

The Great Story

Week 03 – The Twelve Tribes to Joseph (Genesis 28-50)

Bible Study

I. Jacob and His Wives

- a. In order to avoid Esau’s wrath, Rebekah told Isaac to send Jacob to Paddan-aram in order that he could take a wife from the daughters of Rebekah’s brother Laban.
- b. On the way to Paddan-aram, Jacob had a dream where the Lord blessed him and his offspring: Genesis 28:12-14
- c. As soon as Jacob saw Rachel, he kissed her (Genesis 29:10-11). When he met Laban, he told him that he would work for 7 years to marry Rachel – Laban agreed.
- d. Laban was deceitful (pattern?). He substituted Leah on the wedding night. Laban told Jacob that it was against their custom to marry off the younger daughter when the older daughter was unwed. If Jacob wanted to marry Rachel, he would have to work for another 7 years. Jacob served another 7 years and married Rachel.
- e. Polygamy was not expressly outlawed until later, but even here, it causes strife. God created man and woman and said that they would come together as one (Genesis 2:24). The plan never included multiple wives.

II. Israel and His Sons (Tribes of Israel)

Rachel	Bilhah (Rachel’s Maid)	Leah	Zipah (Leah’s Maid)
Joseph – 11	Dan – 5	Reuben – 1	Gad – 7
Benjamin – 12	Naphtali – 6	Simeon – 2	Asher - 8
		Levi – 3	
		Judah – 4	
		Issachar – 9	
		Zebulun - 10	

- a. Jacob hated Leah. Yet, when the Lord saw this, he allowed Leah to have children and prevented Rachel.
- b. After Leah had 4 children, Rachel convinced Jacob to take her maid, Bilhah, and have kids through her.
- c. Leah, becoming jealous, convinced Jacob to take her maid, Zipah, and have children.
- d. Leah had two more sons and a daughter (Dinah).
- e. The Lord finally allowed Rachel to have children.

- f. God changed Jacob's name (Genesis 32:28, 35:10)
 - i. Jacob means deceiver, Israel means "God's fighter" or "he struggles with God"
 - ii. First mention – focused on the patriarch's transformation
 - iii. Second mention – highlights the national and royal importance of the name

III. Dinah Defiled (Genesis 34)

- a. After reconciling with Esau, Jacob camped near the city of Shechem in the land of Canaan.
- b. Shechem was also the name of the prince, and when he saw Dinah, he took her forcibly, humiliating her.
- c. Hamor (Shechem's father) came to Jacob asking for peace. Shechem was in love with Dinah.
- d. Jacob's sons were furious and dealt deceitfully (pattern?) with Hamor.
- e. They told Hamor that they would not allow any intermarrying of their daughters unless Hamor's people were circumcised. Hamor agreed to this.
- f. When all the men in the city were circumcised and still sore, Levi and Simeon attacked the city, slaughtering all of the males and bringing Dinah back to their camp.
- g. Jacob was very upset because his numbers were few and the other inhabitants of the land were massing against him now.

IV. Joseph and his Brothers (Genesis 37)

- a. Joseph was the first born of Rachel, the wife Jacob loved. As such, he was the favored child.
- b. All the brothers knew Joseph was favored, but it became obvious when Jacob gave him "the coat of many colors" – It was an ornamental tunic that was typically used to mark the next head of the household.
 - i. It was not necessarily "many colors". Other translations have the robe as simply being a long robe.
- c. Joseph had two prophetic dreams.
 - i. The first symbolized all of his brothers bowing down to him (sheaves in the field)
 - ii. The second symbolized his brothers and father bowing down to him (sun, moon, and eleven stars). Jacob rebuked him for this. It was almost unthinkable in that culture for a son to rule over his father.
- d. Jacob sent Joseph out to check his brother who were grazing their sheep 63 miles away in Dothan. When Joseph found them, his brother seized him, threw him in a pit, and planned to kill him.

- e. Reuben convinced his brothers not to kill Joseph. He planned on having him thrown in a pit and coming back for him later, returning him to Israel.
 - i. The pit was shaped like a bottle with slick, masoned walls. There was no way for Joseph to get out.
- f. Later while they were eating, they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites who were on their way to Egypt. Judah convinced his brother that they should sell Joseph to them as a slave to make a profit.
 - i. Joseph pleaded/begged his brothers not to sell him, but they ignored him – Genesis 42:21
- g. To hide what they had done, they took Joseph's robes, tore it, and dipped it in the blood of a goat. They presented the robe to Jacob, saying that a wild animal must have attacked him.
 - i. Irony – Jacob fooled his father Isaac by putting on Goat Skin

V. **Joseph's Rise to Power (Genesis 39)**

- a. Joseph was 17 when he was sold as a slave to the house of Potiphar
 - i. Potiphar was the captain of the guard
- b. Genesis 39:2 - The Lord was with Joseph and he prospered
- c. Potiphar put Joseph in charge of his household, entrusting everything to him.
 - i. As the one in charge of Potiphar's household, Joseph would have met many of the high people in the court. He would have learned their customs and how to interact with them.
- d. Potiphar's wife desired Joseph and asked him to "lie with her"
- e. Genesis 39:7-9
 - i. Joseph didn't have a Bible to refer to, yet his faith in God was paramount and it is obvious in his actions.
- f. One day, when Potiphar's wife petitioned Joseph and he refused, she grabbed his garment and Joseph fled. Potiphar claimed that Joseph had violated her and told her husband.
- g. A crime of this nature was punishable by death, but Joseph, a slave, was put into prison. This is God's providence at work.
 - i. The prison that Joseph was put into was reserved for the prisoners of Pharaoh. This put him in the perfect position for future events.
- h. Genesis 39:21 – The Lord was with Joseph and had mercy on him.
 - i. The keeper of the prison liked Joseph and put the administration of the prison into his hands.
 - i. Scribe of the Prison – keeps all the records of the prison and managing the assets
- j. Wine Steward and chief baker were accused of trying to poison Pharaoh
 - i. They both had symbolic dreams on the same night and were saddened. God allows Joseph to interpret the dream for them. He tells them the Wine steward will be restored to his position and the chief baker would be hanged.

1. Joseph asks the Wine Steward not to forget him when he is restored, hoping that a good word to Pharaoh will get him out of prison.
 - a. The Wine Steward forgot about Joseph for two more years.
- k. Pharaoh has two dreams: the first of 7 thin cows devouring 7 fat ones and the second of 7 blighted heads of grain eating 7 plump heads of grain
 - i. Pharaoh calls together all of his wise men and magicians to interpret the dream, but no one can
 - ii. Finally the chief cup bearer tells Pharaoh that Joseph had interpreted correctly a dream for himself and also the chief baker.
 - iii. Pharaoh called Joseph and asked if he could interpret the dream
 1. Joseph said that God would interpret it and give him peace
 - iv. Joseph told Pharaoh about the dreams, indicating that they were symbolic of 7 years of plenty and 7 years of famine. Further that Pharaoh needed to appoint someone to oversee the process of collecting 1/5th (tax) of the grain from the years of plenty and saving it for the years of famine.
 - v. Pharaoh appoints Joseph to be Prime Minister. Joseph was 30 years old.

VI. The Reconciliation of Brothers (Genesis 42)

- a. During the years of famine, Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to obtain grain
- b. When Joseph saw them, he accused them of being spies. He imprisoned them for 3 days.
 - i. On the third day he told his brothers that he would keep one of the (Simeon) and the rest should return home to retrieve their youngest brother. When they return, he would know that they were not spies.
 - ii. Speaking among each other in Hebrew they expressed remorse over what they had done to Joseph. They did not realize that Joseph understood them because he was using an interpreter to communicate with them. – Joseph wept.
- c. Joseph sent them back with grain and secretly returned all their money to them.
- d. Reuben pleaded with Israel to allow Benjamin to go to Egypt as proof that they were not spies, but he refused. Later, Judah pleads with Israel and he finally relents.
 - i. Jacob ordered that they take double the money back with them and the money that was put in their bags so they could pay any debt that was owed.
- e. Joseph dined with his brothers upon their return, seating them at his table in order of their birthright. Joseph ate by himself as Egyptians were above eating with Hebrews (social stigma).
- f. Joseph filled their bags with grain again, put their money in their bags, and also hid a silver cup in the bag of Benjamin.
 - i. When they had left, Joseph sent his guard after them. They were instructed to take Benjamin back as a slave.
 - ii. The brothers returned and Judah offered himself in place of Benjamin

1. This was redemption for Judah as he was the one who sold Joseph into slavery. Now he was willing to sacrifice himself for his brother. Judah showed concern for both his father's age and his happiness as he knew he favored Benjamin.
- g. Joseph saw the change in his brothers and revealed himself to them.
- h. Israel was overcome with joy when he learned that Joseph was still alive.
- i. Pharaoh gave the land of Goshen to Israel and his family to live.

VII. The Blessings of Israel (Genesis 49)

- a. As Israel was nearing death, he called his sons to him so he could bless them.
- b. He told Reuben that despite being his first born, he would not receive the birthright because he had defiled his father's bed
- c. The birthright would not pass to Levi or Simeon either because they murdered the men of Shechem.
- d. The birthright fell to Judah, the 4th born. Genesis 49:8-12
 - i. The scepter shall not depart from Judah (David and Solomon were in this line)
 - ii. Jesus is the "Lion of the Tribe of Judah" – Revelation 5:5
- e. Though Joseph had been blessed by God and was used as the instrument to save his family, the blessed line was not to be through him.

VIII. Lessons Learned from these Stories

- a. Trust in the Lord – Romans 8:28, Genesis 50: 20-21
 - i. Joseph had MANY difficulties in his life, but through his faith, God was with him and blessed him.
- b. Providence and Miracles
 - i. Providence – God is in control of everything and works all things for His purposes
 - ii. Miracles – God interferes with the natural order and supernaturally imposes His will on the Creation

IX. Sources

- a. Mathews, K. A. Vol. 1B, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005.
- b. *The MacArthur Study Bible*. Edited by MacArthur, John, Jr. electronic ed. Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997.