

## OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY LESSON 2: *GENESIS Part II (Gen. 12–50)*

### *Book of Origins (Gk.), in the Beginning (Heb.).*

**INTRO:** Recounting the day/OT Narrative illustration – How was Your Day?

**RECAP:**

**AUTHOR:** Moses, see MSB for OT and NT witness.

**DATE:** Between 1446 and 1406 B.C. (wilderness wanderings before conquest of Canaan).

**STRUCTURE:** There are two central divisions in Genesis.

1. Primeval (early) History (Gen 1–11).<sup>1</sup>
2. Patriarchal (Based on fatherly ancestors) History (Gen 12–50).<sup>2</sup>

**THEME:** *The God Who Creates.*

**NEW:**

**OBJECTIVE FOR STUDENTS:** The objective for students is to understand and articulate what the Joseph narrative teaches about trials and how Genesis' account should bring believers encouragement. Or how God is faithful to His promises. Write a 2-3 page paper on how God used a trial in your life to bring about good.

### 1. Abraham (Genesis 12–24)

Genesis 12:1–3 is key for understanding the Abrahamic Covenant, which is later renewed with Isaac and Jacob as well.

Three elements of Abrahamic Covenant: **Land, Seed (descendants), and Blessing.**<sup>3</sup>

The seed of Abraham was threatened by Abraham's sin (Gen 12:13–15), but God intervened.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Remember, this can be further divided into four key events: Creation (Gen 1–2), Fall (3–5), Flood (6–9), and Nations (10–11).

<sup>2</sup> Remember, this can be further divided into four key people: Abraham (12–24), Isaac (25–26), Jacob (27–36), Joseph (37–50).

<sup>3</sup> All the families of the earth are blessed in Christ, Who is a descendant of Abraham.

<sup>4</sup> On another note, here's a couple interesting observations about Lot's choice to live in Sodom: Lot's choice of Sodom similar to Eve's choice of fruit (Gen 13:10). Lot's sin is demonstrated in his progression from bordering Sodom (Gen 13:12) to living in it (Gen 14:12).

**Genesis 15 is foundational for an Old Testament understanding of salvation.** Abraham believed God's character and His promises (**land, seed, blessing**), and God counted that to Him as righteousness (Gen 15:6).<sup>5</sup>

Genesis 17 ushers in the covenant of circumcision – an outward sign of obedience that demonstrated who was of God's chosen people.<sup>6</sup>

Genesis 18–19 displays God's righteous judgement upon the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the wickedness of Lot's daughters.<sup>7</sup>

Genesis 20 shows that Abraham is still a sinner and God's intervention in the threat against the seed with Abimelech. Genesis 21 demonstrates God's faithfulness to His promise in the birth of Isaac. Abraham's faith is then tested in the offering of Isaac (Gen 22).

## **2. Isaac (Gen 25-26):**

Isaac's wife Rebekkah was barren (another threat to the seed) and God blessed her with conception of twins (Gen 25:21), once again demonstrating His complete control over His promises.

God appears and re-affirms Abrahamic Covenant (**Land, Seed, and Blessing**) to Isaac (Gen 26:3–4).

## **3. Jacob (Gen 27–36):**

God appears in a dream and re-affirms the Abrahamic Covenant (**Land, Seed, and Blessing**) to Jacob (Gen 28:13–14).

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<sup>5</sup> This is not based upon Abraham's works, for he has already been demonstrated as a sinner. God alone walked through the carcasses (Gen 15:17), demonstrating that these promises depended upon God's character, not man's. This is further demonstrated in the following account where Genesis 16 demonstrates another threat to the seed as Abraham takes things into his own hands and has a child with Hagar, who is not his wife.

<sup>6</sup> This covenant is an "everlasting covenant," (Gen 17:7), which serves as a reminder of God's complete control over fertility and the multiplication of descendants. God honors marriage by promising descendants from Sarah (Gen 17:16) and demonstrates His power and control by giving Abraham and Sarah a child at a late age (Gen 17:17). "Is anything too difficult for the LORD?" (Gen 18:14).

<sup>7</sup> Abraham's intercession for Sodom implies that there are none righteous in the city (Gen 18:24–32) – all are wicked (Gen 19:4).

God works through the evil of Laban and sin Jacob for the greater purpose of bringing about many descendants in accordance with the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 29–30).

Jacob's name is changed to Israel by God (Gen 32:28).

The horrific account of Genesis 34 is included to explain why Simeon and Levi will not get the preeminent blessing of firstborn. Genesis 35:22 explains why Reuben does not receive the blessing of firstborn preeminence by Jacob.

#### **4. Joseph (Gen 37–50):**

Joseph is not perfect (Gen 37:6–9).

God continues the line of Judah despite Judah's sin (Gen 38), taking Judah's evil and turning it into the good outcome of fulfilling His promises.

Most important takeaway from the Joseph narrative is that God took the evil of Joseph's brothers (and Potiphar's wife) and turned it into the greater good of saving the people of the land, including his brothers (Gen 45:5–8).<sup>8</sup>

Israel's pre-eminent blessing goes to Judah, the fourth-born (rather than the firstborn) because of Reuben, Simeon, and Levi's actions.<sup>9</sup>

After Jacob's death, there is a second instance of Joseph's brothers fearing for their lives (Gen 50:15–21), having an intrusive sense to the narrative – in other words, it sticks out. Instead of rolling the credits and saying “they lived happily ever after,” there is more conflict. The focus of this passage is on Genesis 50:20 – essentially asking the reader “Are you able to champion the goodness of God despite the evil you see?”

Genesis begins with God creating everything as good and it ends by showing that in a post-fall world, God turns the evil of men into good, using the means of men's evil for His good purposes – fulfilling His promises.

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<sup>8</sup> As Paul declares in the New Testament, all things work together for the ultimate good of the believer (Rom 8:28), and the Joseph account shows that sometimes God decrees suffering for the good of others.

<sup>9</sup> Judah's blessing sounds a lot like Genesis 3:15 (Gen 49:8), and the reign of the seed of Judah will not end (Gen 49:10).

In sum, Genesis 12–50 teaches us that God is faithful to His promises.

**POSSIBLE PAPER TOPIC:** How does the account of Joseph’s life bring hope to you as a believer? What does the Genesis 37–50 narrative teach about God’s plan and humanity’s evil that we experience in this world?

**QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY (Not going to be on quizzes or exams):**

Why are the horrific accounts of Reuben, Simeon, and Levi included in the Genesis narrative?

*To explain why Judah (fourth-born) receives the preeminent blessing from Jacob.*

Why are there two accounts of Joseph’s brothers worried about potential retaliation for selling their brother into slavery?

*To emphasize that even in a post-fall world, God is still working out His good purposes despite the evils of humanity.*

Why were the animals split in half in Abraham’s Covenant with God?

*In ancient contexts, when a covenant was made animals would be cut in half and both people would walk through the carcasses – essentially saying that if they broke the covenant they agreed to be like the animals.*

**Bibliography**

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