

***LB 301: OLD TESTAMENT BOOK ~
THE PENTATEUCH***



Certificate and Diploma Levels

**Student Workbook
Nazarene Theological Institute
Africa Region**

Nazarene Theological Institute
Church of the Nazarene
Africa Region

Syllabus

LB 301: Old Testament Book Study – The Pentateuch

Course Author

Rev. Mary Spaulding, Ph.D.

Note to student: If you discover any typing or factual errors in this *Student Workbook*, please inform your teacher

Course description

This course is offered as an in-depth study of an Old Testament book or related Old Testament books with the purpose of understanding the content and genre as well as developing the skills required to interpret this portion of scripture through teaching and preaching. LB 301 will provide a general overview of the Pentateuch while devoting greatest emphasis to the book of Genesis.

Program outcomes

The following program outcomes assigned to this course are identifiable competencies required of the student in this course.

- CN 1 Knowledge of the history and content of the Old Testament
- CN 3 Use of the principles of Biblical interpretation
- CN 4 Appreciation of the theological foundations of the Christian faith from the Biblical point-of-view when read from a Wesleyan perspective

- CP 2 Ability to preach Biblical sermons that can then be applied to life
- CP 4 Ability to teach the Word of God and make disciples that can make other disciples.
- CP 10 Ability to interpret and apply the Bible according to the best principles of Biblical interpretation

- CR 1 Ability to give value to Christian morality and how to apply this ethic to life
- CR 3 Ability to worship God by using personal and public means of grace
- CR 4 Ability to allow Christ's character to form the attitudes and actions of one's daily life
- CR 6 Ability to give value to relationships through openness, righteousness, and honesty
- CR 9 Ability to engage in continuing formation and education

- CX 2 Ability to understand the context within which he or she lives with objectivity
- CX 4 Ability to understand the differences between the worldviews of the Western world, that of Africa, and that of the Bible

Course outcomes

For achieving the competencies above, this course organizes several learning activities & requirements around the following intended learning outcomes. At the end of the course, the student will be able to:

- 1) To identify the key people and events in chronological order in the book(s) and their roles in the context of their times (CN 1, CN 3, CP 2, CP 4)
- 2) To identify the main themes of the book(s) (CN 1, CN 3, CN 4, CP 4)
- 3) To identify and articulate understanding of the key theological concepts addressed in the book(s) and how they relate to today (CN 3, CN 4, CP 4, CP 10)
- 4) To identify and articulate the general flow of the books' message (CN 1, CN 3)
- 5) To recognize different literary genres and the necessity to read and understand a text according to its genre (CN 3, CN 4, CP 10)
- 6) To identify references or allusions of Old Testament passages, people, events, or messages in the New Testament (CN 1, CP 4)
- 7) To give students opportunity to construct a Bible Study or Sunday School lesson on one of the primary themes of the book(s) (CN 3, CN 4, CP 2, CP 4, CP 10, CR 9)
- 8) To explain the intended purpose and message of the passage in the cultural and historical context in which it was written and how it translates into a message for today (CN 1, CN 3, CN 4)
- 9) To articulate how the key messages of the book(s) relate to today (CN 3, CP 2, CP 4, CX 2)
- 10) To identify passages speaking to grace, redemption and holiness (CN 4; CP 10, CR 4, CR 6)
- 11) To deepen one's commitment to the Lord as a disciple by studying the personalities of this Old Testament book and in following the guidance of the Holy Scriptures as believers in God and His word for us (CP 4, CR 1, CR 4, CR 6, CR 9, CX 4)
- 12) To use the reading of God's Word to improve one's spiritual growth during worship services and personal devotions (CN 3, CR 3, CR 4, CR 9, CX 2)

This course offers the following percentages of the four Cs:

Content	40%
Competence	25%
Character	20%
Context	15%

Course recommended reading and resources

The Bible. The student will not have a principal text apart from a study Bible.

They will be expected to understand the introduction to each book.

Beacon Bible Commentary, or other available commentaries suggested by the professor or Institute.

Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.

Course requirements/assignments

This course has been designed for Diploma Level students who are able to read and write in English. Certificate Level students who cannot read or write well will need to be paired with a Diploma Level student who can verify completion of each assignment, and quiz and final exam will be taken orally.

1. Regular class attendance, attention, and participation are especially important. Students are responsible for all assignments and in-class work. Much work in this course is group work. Cooperative, small-group work cannot be made up. That makes attendance imperative. Even if one does extra reading or writing, the values of discussion, dialogue, and learning from each other are hindered if students fail to attend. If a total of three hours (half a day of class) are missed during the course, the instructor will require extra work before completion can be acknowledged. If six hours or more of this class are missed, the student will be given a failing grade and will be required to repeat the whole course.

2. Pre-Course Assignments

1. Pre-Course Assignment #1. Each student shall prepare an outline of Genesis chapters 12-50 by using the following *Inductive Study* method. This outline will be submitted **at the beginning of the first day of class** for grading. Grade points will be taken off for late assignments not turned in on time.

Step 1

Read through the entire book of Genesis without stopping to analyze or take notes. The purpose is to get an overview of the book. Look for the major events and people involved in the book. Notice the difference of topics/themes between chapters 1-11 & chapters 12-50.

Step 2

Read through the entire book of Genesis again. During this second reading, read chapters 12-50 more carefully. Write down observations as you read, asking yourself these questions – Who? When? Where? What? Why? How? The major purpose of this reading is to create a **short title** for each chapter that shows what each chapter is about. These titles will help you paint a picture of the general flow of the

book's message throughout this section. Do **NOT** use titles already written in your Bible but determine **your own** chapter titles.

Step 3

Review Gen 12-50 again in order to note the major divisions of this book. Develop **3-6 major book division titles** of less than 6 words each. Be sure to indicate which chapters each division title is covering.

Develop **one overall theme or title** for chapters 12-50. This should be related to the major divisions, but as an overview of the book. Again, both the division titles and overall theme should be your own work, not that of some other author or editor.

Step 4

Read/review the book one more time to evaluate your titles, then **construct a chart** of the outline of chapters 12-50 to include the overall theme or title, the major book divisions, and the chapter titles under each major division. This completed outline is **due beginning of the first day of class**. Grade points will be taken off assignments not turned in on time. (course outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 11)

- 2. Pre-Course Assignment #2.** In addition to reading all of Genesis, read the chapters listed below in each of the books of the Pentateuch before the first day of class. You will submit a Reading Report (provided by the instructor) on Day 1 of the course stating how much reading you completed prior to that first day. (course outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12)

- **Exodus** chapters 1-3, 12:21-32; chapters 19, 20, and 32
- **Leviticus** 9:7-10:11 (first priestly acts by Aaron and sons); chapters 16 and 23; 25:1-28
- **Numbers** chapters 11-14; 20:1 – 21:9
- **Deuteronomy** chapter 6; 10:12-22; 29:1 – 31:13; chapter 34

C. In-Class Assignments

- 1. Journal** – Journaling is to be done in an exercise book. A spiritual journal is a tool to record your experiences and spiritual insights from God (via His Word and His Spirit), gained from this course, from fellow believers, and from life. Students will need to make at least 3 entries of at least 7-10 lines. The purpose of this assignment is to help the student relate the Scriptures and key Biblical truths to his or her own life. (Course outcomes 9, 11, 12)
- 2. Group Work** – To understand a subject well, one must “talk it”. Therefore you are expected to discuss the material with others in and out of class. The in-class group work is very important. Students will

serve as study partners for group explorations and discussion. Each student will be observed by the teacher and graded accordingly. (Course outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11).

- 3. Class Notes** – The Student Workbook is designed to assist with following lectures and learning activities. Students are expected to write notes on the resource sheets as the teacher lectures. **All notes are to be written in the Student Workbook - NOT in your spiritual journal/ assignment exercise book.** The purpose of this assignment is to help students develop a resource book for future reference & spiritual nurture. (Outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,9, 10,11)
- 4. Written Assignments** – There will be two assignments that will require some study in order to prepare the work. For Diploma Level students, these assignments will be written in English, using proper grammar. Assignment detail are in Appendix A of Student Workbook.
- 5. Quiz** – A quiz will be given at the beginning of class on at least one day during the course. (Course outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11)
- 6. Final Exam** – A final exam will be on the last day of class. It will focus on techniques learned, as well as material discussed in class. The exam will include multiple choice, short answers, and essays. The essay questions are designed to show the student’s ability to **apply exegetical principles** to a text. (This exam must be passed in order to pass the course.) (Course outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11)

Late Work – Since this is an intensive course in which each day’s classroom work is dependent upon the completion of previous assignments, any late pre-course or in-class homework will receive a 10% late deduction in grade.

Course Evaluation

Pre-Course Genesis Outline	15%
Pre-Course Reading Completion	10%
Written assignments	25%
Journal	10%
Group Work incl. Class Participation	5%
Class Notes	5%
Quiz	10%
Final Exam	20%

- Law or Pentateuch
- Prophets
- Writings

✓ **The Pentateuch**

Author

1. It is actually an anonymous work. _____ is not specified as its author. Tradition and later writings lead us to believe he was the author.
2. Moses is given credit for certain specific writings.
3. It is probable that Moses wrote parts of it.
4. He definitely did not write all of it. Added references could not have come from Moses, but must have come from someone after Moses' death, including the reference to Moses' own death.
5. One probable scenario: Today, most conservative scholars acknowledge Moses as the compiler of existing oral and/or written sources into what we now know as Genesis and the author of parts of the other four books.
6. Though others contributed to the Pentateuch, this does not have to affect its claim to be divinely inspired. Does that mean it is less than scriptural, that somehow it cannot be divinely inspired? We do not believe so at all.

Before Moses: How this process took place we cannot be sure, but probably the narratives of the patriarchs were preserved, primarily by oral means, during the period of slavery in Egypt.

After Moses: Editing and compilation of oral and written material continued on the books by later generations. He was indeed instrumental in their formation.

Major Themes

How would you name each of the 5 books according to their themes?

- Genesis: The Beginnings of Life and Promises to the Fathers
- Exodus: Guidance out of Egypt
- Leviticus: Sinai Revelation
- Numbers: Guidance in the Wilderness
- Deuteronomy: Guidance into the Promised Land

Literature of the Pentateuch and Genesis

A "genre" is a _____ of literature.

Narrative: Narrative is the _____ part of the Bible, recounting people and events. These stories blend historical reporting and theological interpretation, so biblical narrative has a purpose – to reveal God’s redemptive actions in human history.

Ancient poetry:

Prophetic revelation: consists of present admonitions or future predictions

Law: another genre found _____ in the Pentateuch

√ **Genesis**

Genesis is the book of _____.

“Genesis” means “source, origin, the coming into being of something”.

It is the beginning of Heilsgeschichte, _____.

PRIMEVAL PERIOD: Gen 1-11

Historical background

Precise time periods are impossible to determine – before history recorded.

Theology

The primary purpose of this material is theological.

- 1) God is Creator.

- 2) Problem of Sin.

- 3) God’s judgment on human sin.

- 4) God’s sustaining grace.

PATRIARCHAL PERIOD: Gen 12-50

Historical background

Most of the narrative deals with _____ history rather than the history of nations. But much accords with this understanding:

- 1) Kinds of _____
- 2) Abraham's _____ from Haran in Mesopotamia to Canaan
- 3) Nomadic _____ fits early second millennium.
- 4) Various social and legal _____ are comparable to those of other cultures of the area.
- 5) The patriarchal _____ reflects an early era.

Hence, patriarchs are indeed historical people, not just mythical figures or composites created by later Hebrew writers.

Theology

- 1) Election and promises of God.
- 2) Transition from patriarchal family to independent nation begins with the story of Joseph.
- 3) Faithfulness and righteousness.
- 4) Covenant is a central theme of _____ Scripture.
- 5) The beginning of _____ history.

Main Themes of Genesis

- 1) Universal, sovereign God - God of all humanity/all the nations,
- 2) The corrupting power of sin
- 3) Covenant-making God
- 4) The promises of God to the Patriarchs

The main idea: God's _____ is both universal and covenantal.

Subthemes

- 1) God's relationship with humanity based upon four affirmations:
 - a) Preservation in the midst of chaos
 - b) Judgment as a response to sin
 - c) Grace in the midst of judgment
 - d) Consequences of sin
- 2) Our responsibility for our actions vs. God's plan for us
- 3) Blessing

Genre

In Genesis, there are two main types of narrative genre present:

- **cosmic epic** (Gen 1-11) – formative narrative of the cosmos & humanity.
- **ancestral epic** (Gen 12-36) – narrative with nationalistic themes

CREATION AND EDEN

✓ **Genesis Creation: 1:1 – 2:3**

What Genesis 1 tells us positively about God, creation, & man
God

Creation

Humans

✓ **Rival Views in Ancient Near East**

Genesis 1 portrays a deliberate Hebrew view of creation. All other cultures deal with understanding _____ and _____ creation, humanity and society are the way that they are (etiology) using their fables.

The first part of each number presents an ANE view while the second part (after the "versus") presents the biblical view.

- 1) Multiplicity of gods vs. our single God of the OT
- 2) Struggle of gods to separate upper waters from lower waters
vs. Separation portrayed as simple divine fiat in Gen 1:6-10 – reveals power and sovereignty of God
- 3) Egyptian creation took place through magical utterances
vs. biblical creation through merely the spoken word (more powerful)
- 4) Dragons are rivals which Canaanite gods conquer
vs. great sea monsters are only animals created by God in Gen 1:21
- 5) Worship of sun, moon, stars which were considered to have power over humans
vs. created by God (i.e., creations not gods), lighting the earth and ruling day and night
- 6) Babylonian views – creation of man as an afterthought to work for gods and provide them with food
vs. creation of man was goal of all creation and God provides man with food

√ **Controversies today about Creation & Science**

This Genesis chapter should be read primarily as a revelation of the God of creation rather than a scientific statement about the process of creation.

It explains the "_____" and the "_____" (theological issues).

- 1) GOD is the creator who created everything.
- 2) Man was formed in the IMAGE of God, and therefore a unique creation.

Literary Techniques

Repetition of words and phrases in 1:1 through 2:3

The number of times a specific word or phrase recurs is important to Hebrew thought – a form of emphasis. Three times indicates something is _____. Seven times indicates something is whole or complete.

Structural elements

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1) <u>Separating and subduing</u> | <u>Creating and filling</u> |
| Day one: light from darkness | Day three: vegetation |
| Day two: air from water | Day four: sun, moon, stars |
| Day three: earth from water | Day five: birds & fish |
| Day four: day from night | Day six: animals & humans |

2) Structure highlights 3rd and 6th days

3) Emphasis on man's creation also important.

4) Day seven stands out in 2:2-3: three-fold mention of the 7th day.

In 2:4 a statement is made, then it is repeated in reverse order in the original Hebrew. This is called a **chiasmus**

A chiasmus also used in 1:27 - emphasize importance of human beings

√ **The Garden of Eden 2:4 – 3:24**

v. 2:4 Introduction to the story that follows. The purpose of the creation story (ch 1) points to mankind's story as the climax of the original creation of the heavens and the earth. (Brueggemann 40)

2 Parts of the Garden story:

- 1) Chapter 2: Creation of man and his wife
- 2) Chapter 3: Temptation and fall from garden

Overview of Eden ch. 2 & 3

Structure: tightly structured movement with the characters and the action:

- Action begins outside of garden
- dialogues conducted within the garden
- decisive act of disobedience happens at the garden's very center (3:3)
- action moves out from there as humans hide from God
- humans are finally sent out of the garden.

Name of God: Yahweh Elohim, using _____ names together. Within chapters 2 and 3 the two names appear together _____ times!

- Yahweh - indicates God as Israel's covenant partner (relational)
- Elohim - indicates God's role as creator of all creation.

The serpent and woman only use the term Elohim there.

Exegesis

v. 7: The name "Adam" and land "adamah" in Hebrew emphasize the relationship of man to the land.

- man was created from the land
- man's job is to cultivate the land
- at death man returns to the land

This _____ important part of creation – the human needs the garden for food, the garden needs the human to cultivate it.

v. 9: Tree of knowledge of good and evil. Is knowledge itself an evil for humanity and ignorance to be desired? This does not seem to be the issue as much as the issue of trusting God's word about a situation. The sin appears to be a desire for moral autonomy, deciding what is right without reference to _____ revealed _____, thus a willful independence from God.

v. 10-14: The location of Eden is probably meant by God to be unknown.

v. 15-17: Work is not a sin or the result of sin, but a God-given blessing.

v. 18: The importance of finding companionship for man. The Hebrew word "helper" occurs 21 times in OT, and 15 of those times it refers to God helping man in one way or another – a fact that casts doubt on the common suggestion that woman as man's helper was in some way subordinate or inferior. (Briscoe 52). The phrase "suitable for him" gives the idea of a complimentary, rather than an identical, being.

v. 19-20: This showed no animal is an equal of man.

v. 21-25: The Hebrew word for rib can also be translated "side". This "alongside" relationship receives more support when we consider the expression "helper". (Briscoe 49)

THE FALL ~ IN TWO PARTS

√ The Fall

The problem of sin: We hold three suppositions

1. God is all-powerful, but has chosen to limit his power when creating other beings, specifically humans who are created in God's _____.
2. God is all good. There is no evil in Him, nor did he create evil. In His goodness, He created humanity with an endowed freedom of _____.
3. Sin exists & is real. Satan, through the serpent, tempted Adam and Eve, and they chose to disobey God's known will for them. They sought autonomous (_____ - _____) freedom that does not discern the God-given boundaries of human life. This false sense of security did not bring continued wholeness and wellbeing, but rather, the result is always anxiety and alienation in their relationships, both with God and their fellowman.

Exegesis

v. 3:1: The snake is shrewd in _____ what God has said. He didn't tell the woman to disobey God, and cannot even be accused of directly lying. He cast doubt, and at a profound level, his words were totally misleading.

v. 2-3: The woman corrected the snake but not accurately. It appears she only heard the words from Adam, not directly from God. Also refers to God as _____ Elohim, not LORD God.

v. 4-5: The snake uttered half-truths. Expulsion from the garden was a true kind of _____, though not yet physical (Adam lived to be 930 years). He appealed to curiosity, to desire for more knowledge, and for independence from, and equality with God.

v. 6-8: The humans seized the divine rights and privileges, as well as explicitly disobeying God's expressed word. The knowledge of good and evil that they acquired, was that "good" is doing the will of God and "evil" is the converse. (Briscoe 59)

v. 9: The Lord knew where man was, so the question "where are you?" is meant to express the _____ of relationship between God and man.

v. 10: "I was afraid." This is the same answer given by Abraham (20:11) and then Isaac (26:9) and by all who cannot trust the goodness of God and submit to His wise plan for their lives.

- emphasis on "I" (10-13) – an obsession on self replaced a vocation for care and tending of the creation. (Brueggemann 49)
- three of mankind's perennial problems – guilt, shame, fear – were introduced into what had been a place of delight and peace.(Briscoe 61)

v. 12-13: Here we see the divisive effects of sin – setting man against his dearest companion and alienating him from his all-caring creator. We encounter typical sinful answers by both humans of blame-shifting, pointing to circumstances, fate and others to justify themselves.

v. 16: Neither man nor woman were cursed, only the snake (14) and the soil (17) were cursed because of man. The sentences heaped on man and woman, were a disruption of, or hardship in their appointed roles. Woman was told that her desire for independence would conflict with her desire for her husband and his demand for submission. This is the result of the Fall, not God's perfect will for marriages. Those who were created to be one flesh find themselves tearing each other apart.

v. 17-19: The sentence on man is the longest and fullest, since he bore the greatest responsibility in following his wife's advice instead of heeding God's instructions given personally and directly to him. The woman was more easily deceived because she had not received the word directly from God. The woman's punishment struck at the deepest root of her being as wife and mother; man's strikes at his work, his activity and provision for sustenance, his deepest root. But the miracle is not that they are punished, but that they live. God's _____ is seen in the very judgment against them.

v. 21: God's final grace-filled kindness is to make clothing for them. The first animal is killed in order to do so.

v. 24: The Garden of Eden was a perfect sanctuary, where God was uniquely present in all His life-giving power. Man lost this when he ate the fruit.

How do we look at Gen 3?

- it offers a clear and simple study of the nature of sin & its consequences
- the disobedience of the first couple from whom Genesis traces the descent of the whole human race had grave consequences for all mankind – original sin, sin nature, or depravity.
- How does God deal with these two kinds of sin? With our personal sin, He forgives us when we truly repent of the sin. With our sin nature, God cleanses our hearts with his Holy Spirit when we surrender ourselves totally to His authority in our lives.

The Image of God – we are all made in the image of God.

- 1) We are reflectors of the Creator, not creators ourselves. We are _____ on God, not independent of Him.
- 2) We must live out our imagehood by doing what God does:
 - a. being _____ and multiplying by participating in procreation
 - b. being a _____ of the earth by helping build and maintain a universe marked by right relations and peaceful order.

Since there is such an emphasis in scripture on relationship, another view of the image of God in man, is based on relationship.

1. freedom for God - relation with Him as we were in Eden
 2. freedom for the other - social aspect of our image
 3. Freedom from the Earth - man is not to be dominated by it, but to be a steward of and care for God's creation
 4. Freedom from self - we are focused on God rather than on ourselves
- Sin is loss of relation with God and these freedoms, with the freedom to choose to return to God restored only by prevenient grace. (Dunning278-283)

Our Failure of Imagehood – what was lost in the Garden?

- 1) Human sin becomes a downward spiral

- 2) Judgment falls. Adam and Eve die – not just an end of physical life, but a collapse of all relationships at all levels, and a spiritual death of man in his relationship with God.

Hence, we see several immediate and long range consequences:

- Break of relationship with God 3:10
- Break of relationship between man and woman 3:12
- Break of relationship of humanity with the created order 3:17-19
- Break of other familial relationships (4:8), later into all of society
- Finally, cosmic breakdown when God sends the flood and a return to primordial waters of chaos

God graciously intervenes. Though sin was judged in each situation that arose during the Primeval Period, grace was also given:

- God clothes Adam and Eve
- Cain receives a mark protecting him from harm
- Noah and his family survive the flood
- People are scattered after the Tower of Babel to fill the earth rather than be destroyed

✓ **Cain and Abel**

The next generation: note a characteristic of Genesis is to trace mankind's descent from Adam in a series of deviations from the normal way of things in

that culture – for example, when a man has 2-3 sons, it is often the younger son who receives God’s favor. We see this beginning here – When Abel is killed, God’s blessing is not on Cain but on Seth.

Thematic and Structural comparisons

Parallels with Garden of Eden (chapter 4 presented, then chapter 3)

- 1) Questions are similar: 4:9 // 3:9 and 4:10 // 3:17
- 2) Cursing – 4:11 // 3:17
- 3) Marking of Cain 4:15 parallels clothing of Adam and Eve 3:21
- 4) Cain on sin: Its urge is for you, but you must rule over it 4:7 // your urge will be to your husband, but he shall rule over you 3:16.
- 5) Hearing and voice in both 4:10 // 3:10
- 6) Can driven me from the land 4:14 // driven out of the garden 3:24
- 7) Stories end with sinners leaving the presence of God 4:16 // 3:24

But differences as well – not just a rerun of the fall

- 1) Already alienation exists in the Cain and Abel event because of Adam and Eve’s original sin/depravity
- 2) Sin has now moved from neglect of God’s word to murder and will soon spread to infect all of mankind (Arnold 56)
- 3) Cain is actually cursed while Adam and Eve are not – a serious further development

Why is Cain’s offering rejected, Abel’s is accepted by God?

The answer is not clear in the text, but perhaps the best explanation is taken from Heb 11:4 “by faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain”. This could indicate that the brothers may have had differing attitudes and motives.

Cain’s responsibility

v. 4:7 Cain is not a victim of original sin to such an extent that he is not _____ for what he does. He can choose and act for the good. He is free and capable of faithful living, if he so chooses. This is clearly specified by God. Yet sin is not just breaking a rule, it is an inner aggressive force ready to pounce on Cain. God warned him, but he refused to listen.

Importance of blood

v. 4:10 “your brother’s blood is crying to me”: a whole theology is found here – life is in the blood, shed blood is the most polluting of all substances.

The consequences of Cain’s sin

. . . for himself

v. 4:12 being driven away from his family as well as the land. Cain’s relationship with the Lord is broken as well. This leads to a fear of other men. Cain settles in the land of Nod (v. 16), which is east of Eden. Nod means “wandering”. But also God’s grace through protection in the mark

placed upon him. There is a fearfulness that always stalk those who are unreconciled and guilty.

. . . for his offspring – sin everywhere, but also ~

Emergence of culture, music & poetry

Invention of **music** in v. 21 accompanies **poetry** in vv. 23-4 – a superb example of an early Hebrew poem:

Parallelism – repetition of same or related content or structure in consecutive lines or verses. Parallelism is the MOST PROMINENT characteristic of Hebrew poetry.

Three kinds of Hebrew parallelism:

- 1) Synonymous. second line has similar meaning to first line (4:23, 49:7)
- 2) Antithetic. The second line is a contrast to the first – Prov 10:1.
- 3) Synthetic. Succeeding lines give specifics of first line – 1:16c-17.

Hebrew poetry also uses **chiasms** and **word pairs**, but not rhyming.

A downward spiral

Lamak in 4:19-23. Sin is pervading everything! All human activity is affected by sin now. Lamak replaces God's law with his own—he takes his own revenge however and on whomever he wants. Everyone is at risk from him!

✓ **Seth's Hope 4:25-26**

Three rays of hope appear amid the bleakness of sin:

- 1) Name – another child in place of Abel, this will be the chosen line
- 2) "Men began to call upon the name of the Lord" - linked with Seth's line
- 3) Seth is later linked with Noah – Noah seems to hold the promise of a new beginning. (Brueggemann 68, 70) Noah is linked to the Patriarchs through Shem.

✓ **Genealogies – Chapters 4 & 5**

Specific purposes

In Genesis and the OT, genealogies were used to trace the line of the chosen family, hence a predominantly theological function revealing God's intentions for humanity.

Ch 5 links the first founder of humanity, Adam, with its re-founder, Noah. While this lengthy genealogy traces mankind from creation to flood, a parallel extended genealogy in ch. 11 traces mankind from the flood to Abraham. (Brueggemann 67)

Generic purposes

Genealogies also provide continuity in the narrative, linking important events and people together, and provide breaks in the stories, to separate one from the next.

RE-CREATION

✓ **Prelude to the Flood 6:1-8**

6:5: Sin's spread

6:6: God's grief. Sin _____ the Father heart of God. God's reaction to human sinfulness reveals a personal and caring God. The text affirms that God is decisively impacted by the suffering, hurt, and reactions of his creation – He is not a far-off, unfeeling creator.

6:8: Noah's favor. Very rare for a specific person to have found favor in God's sight – equates Noah with Moses (Ex 33:17 and Mary in NT). Noah seems to be the first person who has character – he simply listens & obeys.

**** Homework Assignment: The Epic of Gilgamesh**

Read the epic of Gilgamesh and compare/contrast according to the directions given in Appendix A.

The Flood = new creation or second re-creation

Literary structure

Story of Noah is a favorite pattern/structure of Hebrew narrators: Palistrophe or **extended chiasmus** (see Appendix D).

Stories of a great flood are known in cultures throughout this entire region. The closest parallel to Genesis is from Mesopotamia – the Epic of Gilgamesh.

Why are there these similarities in a flood story?

The Epic was written before 1600 BC. Noah's story was written down later, around 1200 BC, at the time of Moses. It appears the flood was a common historical heritage that each culture presented with its own understanding of what happened. But only Israelites had truth of the real God of the universe behind their "story."

✓ **The Flood Chapters 6 - 9**

Exegesis

v. 13: Since the earth is corrupt and filled with violence because of humans, God says he is "about to destroy them WITH the earth". The punishment fits the crime – a favorite principle of biblical law.

v. 14: Hebrew word for ark: the only other time it is used, Moses is hidden in an ark (basket of bulrushes) – not the same word as Ark of the Covenant.

v. 18: First appearance of the key term “covenant”, also 9:9-10. God shows Himself ready to meet with people, to promise a _____ with them, and to outline the details of behavior which will make this promised relationship a redeeming, wholesome one in which we are reconciled with God. Covenant becomes the means of relationship throughout the Old and New Testaments. Testament means covenant! (Briscoe 92)

Parallels with Genesis Chapter One

Animals

v. 19-20: These animals reflect the description found in Gen 1:

- Male and female (1:27)
- According to types or after their kind (1:21,24,25)
- sequence of birds, land animals, creeping things the same
- All of this indicates a **NEW CREATION**.

Chapter 7

2 lists of animals, some of twos and some of sevens (7:2-3 vs. 6:19-20). The purpose of 7:2-3 is seen only after the flood: birds explore the earth and the clean animals and birds are offered in sacrifice – without extras, these would have disappeared because of all the sacrifices.

Reversing acts of separation = return to _____

v. 11: God releases waters pent up below and above the earth – undoing the great acts of separation whereby dry land created and waters confined in ch 1. Now the earth returns to its original state, first described in 1:2.

Covering up dry land with water

v. 17-24: Repeated 6 times “earth and waters” like ch 1, but in an opposite movement.

Dying animals – same order as when created

v. 21-22: Dying creatures listed in same order as their creation.

Chapter 8

8:1: God remembered Noah: the turning point of the narrative. When God remembers, He acts!

Divinely sent wind

Gen 1:2 The Spirit of God moved over the surface of the waters vs. 8:1 God caused a wind to pass over and the waters subsided (same Hebrew word Ruach for spirit and wind).

v. 6-14: Scientific experimentation in 3 parts – favorite Hebrew format. Other sailors of the time would also use birds to discover if land was close.

Be fruitful & multiply for animals

v. 15-16: Start of a new creation: “be fruitful & multiply” for every living creature

v. 20: 1st altar in scripture and 1st “burnt offerings” – human desire for _____ with God

v. 21: Sacrifice and burnt offerings. Noah’s sacrifice appears to be effective for all mankind. God is not lifting the curse on the ground (3:17) but he is promising not to add to it with another flood.

Chapter 9

Be fruitful & multiply for man

Echoing 1:28 very precisely. This is repeated twice, at 9:1 and 9:7.

Directions on eating

9:1-7 God modifies the food directions of 1:29 regarding plants (man now eats meat as well) and specifies the sanctity of human life.

Reference to image of God

v. 6: Principle of **lex talionis** (an eye for an eye, a life for a life). Note the tight chiasmic formulation:

shed	blood of	man
man	blood	shed

v. 9: Covenant! This covenant is one-sided, since God Himself is making a promise to keep the covenant without reservation.

9:18-29 Sin hasn’t disappeared or been washed away. The flood has affected no change in humanity, only in God’s relationship with His creation.

Note fall of Noah involves food, just as with Adam & Eve

v. 20–22: Ham shows clear disrespect for his father.

v. 25: This is the first time a man is recorded as uttering a curse – being a slave is repeated three times so it is very emphatic.

Why does Noah curse “Canaan”, not Ham? This family narrative is used to explain political realities, the domination of Israel over Canaan and their enmity. We have seen a disruption of relationships, first between husband and wife, then siblings, now parent and child.

Differences with creation

Though we’ve noted various links in chs 6-8 with the creation story of Genesis chapter 1, yet this situation is also different.

- The ground is still cursed but now the curse is extended further: enmity between man and animals in general is noted, not just with the snake (9:2)
- consumption of meat is specified
- Noah surrounded by sinful men including his own family and himself
- only one group of descendants is cursed (Ham), not all humans
- the curse is by man on man rather than by God.

The flood is a great turning point in the history of the world

The story reveals the lessons that

1. God's hatred of and judgment against sin extends to the point of possible total destruction of the earth
2. God's great mercy is revealed in extending safety to Noah and his family during the flood
3. God's great mercy is also revealed towards life on earth – the earth is now promised God's sustaining grace through a covenant
4. Even the most righteous person and offspring may fall from grace into sin in an unguarded moment. Such falls have long-term consequences.

Noah's view in NT – Noah is regarded as an example of faith & righteousness: Heb 11:7; 2 Pet 2:5; 1 Pet 3:20.

√ **From Flood to Babel**

Table of Nations and Tower of Babel – 10:1-32 and 11:1-9:

These are linked by key words such as: scatter, spread out, country of Shinar, build, and also by multiples of 7 which disappear if one separates the two sections.

The dispersal of mankind and divisions revealed in ch. 10 are explained in ch. 11 as God's judgment on man's attempts to make a name for himself, and to reach for the heavens.

The Table of Nations – Chapter 10

The three-fold division of mankind deals with each of Noah's sons. Each son's list opens and closes with a regular formula. "The nations were separated" anticipates the great dispersal at Babel about to be discussed.

Japheth –

Ham –

Shem –

In these genealogies, the emphasis is on peoples/nations more than on individuals. But the point is obvious, that all mankind known to Israel is descended from a single stock – all men are sons of Noah as well as sons of Adam.

This genealogy insists on _____ so that Israel is properly placed

among the nations in relationship, but also _____ as Israel is the offspring of something new and different that God is going to do with one particular nation, not all nations. (Brueggemann 88)

The Tower of Babel – Chapter 11: 1-9

The record of the first human attempt to create a universal kingdom reveals fallen humanity's insecurity, rebellion and self-centeredness.

Structure

This story begins and ends with bookends: v. 1 "the whole earth used the same language"; v. 9 "the Lord confused the language of the whole earth". v. 5 (scene 3) is the center of the story – it is the hinge or turning point.

Scenes 1-2 human deeds

Scene 3 inspection of the tower by God (the hinge of the story)

Scenes 4-5 divine actions

NOTE IRONY: "let us make a name lest we be scattered over the face of the whole earth" is precisely what they fail to achieve – they are ultimately scattered by God, and the name given their construction commemorates their failure, not success.

v. 5: There is an emphasis on God having to come down in order to see their work – a dramatic way to express the puniness of man's greatest achievements when compared to the Creator.

v. 8: Expulsion from one's former home - was seen in the Fall & Cain stories.

The narrative builds towards the explanation of the name of Babylon, "Babel", in v.9. Babylonians understood the name Babel to mean "the gate of the god", but Hebrews used the name to mean "mixed up, confused", as under divine judgment, rather than the height of human accomplishment.

Why these two important episodes are so important:

Purpose of the Table of Nations

A neutral description that is unique in world literature.

The Table is linked genealogically to the sons of Noah and presents all the people groups known to the ANE at that time, revealing how all men are ultimately brothers, hence the brotherhood of humanity.

The tendency exists today in the nationalistic or ethnic aspirations of people when they ignore the link of God's image that joins all humanity together, whenever an idolatrous exaltation of one cultural identity emerges and assumes a hostile stance toward neighboring peoples. We Christians must expose the idolatry latent in nationalism & tribalism, be it in places like Bosnia, Rwanda, or the USA. (Glasser 42-43)

This theme of universal brotherhood has been repeated three times now, with Adam, Noah, and now with this Table. Remember that it is important whenever anything is repeated three times in Hebrew writings.

But ...

Purpose of the Babel Story

This story corrects the impression that man was fulfilling God's command to scatter and fill the earth in brotherly accord and obedience. It is the last great judgment that befell mankind in primeval history. The motives that prompted man's efforts were horrific – a desire to displace God from heaven, to make a name for oneself rather than allow God to do this, and to scheme without reference to God's declared will, prompts judgment that will cripple man's attempts at cooperation once and for all. (Brueggemann 100) Never again will it be easy for different groups to work together, at least not until it is reversed in Acts 2 with the coming of the Holy Spirit and speaking in known languages. The Tower of Babel will not be reversed until Pentecost! There the many languages are united again to hear the one, _____ of the gospel.

Though there is fierce condemnation in this story, yet even here there is _____ – they are not killed but only scattered so they could not continue in their sin, and will actually be fulfilling God's directive to "multiply and fill the earth". The nations are being blessed in the very act of judgment!

Genealogy of Shem – Chapter 11:10-26

This represents a bridge between primeval history and the patriarchal stories, linking the people of one with the other. Fathering three sons links Adam, Noah, and Terah. The generations from Adam to Noah before the flood are 10, while this listing of generations from Shem to Abraham after the flood also contains 10 generations. The patriarchal history is arranged so that a short genealogy (toledoth) alternates with a long family history of one of the key characters.

Ch. 11 - This is where primeval history and sacred history dovetail. The main theme of the primeval history is the corrupting power of sin. God meets this sin with judgment but also with sustaining grace. The primeval prologue prepares the way for the history of redemption. The relationship is one of problem and solution. Its chapters carry utmost importance for understanding all of Scripture. The desperate problem of human sin so poignantly portrayed in Gen 1-11 is solved by God's gracious initiative, already intimated in the prologue, but sounded strongly in the promise of land and posterity to Abraham. The answer is God's choosing and formation of a distinct group of people, the Israelites, from whom the Savior of the world will come. (Lasor 31).

God chooses Abraham for the sake of all humanity, not just for future Israel.

THE FIRST PATRIARCH

✓ **Patriarchal History – Chapters 12 - 50**

Lifestyle of the Patriarchs

Semi-nomadic – they move from place to place when the situation demands it but sometimes stay for long periods in one place making agreements with local townspeople. Their main occupation is keeping flocks and herds, but sometimes they sow and raise crops.

Some of the customs and practices taken for granted by the patriarchs were forbidden by later law, yet they are patriarchs and considered righteous.

The traditions in Genesis are old, long before Mosaic laws were put in place.

Religion of the Patriarchs

We of course only have a sketch of what religious life would have been like during the time of the patriarchs, but there are **certain facts** we can know about their faith.

1. Abraham and his father Terah were polytheists at the time of God’s call (Josh 24:2, 14; Gen 31:19-35, 53; 35:2). Abraham left his old religious ways in order to follow God.
2. This same God appeared to each of the patriarchs, chose them, and promised to be with them. Each then chose this God as the family’s patron.
3. God sealed the relationship with the one elected through a covenant (15:7-21).
4. He revealed himself to be a personal God, desiring to associate with humans. Canaanite gods, by contrast, were primarily associated with places.
5. Worship consisted of praying, probably often prostrating themselves in common Near Eastern manner (17:3; 24:52). They built altars and offered sacrifices, but did not worship at a single special location.

Differences from the surrounding cultures

The Patriarchal narrative reveals a single God who makes covenants with human beings, and is present wherever his people go. The surrounding cultures believed in and worshipped multiple gods who made no covenants with humans and were often associated with particular locations.

Parallels found among The Patriarchal Narratives

- 1) All leave their homeland at some point
- 2) All quarrel with their brothers (if they have brothers)
- 3) Go down to Egypt, 1 to Gerar, i.e., toward Egypt, due to famine

- 4) 2 wives are seduced or nearly so (Sarah & Rebekah); an Egyptian wife attempts to seduce Joseph
- 5) Wives are barren and quarrel (Abraham & Jacob)
- 6) Younger sons are divinely favored
- 7) Brides met at well (Isaac & Jacob & Moses)
- 8) Promises of children, land, divine blessing
- 9) Gentiles acknowledge Gods' blessing on the patriarch
- 10) All buried in cave at Machpelah, except Rachel

They were hence written to shed light on each other, slight differences from one narrative to another help to enhance the portrait and present the individual character of each person.

The Lord retreated further into the background, direct encounters becoming less frequent with each succeeding patriarch, until Joseph only knows of God's will through dreams, not direct contact. But their personalities become more sharply defined as the cycles unroll.

All patriarchal stories contain **the theme of promises**. The human response to these promises revolves either around faith or disbelief. (Brueggemann 106)

Abrahamic narrative

The trust and **faith** of Abraham is the main claim of this narrative. It is stated at the beginning (12:3), in the middle (15:6) and at the end (22:1-13). But Abraham is not always confident in faith for he is shown in all his humanness. Abraham's faith is neither easy nor without anguish. (Brueggemann 111) It is truly in a process of growth – he is on a journey, just as we are on our own _____.

It is the _____ that is central to the Abraham story and his faith. There was a desperate desire for children in primitive society. This becomes especially poignant in the Abraham stories because they are repeatedly promised a child by God Himself, but there is a great delay in its fulfillment. WHO WILL BE ABRAHAM'S HEIR?

√ **The Call of Abraham 11:27 – 12:9**

Introduction to the main characters

Abram, Sarai and Lot – genealogy of the patriarchs often headed by mention of the father (here, Terah), while stories focus on the sons.

The problem of infertility

11:30 Though we can see the links so clearly through the genealogies from Adam to Abram, we encounter a sudden discontinuity. Though all of creation has been told to be fruitful and multiply, suddenly we are confronted with

this family has no foreseeable future. Sarai is barren. This is not meant to be a statement of God’s judgment on Sarai or of human hopelessness. It becomes the arena for God’s life-giving action, not only to this one family, but to the whole human race. This is the ground of the good news – God is not dependent upon any potentiality in the one addressed. He can produce new life from death itself, from a cross and a grave! (Brueggemann 116-7)

12:1-3 The Abrahamic _____ begins here. These verses are central to the understanding of the whole of Genesis. Verbal connections with primeval history are numerous in these three verses: land, descendants, nation, name, greatness, curse and blessing, Canaan, and Canaanites.

This section falls into two main parts: 1) divine word vv 1-3 (command 1/promise 2/promise 3) and 2) Abram’s response vv 4-9 (journey 4-5/journey 6-7/journey 8-9). Each part begins with the key word “go” and the fulfillment in v. 4 inverts the word order of the command in v. 1:

The Lord said
 Abram
 “Go”
 he went
 Abram
 The Lord had spoken

This shows how carefully this section has been composed and how important each verse is here. By placing the promises to Abraham right at the beginning of all the patriarchal narratives, the author is asserting their fundamental importance for the history of Israel and the world and gives us the key to how the stories that follow ought to be understood.

v. 1: Just as God was the subject of the first verb of Gen 1:1, so now God is the subject of a new revelation, a new plan of salvation. (Arnold 71)

v. 2-3: The promise of blessing is central here – “blessing” occurs more frequently in Genesis than any other part of the OT. The presence of God walking with his people is the highest of all blessings. These blessings are reassertions of God’s original intentions for man.

God replaced the 3 things abandoned with 3 central promises:

Land	with	a new land
People/clan/family (relatives)	with	descendants/great nation
Father’s house	with	blessing on self and others

True _____ and _____ in life are achieved by living for God and depending on his promises. (Arnold 73) This echoes Jesus’ own words “For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it” (Mk 8:35). (Brueggemann 118)

v. 7: “The Lord appeared to Abram” is a theophany (the appearance of a divine being). This is God’s first appearance to a patriarch and His first to anyone in the OT outside of Eden.

v. 5-9: His circuit takes Abram from the northern to the southern border of the land. He not only sees what has been promised to him, but he walks through it. Symbolically he has taken possession of it. Ending in the south prepares for the next episode, going to Egypt.

✓ **Abraham in Egypt 12:10-20**

Why Egypt? Fluctuating rainfall made Canaan susceptible to food shortages until modern irrigation, while Egypt was the standard refuge because Nile provided more certain food supply not dependent upon rainfall. We will see three famines in the patriarchal narratives.

v. 11-13: Why does Abram pretend to be Sarai’s brother? What we recognize from the story is the threat to God’s promises by Abram’s own actions and how his actions impact the affairs of nations.

v.18: “What have you done?” same question with Eve, almost the same with Cain, again same in 20:9 and 26:10 when foreign kings quite shocked by the patriarchs’ dishonesty in such a grave matter. Adultery was understood to be a severe crime; throughout ANE it was known as the great sin deserving the death penalty.

✓ **Abram & Lot separate 13:1-18**

Note whereas Abram reacted out of fear in the previous chapter, here he acts in faith that God’s promise of land cannot be thwarted by Lot. As the older uncle, he could have taken the good land for himself. But Abram is willing to trust God that God is the one who will provide the land promised to Abram. So he allows Lot to choose. What a different action taken by Abram here compared to the action he took in Egypt! (Brueggemann 130)

When Lot chooses to go east, he is moving toward territory that his descendants, the Moabites and Ammonites, would eventually occupy.

v. 15-17: The promise is again given, much fuller this time. Abram’s generosity to Lot sets a model for his descendants to imitate. The repetition of the promises indicates God’s approval of Abram’s treatment of Lot, and that Abram’s descendants would not be through Lot.

These two passages (Egypt and Lot) present faith the way it really is – sometimes strong and sometimes not so strong. But in both, the promise-making, blessing-giving God is at work. What matters more than the faith or

actions of Abram is the _____ of God to Abram and to all those who call upon his name. (Brueggemann 134) Do we trust God to use us even though we may be weak on faith and desiring other outcomes than we have been given?

Abram rescues Lot 14:1-24

This is the only place in Genesis where we have an account of a military campaign with various kings named.

Two main parts

- 1) three accounts of battle
- 2) a subsequent interaction among Abraham, the king of Sodom and Melchizedek, an example of a non-Jew who recognizes God's hand at work and God's blessing on Abram.

v. 16: Spoils of victory belong to the winner and was often a recurrent problem for dispute in ANE.

v. 18: Abram on his return is met near Salem by Melchizedek, the priest and king of Salem (possibly an early name for Jerusalem). His name means something like "king is righteous". He brought bread and wine, revealing the generosity of Melchizedek, since bread and wine is royal fare. Melchizedek combined the offices of king and priest, and is the first priest named in Scripture. Though he refers to god as El-Elyon (this could have been the supreme god of the Canaanite pantheon, El), by v. 22 Abram clearly connects this name with the God of the Hebrews. It appears that Abram may be the only one of the two who knows the true name of God, even if Melchizedek may worship this God. (Brueggemann 137)

v. 19: The first explicit fulfillment of God's promise concerning blessing- Abram is blessed by Melchizedek, one of the family of men.

v. 20: Tithing was a widespread ANE custom. Given to both sanctuaries and kings, Melchizedek qualifies on both accounts, though probably it is conferred by Abram because of his priesthood and blessing. Abram sets the example for all descendants to follow.

v. 21: Abram's generosity is especially seen in stark contrast to the poor attitude of the king of Sodom toward his savior. This hints at the subsequent doom that is bound to befall those who oppose/have disdain for the elect of God. Abram's generosity is clearly seen, giving this surly king more than his due. Abram's virtues of courage, loyalty, and piety are shown here, and he seems to regain integrity lost in Egypt.

✓ **Covenant Promise 15:1-21**

This chapter is foundational to two basic concepts throughout the Bible: faith and covenant. These truths bind the OT and NT together. (Arnold 92)

v. 2: Divine blessing and reward should lead to a man being fruitful and multiplying. So Abram asks, Why? What am I to do about this? This is Abram's first address directly to God, which reveals the depth of his need and desire for offspring. He questions God that perhaps Eliezer, the head of Abram's household might be the one through whom Abram would have descendants, since it is not through Lot, his nephew. But God makes it clear this is not the case either.

The utter impossibility of the promise to this family becomes evident. Abram knows what is possible and this is not. God then reasserts the promise in no uncertain terms in vv. 4-5. The same God who made the stars without number can also make a son for this barren family.

v. 6: The result: Abram believed! He has abandoned an understanding of reality that is measured by what he can see and touch and manage. Faith was Abram's response to God's words to him.

As a result of his faith God designated Abram righteous. One who is righteous is one who has a right relationship with God, is acquitted by God in the day of judgment, who is saved. Righteousness is often portrayed as God-pleasing actions on the part of an individual or nation. Here, faith, the right response to God's revelation, counts as righteousness; that faith leads to righteous action (18:19) as well. Faith involves both believing and obeying.

This new righteousness means _____ of the control of the present for the sake of a Genesis (a new origin and beginning), for a _____ to a God who can do anything. (Brueggemann 146)

v. 7: The covenant between Abram and God foreshadows Yahweh's great salvation for Israel in the exodus from Egypt and covenant at Sinai. Direct linkage of these two covenants is made here in the language of this verse – the Abrahamic and the Mosaic. One is the continuation of the other.

v. 9: Sacrificial terminology is present (these animals are every type of sacrificial animal used in OT ritual). But this covenant is different than the one at Sinai which imposes obligations on both God and Israel. Abram's covenant is a promissory oath made by God alone, as only God walks between the animals and invokes their fate on Himself if He fails to keep the covenant.

v. 12-16: Reveal that the promise will be kept so that God's word need not be doubted, the promise will be delayed for historical reasons, and Abram need not be anxious about the delay. He is assured that it will be passed on to the succeeding generations. Hence, to wait a very long time emerges as an overriding theme of this chapter, whether it is for his own son, or for the fulfillment of the promise of land to his offspring.

How important this passage is to our understanding of God's grace! We cannot earn it by our deeds, but only by our faith. It is this passage that Paul uses in his argument in Romans 4 and Galatians 2-4, that the righteous are to live by faith; it is by faith that one becomes righteous before God.

Birth of Ishmael 16:1-16

Abraham seems content to wait for God's timing but Sarai is not. She grasps the initiative after 10 years of being settled in Canaan and 77 years of infertility. She is determined and resourceful. Blaming God for her infertility and following long-established ANE custom, she offers her maid Hagar, whose baby would count as Sarai's child. We can tell that the narrator does not endorse Sarai's scheme. There is even a deliberate echo of Gen 3: Abram "obeying his wife," Sarai "taking and giving to her husband".

When Hagar is found to be pregnant, she boldly decides to treat Sarai with contempt. Sarai's status falls into jeopardy because fertile women are always paid more deference than infertile women in the ANE. Abram rather weakly tries to avoid the angry jealousy and infighting between the women by letting Sarai do as she sees fit. Sarai oppresses Hagar to such an extent that Hagar fears for her life and flees.

It seems that all parties (Abram, Sarai, Hagar) would have left well enough alone but God reopens the issue and intervenes (v. 7). (Brueggemann 152) God listened to both. In her moment of greatest distress, Hagar discovers God's concern for her and hence gives the Lord and the well a new name. Even the name of her son (given by the angel) deals with this passage, for Ishmael means "God hears." Hagar responds with obedience to this God and returns to the household. Though excluded from the promise, they are not excluded from the blessing (17:20).

✓ **Covenant of Circumcision 17:1-27**

This chapter opens with Abram now 99 years old and Sarai, 89. The Lord appears Himself (theophany), signaling a new or important revelation, and declares a new name for Himself – El Shaddai, God Almighty, a name that emphasizes His invincible power & faithfulness/ability to fulfill His promises.

v. 5, 15: The change of names is significant here. Any midlife name change is a momentous event that symbolizes a change in that person's character or a transformation in their destiny. Amazing that the names are changed by God Himself! Abram = exalted father, while Abraham = father of a multitude. Sarai to Sarah constitutes a less clear change since we are not sure about the meaning of Sarai, but Sarah = princess.

Circumcision is a sign that reminds the Israelite of his special spiritual relationship and of his obligation to walk before God and be perfect.

Abraham immediately obeys "that very day", a term used only here, on the day of the flood, and the day of the exodus.

Only in Europe and Central/East Asia is the custom of circumcision unknown. Usually it was a major rite of passage at puberty, widely practiced by Israel's neighbors. This was only practiced on male offspring, so it is not the same as female circumcision (female genital mutilation) which is nowhere sanctioned by God.

Paul's discussion in Rom 9-11 assumes that God's promises are still valid despite Jewish unbelief, but he goes on to express the spiritual aspect of circumcision, which is also seen in the OT. Rom 2:29, "real circumcision is a matter of the _____, spiritual and not literal". The intent of circumcision is to signify commitment to God and acceptance of His covenant.

✓ **Overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah 18:1-19:38**

No other 24 hour period in Abraham's life is related more fully than this description in Gen 18-19, hinting at the importance of this story for the writer of Genesis. Now Sarah is informed of the birth, indicating that only Abraham had been informed in 17:19 and he had not passed on the information to Sarah.

Three visitors come their way, and Abraham treats them royally, befitting ANE custom. One visitor is identified as the Lord while the other two are called messengers or angels (v. 1). These strange men have two tasks – one is to promise a beginning. This is done in 18:1-15 with Sarah and Abraham. The second is to carry out an ending, which will be completed in 19:1-28.

v. 13-14: Sarah finds it difficult to believe and so her laugh. She is not a model of faith at this point. Her reaction solicited from the Lord one of the great statements of scripture "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" We must say it is the fundamental question every person must answer. And how it is answered determines everything else. (Brueggemann 159)

Abraham then intercedes for the people of Sodom. These are Canaanites, not Israelites, which is important. Can we see a progression in Abraham? At first he was selfish and self-centered around strangers. Then he moves out beyond his own immediate family to defend Lot against aggressors. He gives himself through the tithe to Melchizedek. Now finally he is interceding, not just for Lot, but even for the cities of strangers and those of another religion.

This story from 18:16 through 19:29 is structured to show the tension between the faith of Abraham and the waywardness of humanity. (Brueggemann 163) Abraham is portrayed in a wholly positive fashion, the men of Sodom and Gomorrah are portrayed as wholly negative. That Lot

survived at all is ascribed to Abraham, for "God remembered Abraham" and sent Lot out of danger.

Lessons from this passage

This narrative reveals both the surpassing mercy of God in rescuing undeserving Lot and his anger toward sin in destroying the cities. We also see the necessity of looking deeply at the relationships we have with others around us to ascertain that their influence is not leading us away from God rather than towards Him.

The possibility that innocent people have the capacity to save others and the power to override the destructiveness of guilt and sin is the basis of so much of our intercessory prayer. Lot is not saved by his own righteousness, but because Abraham has beseeched God.

What we see, above all else, is that God does not distribute reward and punishment indifferently. He is a God actively seeking a way out of death for us all. Secondly, the virtue and obedience of faithful persons are valued by God and have redemptive potential. God listens to us in our intercessory cries just as He listened to Abraham! (Brueggemann 175)

✓ Sarah and Abimelek 20:1-18

The strong and righteous prophet boldly pleading for the salvation of Sodom is now discovered to be less than perfect in his trust of God's safekeeping for a second time. Understandable perhaps the first time with so little experience of God, now it seems amazing that Abraham should fear for his life in a repeat situation. He comes crashing down again, when faced with the need for self-preservation. Abraham's excuses for himself are feeble and unconvincing. While he reports that he acted because Abimelek did not fear God, it is evident that Abimelek did fear God and that Abraham feared many things more than he feared God. (Brueggemann 178)

But the author is not just attempting to more accurately portray characterizations of previous chapters, he is as always tracing the working out of the promises of Abraham. Though this episode could place the promise of God in jeopardy again, we see God's protection of Sarah, and hence the elect _____, through an illness imposed upon the king and his retinue so that there would be no question that Isaac is Abraham's child. We see that a nation who _____ Abraham and recognizes God at work will also be blessed by Abraham, shown by Abraham's interceding for them so that God healed Abimelek, his wife, and slave-wives. As undeserving as Abraham is, he is still the means by which God grants life and blessing to the nations.

Lesson 6

ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

✓ **Isaac displaces Ishmael 21:1-21**

This chapter begins with laughter, the laughter of joy at the blessing of God in such an unexpected way. "God made me laugh" "everyone who hears it will laugh for me" both words for laugh have the same root word as the root for Isaac's name. The 2nd laugh is the exact word for Isaac. His name means "he laughs". Here is the most visible and most central of fulfillments of God's promises. Without an heir the other parts of the promise couldn't be fulfilled.

However, at the weaning of Isaac, it becomes obvious to Ishmael that Isaac is going to survive his childhood, which means his own right of succession is at risk. He reacts by mocking (same word root, Isaacking) Isaac. Ishmael and Hagar left Abraham's home to become independent nomadic people in fulfillment of God's promise. This story also shows Abraham's deep affection for Hagar and Ishmael, as well as Hagar's love for her son. Though Ishmael brought the result upon himself, he does pray to God and it is his prayer, not Hagar's, that God answers. She goes on to provide a wife for her son from among her own people, a custom of the household. God is faithful to fulfill His promises to each person. Altho these outsiders are excluded from God's elect line and its promises, they are not excluded from His own promises and blessings. God cares about and for these outsiders. (Brueggemann 184)

✓ **Testing of Abraham 22:1-19**

Chapter 22 is the **theological summit of the entire story** of Abraham. No other story in Genesis or even the OT can match this for its haunting beauty or its theological depth.

Three series of summons/response statement interchanges:

Series 1

Series 2

Series 3

(Note: All three responses are "Here I am")

v. 8: "God will provide" – ultimate statement of trust by one who has faith in the One who is faithful to provide. (Brueggemann 187) The author lets us in on a secret – God tested Abraham: is his love for Isaac held above that for God? Abraham is unaware that his trial is a test – for him it is real and heart-breaking. It is only through Isaac that Abraham will be a patriarch of a

nation, but God must test the one thing in his life that is most precious and most vulnerable – his desire for offspring and lasting memorial.

The Three Commands of God (v. 2) turn Abraham's world around.

1. "_____ " has 3 direct objects, moving from general to more specific:

TAKE

Your son
Your only son, whom you love
Isaac

2. "_____ ". The specific Hebrew spelling only occurs one other place in the entire OT – Genesis 12:1!! There it is linked as well to a further qualifier repeated here as well: in **12:1** "to a land unknown ("I will show you") Here it is "to a mountain unknown" ("I will tell you").

3. _____ This last one was devastating. In Gen 12 Abraham was called to leave his **past**, in Gen 22 Abraham is being called to leave his **future!** (Arnold 107)

Abraham's faith is in God, not just in the promises. "God will provide Himself a sheep for the burnt offering, my son" is clearly a turning point in the narrative. Abraham has made his choice to obey God no matter the outcome. The transformation of Abraham through years of interaction with this faithful God, is about to be fully realized. He is building the altar in order to put on it the promises themselves, embodied in his son. Abraham reveals that his trust is truly in God, not simply in what God promises. He discovers that the promises are his by privilege, not by right. The value resides _____, not in the promises themselves. Abraham has forsaken his own way in order to rely fully on the way of God. Though he does not understand God's way, he is prepared to act solidly on the word of God. His only refuge is in the divine provider whom he finds unknowable, but reliable and good. (Brueggemann 188)

NT application. But this story is also about the testing of God and the provisions of God. Jesus, in fact, becomes the one tested in Gethsemane and on the cross, He must choose to believe in God's promise of new life that will come out of death. Testing/provision becomes crucifixion/resurrection in the life of the church. (Brueggemann 194) In NT, James 2:21 and Hebrews 11:17 use Isaac's sacrifice also to portray the kind of faith and behavior the pious should imitate, a _____ that is carried out in _____.

Why God tests faith. True, deep and abiding faith is a decision to submit wholly, completely and unreservedly to a holy God. We look longingly at the temptation to find an alternative that is easier, less demanding than this God who requires our all, our total commitment to Him alone. That is why God tested his faith and why God continues to test ours. Do we trust God for who He is, or for what He gives us? God will stretch us to the limits of our physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual beings in order to

expand our capacity to know Him, and in that knowing to discover the vast potential of life lived by faith. (Briscoe 192) Have you been tested in this way? Have you died to your own life that you might know true life in God? Do you believe His promises and trust His goodness so fully, that you have placed everything before Him, so that nothing will be above Him in your life?

✓ **Genealogy of Rebekah 22:20-24**

The promise in the previous passage of numerous descendants implies that Isaac must marry in order to carry this out. That Rebekah is the only female mentioned among all these men indicates her character and leaves the reader wondering how this will affect the rest of the story.

✓ **Purchase of burial ground 23:1-20**

Sarah plays a major role in Abraham's story. She is heroic, and a worthy mother of a nation. Yet she was treated often with apparent contempt by Abraham, offering her life to protect his own. This story makes plain that he cared deeply for her and wanted to honor her in death at age 127. He needed an undeniable family grave where she might enjoy undisturbed peace, so he refused to accept land merely given but not bought. This important business transaction was performed publicly before the elders of the city, as a legal transaction – the first clear step towards Abraham and his offspring gaining the Promised Land – again, fulfillment of the promises.

✓ **Betrothal of Rebekah 24:1-67**

In his old age, Abraham has his servant take a solemn oath that he will go to the homeland to get a wife for Isaac, setting example for future generations to take wives from within the family of God, rather than from among the surrounding heathen. The fiancée must be willing to come to Canaan or it would represent a denial of God's promises and rejection of Abraham's original charge to leave Haran. In Haran the servant's test demonstrated characteristics required in a patriarch's wife, who must be energetic and hospitable. A camel can drink up to 25 gallons at one time, so offering to water his camels was a huge job of backbreaking labor for a total stranger.

The servant must also use all his persuasion to convince the family to allow Rebekah to go to a foreign land in marriage, and it soon became clear that it was her mother and brother Laban who would have the final say. Though they finally agreed reluctantly, it was Rebekah herself who finally broke the deadlock. She agreed to leave, and in so doing, she behaved like Abraham, who also left home and family from this location to go to the Promised Land.

✓ **Family History of Ishmael 25:12-18**

These stories explain the tension between Israelites and Ishmaelites that has come down through the centuries to our present day (physically, Arab tribes inhabiting deserts south and east of Israel, but also spiritually, the claimants of Islam as descendants of Abraham thru Ishmael). But this also proves that God's promises will be carried out (12 princes). Since He did not overlook His promises to Ishmael, God will certainly be faithful to those guaranteed by oath to Abraham about his descendants, the next part of the Genesis story.

✓ **Family History of Isaac 25:19 – end of Ch. 35**

Last but most important, Isaac

25:19-36:1. Three lengthy sections in the Patriarchal History – Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph. Jacob's sons become the 12 tribes of Israel. Jacob's story ends with him in conflict with most of his sons; it is only the Joseph story that describes the healing of the rift within the family. (Brueggemann 205)

Two ways in which the Jacob story is contrasted with Abraham's story –

- 1) Abraham's story concerns problem of a promise from God to Abraham,
~ Jacob struggles within his own generation – brother, wives, uncle.
- 2) Abraham is concerned with the issue of promise of a son –
~ Jacob's story is dominated with the motif of blessing.

Structure – Jacob's story clearly exhibits palistrophe:

Jacob cheats Esau of his blessing	A
Jacob meets God at Bethel	B
Jacob arrives at Laban's house	C
Jacob marries 2 because of Laban's Trick	D
Birth of Jacob's sons (esp. Joseph)	E
Jacob tricks Laban	D'
Jacob leaves Laban's house	C'
Jacob meets angel of God at Penuel	B'
Jacob returns Esau's blessing	A'

(Brueggemann 211)

The central scene is the birth of Jacob's sons, especially Joseph, which tells him it is time to go home. We see the same wording as the other major palistrophe of Genesis – that of Noah. "God remembered Rachel" - turning point used to emphasize it is God who controls events and saves His people.

✓ **First Encounter of Jacob & Esau 25:19-34**

_____ is childless nearly 20 years – a common occurrence for these patriarchal stories – Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel. "2 nations in your womb . . .

the older will be the slave of the younger” is programmatic for the whole Jacob & Esau story, as God works a basic reversal of social & cultural rights. He is free to work His will despite every human custom. (Brueggemann 214, 16)

Conflict between the two brothers is aggravated by their **parents’ partiality and favoritism**. The younger displaces the older in favor – Isaac & Ishmael, now Jacob & Esau. Here, Jacob acquires the firstborn’s **right of inheritance**, already fulfilling the prophecy that the older will be the slave of the younger. The birthright gave the firstborn twice the inheritance of other sons and responsibility of being the patriarch after the father’s death.

Historical outcome of enmity

At this point, the narrator is not condemning Jacob’s actions, but rather judges Esau’s indifference toward his family responsibilities and privileges, “So Esau despised his birthright.” (Arnold 120) Though we are shocked that Esau so lightly sells his birthright, Jacob himself is at times utterly offensive. Far too crafty to be a typical “hero”, he first takes advantage of his brother to give up his birthright, then deceives his own father to give him the family blessing, showing himself both a liar and cheat. God’s saving purpose is not stopped by human weakness, tho it may be delayed by sin and poor choices.

✓ **Isaac and the Philistines 26:1-33**

Isaac spends most of his life in the shadow of other members of his family, as a rather timid character. Throughout this narrative, comparisons are drawn between Isaac and his father. There is a famine, but instead of going to Egypt as Abraham, Isaac is told by God to “to camp in the country which I shall tell you” echoes 12:1 & 22:2 for Abraham. The promises are repeated and actually outshine those of his father. Isaac sees more of the promise fulfilled than his father. Isaac is indeed prosperous, powerful, and wealthy.

Yet Isaac makes the exact same mistake his father did, passing Rebekah off as his sister because of fear for his own life, willing to sacrifice her honor & commit a grave sin in the process. Again they are saved from their folly by God’s grace & integrity of a foreign king, very concerned for sexual morality.

Now a problem arises over a well. Isaac doesn’t act, but just reacts passively. It appears the treaty between Abimelek and Abraham has been broken by Abimelek’s men. Yet Isaac doesn’t lose faith in God’s promise, v.22. Abimelek sues for peace, restores the treaty now with Isaac, and that very day abundant water is discovered. Though his timidity in some situations led Isaac astray, in others it prompted him to be conciliatory (with the wells) where others might have stirred up strife. Instead, there is ever-increasing prosperity. God has indeed made room for Isaac and his people, as the name of one of the wells, Rehoboth shows (v. 22). (Brueggemann 225)

THE DECEIT OF JACOB

✓ **Jacob cheats Esau of blessing 26:34 – 28:9**

Jacob and Rebekah seem very plotting and evil in what they are doing, but it is unlikely the author saw it all so black and white. Esau had married two Hittite wives who gave much trouble to Isaac and Rebekah. This may reflect Isaac's neglect of his duty to his sons of not obtaining wives for them as Abraham had done for Isaac. Again Isaac is shown as passive, and avoids confrontation. At his deathbed, he ignores custom and summons ONLY Esau to receive a blessing. It was customary at that time to call all the sons to one's side to receive appropriate blessing. His reason for only calling Esau is that he makes "a tasty brew that I love" – one is reminded that Esau had swapped his birthright for a tasty stew. Isaac and Esau appear to be both alike in putting appetite before principle, self-indulgence before justice, immediate satisfaction before long term spiritual values. Initially, the blame then lies as much with Isaac and Esau as with Rebekah and Jacob.

Jacob and Rebekah do suffer for their deeds. Jacob has to flee his home for 20 years and Rebekah never sees her favorite son again. Interesting that Jacob never accepts Leah's sons, just as he was not accepted by his own father. And like his mother, who must have mourned his going, Jacob would spend most of his latter years mourning the loss of his favorite son, Joseph. Fundamental to the story is the conviction of the efficacy of the deathbed blessing – what the patriarch says before he dies determines the destiny of his descendants. The blessing of one generation upon the next is extremely important for those who carry on the family name.

However, the blessing and the birthright belonged together, and so to accept and administer the blessing when it no longer applied, was a fundamentally dishonest action on the part of both the father and the son. Both realize that they are helpless in changing what they wish they could but cannot. And so, Isaac offers a lesser promise to his beloved child (vv. 39-40), a promise to the nations, if not to the elect of God. (Brueggemann 233-4)

Perhaps even more than ever before, we see the unprincipled behavior by every member of the family, each self-centeredly seeking their own interest. Even the mother felt she could humiliate her husband and blatantly manipulate her sons. The narrator not simply points out the fallibility of God's chosen, but reasserts the grace of God. His mercy is the ultimate ground of salvation for the nation of Israel and for all humanity.

Mixed marriages

The acute threat of assimilation by other cultures came to be symbolized by the problem of mixed marriages. The identity and distinctiveness of the Israelite community in the face of such assimilation was important to the beginnings of this community, as well as to its history. And so, Isaac sends Jacob off to find a wife from among the family. It appears that even Esau recognizes the wisdom of his parents, when he decides to choose his next wife from among relatives (28:9), he becomes included among those who honor the prohibition. In the NT, we see Paul addressing this issue with the church of Corinth. Known for its battle with syncretism (the combination of different forms of belief or practice without critical examination of the consequences). We need to be self-conscious and intentional about this, so that we can assess and avoid the dangers of syncretism. "Mixed marriage" is not a racial or ethnic issue in the NT, but a warning against religious syncretism when tempted to marry someone not a believer.(Brueggemann 238-9)

✓ **Jacob meets God at Bethel 28:10-22**

Even though his father did send him off warmly, Jacob must have been frightened and depressed with leaving home. He was the home-loving boy, now a fugitive away from the security of home. On this journey, where nothing is safe or expected and everything is risky, he encounters God (Brueggemann 241), and is assured of protection and that he will return home again (though 20 years passed before that happened). Jacob is given an offer of another future with God. No longer can he live on the strength of his parents' faith – the God of Abraham and Isaac is now to become the God of Jacob as well. (Arnold 124)

v. 15: God's promise is addressed to Jacob directly and personally. During this encounter on his first night away from home, God reassures him "I am with you", a promise first heard here in the Bible but heard by many others to come. It is a promise not needed by those like Isaac who lived their lives without conflict and in relative safety. Jacob faces special dangers and needs God's attentive protection. "I am with you" is the name assigned to Jesus himself – Emmanuel, God with us (Mt. 1:23), and it is the last word to the baby church by that same God and Savior, "I am with you always"(Mt.28:20)

This first promise is about _____. The second promise about an _____, "I will keep you." Jacob has become a fugitive from his own brother, but is offered a better keeper—the Lord Himself.(Brueggemann 245-6)
The appearance of God presents promise that also demands decision. Jacob now decides in ways that reshape his existence, for promises are covenantal acts. God was committed to Jacob since the original oracle about his birth(ch 25), but only now is Jacob also bound to God. His response sounds like a

genuine act of faith, but Jacob is still Jacob. Even in this solemn moment, he still sounds like a bargain-hunter. He still adds an "if" (v. 20). (Brueggemann 248)

The next period in Jacob's life, he is with Laban's family. We see continued conflict, with and between wives and especially now between Laban and Jacob. The character of Jacob is being slowly developed, while it is exactly in this doubtful character, the promise of God is being fulfilled.(Brueggemann 250-1)

✓ **Jacob arrives at Laban's house 29:1-14**

This episode is one of the happiest in Jacob's story. God's promise of protection is being fulfilled. God's providential guidance to a particular well and particular people at the well is an echo of Gen 24, for Jacob finds his own family there. This is a betrothal type scene wherein the patriarch journeys to a foreign land, encounters his future bride at a well, and waters the flock (see Moses in Exodus as well as Gen 24).

✓ **Jacob marries Leah and Rachel 29:15-30**

Though a high price for a wife, Jacob is willing to pay with 7 years because of his love for Rachel, but he is deceived by Laban on his wedding night, just as he deceived his own father. Jacob is being given a graduate course in "heel-grabbing" by his own relatives. Jacob must work for another 7 years to earn Rachel's hand (though he is given her immediately). No trick that can reverse this matter. (Brueggemann 253) Though Jacob has been given God's promises, he can't escape divine justice, God's discipline of those he loves. Sadly, he seems to harbor bitter resentment at Laban and Leah that had lasting effects on the next generation. His sons are born in rivalry, envy and dispute. Yet in spite of all of this, God's purposes are advanced. God's promise to Jacob of a multitude of descendants is fulfilled largely thru the unloved Leah and her maid Zilpah, thru whom 8 of the 12 tribes are traced.

✓ **The birth of Jacob's sons 29:31 – 30:24**

Here we have two women, sisters, both craving what the other has – Leah longs for Jacob's love, and Rachel is desperate for children. Though there is no indication that the sisters had problems before the marriages, there are plenty of indications that it was a very unhappy situation for both of them afterwards. The 12 tribes of Israel emerge out of the intense wrestling of Rachel and Leah. Alienation creeps in between husband and wives, between the two sisters and between the wives and God, so that they speak of Him only as "God". Only when Rachel finally has her prayers answered, does she again address God with the more intimate covenantal name of the LORD.

The family uses two devices to overcome the disaster of barrenness, first in Rachel and then in Leah as well. First, there is recourse to handmaidens as surrogate mothers, just as Sarah had used with Abraham. The second is the use of mandrakes, (Brueggemann 254) famed for arousing sexual desire and for helping barren women to conceive. As Rachel had never conceived and Leah had apparently become infertile and was obviously shunned by Jacob, both sisters had reason to value highly this fertility herb. Since Jacob clearly favored Rachel over Leah, Leah is ready to give these valuable mandrakes for just one night with her husband. It also shows how desperate Rachel is for her own children, even tho her maid has already borne children for her.

The intensity of Leah's desire is expressed in her words to Jacob, that she has surely "hired" him. His relationship with Laban seems reduced to a commercial level, and now even his relationship with his wives is up for rent. At the birth of Issachar, his name (v. 18) is based on this root. Ish-sacar – man of hire. Leah is blessed with another son – her wages from God.

Interestingly, this passage sheds light on superstitions as well. Though the women highly prized this supposed aid to barrenness, the real reason for barrenness is here clearly expressed – God's sovereignty over conceiving children, over life itself. The one who receives the mandrakes stays barren for three additional years, while the one who gives them away bears three more children in the meantime. It is the LORD who opens and closes the womb. It is the LORD who is the only cause of new life.

This is indeed a most bitterly divided family. Fathered by a lying cheat and mothered by a sharp-tongued vexation, with hatred and envy raging in the household, the 12 patriarchs grew up to be less than perfect themselves. But the promises took a great step forward in their fulfillment, showing that it is divine grace not human merit that gives mankind its hope for salvation.

√ **Jacob outwits Laban 30:25 – 31:1**

The stress of the entire narrative of 29-30 is the movement from barrenness to conception and birth. It does not finally come about by human striving but by the inexplicable remembering and hearing of God (30:22). It has brought children to Leah (29:33, 30:17). Now finally it is God's remembering of Rachel that results in the birth of Joseph. God is finally named Lord (v. 24) by this woman who has felt abandoned. (Brueggemann 255) When Joseph is finally born (the turning point in this story) Jacob's longing for home revives. The positive purpose of this sojourn in Paddan-Aram is now fulfilled. But his father-in-law is not ready to let his economic God-send depart so quickly, if at all. Having served Laban 14 years to earn both wives, Laban owed Jacob

nothing other than his wives, even though Laban's wealth is largely due to Jacob's hard work and God's blessing, because of Jacob's presence there.

So they work out a deal that Laban believes will keep Jacob with him for a long time to come, if not for the rest of his life. Since goats are usually all black and sheep are all white, Jacob's asking for the "spotted and speckled" animals seems safe enough a request for Laban, who secured his interests further by going out himself and separating any with spots and speckles presently in the herds, and moving them to a safe distance away. However, through careful breeding techniques, Jacob is able to breed large herds of the spotted and speckled animals. As Laban sees this happening, he keeps changing which ones Jacob is allowed to keep, only to find that those are the very ones that again prosper and multiply. Many promises have been fulfilled here, and finally it is time for Jacob to heed God's call to return to the land to which God has called him.

✓ **Jacob leaves Laban 31:2 – 32:3**

It is obvious by then that Laban is unwilling to ever let Jacob and his daughters leave. So with his herds built up and the voice of God ringing in his ears, Jacob finally decides it is time to act. He chooses the busiest time in the herdsman's calendar to leave, sheep-shearing, when all Laban's men would be working hard from sun-up to sun-down. This gives him a few days' ahead. When Laban finally catches up to him, the Lord has intervened such that Laban knows he cannot prevent Jacob from moving on. The covenant becomes a face-saving measure for Laban, for Jacob has no intention to ever return to Laban's territory nor does Laban intend to go to Canaan. It forces Laban to finally treat Jacob as an equal. The story again reveals how God has protected Jacob all along the way. It also points to the importance of a focus on God whenever reconciliation is sought - v. 53.

✓ **Jacob returns Esau's blessing 32:3 – 33:20**

With the assurance from Laban, Jacob makes the first contact with his brother in 32:3-8. Jacob has wrestled with Laban and now faces the possibility of a struggle with Esau, who he has not seen these 20 years and assumes still wishes to kill him. Jacob must come to terms with Esau, but first he will have to struggle with God.

In this chapter we see two sides of Jacob as he plans – prays – plans. Confession before God in prayer and recognition that his blessings are all from God is one side of Jacob. His plans reveal his other side of calculations and caution, trying to cope with relationships by manipulation and barter.

He approaches the meeting with Esau with extreme deference, as fitting for a wrong-doer before the offended. It is no doubt a measure of his fear. Because of his shrewdness Jacob can plan. Because of his vulnerability, Jacob must pray. (Brueggemann 263) His lengthy prayer can be heard in one imperative word: deliver (v. 11). (Brueggemann 264-5) But he does not yet know if his prayer will be answered positively. His anxiety is hinted at, in vv. 23-24, when he rose that night, and forced the extraordinary undertaking of crossing a river at night with women and children. He must press on to meet his brother but he will do so with everyone else going first.

Then the unexpected happens. He is alone struggling with a stranger. He seems to be winning until his hip socket is dislocated, but he is even then determined to fight on, even when the stranger asks to be released. Quick to take advantage of this request, Jacob asks for a blessing. Jacob is renamed Israel "God fights" or "God rules". Names throughout scripture are significant but changes of name in midlife are especially so. Jacob is no longer to be the heel grabber. Here Jacob's new name is to become the name for a nation, so it is full of significance. Jacob's demanding pushiness turns to sudden awe as he realizes with whom he has been struggling. He suddenly realizes that his wrestling was frail and powerless compared to the true nature of God's power. He finds the blessing he was seeking in the new name given by God, for God has graciously allowed him to live. His prevailing is a defeat as well as a victory, for he is permanently wounded in the process. There is a dangerous costly mystery in drawing near to God. There is _____

_____ **and** _____.

His encounter with God has prepared Jacob for this meeting with Esau. Courage replaces cowardice as Jacob strides ahead of his family to meet Esau; humility replaces arrogance, as he bows 7 times, and penitence prompts his attempt to give back the blessing out of which he had cheated Esau (v. 11). No longer grabbing at the heels of blessing himself, he can now offer it freely. These are all aspects necessary for true repentance and reconciliation. Yet he does not entirely trust Esau's warmth – suspicions still linger. He chooses not to accept Esau's "kind" offer to accompany Jacob or send his men with Jacob, nor does Jacob go to Seir (Edom) where Esau lives, apparently out of fear of Esau's men, as well as his desire to return to Canaan at God's urging. Reconciliations are seldom as clear as we anticipate.

Sibling/Familial relationships – whenever siblings in Scripture decide to turn their sibling frustration over to God, as Jacob does, God gives them the strength to deal with their brothers and sisters on a new plane. Whenever they refuse to allow God into the equation, the sibling conflict can remain unresolved and tragedy often results. Jacob and Esau work out their disagreements through a covenant before God, just as did Jacob and Laban.

THE NEXT GENERATION

✓ **Dinah and the Hivites 34:1-31**

Mixed motives are prevalent in this passage, to the extent it is difficult to condemn any of the actors absolutely or to exonerate them entirely. Dinah going out to visit the girls of the region seems harmless enough, but this is considered in ANE world a little less than proper, particularly with the biblical emphasis on not mingling with others. Her motives may have been suspect.

Shechem was wrong to rape her. This would have been punished at least by a payment of large damages or forced marriage according to OT law. But he acts properly after the event and wants to marry her. Jacob appears to be cold to his six sons and daughter birthed by Leah, so he takes no action about her rape or capture. What a difference when compared to Joseph being abducted later! Jacob could benefit greatly from the alliance – residing in the land, gaining property and improved status as a resident alien (v.10). The Hivites appear to be obliging and reasonable men when they go to talk to the family, though we realize that is not the whole truth since they still hold Dinah almost as a hostage and apparently are hoping to profit financially from the arrangement (v. 23).

Dinah's rape finally leads to war against the Shechemites and Jacob is dismayed but again it is not because of what his sons have done or about the rape, but because of the resulting danger to himself. It is his two sons who retort in fierce moral tones. Jacob's old nature reasserts itself, with his moral principles weak:

- he is fearful of standing up for right when it may cost him
- he doubts the power of God to protect him
- he allows hatred to divide him from his children.

He has failed to protect his womenfolk because of fear for his own skin. Dinah's brothers seem to be the heroes, particularly Simeon and Levi. Though Dinah's brothers seem to fiercely oppose intermarriage with Canaanites, they have quite different intentions than they ever admit. Though they rightly reject Canaanite marriage, they do so for the wrong reasons (family honor & material gain) and with the wrong tactics (revenge and deception), rather than for purity of blood-lines or the divine promise. They pretend to be peaceful in order to wage war.

The most holy of symbols for the Jews, circumcision, has been devalued here of any religious significance. Certainly it had no deep meaning for the Shechemites but the Jews themselves do not value it for its symbolism. Instead of uniting people around a common belief and a single God, it is used to bring people's destruction. And they did not destroy the ill-gotten gain in an act of faithfulness, but instead turned the event into an act of confiscation for self advantage. (Brueggemann 278) As a result, Jacob is made an offense to the neighbors, just when he has arrived back in the land he has desired 20 years. At the end of the

narrative it appears that Jacob's sons have learned nothing and admitted nothing (v. 31). The sons seem to be blind to the larger issues, just as Jacob seems to be blind to his own familial coldness and disregard. (Brueggemann 279)

✓ **Journey's end for Jacob and Isaac 35:1-29**

Jacob is now told by God to return to Bethel, where he had met God before. It was there that he had vowed to worship the Lord when he returned to Canaan, and if he had returned there the family might have avoided the rape of Dinah altogether. Jacob had not fulfilled that vow yet, so God tells him to go on pilgrimage to the town that was holy to him. This time, without hesitation he obeys. Encountering God demands purity in the worshiper and the whole family is defiled by both the rape and the massacre, so he gives directions to them to be purified. Ritual activity – removal of foreign gods from among them, purification, and change of clothes – was effective to release them from their power over them. The new community is found by renunciation, renaming, reclothing, and finally, by receiving a promise. (Brueggemann 281-3)

Prompt obedience is promptly rewarded, so a divine terror fell on the towns so that Jacob proceeded to Bethel unmolested, even though they could have faced revenge for the Shechem massacre. This risky journey made at God's command and taken on faith seems to be a test for Jacob, and, like Abraham, afterwards receives a powerful reaffirmation of the promises, a revelation that would uphold him to his dying day – 48:3-4. Jacob's _____ from and _____ to **Bethel provide structural pillars for Jacob's story** – the return is the _____ of his original encounter with God at Bethel. The promises are now pronounced on Israel who is a very different person than who he was when last at Bethel. He is no longer scoundrel and runaway, but now penitent pilgrim. Now Jacob has fulfilled his vow to God.

But as ever in the Pentateuch, the fulfillment is only partial and sorrow soon follows joy. When Rachel's prayer for another son is answered, she dies, naming him "son of sorrow". Jacob optimistically calls him "son of good fortune"

Even worse is to come, for Reuben lies with his father's concubine in complete contempt of his father. Not just an issue of sexual morality but also a political issue, it is an attempt to seize power, claim the leadership, and in fact, announce that the old man is dead. Reuben is yielding completely to the cultural forms of Canaanite culture, while two other brothers (Simeon and Levi) resist the culture by attempting to destroy it (ch. 34). (Brueggemann 284)

Jacob hears of the atrocity but does not act immediately. He does not forget what Reuben did, however. His final testament to each son harkens back to this event (1 Chron 5:1,2). Joseph's lineage is promoted to the firstborn prominence, when later Jacob blesses both of Joseph's sons by adopting them, thus ensuring a double inheritance to go to Joseph's line, the usual privilege of the firstborn child.

✓ **Family history of Esau 36:1-43**

As is customary with the subordinate non-elect line in Genesis, Esau's family is given before Jacob's and is much briefer. He has married Canaanite women and, like Lot and Ishmael before him, he leaves the land of promise as well. Both Ishmael and Esau are viewed without malice at this point, as relatives who walked out of the line of promise by walking away from the land of promise. Esau too has been blessed by God and becomes the father of a multitude.

✓ **Family history of Jacob (37:1) Chapters 37-50**

Joseph's Story 37 – 50

This is actually entitled the family history of Jacob, so the author is interested in all the sons of Jacob, not only Joseph. We should not be surprised that information is included about Judah in particular, since Judah and Joseph's tribes are destined to have preeminence in the south and the north respectively in the history of the Israelites.

What is different about the Joseph narrative?

- 1) Masterful story
- 2) Miraculous and supernatural elements not obviously present
- 3) Not dealing with official patriarchs of Israel (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob)
- 4) Use of dreams for revelation is a different form of divine communication

Why is the Joseph narrative included at all?

- 1) It explains how Jacob's family came to live in Egypt – direct link to Exodus
- 2) Joseph is presented as an example of holiness and faithfulness
- 3) It contributes to the themes of this book and the Pentateuch

Unique themes. The _____ set the stage for the entire story, which is concerned that the family and the empire should "bow down." As such, the dream stretches to 50:18 when the brothers bow down before Joseph.

God's leadership and guiding power (_____) is the real subject of this narrative, and is shown quite differently than in the rest of the patriarchal narratives. (Brueggemann 290) It reveals God's hidden and decisive power to work in and through, and also against human forms of power. Divine overruling is one theme of this story; _____ is the counterpoint: the terrible effects of sin, Jacob's favoritism, sibling rivalries, hatred that blights the life of a family for over 20 years until repentance finally brings reconciliation and a new life together.

✓ **Joseph sold into Egypt 37:2-36**

This story opens with two increases in tension:

1. Joseph's indiscretion about his brothers – He is apparently a tattler
2. Jacob's obvious partiality & favoritism (37:3).

The author makes it very clear that the dreams inflame the brothers. We see a recurring phrase "**they hated him**" in vv. 4,5,8, they "were jealous of him" in v. 11. The brothers resist and soon reject the dream and the inversion of family relationships. Jacob chides the dreamer, identifies with the brothers in their resistance, and regards the dream as absurd, but it is indicated in v. 11 that he does not think that such inversions are altogether foolish. (Brueggemann 303)

When Joseph is sent to find his brothers, he discovers them even further away in Dothan, completely beyond the range of their father's control. It is clear to the readers that danger is present. When violence does happen, the brothers may have thought they succeeded in removing the hated Joseph from their sight and have killed the dream, but Jacob's mourning will constantly remind them where his deepest affections are. Deception upon deception must take place, for the blood cannot be covered and the guilt will not vanish. (Brueggemann 304)

✓ **Tamar and Judah 38:1-30**

Why is this chapter here? There actually are quite a few reasons for its position and its information.

- 1) It creates suspense for the Joseph story
- 2) It serves to show that Joseph was separated from his family for a long time.
- 3) It furthers the concept of divine justice – as Jacob had deceived his father Isaac, he is deceived by his son Judah concerning Joseph, and now Judah himself is deceived by his daughter-in-law.

Goats

Articles of clothing

- 4) God's preference for the younger child
- 5) It contrasts Jacob's deep grief over Joseph's death, and Judah's absence of mourning when two of his sons die. Judah seems to be hard and calloused, but there is a beginning of acceptance of blame and responsibility for his own actions when he finally admits that "she is in the right, not I". By the end of the Joseph story, Judah appeals for Benjamin's release with heartfelt devotion, and offers himself as a slave in Benjamin's place. He is a changed man, which we see in many of these biographical sketches in Genesis.
- 6) Chs 37-50 is the story of Jacob's family, not Joseph, so we should not be surprised that Judah appears here, especially because of the importance of his lineage in the future (the kings).

The central problem of ch 38 is childlessness. The first husband dies because of sin and Onan dies because he refuses to procreate, an affront to God in general and his promises for this particular family. Tamar has not sinned so she has a right to expect to marry the next son. The purpose of marrying a widow was to guarantee the childless woman would have children who would receive the deceased family member's name and inheritance. They would also care for the woman in her old age. (Arnold 150)

When Judah's faithlessness to Tamar becomes evident, Tamar has no legal redress as a widow. So she takes the situation into her own hands. Such an incestuous relationship was banned by Leviticus but again shows the different standards of the patriarchal time vs. later. But even in the patriarchal time, infidelity during betrothal counted as adultery (though the betrothal was not going to be consummated if Judah had any say in it), and therefore merited the death penalty. It is in v. 25-26 that his concession constitutes the main turn in the narrative. "She is more righteous than I" is Judah's recognition of a new radical perception of righteousness. He admits his guilt in the situation. Because of his security and status, he is expected to care in more responsible ways than he has – to risk his son for the future of the community and to treat the defenseless widow with respect. (Brueggemann 311)

Tamar is determined to propagate the descendants of Abraham. That she is a Canaanite woman makes it even more remarkable for this determination, and she places herself as a forerunner of Ruth spiritually, as well as an ancestor of Ruth's husband Boaz. There is no condemnation here of Tamar's actions. She is honored in the genealogy of Jesus at Mt 1:3. So this story that seems so marginal to biblical history, records a vital link in salvation history, both for the OT through David and the NT through Jesus Himself.

✓ **Joseph's rise to rule over the empire Chs. 39-41**

Joseph and Potiphar 39:1-20

The next three chapters deal with Joseph's rise to come to rule over the empire, his prospering with Potiphar, in prison, and with Pharaoh's dreams.

Joseph's first years in Egypt reveal God's protection and blessing in the house of a royal official. God may not speak to Joseph directly or miraculously intervene, but He is clearly there thru blessing, guidance, and protection. God's presence with Joseph is even evident to Potiphar. The problems with his wife develop Joseph's character, previously shown to be not very wise at all. Now he is a model, the wise man who fears God, who is totally loyal and dependable. Joseph's faithfulness to God and loyalty to his employer result in both his advancement in the household but then also in his disgrace and imprisonment, which is a necessary preliminary to his future glory, for he would never have met the Pharaoh's cupbearer if he had not been present in the prison.

Joseph in Prison 39:21-40:23

We catch glimpses of Joseph's state of mind here. He appears sympathetic to his fellow prisoners, he was a man of prayer since the Lord was with him and he knew to whom to go for dream interpretation, yet he is frustrated by the unfair imprisonment and God's apparent lack of answer to his prayers for release, typical of that of the patriarchs' looking for children and of numerous others who have cried out to God during periods of desolation. This chapter is nicely bound with two dreams, two interpretations, and two fulfillments.

A TURN OF EVENTS

√ Joseph in the palace 41:1-57

Joseph the forgotten one is now remembered, just at the right time. Thirteen years of imprisonment and slavery, yet Joseph's character has undergone a remarkable transformation. Through it all, this story describes God's control of human affairs, which is readily apparent to Joseph as well. He gives credit to God several times as he talks with the greatest man in Egypt. He clearly takes no credit for himself in his ability to interpret dreams (v. 16). The double mention of God in v.32 emphasizes the divine origin of the dream, of its interpretation and of what will take place. The two dreams of Pharaoh are a sign of their certainty and of God's fulfillment – this is a reminder to the reader of Joseph's own double dreams waiting to be fulfilled.

Joseph's interpretation was at one and the same time a denial of Pharaoh and his worldview and an clear confirmation of God. In Egypt Pharaoh was accepted as a divine being who could influence other deities through the use of magic in order to ensure the cycle of life as the Egyptians enjoyed it. The Nile River and resultant crops were expressions of the imperial power of fertility, and permits the Pharaoh to generate and guarantee life. The failure of the Nile and its life system means that the empire does not have in itself the power of life. Joseph presented Pharaoh with an alternative view – God alone is divine and sovereign. (Arnold 154) Hence, Joseph's monopoly of dream interpretation, of discerning the irresistible future, is contrary to the empire for not even Pharaoh's best and brightest men could do the same (see Dan 2,5 and Exodus 7-8). These dreams claim that only God knows the future and only God decides the future. (Brueggemann 323, 327)

√ Joseph's rise to rule over the family Chs. 42-44

First visit of Joseph's family to Egypt 42:1-38

Chs 39-41 involve Joseph's rise in and rule over Egypt.

Chs 42-44 concerns his rule over his brothers and his father. The rule over his brothers could only happen from his rule over Egypt. (Brueggemann 335)

The motif of buying and selling is important in 41: 57-42:6. Those who sold their brother are coming to buy grain from him. Joseph of course recognizes his brothers but they do not recognize him. His brothers bowing down to him fulfills the first dream he had back in Canaan. He charges them with spying to find out about the rest of his family. He does not know if they will tell him the truth if he reveals his identity. He does not know if they still harbor

deadly hatred for him. So he deceives them in order to test them. At first we wonder if it is all personal revenge, but we are slowly shown it is not.

He therefore holds Simeon, who may well have been the ringleader who sold Joseph, and sends the rest to fetch his youngest – for two purposes:

1. Simeon becomes a hostage in order to get Benjamin to Egypt,
2. It poses his brothers with a similar temptation as when they sent Joseph to Egypt – will they abandon Simeon as they did Joseph?

Nearly all the actors are trapped by their _____. The brothers cannot escape the power of their past guilt by being honest with either Joseph or their father. 20 years cannot dull the memory of their sin against their brother, nor ease their sense of guilt. They are bound by the power of an unforgiven past, immobilized by guilt and driven by anxiety. They live in fear of provoking another outburst of paternal sorrow if Benjamin is taken from Jacob. Locked into their past, they cannot be open to any new possibility or to think of any generation after themselves. Jacob himself is even more paranoid, suspecting his sons of selling Simeon and determined not to allow Benjamin from his sight. All his words reflect the heavy loss of Joseph. Jacob is determined to risk no more, certainly not his beloved Benjamin. It is only Joseph who appears in control of the situation, though he too suffers emotionally at seeing his brothers and remembering how they had treated him. Should he ignore them altogether? Meet their needs but send them off without revealing anything? Dredge up the past? Abandon his Hebrew heritage or his Egyptian position in which he is confident and successful? Our past can and often does control our _____ and our _____. Do we allow it to cut us off from important relationships?

There is still one more test the brothers must go through in order to prove themselves worthy of reconciliation. In the meantime, the favorite son becomes the deceiver of his brothers and of his own father as he refuses to reveal who he is to them – yet.

Second visit of Joseph's family to Egypt 43:1-45:28

This section of the story is when Benjamin is finally released to go with the brothers to Egypt, they obtain food from Joseph but the cup is placed in Benjamin's sack to test the brothers concerning their devotion to both Benjamin and Jacob. They pass the test and the brothers are reconciled.

There are three levels of interpretation for most of these stories, which we have been doing for many of the narratives:

1. Personal interaction and psychological development of the characters
2. Place of the particular passage in the plot of the story being presented
3. The contribution of the episode to the themes of Genesis as a whole.

Personal Interaction and Character Development

Jacob is still patriarchal head since he makes the ultimate decisions for the

tribe. But he is living in the past, lavishing his love on Benjamin as formerly he had done on Joseph, still regarding Rachel as his only wife, still mourning the death of Joseph, and still mistrusting his other sons. Because of this skewed focus, he was no longer able to make decisions that were in the best interest of the tribe. While he thought only of his own misfortunes, Judah confronted him with the plight of the family and Jacob was forced to listen, eventually conceding to the facts. His final instructions (v. 14) indicate that he realizes it is out of his hands and that he will have to trust in the _____ of God – for him an important step to take. In order for the family to survive, Jacob must be willing to risk the life of Benjamin who is his only son, whom he loves (like Isaac). If “Israel” is to live and not die, Jacob must give up the one he holds most dear. It is difficult to know where faith leaves off and cynical resignation to the reality of starvation sets in. (Brueggemann 339)

However, the sons have _____, as represented by their chief spokesman, Judah. By offering himself as pledge for Benjamin’s safety, he is outwardly acknowledging Benjamin as a true brother. Does he mean it? Soon we discover yes. Yet the brothers are still trapped by their past, unable to be frank with their father and their guilt weighs heavily upon them, interpreting setbacks in Egypt as divine punishment for their treatment of Joseph. But there is tremendous change in their acceptance of that guilt and offense. Joseph has carefully crafted an opportunity for them to betray Benjamin in much the same way they had gotten rid of Joseph originally, if their feelings towards him had not changed.

Their plea (through Judah) for Benjamin shows how completely they have repented of their former sins. No more moving example of true contrition and repentance may be found in scripture except perhaps in the parable of the prodigal son. It is the longest speech in Genesis. Judah mentions Jacob 14 times, which illustrates the central point of the speech, not so much Benjamin as their father. They are able to accept Jacob for who he is and love him despite his failings, for they recognize his extreme love for Benjamin, his recognition of only one true wife (v.27), his dependence on Benjamin to keep him alive even though there are 10 other children in the family. (44:30-31) Not out of rancor, bitterness or envy, but truly out of love they appeal to Joseph. They pass the test with flying colors.

Joseph himself recognizes that there is no reason to hold vengeful thoughts against his brothers, for God has meant all of this for good and the protection of many. There is no personal vindication but absolution and forgiveness. Now we have an answer to the question of Joseph – will he become an Egyptian? No, he has chosen to remain a brother to his brothers and a son to his father and to the elect line of God.

45:3 “I am Joseph!” This is a self-claim that serves to reshape and redefine the entire situation. The family is suddenly set in a new context. Their presumed world has been irreversibly shattered and turned upside down.

Though the brothers fear that Joseph will now exploit and act out the past, Joseph does not. He breaks with the past and invites his brothers to put the past behind them. The power to create newness does not come from separation or unconcern, but from risky, self-disclosing engagement. Now the narrator has Joseph make the main point three times – it was _____ who brought me here to preserve your lives (45:5,7,8) (Brueggemann 344-6)

The Place of the Passage in the Overall Story

This coincides with the theme of this story, that of God's overruling of human affairs. At the same time, this story and the rest of Scripture insist that both divine sovereignty and human responsibility and freedom are true. The author spends time presenting the cost of the hatred among the members of this family, Jacob's grief, Joseph's unjust imprisonment and the brothers' guilty consciences. Full repentance and forgiveness are only possible after the brothers' sincere repentance. Though the story reveals God's use of the sins of Joseph's Neither the freedom of the creature nor the gracious sovereignty of God is cancelled. What we discover is the following:

For the people of God ~

- God's ultimate purpose is finally sovereign. It will not be altered.
- The sovereign character of God's purpose can create a real _____ that negates the past, redefines the present and opens up the future.
- The story declares that God's purpose is utterly gracious. Yahweh wills _____ for his people.
- The narrative affirms that God's purpose is hidden and mysterious.
- God's purposes are worked out in actual history through the actions of particular persons. (Brueggemann 347-8) General William Booth, founder of Salvation Army, stated "Work as if everything depended on your work, and pray as if everything depended upon your prayer." (Briscoe 369)

How the Story Fits into the Themes of Genesis

This story reports yet another stage in the story of God's saving purpose for the whole world. His fulfillment of the promises of many descendants, and blessing on other nations are clearly proclaimed here, only land is laid aside temporarily.

√ Teaching on Forgiveness

I. The History of Forgiveness

In the history of humanity we find a kind of progression with regard to revenge and forgiveness. A long time ago, before even the Old Testament was written and in other cultures which did not know of the OT, people practiced **unlimited retaliation**. You injure my child and I will wipe out your entire tribe. You take one of my cows and I will burn your house down

and kill your family. Before the Law of Moses we see this operative among the Patriarchs, as in the story of Dinah and Shechem in Gen 34.

When we received the Law of Moses, God taught us a new level of ethical behavior, called **limited retaliation**. The Israelites were told that they should practice an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth (Exodus 21:23-25). Although this may sound severe, it represented a great step forward in the progress of humanity's understanding of ethical behavior towards other human beings. The punishment had to fit the crime, but no more than that. This was a tremendous advance, and if we believe in progressive revelation, probably all that humanity could understand at the time.

The first step in humanity's understanding of **forgiveness** came about as people learned to forgive those people who loved them. Hence, they practiced **limited forgiveness**. Jesus talked about people like that in His Sermon on the Mount. He said even the sinners and tax-gatherers love those who love them. Often people balk at taking even this step in their relationships with others, refusing to forgive those who are family and close friends, much less strangers or enemies. But Jesus asks us to go one enormous step further: **unlimited forgiveness**. "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Mt 5:44). He not only spoke those words to us, but lived those words out to the fullest extent possible, giving his own life on the cross for every sinner, every destroyer, every person throughout the history of the world, no matter how vile or filled with evil. And then he asked his Father to forgive them at the very moment he was being killed by them.

--Part I from William Hinson, *The Power of Holy Habits*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 96-97.

II. Our Responsibility

We are asked to do no less. How is this possible? How can we possibly accomplish something that seems so utterly impossible? Yet we have discovered from our biblical passages that indeed, we put our souls in jeopardy if we are unable to forgive when someone does us harm. Unforgiveness damages us AND our relationship with God.

John and Charles Wesley and General James Oglethorpe became good friends while on their long sea voyage to the colony of Georgia in 1735-6. One day the subject of forgiveness was discussed. General Oglethorpe was adamant that he made it a practice never to forgive. John Wesley responded, "Well, sir, I hope you never sin." Wesley knew that our own forgiveness by God has always been tied to our willingness to forgive others.

Hence, for the Christian, forgiveness is first of all a religious obligation that we owe to the person who has offended us. It is because Christ forgave us and we have received His forgiveness that we are to go and do likewise. But there is also an important benefit to the forgiver as well. The first person who gains from forgiveness is the person who does the forgiving, and the

first person injured by refusal to forgive is the one who was wronged in the first place. Unwillingness to forgive leads to bitterness, hatred, rebellion against God (since He has called us to forgive), and often many physical health problems such as ulcers, high blood pressure and depression. We place ourselves in bondage as long as we refuse to forgive! The opposite, when one forgives an offender, leads to inner peace, joy, health & stability.

Forgiveness by the offended for the offender opens up the possibility of the offender asking God and the offended for forgiveness as well. This is because whenever an individual offends another, the offender gives up a certain degree of power in determining his or her own destiny, with the power being given over to the offended. As an example of this, if one is robbed, one may go to the judicial system and require that the offender be placed in jail, thus affecting the offender's destiny for some time. It is as if the offender is handing over a legal note to the offended, with which the offended now has power over the offender's life. This power can be used to retaliate, to seek vengeance, or to forgive.

In actuality, when we forgive an individual or a group, we can say to God, "This person has offended You more than he has offended me (Ps 51:4 "against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned..."). I give all my legal rights over to You, dear Lord, because I know You are a just and righteous God. I am not worthy to judge another person, but You are. Use my forgiving reaction to this person to advance Your kingdom on earth. Use my forgiving reaction to this person to change me, so that I may be a better ambassador for You. If possible, use my forgiving reaction to this person to change him, so that he may see You more clearly and seek Your merciful forgiveness for himself. Use this offense to bring this person into a loving relationship with You, or to deepen that relationship if he already knows You."

III. What forgiveness is ~

A simple definition of forgiveness is releasing the other person from retaliation, and wishing the other person well.

IV. What forgiveness is not ~

To understand more fully what forgiveness is, it is very important that we recognize what forgiveness is not. First of all, forgiveness does not avoid justice. It does not whitewash the wrong that was done, since nothing that whitewashes evil can be good. It does not pretend that the evil never took place. There may still be consequences for the evil that was done, even though the wrong was forgiven by the offended. The offender may still need to experience the penalty for and consequences of his actions, so forgiveness is not a pardon. These consequences may be natural or they may be judicial. For example, a woman may choose to have a child out of wedlock and may be forgiven by her family for doing so, but she must still raise that child and the family must still help in that process. Or a person

may steal repeatedly, be forgiven by the last person from whom he stole, but must still pay the penalty of a jail sentence in the hope that the incarceration will bring about repentance on the part of the thief that will permanently change this evil behavior into more acceptable behavior. People are still responsible for their actions, whether good or bad.

Secondly, forgiveness does not result automatically in reconciliation. Ideally, forgiveness can bring about reconciliation, but that is dependent on the offender as well as the offended. The offender must realize the sin that was committed, confess it with godly sorrow, repent of it and seek never to repeat the offense. The offended person cannot take responsibility for how the offender will respond to forgiveness, so the offended person is not held accountable before God as long as he offers forgiveness. That is why Rom 12:18 states, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." If you have forgiven, but the other person wishes to continue to sin against you, then that is their responsibility before God, not yours.

A corollary to this is that forgiveness does not require the offended to move back into a relationship of trust with the offender. We are called to forgive, and we are called to pray for our enemies, thus to care about them. But we are not required to trust them until they have proven trustworthy again. This is of course especially important when the offender does not recognize his sin, repent, and turn from his ways. God does not want you to trust a person who is not trustworthy, and thus to allow him to sin again against you.

Forgiveness is not forgetting. Deep hurts can rarely be wiped out of one's awareness completely, though time and God can do wonderful things here. Do not be surprised if you still remember what took place. If hatred, anger, and bitterness are felt at the memory, ask God to help you to forgive. If sorrow for the offense but compassion for the offender is present, you are well on your way to complete forgiveness.

Forgiveness is also not condoning the bad behavior or dismissing it. Again, whitewashing evil is an evil in itself. Forgiveness is a personal transaction that releases the one offended from the offense (but not necessarily releases the offender), and places the offended in proper relationship with God so that God may use the offended and/or the offense to reach the offender.

V. An Important Point of Theology

Perhaps one of the most asked questions by Christians concerning forgiveness is whether or not the offender must seek forgiveness (implying repentance on their part) before they can be forgiven. That is why we looked at the Bible passages from that aspect as well. After all, the argument goes, the parables on forgiveness seem to indicate that the person is asking to be forgiven first. And when we look at salvation, we see that God cannot forgive without repentance on the part of the sinner. Otherwise we have a

cheap grace and universal salvation, whether one recognizes his need for a savior or not. Hence, how can we forgive without that repentance as well?

I think above all else this question is answered at the cross. There, Jesus asks the Father to “forgive them for they know not what they do.” Did the Roman soldier ask to be forgiven when he nailed Christ’s hands and feet to the cross? Did the crowd who reviled him ask for forgiveness for their taunts and evil words? Did the Jewish officials who sent him to his death ask for that forgiveness? During that period of overwhelming, excruciating pain but complete forgiveness at the cross, Jesus is as truly an example for what we may become through Him as was the rest of His life and words. We are to intercede for our enemies before God Himself – that is the fulfillment of the meaning and the heart of forgiveness. We leave the judgment in his hands, for he alone can judge the heart.

During World War II, ninety-two thousand women and children died in the death camp Ravensbruck. Most of them were Jews. This prayer was found scrawled on a scrap of paper near a dead child:

“Lord, remember not only the men and women of good will but also those of ill will. But do not only remember the suffering they have inflicted on us; remember the fruits we have brought, thanks to this suffering – our comradeship, our loyalty, our humility, the courage, the generosity, the greatness of heart which has grown out of all this, and when they come to judgment, let all the fruits we have borne be their forgiveness.” (Gire 116)

VI. The process of forgiveness

What must we do in order to forgive? The following will give you some general guidelines that will be helpful in the process of forgiveness.

1. Don’t deny _____ of hurt, anger, or shame. Rather, acknowledge these feelings and commit yourself to doing something positive about them with the help of God.
2. Don’t just focus on the _____ who has harmed you, but identify the specific offensive behavior.
3. Make a conscious _____ not to seek revenge or nurse a grudge and decide instead to forgive. This conversion of the heart is a critical stage toward forgiveness. Do not rely on emotions but set your _____ with the help of God to forgive the other person.
4. Formulate a rationale for forgiving. List reasons for doing so, including ideas such as “Christ forgave me of my terrible sins which nailed Him to the cross so I should also forgive / I will experience inner healing and move on with my life / God can more effectively work on the other person if I exemplify Christ’s forgiveness to him,” etc.
5. _____ differently about the offender. Try to see things from the offender’s perspective. We have an expression in America, that before we judge another we should walk a mile in their shoes.

6. Accept the _____ you've experienced without passing it off to others, including the offender. Remember how Christ did that for us on the cross.
7. Choose to extend _____ and _____ toward the other; wish for the well-being of that person and pray for them. Realize that this process may take time and do not give up if at first you still experience some feelings of bitterness towards the offender. Ask God to help you with those feelings.
8. Think about how it feels to be _____ from a burden or grudge. Be open to emotional relief. Seek meaning in the suffering you experienced. Realize that God can use it to conform you to the image of Christ (Rom 8:28-29). God can also use it to help others in their times of suffering (2 Cor 1:3-4).
9. Realize the paradox of forgiveness: as you let go and forgive the offender, you are experiencing release and healing. As you forgive, you are forgiven. As you forgive, you move from the place of victim to that of _____ in Christ!

--Information in sections II-VI above from "The Forgiveness Factor"
by Gary Thomas, Christianity Today, January 10, 2000.

Does it still seem impossible? Often we cannot experience the grace and power of God until we take the first step of obedience to His word. Take that step now.

THE MOVE TO EGYPT AND THE REST OF THE STORY

✓ **Third visit of family to Egypt 46:1 - 47:31**

The fact that the entire family is now brought out of Canaan to Egypt raises an important question in the minds of the readers – was the Israelite move to Egypt a big mistake? This question is answered quickly and briefly. The only divine vision in the Joseph story, the last in the entire book, reassures Jacob (not Joseph) that it is God’s will to enter Egypt, and emphasizes that the family’s sojourn in Egypt will only be temporary. God also reassures Jacob that he will go with him, just as at the beginning in ch. 28. The old promises of chs 12-36 are still operative. It is confirmation that Joseph’s understanding of what God has been doing is true. And it is a furtherance of the promise of God to Abraham. “I will make of you a great nation.” To Jacob it is: “I will there make of you a great nation.” This is the next step.

✓ **Last days of Jacob and Joseph 48:1 – 50:26**

Jacob – Dies at 147 years.

Jacob’s Blessing on Joseph’s Sons (Ch 48)

Throughout the closing chapters there are many other references to earlier episodes in the book. We have already discussed the meaning behind the double blessing of Joseph’s sons, where Jacob is in effect adopting Ephraim and Manasseh as his own two sons (v.5).

The blessing here is completely focused on God – 4 times he is named (v. 15 times 2, v. 16, v.20). The act of reversal is inexplicable, as has been every major turn in the life of this family. The nation of Israel dares to believe that a future is set, not by an old man making an error, but by the power of God. (Brueggemann 363) Differently than Jacob and Esau’s own blessings from Isaac, here it is truly a blessing for both sons. There are no words that discriminate for the one brother against the other as there were for Isaac over Ishmael and Jacob over Esau. The words leave things equal here. (Brueggemann 364)

The story of Jacob is dominated by his quest for blessing, now at the end of his life he looks back and declares that “God has blessed me” (48:3). Here too Jacob transmits the religious heritage of divine ancestral promise onto his own offspring. Jacob is the last eye-witness among the Patriarchs to the direct disclosure of God’s will, and he fulfills his obligation to pass on the

heritage here, near death. Joseph will reiterate the promise on his own deathbed in 50:24. The oath and promises of God are repeated at critical moments throughout Genesis.

The title of Gen 49 would be better the Testament of Jacob than the blessing of Jacob, since there are both curses and blessings. It is the first long poem in the Bible. Judah and Joseph are given pride of place. We see here a mixture of long sayings, particularly on these two sons, with short sayings on the other sons that jest on their names or compare them to animals.

Jacob's death is mourned in Egypt's manner as for a king – 70 days. The family's burial trip from Egypt to Canaan anticipates the later Exodus, and the ultimate fulfillment of the promises. The storyline again relates the theme of Pentateuch, the partial fulfillment of the promises to the patriarchs. Despite their failings, they are portrayed as men of faith who places their trust in these promises and looked forward to the day of their fulfillment.

The brothers

The Joseph story reminds us that the past is not easily forgotten, and with Jacob's death, the brothers start to worry again that Joseph might seek revenge. For the first time they frankly confess their sin and plead for forgiveness, though their apparent trick about their father's words and their lack of trust in Joseph made Joseph weep. They again fall down before him and offer to become his slaves. This is the first time we are told they bow down to Joseph as Joseph, not as an Egyptian prince. The brothers know that the only one who can break the cycle and banish the guilt is the wronged party, the one whom they most fear. The fact that they again fall down brings the encounter into relation with the dream in ch 37, bringing the connection at the story here in ch 50. (Brueggemann 370) Joseph is wisely able to explain the purpose of all his sufferings, that God planned it for good so that many people might live. (v. 19) This is **a summary of the entire Joseph narrative**. God has a plan for his people, a good plan, and that plan will not be defeated.

Joseph

Though the Joseph story occupies a position roughly equivalent to those of Abraham and Jacob, Joseph is clearly set apart from the earlier patriarchs. He does not form part of the triad to whom the promise of land & posterity is given – he nowhere in the story receives direct information, blessing or words from God as the other three, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, do. He becomes the first to and through whom the promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is only reiterated (50:24). In fact, the direct line of blessing for the entire world will flow through Judah, not Joseph at all. Joseph instead is the means of preserving the family in a foreign country (a threat to the divine promise of land), and explains how and why the family-clan-nation must be brought out of Egypt before it can be blessed with the Promised Land.

Lesson 11

EXODUS

✓ **Third visit of family to Egypt 46:1 - 47:31**

EXODUS THROUGH DEUTERONOMY

Now let us turn to the other four books of the Pentateuch. We will only be able to present general information on each of them at this time.

EXODUS

Its name comes from the Greek, "departure". In Hebrew, the book is called "these are the names" or "names" for short, from the first sentence of book. Exodus is the true birth of a nation at Sinai and can also be summarized as "Guidance out of Egypt"

✓ **ANE Background**

ANE Background to time of Exodus: (LaSor 56-58)

- This was a very advanced and cosmopolitan world with much cultural diffusion and extensive international contacts
- This called for international alliances and elaborate system of treaties, also principle of law extending beyond local boundaries
- Literary circulation was remarkable with many myths, epics, and ideas written down and spread for first time in history of this part of world
- Alphabetic writing instead of symbols made literacy possible on large scale and communications much more available and easy – scripts date 1700-1200 BC Hebrew one of these alphabetic writings so OT events could be recorded
- Israel appeared at the right time and place to inherit highest cultural legacy of ANE, also at a time when the ANE struggles had exhausted all the combatants, so there was no single mighty rule. Gave chance for Israelites to establish themselves in Promised Land and develop their own nation-state free from threat of outside dominant power, until Assyrians arose in mid-8th century.

When did Exodus take place? Two views are most common: 1400s or 1200s

✓ **Egyptian background**

The culture was highly polytheistic except for one specific period. Pharaoh Amenhotep IV (ruled approximately 1352 to 1335 B.C.) did more than build buildings and empires as the other pharaohs had done. He began a new

religion by declaring that Aten (or Aton), the Sun Disk, was the only god. This movement towards a type of monotheism was not well received in a land steeped in polytheism. Each of the main gods had a location of worship and a priesthood that held great power over the people. In an attempt to transfer that power to his own god, Amenhotep moved his capital away from Thebes, the center for Amon worship (one of the main gods), and built a new capital to Aten, called Akhetaten. He changed his own name as well, to Akhenaten. This era became known as the Amarna revolution, because of the great political and religious turmoil that took place. None of it lasted, for as soon as Akhenaten died, the land returned to its polytheism. Ramses I and son Seti sought to recoup what had been lost in power and prestige by previous pharaohs through new gaining of lands

It was into this time of empire-building and cosmopolitan culture that Moses was born, if we accept the later date of Exodus. Egypt had developed international ties throughout the Ancient Near East. This required an extensive system of outposts and embassies, plus a highly trained scribal class to maintain the international correspondence. There was extensive cultural diffusion as the various peoples interacted with each other. Laws were no longer viewed as local, but were being spread across national boundaries. Deity diffusion was also taking place, as people compared their gods with those they encountered in other lands and incorporated those they found useful. Literary diffusion included the spread of the Canaanite alphabetic writing which would aid in literacy and the transmission of histories (to the benefit of the Hebrew people as well).

As Exodus opens, Pharaoh (perhaps Seti) is worried about the tremendous population increase of the Hebrews because of its threat to the security of his empire. This blessing of God on the descendants of Abraham is met by Pharaoh with resistance and attempt at control. He decides he will use the people as slave labor to decrease their numbers. This practice of inscription into slave labor for building projects is documented as having taken place in Egypt only during the period between 1450 and 1200 BCE, coinciding well with the history of the Hebrew people, whether early or late date. Exodus 1:11 specifies their slave labor assignment as working on the cities of Pithom and Raamses in the delta area, again fitting Egyptian historical information well, including the Egyptian desire to protect this vulnerable area from repeated foreign invasion.

When slave labor does not succeed and their numbers continue to increase, Pharaoh decides to take further action by declaring infant genocide. Since all pharaohs were considered gods and therefore held the power of life and death over their subjects, this was well within his prerogative to do so. Moses of course is rescued from this dire fate by the daughter of the Pharaoh, raised by her and educated within the royal system. Egyptian sources reveal that there existed during this time such harems and a fine

educational system. Records also show that select foreigners were allowed to be trained in this way. Moses probably received an education in reading, writing and administration, which would be particularly useful when leading an entire nation of people through the wilderness. He may also have received instruction on national leadership, useful to his future role. Yet he obviously knew his own Hebrew background when he slew the Egyptian.

His return after exile to become the representative of Yahweh to Pharaoh (perhaps Ramses II) was vital to God's plan. Here was a man raised in Pharaoh's courts, knowing the ways of the system. It was not uncommon that people would petition the Pharaoh to have their concerns heard by him, so Moses' petition would not be considered unusual. The fact that he represented the one God Yahweh would meet with a different reaction, however. If the Amarna Revolution with Pharaoh Amenhotep had not yet happened, then the Exodus event may have influenced this later Pharaoh to consider the possibility of a single god. If the Amarna Revolution had already taken place, then the Pharaoh facing Moses was well aware of the disaster this previous attempt at monotheism had caused for the Egyptian empire. No wonder he sneered at this God and refused to acknowledge him.

✓ **Exodus – in 2 parts**

1. Ch 1-18 Israel's delivery from slavery in Egypt by God
2. Ch 19-40 God enters into covenant with them (Mosaic or Sinaitic Covenant), followed by the giving of the law and construction of the tabernacle at Sinai

Revelation of the divine name

v 3:15 – used in Genesis. Either a later writer was using it to designate God when the name was not yet known (since we know Genesis was written well after the events described in it), or God is now revealing the meaning of the name that was actually given much earlier in the history of all people.

Yahweh (tetragrammaton YHWH) probably means something like "I am who I am" "I am truly present now, ready to act" and can indicate totality and intensity, "I am the foundation of everything, the only real reality." Much later in Jewish history, we know that the holy name was not spoken out of reverence for God. Jews used the word "Adonai" (meaning "Lord") instead whenever they came to this word and placed vowel markings to indicate this in the later Hebrew Bible. Wherever you see LORD in your Bible, it translates Yahweh. Early German translations took the vowel markings literally and replaced Y with a German J – that is where Jehovah comes from!

The Plagues

All plagues except the 10th are natural phenomenon. Of the nine, all except hail form a sequence of natural events which exhibit a cause and effect

relationship in the very order they take place. (LaSor 69) The first 9 plagues are divided into groups of three, with the first plague of each group (1st, 4th, 7th) preceded by a warning to Pharaoh as he walked next to the Nile River in the morning. The last plague in each of the three groups (3rd, 6th, 9th) is unannounced. Even though it is true that each of the first nine plagues is documented as natural occurrences in the region, God still is demonstrating His absolute control, sovereignty and universal power over events by:

- He distinguished between his people and the Egyptians
- He controlled the extent and areas affected by each plague
- He announced the timing of each and could halt it as quickly
- The final plague has no natural explanation at all

God brought about the events according to His timing in order to accomplish His purposes. Most of the plagues directly confront the “power” of an Egyptian deity and shows God’s supreme and unmatched power as a result. In the 10th plague, Pharaoh forfeits his own firstborn (who is supposed to be a god also) to Yahweh as punishment for his refusal to let Yahweh’s firstborn (His people) go. The result is the revelation that God is stronger than Pharaoh and any other gods of Egypt, God is the only one true God, and God is sovereign Lord of creation and in control of all nature.

The character of deliverance

The deliverance from Egypt enables us to glimpse the grand unity of God’s plan for the salvation of the world.

- Liberation and redemption.** Deliverance is from bondage in slavery so it is an act of liberation and redemption – the basis for Heilsgeschichte, whether OT or NT. The Law of Moses reveals God’s deep concern for various forms of oppression & injustice. Yahweh demands righteousness, justice and mercy in the economic, social and legal spheres. Spiritual bondage lies at the root of politically oppressive systems. Spiritual freedom brings justice and mercy to all.
- Creation of a people.** Primary objective of deliverance is the formation of a unique people of God. “I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God” (Ex 6:7). They are to know the true and living God and witness to the truth while surrounded by apostasy and falsehood. So we are to do so today.
- Dependence upon divine intervention.** This deliverance could not have taken place without God’s direct work in history. It is Yahweh who is the great liberator – he sets his people free from the oppressive powers of darkness. So, too, we know that our liberation through Christ could not have been accomplished by any act of our own.
- Involvement of human agency.** Despite divine intervention, Yahweh’s deliverance did involve human agency. It was through Moses and Aaron

that the message was given to Pharaoh. They were God's mouthpiece and mediator, just as God has chosen to work through human beings to bring his message to the world today.

Continued influence of Egypt

The influence of Egypt on the Hebrews continued as they moved into the wilderness. Sadly, it was an influence of temptation that they could not seem to overcome. First, it was the influence of a wealthy, powerful, cosmopolitan culture vs. the empty, threatening expanse of dangerous wilderness. Even though they had been slaves, they remembered the good foods and security they experienced. They quickly forgot the hardships of slavery. The Egyptian culture continued to call to the entire generation, until they were sure the only answer was to return to Egypt (Numbers 14). They went so far as to call Egypt the land of milk and honey! (Num. 16) How quickly the people complain, directed also against God and not just Moses!

The influence of religion also haunted them in the wilderness. They had been immersed in a polytheistic culture for 400 years. It is no wonder that Moses himself had to ask God to reveal who He was in Exodus 3, for few would remember Yahweh accurately. The people, then, felt justified in asking for another god when this first one and His human cohort seemed to have disappeared on them in Ex. 32. Probably the golden calf represented one of the many gods they would have known from Egypt. But God would not give up on them. He began to give them a structure and system that would remind them of what He had done for them, give them guidance in what they should do, and allow for His presence among them.

✓ **Four major Jewish institutions rooted in Exodus**

Four major foundational Jewish institutions that have their roots in this book:

- Passover (along with other special days of observance & remembrance): holy time
- The Covenant Law: holy relationship
- The Tabernacle: holy place
- The Priesthood: holy people

#1: PASSOVER signifies redemption/miraculous deliverance from slavery and beginnings of the nation of Israel:

- Blood of an unblemished lamb on doorposts protects believers from death (Jesus)
- All eat of the meat of the lamb roasted by fire
- 7 days of unleavened bread as reminder of their hasty departure
- Bitter herbs represent the bitterness of slavery in Egypt

Two other pilgrimage festivals were inaugurated in the book of Exodus as well, the Feast of Harvest (Weeks/Pentecost) and the Feast of Ingathering (Tabernacles/Booths). These two along with the Feast of Unleavened Bread (coming just after Passover) required the presence of all the men to come before God (Ex 23:14-17). These two dealt specifically with harvesting crops and therefore would not be performed until after the chosen people settled in the Promised Land. Hence, sacred seasons were set up in order to remind the people that God was God of time as well as of place. The ultimate reminder of sacred time, the Sabbath, also is instituted officially with the 10 Commandments, to commemorate God's act of creation (Ex 20:11).

NOTE: HOLY TIMES

#2: COVENANT, a means of establishing a relationship (not naturally existing), which is sanctioned by an oath sworn in a ceremony of ratification.

NOTE: HOLY RELATIONSHIP

The suzerainty treaty between vassals and overlords/kings (or between two heads of state) was well known in ANE including Egypt so the people would recognize its authority and legitimacy. The Mosaic covenant had many of the same elements as these treaties. Note that the covenant was established in the book of Exodus but other parts of the covenant treaty are found throughout the rest of Pentateuch. We will discuss covenant treaty language more in Dt. **Ex 19:3-8 is unique in ANE as a covenant treaty set up directly between humans and God, not just among humans.**

With Abraham's covenant it is God who is taking the oath, binding himself to His promises. In Sinai, the people take the oath and the obligation is obedience to the covenant stipulations. There was a curse for disobedience as well, which Israel came to experience.

God is saying to this people, "I invite you into a relationship with me." He describes what He has done for them (19:4-6), which shows His trustworthiness and faithfulness. God brings to the relationship His power, love and provision. The people have only themselves to bring to the relationship and that is all that God is asking – He asks for obedience in a relationship of love! We are the same way when we come to God. We have nothing to offer which would benefit God, but all that He desires is our commitment to Him in obedience and love. He does all the rest!

The Main Purpose of the covenant at Mt. Sinai is that God calls the children of Israel to become "A kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (19:6) Consider that if Israel is the nation of "priests", who are the people of the congregation? The rest of the world! Israel is to become a model of holiness and spread God's love to all people. 1 Peter 2:9 applies these very words to the new children of God, His Church. These words are consistent with the previous covenant which God established with Abraham: "in you all the

families of the earth shall be blessed." Blessing the whole world is God's plan and He has chosen this people to do so. How we see that they fall short!

LAW CODE established at Mt. Sinai is similar in form to other ANE law codes, but with distinctive features (remember that much is revealed by comparison to ANE practices). How are God's laws different from those of the surrounding ANE?

- Whole code rests on the authority (and holiness) of God, not a king
- No division between civil and religious laws (ANE mostly legal - civil), showing God's concern for life as a whole
- One law for all, no matter one's particular status. Special regulations protect the weak and the helpless. More humane than other ANE law codes. (Hammurabi's Code allowed 10 varieties of bodily mutilation as punishment; death for robbery; sliding scale of punishment dependent upon class position, no emancipation of slaves, etc.)
- High view of human life demonstrated by fixed, limited penalties, eye for eye. Even today, laws in some countries may not uphold human life as something that is valuable to preserve and protect.

The Law looks forward to settled agricultural life in Promised Land, not the nomadic 40 years, with many regulations dealing with issues that can only arise once the people have entered the Promised Land.

10 Commandments

What is the focus of the 10 Commandments? Love of God and Love of Neighbor, just as Jesus so clearly points out when He is asked what is the most important "commandment" (Mt 22:37-40). So:

- Commands 1-4: Regulate actions and attitudes toward God
- Commands 5-10: Regulate actions and attitudes toward fellow humans.

These are called "words" in Exodus and Dt. 10:4 rather than laws as they are more like 10 principles for moral living than laws. It is in the rest of the Law Code that they are spelled out in more detail as actual laws. As H.L. Ellison stated, "... the 10 Commandments contain a statement of the great basic principles of character that must exist if a man wishes to be in fellowship with God; all the rest is commentary and a guide towards the creation of this character."

#3: TABERNACLE represented the process by which a sinful people could maintain fellowship with a holy, transcendent, infinite God. It signified His presence among them and the sacrifices made it possible for Him to be present among this sinful people. The word tabernacle means "dwelling place." NOTE: HOLY PLACE

Symbolism of the tabernacle as it pertains to Christ:

Its construction is according to a heavenly model. Heb 9:11, 23-24

- 1) Opening to outside is on the east, just as the entrance to Eden which is guarded by the angels is on the east.

- 2) Altar for burnt offerings outside in outer courtyard. Very large- 7 and ½ ft long and wide. Burnt offerings made here. Indicates every approach to God requires a blood sacrifice, as all animals were first bled before being burnt. This speaks of the necessity of atonement as a prerequisite for fellowship with God. The penalty for sin must be paid and the sinner pardoned. Christ is our perfect sacrifice.
- 3) Basin for washing between altar and entrance to Holy Place. Priests required to wash hands and feet every time they entered. Guilt of sin removed by burnt offering, then defilement of sin removed by washing. We need to be washed and renewed on a regular basis.
- 4) Golden Lampstand in Holy Place. Seven branched candlestick called menorah, to give light in the otherwise dark Holy Place. Christ called Himself the light of the world, also in Rev there were 7 lampstands to represent the 7 churches, as we reflect the light of Christ into the world. The Holy Spirit gives us spiritual illumination.
- 5) Table of Showbread – in Holy Place. Loaves of bread represent each of 12 tribes as thank offerings to God for His provision for the people. Tho Jesus used manna of wanderings to describe Himself as the bread of life, showbread takes on new meaning when we recognize communion bread Jesus offered during the last supper. Spiritual sustenance comes by communing with God. Dt 8:3: "...man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD."
- 6) Altar of incense in Holy Place. Located just before the entrance to Holy of Holies. In OT, incense carried protective powers in the midst of the dangerous divine presence – to protect priest and/or people from the wrath of God, or so that they would not "see" God, since this was considered life-threatening. In NT, said to represent the prayers of the saints (Rev 5:8), which actually fits the fact that it allows us to safely be in the presence of the all-powerful God. Before our prayers can be heard by God, we must have first entered by the blood of Christ (the sacrifice) and be cleansed from our sins.
- 7) Curtain between Holy of Holies and Holy Place. God could not be approached directly by sinful people, except by High Priest only once each year on the Day of Atonement and only during and after a proper process of atonement took place. At the death of Christ, our perfect sacrifice, the curtain was torn in two, indicating all could now enter the presence of God through Christ.
- 8) Holy of Holies was a perfect cube, symbolizing the perfection of God in this location that spoke of the presence of God. For the Israelites, only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies, but we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place (another name for the Holy of Holies) by the blood of Jesus through the veil, which is His flesh (Heb 10:19-20).
- 9) Ark. God dwelled symbolically between the wings of the cherubim above the cover of the ark. The ark contained three items: the tablets of the 10 Commandments, Aaron's rod that blossomed, and the jar of manna, to remind the people of God's guidance, authority, and provision. Overall, it

represented the covenant God kept with His people. On the Day of Atonement, blood would be sprinkled on the mercy seat (the lid of the ark) and the sins of the people would be forgiven for that year. Through Jesus' one-time offering of blood, our sins are forgiven! The ark was the only item in Holy of Holies.

#4: PRIESTHOOD

Described in Exodus with regard to the tabernacle, more will be presented in subsequent books of the Pentateuch. The priest represents the people before God – he offers prayers, praise, and gifts on behalf of the people. He also mediates God's forgiveness and blessing to the people. To a certain extent the priests typified Israel's role in the world. Israel channeled blessing to the world by bearing witness to the one and true God, and it was through Israel that the nations would be blessed. NOTE: HOLY PEOPLE

✓ **Themes of Exodus**

Deliverance (ch 1-18) – through plagues, Passover, and through the Red Sea, God revealed Himself to the people as sovereign and powerful. The miracle at the Sea of Reeds (Red Sea) and the exodus from Egypt, God's deliverance of the people from bondage, became the primary symbol of salvation and the central act of redemption in the OT. To this day, Jews understand the exodus event in this way.

Covenant (ch. 19-40) – The Abrahamic covenant anticipated the covenant between Yahweh and Israel. The promises made to Abraham are partially fulfilled here and continued into the future (19:4-5). The Laws gave guidance to the people as to God's expectation of holiness among them, as well as guiding them as to what was best, most healthful physically, emotionally, and relationally with those around them. Obeying God's laws is the right response to God's grace and salvation, not as the means of salvation (already given in the release of the captives).

Presence of God – God desires to be a presence among His people. The coming of God's glorious presence into the newly constructed tabernacle forms the climax of the book of Exodus. (Arnold 113)

What lessons are to be learned and applied for today?

- Too often we do not wait upon the Lord to deliver us, but fall into fear or try to deliver ourselves (14:13)
- Too often we grumble/complain at God about our circumstances – Exodus and Numbers reveals the sinfulness of this (16:8)
- How our sins hurt God and put a distance between Him and us, for He is holy & pure, and cannot be present where sin is (reason for sacrifice)

~~~~~  
**Lesson 12**

## ***LEVITICUS***

Whereas Exodus ended by emphasizing where to worship God (the tabernacle), Leviticus deals with how to worship our holy God.

### ✓ **The name - Leviticus**

**Its Name** comes from the Latin Vulgate, which took it from the Greek "the book pertaining to the Levites" so you know right away it is about Levi's tribe, the priests, and their duties. Hebrew is "and he (the LORD) called" which spotlights God's authority and initiative in issuing rules for acceptable worship. Leviticus is a further elaboration on the process of nation building and covenant making and can be summarized as "Sinai Revelation." That revelation deals with holiness: how a holy God provides for His people to be holy so that He may have relationship with them.

### ✓ **Six Divisions**

**6 divisions:** (LaSor 82)

1. Regulations for making sacrifices (sacrificial system) 1-7
2. Descriptions of ordination of Aaron and sons and first sacrifices in Tent of Meeting (inaugural service) 8-10
3. Laws regulating ritual purity (laws of impurities) 11-15
4. Liturgy and calendar for Day of Atonement 16
5. Laws with exhortations to holy living (laws of holiness) 17-26
6. Laws on valuation, particularly for tithes and offerings 27

**Section 1:** (LaSor 82) There are two types of sacrifices: a) those which offer a soothing aroma to LORD (whole burnt , grain, well-being or peace) and could be presented as the worshiper desired, and b) those that provide expiation and forgiveness (sin/purification or guilt/reparation offering) required of those who had need of restoration of relationship. Both of the latter were unintentional or ignorant failures to keep the commandments. Sins done with premeditation and forethought were for the most part beyond the power of the sacrificial system to expiate. One interpretation by later rabbinic writings is that a premeditated sin could be reduced to an inadvertent sin through repentance, and then could have appropriate reparation sacrifice made to expiate the sin. These sacrifices anticipated the death of Christ on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for all humanity.

Other ANE cultures also used sacrifice, sometimes with the same terms. These sacrifices were designed to provide fellowship with the deity, to

appease a god, and to insure continuance of divine favor, factors present in Israel's sacrifices as well. How was Israel's sacrificial system different from those of their neighbors, who also offered sacrifices?

- Israel's absolute monotheism with sacrifices as direct revelation from Him. The sacrifices were the means by which an unclean and unholy people could be in relationship with a clean, pure and holy God.
- Emphasis on ethics and morality stemmed from God's own absolute moral holiness – rarely seen elsewhere. ANE neighbors had no such concept in their belief system.
- Complete absence and actual prohibition of associated practices used elsewhere, such as magic or sorcery. Mesopotamian culture commonly used the sacrificial animal as a means of divination, in order to discern the future actions of the gods, by reading the dead animal's entrails. This practice was completely absent in Israel.
- High tone of the sacrificial system- no frenzy, prostitution, orgies, fertility rites, human sacrifice, etc.

**Section 2:** (LaSor 86) Moses led an elaborate ordination ceremony, then the priests remained at the sanctuary for a week. After that, the first sacrifices were offered. Aaron's sons offered a "strange" fire that had not been authorized by the Lord (10:1). This could have been a pagan rite or seeking to enter the Holy of Holies reserved only for High Priest – its content is not clear. God is often harshest at an inauguration in order to highlight the severity of the offense—similar to Ananias and Sapphira in Acts Ch. 5.

**Section 3:** (LaSor 87) Ritual purity. Since God is holy, it is crucial that His people prepare themselves properly in order to enter His presence. These laws **separated Israel from worship practices and customs of their neighbors**, particular laws against witchcraft, certain sacrifices, and food laws. Observing them **promoted solidarity among Israelites and encouraged their spiritual development**. Clean and unclean become symbols for moral purity and impurity. It was **a daily reminder** of being separated for God and of His purity in all things.

We can organize these various laws of uncleanness into 5 basic categories:

1. Contact with a corpse
2. Contagious skin diseases
3. Processes connected with sex and reproduction
4. Consumption of a forbidden food
5. Physical impairments

When one became unclean, one was unfit to worship Yahweh. It was a recurring experience for every Israelite, since death and sexual activity is part of life. Uncleanness did not make one guilty of sin – only that one lacked ritual purity. Steps were thus provided to return one to ritual purity.

Food laws not only set Israel apart from surrounding peoples and their worship practices, but also had a **sound basis in avoidance of sickness**. People couldn't eat:

- Carnivorous animals, which readily transmitted infection in a warm climate where flesh decayed rapidly
- Pork – hosts to various parasites, including Trichinosis, which are very dangerous to humans.
- Vermin and predatory birds – likely disease-carriers, since their beaks and claws can carry heavy doses of infectious bacteria.
- Shellfish – can cause food-poisoning and enteritis if not handled well.

Also, prevention of contamination of food and water supplies by dead animals and quarantine regulations regarding acute skin diseases very healthful – earliest quarantine regulations and preventive medicine known in ANE are found here. Note how often washing is recommended throughout this section – this is great hygiene! These were also reminders of separation from impurity in order to be pure and holy before God. Jesus ended these general food laws by calling his followers to a purity not of dress or diet but of the heart.

**Section 4:** (LaSor 88-89) Day of Atonement once each year was an extremely important day. It was the only time the high priest (or anyone) entered the Holy of Holies. The high priest sprinkled blood on the mercy seat twice, first to make atonement for himself (a bull), then for the congregation (a goat). These sacrifices cleansed the Holy of Holies and Tent of Meeting of defilement by human sins. It is only on the Day of Atonement that the blood of the purification offering is brought all the way into the Holy of Holies. Consequently, the Day of Atonement is the one occasion in which all the sins and impurities of the community of Israel are fully purged.

A threefold progression can clearly be seen in the bloodrite on this day. As summarized in Lev 16:20, the priest purifies first the Holy of Holies in the Holy Place, then the tent of meeting and then the outer altar in succession. The purpose of this great purgation is to cleanse the sanctuary of all sins and impurities so that God's presence will not abandon the sanctuary and therefore the people. This made possible His continued presence among His people, since God cannot abide impurity. Then the Scapegoat is used to carry away the sins of the congregation into the wilderness (like Jesus taking on all the sins of the people – Heb 7:27; 9:7,12). At Jesus' death, the way became permanently opened for all believers to enter the presence of God directly and personally for themselves.

**Section 5:** (LaSor 89-90) Holiness Code. The variety of topics in this section is broad. Here Israel is called to be holy as God is holy (19:2); loving, ethical behavior towards others is at the heart of this holy living (19:18). God is Lord of time as well as of place and moral life – hence three times per year all Israelites were to present themselves to the Lord – Feast of Passover followed immediately by Feast of Unleavened Bread (celebrating deliverance), Feast of Weeks 50 days later (first fruits of the wheat harvest), and in the autumn, the Feast of Booths/ Tabernacles (wonderings in the

wilderness and end of the harvest season). Regulations for the Sabbatical Year and the Year of Jubilee are also included in this section (ch. 25). These can be reminders to us today of how our lives are to be in union with what is right and holy all the time.

## √ Genre of Law

Law dominates the last 4 books of Pentateuch. Types of legal material:

1. **Casuistic law** (case law). Its distinctive "if...then" structure and impersonal third person style make it easily recognizable (Ex 21:18-19). Israelite casuistic law resembles ANE law. It primarily deals with civil or criminal cases rather than religious ones.
2. **Apodictic law** (absolute law). Unconditional directives; absolute orders about right and wrong without exception. Can be a positive command which is an admonition (Honor your father and your mother) or negative command that is a prohibition (Thou shalt not murder). Often listed in the OT in a series of similar laws.
3. **Legal instruction**. Two forms: **priestly** instruction aims to instruct priests in professional matters such as ritual procedures. The other is **ritual** instruction for lay people about how to perform rituals properly.

What is God's purpose in giving the chosen people all these laws?

1. Reveal His glory among the people and His character – He is a holy God. He could not be present where sin was present (Dt 23:14), so He gave them a way to cleanse themselves from sin and defilement
2. Mark Israel as a chosen and separated (holy) people from those around them, both to avoid their problems (spiritual, physical, etc.), a negative, and draw others to God, a positive.
3. Give Israel a standard for godly living so they might inherit the land and enjoy its blessings, hence spiritual development and holiness for the people
4. Reveal human sinfulness (Rom 7:7-8)
5. Prepare Israel, and all who have faith, for the coming of Christ (Gal 3:24)

## Principles of interpretation

So how do we interpret all these laws and codes for Christians today?

- 1) Some laws retain literal validity for Christians. (Love the Lord with all your heart...) These laws are **equal** to their meanings in the OT
- 2) In some cases, the NT makes the OT law **more strict**. (OT permits divorce and remarriage Ex 20:14; Dt 5:18; 24:1-4 // Jesus permits divorce only when marital infidelity had occurred (Mt 19:9) and Paul in case of desertion by an unbeliever)
- 3) Some laws are **no longer valid** or have literal validity because of NT teachings (their fulfillment in Christ). We no longer follow the OT sacrificial system, food laws, or requirement of circumcision.
- 4) But laws no longer literally valid may still teach **timeless truths and principles** (sacrifice shows seriousness of sin in eyes of God, food laws remind us that we are to be a separate people for God, pure and clean, and circumcision should be of our hearts though no longer required of our bodies).

- 5) It is good to understand the covenant nature of these laws – God was giving them in order to establish a covenant relationship between Himself and His people. We have been given a new covenant through Christ that is based upon the old one, sometimes clarifying it, sometimes replacing it with a more perfect way, sometimes continuing it just as it is.

## √ **Lessons from Leviticus**

### **What lessons do we glean from Leviticus? (LaSor 91)**

- **God is holy.** His name and His being are holy and cannot be in contact with that which is not holy. Other things are holy as they are in relationship with God. The laws of purity ordered the daily lives of Israelites and kept them conscious of the holy. They separated them as a people from others.
- **Backbone of holiness was justice** – it established equity among all people, both Israel and strangers. Remember how different this was than the law codes and understandings of ANE.
- **Sin and sacrifice.** Since humans sin, fellowship with God (basic to the covenant) required a means of access to God. This was the purpose of the sacrificial system, indicating the seriousness of sin by death of an animal (its blood being its life). Every form of life is a precious gift from God. God is saying that life itself (this most precious gift) must be returned to Him for the purpose of atoning for sin. The animal gave its life for the person who sinned. If the sacrifice was presented properly with a repentant heart, then the result was forgiveness, but it was NOT a magical formula. The presenter relied on the mercy of Yahweh for acceptance of the offering and forgiveness. NT makes it clear that Christ is the perfect sacrifice – His life made a one-time atonement for the sins of all who respond in faith, relying on the mercy of God (Heb 9:26; 1 Jn 2:1-2; 1 Pt 3:18).

Without Leviticus we would not understand what Christ accomplished on the cross!!

## √ **Holiness and how it applies to life today**

**The Holiness of God and His People.** The Hebraic concept of holiness derives from and is defined by the holiness of God Himself. This character aspect of God is perhaps the most important one in the Old Testament. It contains two elements: being separated/set apart and being complete/whole/perfect/pure. We as Nazarenes preaching holiness can find much that is of value in this book!

**Holiness of separation.** God's separateness is his unqualified uniqueness. There is no other God. He is other than His creation and should not be confused with it. He is other than the pantheon of deities that are all man-made and creations themselves. He is other than humanity, even

though humanity so often strives to be Him rather than reflect Him. God's completeness and perfection is unqualified as well. There is no blemish in God. He is pure and whole beyond any human understanding. Because of these aspects of His holiness, God does not allow the worship of anything or anyone other than Himself.

Divine holiness does not automatically transmit itself to humanity, however. Yet God wants us to be holy as He is holy and provides the means to accomplish this on a human level. He surrounded the Israelites with reminders of His holiness to help their understanding of Him and their development as His holy people.

The separateness of holiness took on various aspects and forms. Separateness in relation to a certain space was clearly presented in the tabernacle. (LaSor 94) There is a spatial progression as we move from wilderness to outside camp to inside camp to sanctuary then inner court, Holy Place and Holy of Holies, approaching the presence of God physically. Also persons, moving from unclean spirits to those who are temporarily unclean, to the average person, to Levites to priests to high priest. Only the holiest person, the high priest, was able to enter the Holy of Holies, and that only once each year. It was important to God that those who drew near to Him in this way would be holy as He was holy (Lev. 10).

Even the holy objects used in the tabernacle must be set apart and handled only by specific people, or death would result (Num. 4). People such as Nazirites could be separated for special service to the Lord (Num. 6). Temporal (time) separation was illustrated in the Sabbath each week, the Sabbath year, the festivals and ceremonial days, times considered holy by the Lord. Sexual separation was exhibited by laws against abnormal sexual behavior and admonitions not to marry into other cultures. Morality was also a means of separation through the laws and commandments that set apart the Israelites from those cultures around them. Food and dietary laws kept the Israelites distinct and separate from any non-Israelites.

**Holiness of wholeness and purity.** In the same way, the holiness of perfection, wholeness, and completeness surrounded the Israelites in their daily activities. The priests were expected themselves to be whole, pure, and clean. Lev. 21 commands that all descendants of Aaron who would serve as priests must be whole, complete, and without blemish or defect. The animals used in sacrifice likewise must be without blemish (Lev. 22). Anyone unclean or impure was sent outside the camp so that he/she would not defile the rest of the congregation (Lev. 13) until declared healed by priest (see Miriam's leprosy Num 12). The sacrificial system was given as a method to return a person from uncleanness/ impurity/ incompleteness to wholeness and purity before the Lord.

By these various ways, God surrounded the Israelites daily with reminders of his own holiness and their need to be holy so that He could reside in their presence. In like manner, this would reveal the holiness of God to other peoples and cultures with whom the Israelites came into contact. God did not do this in order to exclude others from worship and knowledge of Him, but to reveal the difference of this God over all others and to draw them to Him, that they might know Him as well.

**Modernism.** Western Christianity's individualism has difficulty understanding why a holy God would call an entire people – a nation – to be holy as he is holy. Why did the Israelites need a Day of Atonement (Lev 16)? What was necessary about the whole nation repenting and seeking forgiveness once each year? Yet this concept of corporate holiness is carried into the New Testament as the body of Christ. We are admonished to grow up as a body into completeness and wholeness (Eph. 4). Western individuals often do not understand the importance of corporate unity and wholeness, believing that individual faith is all that matters. We have much to learn from Africa, where community is of such importance!

African society may emphasize identity through tribal or secret society. A holy God who demands total loyalty and obedience even above family or tribal loyalties seems harsh and unreasonable to people whose only identity and memorial is their children or their tribal allegiances. It is not until they can find their identity in Christ that they will obtain a true memorial for all time. It is only through such devotion and priority as we see in the life of Abraham that we can hope to come into the holy presence of God.

**Post-modernism.** Finally, Christians and secular people alike can fall into the trap of seeking a loving God and ignoring those aspects of his holiness that do not seem very loving, His justice and His righteousness. We tend to gravitate toward 1 John (God is love) and are repelled by the stories in the Old Testament that reveal judgment and justice. The holy wars when children and women are wiped out along with the men, those times when God kills someone for looking at Him wrong (e.g., the sons of Aaron in Lev. 10), do not seem to fit a God of love, grace, and mercy. We begin to think there must be two gods just as there are two testaments. Some Christian churches go so far as to rarely preach or teach out of the Old Testament, so as to avoid this scandal.

But to understand God's love for us, we must understand His holiness as well. It is vital to the total and full reality of a sacred God that we recognize all of Him, not just bits and pieces. We may not always find ourselves comfortable with what we see, but we can always be assured of His justice, His grace, and His faithfulness. This is a true relationship of love, not one based on human definitions. Our trust must reside in a God who is both holy and loving, or we have blinded ourselves to His true reality.

~~~~~  
Lesson 13

NUMBERS

The name - Numbers

From the Greek translation this book was named Numbers because of its census lists, but the Hebrew Bible uses the words in the first verse, "In the wilderness." Numbers could be called "Guidance in the Wilderness." It covers the 38 years and 9 months from encounter with God at Mt. Sinai to the preparations in Moab to enter the Promised Land. The journey, if taking a direct route, would only take about a week or so, but the narrative states that 38 years was punishment for lack of faith (Num 14:20-45), so that almost none of the unbelieving generation was allowed to enter the land.

3 Divisions

- 1) Events around Sinai 1:1-12:16
- 2) Events around Kadesh 13:1-22:1
- 3) Events at Moab 22:2-36:13

Genre

The first section contained more law, directions and guidance as preparation for the journey to the Promised Land. The second and third sections are narrative, relating the failure of the Israelites to trust God while wandering in the desert and then their preparations for entering the Promised Land while on the plains of Moab, interspersed with additional laws.

Important events

Chapter

- | | |
|----|---|
| 11 | Quail and plague |
| 12 | Murmuring of Miriam and Aaron, wanting to be the leaders |
| 13 | Spies sent into the Promised Land |
| 14 | The Great Failure – only Joshua and Caleb had faith |
| 16 | Rebellion of Korah and group – wanting to be the leaders (earth opened and swallowed them/fire consumed others). Aaron intercedes. |
| 17 | Aaron's rod buds to prove God's choice of him |
| 20 | Waters of Meribah – Moses' failure and disobedience – Moses' actions were comparable to the people's rebellion when they refused to enter the Promised Land. |
| 21 | The Bronze Serpent – Jesus lifted up (Jn. 3:14-15) |
| 23 | Balaam's efforts to curse Israel and the talking donkey |
| 25 | Baal of Peor - Phinehas' zeal against Israelite and Midianite woman
Sexual liaison = religious apostasy. Canaanite Baal worship would continue to plague the Israelites for generations to come. |

The message

This message is the faithfulness of Yahweh in the face of Israel's rebellion and the dire consequences attached to covenant disobedience. Israel repeatedly breaks its covenant with Yahweh, but thanks to the covenant mechanism put in place through the tabernacle and the sacrificial system, there is now a way to reconnect and reestablish relationship with God.

Major themes

- 1) **Census numbers.** (LaSor 103-106) Enrollment of peoples was administrative procedure common to ANE. This census, taken twice in Numbers, had three purposes: recognizing manpower for war, allotment of work assignments, and a basis for taxation.
- 2) **God's presence and provision.** (LaSor 107) God could be seen by day or by night (9:15) in a very real way protecting the people from the hot sun by day and the cold desert air by night. God provided for the people in three ways during this time: 1) through direct guidance, physical protection, and material supplies, 2) instructions in God's law and 3) institution of effective patterns of leadership

- 3) **The people's grumbling and rebellion.** Even when the Lord sends them their own grumbling request for meat, they grumble about what he sends. When He leads them up to the Promised Land, they refuse to enter, thus necessitating a total of 40 years in the wilderness to prepare the next generation to enter the land. The wilderness of Numbers is a place of testing and sadly, most often the people fail their test.

The response by Moses to God's anger is to intercede for the people again and again. If God had not put in place a method of reinstatement for the people, there would have been no hope for them at all! Certainly God felt that particular generation was not ready for the Promised Land.

References to events in Numbers are used in 1 Cor 10 and Heb 3-4 to warn NT Christians they too may fall into sin and disobedience even though they have experienced freedom and deliverance through Christ.

- 4) **Yahweh and the nations.** (LaSor 109) The story of Balak and Balaam with the talking donkey shows God's sovereign control over the nations as well as His ability to protect Israel. Balaam, a pagan prophet brought in by Moabite King Balak to curse Israel, is unable to curse Israel but only bless it, while he curses the nations of Moab, Edom, and Amalek.

√ **God's People in the Wilderness**

Wilderness has meant many things to many people through the centuries. It has often meant a place of great hardship, where the basic necessities of life not easily available. It can be a place of great evil and danger, where scorpions and serpents, spirits and demons await their hapless victims. For

early Christians in particular, it was a place of refuge and escape from persecution. When persecution no longer threatened it became a hidden refuge for great minds seeking spiritual formation. Uncluttered by human civilization, the closeness to life and death in wilderness seemed to bring one closer to the source of life and death, God Himself.

To a people who had been living 400 years in a highly advanced international civilization, the desert must have indeed seemed dangerous and foreboding. The ease of food, shelter, and labor (even if forced at times) gave them a false sense of security. Now here was this strange man stating that this strange God wanted them to worship Him out there in the wilderness. Is he crazy? Surely we will die there. But the thought of freedom from slavery moved them to follow.

From the time of their leaving Egypt until they enter the Promised Land 40 years later, the Hebrew people are in the wilderness.

Wilderness as journey is understood as both geographical/physical and spiritual. The spiritual journey during those 40 years of wondering is vital to this diverse group God has chosen to shape into His people. Temptations surround them. The temptation to go no further is real. What is worse, however, is the temptation not only to stop, but to turn around and go back to Egypt. Their fear of this wilderness combines with their lack of faith and trust in their divine and human leadership, until the people decide that is just what they want to do. Numbers 14 tells of their rebellion against God's plan and His promise. He is ready to give them the Promised Land; they refuse it and Him. Their only desire is to return to the security of Egypt. They are willing to be slaves rather than risk freedom with this strange God. For 38 more years God must allow this people to wander in the wilderness in order to prepare and mold the next generation into a people who will accept His plan and His purpose for them. There is very little positive and much that is negative about that first generation of Israelites and their journey.

Wilderness as a place of covenant is begun in Exodus at Mt. Sinai, where the people first receive the covenant and first break it. The beginning of Numbers finds them still present at Mt. Sinai, from where they move out toward the Promised Land. The character of God is revealed through His covenant. It is His desire to come into relationship with this people, to make them His holy nation. His grace and mercy is exhibited as He forgives their rebellious, fear-filled actions throughout the wilderness wandering. Covenant reveals the faithful, compassionate aspects of God that are positive indeed. But it also reveals the wayward hearts of men. Over and over, the people break this covenant into which they have freely entered. Nothing is left but hope that the next generation will be more faithful to this covenanting God.

Wilderness becomes a **place of testing**. Is this people ready to be a holy nation? Or must they be refined and disciplined further? Their complaining

and quarrelsome behaviour reveal the underlying lack of trust in God's plan and leadership. Their evil is brought to an all-time low by their actions at Peor (ch. 25). There seems to be so little faith and trust among this stiff-necked people. Certainly the negative aspects of sin, evil, rebellion, and unbelief is displayed repeatedly throughout this section of Numbers.

But there is more than one story and more than one history happening here. They have a **choice to make between two histories**. One is the history of wilderness as a place of unbearable abandonment & fear, danger & death. An entire generation holds tightly to this history and refuse to let go.

There is **another wilderness history** as well. It is the history of hope and trust in the Lord, a history of promise that brings life, not death, a history based on faith in God. Moses grasps that history and exemplifies it to the people. Though he fails at one point, he shines at so many others. His is the positive leadership and devotion that will finally and safely move this stiff-necked people into the land of milk and honey. His is the intercessory heart that prevents the destruction of so many, time and time again. Others begin to understand and embrace this history as well. Joshua and Caleb testify to it when they take a stand against the rebellious congregation in ch. 14. Aaron seems to have released his hold on the old history after his and Miriam's rebellion, quietly moving into a position that will allow God's blessings rather than his curses. The next generation is the one that will inherit the land and enter into this history of promise as a people.

Yet **the most positive picture** in the book of Numbers is the portrayal of God. Through His provision, presence, and patience, He is the truly faithful one, and all others fade in comparison. He provides the physical necessities, protection from enemies, systems of worship and atonement, strong leadership roles and a successor for Moses. His presence is known daily by the people in the pillar of cloud and fire. His patience with this stiff-necked people is amazing indeed. Though they rebel, He will forgive. Though they reject, He will accept them again.

Numbers reveals to us a covenant-making God who will place Himself fully and completely at the disposal of His people. It speaks to us of His faithfulness when we are not, His desire for us when we turn away. May we be thankful indeed that He is our Lord and our God.

✓ **Lessons and application**

What lessons do we see here?

God can even make a donkey speak wisdom if He needs to! So we should never be surprised by the messenger God chooses to use.

Grumbling and discontent is a form of rebellion. There are grave consequences when we do not trust God to provide for and protect us.

- **Exhortations:** To obey God's laws with the promise of blessing (6:1-3,10-11; 7:12-15).
- **Warnings:** To disobey God's law will result in punishment (6:12-15; 8:11,19-20)
- **Centralization of worship:** In the one place where God chooses (DEUT. 12:1-7).
- **Theme of the land:** Obedience will result in the prosperity of the land, and disobedience will result in the loss of the land and exile (3:18; 4:1; 8:1,7-10; 11:8-17).

Purpose ~ Why was it written? (God's purpose)

- 1) **New generation** – the next generation needed to hear the story and make their commitment to God
- 2) People would be facing **new challenges** of a different kind, now that they were entering a **new land**, the Promised Land – they would need a central place of worship, as an example
- 3) Under **new leadership**, Joshua instead of Moses
- 4) **New temptations** before them (not to give in to local idolatrous religions), different than the wilderness (return to Egypt)
- 5) **New, deeper message** – “love God with all your heart,…” Love used 21 times in Dt with regard to the relationship between God and human beings.

Suzerain-vassal treaty

Deuteronomy follows the outline of a suzerain-vassal treaty of ANE, forms of which have been found this century, but the length of Deuteronomy far exceeds any of those treaties which have been found.

Deuteronomy

- 1) Introduction 1:1-5
- 2) Historical prologue 1:6-4:49
- 3) Stipulations 5:1-26:19

ANE (particularly Hittite of 2nd millennium)

- Preamble** naming author of treaty
 - Historical prologue** sets out relations between parties
 - Stipulations** explaining mutual responsibilities of parties
 - Document clause** describing treaty and arranging for vassal to read it at regular intervals
 - List of gods** witnessing treaty (not needed with Yahweh)
- 4) Curses and blessings 27:1-30:20 **Curses and blessings** threatening the vassal with illness, deportation, etc. if breaks treaty, but promising prosperity/blessing if faithful
 - 5) Succession arrangements and public reading 31:1-34:5

Highlights and contributions (LaSor 118-125)

- 1) **Creed of Israel called the Shema** of 6:4-9, “Hear, O Israel: the LORD is our God, the Lord is one. You shall **love** the LORD your God with all your heart, and will all your soul, and with all your might.” This begins an entire section of important teaching regarding the passing on to next generation of one's knowledge about and devotion to God.

- 2) **God who acts.** Though seen throughout Pentateuch, this is specifically spelled out by Moses over and over again. He admonishes the people not to forget what God has done for them.

Heilsgeschichte – history of _____ – God entering into the history of the world is presented in unique way in Dt that would influence the later historical writings greatly. The ideas of (1) a central location for worship and of (2) blessings with occupation of the land vs. curses with loss of the land become the basis for the following historical narratives in the Bible. In the Latter Prophets, these ideas are applied to the future, in that the people will be sent into exile for their disobedience, away from temple and from land. These concepts sustain the people while they are in exile, when they otherwise feel helpless. There will be a remnant that will return to the land. They are constantly being called to remember what God has done for them, how He has promised them blessing if they will only be obedient, and that a future is planned for them.

- 3) **Election of Israel** becomes the pervasive idea in Dt. God has chosen them, and this is foundational to Moses' entire speech. Does this mean indifference of God to other peoples? No, He wants Israel to transmit God's truth to other peoples, so that all families of the earth will be blessed (Gen 12:3). In order to do so, the people must obey God. One way they were to cling to their God and obey Him was to maintain **a single sanctuary** (12:1-14). The elect must refuse to worship at any place where other gods and idols were worshiped, but only at the single place God would choose for them – first Ebal, then Shechem, Shiloh and finally Jerusalem. When the kingdoms divided after David and Solomon, one of the first acts of the northern king was to set up two new shrines to God without God's approval, the beginning of the end for the Northern Kingdom.
- 4) **Covenant relationship based on _____** is so important. God is not trying to maintain equal responsibility on both sides as in a contract of equal partners (His responsibility is always greater). Nor does He establish His right to covenant through conquest (as in suzerain-vassal treaty), as was customary in ANE. His covenant is based **on love** (7:8 "because the LORD loved you...") and on His own faithfulness. So even if the other side fails in its obligations, God will not break the covenant. Nowhere else in the Pentateuch is this underlying principle of the law of love so clearly stated. The basis of the nation's relationship to God flowed from His love for them and from their response of obedience. When God's people break His commandments, they break the relationship of love (Mt. 22:35-40; Jn 14:15). Obedience to God's law is a byproduct of a relationship of love. Love is the essence of the relationship; law is the natural result. The relationship between God and people is much too personally oriented to be distilled down to merely obedience to a list of rules.

From the divine side of the covenant, the focus is on **promise** – what God offers is a relationship that will be ongoing and provide for the needs of the

people in a location, in prosperity (blessings), and in posterity (future generations). This focus on promise goes all the way back to Abraham! From the human side the focus is on the first commandment, on **faith and trust** in God alone. The only true "condition" placed on the people is that of faith and trust. Unfaithfulness to God is manifested fundamentally in the worship of other gods because it reveals a lack of faith and trust in the one God to provide for our needs. Those gods may be idols of wood and bronze, but they also may be manifested as idols of wealth, injustice and lack of mercy on others. We are called to be faithful to God just as the Israelites were, to have no other gods before us. Thus, the promise is an everlasting one, though participation in its fulfillment is not guaranteed to every person or generation. The promise is always there for believers to cling to, and they know that God will ever be at work to fulfill it. (Terence E. Fretheim, *Deuteronomistic History*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983: 23)

- 5) **Gravity of sin** made dramatically clear in Dt. Instructions were given once they entered the Promised Land to have a ceremony of blessings/curses with 6 tribes climbing Mt. Gerizim for the blessings and 6 tribes Mt. Ebal for the curses. Apostasy or idolatry was the most serious sin of all (29:18-20) with death the only possible outcome, since it was a direct threat to the heart of the covenant relationship.

Law, land, leadership and rebellion

The writer of Deuteronomy developed his entire theology around the importance to Yahweh, of both the law and the land. It is in the land that Israel is about to occupy that the laws are to be obeyed; it is for the Israelites in the land that the laws were given.¹ Deuteronomy fuses together the promise of the land made originally to the early patriarchs and the tradition of the giving of the Law at Sinai.² The commandments are regulatory, in order to provide guidance while in the land; they are also conditional, in that only by their observance can the land be received and maintained. By obeying Yahweh's law, the Israelites could approximate to his holiness and retain his holy-clean land. Through violation of the law, they would profane themselves and could no longer remain in this holy-clean land.³ The land thus became a kind of mirror, reflecting the religious and ethical behavior of the people in their obedience, or lack thereof, to the will of God.⁴ It becomes the touchstone for life or death; given out of God's free grace, it is retained only by means of obedience.

The importance of the land now lay, not in an unconditional fulfillment of a promise (as it did since the time of Abraham), but in the continual obedience to the One who has given it (from this point forward in the history of the chosen people). The determinative bond that Israel must

¹ Norman R. Whybray, *Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 98.

² W. D. Davies, *The Territorial Dimension of Judaism* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1982), 11.

³ Davies, 21.

⁴ Moshe Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1993), 184.

recognize is not with the land but with Yahweh as their leader. Israel must learn obedience to the covenant maker out of faith and love, or lose the land itself.⁵ The relationship with Yahweh, not his gift, is paramount and primary. Thus the central themes in many of the Exodus and Numbers stories of law, land, leadership and rebellion are finally carried out to their full and complete theological conclusion within Deuteronomy.

The central temptation of the land for Israel is that Israel will cease to remember and settle for a seemingly guaranteed security, to cease to be an historical people addressed by the Voice in history who gives life. The **link between law and land** is crucial; Torah exists so that Israel will not forget whose land it is and how it was given to Israel, **to maintain the people's historicity with Yahweh.**⁶ There is no easy assurance of the fulfillment of the promise for the next generation, once the wilderness generation ceases to exist. Though the next generation is promised that Yahweh will bring them into the land to possess it (Num. 14:31), they too must choose to obey rather than rebel. This second generation stands on the edge of the Promised Land with promises still awaiting final fulfillment.⁷ Will they trust Yahweh as their leader, now that Moses is taken from them?

As Christians, what would be the equivalent of "land" for us today? Does God ask us to return to the geographic location of Israel in order to worship Him there? Where is our identity and our security found in relationship with God? It is not in a physical location but within the Body of Christ, His church, where we exist in a completely satisfying relationship of wholeness with God.

This book's influence on later people of the Bible (LaSor 126)

This book held great influence for later biblical figures, including Samuel, Elijah, Hosea, Jeremiah who quoted it. During King Josiah's reign, it is believed that the book of the law discovered in the temple was Dt, and this is what sparked a religious revival. Jesus turned back Satan's three temptations with quotes from Dt (8:3; 6:13, 16) and when asked which commandment was greatest, He quoted 6:5. Dt is quoted often in the NT.

Applications for today ~ What are lessons for us today?

- Remember what God HAS done for us so that we do not become haughty in our own minds and forget His mercy and acts in our own history.
- Love is the foundation both of God's covenant with us and of our response to that covenant. Obedience is an outflow of our love, not something that earns us favor in His sight.
- We must be vigilant not to be enticed away from the true faith by false gods surrounding us in our culture today, just as the chosen people were warned about the gods in the land they were about to enter.

⁵ Norman C. Habel, *The Land is Mine* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 46.

⁶ Walter Brueggemann, *The Land* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 54, 61.

⁷ Dennis T. Olson, *The Death of the Old and the Birth of the New* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 151.

Appendix A

HOMEWORK

The Hebrew Flood and ANE Literature – due on Tuesday

Compare and contrast the Flood narrative in Genesis chs. 6-9 with the Epic of Gilgamesh. As you carefully read through the Epic, please underline in each line of the Epic text what you see is a difference (D) or a similarity (S) with the Bible flood story, then mark a "D" or an "S" at the end of each line. Once you have completed doing this, then write a paragraph describing **how God or the gods are portrayed differently** by the two accounts. Name as many differences as you are able to find and be sure to specify how the two accounts portray them as different. For example: "There is only one God being portrayed in the Bible story but there are many gods named in the Epic."

This writing assignment will be handed to the teacher after we have discussed the biblical Flood in class together.

Course outcomes: 1, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11

Bible Study – due on Friday

Each student must prepare a 30-minute "Bible Study" lesson. **THIS IS NOT A SERMON** – it is a Bible Study. You will be assigned a passage from one of the chapters assigned for pre-course reading in Exodus through Deuteronomy. This assignment will be made by the end of the first day of class After receiving your assigned passage, read about it in the *IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* by Walton, Matthews, and Chavalas, as well as a commentary chosen by the instructor from local library resources (if available). Then complete a **written Bible Study report** of the lesson that will include the following components:

Researching and Writing Your Paper.

Please follow the guidelines below, using these titles for each section in your Bible Study.

Part 1: Introduction

Present the specific passage that you will be studying

Part 2: Historical-cultural analysis

Read about your passage in the *IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* by Walton, Matthews, and Chavalas. A Bible encyclopedia or dictionary may also be helpful. Then discuss and write about any historical-cultural issues regarding the events, customs, or people in the passage.

Part 3: Contextual Analysis.

Context is of utmost importance for a correct understanding of the passage. Answer the following:

1. What is the theme (main idea, concept, or topic) of the **preceding verses**, of the **passage itself**, and of the **verses following** the passage? How do they complement and shed light on each other?
2. How does the passage fit into the flow of the author's writing in this section and into his overall purpose for writing the book?

Part 4: Literary Analysis.

1. Identify natural divisions of the passage by including an outline in your Study.
2. Determine its genre. Is it a narrative about an event, a monologue by one speaker, a dialogue between multiple speakers, or something else? If you are unsure, ask the instructor for help.
3. Identify the following literary forms if they are found in your passage: similes, metaphors, personifications, symbols, poetry, etc.

Part 5: Theological Analysis.

Does the passage relate to any particular doctrines or theological concepts? How does it shed light on them? What is it saying about God and His interaction with human beings?

Part 6: Application.

Think about the main themes and ideas of the passage (it is always better to concentrate on the main themes than to focus on minor ideas or events).

Then answer the following questions:

1. What main message can you, your small group, or your church gain about God, humanity, and/or discipleship from this passage? How can Christians apply this message to their daily lives? How can you utilize the knowledge gained from this study to become more like Christ in your attitudes, desires, and actions?
2. Does this passage have a message for humanity in general? If so, what is that message?
3. Can you think of any stories or illustrations that will help your audience or Bible Study group better understand the meaning of the passage? If so, please present them.

Course outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10

Appendix B

In Class Activities

Lessons from Creation

In your small groups, mark three columns on a piece of paper, headed with the three subjects of God, human beings, creation. Read Gen 1:1-2:3 and place general observations about each of the three subjects under the appropriate heading. Look for general characteristics of each as revealed in those verses. We will then discuss each group's findings in class together.

Parallelism Practice

Choose the kind of parallelism seen in each verse from the following list:

- Synonymous
- Antithetic

The memory of the righteous is blessed,
But the name of the wicked will rot. Prov 10:7 _____

For they provoked Him with their high places,
And aroused His jealousy with their graven images. 78:58 _____

For He has satisfied the thirsty soul,
And the hungry soul He has filled with what is good. 107:9 _____

The wages of the righteous is life,
The income of the wicked, punishment. Prov 10:16 _____

Poor is he who works with a negligent hand,
But the hand of the diligent makes rich. Prov 10:4 _____

Lessons from the Life of Abraham

Abraham's life presents us with a very human response to God's call – times of obedience and faith, times of fear and disobedience, the necessity of commitment first in faith and belief but ultimately in everything (entire consecration).

Each person is to draw a timeline of his/her own journey through life, marking on that timeline the special events that indicate when they have seen God working, when they experienced salvation, when they felt distant from God or were disobedient, when they have sensed God especially close to them, etc.

We will use these personal timelines to highlight and better understand Abraham's life.

Rebekah and Rachel

In your small groups conduct the following exercise: Compare and contrast the two betrothal scenes, the first of Rebekah in ch. 24 with the second one of Rachel in ch. 29. Make two lists: one that lists aspects that are the same in both stories and one that lists differences in the two stories. What do the scenes reveal about the character, actions, and motives of each of the participants – the prospective husband, the prospective wife, other family members (such as Laban)?

Persons of Genesis

In this exercise we will study a person presented in Genesis and we will ask the following questions:

1. What personal characteristics are indicated in Genesis? Is this person being presented in a favorable light or not?
2. In the later OT passage (if one is given), how is that person presented? Do we learn anything about the person that we did not know in Genesis?
3. How is the person presented in the NT passage(s)? What do we learn about that person there that is not revealed in Genesis? How is that person's example being used in the NT passage?
4. Do you know of any other NT passages that address that person's life?
5. How might this person be used in preaching or teaching on a particular subject?

Each small group will be assigned a different person to study by the instructor. The group will review what they know about the person from their Genesis description. A concordance will be used in order to locate the passages in the OT and/or NT books listed after the name. Once the above questions have been answered, the group will present their information to the class.

Melchizedek: Psalms, Hebrews

Esau: Obadiah, Malachi, Hebrews

Hagar: Galatians

Cain: Hebrews, 1 John, Jude

Adam: Job, Romans 5, 1 Cor 15

Lot: 2 Peter

Moses: Hebrews

The 10 Commandments

We will briefly look at how Jesus interpreted the 10 Commandments. But first we need to review His words concerning which "commandment" was most important: Mark 12:28-31.

Each group will read the original commandment, then how Jesus interpreted that commandment, then discuss how we should understand that commandment today:

1	Exod 20:3	Matt 4:10
2	20:4-6	Luke 16:13
3	20:7	Matt 5:34
4	20:8-11	Mark 2:27-28
5	20:12	Matt 10:37
6	20:13	Matt 5:22
7	20:14	Matt 5:28
8	20:15	Matt 5:40
9	20:16	Matt 12:36
10	20:17	Luke 12:15

Law Practice

For each of the following laws, indicate if it is casuistic or apodictic (circle C or A), then specify whether it is a moral (social), civil, or ritual law.

If a fire breaks out and spreads into thornbushes so that it burns shocks of grain or standing grain or the whole field, the one who started the fire must make restitution. Exod 22:6 C or A Kind: _____

If he offers an animal from the flock as a fellowship offering to the Lord, he is to offer a male or female without defect. Lev 3:6 C or A Kind: _____

No one is to approach any close relative to have sexual relations with that person. Lev 18:6 C or A Kind: _____

Do not steal. Lev 19:11 C or A Kind: _____

Do not muzzle an ox while treading out the grain. Deut 25:4 C or A Kind: _____

If anyone injures his neighbor, whatever he has done must be done to him: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. Lev. 24:19 C or A Kind: _____

Do not offer the blood of a sacrifice to me (God) along with anything containing yeast. Exod 23:18 C or A Kind: _____

Do not deny justice to your poor people in their lawsuits. Exod 23:6 C or A Kind: _____

Old Testament Laws

Each group will be assigned one of the following types of laws and will report back to the class once they have answered the questions below regarding their assigned type of law.

1. OT sacrificial system: Lev ch. 1; Heb 10:1-18
2. food laws: Lev 11:1-31; Mk 7:14-23; Acts 10:9-16; Gal 2:11-16
3. circumcision: Gen 17:9-14; Rom 2:25-29; Rom 4:9-13; Gal 6:15
4. Divorce: Ex 20:14; Dt 5:18; Dt 24:1-4; Mt 19:3-9
5. relational laws: Lev 9:18; Lev 24:17-22; Mt 5:21-48; Lk 6:26-30; James 2:1-12; James 5:4
6. the most important commandment: Deut 6:4-5; Mt 22:34-40 or Mk 12:28-34
7. the 10 commandments: Ex 20; Mt 19:16-22; Mk 10:17-21

The following questions will be answered for each type of law:

1. Was the law understood and practiced literally in OT times, as far as you know?
2. what is said about that law in the NT? Do you know of other NT references besides those given here?
3. Would you classify the NT application to be literal or only figurative?
4. Is the NT use of that law more stringent, the same, or less stringent than in the OT? Does it negate the OT law all together and if so, why?
5. How should we apply this kind of law to our lives today? If the actual law is no longer applicable to us, is there a principle behind it that would be useful to retain?

Appendix C

Genesis Application Questions

Application Questions on God and Creation

1. What should be our response to God's self revelation in the created order? What are the consequences for refusing to praise Him? (Rom 1:20-25/Heb 11:1-3)
2. How aware are you of the created world (nature) in your everyday life? Do you have a positive view or negative view of nature?
3. If nature is important to God and if it has been given to us to care for (1:26; 2:15), how should this affect the way we treat the land, water, plants, and animals around us? How is this happening or not happening in your country? Does your own attitude reflect responsible stewardship or benign neglect or active destruction?
4. In American culture we have popular beliefs such as those who believe that only the soul matters and the material body does not matter, we have atheists who believe we are the product of chance and evolution, and we have people who believe that the position of the sun, moon, and stars ordain our personality and fate, so they read their horoscopes every day. What are popular views in your culture that do not agree with this biblical view of creation? How does this account shed light on those views?
5. How might you use the Creation passage to teach or preach a message for today? What message would that be?

Application Questions on Eden before the Fall

Dealing with man/woman relationships and human/God relationships:

1. What does it mean to you to be created in the image of God?
2. If male and female jointly express the image of God (Gen 1:27), what does that mean? Are single (unmarried) people an incomplete image of God? How does this society view single people?
3. If God is also described as a "Helper", what does that tell you about woman being such a helper to the man? What is the view of your culture on this? Are women considered inferior or are they recognized as equal partners? Does your Christian culture have a different view of this than the secular culture around you?
4. How do you feel about the intimacy and openness expressed in Chapter 2 between the man and woman, God and humans? How would you classify this, as normal or abnormal?
5. In your relationship with God, is he more like a distant relative, constant companion, or total stranger? How might you draw closer to him?
6. How might you use this Eden passage to preach or teach a message for today?

Application Questions on Events after the Fall

1. How are man, woman, and creation different now because of the Fall?
2. Where did the evil come from? Is God the author of evil?
3. Why would God allow Adam and Eve to fall when tempted? What does this say about God and his relationship with us?
4. From this story, how would you define sin and its consequences? (alienation, separation from God, broken relationships)
5. Where in this story do you find any good news?
6. Both Adam and Eve blamed others for what they had done rather than admit their own sin. How easy or hard is it for you to admit you are wrong?
7. Where in your life is the serpent seemingly alive and well? What would be the first step to take in order to reject the serpent's temptation in your life?
8. How might you use this passage about the fall to preach or teach a message for today?

Application Questions on Cain and Abel

1. When God tells Cain to "do what is right", what does this tell you about man's source of anger? The strength of anger? God's way of soothing anger?
2. Did Cain repent of his sin? How do his words and the Lord's reply shed light on this? Why is it so important to repent?
3. How does your culture approve of or disapprove of anger? How would you assess the way you handle anger? What might you call yourself – an erupting volcano, silent suppression waiting for revenge, denial that the incident ever happened, or open honesty and loving confrontation? What would you like to do differently with your anger?
4. Cain is promised frustration at work and restlessness in life. How are you experiencing either of these?
5. Are you your brother's keeper? How so? What kind of "keeping" do you do: nagging – parenting – covenanting – praying? What brothers/sisters do you keep?
6. How might you use this passage to teach or preach a message for today?

Application Questions on the Flood

1. With God, His word reveals the intended meaning of a particular action on His part. Without interpretation to accompany event, God's purpose might be ambiguous or his actions open to misunderstanding. What two interpretations come before the flood (6:5-8) and afterward (8:20-22)? What does this word-event-word sequence reveal about God's character? About God's will for mankind?
2. Why do you think that God has decided not to destroy the human race again? To what future and final solutions does God's mercy point?

3. Have you ever stepped out in faith, believing God has asked you to do something? What happened? How were those events like or not like Noah's story?
4. What is something difficult which God is asking you to do, perhaps despite obstacles in your way? Does God's promise in Noah's situation help in overcoming the obstacles you are facing?
5. Have you ever gone through a time that you have felt forgotten by God? How might that be similar to what Noah felt while the water was rising and there seemed to be no end in sight? How does it feel when God re-enters our life so that we know He has not forgotten us? (8:1)
6. How might you use the flood story to preach or teach a message for today?

Application Questions on the Tower of Babel

1. What was the human motivation for building the tower? Why is such unity wrong? How would confusing their language fulfill the first great commission given to humanity (1:28; 9:1)?
2. What is the lesson here for empire-building? Church building? Human ambition? What might our Tower of Babel (our attempt to make a name for ourselves) look like today?
3. How is unity in Christ different from Babel unity?
4. How might you use the Babel or Table of Nations passage to preach or teach a message for today?

Application Questions for Chapters 12-19

1. In 12:1, God calls Abram to "leave your country, your people, and your father's household and go to the land I will show you." Has God ever asked you to leave your previous life and venture into the unknown?
2. Why does God promise Abram a great name in 12:2, when God foiled the name-building efforts of others in just the previous chapter? How is this different?
3. What does Abram fear most, as represented by his conversation with God in 15:2-3? How does Abram's taking Hagar to produce an heir "from his own body" (15:4) indicate faith in God, but also lack of faith?
4. Where have you been waiting "10 years" (ch. 16) for God to do something or to fulfill a promise? How do you cope with such delays? How are you tempted to "help God out"?
5. Hagar encountered God in the desert and gave God a name to describe what He had done for her (16:13). How was her name appropriate to the event? What name would you give to God at this time in your walk? Where have you met Him in a living way most recently?

6. In the ancient world, a name conveyed the essence of a person. Changing the name of an individual indicated authority over or ownership of that individual. What is important about God changing the names of Abram and Sarai in 17:5, 15? How might God's view of Abraham differ from how Abraham was viewing himself at this point? Think about your own salvation: has God ever changed your name? What did it mean to you? Did you believe Him when He renamed you?

7. In the story of Sodom and Gomorrah (ch. 19), Lot shows human weakness as well as faith at several points. What examples does Lot give you to follow, and to avoid, in trying to lead a godly life in a sinful society? When have you hesitated to obey God because to do so might jeopardize your standing with others? What was the result?

8. How might you use this Abraham section to preach or teach today?

Application Questions for Chapters 20-25

1. Where has God demonstrated His willingness to do the same thing as He is asking of Abraham in ch. 22? Was there any substitute or replacement offered or taken? How is Jesus like and not like Isaac? The ram?

2. Has God ever asked you to give up something or someone of great importance to you? What was the result? How did your faith grow during that time of testing? Is there anything in your life you have not given over completely to God? The group may take time to pray for anyone who has something not fully committed to God. Please do not be judgmental about this.

3. How is God's hand evident in the episode with the steward and Rebekah in Nahor (ch. 24)? What positive attributes do you see in the steward? How did you see God active in your own matchmaking/finding a spouse?

4. From chapter 25 alone, how would you describe each of the brothers Esau and Jacob (their personality traits)? When you were growing up, did you feel highly favored or overlooked by your parents? How about now, in your relationship with your spouse? With God? What might you do this week to help your spouse feel favored?

5. How might you use this Isaac and Jacob section to preach and teach today?

Application Questions for Chapters 26-33

1. What do Jacob's and Rebekah's deceptive actions in ch. 27 reveal about each of their characters and their trust in God? How are the two different from each other? Whose blessing or approval means the most to you among human relationships? How might you still be working for their blessing?

2. Once Jacob marries, there seems to be constant tension among the members of his family. What seems to be the main problem in this mixed-up, messed-up family? In what sense are Jacob's troubles his own fault? The fault of his parents and grandparents? Where in your own extended family do you see reflections of

Jacob's problems and/or generational patterns of behavior? Where do you see God in all of this?

3. Knowing his scheming son-in-law as he does (being a schemer himself), Laban takes precautions (30:35-36) after agreeing to Jacob's wages in livestock. What seems to be the cause of Jacob's increase in flocks (vv. 37-42), but to what does Jacob attribute it (31:7-9)? Where have you seen God working behind the scenes in your own life to bless you? How might that blessing have been attributed to something other than God?

4. In chapter 32, how does Jacob indicate he is not sure of Esau's present intentions regarding their relationship? How does Esau also indicate his uncertainty concerning Jacob? When you have wronged someone and want to be forgiven, how do you show you are sincerely sorry? Is there something cultural that is especially helpful in this process? How is that like and unlike Jacob's plan?

5. What might God be trying to teach Jacob by wrestling with him in 32:22ff? What are the issues with which you are wrestling right now? Do you feel you are aligned with God's will on these issues/not sure of His will/opposed to His will?

6. How might you use this Jacob section to preach and teach today?

Application Questions for Chapters 34-40

1. Instead of returning to Bethel immediately, as commanded by God (31:13; 35:1), Jacob lingers at Shechem, seemingly for trade purposes. How might this put his clan at risk? Do you think revenge or retaliation is ever a legitimate response for a Christian? Why or why not? In what form are Christians still called to "cross-cultural purity" in choosing their spouses?

2. At Bethel, God reaffirms the patriarchal promises to Jacob (vv. 11-12). What is your "Bethel" where God has met you in times of stress? Where (in what situation) do you want God to answer now?

3. Why might God have given Joseph these dreams at this time (ch. 37)? Have you ever had a dream given to you from God? Did it come about?

4. At the end of ch. 37, with Joseph sold into slavery, we can see Jacob and Joseph struggling with the "if-only's" in their lives. What advice might you have given each of them to prevent what took place? What is one of your biggest regrets?

5. Where have you ever experienced a double standard (one for men and another for women) as seemed to take place in the story of Judah and Tamar? When has God brought something good out of a bad situation for you? Do you need that to happen today, in some present situation?

6. Have you ever felt unjustly "sent to prison" or in a prison as Joseph was? What was the result? Spend a little time thanking God for your freedom in Him through Jesus Christ.

7. How would you use this Joseph passage to teach or preach today?

Application Questions for Chapters 41-50

1. How would you characterize Joseph's reaction to each changing circumstance in his life? What do you feel is his strength in this? How have you done the same or differently when faced with failure or with success?
2. How is the Joseph of chapter 41 different from the Joseph of chapter 37? Might the 13 intervening years of imprisonment and humiliation have contributed to his maturity? What difficult period(s) in your own life have been positive influence(s) on who you are today?
3. In ch. 42, why is Joseph so interested in how the brothers feel about Benjamin? In vv. 21-22, what do you think the brothers are experiencing: deep guilt alone, true repentance based on their guilt, only worldly sorrow at their misfortune? Where are you still paying the price or reaping the effects of a mistake or a sin made by yourself or by another in your life?
4. Compare Judah's words in 43:8-9 with 37:26-27. Do you see any change? If so, how and why has he changed? How has your relationship to others in your own family changed over the years? Did God have anything to do with that change?
5. Joseph chooses to not reveal himself to his brothers in ch. 43 even though they have returned with Benjamin. Why does he put them through the test in ch. 44? How have the brothers changed since ch. 37? Is there anyone in your life with whom you need to be reconciled? What steps can you take to begin that process?
6. How can you use this Joseph section to preach or teach today?

Forgiveness Questions

1. How do you see the elements of forgiveness/repentance and reconciliation leading to reinstatement after a time of testing in the story of Joseph and his brothers?
 - when might Joseph have begun to forgive?
 - how and where did the brothers indicate their repentance?
 - how did Joseph test them to find out if they had truly repented?
 - how did Joseph exhibit his forgiveness to them and reconciliation with them?
 - at what point did the brothers fully comprehend their reinstatement?
2. What have you learned from this presentation on forgiveness and reconciliation that is new to you? How does that new information change your thoughts and actions?
3. Is there anyone that you have not forgiven? Is there anyone you have offended to whom you need to express your repentance?
4. What next step do you think you need to take in regard to anyone with whom you are not reconciled? Ask the group to pray with you concerning this issue.

Appendix D

PATTERN OF THE FLOOD STORY

(From Word Biblical Commentary Genesis 1-15 by Gordon Wenham, pp. 156-8)

The theme and general plan of the flood story (6:9-9:17) is quite clear. Three elements go to make up the basic theme: (1) God saves Noah and his companions by having them embark in an ark; (2) God sends a flood which destroys the rest of the world; (3) he promises never to send another such flood.

The story itself follows a favorite pattern of Hebrew narrators, the palistrophe or extended chiasmus, perhaps because a flood narrative lends itself to such a schema so easily. B. W. Anderson (*JBL* 97 [1978] 38) put forward the following analysis:

Transitional introduction (6:9-10)

1. Violence in creation (6:11-12)
2. First divine speech: resolve to destroy (6:13-22)
3. Second divine speech: "enter ark" (7:1-10)
4. Beginning of flood (7:11-16)
5. The rising flood (7:17-24)
God remembers Noah
6. The receding flood (8:1-5)
7. Drying of the earth (8:6-14)
8. Third divine speech: "leave ark" (8:15-19)
9. God's resolve to preserve order (8:20-22)
10. Fourth divine speech: covenant (9:1-17)

Transitional conclusion (9:18-19)

Note how each feature in the first half of the story matches a corresponding feature in the second half to create a mirror-image structure (3 // 8, 4 // 7, 5 // 6, etc.) with its center "God remembered Noah" in 8:1. I have also noted the palistrophic structure of this story (*VT* 28 [1978] 337-39) and drawn attention to fifteen verbal echoes in the second half of the story that match elements in the first half. Most striking is the way the number of days is inverted after 8:1.

- 7 days of waiting for flood (7:4)
- 7 days of waiting for flood (7:10)
- 40 days of flood (7:17a)
- 150 days of water triumphing (7:24)
- 150 days of water waning (8:3)
- 40 days' wait (8:6)
- 7 days' wait (8:10)
- 7 days' wait (8:12)

Similarly, R. E. Longacre (*JAAR* 47 Sup [1979] 89-133) has shown how the flood narrative builds up to a peak in 7:17-24 and then declines.

Palistrophic writing is particularly suited to telling a flood story: the literary structure closely resembles the real-life situation. Noah enters the ark and later leaves it. The waters rise and then fall. In other words, the story falls naturally into two halves that ought to resemble each other to some extent. The surface structure of the narrative mirrors the deep structure of the event being described.

Nevertheless, there is certainly an element of artificiality involved in creating a palistrophe on such a grand scale, particularly in mentioning the number of days in reverse order as here (see *VT* 28 [1978] 338-39). The structure itself helps to draw attention to the nature of the flood and the water's rise and fall, and to pinpoint the real turning point, God's remembering Noah (8:1). It was divine intervention that saved Noah, and the palistrophic pattern reminds the reader of the