BIBLE PATRIARCHS

COVENANT WITH ABRAM (Genesis 12:1-5; 15: 1-16; 17:1-9)

Background: God calls Abram away from his current home because God has a mission for him. As a reward for his faithfulness, God will give Abraham descendants as numerous as the stars, these descendants become the 12 tribes of Israel and eventually Jesus will fall into the line of Abraham's descendants. It all begins with Abram trusting God.

Abram's Call and Migration. The LORD said to Abram: Go forth[*] from your land, your relatives, and from your father's house to a land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

Abram went as the LORD directed him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left. Abram took his wife Sarai, his brother's son Lot, all the possessions that they had accumulated and they set out for the land of Canaan.

The Covenant with Abram.[*] Some time afterward, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: Do not fear, Abram! I am your shield; I will make your reward very great.

But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what can you give me, if I die childless? Abram continued, "Look, you have given me no offspring." Then the word of the LORD came to him: Your own offspring will be your heir. He took him outside and said: Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can. Just so, he added, will your descendants be. Abram put his faith in the LORD, who attributed it to him as an act of righteousness.[*] He then said to him: I am the LORD who brought you from the land of Ur to give you this land as a possession

Then the LORD said to Abram: Know for certain that your descendants will reside in a foreign land, where they shall be enslaved for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation they must serve, and after this they will go out with great wealth. You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace; you will be buried at a ripe old age. In the fourth generation[*] your descendants will return here,

Covenant of Circumcision.[*] When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said: I am God the Almighty. Walk in my presence and be blameless. Between you and me I will establish my covenant, and I will multiply you exceedingly.

Abram fell face down and God said to him: For my part, here is my covenant with you: you are to become the father of a multitude of nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham. I will make you exceedingly fertile; I will make nations of you; kings will stem from you. I will maintain my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you. I will give to you and to your descendants after you the land of Canaan, as a permanent possession; and I will be their God. God said to Abraham: For your part, you and your descendants after you must keep my covenant throughout the ages. This is the covenant between me and you and your descendants must keep: every male among you shall be circumcised.[*] Circumcise the flesh of your foreskin. That will be the sign of the covenant between me and you.

God further said to Abraham: As for Sarai your wife, do not call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah.[*] I will bless her, and I will give you a son by her. Her also will I bless; she will give rise to nations, and rulers of peoples will issue from her. Abraham fell face down and laughed[*] as he said to himself, "Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah give birth at ninety?"[k]!" God replied: Even so, your wife Sarah is to bear you a son, and you shall call him Isaac. It is with him that I will maintain my covenant as an everlasting covenant and with his descendants after him.[l]

WATCH video on Isaac and Abraham

JACOB & ESAU Genesis 25:19-34; 27:1-43

Background: Isaac has twin sons: Esau and Jacob. Isaac is Abraham's heir and thus the eldest son would be Isaac's preferred and also would receive his inheritance. Esau and Jacob have a poor relationship and with the help of their mother, Jacob steals Esau's inheritance and blessing.

Birth of Esau and Jacob. These are the descendants of Isaac, son of Abraham; Abraham begot Isaac. Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah. Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, since she was sterile. The LORD heard his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant with twins. But the children fought in the womb so much that she exclaimed, "If it is like this,* why go on living!" She went to consult the LORD, and the LORD answered her:

Two nations are in your womb, But one will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.*

When the time of her delivery came, the first to be born was reddish,* and his whole body was hairy; so they named him Esau. Next his brother came out, gripping Esau's heel;* so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when they were born.[k] When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter; whereas Jacob was a simple* man, who stayed among the tents. Isaac preferred Esau, because he was fond of hunting but Rebekah preferred Jacob.

Jacob's Deception.* When Isaac was so old that his eyesight had failed him, he called his older son Esau and said to him, "Now I have grown old. I do not know when I might die. So now take your hunting gear—and go out into the open country to hunt some game for me. Then prepare for me a dish, and bring it to me to eat, so that I may bless you* before I die."

Rebekah had been listening while Isaac was speaking to his son Esau. So Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "Listen! I heard your father tell your brother Esau that he would give him a blessing. Now, my son, Go to the flock and get me two choice young goats so that with these I might prepare a dish for your father. Then bring it to your father to eat, that he may bless you before he dies." But Jacob said to his mother Rebekah, "But my brother Esau is a hairy man and I am smooth-skinned![b] Suppose my father touches me? He will think I am making fun of him, and I will bring on myself a curse instead of a blessing." His mother, however, replied: "Let any curse against you, my son, fall on me! Just obey me. Go and get me the young goats." So Jacob went and got them and brought them to his mother, and she prepared a dish. Rebekah then took the best clothes of her older son Esau that she had in the house, and gave them to her younger son Jacob to wear; and with the goatskins she covered up his hands and the hairless part of his neck.

Going to his father, Jacob said, "Father!" "Yes?" replied Isaac. "Which of my sons are you?" Jacob answered his father: "I am Esau, your firstborn. I did as you told me. Please sit up and eat, so that you may bless me." Isaac then said to Jacob, "Come closer, my son, that I may feel you, to learn whether you really are my son Esau or not." So Jacob moved up closer to his father. When Isaac felt him, he said, "Although the voice is Jacob's, the hands are Esau's." He failed to identify him because his hands were hairy, like those of his brother Esau; so he blessed him.) Isaac said, "Serve me, my son, and let me eat so that I may bless you." Jacob served it to him, and Isaac ate; he brought him wine, and he drank. Finally his father Isaac said to him, "Come closer, my son, and kiss me." As Jacob went up to kiss him, Isaac smelled the fragrance of his clothes. With that, he blessed him.

Jacob left his father after Isaac had finished blessing him, when his brother Esau came back from his hunt. Then he too prepared a dish, and bringing it to his father, he said, "Let my father sit up and eat that you may then give me your blessing." His father Isaac asked him, "Who are you?" He said, "I am your son, Esau." Isaac trembled greatly. "Who was it, then," he asked, "that hunted game and brought it to me? I blessed him. Now he is blessed!" As he heard his father's words, Esau burst into loud, bitter sobbing and said, "Father, bless me too!"

When Isaac said, “Your brother came here and carried off your blessing,” Esau exclaimed, “He is well named Jacob, is he not! First he took away my right as firstborn, and now he has taken away my blessing.” Then he said, “Have you not saved a blessing for me?” Isaac replied to Esau: “I have already appointed him your master, and I have assigned to him all his kindred as his servants; besides, I have sustained him with grain and wine. What then can I do for you, my son?” and Esau wept aloud.

Esau bore a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. Esau said to himself, “I will kill my brother Jacob.”[i] When Rebekah got news of what her older son Esau had in mind, she summoned her younger son Jacob and said to him: “Listen! Your brother Esau intends to get his revenge by killing you. So now, my son, obey me: flee at once to my brother Laban in Haran,

JOSEPH IS SOLD INTO SLAVERY: Genesis 35:22-25; 37; 39

Background: Joseph’s father is Jacob whose father is Isaac whose father is Abraham. Jacob has 12 sons, 10 of them were bore by his wife Leah and 2 by his wife Rachel. Jacob loved Rachel with everything he had. Joseph was the first son she bore and thus Joseph was the favorite of Jacob. His brothers were very jealous of Joseph because their father gave him gifts such as a beautiful expensive coat. Joseph also had the gift of interpreting dreams. In response to their jealousy they take matters into their own hands to get what they want.

The sons of Jacob were now twelve. Reuben, Jacob’s firstborn, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher and the sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin;

Joseph Sold into Egypt. Jacob settled in the land of Canaan.[*] Jacob loved Joseph best of all his sons, for he was the child of his old age; and he had made him a long ornamented coat.[*] When his brothers saw that their father loved him best of all his brothers, they hated him so much that they could not say a kind word to him.

One day, when his brothers had gone to pasture their father’s flocks, Jacob sent Joseph to find them. So Joseph went after his brothers and found them. They saw him from a distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him. They said to one another: “Here comes that dreamer! Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the cisterns here; we could say that a wild beast devoured him.”

But when Reuben heard this, he tried to save him from their hands, saying: “We must not take his life.” Then Reuben said, “Do not shed blood! Throw him into this cistern in the wilderness; but do not lay a hand on him.” His purpose was to save him from their hands and restore him to his father.

So when Joseph came up to his brothers, they stripped him of his colored coat, then they took him and threw him into the cistern. The cistern was empty; there was no water in it. They saw a caravan of Ishmaelites on their way to Egypt.[e] Judah said to his brothers: “What is to be gained by killing our brother and concealing his blood?[f] Come, let us sell him to these Ishmaelites, instead of doing away with him ourselves. After all, he is our brother, our own flesh.” His brothers agreed.

They sold Joseph for twenty pieces of silver and he was taken to Egypt.[g] When Jacob heard that his son had been killed by wild animals, he tore his garments, put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned his son many days.

Pharaoh’s Dream. After two years of Joseph being in prison, Pharaoh had a dream… Pharaoh then had Joseph summoned because he heard that Joseph could interpret dreams, and they brought him from the dungeon. He came to Pharaoh. Pharaoh then said to Joseph: “I had a dream but there was no one to interpret it. But I hear it said of you, ‘If he hears a dream he can interpret it.’” “It is not I,” Joseph replied to Pharaoh, “but God who will respond for the well-being of Pharaoh.” … Joseph interpreted the Pharaoh’s dreams and he said to Joseph: “You shall be in charge of my household, and all my people will obey your command. Only in respect to the throne will I outrank you.” Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Look, I put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt.” With

that, Pharaoh took off his ring[*] and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck.