

# A Description of THE OLD TESTAMENT

## beginning with Genesis

**“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”** Dear reader, the world did not just happen, for nothing happens without a cause, except God. He alone had no cause because he has always existed. That is one of the great mysteries about him which is beyond our ability to understand. Yet knowing about him is the most rational and enriching explanation of our existence. Nothing can compare with the value of knowledge about him and his will for us.

We can understand him better by knowing that God is a supernatural being who resides outside our universe in a different and vastly superior realm, one that is impossible for us to even imagine. Yet, although invisible to us, he remains actively involved in this world. And over the years, through various representatives, he created the Bible so that we can know something about him and how he wants us to live. For the Bible teaches that we are his offspring, made in his image, which explains why we are so creative, and dominate all the other creatures of the world. Moreover, after our time in this life is over, our souls will be brought to his world to be judged by how we have lived in this one.

The first part of the book of Genesis tells about the creation. It says the world was first dark, without form and void, and covered with water. Then over a six day period, in the following sequence, God created light, the atmosphere, dry land, vegetation, the sun moon and stars, living creatures of the sea and air, living creatures of the land, and last of all mankind.

The book says that in the beginning the Spirit of God moved over the surface of the waters. Then he made light, which he called day, and he separated it from the darkness, which he called night. That created the first night-day cycle. On the second day he created the atmosphere, and divided the waters so that some of it would be for clouds. On the third day he separated the waters of the sea so that dry land would appear, after which he created all of the grass, and trees, and other vegetation. The book says that on the fourth day God created the lights of the sky that we call celestial bodies. One purpose of them was to allow us to determine time. Without

them there would be no days or years. He also designed them to give us bright light by day and dim light by night. Thus ended the special light he made on day one. On the fifth day he created all the creatures of the sea and the air. Then on the sixth day he created all of the land animals.

Also on the sixth day God said **“Let us make man in our image—after our likeness”** (Gen. 1:26). Since we are made in the image of God, then we know what God looks like, because he made us look like him. Of course, he is inconceivably more magnificent than we are. Only on very rare occasions have men seen God in his heavenly glory. You can read a little more about what he looks like in the book of Revelation at 1:13-16. There it tells how he had shown himself in his heavenly glory to his apostle John, and John described how he looked. John said he was as bright as the sun. Indeed, the sight of God was so awesome that John fainted, but God lifted him up and told him not to fear.

Man was created in the image of God, and was commanded to **“Be fruitful, and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth”** (Gen. 1:28). God created mankind to be productive. He wants us to grow more numerous, and to continue bringing order to the world, and to rule over all other living things in it. Therefore we do, although sin greatly retards our progress.

Now the book says that at the end of the sixth day God saw everything that he had made, and it was very good. That does not mean, however, it was perfect and complete, just that what he made was good. You see, God did not make everything in our world into finished products. We are his sons and daughters, and he wants us to continue what he began, to continue bringing new people into the world, and to continue making good new things. The book also says that God gave man and beasts vegetation and fruit for food. So originally no animals were eaten. Hence, there were no predators.

The book says it took God six days to make the world. It only took him six days because he is so

powerful, able to do incredible things very quickly. His Son Jesus could heal normally incurable diseases in an instant. However, creating this vast universe was a colossal task, so it took God six days. And the book says he rested on the seventh day. He rested because making this massive world took a lot of work. Some people do not believe that God did any work, so he did not need to rest. But the Bible says he rested. In fact, in the book of Exodus Moses said that when God rested he was refreshed: **“For in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed”** (Exo. 31:17). Incidentally, Jehovah is God’s name.

Next the book tells how God created the first man and woman. He first formed the body of the man from the dust of the earth, then he breathed into him the breath of life. Next God planted the garden of Eden, and he put the man there to dress it and to keep it. He told him that he could eat of the fruit of any tree in the garden except from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And he warned him, **“For in the day that thou eat of it thou shalt surely die”** (Gen. 2:17).

Then God said, **“It is not good that the man should be alone, I will make a help meet for him”** (Gen. 2:18). First he tried all the animals, but none were suitable. So he caused the man to go into a deep sleep, and he took a rib from him, which he then made into a woman. When the man saw her, he said, **“This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh”** (Gen. 2:23). He called her Woman, and she became his wife. And about them, the record says, **“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cling to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh”** (Gen. 2:24). Since the two are said to be one flesh, then we can understand how the Bible says the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God—the three are one. That can also explain why the Hebrew word for God in the Old Testament is plural ten times more often than it is singular.

Life must have been wonderful in the garden paradise of Eden. They lived in childlike innocence, going about unclothed and carefree. Moreover, the record says that God himself sometimes walked in the garden with them, although doubtless clothed and probably in earthy form. But then evil intruded. The record says, **“Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which Jehovah God had made”** (Gen. 3:1). And he tempted the woman to eat of the forbidden fruit. He lied to her, and told her not to believe God. So she ate and gave it to her husband, and he also ate of it. The book

says, **“And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons”** (Gen. 3:7).

When they heard God walking in the garden they hid themselves. When he called for him the man said he hid himself because he was naked and afraid. When God asked if he had eaten of the forbidden tree, the man said, **“The woman whom thou gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate”** (Gen. 3:12). When God asked the woman what she had done, she said, **“The serpent beguiled me, and I ate”** (Gen. 3:13).

So God punished all three of them. He told the serpent he was cursed above every beast, and he had to go on his belly and eat dust all his life. He also said, **“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel”** (Gen. 3:15). The Bible says the serpent was the devil (see Rev. 12:9). The seed of the woman is commonly believed to be Jesus Christ. The head of the devil probably refers to his authority. The heel of Christ probably refers to his earthly body. Nevertheless, there is much mystery about all of those things. There are many mysteries in the Bible.

God said the woman was going to suffer much pain in childbearing. He also said to her, **“And thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee”** (Gen. 3:16). He told the man the ground was cursed for his sake. He said he would eat from it in toil, and it would bring forth thorns and thistles. He said he would eat bread in the sweat of his face until he returned to the ground. He said, **“For thou are dust, and to dust thou shall return”** (Gen. 3:19). Dear reader, beware of all who promote sinful things. The devil and those who serve him lie until it is too late to undo the damage.

The book says Adam called his wife Eve (which means life), **“because she was the mother of all living”** (Gen. 3:20). Jehovah God made coats of skins for them to wear. Then Jehovah said, **“Behold, the man has become as one of us—to know good and evil”** (Gen. 3:22). Therefore, to prevent him from eating of the tree of life and living forever he sent him forth from the garden of Eden.

The book says that Adam knew his wife (meaning he was physically intimate with her), and in time she bore Cain and Abel. Abel took care of sheep, but Cain tilled the ground to grow crops. They both made offerings to Jehovah. However, Jehovah only accepted Abel’s offering, because he offered what

God wanted. When Cain became angry Jehovah told Cain he would also be accepted if he did right. Nevertheless, when they both were in a field Cain rose up and murdered his brother. When Jehovah asked Cain where his brother was, Cain said, “**I know not. Am I my brother’s keeper?**” (Gen. 4:9). God knew what Cain had done, so he punished him. He could no longer be able to grow crops, but had to wander about to survive. The book says Cain had a wife (it does not tell where she came from), and it names some of his descendants.

Adam had another son after Cain and Abel whom he called Seth. The book gives the names of the men who descended from Seth to Noah, and it tells how long they lived. It says Adam lived 935 years. For several generations men lived a very long time, averaging over 900 years. However, one man did not die, for the record says, “**Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him**” (Gen. 5:24). He must have been an extraordinarily righteous man. Enoch was also the name of Cain’s firstborn. The oldest man on record was Methuselah, who lived 969 years, but God gradually began to lower the age of men to a maximum of 120 years.

As the population of the earth grew larger the record says, “**And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And Jehovah regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him in his heart**” (Gen. 6:5-6). However, the book says Noah found favor in the eyes of Jehovah.

The book also says the earth was filled with violence. As my countrymen have turned from God there has also been an increase in violence. Their music and dancing are more violent. Their movies and TV shows and other forms of entertainment are filled with violence. Their computer games are mostly about violent things. Their language has more shouting and cursing. Violence has seeped into the national character like smoke. It has not been sudden, and so the change is largely unnoticed, except by a few of us who remember the former days.

Because the world had become so corrupted God decided to wash the earth clean with a flood. Noah and his family were apparently the only righteous ones left, and so God commanded him to build a huge floating ark to save them. He also told him to include all the species of animals. Jehovah said, “**Of every clean beast thou shall take to thee by sev-**

**ens, the male and his female. And of the beasts that are not clean two, the male and his female. Also of the birds of the heavens by sevens, male and female, to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth**” (Gen. 7:2-3).

When the ark was ready God brought the great flood over the whole earth, and everything was destroyed except what was in the ark. The waters continued to rise for forty days. The book says after a hundred fifty days the waters began to recede. Then after Noah had being in the ark about a year, God commanded him to come out on the dry land. And from his three sons, their wives, and the animals they saved, the earth began to be repopulated.

God promised never to destroy the earth again by a flood, for he said, “**... the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth**” (Gen. 8:21). Regarding animal life, God said that now they would all fear men. Of course, we can teach some of them not to be afraid. And occasionally an animal will attack someone, but that is rare. Almost every rule has a few exceptions. This time God also let people eat animals for food as well as plants. Actually, he said we could eat any other living thing. However, he forbade eating blood. And God said this time that men should execute murderers. He said, “**Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed. For in the image of God he made man**” (Gen. 9:6). That is just another of the many commands of God that sinful men disobey. God also said he made the rainbow as a sign of his covenant not to destroy every living thing again by a flood.

Noah’s three sons were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. One of the sons of Ham was Canaan. The book says that Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. He became drunk after drinking the wine of it, and was naked in his tent. Noah probably did not know the wine would make him drunk. Nevertheless, his younger son Ham saw him, and did nothing except gossip about it to his brothers. They, on the other hand, respecting the privacy of their father, took a garment, laid it on their shoulders, and walked backward to cover him without seeing his nakedness. When Noah awoke and learned what had been done, he put Canaan under a curse, but he blessed Shem and Japheth. Why he named Canaan in his curse is not explained. There are many unexplained things in the Bible. Canaan was probably involved in the disrespect shown to Noah, for Ham had other sons. Many places in the Bible teach about how important it is to honor our

fathers and our mothers. It is one of the great ten commandments that God spoke from mount Sinai.

After that the record gives a genealogical listing of a few of the descendents of Noah's three sons, from whom came the new population of mankind. It names seven sons of Japheth, and sons of two of them. It names four sons of Ham, and sons of three of them. Then it gives twenty-six names of the progeny of Shem. It names his five sons, sons of two of them, a son of one of them, his son, his two sons, and thirteen sons of one of them.

Regarding the age of the world, from an analysis of the genealogical data in the Bible men have estimated the world was created about 4000 BC. Faithless men scoff at this, but you can either believe God's word or them. Any man who claims to have proof either way is a liar like the serpent who deceived Eve. From the Bible record, the flood seems to have been about 1600 years after the creation, or about 2400 BC.

At some time after the flood, when men had begun to multiply again, they decided to join forces and begin to create the great tower of Babel with its top in the heavens. However, when Jehovah saw it, he said, **"Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is what they begin to do. And now nothing will be withheld from them, which they propose to do"** (Gen. 11:6). Jehovah did not want them to become so powerful so quickly. Men can be very cruel and evil, especially if they have too much power. Therefore, he went down and confounded their language so they could not understand each other's speech. Hence, men were scattered on the face of the earth with many different languages, which continues to make it hard for us to work together. Notice in that scripture God's assessment of our potential: **"And now nothing will be withheld from them, which they propose to do."** Hence, united our potential is virtually unlimited. Indeed, mankind is already doing things that our forefathers considered completely impossible.

Next the book names the fathers of ten generations from Noah to Terah. Terah was the father of Abram (later named Abraham), whom Jehovah called a few centuries after the flood. Jehovah wanted to make him the father of a new race. God knew that most people in the world want to live sinfully. And he did not want the whole world to become wicked like it was before the flood. Therefore, he was going to have a special people he would use to preserve righteousness in the world.

They would keep the world from becoming completely wicked again.

Abram was a very righteous man, therefore God chose him to start this special people. Those people were first called Hebrews. Later they were called Israelites. But now they are called Christians. I am one, and we are the spiritual descendents of Abraham. He is our spiritual forefather, because we believe and obey God as he did.

Jehovah said to Abram, **"Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, to the land that I will show thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and be thou a blessing. And I will bless those who bless thee, and he who curses thee I will curse. And in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed"** (Gen. 12:1-3).

Abram obeyed God, and he sent him to the land of Canaan. At some time after arriving, there was a famine in the land, and so Abram went to Egypt. Before entering the land, however, he asked his wife to say that she was his sister, because she was very beautiful, and he feared they would kill him for her. She was, indeed, his half-sister. And sure enough the Egyptians seized Sarai and took her into Pharaoh's house. Pharaoh dealt well with Abram for Sarai's sake. However, Jehovah helped Abram get Sarai back by afflicting Pharaoh and his house with plagues. When Pharaoh learned why he was being afflicted, he criticized Abram, gave Sarai back to him, and sent him away.

Abram was a herdsman, as was his nephew Lot who had come with him. And when their herds became too large for them to stay together, Lot went to dwell in the cities of the Plain where Sodom and Gomorrah were. The book says, **"Now the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinners against Jehovah"** (Gen. 13:13). However, I doubt Abram and Lot knew that, for they were both righteous men. After Lot left, Jehovah told Abram that he would give him all the land of Canaan, and that his seed would be as the dust of the earth in number. God made that promise to Abram several times in his lifetime.

At some time after Lot moved to the Plain, war developed between several kings. As a result, Sodom and Gomorrah were looted by marauders, and many were carried away captive, including Lot. When Abram heard about it, he took the 318 men of his band, and defeated the marauders. He brought back Lot and his goods, as well as all of the other

people who were captured. Then Melchizedek, the priest of God Most High, brought them bread and wine, and he blessed Abram. Abram in turn gave him a tenth of all (a tithe). Melchizedek is a mysterious man whom the book of Hebrews in the New Testament says was like Christ. However, Melchizedek is only mentioned in one other sentence in the rest of the Old Testament. There are many mysteries in the Bible.

After that Jehovah appeared again to Abram. Abram wanted to know how he could be the father of a great nation if he did not even have a son. However, God promised him a son. Then in a dream Jehovah prophesied to him that his descendents would be slaves four hundred years in a foreign nation. But God would judge that nation, and his descendents would come out with much goods to go to the promised land, which would be from the Nile river to the river Euphrates.

When Sarai saw that she was not bearing him a son, she suggested he have a son by her handmaid, Hagar. Abram agreed and Ishmael was later born. However, that did not work, because God said that Ishmael was not going to be Abram's heir of the promise. Besides, Hagar began to despise Sarai, which caused trouble. Women of those days knew that their proper role was to bear and rear children. So as soon as Hagar saw that she could have children but Sarai could not, Hagar apparently began to scorn her. We can see by Hagar's attitude a good reason why God did not select her to be the mother of his chosen people the Hebrews.

Hagar provoked Sarai so much that, with Abram's approval, Sarai began to deal harshly with her. So before Ishmael was even born she ran away into the wilderness. But an agent of God found her, and told her to go back. He also assured her that she was going to have many descendents. He is the one who told her to call the child Ishmael. He also said to her, "**And he will be a wild donkey among men, his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him, and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brothers**" (Gen. 16:12). Mohammed claimed that Ishmael was the father of the Arabs.

Later God appeared again to Abram. He restated his promise to him, and changed his name to Abraham. This time he also gave him the command of circumcision as a sign of his covenant with him. God said that throughout his generations, every male born in his house, and also foreigners bought with money, were to be circumcised. He said every male born to him was to be circumcised on the

eight day after birth. God also changed the name of his wife to Sarah, and said he would give him a son by her. When Abraham heard that, he fell on his face and laughed, because he was a hundred years old and Sarah was ninety years old. However, God assured him it would happen, and it would be at that season the next year. Then, as soon as God left, Abraham circumcised himself and all the men of his house. The book says Ishmael was thirteen years old when he was circumcised.

Not long afterward God appeared again to Abraham. Jehovah seems to have communicated with Abraham in various ways. This time he and two of his agents appeared to him as three men. When Abraham saw them, he rushed over, bowed down, and urged them to turn in for a meal and to rest. They agree, and so he commanded Sarah to prepare a meal for them, a tender calf with butter and milk. Then Jehovah said to Abraham, "**I will certainly return to thee when the season comes round, and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son**" (Gen. 18:10). Although Sarah was in the tent, and they were outside under a tree, she heard what God said. She laughed to herself about it because she was so old. However, Jehovah knew it, and he assured her that it would happen.

This time Jehovah was on another mission, and before he left Abraham, he said, "**Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice, to the end that Jehovah may bring upon Abraham that which he has spoken of him**" (Gen. 18:17-19). And truly all the nations of the earth have been blessed in him. For it was through Abraham's offspring that God gave the Bible, and it was from his seed that Christ, the Savior of the world, was born.

Therefore, God revealed to Abraham what he was going to do. He said to him, "**Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which comes to me. And if not, I will know**" (Gen. 18:20-21).

Then he sent his two agents to go there to evaluate them. However, after they left, Abraham pleaded with God for the sake of the righteous men in the city not to destroy it. He began by asking him if he

would spare it for the sake of fifty righteous men. When God said he would, Abraham kept lowering the number until he got to ten. God said he would even spare the city for the sake of ten righteous men. Then he departed.

When the agents of God came to Sodom, Lot urged them to stay with him, even though he did not know who they were or where they came from. However, during the night all the men of Sodom surrounded his house and demanded he give them the two visitors so they could “know” them, meaning rape them homosexually. Lot refused, pleading with them not to act so wickedly. The apostle Peter said that Lot was a righteous man. He was probably the only one in the city. When they were about to assault Lot, the two agents brought him back into the house and struck the men with blindness. Early the next morning they took Lot, his wife, and two daughters out of the city, and they warned them not to look back. Then Jehovah rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, but Lot’s wife looked back, and she turned into a pillar of salt. When Abraham arose that morning he saw the smoke rising like the smoke of a furnace from the fire and brimstone that Jehovah rained down from the sky to destroy the cities.

Lot lived in a cave for a while. His daughters thought that all the other men in the world were dead. So they made him drunk with wine two nights in a row. One bedded with him one night, and the other the next night. Consequently, they both conceived offspring by him while he slept. Both daughters bore sons whose descendents became two nations, the Moabites and Ammonites.

Abraham journeyed further and came to the land of the Philistines. He also told them Sarah was his sister, so Abimelech the king sent and took her. However, God warned him about Sarah in a dream. So after criticizing Abraham, Abimelech gave him silver, livestock, and servants as compensation, and returned Sarah back to him, saying that he could live in the land freely.

Later, as God had foretold, Sarah bore Abraham a son, whom he named Isaac. As Isaac began to grow, Sarah saw Ishmael mocking Isaac. The apostle Paul said Ishmael persecuted Isaac (see Gal. 4:29). So Sarah told Abraham to cast them out, and that grieved him. However, God told him to do what Sarah said. And he assured him that the son of the handmaid would also become a nation because he was his seed. So he sent Hagar and Ishmael away. However, they got lost in the wilderness of Beer-

sheba. Hagar was an Egyptian, and she may have been going back to Egypt. So an agent of God spoke to her out of heaven and helped her, telling her again that Ishmael was going to become a great nation. The record says God was with the lad, and he became an archer, living in the wilderness.

After that, Abimelech and the captain of his army came and made a covenant with Abraham, a peace treaty. For he said God was with Abraham in all that he did. The book says Abraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines many days. Then God gave Abraham a severe trial. God commanded Abraham to take Isaac to a mountain in the land of Moriah, and offer him as a burnt offering. Abraham had waited many years, until he became very old before God gave him the son of promise. And now God commanded to kill him for a burnt offering. Nobody knows exactly how old Isaac was when it happened, but it was probably some time during his youth.

Nevertheless, Abraham had learned to trust God so much that he immediately set out on the journey. It took three days to get there. And he went as far as raising his knife to kill Isaac before the agent of Jehovah called to him out of heaven. Speaking for God the agent said, **“Do not lay thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything to him. For now I know that thou fear God, since thou have not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me”** (Gen. 22:12). It had been a test, but Abraham did not know that until it was over. And because Abraham proved his absolute faith in him, God blessed him greatly, making him the father of all the faithful. And so in that sense, Abraham is my father and yours too, if you have faith in God.

Eventually Sarah died, and was buried in the cave of Machpelah, which Abraham purchased from one of the men of that land. When Abraham was old, well stricken in age, he commissioned the chief servant of his house to go to the land from which he came to find a wife for Isaac from among his kin. He did not want him to marry one of the women of Canaan. The Canaanites were a more sinful people. His servant used ten camels to take some other men and many good things with him. When he arrived at the city of Nahor where Abraham’s kin were, he prayed to God that he would make his mission prosperous. And he asked God for a sign, saying, **“Behold, I am standing by the fountain of water. And the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let**

**down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink. And she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also. Let the same be she that thou have appointed for thy servant Isaac. And thereby I shall know that thou have shown kindness to my master”** (Gen. 24:13-14).

And even before he had finished speaking, Rebekah, who was the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Abraham’s brother, came and did just as he described. And about her, the book says, **“And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin”** (Gen. 24:16). So Abraham’s servant gave her some jewelry, and lodged with her family that night, after telling them his mission. He also told them of his prayer, and how Rebekah conformed to what he asked of God. When they heard it, they said since it was from Jehovah he could take her. Then he gave her and members of her family many gifts. The next day, after Rebekah agreed to go, he returned with her and her damsels to Abraham. The servant told Isaac all he had done, and Isaac took Rebekah for his wife. The record says he loved her, and was comforted after his mother’s death.

At some time after that Abraham took another wife, and she bore him six sons. However, Isaac was the only son of promise, from whom the Hebrew race would grow. Then at 175 years of age Abraham died, and Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah with Sarah. After that the record lists the names of the twelve sons of Ishmael. He died at the age of 137 years.

Isaac’s wife Rebekah was barren for almost twenty years after their marriage, but he pleaded God for her, and so she conceived. She bore twins, who struggled together within her, making her wonder why she lived. So she went to inquire of Jehovah. He told her there were two nations in her womb, and one would be stronger than the other. In those days the elder son was given the highest rank, and received a double amount of the inheritance. However, in this case, God told her that the elder was going to serve the younger. The elder was Esau and the younger was Jacob. And the record says of them, **“Esau was a skilful hunter, a man of the field. And Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. Now Isaac loved Esau, because he ate of his venison. And Rebekah loved Jacob”** (Gen. 25:27-28). One day Esau came in from the field exhausted, and asked Jacob for the pottage that he cooked. Jacob said he would sell it to him for his birthright, and Esau agreed. Hence, the book says, **“So Esau despised his birthright”** (Gen. 25:34).

Another famine occurred in the land, and so Isaac journeyed to the land of the Philistines where his father had also gone. Jehovah appeared to him and told him not to go into Egypt, and he gave him the same promise he had given to Abraham. Isaac also told the Philistines that his wife was his sister for the same reason that Abraham did. Although she was not related to him that way, as Sarah was to Abraham. Nevertheless, the Philistines did not bother Rebekah.

However, after he had been there a long time they discovered the truth. Therefore, Abimelech their king criticized him for his deception. And because Isaac had grown so prosperous they considered him a potential threat. Hence, Abimelech asked him to leave. Isaac went out into a valley of the country, but the Philistines kept quarreling with him about wells that he dug. So he eventually traveled to Beersheba where God again appeared to him and encouraged him. While he was there Abimelech, with one of his friends and the captain of his army, came and also made a peace treaty with him, because, they said, **“We saw plainly that Jehovah was with thee”** (Gen. 26:28). So Isaac made a feast for them, and they departed in the morning.

The book says that when Esau was forty years old he took two Hittite women for wives, **“And they were a bitterness of spirit to Isaac and to Rebekah”** (Gen. 26:35). When Isaac was old his eyes were dim and he could not see. And since he did not know how much longer he had to live, he told Esau to go prepare some venison for him so that he would bless him before he died. Now his blessing was a very special thing, apparently having the power from God to bestow benefits for the future. So when Rebekah heard what he told Esau, she persuaded Jacob to deceive Isaac into giving him the blessing instead. Rebekah prepared the meal, and dressed Jacob so that if Isaac touched him, he would feel like Esau, because Esau was a hairy man. The trick worked, and Isaac blessed Jacob. Jacob got the blessing, but both he and his mother sinned in the way he got it. And later events seem to show how God punished them both for it.

When Esau returned from the hunt, he and Isaac learned what happened. The book says Esau cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and he told his father to bless him also. Isaac replied, **“Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brothers I have given to him for servants, and I have sustained him with grain and new wine. And what then shall I do for thee, my son?”** Gen. 27:37). He

did give him a secondary blessing, but said he would serve his brother.

Esau was so angry that he vowed to kill Jacob as soon as his father Isaac died. When Rebekah learned of that, she persuaded Isaac to send Jacob back to live with Laban her brother, to find a wife for himself from her homeland. She hoped that Esau would cool down before he came back. She said to Isaac, **“I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth. If Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these, of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?”** (Gen. 27:46). The modern idea that there are no character differences between races and cultures is quite false. Although such differences are based upon values and habits of living, not genetics.

So Isaac told Jacob not to take a wife of the daughters of Canaan, but to go and take a wife from the daughters of Laban his mother’s brother. When Esau saw that his wives did not please Isaac his father, he went to Ishmael and took one of his daughters for a wife, besides the wives he had.

Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran. At night on the way Jacob used a stone for a pillow. And he had a dream about a ladder up to heaven, with angels of God ascending and descending on it. Jehovah stood above it, and told him that he was the God of Abraham and Isaac. He also spoke to him the blessing of Abraham. He said his descendents would be as the dust of the earth, and he would give him and them the land, and in him and his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed. He said he would always be with him, and would bring him back to that land.

Jacob thought that place was the house of God and the gate of heaven. So he took the stone under his head, set it up for a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. He was so impressed by the dream that he vowed to give God a tenth of everything if he would protect him and give him the necessities of life, for Jacob had very little with him.

When Jacob arrived at his destination, he came to a well. He asked those who were there about Rebekah’s brother Laban. They said they knew him, and his daughter Rachel was coming with the sheep. When he told them they ought to be watering the sheep, they said they had to wait for the stone to be rolled from its mouth (they must have been women and children). So Jacob rolled it away and watered Laban’s flock. Then he told Rachel who he was. So she ran to get Laban, who then brought him to his house. After lodging with him for a month, Laban

offered to hire him. Since Jacob loved Rachel, he agreed to work seven years for her. The record says, **“And they seemed to him but a few days, for the love he had for her”** (Gen. 29:20).

However, after the seven years were over, Laban tricked Jacob into marrying Rachel’s older sister Leah. The book says Leah had “weak eyes,” which may mean she was slow mentally. Jacob did not discover it until he had spent the night with her. So Laban required Jacob to work another seven years to marry Rachel. I suspect that God may have allowed Laban to successfully deceive Jacob, cheating him of the woman he wanted, as recompense for his having deceived his father Isaac and cheating Esau of the blessing he wanted. God has ways to recompense both our good and our bad deeds. Nevertheless, Laban let Jacob have Rachel after the marriage week with Leah. So even though he had to work another seven years for her, he did not have to wait that long to marry her. Therefore, Jacob ended with two wives for fourteen years labor.

Jacob married two sisters, and it was almost inevitable that rivalry would develop between them. However, since Jacob loved Rachel, and regarded Leah inferior, God compensated Leah by giving her sons for Jacob. And since women in those days knew that child rearing was their primary role, Leah was hoping that bearing sons would win Jacob’s heart. However, there is no record it ever did. Although he may have changed later after Rachel died.

Nevertheless, it did stir Rachel to envy because God closed her womb. She said to Jacob, **“Give me sons, or else I die”** (Gen. 30:1). Then the book says, **“Jacob’s anger was kindled against Rachel, and he said, Am I in God’s stead, who has withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?”** So Rachel took Bilhah her handmaid, and gave her to Jacob to have children by her. That way Rachel could have sons, for the sons of bondwomen belonged to their owners. It is like women today who are paid to bear children for someone else. When she got a couple of sons that way, Rachel said, **“With mighty wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and have prevailed”** (Gen. 30:8). Then when Leah saw that she stopped bearing, she gave Jacob her handmaid Zilpah for the same purpose. Finally, after Leah had borne six sons and one daughter, God opened Rachel’s womb and she bore a son, whom she called Joseph. Thus, Jacob ended with eleven sons and one daughter from his two wives and their handmaids while he worked for Laban.

When the second seven year period was over Jacob asked leave of him. Laban replied, **“If now I have found favor in thine eyes, tarry, for I have learned by experience that Jehovah has blessed me for thy sake”** (Gen. 30:27). So he persuaded Jacob to keep working for him. However, this time Jacob said he would not work for wages, but for profit sharing. Jacob said he would work for all of the livestock of a certain coloration. Laban quickly agreed, then he went out that very day and removed all of those animals from the flocks that Jacob was managing. He gave them to his sons, and sent them three days journey away. That showed how selfish, greedy, and unfair he was. Nevertheless, because of Jacob’s skill at breeding, and God blessing him, after six years Jacob ended with huge herds, greater than those of Laban. Hence, Laban and his sons began to resent Jacob. Then in a dream Jehovah told Jacob to return to his homeland.

Jacob called Rachel and Leah to his flock in the field, and he told them how hard he had worked for their father. He also told them how Laban had treated him. He said, **“And your father has deceived me, and changed my wages ten times, but God did not allow him to hurt me”** (Gen. 31:7). Then he told them of the dream he had when God told him to return to his homeland. Rachel and Leah also spoke critically of Laban, and they agreed to do as God told Jacob.

So Jacob took everything he had, and left while Laban was away shearing his sheep. However, Rachel stole her father’s household gods. After three days it was told Laban they had departed. So he went with all his brothers to pursue Jacob, and caught up with him after seven days. However, God had appeared to Laban the night before and said to him, **“Take heed to thyself that thou not speak to Jacob either good or bad”** (Gen. 31:29). Consequently, Laban only criticized Jacob for leaving secretly and stealing his gods. Jacob told him to search for them, but Rachel hid them under the camel saddle she was sitting on, and he did not find them.

Then Jacob rebuked Laban not only for charging him with theft, but also for the many ways he had dealt unfairly with him in the past. Among other things he said, **“These twenty years I have been with thee, thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and I have not eaten the rams of thy flocks. I did not bring to thee that which was torn by beasts; I bore the loss of it, of my hand thou required it, whether stolen by day or stolen**

**by night. Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes”** (Gen. 31:38-40).

Laban admitted no fault, and claimed everything Jacob had was his. Nevertheless, he did make a covenant of peace with Jacob. They both gathered stones and set up a pillar, saying it was a witness of their covenant. Jacob also offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and invited his brothers to eat bread. The next morning, after kissing his sons and daughters, and blessing them, Laban returned to his place

As Jacob neared the land of Canaan he sent messengers to the land of Seir to inform his brother Esau that he was coming. After they returned they said Esau was coming with four hundred men. That report caused fear and distress to Jacob. So he divided his people and livestock into two companies, hoping one would be spared if Esau attacked him. He also prayed to God for protection from his brother Esau. The next morning he selected out of his herds 580 animals including sheep, goats, camels, donkeys, cows and bulls. He sent them in groups, one behind the other, as gifts for Esau, hoping they would appease him. That night he also sent his two wives, his two handmaids, and his eleven sons away from the camp. Then he spent the night in the camp alone, during which time he wrestled with a man who was an agent of God (see Hos. 12:4). The man also changed his name to Israel and blessed him. There is a lot of mystery about that story.

The next day, when Esau met Jacob, they greeted each other with an embrace and a kiss, and they wept. Esau did not want to take the livestock from Jacob, because apparently he too was quite prosperous, but Jacob insisted. So they separated in peace, Esau to Seir, and Jacob to Succoth, which is east of the Jordan river. Jacob built a house there and booths for his livestock, perhaps to recuperated from the long journey, and/or to wait for a convenient time to cross the Jordan.

Then he went to Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, and bought a parcel of ground. He camped there and erected an altar. However, when his daughter Dinah went to see the daughters of that area the son of the prince of the land raped her. Then he went to his father and asked him to get her so she could be a wife for him. So his father went to negotiate. However, Jacob’s sons dealt deceitfully with him, claiming that he and all his men would have to be circumcised first. And when all the men of the city were sore from the circumcision, two of Jacob’s

sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took swords and killed all of the men. Then Jacob's sons plundered the city, and took all of their livestock and other possessions, including their wives and little ones. When Jacob heard what they had done he was very troubled, and he rebuked Simeon and Levi.

Then the book says, **"And God said to Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there, and make an altar there to God, who appeared to thee when thou fled from the face of Esau thy brother"** (Gen. 35:1). So Jacob went to Bethel where God first spoke to him in the dream about the ladder. However, before departing he made everyone give him their foreign gods and earrings, which he buried under the oak that was by Shechem. The earrings were probably charms. The record says, **"And they journeyed, and a terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob"** (Gen. 35:5). Jacob also built an altar at Bethel.

Then God appeared again to him and changed his name to Israel. He also blessed him, and again gave him the promise of Abraham. After that Jacob set up a pillar of stone, and poured out a drink offering and oil upon it. When he journeyed from Bethel, Rachel died in childbirth, and was buried near Bethlehem. Jacob called the child Benjamin. Also sometime on the journey Jacob's firstborn Reuben lay with Bilhah his father's concubine, and Israel heard of it. Then the book names Jacob's twelve sons: **"The sons of Leah: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, and Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Zebulun. The sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. And the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid: Dan and Naphtali. And the sons of Zilpah, Leah's handmaid: Gad and Asher"** (Gen. 35:23-26).

Sometime after Jacob returned to Isaac his father, Isaac also died, being a hundred eighty years old. So Esau and Jacob buried him. Rebekah had apparently died before Jacob returned, so she never saw him again after she had persuaded him to deceive his father Isaac. God has ways to recompense both the good and the bad that we do. After that the book gives the generations of Esau. Many names are given, including those of chiefs. Esau dwelt in mount Seir, and is the father of the Edomites.

Next the book says, **"These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers"** (Gen. 37:2).

The rest of the book is primarily about Joseph, the first son of Rachel. It says that Israel loved Joseph more than all his brothers, and he made him a coat of many colors. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more, the record says, **"... they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him"** (Gen. 37:4). However, later events showed that Joseph was worthy of being loved more than the rest. And it may be that he had already proven his worthiness to Israel, because he informed his father about the evil things his brothers did.

The record says Joseph had two dreams that indicated he would reign over his father, mother, and brothers. The first was about sheaves in the field. His sheaf stood upright, and his brothers sheaves came and made obeisance to his sheaf. When he told his brothers about it, the record says they hated him even more. The second dream showed the sun, moon, and eleven stars making obeisance to him. When he told it to his father and his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, **"What is this dream that thou have dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brothers indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?"** (Gen. 37:10). However, his father kept the saying in mind. Jacob was aware of the significance of some dreams in those days.

Then a day came when Israel sent Joseph to Shechem where his brothers were feeding the flock. However, when he found them they made a conspiracy against him. They said, **"Come now therefore, and let us kill him, and cast him into one of the pits. And we will say, An evil beast has devoured him. And we shall see what will become of his dreams"** (Gen. 37:20). When Reuben heard it, he told them not to shed blood, but to cast him into a pit there. He planned to later restore him to his father. Reuben was the firstborn son, and hence, had responsibility for the others. So after stripping him of his coat of many colors they cast him into the pit.

After that they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites who were Midianite merchantmen. Then Judah said to his brothers, **"What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our flesh"** (Gen. 37:26-27). So they sold him for twenty pieces of silver. Reuben had apparently been away, and when he returned he saw that Joseph was not in the pit. He tore his clothes, went to his brothers, and said, **"The child is not, and I, where shall I go?"** (Gen. 37:30). So they killed a goat, and dipped his

coat of many colors in the blood to give his father the impression that a wild beast had slain him. When they came to Jacob it was very bitter news to him, and he mourned about his son for many days. The book says, **“And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted, and he said, For I will go down to Sheol to my son mourning. And his father wept for him”** (Gen. 37:35).

At about that time Judah married a Canaanite woman who bore him three sons. When Er his firstborn was grown, Judah took a wife for him, whose name was Tamar. However, the book says, **“And Er, Judah’s firstborn, was wicked in the sight of Jehovah, and Jehovah killed him”** (Gen. 38:7). Then Judah told Onan, his second son, to go to Er’s widow, Tamar, and **“perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother”** (Gen. 38:8). However, he spilled his seed on the ground, and so Jehovah took his life also. Since Judah had lost two sons with Tamar, not knowing why, he was afraid to send his third son to her.

So after a while she decided to trick Judah into giving her offspring. She disguised herself, put on a veil, and pretended to be a harlot on the roadside. Since Judah’s wife had died, when he saw her, thinking she was a harlot, he asked if he could go in to her. When he later learned that Tamar was with child, he threatened to burn her because he thought she had been practicing harlotry. Some think the burning may have meant to put a scar on her and not burn to death. Nevertheless, when she proved to him that he was the father, Judah said, **“She is more righteous than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to Shelah my son”** (Gen. 38:26). And he did not lie with her again. Some men write disparagingly about Tamar, but the Bible does not. In fact, she is one of the few women named in Matthew’s genealogy of Christ. She did what she could to have children lawfully, that is, within the family of Judah.

The book says Tamar bore twins. During the delivery one put out his hand. The midwife tied a scarlet thread on it, saying this one came out first. However, he drew back his hand, and his brother, named Perez, came out first. Upon which the midwife said, **“Why have thou made a breach for thyself?”** (Gen. 38:29). Why she said that is not clear, and indeed, her words are variously translated. Some translate what she said as an exclamation rather than a question. Nevertheless, Perez

obtained the birthright of the firstborn because he came out first.

In the meantime, Joseph was purchased by Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh’s army, a man who was the captain of the guard in Egypt. Even though he was made a slave, the book says, **“And Jehovah was with Joseph. And he was a man who succeeds”** (Gen. 39:2). He did so well that his master made him overseer of his house, and Jehovah blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake. However, Joseph was also a handsome man, and his master’s wife wanted him to commit adultery with her. She continued to tempt him day by day. A time came when he was working in the house alone, and she came and caught him by his garment. However, he fled, leaving the garment in her hand. So she called to the other men, and accused him of attempting to lie with her.

When his master came home, she said, **“The Hebrew servant, whom thou have brought to us, came in to me to mock me. And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment by me, and fled out”** (Gen. 39:17-18). Therefore, Joseph’s master became angry, and he put him into prison. However, the record says, **“But Jehovah was with Joseph, and showed kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison”** (Gen. 39:21). Even in prison unjustly, Joseph continued to be a faithful worker, so much so that the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all of the other prisoners.

Were not all of those things a severe test of Joseph’s faith in God? His own brothers hated him, and sold him into slavery. Even though he did not deserve to be a bondman, he worked exceedingly well for his new master. Yet even then, when he refused to commit adultery with his wife, he was cast into prison because of her false charges. Nevertheless, even there he worked faithfully to do good. A lesser man would have been bitter toward God for letting such unjust things happen to him. However, unknown to Joseph, God was preparing him for greatness. And Joseph proved himself worthy of it because he patiently trusted God even when everything seemed to be against him. You see, God was preparing Joseph to be the ruler of all of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh himself. Joseph had been the household manager for the captain of the guard, and he must have learned much about Egyptian life and commerce. And while he was in the special prison where the king’s prisoners were kept, he must have learned much about Egyptian government. So when

the time came, Joseph was well trained to rule over Egypt.

When that time came, the change in his life was rapid and extreme. Joseph had earlier interpreted the dreams of two of Pharaoh's officers, a chief butler and a chief baker, both of whom had been cast into prison temporarily. From the butler's dream Joseph predicted he would be released, and he said to him, **"But have me in thy remembrance when it shall be well with thee, and show kindness, I pray thee, to me, and make mention of me to Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house. For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon"** (Gen. 40:14-15). When the baker asked Joseph to interpret his dream, Joseph said it meant he was going to be hanged. Three days later both predictions came to pass, yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph.

Two years after that Pharaoh had two dreams that no man could interpret. The first dream was about seven fat and well fed cows, followed by seven skinny and undernourished ones. The skinny ones ate the fat ones but remained skinny. The second dream was about seven full and good ears on one stalk, followed by a second stalk with seven thin and withered ears. And the thin ears swallowed the full ears.

Then the chief butler remembered Joseph. He told Pharaoh how he and the chief baker had been cast into prison. While they were there Joseph interpreted dreams they both had one night. And what Joseph said would happen came true; he was restored, but the chief baker was hanged. So Pharaoh called for Joseph, and said he had heard he could interpret dreams. Joseph said to him, **"It is not in me. God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace"** (Gen. 41:16). Joseph always honored God. Then after Pharaoh told him the dreams, Joseph said that God had revealed to Pharaoh by the dreams what was he was about to do. There were going to be seven years of great abundance, followed by seven years of great famine. And the famine would be so severe that it would consume all of the abundance. He said because the dream was doubled to Pharaoh, the thing was established by God, and he was going to shortly bring it to pass.

Then Joseph advised Pharaoh to appoint a wise ruler over the land to supervise overseers who should take a fifth part of the land, and gather grain during the years of abundance to store for the seven years of famine. Pharaoh and his servants were so

impressed by Joseph that Pharaoh made him that ruler. For Pharaoh said to him, **"Inasmuch as God has shown thee all of this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou. Thou shall be over my house, and according to thy word all my people shall be ruled. Only in the throne I will be greater than thou"** (Gen. 41:39-40).

Pharaoh put his signet ring on Joseph's hand, arrayed him with vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck. He also made him ride in the second chariot, and they cried out before him to bow the knee. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, **"I am Pharaoh, and without thee no man shall lift up his hand or his foot in all the land of Egypt"** (Gen. 41:44). He also gave him a wife, the daughter of a priest.

Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, which meant he was in bondage in Egypt for thirteen years. And finally Joseph could understand that all the terrible things that had happened to him were part of a great plan God had to prepare him for greatness. Should that not be a lesson for us all? God wants to prepare us all for greatness, in this life and/or in the one to come. But he cannot unless we trust and obey him, as Joseph did.

The book says that during the seven years of abundance **"Joseph laid up grain as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left off numbering, for it was without number"** (Gen. 41:49). Joseph also had two sons by the wife Pharaoh gave him, whom he named Manasseh and Ephraim. Then came the seven years of famine. The book says, **"And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. And Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, Go to Joseph; what he says to you, do"** (Gen. 41:55). So Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to the Egyptians. Also all the other countries came to Egypt to buy grain.

Jacob and his family also needed grain for bread. And when he heard there was grain in Egypt he sent his sons there. However, he did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin, who was the second son of Rachel, for fear harm might come to him too. When they came to Egypt, Joseph recognized them, but they did not recognize him. So he spoke roughly to them, asking where they were from. The book says Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed about them (that they would bow down to him).

He also apparently decided to test them, to see what kind of men they now were, for he accused them of being spies. And after hearing them tell

about their family, he said the only way they could prove they were not spies was to bring their younger brother to him. He told them to send one of them to fetch their brother. And he put them in custody for three days. However, on the third day, he said to them, **“This do, and live, for I fear God: If ye be true men, let one of your brothers be bound in your prison house, but go ye, carry grain for the famine of your houses, and bring your youngest brother to me. So shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die”** (Gen. 42:18-20).

When they heard those words, they said to each other, **“We are truly guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear. Therefore this distress has come upon us”** (Gen. 42:21). Their consciences were tormenting them because of what they had done to Joseph. They did not know Joseph understood them, for there was an interpreter between them. The record says he turned himself around from them and wept. When he returned, he took Simeon and bound him before their eyes. Then he commanded to fill their vessels with grain, and restore every man’s money into his sack, and also give them provisions for the way. When they later discovered the money in their sacks, they trembled and wondered what God had done to them.

When they returned to Jacob, they told him all that happened. When Jacob heard, he said, **“Ye have bereaved me of my sons. Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away. All these things are against me”** (Gen. 42:36). Jacob refused, even though Reuben the eldest told him to kill his own two sons if he did not bring Benjamin back. And so it was not until they had eaten all of the grain they had brought back that Jacob told his sons to go buy more in Egypt. However, they said they could not return to Egypt without bringing Benjamin with them. Israel said to them, **“Why did ye deal so ill with me, as to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother?”** (Gen. 43:6). They explained how the man questioned them about their family. They asked Jacob how they could have known he would tell them to bring their brother down. This time Judah guaranteed to his father that they would bring him back safely. He said if they had not lingered, they would have returned a second time. So their father Israel said to them, **“If it be so now, do this: Take of the choice fruits of the land in your vessels, and carry a present down to the man, a little balm, and a little honey, spicery and**

**myrrh, nuts, and almonds. And take double money in your hand, and the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks carry again in your hand. Perhaps it was an oversight. Also take your brother, and arise, go again to the man. And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release to you your other brother and Benjamin. And if I be bereaved of my sons, I am bereaved”** (Gen. 43:11-14)

So they went down to Egypt and stood before Joseph. When Joseph saw Benjamin he brought them all into his house to dine with him. That frightened them, and they thought it was because of the money in the sacks. So they told the steward of Joseph’s house about it. However, he said, **“Peace be to you, fear not. Your God, and the God of your father, has given you treasure in your sacks. I had your money”** (Gen. 43:23). Then he brought Simeon out to them. When Joseph came home, they brought the present and bowed down themselves to him. The book says that after seeing Benjamin and asking about their father, **“Joseph made haste, for his heart yearned over his brother, and he sought where to weep. And he entered into his chamber, and wept there. And he washed his face, and came out. And he restrained himself, and said, Set on bread”** (Gen. 43:30-31).

So they dined. Then he sent them all on their way with grain. However, he had his steward hide his silver cup in the bag of grain that Benjamin was carrying. Then after they had gone a short way, the steward caught up with them and accused them of theft. When the cup was found in Benjamin’s bag, they all returned to Egypt with great dismay. Joseph told them that only Benjamin would be his bondman, so the rest of them could return to the land of Canaan. Yet Judah pleaded with Joseph, telling him how their father felt toward Benjamin. He said he became surety for the lad to his father. Then he said, **“Now therefore, let thy servant, I pray thee, abide a bondman to my lord instead of the lad, and let the lad go up with his brothers. For how shall I go up to my father, if the lad be not with me? Lest I see the evil that shall come on my father”** (Gen. 44:33-34).

Joseph had seen their loyalty to Benjamin even in danger, and he had seen their love and concern for their father. They showed Joseph they were not cruel and selfish as they had been. Here is how Joseph responded: **“Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood before him, and he cried out, Cause every man to go out**

from me. And no man stood with him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians heard, and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said to his brothers, **I am Joseph, does my father yet live? And his brothers could not answer him, for they were troubled at his presence.**

**“And Joseph said to his brothers, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near, and he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. And now be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years, in which there shall be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on the earth, and to save you alive by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me here, but God, and he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Hasten ye, and go up to my father, and say to him, Thus says thy son Joseph: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me, delay not”** (Gen. 45:1-9).

Joseph always honored God, proving time and again that he was more worthy than his brothers by the way he lived. When Pharaoh heard that his brothers had come, it pleased him and his servants well. So he commanded Joseph to tell his brothers to go to the land of Canaan, and bring their father and all they have to him. He said he would give them the good of the land of Egypt. He also told them to take wagons for their little ones and their wives, and bring their father.

So Joseph sent his brothers back to Jacob with wagons and many provisions to bring him and all of their possessions down into Egypt. When they came to Jacob, and told him that Joseph was still alive and was ruler of all the land of Egypt, the book says, **“... his heart fainted, for he did not believe them”** (Gen. 45:26). However, when he saw the wagons he said, **“It is enough, Joseph my son is yet alive. I will go and see him before I die”** (Gen. 45:28). Then he departed with them.

On the way to Egypt, at Beersheba, Israel offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. Then God spoke to him in the visions of the night, and said, **“I am God, the God of thy father. Fear not to go down into Egypt, for I will there make of thee a great nation. I will go down with thee into Egypt, and I will also surely bring thee up**

**again, and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes”** (Gen. 46:3-4). Then the book lists the names of all of the children of Israel, and all of their children. He and all of his descendents in Egypt were seventy persons when he went there.

Jacob sent Judah to Joseph, to show them the way to the land of Goshen in Egypt. Then Joseph made his chariot ready, and went up to meet his father. The book says he fell on his neck, and wept a good while. And Israel said, **“Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, that thou art yet alive”** (Gen. 46:30). Then Joseph said he would go to Pharaoh, and tell him they had come. And he would tell him they were shepherds with flocks and herds. He said when Pharaoh asked them their occupation, they were to tell him they were keepers of cattle. That way they could live in the land of Goshen, for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians.

Then Joseph went to Pharaoh, and reported to him about his family. And he said they were in the land of Goshen. Then he took five men from among his brothers to present to Pharaoh. When Pharaoh asked their occupation, they answered as Joseph had instructed them, and they asked to dwell in the land of Goshen. And he granted their request.

Then Joseph brought Jacob his father to Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. When Pharaoh asked Jacob of his age, he replied, **“The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage”** (Gen. 47:9). The record again says that Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and then he departed. So Joseph gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best land, the land of Rameses (Goshen) as Pharaoh had commanded. And Joseph nourished his father, his brothers, and all his father’s household, with bread, because the famine was very severe.

As the famine continued, the population of Egypt eventually sold everything they had to Joseph for Pharaoh. They even asked him to buy their lands for grain to survive. Only the priests did not sell their land, for they ate their portion from Pharaoh. Remember, the Egyptians also had the opportunity to store grain during the seven years of abundance, but apparently they chose not to store their surplus. Joseph said he would buy their lands, and make them tenant farmers, allowing them to keep eighty percent of their crops, but giving twenty percent to Pharaoh as owner. When he told them that, they

said, **“Thou have saved our lives. Let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh’s servants”** (Gen. 47:25). Dear reader, twenty percent is only half of what Americans now pay in taxes to our rulers to spend as they decide.

Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years, until he was 147 years old. And when he was near death he called for Joseph, and made him swear he would bury him with his fathers, not in Egypt. Then he said Joseph’s two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, were his. He said he was adopting them as his own sons, so that the descendents of Joseph would become two tribes of Israel instead of one.

After that Joseph brought his sons to Jacob who put his hands on the head of each of them. He crossed his arms so that his right hand was on Ephraim the younger, and he blessed them. When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him, and he attempted to put it on the head of Manasseh the firstborn. However, his father refused, and said, **“I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations”** (Gen. 48:19).

Then Israel called his sons, saying, **“... gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the latter days”** (Gen. 49:1). Then, beginning with the eldest to the youngest, he foretold, often in figurative language, how their tribes would develop. Among his words he said that Reuben his firstborn would not have pre-eminence because he defiled his father’s bed. He said Simeon and Levi (the sons who slaughtered the men of Shechem) would be scattered among the tribes. He said Judah would become a ruling people, and Joseph would be noted for fruitfulness. All those things came to pass in later centuries. Both Ephraim and Judah became the dominant tribes in Israel. Jerusalem was in Judah, and our Lord Jesus Christ was a descendant of Judah. The Levites were never given a territory of their own, and the land and population of Simeon were eventually absorbed into Judah.

When Jacob finished he charged them to bury him in the cave of Machpelah where Abraham and Sarah, and Isaac and Rebekah, were buried. Jacob also said he buried Leah there. I do not believe God

will ever allow that tomb to be violated by anybody, including grave robbing archaeologists. Then Jacob died, and the book says, **“Joseph fell upon his father’s face, and wept upon him, and kissed him. And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. And the physicians embalmed Israel. And forty days were fulfilled for him, for so are fulfilled the days of embalming. And the Egyptians wept for him seventy days”** (Gen. 50:1-3).

After getting Pharaoh’s permission, Joseph took a very great caravan with chariots and horsemen into the land of Canaan to bury his father in the cave of Machpelah. The book says that all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, went with him and his brothers. Only their little ones and their livestock remained in the land of Goshen. Both chariots and horsemen went with him, a very great company. The record says, **“And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians. Therefore the name of it was called Abel-mizraim, which is beyond the Jordan”** (Gen. 50:11).

When Joseph returned to Egypt his brothers were fearful of what he might do because of their past cruelty to him. So they sent a message to him which said that his father had given a command before he died for him to forgive them, and they begged his forgiveness. Then they came and fell down before him, saying **“Behold, we are thy servants”** (Gen. 50:18). However, Joseph said, **“Fear not, for am I in the place of God? And as for you, ye meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not. I will nourish you, and your little ones”** (Gen. 50:19-21). The book says he comforted them, and spoke kindly to them. Joseph demonstrated the true spirit of Christ in many ways.

Later, when Joseph was about to die, he prophesied that God would bring them back to their promised land. Then he made the sons of Israel swear they would take his bones out of Egypt when God brought them out again. So Joseph died at a hundred ten years of age, and was embalmed and put in a coffin in Egypt.