

DAY 1

GENESIS 1 - 4

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light “day” and the darkness “night.”

And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day.

Then God said, “Let there be a space between the waters, to separate the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth.” And that is what happened. God made this space to separate the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens. God called the space “sky.”

And evening passed and morning came, marking the second day.



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Then God said, “Let the waters beneath the sky flow together into one place, so dry ground may appear.” And that is what happened. God called the dry ground “land” and the waters “seas.” And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let the land sprout with vegetation—every sort of seed-bearing plant, and trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. These seeds will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came.” And that is what happened. The land produced vegetation—all sorts of seed-bearing plants, and trees with seed-bearing fruit. Their seeds produced plants and trees of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

And evening passed and morning came, marking the third day.

Then God said, “Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons, days, and years. Let these lights in the sky shine down on the earth.” And that is what happened. God made two great lights—the larger one to govern the day, and the smaller one to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set these lights in the sky to light the earth, to govern the day and night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

And evening passed and morning came, marking the fourth day.



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Then God said, “Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind.” So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that scurries and swarms in the water, and every sort of bird—each producing offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply. Let the fish fill the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.”

And evening passed and morning came, marking the fifth day.

Then God said, “Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of the same kind—livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals.” And that is what happened. God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.



Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”

Then God said, “Look! I have given you every seed-bearing plant throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food. And I have given every green plant as food for all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—everything that has life.” And that is what happened.

Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!

And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day.

So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation.

This is the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth.

When the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, neither wild plants nor grains were growing on the earth.



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For the Lord God had not yet sent rain to water the earth, and there were no people to cultivate the soil. Instead, springs came up from the ground and watered all the land. Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person.

Then the Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made. The Lord God made all sorts of trees grow up from the ground—trees that were beautiful and that produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

A river flowed from the land of Eden, watering the garden and then dividing into four branches. The first branch, called the Pishon, flowed around the entire land of Havilah, where gold is found. The gold of that land is exceptionally pure; aromatic resin and onyx stone are also found there. The second branch, called the Gihon, flowed around the entire land of Cush. The third branch, called the Tigris, flowed east of the land of Asshur. The fourth branch is called the Euphrates.

The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. But the Lord God warned him, "You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden— except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die."



Then the Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.” So the Lord God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would call them, and the man chose a name for each one. He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him.

So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the Lord God took out one of the man’s ribs and closed up the opening. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.

“At last!” the man exclaimed.

*“This one is bone from my bone,
and flesh from my flesh!
She will be called ‘woman,’
because she was taken from ‘man.’”*

This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.

*Now the man and his wife were both naked,
but they felt no shame.*

The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the Lord God had made. One day he asked the woman, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?”



“Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,” the woman replied. “It’s only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, ‘You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.’”

“You won’t die!” the serpent replied to the woman. “God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.”

The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the Lord God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the Lord God among the trees. Then the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?”

He replied, “I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked.”

*“Who told you that you were naked?”
the Lord*

God asked. “Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?”



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The man replied, “It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it.”

Then the Lord God asked the woman, “What have you done?”

“The serpent deceived me,” she replied. “That’s why I ate it.”

Then the Lord God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all animals, domestic and wild. You will crawl on your belly, groveling in the dust as long as you live. And I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.”

*Then he said to the woman,
“I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy, and in pain you will give birth. And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you.”*

*And to the man he said,
“Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat, the ground is cursed because of you.*

All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it. It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains. By the sweat of your brow will you have food to eat until you return to the ground from which you were made. For you were made from dust, and to dust you will return.”



Then the man—Adam—named his wife Eve, because she would be the mother of all who live. And the Lord God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.

Then the Lord God said, “Look, the human beings have become like us, knowing both good and evil. What if they reach out, take fruit from the tree of life, and eat it? Then they will live forever!” So the Lord God banished them from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam out to cultivate the ground from which he had been made. After sending them out, the Lord God stationed mighty cherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden. And he placed a flaming sword that flashed back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Now Adam had sexual relations with his wife, Eve, and she became pregnant. When she gave birth to Cain, she said, “With the Lord’s help, I have produced a man!” Later she gave birth to his brother and named him Abel.

When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground. When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the Lord. Abel also brought a gift—the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The Lord accepted Abel and his gift, but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected.

*“Why are you so angry?” the Lord asked Cain.
“Why do you look so dejected? You will be accepted if you do what is right.*



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But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master.”

One day Cain suggested to his brother, “Let’s go out into the fields.” And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother, Abel, and killed him.

Afterward the Lord asked Cain, “Where is your brother? Where is Abel?”

“I don’t know,” Cain responded. “Am I my brother’s guardian?”

But the Lord said, “What have you done?

Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground! Now you are cursed and banished from the ground, which has swallowed your brother’s blood. No longer will the ground yield good crops for you, no matter how hard you work! From now on you will be a homeless wanderer on the earth.”

Cain replied to the Lord, “My punishment is too great for me to bear! You have banished me from the land and from your presence; you have made me a homeless wanderer. Anyone who finds me will kill me!”

The Lord replied, “No, for I will give a sevenfold punishment to anyone who kills you.” Then the Lord put a mark on Cain to warn anyone who might try to kill him. So Cain left the Lord’s presence and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.



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Cain had sexual relations with his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Then Cain founded a city, which he named Enoch, after his son. Enoch had a son named Irad. Irad became the father of Mehujael. Mehujael became the father of Methushael. Methushael became the father of Lamech.

Lamech married two women. The first was named Adah, and the second was Zillah. Adah gave birth to Jabal, who was the first of those who raise livestock and live in tents. His brother's name was Jubal, the first of all who play the harp and flute. Lamech's other wife, Zillah, gave birth to a son named Tubal-cain. He became an expert in forging tools of bronze and iron. Tubal-cain had a sister named Naamah. One day Lamech said to his wives,

*“Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
listen to me, you wives of Lamech.
I have killed a man who attacked me,
a young man who wounded me.
If someone who kills Cain is punished seven
times, then the one who kills me will be
punished seventy-seven times!”*

Adam had sexual relations with his wife again, and she gave birth to another son. She named him Seth, for she said, “God has granted me another son in place of Abel, whom Cain killed.” When Seth grew up, he had a son and named him Enosh. At that time people first began to worship the Lord by name.



DAY 2

GENESIS 5 - 8

This is the written account of the descendants of Adam. When God created human beings, he made them to be like himself. He created them male and female, and he blessed them and called them “human.”

When Adam was 130 years old, he became the father of a son who was just like him—in his very image. He named his son Seth. After the birth of Seth, Adam lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters. Adam lived 930 years, and then he died.

When Seth was 105 years old, he became the father of Enosh. After the birth of Enosh, Seth lived another 807 years, and he had other sons and daughters. Seth lived 912 years, and then he died.

When Enosh was 90 years old, he became the father of Kenan. After the birth of Kenan, Enosh lived another 815 years, and he had other sons and daughters. Enosh lived 905 years, and then he died.



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When Kenan was 70 years old, he became the father of Mahalalel. After the birth of Mahalalel, Kenan lived another 840 years, and he had other sons and daughters. Kenan lived 910 years, and then he died.

When Mahalalel was 65 years old, he became the father of Jared. After the birth of Jared, Mahalalel lived another 830 years, and he had other sons and daughters. Mahalalel lived 895 years, and then he died.

When Jared was 162 years old, he became the father of Enoch. After the birth of Enoch, Jared lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters. Jared lived 962 years, and then he died.

When Enoch was 65 years old, he became the father of Methuselah. After the birth of Methuselah, Enoch lived in close fellowship with God for another 300 years, and he had other sons and daughters. Enoch lived 365 years, walking in close fellowship with God. Then one day he disappeared, because God took him.

When Methuselah was 187 years old, he became the father of Lamech. After the birth of Lamech, Methuselah lived another 782 years, and he had other sons and daughters. Methuselah lived 969 years, and then he died.

When Lamech was 182 years old, he became the father of a son.



Lamech named his son Noah, for he said, “May he bring us relief from our work and the painful labor of farming this ground that the Lord has cursed.” After the birth of Noah, Lamech lived another 595 years, and he had other sons and daughters. Lamech lived 777 years, and then he died.

After Noah was 500 years old, he became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Then the people began to multiply on the earth, and daughters were born to them. The sons of God saw the beautiful women and took any they wanted as their wives. Then the Lord said, “My Spirit will not put up with humans for such a long time, for they are only mortal flesh. In the future, their normal lifespan will be no more than 120 years.”

In those days, and for some time after, giant Nephilites lived on the earth, for whenever the sons of God had intercourse with women, they gave birth to children who became the heroes and famous warriors of ancient times. The Lord observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. So the Lord was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart. And the Lord said, “I will wipe this human race I have created from the face of the earth. Yes, and I will destroy every living thing—all the people, the large animals, the small animals that scurry along the ground, and even the birds of the sky. I am sorry I ever made them.”



But Noah found favor with the Lord.

This is the account of Noah and his family.

Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless person living on earth at the time, and he walked in close fellowship with God.

Noah was the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Now God saw that the earth had become corrupt and was filled with violence. God observed all this corruption in the world, for everyone on earth was corrupt. So God said to Noah, “I have decided to destroy all living creatures, for they have filled the earth with violence. Yes, I will wipe them all out along with the earth!”

“Build a large boat from cypress wood and waterproof it with tar, inside and out. Then construct decks and stalls throughout its interior. Make the boat 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. Leave an 18-inch opening below the roof all the way around the boat. Put the door on the side, and build three decks inside the boat—lower, middle, and upper.

“Look! I am about to cover the earth with a flood that will destroy every living thing that breathes. Everything on earth will die. But I will confirm my covenant with you. So enter the boat—you and your wife and your sons and their wives. Bring a pair of every kind of animal—a male and a female—into the boat with you to keep them alive during the flood.



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Pairs of every kind of bird, and every kind of animal, and every kind of small animal that scurries along the ground, will come to you to be kept alive. And be sure to take on board enough food for your family and for all the animals.”

So Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him.

When everything was ready, the Lord said to Noah, “Go into the boat with all your family, for among all the people of the earth, I can see that you alone are righteous. Take with you seven pairs—male and female—of each animal I have approved for eating and for sacrifice, and take one pair of each of the others. Also take seven pairs of every kind of bird. There must be a male and a female in each pair to ensure that all life will survive on the earth after the flood. Seven days from now I will make the rains pour down on the earth. And it will rain for forty days and forty nights, until I have wiped from the earth all the living things I have created.”

So Noah did everything as the Lord commanded him.

Noah was 600 years old when the flood covered the earth. He went on board the boat to escape the flood—he and his wife and his sons and their wives. With them were all the various kinds of animals—those approved for eating and for sacrifice and those that were not—along with all the birds and the small animals that scurry along the ground.



They entered the boat in pairs, male and female, just as God had commanded Noah. After seven days, the waters of the flood came and covered the earth.

When Noah was 600 years old, on the seventeenth day of the second month, all the underground waters erupted from the earth, and the rain fell in mighty torrents from the sky. The rain continued to fall for forty days and forty nights.

That very day Noah had gone into the boat with his wife and his sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—and their wives. With them in the boat were pairs of every kind of animal—domestic and wild, large and small—along with birds of every kind. Two by two they came into the boat, representing every living thing that breathes. A male and female of each kind entered, just as God had commanded Noah. Then the Lord closed the door behind them.

For forty days the floodwaters grew deeper, covering the ground and lifting the boat high above the earth. As the waters rose higher and higher above the ground, the boat floated safely on the surface. Finally, the water covered even the highest mountains on the earth, rising more than twenty-two feet above the highest peaks. All the living things on earth died—birds, domestic animals, wild animals, small animals that scurry along the ground, and all the people. Everything that breathed and lived on dry land died.



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God wiped out every living thing on the earth —people, livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and the birds of the sky. All were destroyed. The only people who survived were Noah and those with him in the boat. And the floodwaters covered the earth for 150 days.

But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and livestock with him in the boat. He sent a wind to blow across the earth, and the floodwaters began to recede. The underground waters stopped flowing, and the torrential rains from the sky were stopped. So the floodwaters gradually receded from the earth. After 150 days, exactly five months from the time the flood began, the boat came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. Two and a half months later, as the waters continued to go down, other mountain peaks became visible.

After another forty days, Noah opened the window he had made in the boat and released a raven. The bird flew back and forth until the floodwaters on the earth had dried up. He also released a dove to see if the water had receded and it could find dry ground. But the dove could find no place to land because the water still covered the ground. So it returned to the boat, and Noah held out his hand and drew the dove back inside. After waiting another seven days, Noah released the dove again. This time the dove returned to him in the evening with a fresh olive leaf in its beak. Then Noah knew that the floodwaters were almost gone.



He waited another seven days and then released the dove again. This time it did not come back.

Noah was now 601 years old. On the first day of the new year, ten and a half months after the flood began, the floodwaters had almost dried up from the earth. Noah lifted back the covering of the boat and saw that the surface of the ground was drying. Two more months went by, and at last the earth was dry!

Then God said to Noah, “Leave the boat, all of you—you and your wife, and your sons and their wives. Release all the animals—the birds, the livestock, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—so they can be fruitful and multiply throughout the earth.”

So Noah, his wife, and his sons and their wives left the boat. And all of the large and small animals and birds came out of the boat, pair by pair.

Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and there he sacrificed as burnt offerings the animals and birds that had been approved for that purpose. And the Lord was pleased with the aroma of the sacrifice and said to himself, “I will never again curse the ground because of the human race, even though everything they think or imagine is bent toward evil from childhood. I will never again destroy all living things. As long as the earth remains, there will be planting and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night.”



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DAY 3

GENESIS 9 - 12

Then God blessed Noah and his sons and told them, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth. All the animals of the earth, all the birds of the sky, all the small animals that scurry along the ground, and all the fish in the sea will look on you with fear and terror. I have placed them in your power. I have given them to you for food, just as I have given you grain and vegetables. But you must never eat any meat that still has the lifeblood in it.

“And I will require the blood of anyone who takes another person’s life. If a wild animal kills a person, it must die. And anyone who murders a fellow human must die. If anyone takes a human life, that person’s life will also be taken by human hands. For God made human beings in his own image. Now be fruitful and multiply, and repopulate the earth.”

Then God told Noah and his sons, “I hereby confirm my covenant with you and your descendants, and with all the animals that were on the boat with you—



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the birds, the livestock, and all the wild animals—every living creature on earth. Yes, I am confirming my covenant with you. Never again will floodwaters kill all living creatures; never again will a flood destroy the earth.”

Then God said, “I am giving you a sign of my covenant with you and with all living creatures, for all generations to come. I have placed my rainbow in the clouds. It is the sign of my covenant with you and with all the earth. When I send clouds over the earth, the rainbow will appear in the clouds, and I will remember my covenant with you and with all living creatures. Never again will the floodwaters destroy all life. When I see the rainbow in the clouds, I will remember the eternal covenant between God and every living creature on earth.” Then God said to Noah, “Yes, this rainbow is the sign of the covenant I am confirming with all the creatures on earth.”

The sons of Noah who came out of the boat with their father were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham is the father of Canaan.) From these three sons of Noah came all the people who now populate the earth.

After the flood, Noah began to cultivate the ground, and he planted a vineyard. One day he drank some wine he had made, and he became drunk and lay naked inside his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw that his father was naked and went outside and told his brothers.



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Then Shem and Japheth took a robe, held it over their shoulders, and backed into the tent to cover their father. As they did this, they looked the other way so they would not see him naked.

When Noah woke up from his stupor, he learned what Ham, his youngest son, had done. Then he cursed Canaan, the son of Ham

*“May Canaan be cursed!
May he be the lowest of servants to his relatives.”*

*Then Noah said,
“May the Lord, the God of Shem, be blessed,
and may Canaan be his servant!
May God expand the territory of Japheth!
May Japheth share the prosperity of Shem,
and may Canaan be his servant.”*

Noah lived another 350 years after the great flood. He lived 950 years, and then he died.

This is the account of the families of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the three sons of Noah. Many children were born to them after the great flood.

The descendants of Japheth were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.

The descendants of Gomer were Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.

The descendants of Javan were Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim.



Their descendants became the seafaring peoples that spread out to various lands, each identified by its own language, clan, and national identity.

The descendants of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.

The descendants of Cush were Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The descendants of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.

Cush was also the ancestor of Nimrod, who was the first heroic warrior on earth. Since he was the greatest hunter in the world, his name became proverbial. People would say, "This man is like Nimrod, the greatest hunter in the world." He built his kingdom in the land of Babylonia, with the cities of Babylon, Erech, Akkad, and Calneh. From there he expanded his territory to Assyria, building the cities of Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Calah, and Resen (the great city located between Nineveh and Calah).

Mizraim was the ancestor of the Ludites, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites, Pathrusites, Casluhites, and the Caphtorites, from whom the Philistines came.

Canaan's oldest son was Sidon, the ancestor of the Sidonians. Canaan was also the ancestor of the Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, Arvadites, Zemarites, and Hamathites.



The Canaanite clans eventually spread out, and the territory of Canaan extended from Sidon in the north to Gerar and Gaza in the south, and east as far as Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, near Lasha.

These were the descendants of Ham, identified by clan, language, territory, and national identity.

Sons were also born to Shem, the older brother of Japheth. Shem was the ancestor of all the descendants of Eber.

The descendants of Shem were Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram.

The descendants of Aram were Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.

Arphaxad was the father of Shelah, and Shelah was the father of Eber.

Eber had two sons. The first was named Peleg (which means “division”), for during his lifetime the people of the world were divided into different language groups. His brother’s name was Joktan.

Joktan was the ancestor of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, Obal, Abimael, Sheba, Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All these were descendants of Joktan. The territory they occupied extended from Mesha all the way to Sephar in the eastern mountains.



These were the descendants of Shem, identified by clan, language, territory, and national identity.

These are the clans that descended from Noah's sons, arranged by nation according to their lines of descent. All the nations of the earth descended from these clans after the great flood.

At one time all the people of the world spoke the same language and used the same words. As the people migrated to the east, they found a plain in the land of Babylonia and settled there.

They began saying to each other, "Let's make bricks and harden them with fire." (In this region bricks were used instead of stone, and tar was used for mortar.) Then they said, "Come, let's build a great city for ourselves with a tower that reaches into the sky. This will make us famous and keep us from being scattered all over the world."

But the Lord came down to look at the city and the tower the people were building. "Look!" he said. "The people are united, and they all speak the same language. After this, nothing they set out to do will be impossible for them! Come, let's go down and confuse the people with different languages. Then they won't be able to understand each other."

In that way, the Lord scattered them all over the world, and they stopped building the city.



That is why the city was called Babel, because that is where the Lord confused the people with different languages. In this way he scattered them all over the world.

This is the account of Shem's family. Two years after the great flood, when Shem was 100 years old, he became the father of Arphaxad. After the birth of Arphaxad, Shem lived another 500 years and had other sons and daughters.

When Arphaxad was 35 years old, he became the father of Shelah. After the birth of Shelah, Arphaxad lived another 403 years and had other sons and daughters.

When Shelah was 30 years old, he became the father of Eber. After the birth of Eber, Shelah lived another 403 years and had other sons and daughters.

When Eber was 34 years old, he became the father of Peleg. After the birth of Peleg, Eber lived another 430 years and had other sons and daughters.

When Peleg was 30 years old, he became the father of Reu. After the birth of Reu, Peleg lived another 209 years and had other sons and daughters.

When Reu was 32 years old, he became the father of Serug. After the birth of Serug, Reu lived another 207 years and had other sons and daughters.



When Serug was 30 years old, he became the father of Nahor. After the birth of Nahor, Serug lived another 200 years and had other sons and daughters.

When Nahor was 29 years old, he became the father of Terah. After the birth of Terah, Nahor lived another 119 years and had other sons and daughters.

After Terah was 70 years old, he became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

This is the account of Terah's family. Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran was the father of Lot. But Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans, the land of his birth, while his father, Terah, was still living. Meanwhile, Abram and Nahor both married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah. (Milcah and her sister Iscah were daughters of Nahor's brother Haran.) But Sarai was unable to become pregnant and had no children.

One day Terah took his son Abram, his daughter-in-law Sarai (his son Abram's wife), and his grandson Lot (his son Haran's child) and moved away from Ur of the Chaldeans. He was headed for the land of Canaan, but they stopped at Haran and settled there.

Terah lived for 205 years and died while still in Haran. The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you."



I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.”

So Abram departed as the Lord had instructed, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all his wealth—his livestock and all the people he had taken into his household at Haran—and headed for the land of Canaan. When they arrived in Canaan, Abram traveled through the land as far as Shechem. There he set up camp beside the oak of Moreh. At that time, the area was inhabited by Canaanites.

Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “I will give this land to your descendants.” And Abram built an altar there and dedicated it to the Lord, who had appeared to him. After that, Abram traveled south and set up camp in the hill country, with Bethel to the west and Ai to the east. There he built another altar and dedicated it to the Lord, and he worshiped the Lord. Then Abram continued traveling south by stages toward the Negev. At that time a severe famine struck the land of Canaan, forcing Abram to go down to Egypt, where he lived as a foreigner. As he was approaching the border of Egypt, Abram said to his wife, Sarai, “Look, you are a very beautiful woman. When the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife. Let’s kill him; then we can have her!’”



So please tell them you are my sister. Then they will spare my life and treat me well because of their interest in you.”

And sure enough, when Abram arrived in Egypt, everyone noticed Sarai’s beauty. When the palace officials saw her, they sang her praises to Pharaoh, their king, and Sarai was taken into his palace. Then Pharaoh gave Abram many gifts because of her—sheep, goats, cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.

But the Lord sent terrible plagues upon Pharaoh and his household because of Sarai, Abram’s wife. So Pharaoh summoned Abram and accused him sharply. “What have you done to me?” he demanded. “Why didn’t you tell me she was your wife? Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ and allow me to take her as my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and get out of here!” Pharaoh ordered some of his men to escort them, and he sent Abram out of the country, along with his wife and all his possessions.



DAY 4

GENESIS 13 - 16

So Abram left Egypt and traveled north into the Negev, along with his wife and Lot and all that they owned. (Abram was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold.) From the Negev, they continued traveling by stages toward Bethel, and they pitched their tents between Bethel and Ai, where they had camped before. This was the same place where Abram had built the altar, and there he worshiped the Lord again.

Lot, who was traveling with Abram, had also become very wealthy with flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, and many tents. But the land could not support both Abram and Lot with all their flocks and herds living so close together. So disputes broke out between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot. (At that time Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land.)

Finally Abram said to Lot, “Let’s not allow this conflict to come between us or our herdsmen. After all, we are close relatives! The whole countryside is open to you.



Cottonwood Creek
— CHURCH —

Take your choice of any section of the land you want, and we will separate. If you want the land to the left, then I'll take the land on the right. If you prefer the land on the right, then I'll go to the left."

Lot took a long look at the fertile plains of the Jordan Valley in the direction of Zoar. The whole area was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the Lord or the beautiful land of Egypt. (This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) Lot chose for himself the whole Jordan Valley to the east of them. He went there with his flocks and servants and parted company with his uncle Abram. So Abram settled in the land of Canaan, and Lot moved his tents to a place near Sodom and settled among the cities of the plain. But the people of this area were extremely wicked and constantly sinned against the Lord.

After Lot had gone, the Lord said to Abram, "Look as far as you can see in every direction—north and south, east and west. I am giving all this land, as far as you can see, to you and your descendants as a permanent possession. And I will give you so many descendants that, like the dust of the earth, they cannot be counted! Go and walk through the land in every direction, for I am giving it to you."

So Abram moved his camp to Hebron and settled near the oak grove belonging to Mamre. There he built another altar to the Lord.

About this time war broke out in the region.



King Amraphel of Babylonia, King Arioch of Ellasar, King Kedorlaomer of Elam, and King Tidal of Goiim fought against King Bera of Sodom, King Birsha of Gomorrah, King Shinab of Admah, King Shemeber of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (also called Zoar).

This second group of kings joined forces in Siddim Valley (that is, the valley of the Dead Sea). For twelve years they had been subject to King Kedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled against him.

One year later Kedorlaomer and his allies arrived and defeated the Rephaites at Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzites at Ham, the Emites at Shaveh-kiriathaim, and the Horites at Mount Seir, as far as El-paran at the edge of the wilderness. Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (now called Kadesh) and conquered all the territory of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites living in Hazazon-tamar.

Then the rebel kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela (also called Zoar) prepared for battle in the valley of the Dead Sea. They fought against King Kedorlaomer of Elam, King Tidal of Goiim, King Amraphel of Babylonia, and King Arioch of Ellasar—four kings against five. As it happened, the valley of the Dead Sea was filled with tar pits. And as the army of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into the tar pits, while the rest escaped into the mountains.



The victorious invaders then plundered Sodom and Gomorrah and headed for home, taking with them all the spoils of war and the food supplies. They also captured Lot—Abram’s nephew who lived in Sodom—and carried off everything he owned.

But one of Lot’s men escaped and reported everything to Abram the Hebrew, who was living near the oak grove belonging to Mamre the Amorite. Mamre and his relatives, Eshcol and Aner, were Abram’s allies.

When Abram heard that his nephew Lot had been captured, he mobilized the 318 trained men who had been born into his household. Then he pursued Kedorlaomer’s army until he caught up with them at Dan. There he divided his men and attacked during the night. Kedorlaomer’s army fled, but Abram chased them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. Abram recovered all the goods that had been taken, and he brought back his nephew Lot with his possessions and all the women and other captives. After Abram returned from his victory over Kedorlaomer and all his allies, the king of Sodom went out to meet him in the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley). And Melchizedek, the king of Salem and a priest of God Most High, brought Abram some bread and wine.

Melchizedek blessed Abram with this blessing:

*“Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Creator of heaven and earth.
And blessed be God Most High, who has
defeated your enemies for you.”*



Cottonwood Creek
— CHURCH —

Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the goods he had recovered.

The king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give back my people who were captured. But you may keep for yourself all the goods you have recovered.”

Abram replied to the king of Sodom, “I solemnly swear to the Lord, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, that I will not take so much as a single thread or sandal thong from what belongs to you. Otherwise you might say, ‘I am the one who made Abram rich.’ I will accept only what my young warriors have already eaten, and I request that you give a fair share of the goods to my allies—Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre.”

Some time later, the Lord spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, “Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great.”

But Abram replied, “O Sovereign Lord, what good are all your blessings when I don’t even have a son? Since you’ve given me no children, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth. You have given me no descendants of my own, so one of my servants will be my heir.”

Then the Lord said to him, “No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own who will be your heir.” Then the Lord took Abram outside and said to him, “Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That’s how many descendants you will have!”



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And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith.

Then the Lord told him, “I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land as your possession.”

But Abram replied, “O Sovereign Lord, how can I be sure that I will actually possess it?”

The Lord told him, “Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” So Abram presented all these to him and killed them. Then he cut each animal down the middle and laid the halves side by side; he did not, however, cut the birds in half.

Some vultures swooped down to eat the carcasses, but Abram chased them away. As the sun was going down, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a terrifying darkness came down over him. Then the Lord said to Abram, “You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, where they will be oppressed as slaves for 400 years. But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and in the end they will come away with great wealth. (As for you, you will die in peace and be buried at a ripe old age.) After four generations your descendants will return here to this land, for the sins of the Amorites do not yet warrant their destruction.”

After the sun went down and darkness fell, Abram saw a smoking firepot and a flaming torch pass between the halves of the carcasses.



So the Lord made a covenant with Abram that day and said, “I have given this land to your descendants, all the way from the border of Egypt to the great Euphrates River—the land now occupied by the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites.”

Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had not been able to bear children for him. But she had an Egyptian servant named Hagar. So Sarai said to Abram, “The Lord has prevented me from having children. Go and sleep with my servant. Perhaps I can have children through her.” And Abram agreed with Sarai’s proposal. So Sarai, Abram’s wife, took Hagar the Egyptian servant and gave her to Abram as a wife. (This happened ten years after Abram had settled in the land of Canaan.)

So Abram had sexual relations with Hagar, and she became pregnant. But when Hagar knew she was pregnant, she began to treat her mistress, Sarai, with contempt. Then Sarai said to Abram, “This is all your fault! I put my servant into your arms, but now that she’s pregnant she treats me with contempt. The Lord will show who’s wrong—you or me!”

Abram replied, “Look, she is your servant, so deal with her as you see fit.” Then Sarai treated Hagar so harshly that she finally ran away. The angel of the Lord found Hagar beside a spring of water in the wilderness, along the road to Shur.



The angel said to her, “Hagar, Sarai’s servant, where have you come from, and where are you going?”

“I’m running away from my mistress, Sarai,” she replied.

The angel of the Lord said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit to her authority.” Then he added, “I will give you more descendants than you can count.”

And the angel also said, “You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son. You are to name him Ishmael (which means ‘God hears’), for the Lord has heard your cry of distress. This son of yours will be a wild man, as untamed as a wild donkey! He will raise his fist against everyone, and everyone will be against him. Yes, he will live in open hostility against all his relatives.”

Thereafter, Hagar used another name to refer to the Lord, who had spoken to her. She said, “You are the God who sees me.” She also said, “Have I truly seen the One who sees me?” So that well was named Beer-lahai-roi (which means “well of the Living One who sees me”). It can still be found between Kadesh and Bered.

So Hagar gave Abram a son, and Abram named him Ishmael. Abram was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born.



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DAY 5

GENESIS 17 - 20

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, “I am El-Shaddai—‘God Almighty.’ Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life. I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to give you countless descendants.”

At this, Abram fell face down on the ground. Then God said to him, “This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of a multitude of nations! What’s more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be Abram. Instead, you will be called Abraham, for you will be the father of many nations. I will make you extremely fruitful. Your descendants will become many nations, and kings will be among them!”

“I will confirm my covenant with you and your descendants after you, from generation to generation. This is the everlasting covenant: I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you. And I will give the entire land of Canaan, where you now live as a foreigner, to you and your descendants.



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— CHURCH —

It will be their possession forever, and I will be their God.”

Then God said to Abraham, “Your responsibility is to obey the terms of the covenant. You and all your descendants have this continual responsibility. This is the covenant that you and your descendants must keep: Each male among you must be circumcised. You must cut off the flesh of your foreskin as a sign of the covenant between me and you. From generation to generation, every male child must be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. This applies not only to members of your family but also to the servants born in your household and the foreign-born servants whom you have purchased. All must be circumcised. Your bodies will bear the mark of my everlasting covenant. Any male who fails to be circumcised will be cut off from the covenant family for breaking the covenant.”

Then God said to Abraham, “Regarding Sarai, your wife—her name will no longer be Sarai. From now on her name will be Sarah. And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly, and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings of nations will be among her descendants.”

Then Abraham bowed down to the ground, but he laughed to himself in disbelief. “How could I become a father at the age of 100?” he thought. “And how can Sarah have a baby when she is ninety years old?” So Abraham said to God, “May Ishmael live under your special blessing!”



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But God replied, “No—Sarah, your wife, will give birth to a son for you. You will name him Isaac, and I will confirm my covenant with him and his descendants as an everlasting covenant. As for Ishmael, I will bless him also, just as you have asked. I will make him extremely fruitful and multiply his descendants. He will become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will be confirmed with Isaac, who will be born to you and Sarah about this time next year.” When God had finished speaking, he left Abraham.

On that very day Abraham took his son, Ishmael, and every male in his household, including those born there and those he had bought. Then he circumcised them, cutting off their foreskins, just as God had told him. Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised, and Ishmael, his son, was thirteen. Both Abraham and his son, Ishmael, were circumcised on that same day, along with all the other men and boys of the household, whether they were born there or bought as servants. All were circumcised with him.

The Lord appeared again to Abraham near the oak grove belonging to Mamre. One day Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent during the hottest part of the day. He looked up and noticed three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he ran to meet them and welcomed them, bowing low to the ground.



“My lord,” he said, “if it pleases you, stop here for a while. Rest in the shade of this tree while water is brought to wash your feet. And since you’ve honored your servant with this visit, let me prepare some food to refresh you before you continue on your journey.”

“All right,” they said. “Do as you have said.”

So Abraham ran back to the tent and said to Sarah, “Hurry! Get three large measures of your best flour, knead it into dough, and bake some bread.” Then Abraham ran out to the herd and chose a tender calf and gave it to his servant, who quickly prepared it. When the food was ready, Abraham took some yogurt and milk and the roasted meat, and he served it to the men. As they ate, Abraham waited on them in the shade of the trees.

“Where is Sarah, your wife?” the visitors asked. “She’s inside the tent,” Abraham replied.

Then one of them said, “I will return to you about this time next year, and your wife, Sarah, will have a son!”

Sarah was listening to this conversation from the tent. Abraham and Sarah were both very old by this time, and Sarah was long past the age of having children. So she laughed silently to herself and said, “How could a worn-out woman like me enjoy such pleasure, especially when my master—my husband—is also so old?” Then the Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, ‘Can an old woman like me have a baby?’



Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son."

Sarah was afraid, so she denied it, saying, "I didn't laugh."

But the Lord said, "No, you did laugh."

Then the men got up from their meal and looked out toward Sodom. As they left, Abraham went with them to send them on their way.

"Should I hide my plan from Abraham?" the Lord asked. "For Abraham will certainly become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him. I have singled him out so that he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just. Then I will do for Abraham all that I have promised."

So the Lord told Abraham, "I have heard a great outcry from Sodom and Gomorrah, because their sin is so flagrant. I am going down to see if their actions are as wicked as I have heard. If not, I want to know."

The other men turned and headed toward Sodom, but the Lord remained with Abraham. Abraham approached him and said, "Will you sweep away both the righteous and the wicked? Suppose you find fifty righteous people living there in the city—will you still sweep it away and not spare it for their sakes?"



Surely you wouldn't do such a thing, destroying the righteous along with the wicked. Why, you would be treating the righteous and the wicked exactly the same! Surely you wouldn't do that! Should not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?"

And the Lord replied, "If I find fifty righteous people in Sodom, I will spare the entire city for their sake."

Then Abraham spoke again. "Since I have begun, let me speak further to my Lord, even though I am but dust and ashes. Suppose there are only forty-five righteous people rather than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?" And the Lord said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five righteous people there."

Then Abraham pressed his request further "Suppose there are only forty?" And the Lord replied, "I will not destroy it for the sake of the forty."

"Please don't be angry, my Lord," Abraham pleaded. "Let me speak—suppose only thirty righteous people are found?" And the Lord replied, "I will not destroy it if I find thirty."

Then Abraham said, "Since I have dared to speak to the Lord, let me continue—suppose there are only twenty?"

And the Lord replied, "Then I will not destroy it for the sake of the twenty."



Finally, Abraham said, “Lord, please don’t be angry with me if I speak one more time. Suppose only ten are found there?”

And the Lord replied, “Then I will not destroy it for the sake of the ten.”

When the Lord had finished his conversation with Abraham, he went on his way, and Abraham returned to his tent.

That evening the two angels came to the entrance of the city of Sodom. Lot was sitting there, and when he saw them, he stood up to meet them. Then he welcomed them and bowed with his face to the ground. “My lords,” he said, “come to my home to wash your feet, and be my guests for the night. You may then get up early in the morning and be on your way again.”

“Oh no,” they replied. “We’ll just spend the night out here in the city square.”

But Lot insisted, so at last they went home with him. Lot prepared a feast for them, complete with fresh bread made without yeast, and they ate. But before they retired for the night, all the men of Sodom, young and old, came from all over the city and surrounded the house. They shouted to Lot, “Where are the men who came to spend the night with you? Bring them out to us so we can have sex with them!”

So Lot stepped outside to talk to them, shutting the door behind him.



Cottonwood Creek
— CHURCH —

“Please, my brothers,” he begged, “don’t do such a wicked thing. Look, I have two virgin daughters. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do with them as you wish. But please, leave these men alone, for they are my guests and are under my protection.”

“Stand back!” they shouted. “This fellow came to town as an outsider, and now he’s acting like our judge! We’ll treat you far worse than those other men!” And they lunged toward Lot to break down the door.

But the two angels reached out, pulled Lot into the house, and bolted the door. Then they blinded all the men, young and old, who were at the door of the house, so they gave up trying to get inside.

Meanwhile, the angels questioned Lot. “Do you have any other relatives here in the city?” they asked. “Get them out of this place—your sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone else.

For we are about to destroy this city completely. The outcry against this place is so great it has reached the Lord, and he has sent us to destroy it.”

So Lot rushed out to tell his daughters’ fiancés, “Quick, get out of the city! The Lord is about to destroy it.” But the young men thought he was only joking.

At dawn the next morning the angels became insistent. “Hurry,” they said to Lot. “Take your wife and your two daughters who are here. Get out right now, or you will be swept away in the destruction of the city!”



When Lot still hesitated, the angels seized his hand and the hands of his wife and two daughters and rushed them to safety outside the city, for the Lord was merciful. When they were safely out of the city, one of the angels ordered, “Run for your lives! And don’t look back or stop anywhere in the valley! Escape to the mountains, or you will be swept away!”

“Oh no, my lord!” Lot begged. “You have been so gracious to me and saved my life, and you have shown such great kindness. But I cannot go to the mountains. Disaster would catch up to me there, and I would soon die. See, there is a small village nearby. Please let me go there instead; don’t you see how small it is? Then my life will be saved.”

“All right,” the angel said, “I will grant your request. I will not destroy the little village. But hurry! Escape to it, for I can do nothing until you arrive there.” (This explains why that village was known as Zoar, which means “little place.”)

Lot reached the village just as the sun was rising over the horizon. Then the Lord rained down fire and burning sulfur from the sky on Sodom and Gomorrah. He utterly destroyed them, along with the other cities and villages of the plain, wiping out all the people and every bit of vegetation. But Lot’s wife looked back as she was following behind him, and she turned into a pillar of salt. Abraham got up early that morning and hurried out to the place where he had stood in the Lord’s presence.



He looked out across the plain toward Sodom and Gomorrah and watched as columns of smoke rose from the cities like smoke from a furnace.

But God had listened to Abraham's request and kept Lot safe, removing him from the disaster that engulfed the cities on the plain.

Afterward Lot left Zoar because he was afraid of the people there, and he went to live in a cave in the mountains with his two daughters. One day the older daughter said to her sister, "There are no men left anywhere in this entire area, so we can't get married like everyone else. And our father will soon be too old to have children. Come, let's get him drunk with wine, and then we will have sex with him. That way we will preserve our family line through our father."

So that night they got him drunk with wine, and the older daughter went in and had intercourse with her father. He was unaware of her lying down or getting up again.

The next morning the older daughter said to her younger sister, "I had sex with our father last night. Let's get him drunk with wine again tonight, and you go in and have sex with him. That way we will preserve our family line through our father." So that night they got him drunk with wine again, and the younger daughter went in and had intercourse with him. As before, he was unaware of her lying down or getting up again.



As a result, both of Lot's daughters became pregnant by their own father. When the older daughter gave birth to a son, she named him Moab. He became the ancestor of the nation now known as the Moabites. When the younger daughter gave birth to a son, she named him Ben-ammi. He became the ancestor of the nation now known as the Ammonites. Abraham moved south to the Negev and lived for a while between Kadesh and Shur, and then he moved on to Gerar. While living there as a foreigner, Abraham introduced his wife, Sarah, by saying, "She is my sister." So King Abimelech of Gerar sent for Sarah and had her brought to him at his palace.

But that night God came to Abimelech in a dream and told him, "You are a dead man, for that woman you have taken is already married!"

But Abimelech had not slept with her yet, so he said, "Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation? Didn't Abraham tell me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'Yes, he is my brother.' I acted in complete innocence! My hands are clean."

In the dream God responded, "Yes, I know you are innocent. That's why I kept you from sinning against me, and why I did not let you touch her. Now return the woman to her husband, and he will pray for you, for he is a prophet. Then you will live. But if you don't return her to him, you can be sure that you and all your people will die."



Cottonwood Creek
— CHURCH —

Abimelech got up early the next morning and quickly called all his servants together. When he told them what had happened, his men were terrified. Then Abimelech called for Abraham. "What have you done to us?" he demanded. "What crime have I committed that deserves treatment like this, making me and my kingdom guilty of this great sin? No one should ever do what you have done! Whatever possessed you to do such a thing?"

Abraham replied, "I thought, 'This is a godless place. They will want my wife and will kill me to get her.' And she really is my sister, for we both have the same father, but different mothers. And I married her. When God called me to leave my father's home and to travel from place to place, I told her, 'Do me a favor. Wherever we go, tell the people that I am your brother.'" Then Abimelech took some of his sheep and goats, cattle, and male and female servants, and he presented them to Abraham. He also returned his wife, Sarah, to him. Then Abimelech said, "Look over my land and choose any place where you would like to live." And he said to Sarah, "Look, I am giving your 'brother' 1,000 pieces of silver in the presence of all these witnesses. This is to compensate you for any wrong I may have done to you. This will settle any claim against me, and your reputation is cleared." Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants, so they could have children. For the Lord had caused all the women to be infertile because of what happened with Abraham's wife, Sarah.



DAY 8

GENESIS 21 - 24

The Lord kept his word and did for Sarah exactly what he had promised. She became pregnant, and she gave birth to a son for Abraham in his old age. This happened at just the time God had said it would. And Abraham named their son Isaac. Eight days after Isaac was born, Abraham circumcised him as God had commanded. Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born. And Sarah declared, “God has brought me laughter. All who hear about this will laugh with me. Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse a baby? Yet I have given Abraham a son in his old age!” When Isaac grew up and was about to be weaned, Abraham prepared a huge feast to celebrate the occasion.

But Sarah saw Ishmael—the son of Abraham and her Egyptian servant Hagar—making fun of her son, Isaac. So she turned to Abraham and demanded, “Get rid of that slave woman and her son. He is not going to share the inheritance with my son, Isaac. I won’t have it!”



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This upset Abraham very much because Ishmael was his son. But God told Abraham, “Do not be upset over the boy and your servant. Do whatever Sarah tells you, for Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted. But I will also make a nation of the descendants of Hagar’s son because he is your son, too.”

So Abraham got up early the next morning, prepared food and a container of water, and strapped them on Hagar’s shoulders. Then he sent her away with their son, and she wandered aimlessly in the wilderness of Beersheba.

When the water was gone, she put the boy in the shade of a bush. Then she went and sat down by herself about a hundred yards away. “I don’t want to watch the boy die,” she said, as she burst into tears.

But God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, “Hagar, what’s wrong? Do not be afraid! God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Go to him and comfort him, for I will make a great nation from his descendants.”

Then God opened Hagar’s eyes, and she saw a well full of water. She quickly filled her water container and gave the boy a drink.

And God was with the boy as he grew up in the wilderness. He became a skillful archer, and he settled in the wilderness of Paran. His mother arranged for him to marry a woman from the land of Egypt.



About this time, Abimelech came with Phicol, his army commander, to visit Abraham. “God is obviously with you, helping you in everything you do,” Abimelech said. “Swear to me in God’s name that you will never deceive me, my children, or any of my descendants. I have been loyal to you, so now swear that you will be loyal to me and to this country where you are living as a foreigner.”

Abraham replied, “Yes, I swear to it!” Then Abraham complained to Abimelech about a well that Abimelech’s servants had taken by force from Abraham’s servants.

“This is the first I’ve heard of it,” Abimelech answered. “I have no idea who is responsible. You have never complained about this before.”

Abraham then gave some of his sheep, goats, and cattle to Abimelech, and they made a treaty. But Abraham also took seven additional female lambs and set them off by themselves. Abimelech asked, “Why have you set these seven apart from the others?”

Abraham replied, “Please accept these seven lambs to show your agreement that I dug this well.” Then he named the place Beersheba (which means “well of the oath”), because that was where they had sworn the oath.

After making their covenant at Beersheba, Abimelech left with Phicol, the commander of his army, and they returned home to the land of the Philistines.



Then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he worshiped the Lord, the Eternal God. And Abraham lived as a foreigner in Philistine country for a long time.

Some time later, God tested Abraham's faith. "Abraham!" God called.

"Yes," he replied. "Here I am."

"Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you."

The next morning Abraham got up early. He saddled his donkey and took two of his servants with him, along with his son, Isaac. Then he chopped wood for a fire for a burnt offering and set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day of their journey, Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. "Stay here with the donkey," Abraham told the servants. "The boy and I will travel a little farther. We will worship there, and then we will come right back."

So Abraham placed the wood for the burnt offering on Isaac's shoulders, while he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them walked on together, Isaac turned to Abraham and said, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.



***“We have the fire and the wood,” the boy said,
“but where is the sheep for the
burnt offering?”***

***“God will provide a sheep for the burnt
offering, my son,” Abraham answered. And
they both walked on together.***

***When they arrived at the place where God
had told him to go, Abraham built an altar
and arranged the wood on it. Then he tied his
son, Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of
the wood. And Abraham picked up the knife to
kill his son as a sacrifice. At that moment the
angel of the Lord called to him from heaven,
“Abraham! Abraham!”***

“Yes,” Abraham replied. “Here I am!”

***“Don’t lay a hand on the boy!” the angel said.
“Do not hurt him in any way, for now I know
that you truly fear God. You have not withheld
from me even your son, your only son.”***

***Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram
caught by its horns in a thicket. So he took the
ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering in
place of his son. Abraham named the place
Yahweh-Yireh (which means “the Lord will
provide”). To this day, people still use that
name as a proverb: “On the mountain of the
Lord it will be provided.”***

***Then the angel of the Lord called again to
Abraham from heaven.***



Cottonwood Creek
— CHURCH —

“This is what the Lord says: Because you have obeyed me and have not withheld even your son, your only son, I swear by my own name that I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies. And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me.”

Then they returned to the servants and traveled back to Beersheba, where Abraham continued to live.

Soon after this, Abraham heard that Milcah, his brother Nahor’s wife, had borne Nahor eight sons. The oldest was named Uz, the next oldest was Buz, followed by Kemuel (the ancestor of the Arameans), Kesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel. (Bethuel became the father of Rebekah.) In addition to these eight sons from Milcah, Nahor had four other children from his concubine Reumah. Their names were Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

When Sarah was 127 years old, she died at Kiriath-arba (now called Hebron) in the land of Canaan. There Abraham mourned and wept for her.

Then, leaving her body, he said to the Hittite elders, “Here I am, a stranger and a foreigner among you. Please sell me a piece of land so I can give my wife a proper burial.”



Cottonwood Creek
— CHURCH —

The Hittites replied to Abraham, “Listen, my lord, you are an honored prince among us. Choose the finest of our tombs and bury her there. No one here will refuse to help you in this way.”

Then Abraham bowed low before the Hittites and said, “Since you are willing to help me in this way, be so kind as to ask Ephron son of Zohar to let me buy his cave at Machpelah, down at the end of his field. I will pay the full price in the presence of witnesses, so I will have a permanent burial place for my family.”

Ephron was sitting there among the others, and he answered Abraham as the others listened, speaking publicly before all the Hittite elders of the town. “No, my lord,” he said to Abraham, “please listen to me. I will give you the field and the cave. Here in the presence of my people, I give it to you. Go and bury your dead.”

Abraham again bowed low before the citizens of the land, and he replied to Ephron as everyone listened. “No, listen to me. I will buy it from you. Let me pay the full price for the field so I can bury my dead there.”

Ephron answered Abraham, “My lord, please listen to me. The land is worth 400 pieces of silver, but what is that between friends? Go ahead and bury your dead.” So Abraham agreed to Ephron’s price and paid the amount he had suggested—400 pieces of silver, weighed according to the market standard.



Cottonwood Creek
— CHURCH —

The Hittite elders witnessed the transaction.

So Abraham bought the plot of land belonging to Ephron at Machpelah, near Mamre. This included the field itself, the cave that was in it, and all the surrounding trees. It was transferred to Abraham as his permanent possession in the presence of the Hittite elders at the city gate. Then Abraham buried his wife, Sarah, there in Canaan, in the cave of Machpelah, near Mamre (also called Hebron).

So the field and the cave were transferred from the Hittites to Abraham for use as a permanent burial place. Abraham was now a very old man, and the Lord had blessed him in every way. One day Abraham said to his oldest servant, the man in charge of his household, "Take an oath by putting your hand under my thigh. Swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and earth, that you will not allow my son to marry one of these local Canaanite women. Go instead to my homeland, to my relatives, and find a wife there for my son Isaac."

The servant asked, "But what if I can't find a young woman who is willing to travel so far from home? Should I then take Isaac there to live among your relatives in the land you came from?"

"No!" Abraham responded. "Be careful never to take my son there. For the Lord, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and my native land, solemnly promised to give this land to my descendants. He will send his angel ahead of you, and he will see to it that you find a wife there for my son."



Cottonwood Creek
— CHURCH —

If she is unwilling to come back with you, then you are free from this oath of mine. But under no circumstances are you to take my son there.”

So the servant took an oath by putting his hand under the thigh of his master, Abraham. He swore to follow Abraham’s instructions. Then he loaded ten of Abraham’s camels with all kinds of expensive gifts from his master, and he traveled to distant Aram-naharaim. There he went to the town where Abraham’s brother Nahor had settled. He made the camels kneel beside a well just outside the town. It was evening, and the women were coming out to draw water.

“O Lord, God of my master, Abraham,” he prayed. “Please give me success today, and show unfailing love to my master, Abraham. See, I am standing here beside this spring, and the young women of the town are coming out to draw water. This is my request. I will ask one of them, ‘Please give me a drink from your jug.’ If she says, ‘Yes, have a drink, and I will water your camels, too!’—let her be the one you have selected as Isaac’s wife. This is how I will know that you have shown unfailing love to my master.”

Before he had finished praying, he saw a young woman named Rebekah coming out with her water jug on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel, who was the son of Abraham’s brother Nahor and his wife, Milcah. Rebekah was very beautiful and old enough to be married, but she was still a virgin.



She went down to the spring, filled her jug, and came up again. Running over to her, the servant said, “Please give me a little drink of water from your jug.”

“Yes, my lord,” she answered, “have a drink.”

And she quickly lowered her jug from her shoulder and gave him a drink. When she had given him a drink, she said, “I’ll draw water for your camels, too, until they have had enough to drink.” So she quickly emptied her jug into the watering trough and ran back to the well to draw water for all his camels.

The servant watched her in silence, wondering whether or not the Lord had given him success in his mission. Then at last, when the camels had finished drinking, he took out a gold ring for her nose and two large gold bracelets for her wrists.

“Whose daughter are you?” he asked. “And please tell me, would your father have any room to put us up for the night?”

“I am the daughter of Bethuel,” she replied. “My grandparents are Nahor and Milcah. Yes, we have plenty of straw and feed for the camels, and we have room for guests.”

The man bowed low and worshiped the Lord.

“Praise the Lord, the God of my master, Abraham,” he said. “The Lord has shown unfailing love and faithfulness to my master, for he has led me straight to my master’s relatives.”



The young woman ran home to tell her family everything that had happened. Now Rebekah had a brother named Laban, who ran out to meet the man at the spring. He had seen the nose-ring and the bracelets on his sister's wrists, and had heard Rebekah tell what the man had said. So he rushed out to the spring, where the man was still standing beside his camels. Laban said to him, "Come and stay with us, you who are blessed by the Lord! Why are you standing here outside the town when I have a room all ready for you and a place prepared for the camels?"

*So the man went home with Laban, and Laban unloaded the camels, gave him straw for their bedding, fed them, and provided water for the man and the camel drivers to wash their feet. Then food was served. But Abraham's servant said, "I don't want to eat until I have told you why I have come."
"All right," Laban said, "tell us."*

"I am Abraham's servant," he explained. "And the Lord has greatly blessed my master; he has become a wealthy man. The Lord has given him flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, a fortune in silver and gold, and many male and female servants and camels and donkeys."

"When Sarah, my master's wife, was very old, she gave birth to my master's son, and my master has given him everything he owns. And my master made me take an oath. He said, 'Do not allow my son to marry one of these local Canaanite women.'"



Cottonwood Creek
— CHURCH —

Go instead to my father's house, to my relatives, and find a wife there for my son.'

"But I said to my master, 'What if I can't find a young woman who is willing to go back with me?' He responded, 'The Lord, in whose presence I have lived, will send his angel with you and will make your mission successful.

Yes, you must find a wife for my son from among my relatives, from my father's family.

Then you will have fulfilled your obligation.

But if you go to my relatives and they refuse to let her go with you, you will be free from my oath.'

"So today when I came to the spring, I prayed this prayer: 'O Lord, God of my master, Abraham, please give me success on this mission. See, I am standing here beside this spring. This is my request. When a young

woman comes to draw water, I will say to her, "Please give me a little drink of water from your jug." If she says, "Yes, have a drink, and I will draw water for your camels, too," let her be the one you have selected to be the wife of my master's son.'

"Before I had finished praying in my heart, I saw Rebekah coming out with her water jug on her shoulder. She went down to the spring and drew water. So I said to her, 'Please give me a drink.' She quickly lowered her jug from her shoulder and said, 'Yes, have a drink, and I will water your camels, too!' So I drank, and then she watered the camels.



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— CHURCH —

“Then I asked, ‘Whose daughter are you?’ She replied, ‘I am the daughter of Bethuel, and my grandparents are Nahor and Milcah.’ So I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her wrists.

“Then I bowed low and worshiped the Lord. I praised the Lord, the God of my master, Abraham, because he had led me straight to my master’s niece to be his son’s wife. So tell me—will you or won’t you show unfailing love and faithfulness to my master? Please tell me yes or no, and then I’ll know what to do next.”

Then Laban and Bethuel replied, “The Lord has obviously brought you here, so there is nothing we can say. Here is Rebekah; take her and go. Yes, let her be the wife of your master’s son, as the Lord has directed.” When Abraham’s servant heard their answer, he bowed down to the ground and worshiped the Lord. Then he brought out silver and gold jewelry and clothing and presented them to Rebekah. He also gave expensive presents to her brother and mother. Then they ate their meal, and the servant and the men with him stayed there overnight.

But early the next morning, Abraham’s servant said, “Send me back to my master.”

“But we want Rebekah to stay with us at least ten days,” her brother and mother said. “Then she can go.”

But he said, “Don’t delay me. The Lord has made my mission successful; now send me back so I can return to my master.”



“Well,” they said, “we’ll call Rebekah and ask her what she thinks.” So they called Rebekah. “Are you willing to go with this man?” they asked her. And she replied, “Yes, I will go.”

So they said good-bye to Rebekah and sent her away with Abraham’s servant and his men. The woman who had been Rebekah’s childhood nurse went along with her. They gave her this blessing as she parted:

*“Our sister, may you become
the mother of many millions!
May your descendants be strong
and conquer the cities of their enemies.”*

Then Rebekah and her servant girls mounted the camels and followed the man. So Abraham’s servant took Rebekah and went on his way.

Meanwhile, Isaac, whose home was in the Negev, had returned from Beer-lahai-roi. One evening as he was walking and meditating in the fields, he looked up and saw the camels coming. When Rebekah looked up and saw Isaac, she quickly dismounted from her camel. “Who is that man walking through the fields to meet us?” she asked the servant. And he replied, “It is my master.” So Rebekah covered her face with her veil. Then the servant told Isaac everything he had done.

And Isaac brought Rebekah into his mother Sarah’s tent, and she became his wife. He loved her deeply, and she was a special comfort to him after the death of his mother.



Cottonwood Creek
— CHURCH —

DAY 9

GENESIS 25 - 28

Abraham married another wife, whose name was Keturah. She gave birth to Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan.

Dedan's descendants were the Asshurites, Letushites, and Leummites. Midian's sons were Ephah, Ephher, Hanoah, Abida, and Eldaah.

These were all descendants of Abraham through Keturah. Abraham gave everything he owned to his son Isaac. But before he died, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them off to a land in the east, away from Isaac. Abraham lived for 175 years, and he died at a ripe old age, having lived a long and satisfying life. He breathed his last and joined his ancestors in death. His sons Isaac

and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite. This was the field Abraham had purchased from the Hittites and where he had buried his wife Sarah. After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac, who settled near Beer-lahai-roi in the Negev.



This is the account of the family of Ishmael, the son of Abraham through Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian servant. Here is a list, by their names and clans, of Ishmael's descendants: The oldest was Nebaioth, followed by Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. These twelve sons of Ishmael became the founders of twelve tribes named after them, listed according to the places they settled and camped. Ishmael lived for 137 years. Then he breathed his last and joined his ancestors in death. Ishmael's descendants occupied the region from Havilah to Shur, which is east of Egypt in the direction of Asshur. There they lived in open hostility toward all their relatives.

This is the account of the family of Isaac, the son of Abraham. When Isaac was forty years old, he married Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan-aram and the sister of Laban the Aramean.

Isaac pleaded with the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was unable to have children. The Lord answered Isaac's prayer, and Rebekah became pregnant with twins. But the two children struggled with each other in her womb. So she went to ask the Lord about it. "Why is this happening to me?" she asked.

And the Lord told her, "The sons in your womb will become two nations. From the very beginning, the two nations will be rivals. One nation will be stronger than the other; and your older son will serve your younger son."



And when the time came to give birth, Rebekah discovered that she did indeed have twins! The first one was very red at birth and covered with thick hair like a fur coat. So they named him Esau. Then the other twin was born with his hand grasping Esau's heel. So they named him Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when the twins were born.

As the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter. He was an outdoorsman, but Jacob had a quiet temperament, preferring to stay at home. Isaac loved Esau because he enjoyed eating the wild game Esau brought home, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

One day when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau arrived home from the wilderness exhausted and hungry. Esau said to Jacob, "I'm starved! Give me some of that red stew!" (This is how Esau got his other name, Edom, which means "red.")

"All right," Jacob replied, "but trade me your rights as the firstborn son."

"Look, I'm dying of starvation!" said Esau. "What good is my birthright to me now?"

But Jacob said, "First you must swear that your birthright is mine." So Esau swore an oath, thereby selling all his rights as the firstborn to his brother, Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and lentil stew. Esau ate the meal, then got up and left. He showed contempt for his rights as the firstborn.



A severe famine now struck the land, as had happened before in Abraham's time. So Isaac moved to Gerar, where Abimelech, king of the Philistines, lived.

The Lord appeared to Isaac and said, "Do not go down to Egypt, but do as I tell you. Live here as a foreigner in this land, and I will be with you and bless you. I hereby confirm that I will give all these lands to you and your descendants, just as I solemnly promised Abraham, your father. I will cause your descendants to become as numerous as the stars of the sky, and I will give them all these lands. And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed. I will do this because Abraham listened to me and obeyed all my requirements, commands, decrees, and instructions." So Isaac stayed in Gerar.

When the men who lived there asked Isaac about his wife, Rebekah, he said, "She is my sister." He was afraid to say, "She is my wife."

He thought, "They will kill me to get her, because she is so beautiful." But some time later, Abimelech, king of the Philistines, looked out his window and saw Isaac caressing Rebekah.

Immediately, Abimelech called for Isaac and exclaimed, "She is obviously your wife! Why did you say, 'She is my sister'?"

"Because I was afraid someone would kill me to get her from me," Isaac replied.

***"How could you do this to us?"
Abimelech exclaimed.***



“One of my people might easily have taken your wife and slept with her, and you would have made us guilty of great sin.”

Then Abimelech issued a public proclamation: “Anyone who touches this man or his wife will be put to death!”

When Isaac planted his crops that year, he harvested a hundred times more grain than he planted, for the Lord blessed him. He became a very rich man, and his wealth continued to grow. He acquired so many flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, and servants that the Philistines became jealous of him. So the Philistines filled up all of Isaac’s wells with dirt. These were the wells that had been dug by the servants of his father, Abraham.

Finally, Abimelech ordered Isaac to leave the country. “Go somewhere else,” he said, “for you have become too powerful for us.”

So Isaac moved away to the Gerar Valley, where he set up their tents and settled down. He reopened the wells his father had dug, which the Philistines had filled in after Abraham’s death. Isaac also restored the names Abraham had given them.

Isaac’s servants also dug in the Gerar Valley and discovered a well of fresh water. But then the shepherds from Gerar came and claimed the spring. “This is our water,” they said, and they argued over it with Isaac’s herdsmen. So Isaac named the well Esek (which means “argument”).



Isaac's men then dug another well, but again there was a dispute over it. So Isaac named it Sitnah (which means "hostility"). Abandoning that one, Isaac moved on and dug another well. This time there was no dispute over it, so Isaac named the place Rehoboth (which means "open space"), for he said, "At last the Lord has created enough space for us to prosper in this land."

From there Isaac moved to Beersheba, where the Lord appeared to him on the night of his arrival. "I am the God of your father, Abraham," he said. "Do not be afraid, for I am with you and will bless you. I will multiply your descendants, and they will become a great nation. I will do this because of my promise to Abraham, my servant." Then Isaac built an altar there and worshiped the Lord. He set up his camp at that place, and his servants dug another well.

One day King Abimelech came from Gerar with his adviser, Ahuzzath, and also Phicol, his army commander. "Why have you come here?" Isaac asked. "You obviously hate me, since you kicked me off your land."

They replied, "We can plainly see that the Lord is with you. So we want to enter into a sworn treaty with you. Let's make a covenant. Swear that you will not harm us, just as we have never troubled you. We have always treated you well, and we sent you away from us in peace. And now look how the Lord has blessed you!" So Isaac prepared a covenant feast to celebrate the treaty, and they ate and drank together.



Early the next morning, they each took a solemn oath not to interfere with each other. Then Isaac sent them home again, and they left him in peace.

That very day Isaac's servants came and told him about a new well they had dug. "We've found water!" they exclaimed. So Isaac named the well Shibah (which means "oath"). And to this day the town that grew up there is called Beersheba (which means "well of the oath").

At the age of forty, Esau married two Hittite wives: Judith, the daughter of Beer, and Basemath, the daughter of Elon. But Esau's wives made life miserable for Isaac and Rebekah.

One day when Isaac was old and turning blind, he called for Esau, his older son, and said, "My son."

"Yes, Father?" Esau replied.

"I am an old man now," Isaac said, "and I don't know when I may die. Take your bow and a quiver full of arrows, and go out into the open country to hunt some wild game for me. Prepare my favorite dish, and bring it here for me to eat. Then I will pronounce the blessing that belongs to you, my firstborn son, before I die." But Rebekah overheard what Isaac had said to his son Esau. So when Esau left to hunt for the wild game, she said to her son Jacob, "Listen. I overheard your father say to Esau, 'Bring me some wild game and prepare me a delicious meal. Then I will bless you in the Lord's presence before I die.'



Now, my son, listen to me. Do exactly as I tell you. Go out to the flocks, and bring me two fine young goats. I'll use them to prepare your father's favorite dish. Then take the food to your father so he can eat it and bless you before he dies."

"But look," Jacob replied to Rebekah, "my brother, Esau, is a hairy man, and my skin is smooth. What if my father touches me? He'll see that I'm trying to trick him, and then he'll curse me instead of blessing me."

But his mother replied, "Then let the curse fall on me, my son! Just do what I tell you. Go out and get the goats for me!"

So Jacob went out and got the young goats for his mother. Rebekah took them and prepared a delicious meal, just the way Isaac liked it. Then she took Esau's favorite clothes, which were there in the house, and gave them to her younger son, Jacob. She covered his arms and the smooth part of his neck with the skin of the young goats. Then she gave Jacob the delicious meal, including freshly baked bread.

So Jacob took the food to his father. "My father?" he said.

"Yes, my son," Isaac answered. "Who are you —Esau or Jacob?"

Jacob replied, "It's Esau, your firstborn son. I've done as you told me. Here is the wild game.



Now sit up and eat it so you can give me your blessing.”

Isaac asked, “How did you find it so quickly, my son?”

*“The Lord your God put it in my path!”
Jacob replied.*

Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Come closer so I can touch you and make sure that you really are Esau.” So Jacob went closer to his father, and Isaac touched him. “The voice is Jacob’s, but the hands are Esau’s,” Isaac said. But he did not recognize Jacob, because Jacob’s hands felt hairy just like Esau’s. So Isaac prepared to bless Jacob. “But are you really my son Esau?” he asked.

“Yes, I am,” Jacob replied.

Then Isaac said, “Now, my son, bring me the wild game. Let me eat it, and then I will give you my blessing.” So Jacob took the food to his father, and Isaac ate it. He also drank the wine that Jacob served him. Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Please come a little closer and kiss me, my son.”

So Jacob went over and kissed him. And when Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he was finally convinced, and he blessed his son. He said, “Ah! The smell of my son is like the smell of the outdoors, which the Lord has blessed!

“From the dew of heaven and the richness of the earth, may God always give you abundant harvests of grain and bountiful new wine.



Cottonwood Creek
— CHURCH —

May many nations become your servants, and may they bow down to you. May you be the master over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. All who curse you will be cursed, and all who bless you will be blessed."

As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and almost before Jacob had left his father, Esau returned from his hunt. Esau prepared a delicious meal and brought it to his father. Then he said, "Sit up, my father, and eat my wild game so you can give me your blessing."

But Isaac asked him, "Who are you?" Esau replied, "It's your son, your firstborn son, Esau."

Isaac began to tremble uncontrollably and said, "Then who just served me wild game? I have already eaten it, and I blessed him just before you came. And yes, that blessing must stand!"

When Esau heard his father's words, he let out a loud and bitter cry. "Oh my father, what about me? Bless me, too!" he begged.

But Isaac said, "Your brother was here, and he tricked me. He has taken away your blessing."

Esau exclaimed, "No wonder his name is Jacob, for now he has cheated me twice. First he took my rights as the firstborn, and now he has stolen my blessing. Oh, haven't you saved even one blessing for me?"



Isaac said to Esau, “I have made Jacob your master and have declared that all his brothers will be his servants. I have guaranteed him an abundance of grain and wine—what is left for me to give you, my son?”

Esau pleaded, “But do you have only one blessing? Oh my father, bless me, too!” Then Esau broke down and wept.

Finally, his father, Isaac, said to him, “You will live away from the richness of the earth, and away from the dew of the heaven above. You will live by your sword, and you will serve your brother. But when you decide to break free, you will shake his yoke from your neck.”

From that time on, Esau hated Jacob because their father had given Jacob the blessing. And Esau began to scheme: “I will soon be mourning my father’s death. Then I will kill my brother, Jacob.”

But Rebekah heard about Esau’s plans. So she sent for Jacob and told him, “Listen, Esau is consoling himself by plotting to kill you. So listen carefully, my son. Get ready and flee to my brother, Laban, in Haran. Stay there with him until your brother cools off. When he calms down and forgets what you have done to him, I will send for you to come back. Why should I lose both of you in one day?”

Then Rebekah said to Isaac, “I’m sick and tired of these local Hittite women! I would rather die than see Jacob marry one of them.”



So Isaac called for Jacob, blessed him, and said, “You must not marry any of these Canaanite women. Instead, go at once to Paddan-aram, to the house of your grandfather Bethuel, and marry one of your uncle Laban’s daughters. May God Almighty bless you and give you many children. And may your descendants multiply and become many nations! May God pass on to you and your descendants the blessings he promised to Abraham. May you own this land where you are now living as a foreigner, for God gave this land to Abraham.” So Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Paddan-aram to stay with his uncle Laban, his mother’s brother, the son of Bethuel the Aramean.

Esau knew that his father, Isaac, had blessed Jacob and sent him to Paddan-aram to find a wife, and that he had warned Jacob, “You must not marry a Canaanite woman.” He also knew that Jacob had obeyed his parents and gone to Paddan-aram. It was now very clear to Esau that his father did not like the local Canaanite women. So Esau visited his uncle Ishmael’s family and married one of Ishmael’s daughters, in addition to the wives he already had. His new wife’s name was Mahalath. She was the sister of Nebaioth and the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham’s son. Meanwhile, Jacob left Beersheba and traveled toward Haran. At sundown he arrived at a good place to set up camp and stopped there for the night. Jacob found a stone to rest his head against and lay down to sleep. As he slept, he dreamed of a stairway that reached from the earth up to heaven.



And he saw the angels of God going up and down the stairway. At the top of the stairway stood the Lord, and he said, “I am the Lord, the God of your grandfather Abraham, and the God of your father, Isaac. The ground you are lying on belongs to you. I am giving it to you and your descendants. Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth! They will spread out in all directions—to the west and the east, to the north and the south. And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants. What’s more, I am with you, and I will protect you wherever you go. One day I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have finished giving you everything I have promised you.”

Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I wasn’t even aware of it!” But he was also afraid and said, “What an awesome place this is! It is none other than the house of God, the very gateway to heaven!” The next morning Jacob got up very early. He took the stone he had rested his head against, and he set it upright as a memorial pillar. Then he poured olive oil over it. He named that place Bethel (which means “house of God”), although it was previously called Luz. Then Jacob made this vow: “If God will indeed be with me and protect me on this journey, and if he will provide me with food and clothing, and if I return safely to my father’s home, then the Lord will certainly be my God. And this memorial pillar I have set up will become a place for worshiping God, and I will present to God a tenth of everything he gives me.”



DAY 10

GENESIS 29 - 32

Then Jacob hurried on, finally arriving in the land of the east. He saw a well in the distance. Three flocks of sheep and goats lay in an open field beside it, waiting to be watered. But a heavy stone covered the mouth of the well. It was the custom there to wait for all the flocks to arrive before removing the stone and watering the animals. Afterward the stone would be placed back over the mouth of the well. Jacob went over to the shepherds and asked, “Where are you from, my friends?”

“We are from Haran,” they answered.

“Do you know a man there named Laban, the grandson of Nahor?” he asked. “Yes, we do,” they replied.

“Is he doing well?” Jacob asked. “Yes, he’s well,” they answered. “Look, here comes his daughter Rachel with the flock now.”

Jacob said, “Look, it’s still broad daylight—too early to round up the animals. Why don’t you water the sheep and goats so they can get back out to pasture?”



“We can’t water the animals until all the flocks have arrived,” they replied. “Then the shepherds move the stone from the mouth of the well, and we water all the sheep and goats.”

Jacob was still talking with them when Rachel arrived with her father’s flock, for she was a shepherd. And because Rachel was his cousin—the daughter of Laban, his mother’s brother—and because the sheep and goats belonged to his uncle Laban, Jacob went over to the well and moved the stone from its mouth and watered his uncle’s flock. Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and he wept aloud. He explained to Rachel that he was her cousin on her father’s side—the son of her aunt Rebekah. So Rachel quickly ran and told her father, Laban.

As soon as Laban heard that his nephew Jacob had arrived, he ran out to meet him. He embraced and kissed him and brought him home. When Jacob had told him his story, Laban exclaimed, “You really are my own flesh and blood!”

After Jacob had stayed with Laban for about a month, Laban said to him, “You shouldn’t work for me without pay just because we are relatives. Tell me how much your wages should be.”

Now Laban had two daughters. The older daughter was named Leah, and the younger one was Rachel. There was no sparkle in Leah’s eyes, but Rachel had a beautiful figure and a lovely face.



Since Jacob was in love with Rachel, he told her father, “I’ll work for you for seven years if you’ll give me Rachel, your younger daughter, as my wife.”

“Agreed!” Laban replied. “I’d rather give her to you than to anyone else. Stay and work with me.” So Jacob worked seven years to pay for Rachel. But his love for her was so strong that it seemed to him but a few days.

Finally, the time came for him to marry her. “I have fulfilled my agreement,” Jacob said to Laban. “Now give me my wife so I can sleep with her.”

So Laban invited everyone in the neighborhood and prepared a wedding feast. But that night, when it was dark, Laban took Leah to Jacob, and he slept with her. (Laban had given Leah a servant, Zilpah, to be her maid.)

But when Jacob woke up in the morning—it was Leah! “What have you done to me?” Jacob raged at Laban. “I worked seven years for Rachel! Why have you tricked me?”

“It’s not our custom here to marry off a younger daughter ahead of the firstborn,” Laban replied. “But wait until the bridal week is over; then we’ll give you Rachel, too—provided you promise to work another seven years for me.” So Jacob agreed to work seven more years. A week after Jacob had married Leah, Laban gave him Rachel, too. (Laban gave Rachel a servant, Bilhah, to be her maid.)



So Jacob slept with Rachel, too, and he loved her much more than Leah. He then stayed and worked for Laban the additional seven years. When the Lord saw that Leah was unloved, he enabled her to have children, but Rachel could not conceive. So Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben, for she said, “The Lord has noticed my misery, and now my husband will love me.”

She soon became pregnant again and gave birth to another son. She named him Simeon, for she said, “The Lord heard that I was unloved and has given me another son.”

Then she became pregnant a third time and gave birth to another son. He was named Levi, for she said, “Surely this time my husband will feel affection for me, since I have given him three sons!”

Once again Leah became pregnant and gave birth to another son. She named him Judah, for she said, “Now I will praise the Lord!” And then she stopped having children.

When Rachel saw that she wasn’t having any children for Jacob, she became jealous of her sister. She pleaded with Jacob, “Give me children, or I’ll die!”

Then Jacob became furious with Rachel. “Am I God?” he asked.

“He’s the one who has kept you from having children!” Then Rachel told him, “Take my maid, Bilhah, and sleep with her.



Cottonwood Creek
— CHURCH —

She will bear children for me, and through her I can have a family, too.” So Rachel gave her servant, Bilhah, to Jacob as a wife, and he slept with her. Bilhah became pregnant and presented him with a son. Rachel named him Dan, for she said, “God has vindicated me! He has heard my request and given me a son.

Then Bilhah became pregnant again and gave Jacob a second son. Rachel named him Naphtali, for she said, “I have struggled hard with my sister, and I’m winning!”

Meanwhile, Leah realized that she wasn’t getting pregnant anymore, so she took her servant, Zilpah, and gave her to Jacob as a wife. Soon Zilpah presented him with a son.

Leah named him Gad, for she said, “How fortunate I am!” Then Zilpah gave Jacob a second son. And Leah named him Asher, for she said, “What joy is mine! Now the other women will celebrate with me.”

One day during the wheat harvest, Reuben found some mandrakes growing in a field and brought them to his mother, Leah. Rachel begged Leah, “Please give me some of your son’s mandrakes.”

But Leah angrily replied, “Wasn’t it enough that you stole my husband? Now will you steal my son’s mandrakes, too?”

Rachel answered, “I will let Jacob sleep with you tonight if you give me some of the mandrakes.”



So that evening, as Jacob was coming home from the fields, Leah went out to meet him. “You must come and sleep with me tonight!” she said. “I have paid for you with some mandrakes that my son found.” So that night he slept with Leah. And God answered Leah’s prayers. She became pregnant again and gave birth to a fifth son for Jacob. She named him Issachar, for she said, “God has rewarded me for giving my servant to my husband as a wife.” Then Leah became pregnant again and gave birth to a sixth son for Jacob. She named him Zebulun, for she said, “God has given me a good reward. Now my husband will treat me with respect, for I have given him six sons. Later she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah.

Then God remembered Rachel’s plight and answered her prayers by enabling her to have children. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son. “God has removed my disgrace,” she said. And she named him Joseph, for she said, “May the Lord add yet another son to my family.”

Soon after Rachel had given birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, “Please release me so I can go home to my own country. Let me take my wives and children, for I have earned them by serving you, and let me be on my way. You certainly know how hard I have worked for you.”

“Please listen to me,” Laban replied. “I have become wealthy, for the Lord has blessed me because of you.



Tell me how much I owe you. Whatever it is, I'll pay it."

Jacob replied, "You know how hard I've worked for you, and how your flocks and herds have grown under my care. You had little indeed before I came, but your wealth has increased enormously. The Lord has blessed you through everything I've done. But now, what about me? When can I start providing for my own family?"

***"What wages do you want?"
Laban asked again.***

Jacob replied, "Don't give me anything. Just do this one thing, and I'll continue to tend and watch over your flocks. Let me inspect your flocks today and remove all the sheep and goats that are speckled or spotted, along with all the black sheep. Give these to me as my wages. In the future, when you check on the animals you have given me as my wages, you'll see that I have been honest. If you find in my flock any goats without speckles or spots, or any sheep that are not black, you will know that I have stolen them from you."

"All right," Laban replied. "It will be as you say." But that very day Laban went out and removed the male goats that were streaked and spotted, all the female goats that were speckled and spotted or had white patches, and all the black sheep. He placed them in the care of his own sons, who took them a three-days' journey from where Jacob was.



**Cottonwood Creek
— CHURCH —**

Meanwhile, Jacob stayed and cared for the rest of Laban's flock. Then Jacob took some fresh branches from poplar, almond, and plane trees and peeled off strips of bark, making white streaks on them. Then he placed these peeled branches in the watering troughs where the flocks came to drink, for that was where they mated. And when they mated in front of the white-streaked branches, they gave birth to young that were streaked, speckled, and spotted. Jacob separated those lambs from Laban's flock. And at mating time he turned the flock to face Laban's animals that were streaked or black. This is how he built his own flock instead of increasing Laban's.

Whenever the stronger females were ready to mate, Jacob would place the peeled branches in the watering troughs in front of them. Then they would mate in front of the branches. But he didn't do this with the weaker ones, so the weaker lambs belonged to Laban, and the stronger ones were Jacob's. As a result, Jacob became very wealthy, with large flocks of sheep and goats, female and male servants, and many camels and donkeys.

But Jacob soon learned that Laban's sons were grumbling about him. "Jacob has robbed our father of everything!" they said. "He has gained all his wealth at our father's expense."

And Jacob began to notice a change in Laban's attitude toward him. Then the Lord said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your father and grandfather and to your relatives there, and I will be with you."



Cottonwood Creek
— CHURCH —

So Jacob called Rachel and Leah out to the field where he was watching his flock. He said to them, “I have noticed that your father’s attitude toward me has changed. But the God of my father has been with me. You know how hard I have worked for your father, but he has cheated me, changing my wages ten times. But God has not allowed him to do me any harm. For if he said, ‘The speckled animals will be your wages,’ the whole flock began to produce speckled young. And when he changed his mind and said, ‘The striped animals will be your wages,’ then the whole flock produced striped young. In this way, God has taken your father’s animals and given them to me.

“One time during the mating season, I had a dream and saw that the male goats mating with the females were streaked, speckled, and spotted. Then in my dream, the angel of God said to me, ‘Jacob!’ And I replied, ‘Yes, here I am.’

“The angel said, ‘Look up, and you will see that only the streaked, speckled, and spotted males are mating with the females of your flock. For I have seen how Laban has treated you. I am the God who appeared to you at Bethel, the place where you anointed the pillar of stone and made your vow to me. Now get ready and leave this country and return to the land of your birth.’”

Rachel and Leah responded, “That’s fine with us! We won’t inherit any of our father’s wealth anyway.



**Cottonwood Creek
— CHURCH —**

He has reduced our rights to those of foreign women. And after he sold us, he wasted the money you paid him for us. All the wealth God has given you from our father legally belongs to us and our children. So go ahead and do whatever God has told you.”

So Jacob put his wives and children on camels, and he drove all his livestock in front of him. He packed all the belongings he had acquired in Paddan-aram and set out for the land of Canaan, where his father, Isaac, lived.

At the time they left, Laban was some distance away, shearing his sheep. Rachel stole her father’s household idols and took them with her. Jacob outwitted Laban the Aramean, for they set out secretly and never told Laban they were leaving. So Jacob took all his possessions with him and crossed the Euphrates River, heading for the hill country of Gilead.

Three days later, Laban was told that Jacob had fled. So he gathered a group of his relatives and set out in hot pursuit. He caught up with Jacob seven days later in the hill country of Gilead. But the previous night God had appeared to Laban the Aramean in a dream and told him, “I’m warning you—leave Jacob alone!”

Laban caught up with Jacob as he was camped in the hill country of Gilead, and he set up his camp not far from Jacob’s. “What do you mean by deceiving me like this?” Laban demanded. “How dare you drag my daughters away like prisoners of war?”



Why did you slip away secretly? Why did you deceive me? And why didn't you say you wanted to leave? I would have given you a farewell feast, with singing and music, accompanied by tambourines and harps. Why didn't you let me kiss my daughters and grandchildren and tell them good-bye? You have acted very foolishly! I could destroy you, but the God of your father appeared to me last night and warned me, 'Leave Jacob alone!' I can understand your feeling that you must go, and your intense longing for your father's home. But why have you stolen my gods?"

"I rushed away because I was afraid," Jacob answered. "I thought you would take your daughters from me by force. But as for your gods, see if you can find them, and let the person who has taken them die! And if you find anything else that belongs to you, identify it before all these relatives of ours, and I will give it back!" But Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the household idols.

Laban went first into Jacob's tent to search there, then into Leah's, and then the tents of the two servant wives—but he found nothing. Finally, he went into Rachel's tent. But Rachel had taken the household idols and hidden them in her camel saddle, and now she was sitting on them. When Laban had thoroughly searched her tent without finding them, she said to her father, "Please, sir, forgive me if I don't get up for you. I'm having my monthly period." So Laban continued his search, but he could not find the household idols.



Cottonwood Creek
— CHURCH —

Then Jacob became very angry, and he challenged Laban. “What’s my crime?” he demanded. “What have I done wrong to make you chase after me as though I were a criminal? You have rummaged through everything I own. Now show me what you found that belongs to you! Set it out here in front of us, before our relatives, for all to see. Let them judge between us!

“For twenty years I have been with you, caring for your flocks. In all that time your sheep and goats never miscarried. In all those years I never used a single ram of yours for food. If any were attacked and killed by wild animals, I never showed you the carcass and asked you to reduce the count of your flock. No, I took the loss myself! You made me pay for every stolen animal, whether it was taken in broad daylight or in the dark of night.

“I worked for you through the scorching heat of the day and through cold and sleepless nights. Yes, for twenty years I slaved in your house! I worked for fourteen years earning your two daughters, and then six more years for your flock. And you changed my wages ten times! In fact, if the God of my father had not been on my side—the God of Abraham and the fearsome God of Isaac—you would have sent me away empty-handed. But God has seen your abuse and my hard work. That is why he appeared to you last night and rebuked you!”



Cottonwood Creek
— CHURCH —

Then Laban replied to Jacob, “These women are my daughters, these children are my grandchildren, and these flocks are my flocks—in fact, everything you see is mine. But what can I do now about my daughters and their children? So come, let’s make a covenant, you and I, and it will be a witness to our commitment.”

So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a monument. Then he told his family members, “Gather some stones.” So they gathered stones and piled them in a heap. Then Jacob and Laban sat down beside the pile of stones to eat a covenant meal. To commemorate the event, Laban called the place Jegar-sahadutha (which means “witness pile” in Aramaic), and Jacob called it Galeed (which means “witness pile” in Hebrew).

Then Laban declared, “This pile of stones will stand as a witness to remind us of the covenant we have made today.” This explains why it was called Galeed—“Witness Pile.” But it was also called Mizpah (which means “watchtower”), for Laban said, “May the Lord keep watch between us to make sure that we keep this covenant when we are out of each other’s sight. If you mistreat my daughters or if you marry other wives, God will see it even if no one else does. He is a witness to this covenant between us.

“See this pile of stones,” Laban continued, “and see this monument I have set between us. They stand between us as witnesses of our vows.



I will never pass this pile of stones to harm you, and you must never pass these stones or this monument to harm me. I call on the God of our ancestors—the God of your grandfather Abraham and the God of my grandfather Nahor—to serve as a judge between us.”

So Jacob took an oath before the fearsome God of his father, Isaac, to respect the boundary line. Then Jacob offered a sacrifice to God there on the mountain and invited everyone to a covenant feast. After they had eaten, they spent the night on the mountain. Laban got up early the next morning, and he kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them. Then he left and returned home.

As Jacob started on his way again, angels of God came to meet him. When Jacob saw them, he exclaimed, “This is God’s camp!” So he named the place Mahanaim. Then Jacob sent messengers ahead to his brother, Esau, who was living in the region of Seir in the land of Edom. He told them, “Give this message to my master Esau: ‘Humble greetings from your servant Jacob. Until now I have been living with Uncle Laban, and now I own cattle, donkeys, flocks of sheep and goats, and many servants, both men and women. I have sent these messengers to inform my lord of my coming, hoping that you will be friendly to me.’” After delivering the message, the messengers returned to Jacob and reported, “We met your brother, Esau, and he is already on his way to meet you—with an army of 400 men!”



Cottonwood Creek
— CHURCH —

Jacob was terrified at the news. He divided his household, along with the flocks and herds and camels, into two groups.

He thought, “If Esau meets one group and attacks it, perhaps the other group can escape.”

Then Jacob prayed, “O God of my grandfather Abraham, and God of my father, Isaac—O Lord, you told me, ‘Return to your own land and to your relatives.’ And you promised me, ‘I will treat you kindly.’ I am not worthy of all the unfailing love and faithfulness you have shown to me, your servant. When I left home and crossed the Jordan River, I owned nothing except a walking stick. Now my household fills two large camps! O Lord, please rescue me from the hand of my brother, Esau. I am afraid that he is coming to attack me, along with my wives and children. But you promised me, ‘I will surely treat you kindly, and I will multiply your descendants until they become as numerous as the sands along the seashore—too many to count.’”

Jacob stayed where he was for the night.

Then he selected these gifts from his possessions to present to his brother, Esau: 200 female goats, 20 male goats, 200 ewes, 20 rams, 30 female camels with their young, 40 cows, 10 bulls, 20 female donkeys, and 10 male donkeys. He divided these animals into herds and assigned each to different servants. Then he told his servants, “Go ahead of me with the animals, but keep some distance between the herds.”



Cottonwood Creek
— CHURCH —

He gave these instructions to the men leading the first group: “When my brother, Esau, meets you, he will ask, ‘Whose servants are you? Where are you going?’

Who owns these animals?’ You must reply, ‘They belong to your servant Jacob, but they are a gift for his master Esau. Look, he is coming right behind us.’”

Jacob gave the same instructions to the second and third herdsman and to all who followed behind the herds: “You must say the same thing to Esau when you meet him. And be sure to say, ‘Look, your servant Jacob is right behind us.’”

Jacob thought, “I will try to appease him by sending gifts ahead of me. When I see him in person, perhaps he will be friendly to me.” So the gifts were sent on ahead, while Jacob himself spent that night in the camp.

During the night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two servant wives, and his eleven sons and crossed the Jabbok River with them. After taking them to the other side, he sent over all his possessions.

This left Jacob all alone in the camp, and a man came and wrestled with him until the dawn began to break. When the man saw that he would not win the match, he touched Jacob’s hip and wrenched it out of its socket. Then the man said, “Let me go, for the dawn is breaking!”



But Jacob said, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.”

*“What is your name?” the man asked.
He replied, “Jacob.”*

“Your name will no longer be Jacob,” the man told him. “From now on you will be called Israel, because you have fought with God and with men and have won.”

*“Please tell me your name,” Jacob said.
“Why do you want to know my name?” the man replied. Then he blessed Jacob there.*

Jacob named the place Peniel (which means “face of God”), for he said, “I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been spared.” The sun was rising as Jacob left Peniel, and he was limping because of the injury to his hip. (Even today the people of Israel don’t eat the tendon near the hip socket because of what happened that night when the man strained the tendon of Jacob’s hip.)



Cottonwood Creek
— CHURCH —

DAY 11

GENESIS 33 - 36

Then Jacob looked up and saw Esau coming with his 400 men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and his two servant wives. He put the servant wives and their children at the front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last. Then Jacob went on ahead. As he approached his brother, he bowed to the ground seven times before him. Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him. And they both wept.

Then Esau looked at the women and children and asked, “Who are these people with you?”

“These are the children God has graciously given to me, your servant,” Jacob replied. Then the servant wives came forward with their children and bowed before him. Next came Leah with her children, and they bowed before him. Finally, Joseph and Rachel came forward and bowed before him.

“And what were all the flocks and herds I met as I came?” Esau asked.



Jacob replied, “They are a gift, my lord, to ensure your friendship.”

*“My brother, I have plenty,” Esau answered.
“Keep what you have for yourself.”*

*But Jacob insisted, “No, if I have found favor with you, please accept this gift from me. And what a relief to see your friendly smile. It is like seeing the face of God! Please take this gift I have brought you, for God has been very gracious to me. I have more than enough.”
And because Jacob insisted, Esau finally accepted the gift.*

“Well,” Esau said, “let’s be going. I will lead the way.”

But Jacob replied, “You can see, my lord, that some of the children are very young, and the flocks and herds have their young, too. If they are driven too hard, even for one day, all the animals could die. Please, my lord, go ahead of your servant. We will follow slowly, at a pace that is comfortable for the livestock and the children. I will meet you at Seir.”

“All right,” Esau said, “but at least let me assign some of my men to guide and protect you.”

Jacob responded, “That’s not necessary. It’s enough that you’ve received me warmly, my lord!”

So Esau turned around and started back to Seir that same day. Jacob, on the other hand, traveled on to Succoth.



There he built himself a house and made shelters for his livestock. That is why the place was named Succoth (which means “shelters”).

Later, having traveled all the way from Paddan-aram, Jacob arrived safely at the town of Shechem, in the land of Canaan. There he set up camp outside the town. Jacob bought the plot of land where he camped from the family of Hamor, the father of Shechem, for 100 pieces of silver. And there he built an altar and named it El-Elohe-Israel.

One day Dinah, the daughter of Jacob and Leah, went to visit some of the young women who lived in the area. But when the local prince, Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, saw Dinah, he seized her and raped her. But then he fell in love with her, and he tried to win her affection with tender words. He said to his father, Hamor, “Get me this young girl. I want to marry her.”

Soon Jacob heard that Shechem had defiled his daughter, Dinah. But since his sons were out in the fields herding his livestock, he said nothing until they returned. Hamor, Shechem’s father, came to discuss the matter with Jacob. Meanwhile, Jacob’s sons had come in from the field as soon as they heard what had happened. They were shocked and furious that their sister had been raped.

Shechem had done a disgraceful thing against Jacob’s family, something that should never be done.

Hamor tried to speak with Jacob and his sons.



Cottonwood Creek
— CHURCH —

“My son Shechem is truly in love with your daughter,” he said. “Please let him marry her. In fact, let’s arrange other marriages, too. You give us your daughters for our sons, and we will give you our daughters for your sons. And you may live among us; the land is open to you! Settle here and trade with us. And feel free to buy property in the area.”

Then Shechem himself spoke to Dinah’s father and brothers. “Please be kind to me, and let me marry her,” he begged. “I will give you whatever you ask. No matter what dowry or gift you demand, I will gladly pay it—just give me the girl as my wife.”

But since Shechem had defiled their sister, Dinah, Jacob’s sons responded deceitfully to Shechem and his father, Hamor. They said to them, “We couldn’t possibly allow this, because you’re not circumcised. It would be a disgrace for our sister to marry a man like you! But here is a solution. If every man among you will be circumcised like we are, then we will give you our daughters, and we’ll take your daughters for ourselves. We will live among you and become one people. But if you don’t agree to be circumcised, we will take her and be on our way.”

Hamor and his son Shechem agreed to their proposal. Shechem wasted no time in acting on this request, for he wanted Jacob’s daughter desperately. Shechem was a highly respected member of his family, and he went with his father, Hamor, to present this proposal to the leaders at the town gate.



“These men are our friends,” they said. “Let’s invite them to live here among us and trade freely. Look, the land is large enough to hold them. We can take their daughters as wives and let them marry ours. But they will consider staying here and becoming one people with us only if all of our men are circumcised, just as they are. But if we do this, all their livestock and possessions will eventually be ours. Come, let’s agree to their terms and let them settle here among us.”

So all the men in the town council agreed with Hamor and Shechem, and every male in the town was circumcised. But three days later, when their wounds were still sore, two of Jacob’s sons, Simeon and Levi, who were Dinah’s full brothers, took their swords and entered the town without opposition. Then they slaughtered every male there, including Hamor and his son Shechem. They killed them with their swords, then took Dinah from Shechem’s house and returned to their camp.

Meanwhile, the rest of Jacob’s sons arrived. Finding the men slaughtered, they plundered the town because their sister had been defiled there. They seized all the flocks and herds and donkeys—everything they could lay their hands on, both inside the town and outside in the fields. They looted all their wealth and plundered their houses. They also took all their little children and wives and led them away as captives.

*Afterward Jacob said to Simeon and Levi,
“You have ruined me!”*



Cottonwood Creek
— CHURCH —

You've made me stink among all the people of this land—among all the Canaanites and Perizzites. We are so few that they will join forces and crush us. I will be ruined, and my entire household will be wiped out!"

"But why should we let him treat our sister like a prostitute?" they retorted angrily.

Then God said to Jacob, "Get ready and move to Bethel and settle there. Build an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother, Esau."

So Jacob told everyone in his household, "Get rid of all your pagan idols, purify yourselves, and put on clean clothing. We are now going to Bethel, where I will build an altar to the God who answered my prayers when I was in distress. He has been with me wherever I have gone."

So they gave Jacob all their pagan idols and earrings, and he buried them under the great tree near Shechem. As they set out, a terror from God spread over the people in all the towns of that area, so no one attacked Jacob's family.

Eventually, Jacob and his household arrived at Luz (also called Bethel) in Canaan. Jacob built an altar there and named the place El-bethel (which means "God of Bethel"), because God had appeared to him there when he was fleeing from his brother, Esau. Soon after this, Rebekah's old nurse, Deborah, died.



She was buried beneath the oak tree in the valley below Bethel. Ever since, the tree has been called Allon-bacuth (which means “oak of weeping”).

Now that Jacob had returned from Paddan-aram, God appeared to him again at Bethel. God blessed him, saying, “Your name is Jacob, but you will not be called Jacob any longer. From now on your name will be Israel.” So God renamed him Israel.

Then God said, “I am El-Shaddai—‘God Almighty.’ Be fruitful and multiply. You will become a great nation, even many nations. Kings will be among your descendants! And I will give you the land I once gave to Abraham and Isaac. Yes, I will give it to you and your descendants after you.” Then God went up from the place where he had spoken to Jacob.

Jacob set up a stone pillar to mark the place where God had spoken to him. Then he poured wine over it as an offering to God and anointed the pillar with olive oil. And Jacob named the place Bethel (which means “house of God”), because God had spoken to him there. Leaving Bethel, Jacob and his clan moved on toward Ephrath. But Rachel went into labor while they were still some distance away. Her labor pains were intense. After a very hard delivery, the midwife finally exclaimed, “Don’t be afraid—you have another son!” Rachel was about to die, but with her last breath she named the baby Ben-oni (which means “son of my sorrow”).



The baby's father, however, called him Benjamin (which means "son of my right hand"). So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). Jacob set up a stone monument over Rachel's grave, and it can be seen there to this day.

Then Jacob traveled on and camped beyond Migdal-eder. While he was living there, Reuben had intercourse with Bilhah, his father's concubine, and Jacob soon heard about it.

These are the names of the twelve sons of Jacob:

The sons of Leah were Reuben (Jacob's oldest son), Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun.

The sons of Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin.

The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's servant, were Dan and Naphtali.

The sons of Zilpah, Leah's servant, were Gad and Asher.

These are the names of the sons who were born to Jacob at Paddan-aram. So Jacob returned to his father, Isaac, in Mamre, which is near Kiriath-arba (now called Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had both lived as foreigners. Isaac lived for 180 years. Then he breathed his last and died at a ripe old age, joining his ancestors in death.



And his sons, Esau and Jacob, buried him. This is the account of the descendants of Esau (also known as Edom). Esau married two young women from Canaan: Adah, the daughter of Elon the Hittite; and Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah and granddaughter of Zibeon the Hivite. He also married his cousin Basemath, who was the daughter of Ishmael and the sister of Nebaioth. Adah gave birth to a son named Eliphaz for Esau. Basemath gave birth to a son named Reuel. Oholibamah gave birth to sons named Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. All these sons were born to Esau in the land of Canaan.

Esau took his wives, his children, and his entire household, along with his livestock and cattle—all the wealth he had acquired in the land of Canaan—and moved away from his brother, Jacob. There was not enough land to support them both because of all the livestock and possessions they had acquired. So Esau (also known as Edom) settled in the hill country of Seir.

This is the account of Esau's descendants, the Edomites, who lived in the hill country of Seir.

These are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz, the son of Esau's wife Adah; and Reuel, the son of Esau's wife Basemath.

The descendants of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz. Timna, the concubine of Esau's son Eliphaz, gave birth to a son named Amalek. These are the descendants of Esau's wife Adah.



The descendants of Reuel were Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These are the descendants of Esau's wife Basemath.

Esau also had sons through Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah and granddaughter of Zibeon. Their names were Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.

These are the descendants of Esau who became the leaders of various clans:

The descendants of Esau's oldest son, Eliphaz, became the leaders of the clans of Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz, Korah, Gatam, and Amalek. These are the clan leaders in the land of Edom who descended from Eliphaz. All these were descendants of Esau's wife Adah.

The descendants of Esau's son Reuel became the leaders of the clans of Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These are the clan leaders in the land of Edom who descended from Reuel. All these were descendants of Esau's wife Basemath.

The descendants of Esau and his wife Oholibamah became the leaders of the clans of Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. These are the clan leaders who descended from Esau's wife Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah.

These are the clans descended from Esau (also known as Edom), identified by their clan leaders.

These are the names of the tribes that descended from Seir the Horite.



They lived in the land of Edom: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. These were the Horite clan leaders, the descendants of Seir, who lived in the land of Edom.

The descendants of Lotan were Hori and Hemam. Lotan's sister was named Timna.

The descendants of Shobal were Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam.

The descendants of Zibeon were Aiah and Anah. (This is the Anah who discovered the hot springs in the wilderness while he was grazing his father's donkeys.)

The descendants of Anah were his son, Dishon, and his daughter, Oholibamah.

The descendants of Dishon were Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Keran.

The descendants of Ezer were Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan.

The descendants of Dishan were Uz and Aran.

So these were the leaders of the Horite clans: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. The Horite clans are named after their clan leaders, who lived in the land of Seir.

These are the kings who ruled in the land of Edom before any king ruled over the Israelites:

Bela son of Beor, who ruled in Edom from his city of Dinhabah.



When Bela died, Jobab son of Zerah from Bozrah became king in his place.

When Jobab died, Husham from the land of the Temanites became king in his place.

When Husham died, Hadad son of Bedad became king in his place and ruled from the city of Avith. He was the one who defeated the Midianites in the land of Moab.

When Hadad died, Samlah from the city of Masrekah became king in his place.

When Samlah died, Shaul from the city of Rehoboth-on-the-River became king in his place.

When Shaul died, Baal-hanan son of Acbor became king in his place.

When Baal-hanan son of Acbor died, Hadad became king in his place and ruled from the city of Pau. His wife was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred and granddaughter of Me-zahab.

These are the names of the leaders of the clans descended from Esau, who lived in the places named for them: Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, Magdiel, and Iram. These are the leaders of the clans of Edom, listed according to their settlements in the land they occupied. They all descended from Esau, the ancestor of the Edomites.



DAY 12

GENESIS 37 - 40

So Jacob settled again in the land of Canaan, where his father had lived as a foreigner.

This is the account of Jacob and his family. When Joseph was seventeen years old, he often tended his father's flocks. He worked for his half brothers, the sons of his father's wives Bilhah and Zilpah. But Joseph reported to his father some of the bad things his brothers were doing.

Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other children because Joseph had been born to him in his old age. So one day Jacob had a special gift made for Joseph—a beautiful robe. But his brothers hated Joseph because their father loved him more than the rest of them.

They couldn't say a kind word to him. One night Joseph had a dream, and when he told his brothers about it, they hated him more than ever. "Listen to this dream," he said. "We were out in the field, tying up bundles of grain.

Suddenly my bundle stood up, and your bundles all gathered around and bowed low before mine!"



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His brothers responded, “So you think you will be our king, do you? Do you actually think you will reign over us?” And they hated him all the more because of his dreams and the way he talked about them.

Soon Joseph had another dream, and again he told his brothers about it. “Listen, I have had another dream,” he said. “The sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed low before me!”

This time he told the dream to his father as well as to his brothers, but his father scolded him. “What kind of dream is that?” he asked.

“Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow to the ground before you?” But while his brothers were jealous of Joseph, his father wondered what the dreams meant. Soon after this, Joseph’s brothers went to pasture their father’s flocks at Shechem.

When they had been gone for some time, Jacob said to Joseph, “Your brothers are pasturing the sheep at Shechem. Get ready, and I will send you to them.”

“I’m ready to go,” Joseph replied.

“Go and see how your brothers and the flocks are getting along,” Jacob said. “Then come back and bring me a report.” So Jacob sent him on his way, and Joseph traveled to Shechem from their home in the valley of Hebron.

When he arrived there, a man from the area noticed him wandering around the countryside. “What are you looking for?” he asked.



“I’m looking for my brothers,” Joseph replied.

“Do you know where they are pasturing their sheep?”

“Yes,” the man told him. “They have moved on from here, but I heard them say, ‘Let’s go on to Dothan.’” So Joseph followed his brothers to Dothan and found them there.

When Joseph’s brothers saw him coming, they recognized him in the distance. As he approached, they made plans to kill him. “Here comes the dreamer!” they said. “Come on, let’s kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns. We can tell our father, ‘A wild animal has eaten him.’ Then we’ll see what becomes of his dreams!”

But when Reuben heard of their scheme, he came to Joseph’s rescue. “Let’s not kill him,” he said. “Why should we shed any blood? Let’s just throw him into this empty cistern here in the wilderness. Then he’ll die without our laying a hand on him.” Reuben was secretly planning to rescue Joseph and return him to his father.

So when Joseph arrived, his brothers ripped off the beautiful robe he was wearing. Then they grabbed him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it. Then, just as they were sitting down to eat, they looked up and saw a caravan of camels in the distance coming toward them. It was a group of Ishmaelite traders taking a load of gum, balm, and aromatic resin from Gilead down to Egypt.



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Judah said to his brothers, “What will we gain by killing our brother? We’d have to cover up the crime. Instead of hurting him, let’s sell him to those Ishmaelite traders. After all, he is our brother—our own flesh and blood!” And his brothers agreed. So when the Ishmaelites, who were Midianite traders, came by, Joseph’s brothers pulled him out of the cistern and sold him to them for twenty pieces of silver. And the traders took him to Egypt.

Some time later, Reuben returned to get Joseph out of the cistern. When he discovered that Joseph was missing, he tore his clothes in grief. Then he went back to his brothers and lamented, “The boy is gone! What will I do now?”

Then the brothers killed a young goat and dipped Joseph’s robe in its blood. They sent the beautiful robe to their father with this message: “Look at what we found. Doesn’t this robe belong to your son?”

Their father recognized it immediately. “Yes,” he said, “it is my son’s robe. A wild animal must have eaten him. Joseph has clearly been torn to pieces!” Then Jacob tore his clothes and dressed himself in burlap. He mourned deeply for his son for a long time. His family all tried to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. “I will go to my grave mourning for my son,” he would say, and then he would weep. Meanwhile, the Midianite traders arrived in Egypt, where they sold Joseph to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.



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Potiphar was captain of the palace guard.

About this time, Judah left home and moved to Adullam, where he stayed with a man named Hirah. There he saw a Canaanite woman, the daughter of Shua, and he married her. When he slept with her, she became pregnant and gave birth to a son, and he named the boy Er. Then she became pregnant again and gave birth to another son, and she named him Onan. And when she gave birth to a third son, she named him Shelah. At the time of Shelah's birth, they were living at Kezib.

In the course of time, Judah arranged for his firstborn son, Er, to marry a young woman named Tamar. But Er was a wicked man in the Lord's sight, so the Lord took his life. Then Judah said to Er's brother Onan, "Go and marry Tamar, as our law requires of the brother of a man who has died. You must produce an heir for your brother."

But Onan was not willing to have a child who would not be his own heir. So whenever he had intercourse with his brother's wife, he spilled the semen on the ground. This prevented her from having a child who would belong to his brother. But the Lord considered it evil for Onan to deny a child to his dead brother. So the Lord took Onan's life, too.

Then Judah said to Tamar, his daughter-in-law, "Go back to your parents' home and remain a widow until my son Shelah is old enough to marry you."



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(But Judah didn't really intend to do this because he was afraid Shelah would also die, like his two brothers.) So Tamar went back to live in her father's home.

Some years later Judah's wife died. After the time of mourning was over, Judah and his friend Hirah the Adullamite went up to Timnah to supervise the shearing of his sheep. Someone told Tamar, "Look, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep."

Tamar was aware that Shelah had grown up, but no arrangements had been made for her to come and marry him. So she changed out of her widow's clothing and covered herself with a veil to disguise herself. Then she sat beside the road at the entrance to the village of Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. Judah noticed her and thought she was a prostitute, since she had covered her face. So he stopped and propositioned her. "Let me have sex with you," he said, not realizing that she was his own daughter-in-law.

*"How much will you pay to have sex with me?"
Tamar asked.*

*"I'll send you a young goat from my flock,"
Judah promised.*

"But what will you give me to guarantee that you will send the goat?" she asked.

*"What kind of guarantee do you want?"
he replied.*



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She answered, “Leave me your identification seal and its cord and the walking stick you are carrying.” So Judah gave them to her. Then he had intercourse with her, and she became pregnant. Afterward she went back home, took off her veil, and put on her widow’s clothing as usual.

Later Judah asked his friend Hirah the Adullamite to take the young goat to the woman and to pick up the things he had given her as his guarantee. But Hirah couldn’t find her. So he asked the men who lived there, “Where can I find the shrine prostitute who was sitting beside the road at the entrance to Enaim?”

“We’ve never had a shrine prostitute here,” they replied.

So Hirah returned to Judah and told him, “I couldn’t find her anywhere, and the men of the village claim they’ve never had a shrine prostitute there.”

“Then let her keep the things I gave her,” Judah said. “I sent the young goat as we agreed, but you couldn’t find her. We’d be the laughingstock of the village if we went back again to look for her.”

About three months later, Judah was told, “Tamar, your daughter-in-law, has acted like a prostitute. And now, because of this, she’s pregnant.”

“Bring her out, and let her be burned!” Judah demanded.



But as they were taking her out to kill her, she sent this message to her father-in-law: “The man who owns these things made me pregnant. Look closely. Whose seal and cord and walking stick are these?”

Judah recognized them immediately and said, “She is more righteous than I am, because I didn’t arrange for her to marry my son Shelah.” And Judah never slept with Tamar again.

When the time came for Tamar to give birth, it was discovered that she was carrying twins.

While she was in labor, one of the babies reached out his hand. The midwife grabbed it and tied a scarlet string around the child’s wrist, announcing, “This one came out first.”

But then he pulled back his hand, and out came his brother! “What!” the midwife exclaimed. “How did you break out first?” So he was named Perez. Then the baby with the scarlet string on his wrist was born, and he was named Zerah.

When Joseph was taken to Egypt by the Ishmaelite traders, he was purchased by Potiphar, an Egyptian officer. Potiphar was captain of the guard for Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. The Lord was with Joseph, so he succeeded in everything he did as he served in the home of his Egyptian master. Potiphar noticed this and realized that the Lord was with Joseph, giving him success in everything he did. This pleased Potiphar, so he soon made Joseph his personal attendant.



He put him in charge of his entire household and everything he owned. From the day Joseph was put in charge of his master's household and property, the Lord began to bless Potiphar's household for Joseph's sake. All his household affairs ran smoothly, and his crops and livestock flourished. So Potiphar gave Joseph complete administrative responsibility over everything he owned. With Joseph there, he didn't worry about a thing—except what kind of food to eat!

Joseph was a very handsome and well-built young man, and Potiphar's wife soon began to look at him lustfully. "Come and sleep with me," she demanded.

But Joseph refused. "Look," he told her, "my master trusts me with everything in his entire household. No one here has more authority than I do. He has held back nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How could I do such a wicked thing? It would be a great sin against God."

She kept putting pressure on Joseph day after day, but he refused to sleep with her, and he kept out of her way as much as possible. One day, however, no one else was around when he went in to do his work. She came and grabbed him by his cloak, demanding, "Come on, sleep with me!" Joseph tore himself away, but he left his cloak in her hand as he ran from the house. When she saw that she was holding his cloak and he had fled, she called out to her servants. Soon all the men came running.



“Look!” she said. “My husband has brought this Hebrew slave here to make fools of us! He came into my room to rape me, but I screamed. When he heard me scream, he ran outside and got away, but he left his cloak behind with me.”

She kept the cloak with her until her husband came home. Then she told him her story. “That Hebrew slave you’ve brought into our house tried to come in and fool around with me,” she said. “But when I screamed, he ran outside, leaving his cloak with me!”

Potiphar was furious when he heard his wife’s story about how Joseph had treated her. So he took Joseph and threw him into the prison where the king’s prisoners were held, and there he remained. But the Lord was with Joseph in the prison and showed him his faithful love. And the Lord made Joseph a favorite with the prison warden. Before long, the warden put Joseph in charge of all the other prisoners and over everything that happened in the prison. The warden had no more worries, because Joseph took care of everything. The Lord was with him and caused everything he did to succeed.

Some time later, Pharaoh’s chief cup-bearer and chief baker offended their royal master. Pharaoh became angry with these two officials, and he put them in the prison where Joseph was, in the palace of the captain of the guard. They remained in prison for quite some time, and the captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, who looked after them.



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While they were in prison, Pharaoh's cup-bearer and baker each had a dream one night, and each dream had its own meaning. When Joseph saw them the next morning, he noticed that they both looked upset. "Why do you look so worried today?" he asked them.

And they replied, "We both had dreams last night, but no one can tell us what they mean."

"Interpreting dreams is God's business," Joseph replied. "Go ahead and tell me your dreams."

So the chief cup-bearer told Joseph his dream first. "In my dream," he said, "I saw a grapevine in front of me. The vine had three branches that began to bud and blossom, and soon it produced clusters of ripe grapes. I was holding Pharaoh's wine cup in my hand, so I took a cluster of grapes and squeezed the juice into the cup. Then I placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand."

"This is what the dream means," Joseph said. "The three branches represent three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift you up and restore you to your position as his chief cup-bearer. And please remember me and do me a favor when things go well for you. Mention me to Pharaoh, so he might let me out of this place. For I was kidnapped from my homeland, the land of the Hebrews, and now I'm here in prison, but I did nothing to deserve it."



When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given the first dream such a positive interpretation, he said to Joseph, “I had a dream, too. In my dream there were three baskets of white pastries stacked on my head. The top basket contained all kinds of pastries for Pharaoh, but the birds came and ate them from the basket on my head.”

“This is what the dream means,” Joseph told him. “The three baskets also represent three days. Three days from now Pharaoh will lift you up and impale your body on a pole. Then birds will come and peck away at your flesh.”

Pharaoh’s birthday came three days later, and he prepared a banquet for all his officials and staff. He summoned his chief cup-bearer and chief baker to join the other officials. He then restored the chief cup-bearer to his former position, so he could again hand Pharaoh his cup. But Pharaoh impaled the chief baker, just as Joseph had predicted when he interpreted his dream. Pharaoh’s chief cup-bearer, however, forgot all about Joseph, never giving him another thought.



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DAY 15

GENESIS 41 - 43

Two full years later, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing on the bank of the Nile River. In his dream he saw seven fat, healthy cows come up out of the river and begin grazing in the marsh grass. Then he saw seven more cows come up behind them from the Nile, but these were scrawny and thin. These cows stood beside the fat cows on the riverbank. Then the scrawny, thin cows ate the seven healthy, fat cows! At this point in the dream, Pharaoh woke up.

But he fell asleep again and had a second dream. This time he saw seven heads of grain, plump and beautiful, growing on a single stalk. Then seven more heads of grain appeared, but these were shriveled and withered by the east wind. And these thin heads swallowed up the seven plump, well-formed heads! Then Pharaoh woke up again and realized it was a dream.

The next morning Pharaoh was very disturbed by the dreams. So he called for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt.



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When Pharaoh told them his dreams, not one of them could tell him what they meant.

Finally, the king's chief cup-bearer spoke up. "Today I have been reminded of my failure," he told Pharaoh. "Some time ago, you were angry with the chief baker and me, and you imprisoned us in the palace of the captain of the guard. One night the chief baker and I each had a dream, and each dream had its own meaning. There was a young Hebrew man with us in the prison who was a slave of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he told us what each of our dreams meant. And everything happened just as he had predicted. I was restored to my position as cup-bearer, and the chief baker was executed and impaled on a pole."

Pharaoh sent for Joseph at once, and he was quickly brought from the prison. After he shaved and changed his clothes, he went in and stood before Pharaoh. Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream last night, and no one here can tell me what it means. But I have heard that when you hear about a dream you can interpret it."

"It is beyond my power to do this," Joseph replied. "But God can tell you what it means and set you at ease."

So Pharaoh told Joseph his dream. "In my dream," he said, "I was standing on the bank of the Nile River, and I saw seven fat, healthy cows come up out of the river and begin grazing in the marsh grass."



But then I saw seven sick-looking cows, scrawny and thin, come up after them. I've never seen such sorry-looking animals in all the land of Egypt. These thin, scrawny cows ate the seven fat cows. But afterward you wouldn't have known it, for they were still as thin and scrawny as before! Then I woke up.

"In my dream I also saw seven heads of grain, full and beautiful, growing on a single stalk. Then seven more heads of grain appeared, but these were blighted, shriveled, and withered by the east wind. And the shriveled heads swallowed the seven healthy heads. I told these dreams to the magicians, but no one could tell me what they mean."

Joseph responded, "Both of Pharaoh's dreams mean the same thing. God is telling Pharaoh in advance what he is about to do. The seven healthy cows and the seven healthy heads of grain both represent seven years of prosperity. The seven thin, scrawny cows that came up later and the seven thin heads of grain, withered by the east wind, represent seven years of famine.

"This will happen just as I have described it, for God has revealed to Pharaoh in advance what he is about to do. The next seven years will be a period of great prosperity throughout the land of Egypt. But afterward there will be seven years of famine so great that all the prosperity will be forgotten in Egypt. Famine will destroy the land. This famine will be so severe that even the memory of the good years will be erased.



As for having two similar dreams, it means that these events have been decreed by God, and he will soon make them happen.

“Therefore, Pharaoh should find an intelligent and wise man and put him in charge of the entire land of Egypt. Then Pharaoh should appoint supervisors over the land and let them collect one-fifth of all the crops during the seven good years. Have them gather all the food produced in the good years that are just ahead and bring it to Pharaoh’s storehouses. Store it away, and guard it so there will be food in the cities. That way there will be enough to eat when the seven years of famine come to the land of Egypt. Otherwise this famine will destroy the land.”

Joseph’s suggestions were well received by Pharaoh and his officials. So Pharaoh asked his officials, “Can we find anyone else like this man so obviously filled with the spirit of God?” Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has revealed the meaning of the dreams to you, clearly no one else is as intelligent or wise as you are. You will be in charge of my court, and all my people will take orders from you. Only I, sitting on my throne, will have a rank higher than yours.”

Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I hereby put you in charge of the entire land of Egypt.” Then Pharaoh removed his signet ring from his hand and placed it on Joseph’s finger. He dressed him in fine linen clothing and hung a gold chain around his neck.



Then he had Joseph ride in the chariot reserved for his second-in-command. And wherever Joseph went, the command was shouted, “Kneel down!” So Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of all Egypt. And Pharaoh said to him, “I am Pharaoh, but no one will lift a hand or foot in the entire land of Egypt without your approval.”

Then Pharaoh gave Joseph a new Egyptian name, Zaphenath-paneah. He also gave him a wife, whose name was Asenath. She was the daughter of Potiphera, the priest of On. So Joseph took charge of the entire land of Egypt. He was thirty years old when he began serving in the court of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. And when Joseph left Pharaoh’s presence, he inspected the entire land of Egypt.

As predicted, for seven years the land produced bumper crops. During those years, Joseph gathered all the crops grown in Egypt and stored the grain from the surrounding fields in the cities. He piled up huge amounts of grain like sand on the seashore. Finally, he stopped keeping records because there was too much to measure. During this time, before the first of the famine years, two sons were born to Joseph and his wife, Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, the priest of On. Joseph named his older son Manasseh, for he said, “God has made me forget all my troubles and everyone in my father’s family.” Joseph named his second son Ephraim, for he said, “God has made me fruitful in this land of my grief.”



At last the seven years of bumper crops throughout the land of Egypt came to an end. Then the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had predicted. The famine also struck all the surrounding countries, but throughout Egypt there was plenty of food. Eventually, however, the famine spread throughout the land of Egypt as well. And when the people cried out to Pharaoh for food, he told them, "Go to Joseph, and do whatever he tells you." So with severe famine everywhere, Joseph opened up the storehouses and distributed grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout the land of Egypt. And people from all around came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph because the famine was severe throughout the world.

When Jacob heard that grain was available in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why are you standing around looking at one another? I have heard there is grain in Egypt. Go down there, and buy enough grain to keep us alive. Otherwise we'll die."

So Joseph's ten older brothers went down to Egypt to buy grain. But Jacob wouldn't let Joseph's younger brother, Benjamin, go with them, for fear some harm might come to him. So Jacob's sons arrived in Egypt along with others to buy food, for the famine was in Canaan as well. Since Joseph was governor of all Egypt and in charge of selling grain to all the people, it was to him that his brothers came. When they arrived, they bowed before him with their faces to the ground.



Joseph recognized his brothers instantly, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. “Where are you from?” he demanded.

“From the land of Canaan,” they replied. “We have come to buy food.”

Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they didn’t recognize him. And he remembered the dreams he’d had about them many years before. He said to them, “You are spies! You have come to see how vulnerable our land has become.”

“No, my lord!” they exclaimed. “Your servants have simply come to buy food. We are all brothers—members of the same family. We are honest men, sir! We are not spies!”

“Yes, you are!” Joseph insisted. “You have come to see how vulnerable our land has become.”

“Sir,” they said, “there are actually twelve of us. We, your servants, are all brothers, sons of a man living in the land of Canaan. Our youngest brother is back there with our father right now, and one of our brothers is no longer with us.”

But Joseph insisted, “As I said, you are spies! This is how I will test your story. I swear by the life of Pharaoh that you will never leave Egypt unless your youngest brother comes here! One of you must go and get your brother. I’ll keep the rest of you here in prison. Then we’ll find out whether or not your story is true.



By the life of Pharaoh, if it turns out that you don't have a younger brother, then I'll know you are spies."

So Joseph put them all in prison for three days. On the third day Joseph said to them, "I am a God-fearing man. If you do as I say, you will live. If you really are honest men, choose one of your brothers to remain in prison. The rest of you may go home with grain for your starving families. But you must bring your youngest brother back to me. This will prove that you are telling the truth, and you will not die." To this they agreed.

Speaking among themselves, they said, "Clearly we are being punished because of what we did to Joseph long ago. We saw his anguish when he pleaded for his life, but we wouldn't listen. That's why we're in this trouble."

"Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy?" Reuben asked. "But you wouldn't listen. And now we have to answer for his blood!"

Of course, they didn't know that Joseph understood them, for he had been speaking to them through an interpreter. Now he turned away from them and began to weep. When he regained his composure, he spoke to them again. Then he chose Simeon from among them and had him tied up right before their eyes. Joseph then ordered his servants to fill the men's sacks with grain, but he also gave secret instructions to return each brother's payment at the top of his sack.



He also gave them supplies for their journey home. So the brothers loaded their donkeys with the grain and headed for home.

But when they stopped for the night and one of them opened his sack to get grain for his donkey, he found his money in the top of his sack. “Look!” he exclaimed to his brothers. “My money has been returned; it’s here in my sack!” Then their hearts sank. Trembling, they said to each other, “What has God done to us?”

When the brothers came to their father, Jacob, in the land of Canaan, they told him everything that had happened to them. “The man who is governor of the land spoke very harshly to us,” they told him. “He accused us of being spies scouting the land. But we said, ‘We are honest men, not spies. We are twelve brothers, sons of one father. One brother is no longer with us, and the youngest is at home with our father in the land of Canaan.’

“Then the man who is governor of the land told us, ‘This is how I will find out if you are honest men. Leave one of your brothers here with me, and take grain for your starving families and go on home. But you must bring your youngest brother back to me. Then I will know you are honest men and not spies. Then I will give you back your brother, and you may trade freely in the land.’” As they emptied out their sacks, there in each man’s sack was the bag of money he had paid for the grain! The brothers and their father were terrified when they saw the bags of money.



Jacob exclaimed, “You are robbing me of my children! Joseph is gone! Simeon is gone! And now you want to take Benjamin, too. Everything is going against me!”

Then Reuben said to his father, “You may kill my two sons if I don’t bring Benjamin back to you. I’ll be responsible for him, and I promise to bring him back.”

But Jacob replied, “My son will not go down with you. His brother Joseph is dead, and he is all I have left. If anything should happen to him on your journey, you would send this grieving, white-haired man to his grave.”

But the famine continued to ravage the land of Canaan. When the grain they had brought from Egypt was almost gone, Jacob said to his sons, “Go back and buy us a little more food.”

But Judah said, “The man was serious when he warned us, ‘You won’t see my face again unless your brother is with you.’ If you send Benjamin with us, we will go down and buy more food. But if you don’t let Benjamin go, we won’t go either. Remember, the man said, ‘You won’t see my face again unless your brother is with you.’”

“Why were you so cruel to me?” Jacob moaned. “Why did you tell him you had another brother?”

“The man kept asking us questions about our family,” they replied. “He asked, ‘Is your father still alive? Do you have another brother?’



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So we answered his questions. How could we know he would say, ‘Bring your brother down here’?”

Judah said to his father, “Send the boy with me, and we will be on our way. Otherwise we will all die of starvation—and not only we, but you and our little ones. I personally guarantee his safety. You may hold me responsible if I don’t bring him back to you. Then let me bear the blame forever. If we hadn’t wasted all this time, we could have gone and returned twice by now.”

So their father, Jacob, finally said to them, “If it can’t be avoided, then at least do this. Pack your bags with the best products of this land. Take them down to the man as gifts—balm, honey, gum, aromatic resin, pistachio nuts, and almonds. Also take double the money that was put back in your sacks, as it was probably someone’s mistake. Then take your brother, and go back to the man. May God Almighty give you mercy as you go before the man, so that he will release Simeon and let Benjamin return. But if I must lose my children, so be it.”

So the men packed Jacob’s gifts and double the money and headed off with Benjamin. They finally arrived in Egypt and presented themselves to Joseph. When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the manager of his household, “These men will eat with me this noon. Take them inside the palace. Then go slaughter an animal, and prepare a big feast.”



So the man did as Joseph told him and took them into Joseph's palace. The brothers were terrified when they saw that they were being taken into Joseph's house. "It's because of the money someone put in our sacks last time we were here," they said. "He plans to pretend that we stole it. Then he will seize us, make us slaves, and take our donkeys."

The brothers approached the manager of Joseph's household and spoke to him at the entrance to the palace. "Sir," they said, "we came to Egypt once before to buy food. But as we were returning home, we stopped for the night and opened our sacks. Then we discovered that each man's money—the exact amount paid—was in the top of his sack! Here it is; we have brought it back with us. We also have additional money to buy more food. We have no idea who put our money in our sacks."

"Relax. Don't be afraid," the household manager told them. "Your God, the God of your father, must have put this treasure into your sacks. I know I received your payment." Then he released Simeon and brought him out to them.

The manager then led the men into Joseph's palace. He gave them water to wash their feet and provided food for their donkeys. They were told they would be eating there, so they prepared their gifts for Joseph's arrival at noon. When Joseph came home, they gave him the gifts they had brought him, then bowed low to the ground before him.



After greeting them, he asked, “How is your father, the old man you spoke about? Is he still alive?”

“Yes,” they replied. “Our father, your servant, is alive and well.” And they bowed low again.

Then Joseph looked at his brother Benjamin, the son of his own mother. “Is this your youngest brother, the one you told me about?” Joseph asked. “May God be gracious to you, my son.” Then Joseph hurried from the room because he was overcome with emotion for his brother. He went into his private room, where he broke down and wept. After washing his face, he came back out, keeping himself under control. Then he ordered, “Bring out the food!”

The waiters served Joseph at his own table, and his brothers were served at a separate table. The Egyptians who ate with Joseph sat at their own table, because Egyptians despise Hebrews and refuse to eat with them. Joseph told each of his brothers where to sit, and to their amazement, he seated them according to age, from oldest to youngest. And Joseph filled their plates with food from his own table, giving Benjamin five times as much as he gave the others. So they feasted and drank freely with him.



DAY 16

GENESIS 44 - 47

When his brothers were ready to leave, Joseph gave these instructions to his palace manager: “Fill each of their sacks with as much grain as they can carry, and put each man’s money back into his sack. Then put my personal silver cup at the top of the youngest brother’s sack, along with the money for his grain.” So the manager did as Joseph instructed him.

The brothers were up at dawn and were sent on their journey with their loaded donkeys. But when they had gone only a short distance and were barely out of the city, Joseph said to his palace manager, “Chase after them and stop them. When you catch up with them, ask them, ‘Why have you repaid my kindness with such evil? Why have you stolen my master’s silver cup, which he uses to predict the future? What a wicked thing you have done!’”

When the palace manager caught up with the men, he spoke to them as he had been instructed.



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“What are you talking about?” the brothers responded. “We are your servants and would never do such a thing! Didn’t we return the money we found in our sacks? We brought it back all the way from the land of Canaan. Why would we steal silver or gold from your master’s house? If you find his cup with any one of us, let that man die. And all the rest of us, my lord, will be your slaves.”

“That’s fair,” the man replied. “But only the one who stole the cup will be my slave. The rest of you may go free.”

They all quickly took their sacks from the backs of their donkeys and opened them. The palace manager searched the brothers’ sacks, from the oldest to the youngest. And the cup was found in Benjamin’s sack! When the brothers saw this, they tore their clothing in despair. Then they loaded their donkeys again and returned to the city.

Joseph was still in his palace when Judah and his brothers arrived, and they fell to the ground before him. “What have you done?” Joseph demanded. “Don’t you know that a man like me can predict the future?”

Judah answered, “Oh, my lord, what can we say to you? How can we explain this? How can we prove our innocence? God is punishing us for our sins. My lord, we have all returned to be your slaves—all of us, not just our brother who had your cup in his sack.”



“No,” Joseph said. “I would never do such a thing! Only the man who stole the cup will be my slave. The rest of you may go back to your father in peace.”

Then Judah stepped forward and said, “Please, my lord, let your servant say just one word to you. Please, do not be angry with me, even though you are as powerful as Pharaoh himself.

“My lord, previously you asked us, your servants, ‘Do you have a father or a brother?’ And we responded, ‘Yes, my lord, we have a father who is an old man, and his youngest son is a child of his old age. His full brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother’s children, and his father loves him very much.’

“And you said to us, ‘Bring him here so I can see him with my own eyes.’ But we said to you, ‘My lord, the boy cannot leave his father, for his father would die.’ But you told us, ‘Unless your youngest brother comes with you, you will never see my face again.’

“So we returned to your servant, our father, and told him what you had said. Later, when he said, ‘Go back again and buy us more food,’ we replied, ‘We can’t go unless you let our youngest brother go with us. We’ll never get to see the man’s face unless our youngest brother is with us.’



“Then my father said to us, ‘As you know, my wife had two sons, and one of them went away and never returned. Doubtless he was torn to pieces by some wild animal. I have never seen him since. Now if you take his brother away from me, and any harm comes to him, you will send this grieving, white-haired man to his grave.’

“And now, my lord, I cannot go back to my father without the boy. Our father’s life is bound up in the boy’s life. If he sees that the boy is not with us, our father will die. We, your servants, will indeed be responsible for sending that grieving, white-haired man to his grave. My lord, I guaranteed to my father that I would take care of the boy. I told him, ‘If I don’t bring him back to you, I will bear the blame forever.’

“So please, my lord, let me stay here as a slave instead of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. For how can I return to my father if the boy is not with me? I couldn’t bear to see the anguish this would cause my father!”

Joseph could stand it no longer. There were many people in the room, and he said to his attendants, “Out, all of you!” So he was alone with his brothers when he told them who he was. Then he broke down and wept. He wept so loudly the Egyptians could hear him, and word of it quickly carried to Pharaoh’s palace.

“I am Joseph!” he said to his brothers. “Is my father still alive?” But his brothers were speechless!



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They were stunned to realize that Joseph was standing there in front of them. “Please, come closer,” he said to them. So they came closer. And he said again, “I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into slavery in Egypt. But don’t be upset, and don’t be angry with yourselves for selling me to this place. It was God who sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives. This famine that has ravaged the land for two years will last five more years, and there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. God has sent me ahead of you to keep you and your families alive and to preserve many survivors. So it was God who sent me here, not you! And he is the one who made me an adviser to Pharaoh—the manager of his entire palace and the governor of all Egypt.

“Now hurry back to my father and tell him, ‘This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me master over all the land of Egypt. So come down to me immediately! You can live in the region of Goshen, where you can be near me with all your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and everything you own. I will take care of you there, for there are still five years of famine ahead of us. Otherwise you, your household, and all your animals will starve.’”

Then Joseph added, “Look! You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that I really am Joseph! Go tell my father of my honored position here in Egypt. Describe for him everything you have seen, and then bring my father here quickly.”



Weeping with joy, he embraced Benjamin, and Benjamin did the same. Then Joseph kissed each of his brothers and wept over them, and after that they began talking freely with him.

The news soon reached Pharaoh's palace: "Joseph's brothers have arrived!" Pharaoh and his officials were all delighted to hear this. Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Tell your brothers, 'This is what you must do: Load your pack animals, and hurry back to the land of Canaan. Then get your father and all of your families, and return here to me. I will give you the very best land in Egypt, and you will eat from the best that the land produces.'"

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Tell your brothers, 'Take wagons from the land of Egypt to carry your little children and your wives, and bring your father here. Don't worry about your personal belongings, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.'"

So the sons of Jacob did as they were told. Joseph provided them with wagons, as Pharaoh had commanded, and he gave them supplies for the journey. And he gave each of them new clothes—but to Benjamin he gave five changes of clothes and 300 pieces of silver. He also sent his father ten male donkeys loaded with the finest products of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and other supplies he would need on his journey. So Joseph sent his brothers off, and as they left, he called after them, "Don't quarrel about all this along the way!"



And they left Egypt and returned to their father, Jacob, in the land of Canaan.

“Joseph is still alive!” they told him. “And he is governor of all the land of Egypt!” Jacob was stunned at the news—he couldn’t believe it. But when they repeated to Jacob everything Joseph had told them, and when he saw the wagons Joseph had sent to carry him, their father’s spirits revived.

Then Jacob exclaimed, “It must be true! My son Joseph is alive! I must go and see him before I die.”

So Jacob set out for Egypt with all his possessions. And when he came to Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father, Isaac. During the night God spoke to him in a vision. “Jacob! Jacob!” he called.

“Here I am,” Jacob replied.

“I am God, the God of your father,” the voice said. “Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make your family into a great nation. I will go with you down to Egypt, and I will bring you back again. You will die in Egypt, but Joseph will be with you to close your eyes.”

So Jacob left Beersheba, and his sons took him to Egypt. They carried him and their little ones and their wives in the wagons Pharaoh had provided for them. They also took all their livestock and all the personal belongings they had acquired in the land of Canaan.



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So Jacob and his entire family went to Egypt—sons and grandsons, daughters and granddaughters—all his descendants.

These are the names of the descendants of Israel—the sons of Jacob—who went to Egypt: Reuben was Jacob's oldest son. The sons of Reuben were Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.

The sons of Simeon were Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar, and Shaul. (Shaul's mother was a Canaanite woman.)

The sons of Levi were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

The sons of Judah were Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah (though Er and Onan had died in the land of Canaan). The sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul.

The sons of Issachar were Tola, Puah, Jashub, and Shimron.

The sons of Zebulun were Sered, Elon, and Jahleel.

These were the sons of Leah and Jacob who were born in Paddan-aram, in addition to their daughter, Dinah. The number of Jacob's descendants (male and female) through Leah was thirty-three.

The sons of Gad were Zephon, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli.



The sons of Asher were Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, and Beriah. Their sister was Serah. Beriah's sons were Heber and Malkiel.

These were the sons of Zilpah, the servant given to Leah by her father, Laban. The number of Jacob's descendants through Zilpah was sixteen.

The sons of Jacob's wife Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin.

Joseph's sons, born in the land of Egypt, were Manasseh and Ephraim. Their mother was Asenath, daughter of Potiphera, the priest of On.

Benjamin's sons were Bela, Beker, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard.

These were the sons of Rachel and Jacob. The number of Jacob's descendants through Rachel was fourteen.

The son of Dan was Hushim.

The sons of Naphtali were Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem.

These were the sons of Bilhah, the servant given to Rachel by her father, Laban. The number of Jacob's descendants through Bilhah was seven.

The total number of Jacob's direct descendants who went with him to Egypt, not counting his sons' wives, was sixty-six.



In addition, Joseph had two sons who were born in Egypt. So altogether, there were seventy members of Jacob's family in the land of Egypt.

As they neared their destination, Jacob sent Judah ahead to meet Joseph and get directions to the region of Goshen. And when they finally arrived there, Joseph prepared his chariot and traveled to Goshen to meet his father, Jacob. When Joseph arrived, he embraced his father and wept, holding him for a long time. Finally, Jacob said to Joseph, "Now I am ready to die, since I have seen your face again and know you are still alive."

And Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's entire family, "I will go to Pharaoh and tell him, 'My brothers and my father's entire family have come to me from the land of Canaan. These men are shepherds, and they raise livestock. They have brought with them their flocks and herds and everything they own.'"

Then he said, "When Pharaoh calls for you and asks you about your occupation, you must tell him, 'We, your servants, have raised livestock all our lives, as our ancestors have always done.' When you tell him this, he will let you live here in the region of Goshen, for the Egyptians despise shepherds."

Then Joseph went to see Pharaoh and told him, "My father and my brothers have arrived from the land of Canaan."



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They have come with all their flocks and herds and possessions, and they are now in the region of Goshen.”

Joseph took five of his brothers with him and presented them to Pharaoh. And Pharaoh asked the brothers, “What is your occupation?”

They replied, “We, your servants, are shepherds, just like our ancestors. We have come to live here in Egypt for a while, for there is no pasture for our flocks in Canaan. The famine is very severe there. So please, we request permission to live in the region of Goshen.”

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Now that your father and brothers have joined you here, choose any place in the entire land of Egypt for them to live. Give them the best land of Egypt. Let them live in the region of Goshen. And if any of them have special skills, put them in charge of my livestock, too.”

Then Joseph brought in his father, Jacob, and presented him to Pharaoh. And Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

“How old are you?” Pharaoh asked him.

Jacob replied, “I have traveled this earth for 130 hard years. But my life has been short compared to the lives of my ancestors.” Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh again before leaving his court.



So Joseph assigned the best land of Egypt—the region of Rameses—to his father and his brothers, and he settled them there, just as Pharaoh had commanded. And Joseph provided food for his father and his brothers in amounts appropriate to the number of their dependents, including the smallest children.

Meanwhile, the famine became so severe that all the food was used up, and people were starving throughout the lands of Egypt and Canaan. By selling grain to the people, Joseph eventually collected all the money in Egypt and Canaan, and he put the money in Pharaoh's treasury. When the people of Egypt and Canaan ran out of money, all the Egyptians came to Joseph. "Our money is gone!" they cried. "But please give us food, or we will die before your very eyes!"

Joseph replied, "Since your money is gone, bring me your livestock. I will give you food in exchange for your livestock." So they brought their livestock to Joseph in exchange for food. In exchange for their horses, flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, and donkeys, Joseph provided them with food for another year.

But that year ended, and the next year they came again and said, "We cannot hide the truth from you, my lord. Our money is gone, and all our livestock and cattle are yours. We have nothing left to give but our bodies and our land. Why should we die before your very eyes?"



Buy us and our land in exchange for food; we offer our land and ourselves as slaves for Pharaoh. Just give us grain so we may live and not die, and so the land does not become empty and desolate.”

So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh. All the Egyptians sold him their fields because the famine was so severe, and soon all the land belonged to Pharaoh. As for the people, he made them all slaves, from one end of Egypt to the other. The only land he did not buy was the land belonging to the priests. They received an allotment of food directly from Pharaoh, so they didn’t need to sell their land.

Then Joseph said to the people, “Look, today I have bought you and your land for Pharaoh. I will provide you with seed so you can plant the fields. Then when you harvest it, one-fifth of your crop will belong to Pharaoh. You may keep the remaining four-fifths as seed for your fields and as food for you, your households, and your little ones.”

“You have saved our lives!” they exclaimed. “May it please you, my lord, to let us be Pharaoh’s servants.” Joseph then issued a decree still in effect in the land of Egypt, that Pharaoh should receive one-fifth of all the crops grown on his land. Only the land belonging to the priests was not given to Pharaoh.

Meanwhile, the people of Israel settled in the region of Goshen in Egypt.



There they acquired property, and they were fruitful, and their population grew rapidly.

Jacob lived for seventeen years after his arrival in Egypt, so he lived 147 years in all. As the time of his death drew near, Jacob called for his son Joseph and said to him, "Please do me this favor. Put your hand under my thigh and swear that you will treat me with unfailing love by honoring this last request: Do not bury me in Egypt. When I die, please take my body out of Egypt and bury me with my ancestors."

So Joseph promised, "I will do as you ask."

"Swear that you will do it," Jacob insisted.

So Joseph gave his oath, and Jacob bowed humbly at the head of his bed.



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DAY 17

GENESIS 48 - 50

One day not long after this, word came to Joseph, “Your father is failing rapidly.” So Joseph went to visit his father, and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

When Joseph arrived, Jacob was told, “Your son Joseph has come to see you.” So Jacob gathered his strength and sat up in his bed.

Jacob said to Joseph, “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me. He said to me, ‘I will make you fruitful, and I will multiply your descendants. I will make you a multitude of nations. And I will give this land of Canaan to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession.’

“Now I am claiming as my own sons these two boys of yours, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born here in the land of Egypt before I arrived. They will be my sons, just as Reuben and Simeon are.



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But any children born to you in the future will be your own, and they will inherit land within the territories of their brothers Ephraim and Manasseh.

“Long ago, as I was returning from Paddan-aram, Rachel died in the land of Canaan. We were still on the way, some distance from Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). So with great sorrow I buried her there beside the road to Ephrath.”

Then Jacob looked over at the two boys. “Are these your sons?” he asked.

“Yes,” Joseph told him, “these are the sons God has given me here in Egypt.”

And Jacob said, “Bring them closer to me, so I can bless them.”

Jacob was half blind because of his age and could hardly see. So Joseph brought the boys close to him, and Jacob kissed and embraced them. Then Jacob said to Joseph, “I never thought I would see your face again, but now God has let me see your children, too!”

Joseph moved the boys, who were at their grandfather’s knees, and he bowed with his face to the ground. Then he positioned the boys in front of Jacob. With his right hand he directed Ephraim toward Jacob’s left hand, and with his left hand he put Manasseh at Jacob’s right hand. But Jacob crossed his arms as he reached out to lay his hands on the boys’ heads.



He put his right hand on the head of Ephraim, though he was the younger boy, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, though he was the firstborn. Then he blessed Joseph and said, “May the God before whom my grandfather Abraham and my father, Isaac, walked—the God who has been my shepherd all my life, to this very day, the Angel who has redeemed me from all harm—may he bless these boys. May they preserve my name and the names of Abraham and Isaac. And may their descendants multiply greatly throughout the earth.”

But Joseph was upset when he saw that his father placed his right hand on Ephraim’s head. So Joseph lifted it to move it from Ephraim’s head to Manasseh’s head. “No, my father,” he said. “This one is the firstborn. Put your right hand on his head.”

But his father refused. “I know, my son; I know,” he replied. “Manasseh will also become a great people, but his younger brother will become even greater. And his descendants will become a multitude of nations.”

So Jacob blessed the boys that day with this blessing: “The people of Israel will use your names when they give a blessing. They will say, ‘May God make you as prosperous as Ephraim and Manasseh.’” In this way, Jacob put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh.

Then Jacob said to Joseph, “Look, I am about to die, but God will be with you and will take you back to Canaan, the land of your ancestors.”



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And beyond what I have given your brothers, I am giving you an extra portion of the land that I took from the Amorites with my sword and bow.”

Then Jacob called together all his sons and said, “Gather around me, and I will tell you what will happen to each of you in the days to come.

“Come and listen, you sons of Jacob; listen to Israel, your father.

“Reuben, you are my firstborn, my strength, the child of my vigorous youth. You are first in rank and first in power.

But you are as unruly as a flood, and you will be first no longer. For you went to bed with my wife; you defiled my marriage couch.

“Simeon and Levi are two of a kind; their weapons are instruments of violence. May I never join in their meetings; may I never be a party to their plans. For in their anger they murdered men, and they crippled oxen just for sport. A curse on their anger, for it is fierce; a curse on their wrath, for it is cruel. I will scatter them among the descendants of Jacob; I will disperse them throughout Israel.

“Judah, your brothers will praise you. You will grasp your enemies by the neck. All your relatives will bow before you. Judah, my son, is a young lion that has finished eating its prey.



Like a lion he crouches and lies down; like a lioness—who dares to rouse him The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from his descendants, until the coming of the one to whom it belongs, the one whom all nations will honor. He ties his foal to a grapevine, the colt of his donkey to a choice vine.

He washes his clothes in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth are whiter than milk.

“Zebulun will settle by the seashore and will be a harbor for ships; his borders will extend to Sidon.

“Issachar is a sturdy donkey, resting between two saddlepacks. When he sees how good the countryside is and how pleasant the land, he will bend his shoulder to the load and submit himself to hard labor.

“Dan will govern his people, like any other tribe in Israel. Dan will be a snake beside the road, a poisonous viper along the path that bites the horse's hooves so its rider is thrown off. I trust in you for salvation, O Lord!

“Gad will be attacked by marauding bands, but he will attack them when they retreat

“Asher will dine on rich foods and produce food fit for kings.

“Naphtali is a doe set free that bears beautiful fawns.



“Joseph is the foal of a wild donkey, the foal of a wild donkey at a spring—one of the wild donkeys on the ridge.

Archers attacked him savagely; they shot at him and harassed him.

But his bow remained taut, and his arms were strengthened by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob, by the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel.

May the God of your father help you; may the Almighty bless you with the blessings of the heavens above, and blessings of the watery depths below, and blessings of the breasts and womb.

May my fatherly blessings on you surpass the blessings of my ancestors, reaching to the heights of the eternal hills.

May these blessings rest on the head of Joseph, who is a prince among his brothers.

“Benjamin is a ravenous wolf, devouring his enemies in the morning and dividing his plunder in the evening.”

These are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said as he told his sons good-bye. He blessed each one with an appropriate message.

Then Jacob instructed them, “Soon I will die and join my ancestors. Bury me with my father and grandfather in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite.



This is the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre in Canaan, that Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite as a permanent burial site. There Abraham and his wife Sarah are buried. There Isaac and his wife, Rebekah, are buried. And there I buried Leah. It is the plot of land and the cave that my grandfather Abraham bought from the Hittites.”

When Jacob had finished this charge to his sons, he drew his feet into the bed, breathed his last, and joined his ancestors in death.

Joseph threw himself on his father and wept over him and kissed him. Then Joseph told the physicians who served him to embalm his father’s body; so Jacob was embalmed. The embalming process took the usual forty days. And the Egyptians mourned his death for seventy days.

When the period of mourning was over, Joseph approached Pharaoh’s advisers and said, “Please do me this favor and speak to Pharaoh on my behalf. Tell him that my father made me swear an oath. He said to me ‘Listen, I am about to die. Take my body back to the land of Canaan, and bury me in the tomb I prepared for myself.’ So please allow me to go and bury my father. After his burial, I will return without delay.”

Pharaoh agreed to Joseph’s request. “Go and bury your father, as he made you promise,” he said. So Joseph went up to bury his father.



He was accompanied by all of Pharaoh's officials, all the senior members of Pharaoh's household, and all the senior officers of Egypt. Joseph also took his entire household and his brothers and their households. But they left their little children and flocks and herds in the land of Goshen. A great number of chariots and charioteers accompanied Joseph.

When they arrived at the threshing floor of Atad, near the Jordan River, they held a very great and solemn memorial service, with a seven-day period of mourning for Joseph's father. The local residents, the Canaanites, watched them mourning at the threshing floor of Atad. Then they renamed that place (which is near the Jordan) Abel-mizraim, for they said, "This is a place of deep mourning for these Egyptians."

So Jacob's sons did as he had commanded them. They carried his body to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre. This is the cave that Abraham had bought as a permanent burial site from Ephron the Hittite.

After burying Jacob, Joseph returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who had accompanied him to his father's burial. But now that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers became fearful. "Now Joseph will show his anger and pay us back for all the wrong we did to him," they said.



So they sent this message to Joseph: “Before your father died, he instructed us to say to you: ‘Please forgive your brothers for the great wrong they did to you—for their sin in treating you so cruelly.’ So we, the servants of the God of your father, beg you to forgive our sin.”

When Joseph received the message, he broke down and wept. Then his brothers came and threw themselves down before Joseph. “Look, we are your slaves!” they said.

But Joseph replied, “Don’t be afraid of me. Am I God, that I can punish you? You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people. No, don’t be afraid. I will continue to take care of you and your children.” So he reassured them by speaking kindly to them.

So Joseph and his brothers and their families continued to live in Egypt. Joseph lived to the age of 110. He lived to see three generations of descendants of his son Ephraim, and he lived to see the birth of the children of Manasseh’s son Makir, whom he claimed as his own.

“Soon I will die,” Joseph told his brothers, “but God will surely come to help you and lead you out of this land of Egypt. He will bring you back to the land he solemnly promised to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.”



Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath, and he said, “When God comes to help you and lead you back, you must take my bones with you.”

So Joseph died at the age of 110. The Egyptians embalmed him, and his body was placed in a coffin in Egypt.



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DAY 18

EXODUS 1

These are the names of the sons of Israel who went to Egypt with Jacob, each with his family: Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin; Dan and Naphtali; Gad and Asher. The descendants of Jacob numbered seventy in all; Joseph was already in Egypt.

Now Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation died, but the Israelites were exceedingly fruitful; they multiplied greatly, increased in numbers and became so numerous that the land was filled with them.

Then a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt. “Look,” he said to his people, “the Israelites have become far too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country.”

So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh.



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But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly.

They made their lives bitter with harsh labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their harsh labor the Egyptians worked them ruthlessly.

The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah, “When you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth on the delivery stool, if you see that the baby is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live.” The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live. Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, “Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?”

The midwives answered Pharaoh, “Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive.”

So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own.

Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: “Every Hebrew boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live.”



DAY 19

EXODUS 2 - 5

About this time, a man and woman from the tribe of Levi got married. The woman became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She saw that he was a special baby and kept him hidden for three months. But when she could no longer hide him, she got a basket made of papyrus reeds and waterproofed it with tar and pitch. She put the baby in the basket and laid it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile River. The baby's sister then stood at a distance, watching to see what would happen to him.

Soon Pharaoh's daughter came down to bathe in the river, and her attendants walked along the riverbank. When the princess saw the basket among the reeds, she sent her maid to get it for her. When the princess opened it, she saw the baby. The little boy was crying, and she felt sorry for him. "This must be one of the Hebrew children," she said.

Then the baby's sister approached the princess.



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“Should I go and find one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?” she asked.

“Yes, do!” the princess replied. So the girl went and called the baby’s mother.

“Take this baby and nurse him for me,” the princess told the baby’s mother. “I will pay you for your help.” So the woman took her baby home and nursed him.

Later, when the boy was older, his mother brought him back to Pharaoh’s daughter, who adopted him as her own son. The princess named him Moses, for she explained, “I lifted him out of the water.”

Many years later, when Moses had grown up, he went out to visit his own people, the Hebrews, and he saw how hard they were forced to work. During his visit, he saw an Egyptian beating one of his fellow Hebrews. After looking in all directions to make sure no one was watching, Moses killed the Egyptian and hid the body in the sand.

The next day, when Moses went out to visit his people again, he saw two Hebrew men fighting. “Why are you beating up your friend?” Moses said to the one who had started the fight.

The man replied, “Who appointed you to be our prince and judge? Are you going to kill me as you killed that Egyptian yesterday?”



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Then Moses was afraid, thinking, “Everyone knows what I did.” And sure enough, Pharaoh heard what had happened, and he tried to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in the land of Midian.

When Moses arrived in Midian, he sat down beside a well. Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters who came as usual to draw water and fill the water troughs for their father’s flocks. But some other shepherds came and chased them away. So Moses jumped up and rescued the girls from the shepherds. Then he drew water for their flocks.

When the girls returned to Reuel, their father, he asked, “Why are you back so soon today?”

“An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds,” they answered. “And then he drew water for us and watered our flocks.”

“Then where is he?” their father asked. “Why did you leave him there? Invite him to come and eat with us.”

Moses accepted the invitation, and he settled there with him. In time, Reuel gave Moses his daughter Zipporah to be his wife. Later she gave birth to a son, and Moses named him Gershom, for he explained, “I have been a foreigner in a foreign land.”

Years passed, and the king of Egypt died. But the Israelites continued to groan under their burden of slavery.



They cried out for help, and their cry rose up to God. God heard their groaning, and he remembered his covenant promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He looked down on the people of Israel and knew it was time to act.

One day Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the flock far into the wilderness and came to Sinai, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the middle of a bush. Moses stared in amazement. Though the bush was engulfed in flames, it didn't burn up. "This is amazing," Moses said to himself. "Why isn't that bush burning up? I must go see it."

When the Lord saw Moses coming to take a closer look, God called to him from the middle of the bush, "Moses! Moses!"

"Here I am!" Moses replied.

"Do not come any closer," the Lord warned. "Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground. I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." When Moses heard this, he covered his face because he was afraid to look at God.

Then the Lord told him, "I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries of distress because of their harsh slave drivers. Yes, I am aware of their suffering."



So I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and lead them out of Egypt into their own fertile and spacious land. It is a land flowing with milk and honey—the land where the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites now live.

Look! The cry of the people of Israel has reached me, and I have seen how harshly the Egyptians abuse them. Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt.”

But Moses protested to God, “Who am I to appear before Pharaoh? Who am I to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt?”

God answered, “I will be with you. And this is your sign that I am the one who has sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God at this very mountain.”

But Moses protested, “If I go to the people of Israel and tell them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ they will ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what should I tell them?”

God replied to Moses, “I am who I am. Say this to the people of Israel: I am has sent me to you.” God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: Yahweh, the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you. This is my eternal name, my name to remember for all generations.



“Now go and call together all the elders of Israel. Tell them, ‘Yahweh, the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—has appeared to me. He told me, “I have been watching closely, and I see how the Egyptians are treating you. I have promised to rescue you from your oppression in Egypt. I will lead you to a land flowing with milk and honey—the land where the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites now live.””

“The elders of Israel will accept your message. Then you and the elders must go to the king of Egypt and tell him, ‘The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. So please let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the Lord, our God.’

“But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand forces him. So I will raise my hand and strike the Egyptians, performing all kinds of miracles among them. Then at last he will let you go. And I will cause the Egyptians to look favorably on you. They will give you gifts when you go so you will not leave empty-handed. Every Israelite woman will ask for articles of silver and gold and fine clothing from her Egyptian neighbors and from the foreign women in their houses. You will dress your sons and daughters with these, stripping the Egyptians of their wealth.”

But Moses protested again, “What if they won’t believe me or listen to me? What if they say, ‘The Lord never appeared to you’?”



Then the Lord asked him, “What is that in your hand?”

“A shepherd’s staff,” Moses replied.

“Throw it down on the ground,” the Lord told him. So Moses threw down the staff, and it turned into a snake! Moses jumped back.

Then the Lord told him, “Reach out and grab its tail.” So Moses reached out and grabbed it, and it turned back into a shepherd’s staff in his hand.

“Perform this sign,” the Lord told him. “Then they will believe that the Lord, the God of their ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—really has appeared to you.”

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Now put your hand inside your cloak.” So Moses put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out again, his hand was white as snow with a severe skin disease. “Now put your hand back into your cloak,” the Lord said. So Moses put his hand back in, and when he took it out again, it was as healthy as the rest of his body. The Lord said to Moses, “If they do not believe you and are not convinced by the first miraculous sign, they will be convinced by the second sign. And if they don’t believe you or listen to you even after these two signs, then take some water from the Nile River and pour it out on the dry ground. When you do, the water from the Nile will turn to blood on the ground.”



But Moses pleaded with the Lord, “O Lord, I’m not very good with words. I never have been, and I’m not now, even though you have spoken to me. I get tongue-tied, and my words get tangled.”

Then the Lord asked Moses, “Who makes a person’s mouth? Who decides whether people speak or do not speak, hear or do not hear, see or do not see? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go! I will be with you as you speak, and I will instruct you in what to say.”

But Moses again pleaded, “Lord, please! Send anyone else.”

Then the Lord became angry with Moses. “All right,” he said. “What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he speaks well. And look! He is on his way to meet you now. He will be delighted to see you. Talk to him, and put the words in his mouth. I will be with both of you as you speak, and I will instruct you both in what to do. Aaron will be your spokesman to the people. He will be your mouthpiece, and you will stand in the place of God for him, telling him what to say. And take your shepherd’s staff with you, and use it to perform the miraculous signs I have shown you.”

So Moses went back home to Jethro, his father-in-law. “Please let me return to my relatives in Egypt,” Moses said. “I don’t even know if they are still alive.”

“Go in peace,” Jethro replied.



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Before Moses left Midian, the Lord said to him, “Return to Egypt, for all those who wanted to kill you have died.”

So Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey, and headed back to the land of Egypt. In his hand he carried the staff of God.

And the Lord told Moses, “When you arrive back in Egypt, go to Pharaoh and perform all the miracles I have empowered you to do. But I will harden his heart so he will refuse to let the people go. Then you will tell him, ‘This is what the Lord says: Israel is my firstborn son. I commanded you, “Let my son go, so he can worship me.” But since you have refused, I will now kill your firstborn son!’”

On the way to Egypt, at a place where Moses and his family had stopped for the night, the Lord confronted him and was about to kill him. But Moses’ wife, Zipporah, took a flint knife and circumcised her son. She touched his feet with the foreskin and said, “Now you are a bridegroom of blood to me.” (When she said “a bridegroom of blood,” she was referring to the circumcision.) After that, the Lord left him alone.

Now the Lord had said to Aaron, “Go out into the wilderness to meet Moses.” So Aaron went and met Moses at the mountain of God, and he embraced him. Moses then told Aaron everything the Lord had commanded him to say. And he told him about the miraculous signs the Lord had commanded him to perform.



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Then Moses and Aaron returned to Egypt and called all the elders of Israel together. Aaron told them everything the Lord had told Moses, and Moses performed the miraculous signs as they watched. Then the people of Israel were convinced that the Lord had sent Moses and Aaron. When they heard that the Lord was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped.

After this presentation to Israel's leaders, Moses and Aaron went and spoke to Pharaoh. They told him, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Let my people go so they may hold a festival in my honor in the wilderness."

"Is that so?" retorted Pharaoh. "And who is the Lord? Why should I listen to him and let Israel go? I don't know the Lord, and I will not let Israel go."

But Aaron and Moses persisted. "The God of the Hebrews has met with us," they declared

"So let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness so we can offer sacrifices to the Lord our God. If we don't, he will kill us with a plague or with the sword."

Pharaoh replied, "Moses and Aaron, why are you distracting the people from their tasks? Get back to work! Look, there are many of your people in the land, and you are stopping them from their work."



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That same day Pharaoh sent this order to the Egyptian slave drivers and the Israelite foremen: “Do not supply any more straw for making bricks. Make the people get it themselves! But still require them to make the same number of bricks as before. Don’t reduce the quota. They are lazy. That’s why they are crying out, ‘Let us go and offer sacrifices to our God.’ Load them down with more work. Make them sweat! That will teach them to listen to lies!”

So the slave drivers and foremen went out and told the people: “This is what Pharaoh says: I will not provide any more straw for you. Go and get it yourselves. Find it wherever you can. But you must produce just as many bricks as before!” So the people scattered throughout the land of Egypt in search of stubble to use as straw.

Meanwhile, the Egyptian slave drivers continued to push hard. “Meet your daily quota of bricks, just as you did when we provided you with straw!” they demanded.

Then they whipped the Israelite foremen they had put in charge of the work crews. “Why haven’t you met your quotas either yesterday or today?” they demanded.

So the Israelite foremen went to Pharaoh and pleaded with him. “Please don’t treat your servants like this,” they begged. “We are given no straw, but the slave drivers still demand, ‘Make bricks!’ We are being beaten, but it isn’t our fault! Your own people are to blame!”



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But Pharaoh shouted, “You’re just lazy! Lazy! That’s why you’re saying, ‘Let us go and offer sacrifices to the Lord.’ Now get back to work! No straw will be given to you, but you must still produce the full quota of bricks.”

The Israelite foremen could see that they were in serious trouble when they were told, “You must not reduce the number of bricks you make each day.” As they left Pharaoh’s court, they confronted Moses and Aaron, who were waiting outside for them.

The foremen said to them, “May the Lord judge and punish you for making us stink before Pharaoh and his officials. You have put a sword into their hands, an excuse to kill us!”

Then Moses went back to the Lord and protested, “Why have you brought all this trouble on your own people, Lord? Why did you send me? Ever since I came to Pharaoh as your spokesman, he has been even more brutal to your people. And you have done nothing to rescue them!”



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DAY 22

EXODUS 6 - 8

Then the Lord told Moses, “Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh. When he feels the force of my strong hand, he will let the people go. In fact, he will force them to leave his land!”

And God said to Moses, “I am Yahweh—‘the Lord.’ I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as El-Shaddai—‘God Almighty’—but I did not reveal my name, Yahweh, to them. And I reaffirmed my covenant with them. Under its terms, I promised to give them the land of Canaan, where they were living as foreigners. You can be sure that I have heard the groans of the people of Israel, who are now slaves to the Egyptians. And I am well aware of my covenant with them.

“Therefore, say to the people of Israel: ‘I am the Lord. I will free you from your oppression and will rescue you from your slavery in Egypt. I will redeem you with a powerful arm and great acts of judgment. I will claim you as my own people, and I will be your God.



Then you will know that I am the Lord your God who has freed you from your oppression in Egypt. I will bring you into the land I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I will give it to you as your very own possession. I am the Lord!”

So Moses told the people of Israel what the Lord had said, but they refused to listen anymore. They had become too discouraged by the brutality of their slavery. Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go back to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and tell him to let the people of Israel leave his country.”

“But Lord!” Moses objected. “My own people won’t listen to me anymore. How can I expect Pharaoh to listen? I’m such a clumsy speaker!”

But the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron and gave them orders for the Israelites and for Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. The Lord commanded Moses and Aaron to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt.

These are the ancestors of some of the clans of Israel: The sons of Reuben, Israel’s oldest son, were Hanoah, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. Their descendants became the clans of Reuben. The sons of Simeon were Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar, and Shaul. (Shaul’s mother was a Canaanite woman.) Their descendants became the clans of Simeon. These are the descendants of Levi, as listed in their family records: The sons of Levi were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. (Levi lived to be 137 years old.)



The descendants of Gershon included Libni and Shimei, each of whom became the ancestor of a clan.

The descendants of Kohath included Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. (Kohath lived to be 133 years old.)

The descendants of Merari included Mahli and Mushi.

These are the clans of the Levites, as listed in their family records. Amram married his father's sister Jochebed, and she gave birth to his sons, Aaron and Moses. (Amram lived to be 137 years old.)

The sons of Izhar were Korah, Nepheg, and Zicri.

The sons of Uzziel were Mishael, Elzaphan, and Sithri.

Aaron married Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab and sister of Nahshon, and she gave birth to his sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

The sons of Korah were Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph. Their descendants became the clans of Korah.

Eleazar son of Aaron married one of the daughters of Putiel, and she gave birth to his son, Phinehas. These are the ancestors of the Levite families, listed according to their clans.



The Aaron and Moses named in this list are the same ones to whom the Lord said, “Lead the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt like an army.” It was Moses and Aaron who spoke to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, about leading the people of Israel out of Egypt.

When the Lord spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, he said to him, “I am the Lord! Tell Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, everything I am telling you.”

But Moses argued with the Lord, saying, “I can’t do it! I’m such a clumsy speaker! Why should Pharaoh listen to me?”

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Pay close attention to this. I will make you seem like God to Pharaoh, and your brother, Aaron, will be your prophet. Tell Aaron everything I command you, and Aaron must command Pharaoh to let the people of Israel leave his country. But I will make Pharaoh’s heart stubborn so I can multiply my miraculous signs and wonders in the land of Egypt. Even then Pharaoh will refuse to listen to you. So I will bring down my fist on Egypt. Then I will rescue my forces—my people, the Israelites—from the land of Egypt with great acts of judgment. When I raise my powerful hand and bring out the Israelites, the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord.”

So Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord had commanded them. Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron was eighty-three when they made their demands to Pharaoh.



Then the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Pharaoh will demand, ‘Show me a miracle.’ When he does this, say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and throw it down in front of Pharaoh, and it will become a serpent.’”

So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did what the Lord had commanded them. Aaron threw down his staff before Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a serpent! Then Pharaoh called in his own wise men and sorcerers, and these Egyptian magicians did the same thing with their magic. They threw down their staffs, which also became serpents! But then Aaron’s staff swallowed up their staffs. Pharaoh’s heart, however, remained hard. He still refused to listen, just as the Lord had predicted.

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Pharaoh’s heart is stubborn, and he still refuses to let the people go. So go to Pharaoh in the morning as he goes down to the river. Stand on the bank of the Nile and meet him there. Be sure to take along the staff that turned into a snake. Then announce to him, ‘The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to tell you, “Let my people go, so they can worship me in the wilderness.” Until now, you have refused to listen to him. So this is what the Lord says: “I will show you that I am the Lord.” Look! I will strike the water of the Nile with this staff in my hand, and the river will turn to blood. The fish in it will die, and the river will stink. The Egyptians will not be able to drink any water from the Nile.”’”



Then the Lord said to Moses: “Tell Aaron, ‘Take your staff and raise your hand over the waters of Egypt—all its rivers, canals, ponds, and all the reservoirs. Turn all the water to blood. Everywhere in Egypt the water will turn to blood, even the water stored in wooden bowls and stone pots.’”

So Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord commanded them. As Pharaoh and all of his officials watched, Aaron raised his staff and struck the water of the Nile. Suddenly, the whole river turned to blood! The fish in the river died, and the water became so foul that the Egyptians couldn’t drink it. There was blood everywhere throughout the land of Egypt. But again the magicians of Egypt used their magic, and they, too, turned water into blood. So Pharaoh’s heart remained hard. He refused to listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had predicted. Pharaoh returned to his palace and put the whole thing out of his mind. Then all the Egyptians dug along the riverbank to find drinking water, for they couldn’t drink the water from the Nile. Seven days passed from the time the Lord struck the Nile.

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go back to Pharaoh and announce to him, ‘This is what the Lord says: Let my people go, so they can worship me. If you refuse to let them go, I will send a plague of frogs across your entire land. The Nile River will swarm with frogs. They will come up out of the river and into your palace, even into your bedroom and onto your bed!’”



They will enter the houses of your officials and your people. They will even jump into your ovens and your kneading bowls. Frogs will jump on you, your people, and all your officials.”

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Tell Aaron, ‘Raise the staff in your hand over all the rivers, canals, and ponds of Egypt, and bring up frogs over all the land.’” So Aaron raised his hand over the waters of Egypt, and frogs came up and covered the whole land! But the magicians were able to do the same thing with their magic. They, too, caused frogs to come up on the land of Egypt.

Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and begged, “Plead with the Lord to take the frogs away from me and my people. I will let your people go, so they can offer sacrifices to the Lord.”

“You set the time!” Moses replied. “Tell me when you want me to pray for you, your officials, and your people. Then you and your houses will be rid of the frogs. They will remain only in the Nile River.”

“Do it tomorrow,” Pharaoh said.

“All right,” Moses replied, “it will be as you have said. Then you will know that there is no one like the Lord our God. The frogs will leave you and your houses, your officials, and your people. They will remain only in the Nile River.”



So Moses and Aaron left Pharaoh's palace, and Moses cried out to the Lord about the frogs he had inflicted on Pharaoh. And the Lord did just what Moses had predicted. The frogs in the houses, the courtyards, and the fields all died. The Egyptians piled them into great heaps, and a terrible stench filled the land. But when Pharaoh saw that relief had come, he became stubborn. He refused to listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had predicted.

So the Lord said to Moses, "Tell Aaron, 'Raise your staff and strike the ground. The dust will turn into swarms of gnats throughout the land of Egypt.'" So Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord had commanded them. When Aaron raised his hand and struck the ground with his staff, gnats infested the entire land, covering the Egyptians and their animals. All the dust in the land of Egypt turned into gnats. Pharaoh's magicians tried to do the same thing with their secret arts, but this time they failed. And the gnats covered everyone, people and animals alike.

"This is the finger of God!" the magicians exclaimed to Pharaoh. But Pharaoh's heart remained hard. He wouldn't listen to them, just as the Lord had predicted.

Then the Lord told Moses, "Get up early in the morning and stand in Pharaoh's way as he goes down to the river. Say to him, 'This is what the Lord says: Let my people go, so they can worship me.



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If you refuse, then I will send swarms of flies on you, your officials, your people, and all the houses. The Egyptian homes will be filled with flies, and the ground will be covered with them. But this time I will spare the region of Goshen, where my people live. No flies will be found there. Then you will know that I am the Lord and that I am present even in the heart of your land. I will make a clear distinction between my people and your people. This miraculous sign will happen tomorrow.”

And the Lord did just as he had said. A thick swarm of flies filled Pharaoh’s palace and the houses of his officials. The whole land of Egypt was thrown into chaos by the flies.

Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron. “All right! Go ahead and offer sacrifices to your God,” he said. “But do it here in this land.”

But Moses replied, “That wouldn’t be right. The Egyptians detest the sacrifices that we offer to the Lord our God. Look, if we offer our sacrifices here where the Egyptians can see us, they will stone us. We must take a three-day trip into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the Lord our God, just as he has commanded us.”

“All right, go ahead,” Pharaoh replied. “I will let you go into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the Lord your God. But don’t go too far away. Now hurry and pray for me.”



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Moses answered, “As soon as I leave you, I will pray to the Lord, and tomorrow the swarms of flies will disappear from you and your officials and all your people. But I am warning you, Pharaoh, don’t lie to us again and refuse to let the people go to sacrifice to the Lord.”

So Moses left Pharaoh’s palace and pleaded with the Lord to remove all the flies. And the Lord did as Moses asked and caused the swarms of flies to disappear from Pharaoh, his officials, and his people. Not a single fly remained. But Pharaoh again became stubborn and refused to let the people go.



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DAY 23

EXODUS 10 - 13

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Return to Pharaoh and make your demands again. I have made him and his officials stubborn so I can display my miraculous signs among them. I’ve also done it so you can tell your children and grandchildren about how I made a mockery of the Egyptians and about the signs I displayed among them—and so you will know that I am the Lord.”

So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, “This is what the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, says: How long will you refuse to submit to me? Let my people go, so they can worship me. If you refuse, watch out! For tomorrow I will bring a swarm of locusts on your country. They will cover the land so that you won’t be able to see the ground. They will devour what little is left of your crops after the hailstorm, including all the trees growing in the fields. They will overrun your palaces and the homes of your officials and all the houses in Egypt. Never in the history of Egypt have your ancestors seen a plague like this one!” And with that, Moses turned and left Pharaoh.



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Pharaoh's officials now came to Pharaoh and appealed to him. "How long will you let this man hold us hostage? Let the men go to worship the Lord their God! Don't you realize that Egypt lies in ruins?"

So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh. "All right," he told them, "go and worship the Lord your God. But who exactly will be going with you?"

Moses replied, "We will all go—young and old, our sons and daughters, and our flocks and herds. We must all join together in celebrating a festival to the Lord."

Pharaoh retorted, "The Lord will certainly need to be with you if I let you take your little ones! I can see through your evil plan. Never! Only the men may go and worship the Lord, since that is what you requested." And Pharaoh threw them out of the palace.

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Raise your hand over the land of Egypt to bring on the locusts. Let them cover the land and devour every plant that survived the hailstorm." So Moses raised his staff over Egypt, and the Lord caused an east wind to blow over the land all that day and through the night. When morning arrived, the east wind had brought the locusts. And the locusts swarmed over the whole land of Egypt, settling in dense swarms from one end of the country to the other. It was the worst locust plague in Egyptian history, and there has never been another one like it.



For the locusts covered the whole country and darkened the land. They devoured every plant in the fields and all the fruit on the trees that had survived the hailstorm. Not a single leaf was left on the trees and plants throughout the land of Egypt.

Pharaoh quickly summoned Moses and Aaron. “I have sinned against the Lord your God and against you,” he confessed. “Forgive my sin, just this once, and plead with the Lord your God to take away this death from me.”

So Moses left Pharaoh’s court and pleaded with the Lord. The Lord responded by shifting the wind, and the strong west wind blew the locusts into the Red Sea. Not a single locust remained in all the land of Egypt. But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart again, so he refused to let the people go.

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Lift your hand toward heaven, and the land of Egypt will be covered with a darkness so thick you can feel it.” So Moses lifted his hand to the sky, and a deep darkness covered the entire land of Egypt for three days. During all that time the people could not see each other, and no one moved. But there was light as usual where the people of Israel lived.

Finally, Pharaoh called for Moses. “Go and worship the Lord,” he said. “But leave your flocks and herds here. You may even take your little ones with you.”



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“No,” Moses said, “you must provide us with animals for sacrifices and burnt offerings to the Lord our God. All our livestock must go with us, too; not a hoof can be left behind. We must choose our sacrifices for the Lord our God from among these animals. And we won’t know how we are to worship the Lord until we get there.”

But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart once more, and he would not let them go. “Get out of here!” Pharaoh shouted at Moses. “I’m warning you. Never come back to see me again! The day you see my face, you will die!” “Very well,” Moses replied. “I will never see your face again.”

Then the Lord said to Moses, “I will strike Pharaoh and the land of Egypt with one more blow. After that, Pharaoh will let you leave this country. In fact, he will be so eager to get rid of you that he will force you all to leave. Tell all the Israelite men and women to ask their Egyptian neighbors for articles of silver and gold.” (Now the Lord had caused the Egyptians to look favorably on the people of Israel. And Moses was considered a very great man in the land of Egypt, respected by Pharaoh’s officials and the Egyptian people alike.)

Moses had announced to Pharaoh, “This is what the Lord says: At midnight tonight I will pass through the heart of Egypt.



All the firstborn sons will die in every family in Egypt, from the oldest son of Pharaoh, who sits on his throne, to the oldest son of his lowliest servant girl who grinds the flour. Even the firstborn of all the livestock will die. Then a loud wail will rise throughout the land of Egypt, a wail like no one has heard before or will ever hear again. But among the Israelites it will be so peaceful that not even a dog will bark. Then you will know that the Lord makes a distinction between the Egyptians and the Israelites. All the officials of Egypt will run to me and fall to the ground before me. 'Please leave!' they will beg. 'Hurry! And take all your followers with you.' Only then will I go!" Then, burning with anger, Moses left Pharaoh.

Now the Lord had told Moses earlier, "Pharaoh will not listen to you, but then I will do even more mighty miracles in the land of Egypt." Moses and Aaron performed these miracles in Pharaoh's presence, but the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he wouldn't let the Israelites leave the country.

While the Israelites were still in the land of Egypt, the Lord gave the following instructions to Moses and Aaron: "From now on, this month will be the first month of the year for you. Announce to the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each family must choose a lamb or a young goat for a sacrifice, one animal for each household. If a family is too small to eat a whole animal, let them share with another family in the neighborhood.



Divide the animal according to the size of each family and how much they can eat. The animal you select must be a one-year-old male, either a sheep or a goat, with no defects.

“Take special care of this chosen animal until the evening of the fourteenth day of this first month. Then the whole assembly of the community of Israel must slaughter their lamb or young goat at twilight. They are to take some of the blood and smear it on the sides and top of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the animal. That same night they must roast the meat over a fire and eat it along with bitter salad greens and bread made without yeast. Do not eat any of the meat raw or boiled in water. The whole animal—including the head, legs, and internal organs—must be roasted over a fire. Do not leave any of it until the next morning. Burn whatever is not eaten before morning.

“These are your instructions for eating this meal: Be fully dressed, wear your sandals, and carry your walking stick in your hand. Eat the meal with urgency, for this is the Lord’s Passover. On that night I will pass through the land of Egypt and strike down every firstborn son and firstborn male animal in the land of Egypt. I will execute judgment against all the gods of Egypt, for I am the Lord! But the blood on your doorposts will serve as a sign, marking the houses where you are staying. When I see the blood, I will pass over you. This plague of death will not touch you when I strike the land of Egypt.



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“This is a day to remember. Each year, from generation to generation, you must celebrate it as a special festival to the Lord. This is a law for all time. For seven days the bread you eat must be made without yeast. On the first day of the festival, remove every trace of yeast from your homes. Anyone who eats bread made with yeast during the seven days of the festival will be cut off from the community of Israel. On the first day of the festival and again on the seventh day, all the people must observe an official day for holy assembly. No work of any kind may be done on these days except in the preparation of food.

“Celebrate this Festival of Unleavened Bread, for it will remind you that I brought your forces out of the land of Egypt on this very day. This festival will be a permanent law for you; celebrate this day from generation to generation. The bread you eat must be made without yeast from the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month until the evening of the twenty-first day of that month. During those seven days, there must be no trace of yeast in your homes. Anyone who eats anything made with yeast during this week will be cut off from the community of Israel. These regulations apply both to the foreigners living among you and to the native-born Israelites. During those days you must not eat anything made with yeast. Wherever you live, eat only bread made without yeast.”



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Then Moses called all the elders of Israel together and said to them, “Go, pick out a lamb or young goat for each of your families, and slaughter the Passover animal. Drain the blood into a basin. Then take a bundle of hyssop branches and dip it into the blood. Brush the hyssop across the top and sides of the doorframes of your houses. And no one may go out through the door until morning. For the Lord will pass through the land to strike down the Egyptians. But when he sees the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe, the Lord will pass over your home. He will not permit his death angel to enter your house and strike you down.

“Remember, these instructions are a permanent law that you and your descendants must observe forever. When you enter the land the Lord has promised to give you, you will continue to observe this ceremony. Then your children will ask, ‘What does this ceremony mean?’ And you will reply, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, for he passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt. And though he struck the Egyptians, he spared our families.’” When Moses had finished speaking, all the people bowed down to the ground and worshiped.

So the people of Israel did just as the Lord had commanded through Moses and Aaron. And that night at midnight, the Lord struck down all the firstborn sons in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sat on his throne, to the firstborn son of the prisoner in the dungeon.



Even the firstborn of their livestock were killed. Pharaoh and all his officials and all the people of Egypt woke up during the night, and loud wailing was heard throughout the land of Egypt. There was not a single house where someone had not died.

Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron during the night. “Get out!” he ordered. “Leave my people—and take the rest of the Israelites with you!

Go and worship the Lord as you have requested. Take your flocks and herds, as you said, and be gone. Go, but bless me as you leave.” All the Egyptians urged the people of Israel to get out of the land as quickly as possible, for they thought, “We will all die!” The Israelites took their bread dough before yeast was added. They wrapped their kneading boards in their cloaks and carried them on their shoulders. And the people of Israel did as Moses had instructed; they asked the Egyptians for clothing and articles of silver and gold. The Lord caused the Egyptians to look favorably on the Israelites, and they gave the Israelites whatever they asked for. So they stripped the Egyptians of their wealth! That night the people of Israel left Rameses and started for Succoth. There were about 600,000 men, plus all the women and children. A rabble of non-Israelites went with them, along with great flocks and herds of livestock. For bread they baked flat cakes from the dough without yeast they had brought from Egypt. It was made without yeast because the people were driven out of Egypt in such a hurry that they had no time to prepare the bread or other food.



The people of Israel had lived in Egypt for 430 years. In fact, it was on the last day of the 430th year that all the Lord's forces left the land. On this night the Lord kept his promise to bring his people out of the land of Egypt. So this night belongs to him, and it must be commemorated every year by all the Israelites, from generation to generation.

Then the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "These are the instructions for the festival of Passover. No outsiders are allowed to eat the Passover meal. But any slave who has been purchased may eat it if he has been circumcised. Temporary residents and hired servants may not eat it. Each Passover lamb must be eaten in one house. Do not carry any of its meat outside, and do not break any of its bones. The whole community of Israel must celebrate this Passover festival.

"If there are foreigners living among you who want to celebrate the Lord's Passover, let all their males be circumcised. Only then may they celebrate the Passover with you like any native-born Israelite. But no uncircumcised male may ever eat the Passover meal. This instruction applies to everyone, whether a native-born Israelite or a foreigner living among you."

So all the people of Israel followed all the Lord's commands to Moses and Aaron. On that very day the Lord brought the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt like an army.



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Then the Lord said to Moses, “Dedicate to me every firstborn among the Israelites. The first offspring to be born, of both humans and animals, belongs to me.”

So Moses said to the people, “This is a day to remember forever—the day you left Egypt, the place of your slavery. Today the Lord has brought you out by the power of his mighty hand. (Remember, eat no food containing yeast.) On this day in early spring, in the month of Abib, you have been set free. You must celebrate this event in this month each year after the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites, and Jebusites. (He swore to your ancestors that he would give you this land—a land flowing with milk and honey.) For seven days the bread you eat must be made without yeast. Then on the seventh day, celebrate a feast to the Lord. Eat bread without yeast during those seven days. In fact, there must be no yeast bread or any yeast at all found within the borders of your land during this time.

“On the seventh day you must explain to your children, ‘I am celebrating what the Lord did for me when I left Egypt.’ This annual festival will be a visible sign to you, like a mark branded on your hand or your forehead. Let it remind you always to recite this teaching of the Lord: ‘With a strong hand, the Lord rescued you from Egypt.’ So observe the decree of this festival at the appointed time each year.



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“This is what you must do when the Lord fulfills the promise he swore to you and to your ancestors. When he gives you the land where the Canaanites now live, you must present all firstborn sons and firstborn male animals to the Lord, for they belong to him. A firstborn donkey may be bought back from the Lord by presenting a lamb or young goat in its place. But if you do not buy it back, you must break its neck. However, you must buy back every firstborn son.

“And in the future, your children will ask you, ‘What does all this mean?’ Then you will tell them, ‘With the power of his mighty hand, the Lord brought us out of Egypt, the place of our slavery. Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, so the Lord killed all the firstborn males throughout the land of Egypt, both people and animals. That is why I now sacrifice all the firstborn males to the Lord—except that the firstborn sons are always bought back.’ This ceremony will be like a mark branded on your hand or your forehead. It is a reminder that the power of the Lord’s mighty hand brought us out of Egypt.”

When Pharaoh finally let the people go, God did not lead them along the main road that runs through Philistine territory, even though that was the shortest route to the Promised Land. God said, “If the people are faced with a battle, they might change their minds and return to Egypt.” So God led them in a roundabout way through the wilderness toward the Red Sea. Thus the Israelites left Egypt like an army ready for battle.



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Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for Joseph had made the sons of Israel swear to do this. He said, “God will certainly come to help you. When he does, you must take my bones with you from this place.”

The Israelites left Succoth and camped at Etham on the edge of the wilderness. The Lord went ahead of them. He guided them during the day with a pillar of cloud, and he provided light at night with a pillar of fire. This allowed them to travel by day or by night. And the Lord did not remove the pillar of cloud or pillar of fire from its place in front of the people.



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DAY 24

EXODUS 14 - 17

Then the Lord gave these instructions to Moses: “Order the Israelites to turn back and camp by Pi-hahiroth between Migdol and the sea. Camp there along the shore, across from Baal-zephon. Then Pharaoh will think, ‘The Israelites are confused. They are trapped in the wilderness!’ And once again I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will chase after you. I have planned this in order to display my glory through Pharaoh and his whole army. After this the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord!” So the Israelites camped there as they were told.

When word reached the king of Egypt that the Israelites had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds. “What have we done, letting all those Israelite slaves get away?” they asked. So Pharaoh harnessed his chariot and called up his troops. He took with him 600 of Egypt’s best chariots, along with the rest of the chariots of Egypt, each with its commander.



The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, so he chased after the people of Israel, who had left with fists raised in defiance. The Egyptians chased after them with all the forces in Pharaoh's army—all his horses and chariots, his charioteers, and his troops. The Egyptians caught up with the people of Israel as they were camped beside the shore near Pi-hahiroth, across from Baal-zephon.

As Pharaoh approached, the people of Israel looked up and panicked when they saw the Egyptians overtaking them. They cried out to the Lord, and they said to Moses, "Why did you bring us out here to die in the wilderness? Weren't there enough graves for us in Egypt? What have you done to us? Why did you make us leave Egypt? Didn't we tell you this would happen while we were still in Egypt? We said, 'Leave us alone! Let us be slaves to the Egyptians. It's better to be a slave in Egypt than a corpse in the wilderness!'"

But Moses told the people, "Don't be afraid. Just stand still and watch the Lord rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today will never be seen again. The Lord himself will fight for you. Just stay calm."

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the people to get moving! Pick up your staff and raise your hand over the sea. Divide the water so the Israelites can walk through the middle of the sea on dry ground."



And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they will charge in after the Israelites. My great glory will be displayed through Pharaoh and his troops, his chariots, and his charioteers. When my glory is displayed through them, all Egypt will see my glory and know that I am the Lord!”

Then the angel of God, who had been leading the people of Israel, moved to the rear of the camp. The pillar of cloud also moved from the front and stood behind them. The cloud settled between the Egyptian and Israelite camps. As darkness fell, the cloud turned to fire, lighting up the night. But the Egyptians and Israelites did not approach each other all night.

Then Moses raised his hand over the sea, and the Lord opened up a path through the water with a strong east wind. The wind blew all that night, turning the seabed into dry land. So the people of Israel walked through the middle of the sea on dry ground, with walls of water on each side!

Then the Egyptians—all of Pharaoh’s horses, chariots, and charioteers—chased them into the middle of the sea. But just before dawn the Lord looked down on the Egyptian army from the pillar of fire and cloud, and he threw their forces into total confusion. He twisted their chariot wheels, making their chariots difficult to drive. “Let’s get out of here—away from these Israelites!” the Egyptians shouted. “The Lord is fighting for them against Egypt!”



When all the Israelites had reached the other side, the Lord said to Moses, “Raise your hand over the sea again. Then the waters will rush back and cover the Egyptians and their chariots and charioteers.” So as the sun began to rise, Moses raised his hand over the sea, and the water rushed back into its usual place. The Egyptians tried to escape, but the Lord swept them into the sea. Then the waters returned and covered all the chariots and charioteers—the entire army of Pharaoh. Of all the Egyptians who had chased the Israelites into the sea, not a single one survived.

But the people of Israel had walked through the middle of the sea on dry ground, as the water stood up like a wall on both sides. That is how the Lord rescued Israel from the hand of the Egyptians that day. And the Israelites saw the bodies of the Egyptians washed up on the seashore. When the people of Israel saw the mighty power that the Lord had unleashed against the Egyptians, they were filled with awe before him. They put their faith in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord:

*“I will sing to the Lord,
for he has triumphed gloriously;
he has hurled both horse and rider
into the sea.*

*The Lord is my strength and my song;
he has given me victory.*



Cottonwood Creek
— CHURCH —

*This is my God, and I will praise him—
my father's God, and I will exalt him!*

*The Lord is a warrior;
Yahweh is his name!
Pharaoh's chariots and army
he has hurled into the sea.
The finest of Pharaoh's officers
are drowned in the Red Sea.*

*The deep waters gushed over them;
they sank to the bottom like a stone.*

*“Your right hand, O Lord,
is glorious in power.
Your right hand, O Lord,
smashes the enemy.*

*In the greatness of your majesty,
you overthrow those who rise against you.
You unleash your blazing fury;
it consumes them like straw.*

*At the blast of your breath,
the waters piled up!*

*The surging waters stood straight like a wall;
in the heart of the sea the deep waters
became hard.*

*“The enemy boasted, ‘I will chase them
and catch up with them.
I will plunder them
and consume them.
I will flash my sword;
my powerful hand will destroy them.’*



Cottonwood Creek
— CHURCH —

*But you blew with your breath,
and the sea covered them.
They sank like lead
in the mighty waters.*

*“Who is like you among the gods, O Lord—
glorious in holiness,
awesome in splendor,
performing great wonders?
You raised your right hand,
and the earth swallowed our enemies.
“With your unfailing love you lead
the people you have redeemed.
In your might, you guide them
to your sacred home.*

*The peoples hear and tremble;
anguish grips those who live in Philistia.
The leaders of Edom are terrified;
the nobles of Moab tremble.
All who live in Canaan melt away;
terror and dread fall upon them.*

*The power of your arm
makes them lifeless as stone
until your people pass by, O Lord,
until the people you purchased pass by.*

*You will bring them in and plant them on your
own mountain—
the place, O Lord, reserved for your
own dwelling,
the sanctuary, O Lord, that your hands
have established.
The Lord will reign forever and ever!”*



Cottonwood Creek
— CHURCH —

When Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and charioteers rushed into the sea, the Lord brought the water crashing down on them. But the people of Israel had walked through the middle of the sea on dry ground! Then Miriam the prophet, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine and led all the women as they played their tambourines and danced. And Miriam sang this song:

*"Sing to the Lord,
for he has triumphed gloriously;
he has hurled both horse and rider
into the sea."*

Then Moses led the people of Israel away from the Red Sea, and they moved out into the desert of Shur. They traveled in this desert for three days without finding any water. When they came to the oasis of Marah, the water was too bitter to drink. So they called the place Marah (which means "bitter"). Then the people complained and turned against Moses "What are we going to drink?" they demanded. So Moses cried out to the Lord for help, and the Lord showed him a piece of wood. Moses threw it into the water, and this made the water good to drink. It was there at Marah that the Lord set before them the following decree as a standard to test their faithfulness to him. He said, "If you will listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in his sight, obeying his commands and keeping all his decrees, then I will not make you suffer any of the diseases I sent on the Egyptians; for I am the Lord who heals you."



After leaving Marah, the Israelites traveled on to the oasis of Elim, where they found twelve springs and seventy palm trees. They camped there beside the water.

Then the whole community of Israel set out from Elim and journeyed into the wilderness of Sin, between Elim and Mount Sinai. They arrived there on the fifteenth day of the second month, one month after leaving the land of Egypt. There, too, the whole community of Israel complained about Moses and Aaron.

“If only the Lord had killed us back in Egypt,” they moaned. “There we sat around pots filled with meat and ate all the bread we wanted. But now you have brought us into this wilderness to starve us all to death.”

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Look, I’m going to rain down food from heaven for you. Each day the people can go out and pick up as much food as they need for that day. I will test them in this to see whether or not they will follow my instructions. On the sixth day they will gather food, and when they prepare it, there will be twice as much as usual.”

So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, “By evening you will realize it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt. In the morning you will see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your complaints, which are against him, not against us. What have we done that you should complain about us?”



Then Moses added, “The Lord will give you meat to eat in the evening and bread to satisfy you in the morning, for he has heard all your complaints against him. What have we done? Yes, your complaints are against the Lord, not against us.”

Then Moses said to Aaron, “Announce this to the entire community of Israel: ‘Present yourselves before the Lord, for he has heard your complaining.’” And as Aaron spoke to the whole community of Israel, they looked out toward the wilderness. There they could see the awesome glory of the Lord in the cloud.

Then the Lord said to Moses, “I have heard the Israelites’ complaints. Now tell them, ‘In the evening you will have meat to eat, and in the morning you will have all the bread you want. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.’”

That evening vast numbers of quail flew in and covered the camp. And the next morning the area around the camp was wet with dew. When the dew evaporated, a flaky substance as fine as frost blanketed the ground. The Israelites were puzzled when they saw it.

“What is it?” they asked each other. They had no idea what it was.

And Moses told them, “It is the food the Lord has given you to eat. These are the Lord’s instructions: Each household should gather as much as it needs. Pick up two quarts for each person in your tent.”



So the people of Israel did as they were told. Some gathered a lot, some only a little. But when they measured it out, everyone had just enough. Those who gathered a lot had nothing left over, and those who gathered only a little had enough. Each family had just what it needed.

Then Moses told them, “Do not keep any of it until morning.” But some of them didn’t listen and kept some of it until morning. But by then it was full of maggots and had a terrible smell. Moses was very angry with them.

After this the people gathered the food morning by morning, each family according to its need. And as the sun became hot, the flakes they had not picked up melted and disappeared. On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much as usual—four quarts for each person instead of two. Then all the leaders of the community came and asked Moses for an explanation. He told them, “This is what the Lord commanded: Tomorrow will be a day of complete rest, a holy Sabbath day set apart for the Lord. So bake or boil as much as you want today, and set aside what is left for tomorrow.”

So they put some aside until morning, just as Moses had commanded. And in the morning the leftover food was wholesome and good, without maggots or odor. Moses said, “Eat this food today, for today is a Sabbath day dedicated to the Lord. There will be no food on the ground today.



You may gather the food for six days, but the seventh day is the Sabbath. There will be no food on the ground that day.”

Some of the people went out anyway on the seventh day, but they found no food. The Lord asked Moses, “How long will these people refuse to obey my commands and instructions? They must realize that the Sabbath is the Lord’s gift to you. That is why he gives you a two-day supply on the sixth day, so there will be enough for two days. On the Sabbath day you must each stay in your place. Do not go out to pick up food on the seventh day.” So the people did not gather any food on the seventh day.

The Israelites called the food manna. It was white like coriander seed, and it tasted like honey wafers.

Then Moses said, “This is what the Lord has commanded: Fill a two-quart container with manna to preserve it for your descendants. Then later generations will be able to see the food I gave you in the wilderness when I set you free from Egypt.”

Moses said to Aaron, “Get a jar and fill it with two quarts of manna. Then put it in a sacred place before the Lord to preserve it for all future generations.” Aaron did just as the Lord had commanded Moses. He eventually placed it in the Ark of the Covenant—in front of the stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant.



So the people of Israel ate manna for forty years until they arrived at the land where they would settle. They ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan. The container used to measure the manna was an omer, which was one-tenth of an ephah; it held about two quarts.

At the Lord's command, the whole community of Israel left the wilderness of Sin and moved from place to place. Eventually they camped at Rephidim, but there was no water there for the people to drink. So once more the people complained against Moses. "Give us water to drink!" they demanded.

"Quiet!" Moses replied. "Why are you complaining against me? And why are you testing the Lord?"

But tormented by thirst, they continued to argue with Moses. "Why did you bring us out of Egypt? Are you trying to kill us, our children, and our livestock with thirst?"

Then Moses cried out to the Lord, "What should I do with these people? They are ready to stone me!"

The Lord said to Moses, "Walk out in front of the people. Take your staff, the one you used when you struck the water of the Nile, and call some of the elders of Israel to join you. I will stand before you on the rock at Mount Sinai. Strike the rock, and water will come gushing out. Then the people will be able to drink." So Moses struck the rock as he was told, and water gushed out as the elders looked on.



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Moses named the place Massah (which means “test”) and Meribah (which means “arguing”) because the people of Israel argued with Moses and tested the Lord by saying, “Is the Lord here with us or not?”

While the people of Israel were still at Rephidim, the warriors of Amalek attacked them. Moses commanded Joshua, “Choose some men to go out and fight the army of Amalek for us. Tomorrow, I will stand at the top of the hill, holding the staff of God in my hand.”

So Joshua did what Moses had commanded and fought the army of Amalek. Meanwhile, Moses, Aaron, and Hur climbed to the top of a nearby hill. As long as Moses held up the staff in his hand, the Israelites had the advantage.

But whenever he dropped his hand, the Amalekites gained the advantage. Moses’ arms soon became so tired he could no longer hold them up. So Aaron and Hur found a stone for him to sit on. Then they stood on each side of Moses, holding up his hands. So his hands held steady until sunset. As a result, Joshua overwhelmed the army of Amalek in battle. After the victory, the Lord instructed Moses, “Write this down on a scroll as a permanent reminder, and read it aloud to Joshua: I will erase the memory of Amalek from under heaven.” Moses built an altar there and named it Yahweh-Nissi (which means “the Lord is my banner”). He said, “They have raised their fist against the Lord’s throne, so now the Lord will be at war with Amalek generation after generation.”



DAY 25

EXODUS 18 - 21

Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, heard about everything God had done for Moses and his people, the Israelites. He heard especially about how the Lord had rescued them from Egypt.

Earlier, Moses had sent his wife, Zipporah, and his two sons back to Jethro, who had taken them in. (Moses' first son was named Gershom, for Moses had said when the boy was born, "I have been a foreigner in a foreign land." His second son was named Eliezer, for Moses had said, "The God of my ancestors was my helper; he rescued me from the sword of Pharaoh.") Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, now came to visit Moses in the wilderness. He brought Moses' wife and two sons with him, and they arrived while Moses and the people were camped near the mountain of God. Jethro had sent a message to Moses, saying, "I, Jethro, your father-in-law, am coming to see you with your wife and your two sons." So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law. He bowed low and kissed him.



They asked about each other's welfare and then went into Moses' tent. Moses told his father-in-law everything the Lord had done to Pharaoh and Egypt on behalf of Israel. He also told about all the hardships they had experienced along the way and how the Lord had rescued his people from all their troubles. Jethro was delighted when he heard about all the good things the Lord had done for Israel as he rescued them from the hand of the Egyptians.

"Praise the Lord," Jethro said, "for he has rescued you from the Egyptians and from Pharaoh. Yes, he has rescued Israel from the powerful hand of Egypt! I know now that the Lord is greater than all other gods, because he rescued his people from the oppression of the proud Egyptians."

Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God. Aaron and all the elders of Israel came out and joined him in a sacrificial meal in God's presence.

The next day, Moses took his seat to hear the people's disputes against each other. They waited before him from morning till evening. When Moses' father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he asked, "What are you really accomplishing here? Why are you trying to do all this alone while everyone stands around you from morning till evening?" Moses replied, "Because the people come to me to get a ruling from God.



When a dispute arises, they come to me, and I am the one who settles the case between the quarreling parties. I inform the people of God's decrees and give them his instructions."

"This is not good!" Moses' father-in-law exclaimed. "You're going to wear yourself out—and the people, too. This job is too heavy a burden for you to handle all by yourself. Now listen to me, and let me give you a word of advice, and may God be with you. You should continue to be the people's representative before God, bringing their disputes to him. Teach them God's decrees, and give them his instructions. Show them how to conduct their lives. But select from all the people some capable, honest men who fear God and hate bribes. Appoint them as leaders over groups of one thousand, one hundred, fifty, and ten. They should always be available to solve the people's common disputes, but have them bring the major cases to you. Let the leaders decide the smaller matters themselves. They will help you carry the load, making the task easier for you. If you follow this advice, and if God commands you to do so, then you will be able to endure the pressures, and all these people will go home in peace."

Moses listened to his father-in-law's advice and followed his suggestions. He chose capable men from all over Israel and appointed them as leaders over the people. He put them in charge of groups of one thousand, one hundred, fifty, and ten.



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These men were always available to solve the people's common disputes. They brought the major cases to Moses, but they took care of the smaller matters themselves.

Soon after this, Moses said good-bye to his father-in-law, who returned to his own land. Exactly two months after the Israelites left Egypt, they arrived in the wilderness of Sinai. After breaking camp at Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai and set up camp there at the base of Mount Sinai.

Then Moses climbed the mountain to appear before God. The Lord called to him from the mountain and said, "Give these instructions to the family of Jacob; announce it to the descendants of Israel: 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You know how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. And you will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation.' This is the message you must give to the people of Israel."

So Moses returned from the mountain and called together the elders of the people and told them everything the Lord had commanded him. And all the people responded together, "We will do everything the Lord has commanded." So Moses brought the people's answer back to the Lord.



Then the Lord said to Moses, “I will come to you in a thick cloud, Moses, so the people themselves can hear me when I speak with you. Then they will always trust you.” Moses told the Lord what the people had said.

Then the Lord told Moses, “Go down and prepare the people for my arrival. Consecrate them today and tomorrow, and have them wash their clothing. Be sure they are ready on the third day, for on that day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai as all the people watch. Mark off a boundary all around the mountain. Warn the people, ‘Be careful! Do not go up on the mountain or even touch its boundaries. Anyone who touches the mountain will certainly be put to death. No hand may touch the person or animal that crosses the boundary; instead, stone them or shoot them with arrows. They must be put to death.’ However, when the ram’s horn sounds a long blast, then the people may go up on the mountain.”

So Moses went down to the people. He consecrated them for worship, and they washed their clothes. He told them, “Get ready for the third day, and until then abstain from having sexual intercourse.”

On the morning of the third day, thunder roared and lightning flashed, and a dense cloud came down on the mountain. There was a long, loud blast from a ram’s horn, and all the people trembled. Moses led them out from the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.



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All of Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because the Lord had descended on it in the form of fire. The smoke billowed into the sky like smoke from a brick kiln, and the whole mountain shook violently. As the blast of the ram's horn grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God thundered his reply. The Lord came down on the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses climbed the mountain.

Then the Lord told Moses, "Go back down and warn the people not to break through the boundaries to see the Lord, or they will die. Even the priests who regularly come near to the Lord must purify themselves so that the Lord does not break out and destroy them."

"But Lord," Moses protested, "the people cannot come up to Mount Sinai. You already warned us. You told me, 'Mark off a boundary all around the mountain to set it apart as holy.'"

But the Lord said, "Go down and bring Aaron back up with you. In the meantime, do not let the priests or the people break through to approach the Lord, or he will break out and destroy them."

So Moses went down to the people and told them what the Lord had said.

Then God gave the people all these instructions:



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“I am the Lord your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery.

“You must not have any other god but me.

“You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me. But I lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations on those who love me and obey my commands.

“You must not misuse the name of the Lord your God. The Lord will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name.

“Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. For in six days the Lord made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.



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“Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

“You must not murder.

“You must not commit adultery.

“You must not steal.

“You must not testify falsely against your neighbor.

“You must not covet your neighbor’s house. You must not covet your neighbor’s wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor.”

When the people heard the thunder and the loud blast of the ram’s horn, and when they saw the flashes of lightning and the smoke billowing from the mountain, they stood at a distance, trembling with fear.

And they said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen. But don’t let God speak directly to us, or we will die!”

“Don’t be afraid,” Moses answered them, “for God has come in this way to test you, and so that your fear of him will keep you from sinning!”

As the people stood in the distance, Moses approached the dark cloud where God was. And the Lord said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel:



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You saw for yourselves that I spoke to you from heaven. Remember, you must not make any idols of silver or gold to rival me.

“Build for me an altar made of earth, and offer your sacrifices to me—your burnt offerings and peace offerings, your sheep and goats, and your cattle. Build my altar wherever I cause my name to be remembered, and I will come to you and bless you. If you use stones to build my altar, use only natural, uncut stones. Do not shape the stones with a tool, for that would make the altar unfit for holy use. And do not approach my altar by going up steps. If you do, someone might look up under your clothing and see your nakedness.

“These are the regulations you must present to Israel.

“If you buy a Hebrew slave, he may serve for no more than six years. Set him free in the seventh year, and he will owe you nothing for his freedom. If he was single when he became your slave, he shall leave single. But if he was married before he became a slave, then his wife must be freed with him.

“If his master gave him a wife while he was a slave and they had sons or daughters, then only the man will be free in the seventh year, but his wife and children will still belong to his master. But the slave may declare, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children. I don’t want to go free.’ If he does this, his master must present him before God.



Then his master must take him to the door or doorpost and publicly pierce his ear with an awl. After that, the slave will serve his master for life.

“When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she will not be freed at the end of six years as the men are. If she does not satisfy her owner, he must allow her to be bought back again. But he is not allowed to sell her to foreigners, since he is the one who broke the contract with her. But if the slave’s owner arranges for her to marry his son, he may no longer treat her as a slave but as a daughter.

“If a man who has married a slave wife takes another wife for himself, he must not neglect the rights of the first wife to food, clothing, and sexual intimacy. If he fails in any of these three obligations, she may leave as a free woman without making any payment.

“Anyone who assaults and kills another person must be put to death. But if it was simply an accident permitted by God, I will appoint a place of refuge where the slayer can run for safety. However, if someone deliberately kills another person, then the slayer must be dragged even from my altar and be put to death.

“Anyone who strikes father or mother must be put to death.

“Kidnappers must be put to death, whether they are caught in possession of their victims or have already sold them as slaves.



“Anyone who dishonors father or mother must be put to death.

“Now suppose two men quarrel, and one hits the other with a stone or fist, and the injured person does not die but is confined to bed. If he is later able to walk outside again, even with a crutch, the assailant will not be punished but must compensate his victim for lost wages and provide for his full recovery.

“If a man beats his male or female slave with a club and the slave dies as a result, the owner must be punished. But if the slave recovers within a day or two, then the owner shall not be punished, since the slave is his property.

“Now suppose two men are fighting, and in the process they accidentally strike a pregnant woman so she gives birth prematurely. If no further injury results, the man who struck the woman must pay the amount of compensation the woman’s husband demands and the judges approve. But if there is further injury, the punishment must match the injury: a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, a foot for a foot, a burn for a burn, a wound for a wound, a bruise for a bruise.

“If a man hits his male or female slave in the eye and the eye is blinded, he must let the slave go free to compensate for the eye. And if a man knocks out the tooth of his male or female slave, he must let the slave go free to compensate for the tooth.



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***“If an ox gores a man or woman to death, the ox must be stoned, and its flesh may not be eaten. In such a case, however, the owner will not be held liable. But suppose the ox had a reputation for goring, and the owner had been informed but failed to keep it under control. If the ox then kills someone, it must be stoned, and the owner must also be put to death. However, the dead person’s relatives may accept payment to compensate for the loss of life. The owner of the ox may redeem his life by paying whatever is demanded.*”**

***“The same regulation applies if the ox gores a boy or a girl. But if the ox gores a slave, either male or female, the animal’s owner must pay the slave’s owner thirty silver coins, and the ox must be stoned.*”**

***“Suppose someone digs or uncovers a pit and fails to cover it, and then an ox or a donkey falls into it. The owner of the pit must pay full compensation to the owner of the animal, but then he gets to keep the dead animal.*”**

***“If someone’s ox injures a neighbor’s ox and the injured ox dies, then the two owners must sell the live ox and divide the price equally between them. They must also divide the dead animal. But if the ox had a reputation for goring, yet its owner failed to keep it under control, he must pay full compensation—a live ox for the dead one—but he may keep the dead ox.*”**



DAY 26

EXODUS 22 - 25

“If someone steals an ox or sheep and then kills or sells it, the thief must pay back five oxen for each ox stolen, and four sheep for each sheep stolen.

“If a thief is caught in the act of breaking into a house and is struck and killed in the process, the person who killed the thief is not guilty of murder. But if it happens in daylight, the one who killed the thief is guilty of murder.

“A thief who is caught must pay in full for everything he stole. If he cannot pay, he must be sold as a slave to pay for his theft. If someone steals an ox or a donkey or a sheep and it is found in the thief’s possession, then the thief must pay double the value of the stolen animal.

“If an animal is grazing in a field or vineyard and the owner lets it stray into someone else’s field to graze, then the animal’s owner must pay compensation from the best of his own grain or grapes.



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“If you are burning thorn bushes and the fire gets out of control and spreads into another person’s field, destroying the sheaves or the uncut grain or the whole crop, the one who started the fire must pay for the lost crop.

“Suppose someone leaves money or goods with a neighbor for safekeeping, and they are stolen from the neighbor’s house. If the thief is caught, the compensation is double the value of what was stolen. But if the thief is not caught, the neighbor must appear before God, who will determine if he stole the property.

“Suppose there is a dispute between two people who both claim to own a particular ox, donkey, sheep, article of clothing, or any lost property. Both parties must come before God, and the person whom God declares guilty must pay double compensation to the other.

“Now suppose someone leaves a donkey, ox, sheep, or any other animal with a neighbor for safekeeping, but it dies or is injured or is taken away, and no one sees what happened. The neighbor must then take an oath in the presence of the Lord. If the Lord confirms that the neighbor did not steal the property, the owner must accept the verdict, and no payment will be required. But if the animal was indeed stolen, the guilty person must pay compensation to the owner. If it was torn to pieces by a wild animal, the remains of the carcass must be shown as evidence, and no compensation will be required.



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“If someone borrows an animal from a neighbor and it is injured or dies when the owner is absent, the person who borrowed it must pay full compensation. But if the owner was present, no compensation is required. And no compensation is required if the animal was rented, for this loss is covered by the rental fee.

“If a man seduces a virgin who is not engaged to anyone and has sex with her, he must pay the customary bride price and marry her. But if her father refuses to let him marry her, the man must still pay him an amount equal to the bride price of a virgin.

“You must not allow a sorceress to live.

“Anyone who has sexual relations with an animal must certainly be put to death.

“Anyone who sacrifices to any god other than the Lord must be destroyed.

“You must not mistreat or oppress foreigners in any way. Remember, you yourselves were once foreigners in the land of Egypt.

“You must not exploit a widow or an orphan. If you exploit them in any way and they cry out to me, then I will certainly hear their cry. My anger will blaze against you, and I will kill you with the sword. Then your wives will be widows and your children fatherless.



“If you lend money to any of my people who are in need, do not charge interest as a money lender would. If you take your neighbor’s cloak as security for a loan, you must return it before sunset. This coat may be the only blanket your neighbor has. How can a person sleep without it? If you do not return it and your neighbor cries out to me for help, then I will hear, for I am merciful.

“You must not dishonor God or curse any of your rulers.

“You must not hold anything back when you give me offerings from your crops and your wine.

“You must give me your firstborn sons.

“You must also give me the firstborn of your cattle, sheep, and goats. But leave the newborn animal with its mother for seven days; then give it to me on the eighth day.

“You must be my holy people. Therefore, do not eat any animal that has been torn up and killed by wild animals. Throw it to the dogs.

“You must not pass along false rumors. You must not cooperate with evil people by lying on the witness stand.

“You must not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you are called to testify in a dispute, do not be swayed by the crowd to twist justice.



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And do not slant your testimony in favor of a person just because that person is poor.

“If you come upon your enemy’s ox or donkey that has strayed away, take it back to its owner. If you see that the donkey of someone who hates you has collapsed under its load, do not walk by. Instead, stop and help.

“In a lawsuit, you must not deny justice to the poor.

“Be sure never to charge anyone falsely with evil. Never sentence an innocent or blameless person to death, for I never declare a guilty person to be innocent.

“Take no bribes, for a bribe makes you ignore something that you clearly see. A bribe makes even a righteous person twist the truth.

“You must not oppress foreigners. You know what it’s like to be a foreigner, for you yourselves were once foreigners in the land of Egypt.

“Plant and harvest your crops for six years, but let the land be renewed and lie uncultivated during the seventh year. Then let the poor among you harvest whatever grows on its own. Leave the rest for wild animals to eat. The same applies to your vineyards and olive groves.

“You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but on the seventh day you must stop working.



This gives your ox and your donkey a chance to rest. It also allows your slaves and the foreigners living among you to be refreshed.

“Pay close attention to all my instructions. You must not call on the name of any other gods. Do not even speak their names.

“Each year you must celebrate three festivals in my honor. First, celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread. For seven days the bread you eat must be made without yeast, just as I commanded you. Celebrate this festival annually at the appointed time in early spring, in the month of Abib, for that is the anniversary of your departure from Egypt. No one may appear before me without an offering.

“Second, celebrate the Festival of Harvest, when you bring me the first crops of your harvest.

“Finally, celebrate the Festival of the Final Harvest at the end of the harvest season, when you have harvested all the crops from your fields. At these three times each year, every man in Israel must appear before the Sovereign, the Lord.

“You must not offer the blood of my sacrificial offerings together with any baked goods containing yeast. And do not leave the fat from the festival offerings until the next morning.



“As you harvest your crops, bring the very best of the first harvest to the house of the Lord your God.

“You must not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk.

“See, I am sending an angel before you to protect you on your journey and lead you safely to the place I have prepared for you.

Pay close attention to him, and obey his instructions. Do not rebel against him, for he is my representative, and he will not forgive your rebellion. But if you are careful to obey him, following all my instructions, then I will be an enemy to your enemies, and I will oppose those who oppose you. For my angel will go before you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites, and Jebusites, so you may live there. And I will destroy them completely. You must not worship the gods of these nations or serve them in any way or imitate their evil practices. Instead, you must utterly destroy them and smash their sacred pillars.

“You must serve only the Lord your God. If you do, I will bless you with food and water, and I will protect you from illness. There will be no miscarriages or infertility in your land, and I will give you long, full lives.

“I will send my terror ahead of you and create panic among all the people whose lands you invade. I will make all your enemies turn and run. I will send terror ahead of you to drive out the Hivites, Canaanites, and Hittites.



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But I will not drive them out in a single year, because the land would become desolate and the wild animals would multiply and threaten you. I will drive them out a little at a time until your population has increased enough to take possession of the land. And I will fix your boundaries from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, and from the eastern wilderness to the Euphrates River. I will hand over to you the people now living in the land, and you will drive them out ahead of you.

“Make no treaties with them or their gods. They must not live in your land, or they will cause you to sin against me. If you serve their gods, you will be caught in the trap of idolatry.”

Then the Lord instructed Moses: “Come up here to me, and bring along Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of Israel’s elders. All of you must worship from a distance. Only Moses is allowed to come near to the Lord. The others must not come near, and none of the other people are allowed to climb up the mountain with him.”

Then Moses went down to the people and repeated all the instructions and regulations the Lord had given him. All the people answered with one voice, “We will do everything the Lord has commanded.”

Then Moses carefully wrote down all the Lord’s instructions. Early the next morning Moses got up and built an altar at the foot of the mountain.



He also set up twelve pillars, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent some of the young Israelite men to present burnt offerings and to sacrifice bulls as peace offerings to the Lord. Moses drained half the blood from these animals into basins. The other half he splattered against the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it aloud to the people. Again they all responded, “We will do everything the Lord has commanded. We will obey.”

Then Moses took the blood from the basins and splattered it over the people, declaring, “Look, this blood confirms the covenant the Lord has made with you in giving you these instructions.”

Then Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel climbed up the mountain. There they saw the God of Israel. Under his feet there seemed to be a surface of brilliant blue lapis lazuli, as clear as the sky itself. And though these nobles of Israel gazed upon God, he did not destroy them. In fact, they ate a covenant meal, eating and drinking in his presence!

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain. Stay there, and I will give you the tablets of stone on which I have inscribed the instructions and commands so you can teach the people.” So Moses and his assistant Joshua set out, and Moses climbed up the mountain of God.



Moses told the elders, “Stay here and wait for us until we come back. Aaron and Hur are here with you. If anyone has a dispute while I am gone, consult with them.”

Then Moses climbed up the mountain, and the cloud covered it. And the glory of the Lord settled down on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days. On the seventh day the Lord called to Moses from inside the cloud. To the Israelites at the foot of the mountain, the glory of the Lord appeared at the summit like a consuming fire. Then Moses disappeared into the cloud as he climbed higher up the mountain. He remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

The Lord said to Moses, “Tell the people of Israel to bring me their sacred offerings. Accept the contributions from all whose hearts are moved to offer them. Here is a list of sacred offerings you may accept from them:
gold, silver, and bronze;
blue, purple, and scarlet thread;
fine linen and goat hair for cloth;
tanned ram skins and fine goatskin leather;
acacia wood;
olive oil for the lamps;
spices for the anointing oil and the
fragrant incense;
onyx stones, and other gemstones to be set in
the ephod and the priest’s chestpiece.

“Have the people of Israel build me a holy sanctuary so I can live among them.



You must build this Tabernacle and its furnishings exactly according to the pattern I will show you.

“Have the people make an Ark of acacia wood—a sacred chest 45 inches long, 27 inches wide, and 27 inches high. Overlay it inside and outside with pure gold, and run a molding of gold all around it. Cast four gold rings and attach them to its four feet, two rings on each side. Make poles from acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. Insert the poles into the rings at the sides of the Ark to carry it. These carrying poles must stay inside the rings; never remove them. When the Ark is finished, place inside it the stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant, which I will give to you.

“Then make the Ark’s cover—the place of atonement—from pure gold. It must be 45 inches long and 27 inches wide. Then make two cherubim from hammered gold, and place them on the two ends of the atonement cover. Mold the cherubim on each end of the atonement cover, making it all of one piece of gold. The cherubim will face each other and look down on the atonement cover. With their wings spread above it, they will protect it. Place inside the Ark the stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant, which I will give to you. Then put the atonement cover on top of the Ark. I will meet with you there and talk to you from above the atonement cover between the gold cherubim that hover over the Ark of the Covenant.



From there I will give you my commands for the people of Israel.

“Then make a table of acacia wood, 36 inches long, 18 inches wide, and 27 inches high. Overlay it with pure gold and run a gold molding around the edge. Decorate it with a 3-inch border all around, and run a gold molding along the border. Make four gold rings for the table and attach them at the four corners next to the four legs. Attach the rings near the border to hold the poles that are used to carry the table. Make these poles from acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. Make special containers of pure gold for the table—bowls, ladles, pitchers, and jars—to be used in pouring out liquid offerings. Place the Bread of the Presence on the table to remain before me at all times.

“Make a lampstand of pure, hammered gold. Make the entire lampstand and its decorations of one piece—the base, center stem, lamp cups, buds, and petals. Make it with six branches going out from the center stem, three on each side. Each of the six branches will have three lamp cups shaped like almond blossoms, complete with buds and petals. Craft the center stem of the lampstand with four lamp cups shaped like almond blossoms, complete with buds and petals. There will also be an almond bud beneath each pair of branches where the six branches extend from the center stem.



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The almond buds and branches must all be of one piece with the center stem, and they must be hammered from pure gold. Then make the seven lamps for the lampstand, and set them so they reflect their light forward. The lamp snuffers and trays must also be made of pure gold. You will need 75 pounds of pure gold for the lampstand and its accessories.

“Be sure that you make everything according to the pattern I have shown you here on the mountain.



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DAY 29

EXODUS 26 - 29

“Make the Tabernacle from ten curtains of finely woven linen. Decorate the curtains with blue, purple, and scarlet thread and with skillfully embroidered cherubim. These ten curtains must all be exactly the same size—42 feet long and 6 feet wide. Join five of these curtains together to make one long curtain, then join the other five into a second long curtain. Put loops of blue yarn along the edge of the last curtain in each set. The fifty loops along the edge of one curtain are to match the fifty loops along the edge of the other curtain. Then make fifty gold clasps and fasten the long curtains together with the clasps. In this way, the Tabernacle will be made of one continuous piece.

“Make eleven curtains of goat-hair cloth to serve as a tent covering for the Tabernacle. These eleven curtains must all be exactly the same size—45 feet long and 6 feet wide. Join five of these curtains together to make one long curtain, and join the other six into a second long curtain.



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Allow 3 feet of material from the second set of curtains to hang over the front of the sacred tent. Make fifty loops for one edge of each large curtain. Then make fifty bronze clasps, and fasten the loops of the long curtains with the clasps. In this way, the tent covering will be made of one continuous piece. The remaining 3 feet of this tent covering will be left to hang over the back of the Tabernacle. Allow 18 inches of remaining material to hang down over each side, so the Tabernacle is completely covered. Complete the tent covering with a protective layer of tanned ram skins and a layer of fine goatskin leather.

“For the framework of the Tabernacle, construct frames of acacia wood. Each frame must be 15 feet high and 27 inches wide, with two pegs under each frame. Make all the frames identical. Make twenty of these frames to support the curtains on the south side of the Tabernacle. Also make forty silver bases—two bases under each frame, with the pegs fitting securely into the bases. For the north side of the Tabernacle, make another twenty frames, with their forty silver bases, two bases under each frame. Make six frames for the rear—the west side of the Tabernacle—along with two additional frames to reinforce the rear corners of the Tabernacle. These corner frames will be matched at the bottom and firmly attached at the top with a single ring, forming a single corner unit. Make both of these corner units the same way.



So there will be eight frames at the rear of the Tabernacle, set in sixteen silver bases—two bases under each frame.

“Make crossbars of acacia wood to link the frames, five crossbars for the north side of the Tabernacle and five for the south side. Also make five crossbars for the rear of the Tabernacle, which will face west. The middle crossbar, attached halfway up the frames, will run all the way from one end of the Tabernacle to the other. Overlay the frames with gold, and make gold rings to hold the crossbars. Overlay the crossbars with gold as well.

“Set up this Tabernacle according to the pattern you were shown on the mountain.

“For the inside of the Tabernacle, make a special curtain of finely woven linen. Decorate it with blue, purple, and scarlet thread and with skillfully embroidered cherubim. Hang this curtain on gold hooks attached to four posts of acacia wood. Overlay the posts with gold, and set them in four silver bases. Hang the inner curtain from clasps, and put the Ark of the Covenant in the room behind it. This curtain will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place.

“Then put the Ark’s cover—the place of atonement—on top of the Ark of the Covenant inside the Most Holy Place. Place the table outside the inner curtain on the north side of the Tabernacle, and place the lampstand across the room on the south side.



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“Make another curtain for the entrance to the sacred tent. Make it of finely woven linen and embroider it with exquisite designs, using blue, purple, and scarlet thread. Craft five posts from acacia wood. Overlay them with gold, and hang the curtain from them with gold hooks. Cast five bronze bases for the posts.

“Using acacia wood, construct a square altar 7 ½ feet wide, 7 ½ feet long, and 4 ½ feet high. Make horns for each of its four corners so that the horns and altar are all one piece. Overlay the altar with bronze. Make ash buckets, shovels, basins, meat forks, and firepans, all of bronze. Make a bronze grating for it, and attach four bronze rings at its four corners. Install the grating halfway down the side of the altar, under the ledge. For carrying the altar, make poles from acacia wood, and overlay them with bronze. Insert the poles through the rings on the two sides of the altar. The altar must be hollow, made from planks. Build it just as you were shown on the mountain.

“Then make the courtyard for the Tabernacle, enclosed with curtains made of finely woven linen. On the south side, make the curtains 150 feet long. They will be held up by twenty posts set securely in twenty bronze bases. Hang the curtains with silver hooks and rings. Make the curtains the same on the north side—150 feet of curtains held up by twenty posts set securely in bronze bases. Hang the curtains with silver hooks and rings.



The curtains on the west end of the courtyard will be 75 feet long, supported by ten posts set into ten bases. The east end of the courtyard, the front, will also be 75 feet long. The courtyard entrance will be on the east end, flanked by two curtains. The curtain on the right side will be 22 ½ feet long, supported by three posts set into three bases. The curtain on the left side will also be 22 ½ feet long, supported by three posts set into three bases.

“For the entrance to the courtyard, make a curtain that is 30 feet long. Make it from finely woven linen, and decorate it with beautiful embroidery in blue, purple, and scarlet thread. Support it with four posts, each securely set in its own base. All the posts around the courtyard must have silver rings and hooks and bronze bases. So the entire courtyard will be 150 feet long and 75 feet wide, with curtain walls 7 ½ feet high, made from finely woven linen. The bases for the posts will be made of bronze.

“All the articles used in the rituals of the Tabernacle, including all the tent pegs used to support the Tabernacle and the courtyard curtains, must be made of bronze.

“Command the people of Israel to bring you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to keep the lamps burning continually. The lampstand will stand in the Tabernacle, in front of the inner curtain that shields the Ark of the Covenant. Aaron and his sons must keep the lamps burning in the Lord’s presence all night.



This is a permanent law for the people of Israel, and it must be observed from generation to generation.

“Call for your brother, Aaron, and his sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. Set them apart from the rest of the people of Israel so they may minister to me and be my priests.

Make sacred garments for Aaron that are glorious and beautiful. Instruct all the skilled craftsmen whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom. Have them make garments for Aaron that will distinguish him as a priest set apart for my service. These are the garments they are to make: a chestpiece, an ephod, a robe, a patterned tunic, a turban, and a sash. They are to make these sacred garments for your brother, Aaron, and his sons to wear when they serve me as priests. So give them fine linen cloth, gold thread, and blue, purple, and scarlet thread.

“The craftsmen must make the ephod of finely woven linen and skillfully embroider it with gold and with blue, purple, and scarlet thread. It will consist of two pieces, front and back, joined at the shoulders with two shoulder-pieces. The decorative sash will be made of the same materials: finely woven linen embroidered with gold and with blue, purple, and scarlet thread.

“Take two onyx stones, and engrave on them the names of the tribes of Israel. Six names will be on each stone, arranged in the order of the births of the original sons of Israel.



Engrave these names on the two stones in the same way a jeweler engraves a seal. Then mount the stones in settings of gold filigree. Fasten the two stones on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod as a reminder that Aaron represents the people of Israel. Aaron will carry these names on his shoulders as a constant reminder whenever he goes before the Lord. Make the settings of gold filigree, then braid two cords of pure gold and attach them to the filigree settings on the shoulders of the ephod.

“Then, with great skill and care, make a chestpiece to be worn for seeking a decision from God. Make it to match the ephod, using finely woven linen embroidered with gold and with blue, purple, and scarlet thread. Make the chestpiece of a single piece of cloth folded to form a pouch nine inches square. Mount four rows of gemstones on it. The first row will contain a red carnelian, a pale-green peridot, and an emerald. The second row will contain a turquoise, a blue lapis lazuli, and a white moonstone. The third row will contain an orange jacinth, an agate, and a purple amethyst. The fourth row will contain a blue-green beryl, an onyx, and a green jasper. All these stones will be set in gold filigree. Each stone will represent one of the twelve sons of Israel, and the name of that tribe will be engraved on it like a seal.

“To attach the chestpiece to the ephod, make braided cords of pure gold thread. Then make two gold rings and attach them to the top corners of the chestpiece.



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Tie the two gold cords to the two rings on the chestpiece. Tie the other ends of the cords to the gold settings on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod. Then make two more gold rings and attach them to the inside edges of the chestpiece next to the ephod. And make two more gold rings and attach them to the front of the ephod, below the shoulder-pieces, just above the knot where the decorative sash is fastened to the ephod. Then attach the bottom rings of the chestpiece to the rings on the ephod with blue cords. This will hold the chestpiece securely to the ephod above the decorative sash.

“In this way, Aaron will carry the names of the tribes of Israel on the sacred chestpiece over his heart when he goes into the Holy Place.

This will be a continual reminder that he represents the people when he comes before the Lord. Insert the Urim and Thummim into the sacred chestpiece so they will be carried over Aaron’s heart when he goes into the Lord’s presence. In this way, Aaron will always carry over his heart the objects used to determine the Lord’s will for his people whenever he goes in before the Lord.

“Make the robe that is worn with the ephod from a single piece of blue cloth, with an opening for Aaron’s head in the middle of it. Reinforce the opening with a woven collar so it will not tear. Make pomegranates out of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, and attach them to the hem of the robe, with gold bells between them.



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The gold bells and pomegranates are to alternate all around the hem. Aaron will wear this robe whenever he ministers before the Lord, and the bells will tinkle as he goes in and out of the Lord's presence in the Holy Place. If he wears it, he will not die.

"Next make a medallion of pure gold, and engrave it like a seal with these words: Holy to the lord. Attach the medallion with a blue cord to the front of Aaron's turban, where it must remain. Aaron must wear it on his forehead so he may take on himself any guilt of the people of Israel when they consecrate their sacred offerings. He must always wear it on his forehead so the Lord will accept the people.

"Weave Aaron's patterned tunic from fine linen cloth. Fashion the turban from this linen as well. Also make a sash, and decorate it with colorful embroidery.

"For Aaron's sons, make tunics, sashes, and special head coverings that are glorious and beautiful. Clothe your brother, Aaron, and his sons with these garments, and then anoint and ordain them. Consecrate them so they can serve as my priests. Also make linen undergarments for them, to be worn next to their bodies, reaching from their hips to their thighs. These must be worn whenever Aaron and his sons enter the Tabernacle or approach the altar in the Holy Place to perform their priestly duties. Then they will not incur guilt and die. This is a permanent law for Aaron and all his descendants after him.



***“This is the ceremony you must follow when you consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests: Take a young bull and two rams with no defects. Then, using choice wheat flour and no yeast, make loaves of bread, thin cakes mixed with olive oil, and wafers spread with oil. Place them all in a single basket, and present them at the entrance of the Tabernacle, along with the young bull and the two rams.*”**

***“Present Aaron and his sons at the entrance of the Tabernacle, and wash them with water. Dress Aaron in his priestly garments—the tunic, the robe worn with the ephod, the ephod itself, and the chestpiece. Then wrap the decorative sash of the ephod around him. Place the turban on his head, and fasten the sacred medallion to the turban. Then anoint him by pouring the anointing oil over his head. Next present his sons, and dress them in their tunics. Wrap the sashes around the waists of Aaron and his sons, and put their special head coverings on them. Then the right to the priesthood will be theirs by law forever. In this way, you will ordain Aaron and his sons.*”**

***“Bring the young bull to the entrance of the Tabernacle, where Aaron and his sons will lay their hands on its head. Then slaughter the bull in the Lord’s presence at the entrance of the Tabernacle. Put some of its blood on the horns of the altar with your finger, and pour out the rest at the base of the altar. Take all the fat around the internal organs, the long lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys and the fat around them, and burn it all on the altar.*”**



Then take the rest of the bull, including its hide, meat, and dung, and burn it outside the camp as a sin offering.

“Next Aaron and his sons must lay their hands on the head of one of the rams. Then slaughter the ram, and splatter its blood against all sides of the altar. Cut the ram into pieces, and wash off the internal organs and the legs. Set them alongside the head and the other pieces of the body, then burn the entire animal on the altar. This is a burnt offering to the Lord; it is a pleasing aroma, a special gift presented to the Lord.

“Now take the other ram, and have Aaron and his sons lay their hands on its head. Then slaughter it, and apply some of its blood to the right earlobes of Aaron and his sons. Also put it on the thumbs of their right hands and the big toes of their right feet. Splatter the rest of the blood against all sides of the altar. Then take some of the blood from the altar and some of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it on Aaron and his sons and on their garments. In this way, they and their garments will be set apart as holy.

“Since this is the ram for the ordination of Aaron and his sons, take the fat of the ram, including the fat of the broad tail, the fat around the internal organs, the long lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys and the fat around them, along with the right thigh.



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Then take one round loaf of bread, one thin cake mixed with olive oil, and one wafer from the basket of bread without yeast that was placed in the Lord's presence. Put all these in the hands of Aaron and his sons to be lifted up as a special offering to the Lord. Afterward take the various breads from their hands, and burn them on the altar along with the burnt offering. It is a pleasing aroma to the Lord, a special gift for him. Then take the breast of Aaron's ordination ram, and lift it up in the Lord's presence as a special offering to him. Then keep it as your own portion.

"Set aside the portions of the ordination ram that belong to Aaron and his sons. This includes the breast and the thigh that were lifted up before the Lord as a special offering. In the future, whenever the people of Israel lift up a peace offering, a portion of it must be set aside for Aaron and his descendants. This is their permanent right, and it is a sacred offering from the Israelites to the Lord.

"Aaron's sacred garments must be preserved for his descendants who succeed him, and they will wear them when they are anointed and ordained. The descendant who succeeds him as high priest will wear these clothes for seven days as he ministers in the Tabernacle and the Holy Place.

"Take the ram used in the ordination ceremony, and boil its meat in a sacred place. Then Aaron and his sons will eat this meat, along with the bread in the basket, at the Tabernacle entrance.



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They alone may eat the meat and bread used for their purification in the ordination ceremony. No one else may eat them, for these things are set apart and holy. If any of the ordination meat or bread remains until the morning, it must be burned. It may not be eaten, for it is holy.

“This is how you will ordain Aaron and his sons to their offices, just as I have commanded you. The ordination ceremony will go on for seven days. Each day you must sacrifice a young bull as a sin offering to purify them, making them right with the Lord. Afterward, cleanse the altar by purifying it; make it holy by anointing it with oil. Purify the altar, and consecrate it every day for seven days. After that, the altar will be absolutely holy, and whatever touches it will become holy.

“These are the sacrifices you are to offer regularly on the altar. Each day, offer two lambs that are a year old, one in the morning and the other in the evening. With one of them, offer two quarts of choice flour mixed with one quart of pure oil of pressed olives; also, offer one quart of wine as a liquid offering. Offer the other lamb in the evening, along with the same offerings of flour and wine as in the morning. It will be a pleasing aroma, a special gift presented to the Lord.

“These burnt offerings are to be made each day from generation to generation. Offer them in the Lord’s presence at the Tabernacle entrance; there I will meet with you and speak with you.



I will meet the people of Israel there, in the place made holy by my glorious presence. Yes, I will consecrate the Tabernacle and the altar, and I will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests. Then I will live among the people of Israel and be their God, and they will know that I am the Lord their God. I am the one who brought them out of the land of Egypt so that I could live among them. I am the Lord their God.



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DAY 30

EXODUS 30 - 33

“Then make another altar of acacia wood for burning incense. Make it 18 inches square and 36 inches high, with horns at the corners carved from the same piece of wood as the altar itself. Overlay the top, sides, and horns of the altar with pure gold, and run a gold molding around the entire altar. Make two gold rings, and attach them on opposite sides of the altar below the gold molding to hold the carrying poles. Make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. Place the incense altar just outside the inner curtain that shields the Ark of the Covenant, in front of the Ark’s cover—the place of atonement—that covers the tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant. I will meet with you there.

“Every morning when Aaron maintains the lamps, he must burn fragrant incense on the altar. And each evening when he lights the lamps, he must again burn incense in the Lord’s presence. This must be done from generation to generation.



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Do not offer any unholy incense on this altar, or any burnt offerings, grain offerings, or liquid offerings.

“Once a year Aaron must purify the altar by smearing its horns with blood from the offering made to purify the people from their sin. This will be a regular, annual event from generation to generation, for this is the Lord’s most holy altar.”

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Whenever you take a census of the people of Israel, each man who is counted must pay a ransom for himself to the Lord. Then no plague will strike the people as you count them. Each person who is counted must give a small piece of silver as a sacred offering to the Lord. (This payment is half a shekel, based on the sanctuary shekel, which equals twenty gerahs.) All who have reached their twentieth birthday must give this sacred offering to the Lord. When this offering is given to the Lord to purify your lives, making you right with him, the rich must not give more than the specified amount, and the poor must not give less.

Receive this ransom money from the Israelites, and use it for the care of the Tabernacle. It will bring the Israelites to the Lord’s attention, and it will purify your lives.”

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Make a bronze washbasin with a bronze stand. Place it between the Tabernacle and the altar, and fill it with water. Aaron and his sons will wash their hands and feet there.



They must wash with water whenever they go into the Tabernacle to appear before the Lord and when they approach the altar to burn up their special gifts to the Lord—or they will die! They must always wash their hands and feet, or they will die. This is a permanent law for Aaron and his descendants, to be observed from generation to generation.”

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Collect choice spices—12 ½ pounds of pure myrrh, 6 ¼ pounds of fragrant cinnamon, 6 ¼ pounds of fragrant calamus, and 12 ½ pounds of cassia—as measured by the weight of the sanctuary shekel. Also get one gallon of olive oil. Like a skilled incense maker, blend these ingredients to make a holy anointing oil. Use this sacred oil to anoint the Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, the table and all its utensils, the lampstand and all its accessories, the incense altar, the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the washbasin with its stand. Consecrate them to make them absolutely holy. After this, whatever touches them will also become holy.

“Anoint Aaron and his sons also, consecrating them to serve me as priests. And say to the people of Israel, ‘This holy anointing oil is reserved for me from generation to generation. It must never be used to anoint anyone else, and you must never make any blend like it for yourselves. It is holy, and you must treat it as holy. Anyone who makes a blend like it or anoints someone other than a priest will be cut off from the community.’”



Then the Lord said to Moses, “Gather fragrant spices—resin droplets, mollusk shell, and galbanum—and mix these fragrant spices with pure frankincense, weighed out in equal amounts. Using the usual techniques of the incense maker, blend the spices together and sprinkle them with salt to produce a pure and holy incense. Grind some of the mixture into a very fine powder and put it in front of the Ark of the Covenant, where I will meet with you in the Tabernacle. You must treat this incense as most holy. Never use this formula to make this incense for yourselves. It is reserved for the Lord, and you must treat it as holy. Anyone who makes incense like this for personal use will be cut off from the community.”

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Look, I have specifically chosen Bezalel son of Uri, grandson of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. I have filled him with the Spirit of God, giving him great wisdom, ability, and expertise in all kinds of crafts. He is a master craftsman, expert in working with gold, silver, and bronze. He is skilled in engraving and mounting gemstones and in carving wood. He is a master at every craft!

***“And I have personally appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, to be his assistant. Moreover, I have given special skill to all the gifted craftsmen so they can make all the things I have commanded you to make:
the Tabernacle;
the Ark of the Covenant;
the Ark’s cover—the place of atonement;
all the furnishings of the Tabernacle;***



*the table and its utensils;
the pure gold lampstand with all
its accessories;
the incense altar;
the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils;
the washbasin with its stand;
the beautifully stitched garments—the sacred
garments for Aaron the priest, and the
garments for his sons to wear as they minister
as priests;
the anointing oil;
the fragrant incense for the Holy Place.
The craftsmen must make everything as I
have commanded you.”*

The Lord then gave these instructions to Moses: “Tell the people of Israel: ‘Be careful to keep my Sabbath day, for the Sabbath is a sign of the covenant between me and you from generation to generation. It is given so you may know that I am the Lord, who makes you holy. You must keep the Sabbath day, for it is a holy day for you. Anyone who desecrates it must be put to death; anyone who works on that day will be cut off from the community. You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day must be a Sabbath day of complete rest, a holy day dedicated to the Lord. Anyone who works on the Sabbath must be put to death. The people of Israel must keep the Sabbath day by observing it from generation to generation. This is a covenant obligation for all time. It is a permanent sign of my covenant with the people of Israel. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day he stopped working and was refreshed.’”



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When the Lord finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant, written by the finger of God.

When the people saw how long it was taking Moses to come back down the mountain, they gathered around Aaron. “Come on,” they said, “make us some gods who can lead us. We don’t know what happened to this fellow Moses, who brought us here from the land of Egypt.”

So Aaron said, “Take the gold rings from the ears of your wives and sons and daughters, and bring them to me.”

All the people took the gold rings from their ears and brought them to Aaron. Then Aaron took the gold, melted it down, and molded it into the shape of a calf. When the people saw it, they exclaimed, “O Israel, these are the gods who brought you out of the land of Egypt!”

Aaron saw how excited the people were, so he built an altar in front of the calf. Then he announced, “Tomorrow will be a festival to the Lord!”

The people got up early the next morning to sacrifice burnt offerings and peace offerings. After this, they celebrated with feasting and drinking, and they indulged in pagan revelry. The Lord told Moses, “Quick! Go down the mountain! Your people whom you brought from the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves.



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How quickly they have turned away from the way I commanded them to live! They have melted down gold and made a calf, and they have bowed down and sacrificed to it. They are saying, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.’”

Then the Lord said, “I have seen how stubborn and rebellious these people are. Now leave me alone so my fierce anger can blaze against them, and I will destroy them. Then I will make you, Moses, into a great nation.”

But Moses tried to pacify the Lord his God. “O Lord!” he said. “Why are you so angry with your own people whom you brought from the land of Egypt with such great power and such a strong hand? Why let the Egyptians say, ‘Their God rescued them with the evil intention of slaughtering them in the mountains and wiping them from the face of the earth’? Turn away from your fierce anger. Change your mind about this terrible disaster you have threatened against your people! Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You bound yourself with an oath to them, saying, ‘I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven. And I will give them all of this land that I have promised to your descendants, and they will possess it forever.’”

So the Lord changed his mind about the terrible disaster he had threatened to bring on his people. Then Moses turned and went down the mountain. He held in his hands the two stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant.



They were inscribed on both sides, front and back. These tablets were God's work; the words on them were written by God himself. When Joshua heard the boisterous noise of the people shouting below them, he exclaimed to Moses, "It sounds like war in the camp!"

But Moses replied, "No, it's not a shout of victory nor the wailing of defeat. I hear the sound of a celebration."

When they came near the camp, Moses saw the calf and the dancing, and he burned with anger. He threw the stone tablets to the ground, smashing them at the foot of the mountain. He took the calf they had made and burned it. Then he ground it into powder, threw it into the water, and forced the people to drink it.

Finally, he turned to Aaron and demanded, "What did these people do to you to make you bring such terrible sin upon them?"

"Don't get so upset, my lord," Aaron replied. "You yourself know how evil these people are. They said to me, 'Make us gods who will lead us. We don't know what happened to this fellow Moses, who brought us here from the land of Egypt.' So I told them, 'Whoever has gold jewelry, take it off.' When they brought it to me, I simply threw it into the fire—and out came this calf!"

Moses saw that Aaron had let the people get completely out of control, much to the amusement of their enemies.



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So he stood at the entrance to the camp and shouted, “All of you who are on the Lord’s side, come here and join me.” And all the Levites gathered around him.

Moses told them, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Each of you, take your swords and go back and forth from one end of the camp to the other. Kill everyone—even your brothers, friends, and neighbors.” The Levites obeyed Moses’ command, and about 3,000 people died that day.

Then Moses told the Levites, “Today you have ordained yourselves for the service of the Lord, for you obeyed him even though it meant killing your own sons and brothers. Today you have earned a blessing.”

The next day Moses said to the people, “You have committed a terrible sin, but I will go back up to the Lord on the mountain. Perhaps I will be able to obtain forgiveness for your sin.”

So Moses returned to the Lord and said, “Oh, what a terrible sin these people have committed. They have made gods of gold for themselves. But now, if you will only forgive their sin—but if not, erase my name from the record you have written!”

But the Lord replied to Moses, “No, I will erase the name of everyone who has sinned against me. Now go, lead the people to the place I told you about. Look! My angel will lead the way before you.



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And when I come to call the people to account, I will certainly hold them responsible for their sins.”

Then the Lord sent a great plague upon the people because they had worshiped the calf Aaron had made.

The Lord said to Moses, “Get going, you and the people you brought up from the land of Egypt. Go up to the land I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I told them, ‘I will give this land to your descendants.’ And I will send an angel before you to drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. Go up to this land that flows with milk and honey. But I will not travel among you, for you are a stubborn and rebellious people. If I did, I would surely destroy you along the way.”

When the people heard these stern words, they went into mourning and stopped wearing their jewelry and fine clothes. For the Lord had told Moses to tell them, “You are a stubborn and rebellious people. If I were to travel with you for even a moment, I would destroy you. Remove your jewelry and fine clothes while I decide what to do with you.” So from the time they left Mount Sinai, the Israelites wore no more jewelry or fine clothes. It was Moses’ practice to take the Tent of Meeting and set it up some distance from the camp. Everyone who wanted to make a request of the Lord would go to the Tent of Meeting outside the camp.



Whenever Moses went out to the Tent of Meeting, all the people would get up and stand in the entrances of their own tents. They would all watch Moses until he disappeared inside. As he went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and hover at its entrance while the Lord spoke with Moses. When the people saw the cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, they would stand and bow down in front of their own tents. Inside the Tent of Meeting, the Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Afterward Moses would return to the camp, but the young man who assisted him, Joshua son of Nun, would remain behind in the Tent of Meeting.

One day Moses said to the Lord, “You have been telling me, ‘Take these people up to the Promised Land.’ But you haven’t told me whom you will send with me. You have told me, ‘I know you by name, and I look favorably on you.’ If it is true that you look favorably on me, let me know your ways so I may understand you more fully and continue to enjoy your favor. And remember that this nation is your very own people.”

The Lord replied, “I will personally go with you, Moses, and I will give you rest—everything will be fine for you.”

Then Moses said, “If you don’t personally go with us, don’t make us leave this place. How will anyone know that you look favorably on me—on me and on your people—if you don’t go with us?”



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*For your presence among us sets your people
and me apart from all other people on
the earth.”*

*The Lord replied to Moses, “I will indeed do
what you have asked, for I look favorably on
you, and I know you by name.”*

*Moses responded, “Then show me your
glorious presence.”*

*The Lord replied, “I will make all my goodness
pass before you, and I will call out my name,
Yahweh, before you. For I will show mercy to
anyone I choose, and I will show compassion
to anyone I choose. But you may not look
directly at my face, for no one may see me
and live.” The Lord continued, “Look, stand
near me on this rock. As my glorious presence
passes by, I will hide you in the crevice of the
rock and cover you with my hand until I have
passed by. Then I will remove my hand and let
you see me from behind. But my face will not
be seen.”*



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— CHURCH —