

## OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

### Genesis 12-50

#### Genesis

- "Beginnings" or "Origins"
  - 1st book of both Hebrew & Christian Bibles
  - speaks of the beginnings of
    - the universe and the earth
    - mankind
    - God's people, and in particular, the nation of Israel
  - spans Creation (>4000 B.C.) through the life and death of Joseph (~1800 B.C.)
  - introduces many themes and concepts that run through the rest of the Scriptures
  
- Structure of the book
  1. **Genealogical** - '*Toledoth*' formula
    - starts with a 'prologue' describing Creation (1:1-2:3), followed by a focus on God's dealings with humanity, divided into 10 sections
    - each section starts with Hebrew phrase '*elleh tole dot*' - "These are the generations of..."
  
  2. **Historical**
    - Genesis 1-11 - 'ancient' or primeval history - pre-patriarchal
      - from Creation to Abraham (>4000 B.C. to ~2100 B.C.)
    - Genesis 12-50 - patriarchal history (~2100-1800 B.C.)
      - Genesis 12-25: Abraham (2166-1991 B.C.)
      - Genesis 24-26: Isaac (2066-1886 B.C.)
      - Genesis 25-36: Jacob (Israel) (2006-1859 B.C.) & Esau
      - Genesis 37-50: Joseph (1915-1805 B.C.) and the sons of Israel

#### **Genesis 12-50 - Summary & Storyline**

#### **Genesis 12-25 Abraham**

- **Abram (later renamed Abraham - 17:5) - Introduction**
  - son of Terah, uncle of Lot, husband of Sarai (11:31)
  - originally from Ur of the Chaldeans (11:31)
  - worshipped other gods before God called him (Joshua 24:2)
  - was in Ur when God first called him (Acts 7:2-3)
  - moved to Haran, then at the age of 75, continued to the land of Canaan after his father's death (Genesis 12:1,4; Acts 7:4)
  
- **12:1-3 - The call of Abram**
  - God tells Abram to leave his country, his people, his father's household, to the land He should show Abram (ultimately the land of Canaan)
  
  - promises blessings on Abram and his seed (offspring)
    - descendants - "I will make of you a great nation" (12:2)
    - a name - "I will bless you and make your name great" (12:2)
    - protection - "I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse" (12:3)

- blessing to the whole world - "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (12:3)
- a land - to your offspring I will give this land
- direct contrast with what happened at the Tower of Babel (11:1-9)

<b>Babel</b>	<b>Abram's call</b>
"Come, let us build ourselves a city..." (11:3)	"Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house..." (12:1)
"let us make a name for ourselves" (11:4)	"I will bless you and make your name great" (12:2)
"So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth" (11:8)	"in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (12:3)

• **12:4-23:20 - Abram in the Promised Land (with a few excursions)**

A brief synopsis:

- Abram arrives in the land of Canaan with Sarai and Lot (12:4-6)
- God appears to Abram and promises the land to his offspring; Abram builds an altar and worships (12:7-9)
- Abram goes to Egypt to escape famine (12:10-20)
  - lies about Sarai being his sister rather than his wife; Pharaoh takes Sarai, but God delivers her
- Abram & Lot separate, with Lot moving towards Sodom (13:1-18)
- Abram rescues Lot, defeating the forces of 5 kings who had taken Lot captive in war (14:1-24)
  - meets Melchizedek, king of Salem after his victory and gives him a tenth of everything
- God's covenant with Abram (15:1-21)
  - confirms the promises He had made to Abram - many descendants and possession of the land
  - prophesies that Abraham's descendants will be slaves in a foreign land (Egypt) for 400 years, but that God will bring them out
  - "And he believed the LORD, and He counted it to him as righteousness." (15:6)
- At age 86, Abram has a son (Ishmael) through Sarai's maidservant, Hagar (16:1-16)
- God confirms His covenant with Abram and changes his name to Abraham ("father of many") (17:1-27)
  - reiterates his promise of
    - numerous descendants - Abraham to be father of many nations
    - possession of the land of Canaan
  - commands Abraham to circumcise every male in his household
  - changes Sarai's name to Sarah ("princess") - mother of nations; kings will come from her
  - promises Abraham, who is 99 years old, a son through Sarah, who is almost 90
- The LORD destroys Sodom & Gomorrah, but saves Lot (18:1-19:38)
  - the Lord reveals to Abraham that He will judge Sodom & Gomorrah for their wickedness
  - Abraham intercedes for Sodom, that God would not destroy the righteous with the wicked; God promises not to destroy the city if there are 10 righteous people there
  - God destroys Sodom & Gomorrah, but Lot and his daughters escape
- Abraham moves to Gerar (land of the Philistines) (20:1-18)
  - again lies about Sarah being his sister, but God again intervenes to deliver her
  - makes a treaty with the king of Gerar (Abimelech) (21:22-34)

- the promised son is born to Sarah and is named Isaac ("he laughs"); Hagar & Ishmael are sent away (21:1-21)
- God tells Abraham to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering (22:1-24)
  - Abraham obeys, but God intervenes at the last moment to stop him, and to provide a ram to offer in Isaac's place
  - this occurs on Mount Moriah, which is the future site of the Temple (2 Chron. 3:1)
- Sarah dies at age 127; Abraham buys a burial plot for her (23:1-20)
- Abraham remarries and has many other descendants; dies at age 175 (25:1-18)

## **Genesis 24-26 Isaac**

- **24:1-67 - Isaac marries Rebekah**
  - granddaughter of Nahor (Abraham's brother); brought from Haran by Abraham's servant
- **25:19-34 - Isaac & Rebekah have two sons**
  - God foretells that from them will come 2 nations, but that the older (Esau) will serve the younger (Jacob)
  - Esau sells his rights as firstborn for a bowl of soup
- **26:1-35 - Isaac in Gerar**
  - Isaac moves to Gerar and says Rebekah is his sister, but his secret is discovered by the king
  - God confirms to Isaac the promise He made to Abraham, and blesses Isaac

## **Genesis 27-36 Jacob**

- **27:1-46 - Jacob gets Isaac's blessing**
  - Jacob tricks Isaac into thinking he is Esau
  - Jacob is blessed by Isaac, "inheriting" God's blessing to Abraham, passed down through Isaac (27:28-29)
  - Esau nurses a grudge against Jacob and thinks to kill him
- **28:1-31:55 - Jacob in Haran**
  - Isaac & Rebekah send Jacob to Haran, to get him away from Esau (but also to get a proper wife) (28:1-9)
  - Jacob has a dream at Bethel, of a stairway to heaven (28:10-22)
    - God confirms to Jacob the promise He had made to Abraham
    - Jacob makes a vow to that the LORD would be his God
  - Jacob arrives at Haran and works for his uncle, Laban (Rebekah's brother) (29:1-30:43)
    - Jacob agrees to work 7 years to marry Laban's daughter Rachel, but is tricked into marrying Leah, and has to work another 7 years (29:15-30)
    - Jacob ultimately has 12 sons and 1 daughter through his 2 wives and their 2 maidservants (29:31-30:24, 35:16-18)
    - after 14 years, Jacob spends 6 years building up his wealth (flocks) (30:25-41)
    - flees from Laban to return to the land of Canaan (31:1-55)
- **32:1-35:29 - Jacob returns to Canaan**
  - As Jacob returns to Canaan, he prepares to meet Esau, who is coming to meet him with 400 men (32:1-21)
  - Jacob wrestles with God; is broken and renamed from Jacob ("he grasps the heel"; "he cheats") to Israel ("he struggles with God") (32:22-32)
  - Jacob is welcomed back by Esau, and settles at Shechem (33:1-20)
  - Jacob's daughter Dinah is raped by one of the young men of Shechem (34:1-31)
    - Jacob's sons, Simeon & Levi, slaughter all the men of Shechem in retaliation
  - Jacob returns to Bethel, where he had sworn his oath to God (35:1-15)
    - God confirms His promises to Jacob

- Jacob's wife Rachel dies while giving birth to Benjamin; Isaac dies at age 180 (35:16-29)

- **36:1-43 - descendants of Esau, father of the Edomites**

### **Genesis 37-50 Joseph and the sons of Israel**

- **37:1-36 - Joseph is despised by his brothers and is sold by them into slavery in Egypt**
- **38:1-30 - Judah fathers Perez and Zerah by his own daughter-in-law**
- **39:1-50:26 - Joseph in Egypt**
  - Joseph serves in Potiphar's house; serves well and rises, but is imprisoned after being falsely accused by Potiphar's wife (39:1-23)
  - In prison, Joseph interprets the dreams of two of Pharaoh's servants, and his interpretations prove true (40:1-23)
  - Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams and predicts seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine (41:1-57)
    - advises storing up grain during the years of plenty, and is placed in charge of the whole land of Egypt by Pharaoh
  - Joseph's brothers go to Egypt to buy grain during the famine (42:1-44:34)
    - Joseph recognizes them, but they do not recognize him
    - Joseph treats them kindly, but tests them by threatening Benjamin (Jacob's favored son)
    - Joseph's brothers pass the test, as they refuse to abandon Benjamin, and as Judah offers himself to be punished instead of Benjamin
  - Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and brings his family to live in Egypt (45:1-47:12)
  - Joseph saves Egypt and Canaan from the famine (47:13-26)
  - Jacob makes Joseph swear to bury him in Canaan (47:27-31)
  - Jacob blesses and 'adopts' Joseph's two sons, giving them each an equal share with the rest of Jacob's sons in the nation of Israel. but giving priority to the younger (Ephraim) over the older (Manasseh) (48:1-22)
  - Jacob blesses his sons, with special attention to Judah and Joseph (49:1-28)
  - Jacob dies at age 147 and is buried in the burial ground bought by Abraham (49:29-50:14)
  - Joseph reassures his brothers, who fear that he will turn on them, now that their father is dead (50:15-21)
    - "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good..." (50:20)
  - Joseph dies at age 110; is embalmed and placed in a coffin, awaiting the time when God would fulfill His promise to bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt back to Canaan (50:22-26)

### **Major Themes and Concepts in Genesis 12-50**

- God's sovereignty
  - over Creation
    - seen most clearly in Genesis 1-11 but also, for example, in
      - the birth of Isaac by Sarah, at the age of 90
      - the prospering of Jacob's flocks despite Laban's attempts to cheat him
      - 7 years of plenty and 7 years of famine in Joseph's time
  - in election
    - Not all Abraham's descendants are children of the Promise, but only those chosen and called by God
      - out of all of Shem's descendants (10:21-11:28), calls Abram (12:1)
      - chooses Isaac rather than Ishmael to inherit Abraham's blessing (17:18-21)

- chooses Jacob rather than Esau (25:23)
    - God's choosing not based on Man's works, but on His purposes:
      - "...when Rebecca had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad - in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of His call - she was told, "The older will serve the younger.'" (Romans 9:10-12)
  - over the affairs of mankind/human history
    - God's good purposes for His people as they live in this world cannot be thwarted and will surely be fulfilled, as illustrated in the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob & his children
      - preserves His people against those who would harm them and even against their own folly
      - uses others to bring blessing to those whom He has called
  - in over-ruling evil
    - God preserves His people against those who would harm them
      - "I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse" (12:3)
      - e.g. over-ruling Laban's deceitfulness, to bless and prosper Jacob
    - God uses even the sins and evil intentions of people (including His own people) for the good of His people, for example,
      - Out of Judah's sin against his daughter-in-law would come an ancestor of Jesus Christ (38:1-30)
      - Joseph being sold into Egypt as God's means for preserving Jacob's family - "you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good..." (50:20)
- God's promised blessing to Abraham
  - God promises to make Abraham into a great nation
    - entails both descendants and land
    - looks to fulfillment of God's mandate to mankind in Creation to be fruitful and multiply; to fill the earth and subdue/rule over it (1:28)
    - echoed to Isaac (26:3-5, 24) and Jacob (28:13-15; 35:9-12)
  - these promises not were given to all Abraham's descendants, but only to those whom God had chosen and called - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (see above, on God's sovereignty in election)
  - continues God's promise to Adam & Eve of redemption through the seed (offspring) of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent (3:15)
    - God promises that "*in you* [Abraham] all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (12:3)
      - promise made to Abraham and his seed (offspring), looking forward ultimately to Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:16)
        - the blessing promised Abraham comes to the whole world *in Christ*, Abraham's seed
- God's faithfulness
  - God remains faithful to His promises to Abraham and his descendants, in spite of themselves and in spite of others who may oppose them
- God's covenants with Man
  - covenant - "a bond in blood that is sovereignly administered" (O. Palmer Robertson)
    - a life-and-death commitment between 2 (or more) parties

- in the covenants God makes with men, He unilaterally sets the terms ('sovereignly administered')
      - terms stipulate blessings/rewards for keeping the terms of the covenant, and curses/punishments (typically death) for breaking them
    - often inaugurated with a 'self-maledictory oath', calling for judgment on covenant-breaker
      - e.g. cutting animals in half and having the involved parties walk between the pieces - signifying that what happened to the animals should happen to them if they break the terms of the covenant (cf. Jeremiah 34:8-20)
    - often accompanied by a sign of the covenant
  - God makes a covenant with Abraham (chapter 15) (and previously with Noah, chapter 9)
    - God alone walks between the halves of the animals, signifying He alone bears responsibility for fulfilling the terms of the covenant
    - as with many of the covenants God makes, involves not just Abraham, but his seed/offspring
    - sign of the covenant is circumcision (chapter 17)
  - anticipates the New Covenant in Christ's blood
- Faith
  - "[Abraham] believed the LORD, and He counted it to him as righteousness." (15:6)
    - God credits righteousness to those who trust Him and believe in His promises
    - basis of justification by faith, as expounded by Paul in Romans 4 and Galatians 3
  - genuine faith works out in obedience to God, as seen especially in the life of Abraham (e.g. leaving his country; offering Isaac)
- Glimpses of the Promised Savior - "Types" of Jesus Christ
  - types - people, things, or events that pre-figure or foreshadow something or someone else
  - In Genesis 12-50, many people & events point forward to Jesus Christ, including
    - Melchizedek (14:18-20) - both a king and a priest --> points to higher order of priesthood than the Levitical priests, found in Christ (see Psalm 110, Hebrews 7)
    - Abraham's offering of Isaac, but God Himself providing the lamb (22:1-18) - points to God's provision of His Son as a substitute
    - Jacob's dream of a ladder reaching into heaven (28:10-19) - points to Jesus Christ, who is the ladder to heaven (see John 1:51)
    - Joseph - beloved by his father; persecuted and rejected by his brothers, but saves them and is exalted to a position of honor and power

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