

PEOPLE OF GOD HAVE LEADERS
Early Leaders in the Rise of the Nation
Joseph

September 23, 2020

Jacob

Last week we noted that not much is said about Isaac in Scripture.

He seemed to be little more than a replica of his father.

As the story moves to the next generation we find Rebekah (like Sarah) not able to bear children. Without the Lord's intervention she would not have had a son with Isaac.

But she had two sons named Esau (the father of the Edomites) and Jacob (ancestor of Israel). Already in the womb they struggled together as these nations would do in real life.

Jacob tricked his brother out of his birthright and a final blessing was offered by Isaac.

Jacob was destined to gain dominance over Edom which occurred at the time of David.

But the blessing was no good if (due to the hostility by Esau) Jacob had to flee to Haran.

Flight to Haran gave the writer a chance to introduce a cycle of legends centered on Jacob.

We have the story of the Lord meeting Jacob in his despair to renew the promise.

In Haran Jacob came into the possession of great wealth.

With his wealth he managed to escape from his Aramean relative.

He started to plan and prepare to win Esau over by a lavish display of gifts.

Lord appeared to Jacob once more but this time when he was prosperous.

Lord came at a time when Jacob could have easily bought his way into the Promised Land.

With this angel (night demon) Jacob wrestled until daybreak.

Jacob finally received a blessing from the angel, but Jacob left limping from the combat.

He was reunited with Esau and thus gained access to the Promised Land.

Article from Israel National News

Why Isaac and not Ishmael?

Why Jacob and not Esau?

Plight of Ishmael and Esau are among the most powerful descriptions of emotion in the Torah.

It is precisely the opposite of what we would expect.

We would expect the Torah to enlist our sympathies to the chosen (Isaac and Jacob).

Instead it almost forces us to empathize with the unchosen (Hagar, Ishmael, and Esau).

In the midrash Isaac and Jacob are described as righteous.

It represents Ishmael and Esau as unrighteous in some of their ways.

Ishmael worshiped idols and tried to kill Isaac while making it look like an accident.

Esau pretended to be pious when he was not.

Midrash states that God cut life of Abraham by five years so as not to see Esau's behavior.

Esau was the impulsive son, the coarse hunter, and father of Amalek (who symbolized evil).

Sages viewed Esau and his descendants as the eternal, arch-enemies of Israel.

On the other hand Jacob is endowed with the capacity to draw out the good in people.

He transformed people and brought them closer to God.
As one who could see the light in darkness he had the potential to reveal the goodness in Esau.
Spark of authentic good was apparent for a fleeting moment when two brothers embraced.



Genesis 33:4

Midrash implies that things might have turned out differently between them.
Rather than a perpetual rivalry the two could have joined together as Moses and Aaron did later.

Chapter 36

Lists were probably gathered by the monarchy under David after it conquered Edom.
Over half of the names are not identifiable as they have no connection with existing narrative.
Many of the known names have a close relationship with Judah.
Lists document stages in the history of the people involved.
It moves from family (vs. 1-14) to tribal units (vs. 15-30) to national entities (vs. 31-39).

List parallels that of Ishmael (25:12-18) in structure and concern for the non-chosen brother.
As with Ishmael, the genealogy of Esau relates to previous oracles of blessing.
Writer presents family of Esau in a positive light.
He highlights stability, growth, and continuity.

In vs. 31-39 the list is of non-dynastic kings of Edom.
Role is best understood as chiefs similar to Israelite judges.
They pre-date Israel's entry into Canaan and continue down to the United Monarchy.
Last of the kings may be a contemporary of Saul.
Reference to the kings of Israel in vs. 31 reflects the oracle that Esau came to serve the younger.

Move from Esau to Edom in this chapter also leads into Chapters 37-50.
Here the most basic subject is the movement from Jacob to Israel.
Importance of Chapter 36 is that God also works outside Israel.
God gives life and blessing to the non-chosen.
While Esau is not the chosen one these texts do not forget that the story is about brothers.
Links between the two excluded sons (Ishmael and Esau) exist with Arab peoples.
As noted many in the Arab countries claim adherence to Islam.
Demonstrates the common roots in the faith of Abraham and Sarah and that heritage.

Joseph

Last major section of the *Book of Genesis* is the story of Joseph.

At the same time the text announces that this is the story of the family of Jacob (37:2).

Story concludes with reference to the promises God swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Story is influenced by *wisdom* movement as in the portrayal of Joseph as an ideal young man.

He is also seen as a model administrator, so a royal setting is also indicated.

Narrative on Joseph starts in a familiar way.

Jacob is seen as not as attentive as he could be to all of his sons.

Sons deceive their father and moving forward there is conflict among the brothers.

Chapters 37-50 answer the question from before – *Will only one brother receive the promise?*

Joseph seems to be the leading candidate to succeed Isaac and Jacob.

By the end he seems to be less of a candidate.

Chapter 38

Preceding chapter centered on the conflict between Joseph and his brothers.

It concluded with Joseph being sold to Egypt.

New chapter proceeds as if that were the end of the story for Joseph.

It picks up the continuing life of one of the brothers (in this case Judah).

It shows how the story of Jacob and his family continues alongside that of Joseph.

Judah stands over against the tradition of marriage to Canaanites.

Line of promise carries on through Tamar, a Canaanite.

Tamar is mentioned specifically in the genealogy of Jesus as found in Matthew 1.

Firstborn sons of neither Jacob nor Judah continue the line of promise leading to David.

Web of deception also continues.

Judah became a risk-taker for the sake of the family (Chapters 43-44).

He received high praise in the blessing by Jacob (Chapter 49).

Story of Joseph also becomes the story of Judah as both receive equal prominence.

Text lifts up issues of social responsibility and justice that focuses on the plight of women.

Writer recognized Tamar as one misused by a key authority figure in her life.

In spite of her oppression, she possessed resources to find a way into a more hopeful future.

She accomplished a reversal of authority (and with God not acting directly).

Writer presents Judah as one who misuses his authority and fails in his responsibilities.

He chose a self-serving route that placed in jeopardy the future of Tamar and the community.

Lesson speaks sharply about the use and abuse of power within the family and community.

Judah did change and acknowledged that the one he abused was indeed the righteous one.

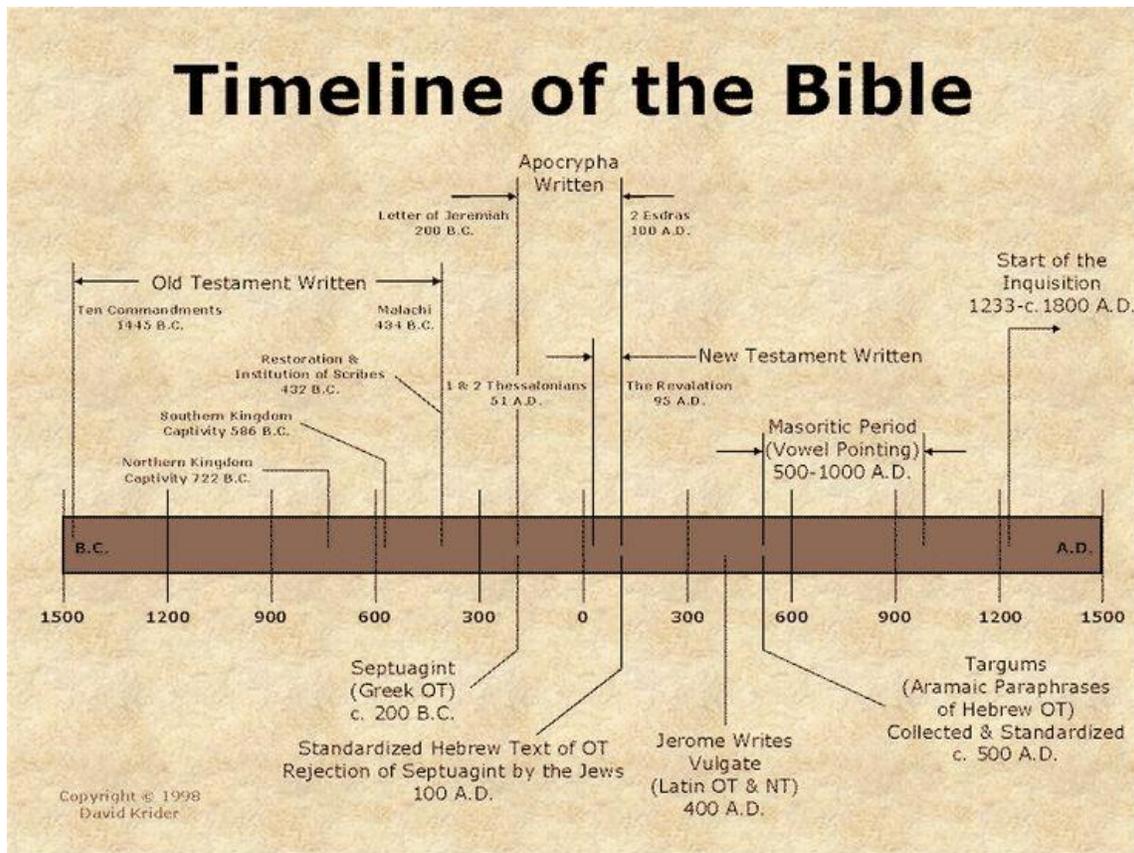
Chapters 39-41

Chapters tell the story of the problems and successes associated with the rise of Joseph.

Story bears some resemblance to the Egyptian *Tale of Two Brothers*.

Egyptian story dates from the reign of Seti II who ruled from 1200 to 1194 BC.

Story is preserved on a papyrus that is currently held in the British Museum.



In the Biblical account Joseph fled the advances of his master's wife yet suffered unjustly. In the Egyptian myth Anubis' wife tried to seduce Bata while her husband was out. Like Joseph, Bata spurned her. Like the wife of Potiphar the wife of Anubis falsely cried rape. Joseph was in prison for many years until he interpreted the dreams for Pharaoh. He was then appointed vizier of Egypt. Bata also endured a lot but became a ruler in the end (a Pharaoh).

Another little-known episode of Joseph took place during the Exodus. When the Israelites left Egypt they brought the bones of Joseph with them. Rabbinical story tells of Moses (before leaving Egypt) calling on Joseph's coffin buried in Nile. Coffin rises up and then Moses collects it. In the *Tale of Osiris*, Osiris was murdered by his jealous brother Seth and was placed in a coffin. It was then dumped in the Nile. Wife of Osiris went searching for him and later found him.

In Chapter 41 the scene changes from the prison to the palace. It mirrors the rise of Joseph from weakness to strength. Pharaoh elevated Joseph to the status of prime minister. In this capacity he proved to be an effective administrator of Egypt's economy.

Common among the cultures was the elevation of a person because he/she solved a problem.

Chapters 42-44

Previous section focused on Joseph in Egypt.

It is now balanced by these chapters that center on a new relationship for Joseph and his family.

The former developments made the latter possible.

Two journeys of the brothers to Egypt mirror the doubling of the dreams.

Scene now reverses the situation Joseph found himself in where his story started in Chapter 37.

He now has the power and the brothers are at the mercy of his decisions.

We are allowed to see how Joseph will use his power.

Various suggestions have been made regarding the motive for Joseph to give the test.

One theory is to exact punishment and revenge on his brothers.

Seems unlikely since the writer put more emphasis on the wisdom and discernment of Joseph.

Best understanding of this text is that Joseph had the best interests of everyone at heart.

Brothers need to pass through an ordeal in order to bring their memories and guilt to the surface.

In the open it could be dealt with adequately before reconciliation could truly take place.

In 43:14 Jacob first mentions God (El Shaddai) in this story.

He used the language of *mercy* and *undeserved divine favor*.

Both terms were frequent elements in Israel's confession about God.

Success of his sons' journey depended on the mercy of God.

Although hopeful, Jacob knew that things may not work out as well as he anticipated.

His trust in God enabled him to continue to express hope for the future.

Joseph used the verb meaning *be gracious* (hānan) in 43:29.

Phrase is a theological claim by Israel for the nature of its God.

It functions here as a welcoming word.

Relates back to the creedal language used by Jacob about their God.

Jacob also used this language at the reconciliation with Esau and at Jabbok.

Chapter 45-50

At this climatic point in their relationship Joseph sits in a position to do as he pleases.

Yet he makes no effort to hold his brothers accountable.

His language and demeanor do not show evidence of anger or irritation.

For some he shows more weakness than strength.

He sets aside the trappings of royalty and enters in the situation for the sake of reconciliation.

Joseph steps outside his role as Egyptian ruler and joins the family at a vulnerable moment.

A full reconciliation comes in Chapter 50.

Subsequent tribal history has shaped these chapters.

Relationship between Ephraim and Manasseh plays off the development of Israelite tribes.

Collectively they are called the *house of Joseph* (as in Amos 5:6).

Blessing of Jacob in Chapter 49 is for all of his sons.

It does recognize the ascendancy of the Joseph and Judah tribes in the north and south.

Egyptian history records a vizier to Pharaoh Djoser of the third dynasty by the name of Imhotep. He lived for 110 years and saved Egypt from a seven-year famine and made Egypt wealthy. He also heard the dreams of Pharaoh.

He is said to have designed the first pyramid and was the first to use papyrus. Scholars question whether or not Joseph and Imhotep were the same person.

Joseph is responsible for saving Egypt from a seven-year famine. He may have built the massive underground silos that can be found in many cities of Egypt. If the same person then it gives historians a solid anchor in history. It would correlate the history of Egypt, Israel and Mesopotamia. Using revised dating systems the historical records fit together much better than earlier surmised.

It also fits a theory that Amenemhet III was the Pharaoh of Moses. Pyramid of Amenemhet III was made of mud bricks containing straw.

Date	Dynasty	Egypt	Contemporary_in_Israel
2080 BC	1st	Menes	Abraham
1900 BC	3rd	Djoser+_Imhotep	Joseph
1531 BC	12th	Amenemhet_III (6th_Pharaoh)	Moses
1445 BC	13th	Neferhotep I	The Exodus (Moses)
1405 -1021 BC	15th_&_16th	Hyksos	Joshua to Saul
1018 BC	18th	Amenhotep I & Thutmosis I	King David
950 BC	18th	Hatshepsut [Queen of Sheba]	Solomon
929 BC	18th	Thutmosis III	Jereboam

Assignment for September 30

Story of Moses

Read Exodus 1-19 and 32-34