatly. Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years, and the days of Jacob, the years of his life, came to a hundred and forty-seven years. Gen 47:29 When the time drew near for Israel to die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "If I have found favor in your eyes, put your hand under my thigh and deal with me in loyalty and faithfulness: please do not bury me in Egypt. When I lie down with my fathers, carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place." He said, "I will do as you say." He said, "Swear to me." And he swore to him. Then Israel bowed down at the head of the bed.

CHAPTER 48

Jacob adopts and blesses Joseph's sons, putting Ephraim before Manasseh.

Gen 48:1 It happened some time after these things that Joseph was told, "Your father is ill." So he took his two sons with him, Manasseh and Ephraim. When Jacob was told, "Your son Joseph has come to you," Israel gathered his strength and sat up in the bed. Jacob said to Joseph, "God Shaddai appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me. Gen 48:4 He said to me, 'I am going to make you fruitful and multiply you. I will make you an assembly of peoples, and I will give this land to your offspring after you as a holding forever.' Now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt,

are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are. Gen 48:6 But the children born to you after them shall be yours; they shall be called by their brothers' names in their inheritance. As for me, when I was coming from Paddan, Rachel died, to my sorrow, in the land of Canaan on the way, when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath, and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)." Gen 48:8 When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, "Who are these?" Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given me here." He said, "Bring them to me, please, so that I may bless them." Now Israel's eyes were dim with age, and he could not see. Joseph brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them. Gen 48:11 Israel said to Joseph, "I never expected to see your face again, and now God has let me see your offspring as well." Then Joseph took them from Israel's knees, and he bowed down with his face to the ground. Joseph took the two of them, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right, and brought them near him. Gen 48:14 But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh—he crossed his hands, for Manasseh was the firstborn. And he blessed Joseph and said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day,[21] Gen 48:16 the angel who has redeemed me from all harm—may he bless the boys. May my name live on in them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth." When Joseph saw that his father had laid his right hand on Ephraim's head, it displeased him, and he took hold of his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. Gen 48:18 Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head." But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He too shall become a people, and he too shall be great. Yet his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his offspring shall become

21 The Hebrew word rendered "crossed" may instead mean "acted knowingly."

a multitude of nations." Gen 48:20 He blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel will pronounce blessings, saying, 'May God make you like Ephraim and like Manasseh.'" So he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh. Then Israel said to Joseph, "I am about to die, but God will be with you and will bring you back to the land of your fathers. And I give you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorites with my sword and with my bow."[22]

CHAPTER 49

Jacob blesses his twelve sons, gives orders for his burial, and dies.

Gen 49:1 Then Jacob called his sons and said, "Gather around, and I will tell you what will happen to you in days to come. Assemble and listen, sons of Jacob; listen to Israel your father. Reuben, you are my firstborn, my strength and the first fruit of my vigor, excelling in rank and excelling in power. Unruly as water, you shall not excel, for you went up to your father's bed; then you defiled it—he went up onto my couch!

Gen 49:5 Simeon and Levi are brothers; their swords are weapons of violence. Let my soul not enter their council; let my glory not join their assembly. For in their anger they killed men, and at their whim they hamstrung oxen. Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce, and their fury, for it is cruel. I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.[23]

Gen 49:8 Judah, 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 cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He crouches, he lies down like a lion, like a lioness—who dares rouse him?[24] Gen 49:10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to Shiloh, and the obedience of the peoples is his.

22 The word for "portion," *shekem* (literally "shoulder" or "ridge"), is also the name of the city of Shechem.
23 The meaning of the word rendered "swords" is uncertain.
24 "Praise you" (*yodukha*) plays on the name Judah (*yehudah*).

Binding his foal to the vine, his donkey's colt to the choice vine,
he washes his garments in wine, his robe in the blood of grapes.
His eyes are dark with wine, and his teeth white with milk.[25]

Gen 49:13 Zebulun shall dwell at the shore of the seas; he shall be
a shore for ships, and his flank shall reach to Sidon.

Gen 49:14 Issachar is a strong-boned donkey, lying down between
the sheepfolds. When he saw that a resting place was good and
that the land was pleasant, he bent his shoulder to bear the load
and was put to forced labor.

Gen 49:16 Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel.
Let Dan be a snake on the road, a viper on the path, that bites
the horse's heels so that its rider falls backward. I wait for your
deliverance, LORD. Gad—raiders shall raid him, but he shall raid
at their heels.[26]

Gen 49:20 Asher's bread shall be rich, and he shall provide delic-
acies fit for a king.

Gen 49:21 Naphtali is a doe let loose, who gives lovely words.[27]

Gen 49:22 Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine beside a spring,
whose branches climb over the wall. The archers attacked him
bitterly; they shot at him and hated him. But his bow stayed
steady, and his arms were made agile by the hands of the Mighty
One of Jacob—from there, the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel—[28]
Gen 49:25 by the God of your father, who helps you, by Shaddai, who
blesses you with blessings of the heavens above, blessings of the
deep that crouches below, blessings of the breasts and of the
womb. The blessings of your father surpass the blessings of my
ancestors, to the bounds of the everlasting hills. May they rest
on the head of Joseph, on the brow of the one set apart from his
brothers.[29]

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25 The Hebrew of "until he comes to Shiloh" is uncertain; it can also be read "until tribute comes to him" or "until the one comes to whom it belongs."

26 Dan sounds like the Hebrew for "judge," and the Gad line plays on *gad* and *gedud*, "raiding band."

27 The Hebrew is obscure; with different vowels it could mean "who bears lovely fawns."

28 The Hebrew of the Joseph lines is difficult; "fruitful" (*porat*) may echo the name Ephraim.

29 "Breasts" (*shadayim*) echoes the divine name Shaddai.

Gen 49:27 Benjamin is a ravenous wolf: in the morning he devours the prey, and in the evening he divides the spoil." All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them; he blessed each of them with the blessing that was his. Gen 49:29 Then he charged them and said to them, "I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, the cave in the field of Machpelah, facing Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought along with the field from Ephron the Hittite as a burial site. Gen 49:31 There they buried Abraham and his wife Sarah; there they buried Isaac and his wife Rebekah; and there I buried Leah—the field and the cave in it, bought from the Hittites." When Jacob had finished charging his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed, breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.

CHAPTER 50

Joseph and the Egyptians mourn Jacob and bury him in the cave of Machpelah.

Gen 50:1 Joseph threw himself on his father's face and wept over him and kissed him. Then Joseph ordered his servants the physicians to embalm his father, and the physicians embalmed Israel. It took them forty days, for that is the full time required for embalming, and the Egyptians wept for him seventy days. Gen 50:4 When the days of weeping for him had passed, Joseph spoke to Pharaoh's household: "If I have found favor in your eyes, please speak in Pharaoh's ears and say, 'My father made me swear, saying, "I am about to die. In my tomb, which I dug for myself in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me." So now, please let me go up and bury my father; then I will come back.'" Gen 50:6 Pharaoh said, "Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear." So Joseph went up to bury his father, and with him went up all Pharaoh's servants, the elders of his household, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, as well as all Joseph's household, his brothers, and his father's household. Only their little ones,

their flocks, and their herds were left in the land of Goshen. Chariots and horsemen also went up with him; it was a very great company. Gen 50:10 When they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, they lamented there with a great and very grievous lamentation, and he observed seven days of mourning for his father. When the Canaanites who lived in the land saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, "This is a grievous mourning for the Egyptians." That is why the place was named Abel-mizraim; it is beyond the Jordan.[30] Gen 50:12 So his sons did for him as he had commanded them. His sons carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, the field Abraham had bought as a burial site from Ephron the Hittite, facing Mamre.

JOSEPH FORGIVES HIS BROTHERS

Joseph tells his fearful brothers that God meant their evil for good.

Gen 50:14 After he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers and all who had gone up with him to bury his father. When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong we did him?" Gen 50:16 So they sent word to Joseph: "Before he died, your father gave this command: 'Say this to Joseph: "Please, forgive the offense of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong."' So now, please forgive the offense of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. Gen 50:18 Then his brothers also came and threw themselves down before him and said, "Here we are, your slaves." But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended evil against me, but God intended it for good, to bring about what is happening today: the saving of many lives. Gen 50:21 So now, do not be afraid. I myself will provide for you and your little ones." So he comforted them and spoke to their hearts. Joseph lived in Egypt, he and his father's household, and Joseph lived a hundred and ten

30 Abel-mizraim sounds like *evel mitsrayim*, "mourning of Egypt."

years. Joseph saw Ephraim's children to the third generation; the children of Machir son of Manasseh were also born on Joseph's knees.[31] Gen 50:24 Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will surely come to your aid and bring you up out of this land to the land he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "God will surely come to your aid, and then you shall carry my bones up from here." Joseph died at the age of a hundred and ten years. They embalmed him, and he was placed in a coffin in Egypt.

31 Being born on someone's knees seems to mark the children as acknowledged by him as his own (compare 30:3).