

*All the
stories
of the* **Bible**

as crafted and told by John Walsh

Book 1

All the stories of the Bible in five books:

Beginnings

Stories 1-52

Building a Nation

Stories 53-113

Path Down to Captivity

Stories 114-161

Beauty from Ashes

Stories 162-219

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Beginnings

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Warning to parents and teachers:

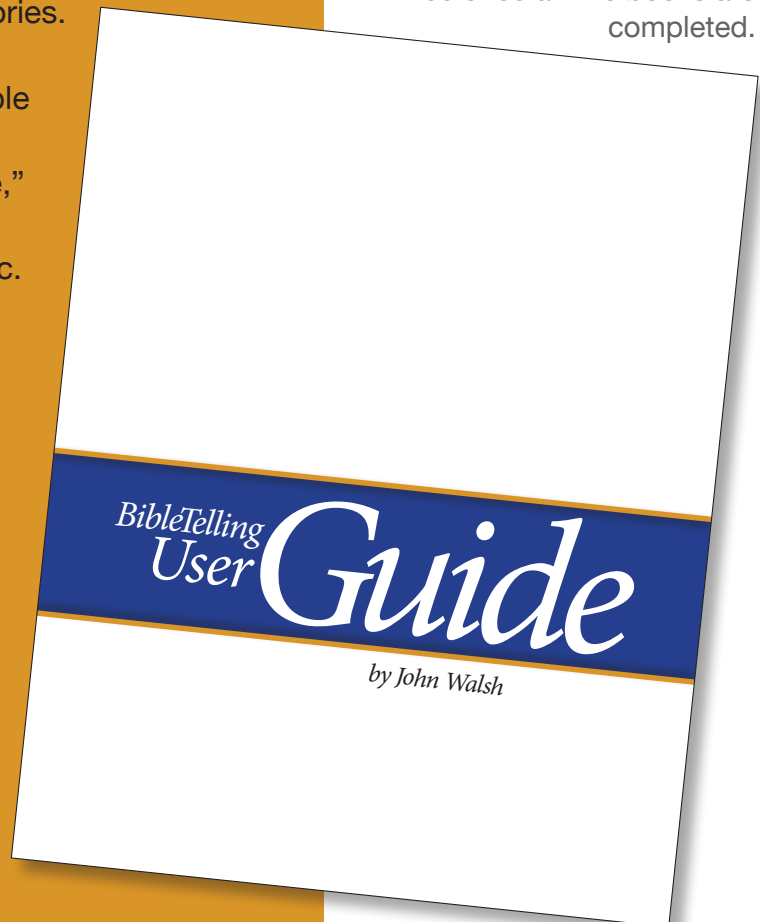
This icon indicates a story that has material you may find objectionable for younger children. We recommend you personally read the story before reading it aloud to children.

The BibleTelling User Guide provides principles of learning and using Bible stories.

In addition, it contains ...

- **Alphabetical listing** of all the stories found throughout the Bible, including those hidden in other stories.
- **50 Groupings** - All the Bible stories grouped together under such titles as “Water stories,” “Women of the Bible,” “Lies of the Bible,” etc.
- **Overview Stories** - the whole Bible in 10 stories, 20 stories, 30 stories, and 40 stories.
- **74 Character Traits** - All the Bible stories grouped together under such titles as “Comfort,” “Blame,” “Deception,” “Determination,” “Forgiveness,” “Persistence,” etc.

The BibleTelling User Guide greatly increases the value of All the Stories of the Bible. It will be updated free once all five books are completed.



1 Creation

Beginnings

Genesis 1 – 2:4

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was lifeless, empty, and dark. Then the Spirit of God moved across the vast emptiness. He said, "Let there be light." Suddenly light shone around the entire sphere of the earth! God looked at the light, and said, "That's good."

He then divided the light from the darkness. He looked at the light and said, "I'll call you day." Turning to the darkness, He said, "And I'll call you night." So, with the day and the night, that was the first day.

On the second day, God looked at the waters and said, "Be divided!"

Immediately, the waters started to separate. Some went up and the rest stayed down. God looked at the waters that were above, and he looked at the waters that were beneath. Then he looked at the space that was in between the two and said, "I'll call you Sky."

On the third day, God focused on the waters that were below the sky. He said, "Be gathered together into seas, rivers and lakes. Let dry land appear." Suddenly land rose up from the waters. Rivers flowed off the land separating the hills and causing valleys. Lakes and seas were everywhere. God looked at the dry land and he looked at the seas and said, "That's good."

Then He said to the land, "Bring forth vegetation! Let there be grasses, vegetables, herbs, and trees. All of them will have seeds, so that life may continue on." Immediately plants started growing across the entire earth. There were grasses, flowers, and vegetables. There were trees of many different kinds. Some would become tall, while other would remain close to the ground. Some of the trees would produce different kinds of fruit. All this vegetation grew from that day forward, and they all had seeds so life could continue on.

On the fourth day, God looked into the heavens and said, "Let there be lights – a greater light to rule over the day, and a lesser light to dominate the night. They'll divide the day and

the night, and be for signs and seasons, days and years." Immediately the sun started moving across the sky, giving light and warmth to the earth. The moon and stars filled the night with splendor and brilliance. God looked at the sun, the moon, and the stars and said, "That's good."

On the fifth day, God looked at the sky and the waters that were below it. He said, "Bring forth life! Let there be birds in the skies, and fish and sea creatures in the water."

Immediately sea creatures started moving in the seas, lakes, and rivers. Some were large and others were very small. There were fish of all different sizes, shapes, and colors. Birds appeared in the skies. Some flew high up in the air, while others stayed close to the ground. They had different shapes, colors, and sounds.

God looked at the sea creatures, the fish, and birds. He said, "That's good." He blessed them and told them to multiply and fill the seas and skies."

On the sixth day, God said to the earth, "Bring forth living creatures. Let there be wild animals and others that can be tamed." Immediately, animals started walking across the earth. Some were huge, and others were very small. God looked at them and said, "That's good."

Then God said, "Let's make people. We'll make them to be like us. They'll rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the animals that move across the land."

So God made a man and a woman and he blessed them and told them to multiply and fill the earth with people. He told them to rule over all he had made. He then gave them fruit, grains, vegetables, and green plants to eat.

Then God looked at all he had made, and he said, "It is all very, very good!"

On the seventh day, God rested from all that he had done. He blessed the seventh day and made it special.

This is how God created the heavens and the earth, and brought forth life in the first week of time.

2 Adam and Eve

Beginnings

Genesis 2:5-24 & 3:20

Imagine the earth when it was new – before the plants had come up. In those days, God hadn't yet allowed it to rain on the earth, but caused a mist to come each day to water the land.

During this time, God took some soil and shaped the first man. He breathed into his nostrils, and Adam was alive.

God planted a garden in a place called Eden. It had every kind of tree, and there was a river that flowed out from the garden.

In the middle, there were two special trees. One was called the Tree of Life and the other was called the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

God told Adam to take care of the garden. He said, "You may eat from every tree except the one in the middle, The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. You're not to eat from that tree. If you eat from it, you will die!"

God said, "It's not good that man is alone. I'll make a helper that's just right for him." He then brought all the animals to Adam and told

him to name them. So Adam named all the animals, and whatever he named them, that was their name.

As he was naming them, he noticed that all the animals came in pairs, male and female. Yet, as he looked around, he noticed that there wasn't a female for him.

God caused a deep sleep to come down over Adam, and he slept deep and long. Then God opened up the flesh in Adam's side and took a rib. Carefully he closed up the flesh. From that rib, God made a woman.

When Adam awoke, God brought the woman to him. Adam said, "This is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh. She'll be called woman, because she was taken out of man." This is the reason why a man leaves his parents and forms a relationship with his wife, and they become one flesh.

Adam named his wife Eve because she would become the mother of all people.

3 The Fall

Beginnings

Genesis 2:25 – 3:24

God created Adam and Eve and provided all they needed in the Garden of Eden. Like the animals, they had no need of clothes, yet they were not ashamed.

The snake was most clever of all the animals. One day he said to Eve, "Is it true God won't let you eat from all the trees in the garden?"

"Oh, we can eat from all the trees. That is, except for the one in the middle. God said that we aren't to eat that fruit or even touch it. He says if we do, we'll die."

"It's not true! You won't die. God told you that because he knows if you eat that fruit, you'd be like him – knowing good, as well as evil."

The woman looked at the fruit. It was beautiful and looked delicious. She thought, "If I eat this fruit, it'll make me wise." So she took the fruit and ate it. She then gave some to Adam and he ate it as well. Suddenly they realized they were naked. So they sewed some fig leaves together to make coverings for themselves.

As evening approached, they heard God walking in the garden. Suddenly, they realized they were afraid of God, so they hid among the trees.

"Adam, where are you?"

Adam knew he had to answer. He said, "Lord, I heard you walking in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked. So, I hid."

"Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat of the tree from which I told you not to eat?"

"It was the woman you gave me. She gave me

the fruit, and ... yes, I ate it."

God turned to Eve, "Why did you do this?"

"The snake! The snake tricked me into eating it!"

God turned to the snake and said, "Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all the animals. From now on, you'll move about on your belly. There'll be hostility between you and the woman, and there'll be a battle between your offspring and hers. He'll crush your head, while you'll only bruise his heel."

Looking back at the woman God said, "Your pain will be great when you give birth to children, and having babies will be associated with pain. You'll want to control your husband, but from now on, men will dominate over you."

God said to Adam, "I made it very clear that you were not to eat from that tree. Because you have disobeyed, the ground is cursed. From now on, you'll work for your food, and the ground will fight against you. It'll sprout thorns and weeds. Hard work will mark your life until you return to the soil from which you came."

God dressed the man and his wife in clothes made out of animal skins. He then sent them out of the garden, where they worked the soil for their food.

God said, "People now know evil as well as good. They'll try to get to the Tree of Life so they can live forever." Therefore, God put a heavenly guard outside the garden. From that day on, people were separated from the Tree of Life.

4 Cain and Abel

Beginnings

Genesis 4:1-16

Adam and Eve had a son and named him Cain. In time they had another son named Abel.

Abel became a herdsman – working with animals. Cain became a farmer, tilling the soil.

One day, when it was time to bring a sacrifice to the Lord, Cain decided to bring fruits and vegetables, instead of a lamb. Abel also brought an offering, but it was the best lamb from his flock. The Lord was pleased with Abel's offering, but he wasn't happy with Cain's.

Cain became angry when he saw that God didn't accept his sacrifice. He started to pout. God said, "Cain, why are you angry? If you simply do what's right, you'll be accepted and happy. But if you don't, sin is waiting for you. It's crouched by your door, ready to pounce and become your master. Instead, you need to take control of it!"

A few days later, Cain and Abel were talking out in a field. Cain turned and attacked his brother and killed him.

Later that day, God asked Cain, "Where's your brother?"

"I don't know! Am I supposed to watch over him all the time?"

"Oh Cain, what have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood is crying to me from the soil. You've loved this ground, but from now on it's cursed because it contains your brother's blood. Oh, you'll continue to work the field, but it'll no longer respond to you and give you its best. You'll become a restless wanderer."

Cain fell down and cried out. "Oh God, your punishment is too severe! You're taking away my land and your presence! I'll be aimless and separated from everyone else. Eventually they'll hunt me down and kill me."

So God put a mark on Cain and said, "Anyone who kills Cain will suffer for it seven times over!"

With that, Cain went away from the presence of the Lord.

5 The Flood

Beginnings

Genesis 6 – 9:17

After people disobeyed God and went into sin, they became extremely wicked. All of their thoughts and actions were evil. God knew he had to destroy the people he created.

Yet, a man named Noah walked with God. The Lord said to him, “I’m going to destroy the entire earth with a flood because the people are wicked. Therefore, I’m making an agreement with you to preserve life on the earth. Build an ark. I’ll give you the exact dimensions I want you to use. After you’re done, a flood will kill all the people and animals on the earth. You and your family will be saved, as well as the animals you take with you.”

God gave him building instructions, and Noah did exactly as God said. He and his three sons built the ark. When it was done, God said, “Noah, go into the ark with your family. After seven days, water will fall upon the earth and every person and animal will be destroyed except those in this ark.”

So Noah and his wife, his sons and their wives moved into the ark. Once they were there, animals and birds started coming in pairs, male and female. There were seven pairs of clean animals, seven pairs of birds, and only one pair of all the rest. When they had every kind of animal and bird, God closed the door.

On the seventh day, the waters that were above the sky started falling to the earth. At the same time, the earth erupted, sending fountains of water shooting up from beneath the ground. Waters flowed down the hills and filled the valleys. Eventually it covered the entire earth. All the people and animals were destroyed.

Those same waters lifted Noah’s ark above the destruction. The people, animals, and birds that were in the ark were safe while the whole earth was being destroyed. This deluge of water lasted

forty days and covered the entire world. And then ... it stopped.

Noah’s ark floated on the water for 110 days after it stopped raining. There were winds that moved across the earth to dry it off.

Finally, the ark landed on a mountain called Ararat. Noah waited for another four months and then opened the window to see what was on the earth.

He sent out a raven, but it never came back. Next he sent out a dove, which flew around but couldn’t find a place to nest. Soon she returned to the ark and Noah took her in.

After seven days, he sent out the dove again. She came back that night with an olive leaf in her beak. Noah then knew that plants were growing once again. He waited seven more days and sent out the dove again. This time, she didn’t come back.

A month later, Noah removed the hatch from the ark and saw that the earth was dry. God said, “Your family and the animals may leave the ark.”

Once they were out of the ark, Noah built an altar so they could worship God. The Lord smelled the sacrifice and said, “Never again will I destroy the earth with a flood. There will always be planting and harvest, hot and cold, summer and winter, day and night.

“From now on, animals will fear you, yet you are still responsible for them.

“You may now eat animals as well as plants. But you’re not to kill people, because they are made in the image of God.

“You’re to multiply and once again fill the earth with people.”

God said to Noah and his family, “Look into the clouds and see the rainbow. When I look at it and when you look at it, we’ll remember this promise. A flood will never again destroy the entire earth. This is my promise to you.”

6 The World after the Flood

Beginnings

Genesis 9:20 – 11:26

After the Flood, Noah planted a vineyard. In time he drank some of the wine from his harvest and got drunk. He went to his tent and fell asleep on the floor without any clothes on.

His youngest son saw his father lying there, and went and told his brothers what he had seen. His brothers draped a coat between them and walked backwards into the tent, draping the coat over their father.

When Noah woke up, he learned what had happened. So he put a curse on the family of his youngest son, and blessed the families of the other two.

All three sons had large families, with many children and grandchildren. Among all these people was a man named Nimrod. He became the first dictator. He was known for his skill of hunting, and his kingdom was called Babylon.

The people of Babylon realized that their potential was greater if they stayed together. They felt it best not to go throughout the

world like God had said. So they built a tower that went high into the sky – high enough so everyone could see it. They felt this would keep them together.

God looked at the tower and said, “People are disobeying my command. If they stay together, nothing will be impossible for them. Therefore, I’ll have them talk different languages.”

Suddenly the people spoke many different languages. They were confused because they couldn’t understand one another. They didn’t know what was happening to them. Immediately, the work on the tower stopped. They formed groups according to their languages and moved to other parts of the world. The tower became known as the tower of confusion, or the Tower of Babel.

The oldest son of Noah was Shem. One of his descendants was a man named Peleg. His name means division, because at the time of his birth, the earth divided. His great, great, great grandson was Abraham.

7 Call of Abraham

Beginnings

Genesis 11:26 – 12:20

Terah lived in a place called Ur. He had three sons and at least one daughter. One of the sons had a child named Lot. Another son was Abram, who married his half-sister Sarai.

When Lot's father died, Terah took the entire family and moved north to a place called Haran. They stayed there until Terah died.

When Abram was seventy-five years old, the LORD said, "Abram, I want you to leave your family and country and go to a place I have selected for you. I'll make you into a nation and your name will be great. I'll bless you, and I'll also bless everyone else who blesses you. And I'll curse anyone who curses you. All the families of the earth will be blessed because of you."

So Abram took his wife Sarai and Lot his nephew and left Haran. When they came to a place called Canaan, God said, "I'm giving this land to you and your children." Abram believed God, even though he didn't have any children. He knew God would keep his promise. So he built an altar in the new land God had given him, and worshiped the Lord.

Sometime later, a severe famine hit the land. So Abram took all he had and went to Egypt. He said to Sarai, "The Egyptians will see you're a beautiful woman. They'll kill me in order to get you. So tell them you're my sister."

He was right. The Egyptians saw that Sarai was beautiful. When Pharaoh found out that she wasn't married, he took her into his house. He treated Abram well, thinking the man was her brother.

Abram became rich in Egypt. His wealth included sheep, cattle, donkeys, camels, and servants.

God was angry with Pharaoh because he had Sarai in his house. Plagues hit his family, and everyone got seriously sick. Finally, Pharaoh said to Abram, "Why did you do this to me? You said she was your sister. Now I find out she's your wife! Take her and get out of here!"

So Abram took his wife and Lot and went back to Canaan. They settled near a place called Bethel. There, he worshiped the Lord.

Genesis 13:10 – 15:24

Both Abram and Lot were prosperous. Soon their herdsmen started arguing over grazing rights. Abram said, “We shouldn’t be fighting. After all, we’re family. There is plenty of land here. You choose. You go one way and I’ll go the other.”

Lot knew which direction he wanted to go. The Jordan valley had plenty of water, and it reminded him of Egypt. He’d often say to himself, “It’s like the Lord’s garden.” So he chose the entire Jordan Valley. He set up his tent near Sodom, even though the men there were extremely wicked.

Then the Lord said to Abram, “Look to the north and to the south. Look to the east and the west. I’m giving it all to you and your descendants. Get up! Walk over all this land. It’s yours.”

Some time later, an alliance of four city-kingdoms made war with the five cities around Sodom. The alliance won the battle and took all their possessions, food, and many of the people, including Lot.

When Abram heard about this, he took his 318 trained servants and chased after the alliance. He attacked them during the night and totally defeated them. He then took Lot, all the people,

and their possessions back to Sodom.

Abram met Melchizedek when he got there. Melchizedek was the king of Salem, but he was also a priest of the Most High God. He said, “Abram is blessed by the Most High God, who created the heaven and earth. Give praise to the Most High God, because it is he who has given you victory over your enemies.”

Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything.

The king of Sodom said to Abram. “Give me the people and you keep all the possessions.”

Abram said, “No, I’m not taking any of it. I’m giving it all back to you, except what the servants ate during the campaign. I never want you to say, ‘I made Abram rich.’ ”

With that, Abram and his servants went home. Soon afterwards, the Lord came to him in a vision and said, “I’m your shield and exceeding great reward.”

Abram answered, “Lord, I still don’t have a son, but I have a servant that is like a son to me. Let him inherit your promises to me.”

“No! You’ll have a son, and he’ll be your heir. Abram, look at the stars in the sky. Your descendants will be as hard to count as those stars.” This seemed impossible to Abram, but he believed it, and God was pleased!

9 The God Who Sees Me

Beginnings

Genesis 16

After Abram had lived in Canaan for ten years, Sarai became concerned that she hadn't yet had a child like the Lord promised. She said to her husband, "I have a solution to this problem. Go to bed with my slave Hagar. When she delivers a child, it'll be the same as if I had the child."

Abram agreed and did as she said. But as soon as Hagar became pregnant, she started acting like she was better than Sarai.

This made Sarai angry. She said to Abram, "You're the one who has caused all my problems! You got my slave pregnant, and now she thinks she's better than me."

Abram said, "She's your slave. Do whatever you want with her."

So Sarai started beating Hagar and humiliating her in any way she could. Finally, the slave ran away. She came to a spring of water and collapsed next to it.

The Angel of the Lord said to her, "Hagar, where are you going?"

"Oh Lord. I'm running away from Sarai, my mistress."

"No, no, you shouldn't do that. God has heard your crying out in pain. Go back and submit to Sarai, even if she beats you. You'll have a son, and you're to call him Ishmael. He'll be a fighting man, and be at odds with everyone. I'll multiply your descendants so much that you wouldn't be able to count them."

Hagar was amazed and said, "I have seen the God who sees me. So she named the spring, 'The Well of the Living God who Sees Me.'"

She then went back and submitted herself to Sarai. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar gave birth to her son. He named the child Ishmael, which means "God Hears."

10 The Promise of Isaac

Beginnings

Genesis 18:1-15 & 21:1-7

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord said to him, “You’ll be the father of many nations and some of your descendants will be kings! Therefore I’m changing your name to Abraham, which means the ‘father of many nations’. I will be with you and I will give this land to you and your descendants. As a sign of these promises, you are to circumcise all the men.”

Then the Lord said to him, “From now on, your wife will be called Sarah. I will bless her, and she’ll bear you a son.”

Abraham laughed and said, “How is it possible for a man who is a hundred years old and a woman who is ninety years old to have a child? Perhaps Ishmael could inherit all your promises to me.”

God said, “No, Sarah will have a son and you’ll call his name Isaac. I’ll give my promises to him and his descendants, and I’ll be their God. And the whole earth will be blessed because of them.

But I will bless Ishmael as well. I will also make a great nation of him. Twelve tribes will come from him.”

Sometime later, Abraham was sitting at the door of his tent. Suddenly he noticed three men standing nearby, and realized that one of them was the Lord. He rushed over to them and said, “Sirs, Please, come sit under this tree. I’ll give you some water so you can wash

your feet. Then you rest while I prepare a meal. After you have eaten, you may continue on your way.”

They said, “Yes, we’ll stay for a while.”

Abraham rushed into the tent and told Sarah to make some bread for his guests. He then went to the field and selected a choice calf and gave it to his servants so they could use it to prepare a meal. As soon as the food was ready, Abraham served it to his guests and then stood back and watched them eat.

As they ate, the Lord said to Abraham, “Where’s Sarah, your wife?”

“She’s in the tent.”

The Lord said, “I’ll come back in about a year. At that time Sarah will have given birth to a son.”

Sarah was listening to this from inside the tent. She was ninety years old, so she laughed inside herself when she heard that she was going to give birth to a son. She said, “That’s impossible. I’m too old to give birth to a child.”

The Lord asked Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh? Is anything too hard for the Lord? I WILL come back, and she WILL have given birth to a child!”

When Sarah heard this, she ran out and said, “Lord, I didn’t laugh!”

“Ah, but you DID laugh!”

Soon Sarah found that she was expecting a child.

11 Bargaining with God

Beginnings

Genesis 18:16-33

Abraham had three guests. One of them was the Lord. He served them a meal under the shade of a tree. Afterwards they got up and started walking toward Sodom. Abraham walked with them for a short distance.

Suddenly the Lord stopped and said to the others, "I'm going to tell Abraham what I'm about to do. After all, he'll become a great and powerful nation. All the nations on earth will be blessed through him. I know he'll teach his children to honor God and do right."

Turning to Abraham, the Lord said, "The sin of Sodom and Gomorrah is great. I hear the cries of their victims constantly. I'm going to the city to see it for myself. If I find that it's true, I'll destroy them."

As Abraham and the Lord continued to talk, the other two men left them and walked toward Sodom. Abraham said, "Is it true that you would actually sweep away the righteous along with the wicked? Let's say there're fifty righteous people in the city. Would you actually destroy the place, knowing that you're killing those righteous people right along with the wicked? I don't believe you'd do that. The Judge of all the earth is always just."

The Lord said, "If I find fifty righteous people in Sodom, then for their sakes I won't destroy the city."

Abraham said, "I realize now that I shouldn't

have been so fast to talk to you that way. I'm nothing but dust along the road. But let's say the city lacked just five people to make up the fifty you're looking for. Are you going to destroy the whole city just because they're missing five righteous people?"

The Lord said, "I won't destroy the city if I find forty-five righteous people there."

"Uh, Lord, could we make that forty righteous people?"

"I won't destroy the place if I find forty righteous people there."

"Lord, don't be angry with me for speaking up again. What would you do if you found only thirty righteous people there?"

"I won't destroy the place if I find thirty righteous people there."

"Lord, since I have already been so bold to talk to you about this, could we make that twenty righteous people?"

"I won't destroy the place if I find twenty righteous people there."

"Uh Lord, please don't be angry with me. I promise this is the last time I'll talk to you about this. What would you do if you found only ten righteous people there?"

"I won't destroy the place if I find ten righteous people there."

With that, the conversation was over. The Lord left, and Abraham returned to his tent.

12 Sodom and Gomorrah

Beginnings

Genesis 19

In the early evening, two angels entered Sodom. They found Lot sitting at the city gate. As soon as he saw them, he went and bowed before them. He said, "I'm your humble servant. Please come to my house so I can make you comfortable. I'll wash your feet and give you a place to spend the night. Then I'll wake you up early so you can be on your way."

They said, "No, we'll just spend the night here in the town square."

"Oh, no, my lords! You must come with me right now. Please follow me."

He led them to his house and his family prepared a meal for them. As they were preparing for bed, a mob gathered outside. It was all the men of the city, both young and old. They surrounded the house and yelled, "Lot, give us those men who are in your house. Send them out so we can have sex with them."

Lot stepped outside and closed the door behind him. He said, "Please, my brothers, don't do this wickedness. These men are guests in my house. Instead of these men, take my two daughters. They're virgins. Do what you want with them, but don't touch these men."

The mob got angry. "Get out of the way! Who do you think you are – our judge? You're not even one of us."

With that, they pushed him aside and started to break down the door. The angels opened the door, grabbed Lot, pulled him inside, and slammed the door. They then caused all the men outside to go blind. The crowd dispersed as they tried to find their way.

The angels turned to Lot. "We're here to destroy this city! The voices of its victims are yelling into the ears of God. Quick, go get any

relatives you have who are living in the city – sons, daughters, sons-in-law – anyone who belongs to you. Get them and leave this city.

Lot rushed to the home of his future sons-in-law. "Wake up! Come with me! We have to get out of the city! The Lord is about to destroy it." But they ignored him because they thought he was joking.

Lot had still not left the city in the morning as the sun was coming up. The angels yelled, "Hurry! You and your family get out of here! You're about to be killed in the judgment."

Still, they took their time getting ready to leave. With that, the Lord showed compassion on them. The angels physically grabbed Lot, his wife and daughters and rushed them out of the city. Once there, the angels said, "Run for your lives! Don't look back! Don't stop until you're in the mountains."

Lot said, "Oh Lord, you've been merciful to me. But I can't make it to the mountain. Please, there's a small town near by. Let me go there."

The angel said, "Go there and I'll hold the judgment away from that town. But hurry! I can't do anything until you're safe." The Lord was showing mercy to Lot because of Abraham. Unfortunately, Lot's wife looked back toward the city as they were running away, so she became a pillar of salt.

The sun was fully up when Lot reached the little town. As soon as he was inside, the Lord brought down fire from heaven and destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, and all the other cities in the valley, except for that one little town.

Abraham went out to the spot where God had talked with him. He looked in the direction of Sodom but all he saw was smoke rising into the sky.

13 She's My Sister

Beginnings

Genesis 20

Abraham travelled to an area where Abimelech was king. He told the people there, "Sarah is my sister." So Abimelech sent people to get Sarah and bring her to his household. Once she was there, the Lord prevented the king from having sex with her.

God came to Abimelech in a dream and said, "You're about to die because that woman you brought into your house is married."

The king said, "Lord, I'm innocent! The man told me she was his sister, and she said the same. Lord, you must believe that I did this with a clear conscience. Besides I haven't touched her."

The Lord said, "Yes, I know you're telling the truth. I kept you away from her. Now here's what you're to do. The man is a prophet. Take his wife back to him and ask him to pray for you. If he does, I'll let you live. But be careful. If you don't do this, you and your entire family will die."

Early in the morning, Abimelech called in all of his servants. When he told them what God had said, terror fell on all of the men. Suddenly the women of the household realized they were

unable to bear children.

Abimelech sent for Abraham. When he arrived, the king said to him. "Why did you do this to us? What did I do to you that caused you to treat me this way? My whole kingdom is going through tremendous guilt. Never in the world should anyone treat another person like this! What were you thinking of?"

Abraham said, "My wife and I have the same father. So she really is my sister. We just don't have the same mother. When we came to your land, I didn't know the fear of God was here. I was sure I'd be killed so you could get my wife. So she agreed to show her loyalty to me by telling people that I'm her brother."

Abimelech gave Sarah back to Abraham, along with sheep, cattle, slaves, and a thousand pieces of silver. He said, "You may freely go anywhere in my kingdom. Settle where you want. No one will bother you."

Abraham then prayed for the king. So the Lord healed Abimelech, and allowed all the women to have children once again.

14 God Hears

Beginnings

Genesis 21:8-21

When Abraham was a hundred years old, Sarah gave birth to a son. They called him Isaac, which means “laughter,” because Sarah said; “God has put laughter in my heart. And all who hear about me giving birth to a child will laugh with me. Who would have thought that I could nurse a baby?”

When Ishmael was a young man, Sarah saw him mocking Isaac. She was furious and said to Abraham, “Send that woman away, as well as her son. I don’t want them to inherit anything that belongs to Isaac.”

Abraham didn’t want to do this because he loved Ishmael. But God told him, “Do what Sarah wants. My promises to you will be passed down through Isaac. And don’t be concerned about Ishmael and his mother. Because he’s your son, I’ll make a nation of him as well.”

So, early the next morning, Abraham gave Hagar bread and water, and sent her and her son

away. They wandered into the wilderness, where they stayed until their water was gone. Soon Hagar lost all hope of living. She couldn’t bear to watch her son die, so she left him under a bush and walked a short distance away. She then fell to the ground and sobbed.

Ishmael called out and God heard his voice. The Angel of the Lord said to Hagar, “Don’t be afraid. God has heard your son’s voice. Get up and go to him. He needs your help. Take care of him because he’ll be the father of a great nation.”

With that, God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water nearby. She rushed over and filled her container with water and took it to her son.

So Ishmael grew and God was with him. He became a great archer and settled in the wilderness. In time, Hagar went to Egypt and got a wife for him.

15 The Trial of Abraham

Beginnings

Genesis 22

When Isaac was a young man, God came to Abraham and said, “Abraham, take Isaac, the son you love so dearly, and go to a place I’ll show you. There, you’re to sacrifice him as a burnt offering.”

So the next morning, Abraham got up early and cut wood for the sacrifice. He saddled a donkey, took two servants, and started on the journey.

Three days later, Abraham saw the place God had selected. He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey. Isaac and I will go and worship the Lord. We’ll come back after the sacrifice.”

He told Isaac to carry the wood. Abraham took the hot coals and the knife. Isaac looked around and asked: “Father, we have the wood and the fire, but where’s the lamb for sacrifice?” Abraham looked at his son and finally said, “God will provide Himself a lamb for the sacrifice.”

When they got to the place God had selected, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on top. Next, he tied up his son and

put him on top of the wood. He then reached for the knife to kill his son.

With that, the angel of the Lord called to him out of heaven. “Abraham, Abraham! Don’t kill your son! Don’t do anything to him! For now I know you fear God, since you were willing to give me your son!”

Abraham looked off to the side and saw a ram with his horns caught in a bush. He took the ram and used him as the sacrifice instead of his son. Abraham named the place “The Lord Will Provide”.

Afterwards, God said to Abraham, “Because you have obeyed me, I’ll bless you and your descendants. I’ll make your descendants as hard to count as the stars. They’ll be as hard to count as the sand on the seashore. On top of that, I’ll make them prominent, even in the cities of their enemies! And the whole earth will be blessed because of them.”

Then Abraham and Isaac went back to where the servants were waiting, and together they went home.

16 Beer-sheba

Beginnings

Genesis 19:30-38

King Abimelech came to Abraham and said, "We can clearly see that God is with you in everything you do. So let's make an agreement that there'll be peace between your people and my people."

Abraham said, "I agree, but there is a problem we need to talk about. Your people have taken one of my wells."

The king said, "I didn't know anything about this. Why didn't you tell me before now? I'll take care of it."

So they made an agreement and Abraham sealed it with giving Abimelech cattle and sheep. But he set aside seven ewe lambs.

Abimelech asked about this. Abraham said, "You are to accept these seven lambs as you're way of saying that I own this well."

The king accepted the seven ewe lambs, and Abraham called the place Beer-sheba, which means, "Well of the Oath." He planted a tamarisk tree there and worshipped the Lord, the Everlasting God.

Soon after the destruction of Sodom, Lot and his two daughters left the little town where they lived because he was afraid of what might happen to them there. They went to the mountains and lived in a cave.

One day, the oldest daughter said to her sister, "Our father is old, and we have no hope of getting a husband and having children. Therefore, it's up to us to preserve our father's line for future generations. I have a plan. Let's get our father drunk until he no longer knows what he's doing. We'll then have sex with him."

The sister agreed, so that night they got their father drunk. The oldest daughter had sex with

him. He didn't know anything that happened.

The next day, the older daughter said to her sister, "Tonight it's your turn. Remember, we're doing this to preserve our father's line." So they got their father drunk, and the younger daughter had sex with him. Again, Lot didn't know anything that happened.

Both daughters became pregnant by their father. The oldest sister gave birth to a son who became the father of the Moabites. The younger sister gave birth to a son who became the father of the Ammonites.

Years later, Sarah died, having lived 127 years. Their encampment was near Hebron at the time, so Abraham went to the Hittites and said, "We both live in this land together. Please allow me to buy a place where I can bury my dead."

They said, "You're God's chosen. None of us would hinder you from burying your dead."

Abraham got up and bowed down before them. "One of you owns a particular cave at the end of a field. Talk to him and persuade him to sell it to me at full price."

That man stepped forward and said, "I am that man, and I can tell you that you're free to bury your dead there at no charge."

So the two men met in front of all the people and Abraham said, "Please allow me to buy this cave at full price."

The man said, "The cave is worth 400 shekels of silver, but what is that between you and me. Bury your dead freely in the cave."

So Abraham weighed out 400 shekels and paid it to the man in front of everyone. So Abraham buried Sarah in the cave of Hebron, and it became his possession from that day on.

17 Rebekah

Beginnings

Genesis 24

When Sarah died, Abraham realized he needed to find a wife for his son Isaac. He said to his servant, "I'm sending you back to my homeland so you can find a wife for my son. Promise me you won't choose a woman from the people around here. Make sure she's from among my relatives."

The servant was concerned. "What if I find a woman, and she's not willing to leave her home and come here? Perhaps I should take Isaac back there to marry her."

"Absolutely not! You're not to take Isaac back to that country! Listen, the Lord will send his angel before you. He'll prepare the way. But if the woman isn't willing to come back with you, then you're released from this assignment."

After a long journey, the servant reached the town where Abraham's relatives lived. He stopped at a well on the outskirts of town and prayed, "Oh God, help me find the right woman for Isaac."

Suddenly he had an idea. "Lord, I'll ask a woman for a drink of water. I'll know she's the right one if she gives me a drink, and then offers to draw water for all ten of these camels!"

Soon a young woman named Rebekah came to the well. She was beautiful ... and virtuous ... and ... she wasn't married.

She filled her jar and started to walk away. The servant stepped forward and asked for a drink of water. She gave him one, and then offered to draw water for all his camels. While she was doing this, the servant asked God to help him know for sure that this was the woman for Isaac.

After Rebekah was done, the servant gave her several pieces of jewelry and asked, "Who's your family, and is there room at your father's house for my men and me to spend the night?" She told the servant the names of her father and

grandfather, and the servant knew they were Abraham's relatives. Rebekah said that there was plenty of room for them to spend the night.

She then left the servant and ran home to tell her family about this conversation. Her brother was Laban, and when he saw the valuable jewelry, he hurried to the well to see who had given her these things. He asked the servant, "Come, we've prepared a place for you and your servants, as well as your camels!"

Once they got to the house, the servant was invited to sit down and eat a meal with them. But he said, "Before we eat this meal, I must tell you my story."

He told them about the assignment Abraham had given him. He then said, "I prayed and asked God to show me the right woman for Isaac. As a sign, I asked that she'd be willing to give me a drink of water and also draw water for all the camels. Rebekah did exactly that. I believe she's the woman God has chosen to be Isaac's wife."

Laban and his father were amazed when they heard this story. They agreed with him and immediately gave their blessing. The next morning they asked Rebekah if she was willing to go with Abraham's servant and marry Isaac. She said she was willing to go. So, they blessed Rebekah and sent her with the servant.

Isaac was in the field when he saw, off in the distance, the servant's caravan of camels. So he started walking toward it. Rebekah saw him coming their way. She asked the servant, "Who is that man?"

"Oh, that is my master, Isaac." So Rebekah covered herself with a veil.

The servant told Isaac all about his trip, and how God led him to just the right woman. So Isaac took Rebekah to be his wife, and the love between them was great.

18 Selling the Birthright

Beginnings

Genesis 25:19 – 26:1-34

After Sarah died, Abraham married a woman named Keturah. Together they had six sons. Years later, when Abraham knew he was going to die, he gave gifts to Keturah and her sons, and sent them away to the land of the East. He then gave everything he owned to Isaac.

Abraham died when he was 175 years old. Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the same cave where Sarah was buried.

After twenty years of marriage, Isaac prayed for his wife because she was unable to have children. God answered his prayer and Rebekah became pregnant with twin boys.

Near the end of her term, she felt like there was fighting inside her womb. She was in so much pain that she prayed, "Oh God, what is happening to me?"

The Lord said, "You have two nations inside of you. Two people groups will come from your womb. One will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger."

At the time of birth, the oldest baby was red and covered with hair. They named him Esau, which means "hairy."

His brother was born holding on to Esau's heel. They named him Jacob, which means,

"heel." Isaac was sixty years old when the boys were born.

As a man, Esau became skilled as an outdoorsman, which included hunting. Jacob was quiet, and preferred to stay home. Rebekah loved Jacob, but Isaac loved the taste of wild game, so he favored Esau.

One day, Esau came home exhausted from a trip. He found Jacob cooking a pot of stew. He said, "I'm tired and hungry. Give me some of that red stew."

Jacob said, "I'll trade my stew for your birthright."

"That's a deal! My birthright won't do me any good if I die of hunger. Now give me the stew, I want the whole pot."

Jacob said, "No. You must first swear an oath that you're giving me your birthright."

"I swear to you. The birthright is yours."

With that, Jacob gave his brother an entire meal of bread, stew, and drink. Esau ate and drank heartily, and then got up and left.

From then on, it was said of Esau, "He despised his birthright." Also, people referred to him as "Edom," which means "Red." This was because of the value he placed on that red stew.

19 She's My Sister II

Beginnings

Genesis 26:1-11

A great famine hit the place where Isaac lived, so he realized he needed to move to another area. The Lord appeared to him and said, "Don't go to Egypt. Stay in this land, even though you're a foreigner here. I'll bless you, and give you all the promises I gave to your father Abraham. Your descendants will be as hard to count as the stars. I'll give them all of this land, and through them all the nations on earth will be blessed."

So Isaac didn't go to Egypt, but instead settled in the land of Abimelech, king of the Philistines. When the men there saw that Rebekah was a beautiful woman, they asked Isaac about her. He immediately became concerned for his life, thinking they would kill

him because of her. So he said, "She's my sister."

When Isaac had been there for a while, the king looked out of his window and saw Isaac hugging and kissing Rebekah. The king sent for him and said, "This woman is your wife! Why did you tell everyone she was your sister?"

Isaac explained how he was afraid he might be killed because of her. The king said, "You've put all of us at risk. One of our men could have easily had sex with her. Then we all would've suffered because of it."

So Abimelech sent out a warning to all his people. "If anyone harms Isaac or his wife, that person will die."

20 The Well Digger

Beginnings

Genesis 26:12-33

Isaac was a farmer while he lived among the Philistines. The Lord blessed his harvest so much that he became more and more wealthy. Eventually, his wealth was so great that the Philistines became jealous. They decided to plug up some wells Abraham had dug. In time, Abimelech asked Isaac to leave their country. He said, "You've become too powerful. We feel you're a threat to us."

Isaac moved to another valley, and his servants unplugged some of Abraham's wells. They also dug some new ones. Suddenly they found precious spring water. The herdsmen in that area said, "That water belongs to us." So Isaac's servants went and dug other wells, and again found water. Again, the herdsmen said, "That's our water."

They went to another area and dug some more wells. This time, no one argued about the water they found. Isaac said, "Finally! The Lord

has made room for us. We can now prosper at this spot. He called that place, "Plenty of Room."

Abimelech and a delegation from the Philistines went to Isaac. When he saw them he said, "You sent me away in anger. So why have you come to me now?"

Abimelech said, "It's clear to us that the Lord has been with you all this time. We want a treaty with you. We were good to you when you lived among us. Yes, we sent you away, but it was in peace. Now, let's agree that you'll treat us the same way and won't harm us."

So Isaac prepared a banquet, and they all ate and drank together. The next morning they each gave an oath that they would live in peace with one another.

As Abimelech and his delegation left, servants came and told Isaac about their newest well. They said, "We've found water." So he called the place Beer-sheba, which means "Well of the Oath."

21 Stolen Blessing

Beginnings

Genesis 27 – 28:9

As Isaac got older, he became blind, and thought he was going to die soon. So he decided to give the family blessing to Esau. He said, “Go hunt for wild game and prepare it the way I like. After I eat, I’ll give you the family blessing.”

Rebekah overheard this and told Jacob. She said, “Go get two young goats. I’ll prepare them as a meal for your father, and make it the way that will please him. You serve it to him and get the blessing.”

Jacob said, “Esau is a hairy man, and I have smooth skin. If my father touches me, he’ll know that I’m trying to trick him. He’ll give me a curse instead of a blessing!”

Rebekah said, “Let your curse be on me! Go and do as I’ve said.”

So Jacob went and got the two young goats and gave them to his mother. She gave him Esau’s hunting clothes to put on. After she prepared the meal, she covered Jacob’s arms with goatskins – as well as the back of his neck.

Jacob took the food to his father’s tent. He said, “Father.”

Isaac turned his blind eyes toward him. “Yes, son, who are you?”

“I’m Esau. Please, sit up and eat so you can give me the blessing.”

Isaac said, “I’m surprised you’re back so fast! “Your God was with me and gave me success.”

Isaac said, “Come close to me so I can make sure you’re really Esau.” So Jacob stepped closer and Isaac reached out and touched his arm. It was hairy like Esau’s arm. Isaac then reached around to the back of Jacob’s neck. Once again he found it was hairy.

He said, “Son, I’m confused. Your voice sounds like Jacob, yet your skin feels like Esau. Are you really Esau?”

“Yes, father, I’m Esau.”

“Well ... uh ... please, serve me the meal.”

Jacob served the food to his father. It tasted exactly the way Esau would have prepared it.

Still Isaac was not convinced. So he asked his

son to come and give him a kiss. When Jacob leaned over to kiss his father, Isaac smelled the clothes his son was wearing. It had the smell of the outdoors. He said,

“The smell of my son is like the smell of a field - blessed by God!

May God give you of heaven’s dew and earth’s richness:

an abundance of grain and new wine!

May nations serve you and people bow down to you.

*You’ll be the master over your brothers
The sons of your mother
will bow down to you.*

*May those who curse you be cursed,
and those who bless you be blessed.”*

Soon after Jacob left the tent, Esau came in with the meat he had prepared. “Father, sit up and eat the meal I’ve prepared for you. Then you can give me the blessing.”

Isaac looked up. “Who are you?”

“I’m Esau, your firstborn son! Please, sit up.”

Isaac began to tremble. “Then who brought me a meal of wild game? I gave him the blessing. And... indeed, the blessing is his.

Esau was shocked. He shouted, “Bless me too, my father!”

“Ah, your brother deceived me and took your blessing. I’ve made him your lord. All of his relatives will serve him. I’ve given him everything – all of our grain and new wine. What else can I possibly give you?”

As Esau left his father’s tent, he said, “After my father dies, I’ll kill Jacob!”

Rebekah heard this, and rushed to tell Jacob. “You must leave. Go to my brother’s house! I’ll send for you once Esau gets over his anger. Go quickly. I don’t want to lose both of you in one day!”

She then got Isaac’s permission for Jacob’s trip. Isaac agreed that Jacob should go to Rebekah’s country and find a wife.

22 Jacob's Two Wives

Beginnings

Genesis 28:1-30

Jacob started his journey to his mother's country. His father had said, "You're not to marry a Canaanite woman. Go back to your mother's family and find a wife there. May God give you the blessings he promised Abraham!"

Jacob traveled all day. That night, he slept on the ground, using a rock for a pillow.

During the night he dreamed he saw a ladder that went up to Heaven. There were angels going up and coming down! He saw the Lord standing above the ladder saying, "I'm the Lord God of Abraham and your father Isaac. I'm giving this land to you and your descendants. All the earth will be blessed because of them! I'm with you and will watch over you as you go. I'll bring you back to this land."

Suddenly Jacob woke up and was afraid. He said, "Oh, ... God is here and I didn't know it! This is the house of God and the doorway to Heaven!"

He took the rock he had used as a pillow and used it to build an altar. He poured oil on it and called the place Bethel, which means "the house of God." He said, "If God watches over me, and provides for me, and brings me back to this land, then he'll be my God, and I'll give him a tenth of all he gives to me."

Jacob traveled on to the home of his mother's brother. His uncle Laban received him with joy.

Now Laban had two daughters. The oldest was Leah, and the youngest was Rachel – who was beautiful.

At the end of a month, Laban said to Jacob, "Work for me and I'll give you wages. What's your price?"

Jacob said, "I'll work for you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel."

Laban agreed and said, "It's a deal!"

So Jacob worked for Laban seven years, and it seemed like a few days because of his great love for Rachel.

At the end of that time, Laban invited people to a wedding feast. At the appropriate time, he brought his daughter and gave her to Jacob. It wasn't until morning that Jacob realized his uncle had given him Leah, the oldest daughter.

He was furious! He went to Laban and said, "Why did you deceive me? You know I love Rachel! I served you seven years for her."

Laban said, "In our country, a younger daughter isn't allowed to marry until the older one is married. But, this is what we can do. Fulfill Leah's bridal week, and then I'll give you Rachel and she can also be your wife. It'll only cost you another seven years of work."

So Jacob agreed, and after seven days, he married Rachel as well.

23 Speckled, Spotted & Streaked

Beginnings

Genesis 29:31 – 31:3

Jacob worked for his uncle Laban a total of fourteen years to get his two wives. It was obvious that he loved Rachel more than Leah.

The Lord saw that Leah was unloved, so he kept Rachel from having children. After Leah had four sons, Rachel was so jealous that she yelled at Jacob, “Give me a son or I’ll die!”

He said, “I’m not God. I didn’t make you barren.”

With this, Rachel gave him her maidservant. She said, “Sleep with my servant. She can have children for me.” Jacob agreed and soon the servant started having children.

Suddenly Leah was unable to bear children. So she gave her maidservant to Jacob. Soon, with three women, Jacob had ten sons and one daughter. At that point God allowed Rachel to give birth to a son. She called him Joseph. He was the eleventh son.

At this point, Jacob went to Laban and said, “I want to return to my home. Give me the freedom to take my wives and children and go.”

Laban said, “Oh Jacob, be kind to me and don’t leave. I’ve learned that the Lord has blessed me because of you. I’ll pay you whatever you want.”

Jacob said, “You don’t have to pay me anything. Instead, allow me to build up my wealth by keeping a part of the flock.”

“I’ll oversee your flocks, but I’ll keep all the goats and sheep that are born speckled, spotted, or streaked. You keep the rest. In this way, you’ll know if I’m stealing from you. Simply check my flocks and see if they all have the right markings on them.”

Laban agreed to these terms. So they separated the flocks according to those markings.

Jacob had a way of making the lambs be born speckled, spotted, and streaked. Using this process, he made sure all the strongest of the flock were his, and all the weakest of the flock were Laban’s. In frustration, Laban changed their agreement ten times in order to gain the advantage. Even so, Jacob became very rich over the years.

One day, he overheard a conversation between his brothers-in-law. They said, “Jacob has built his wealth by taking what really belongs to our father.” He also noticed that Laban’s attitude had changed towards him.

The Lord said to Jacob, “Go back to the land I gave to your fathers, and I’ll be with you.”

24 Leaving Laban

Beginnings

Genesis 31:17–55

Jacob wanted to have a private conversation with his two wives, so they met out in the field. He said to them, “I worked hard for your father, even though he changed our deal ten times. The Lord protected me, and every time Laban changed our agreement, God changed how the lambs were born. Now your father is angry with me. So the Angel of God has told me to return to the land of my fathers.”

Both women agreed with him. They said, “Do what God has told you to do. Our father sold us to you and then spent the money. You haven’t gotten anything from him that doesn’t already belong to us and our children.”

So without telling Laban, Jacob took all that he had, and started driving his herds toward Canaan. Before they left, Rachel stole her father’s family idol.

Three days later, Laban heard that Jacob had left. He immediately took a group of men and chased after Jacob. It took seven days to catch up with him. The night before, God appeared to Laban and said, “Watch out! Don’t do anything to Jacob, good or bad.”

The next day, Laban met Jacob and said, “Why did you do this to me? You left like a thief in the night, and took my daughters and grandchildren like they were prisoners. If you had told me, I would’ve put on a grand party and sent you off with a flair.”

“Now you’ve disgraced me, and if I wanted to, I could destroy you right here. But last night, the God of your fathers told me not to do anything to you.

“I suppose I can understand your being homesick and wanting to go home. But why did you steal my family idol?”

Jacob said, “I didn’t steal your idol. Look for yourself. Go ahead. Search our tents. If you find it, I’ll kill the person who took it.” He didn’t know that Rachel had taken it.

Laban searched the tents belonging to Jacob, Leah, and the two maidservants. He then went into Rachel’s tent. She was sitting on her camel seat, where she had put the idol. She said, “Father, please forgive me for not standing. I am having my monthly period.” Laban looked throughout her tent and didn’t find his idol.

At this point, Jacob became angry. He said, “You’ve chased me here like I was a criminal. You’ve searched everything I have. Have you found anything that belongs to you? Bring it out and put it in front of your men.

“No, you haven’t found anything! I worked for you for twenty years. I endured the extreme heat in the day, and the frost at night. I worked without much sleep, so you could prosper. I endured these hardships, and you still mistreated me through it all.

“Then you made me bear all the loss for anything that went wrong. I had to pay you if someone stole a sheep. If an animal killed a lamb, suddenly it was my lamb.”

“You changed our agreement ten times. I would be standing here penniless if God hadn’t made things right. Now he’s protecting me from you.”

Laban said, “Everything you have belongs to me. Those are my daughters! Those are my grandsons! Those are my flocks! But what can I do now? Let’s make a firm agreement that can’t be changed. Everyone here will be a witness to it.”

So all the men took stones and piled them in a mound. Jacob and Laban agreed that neither man would ever go to the other side of the mound. Laban said, “These rocks are an agreement between us. You’re not to mistreat my daughters and take any other wives.”

Jacob then made a sacrifice to God and afterwards everyone sat down to a meal. The next morning, Laban kissed his daughters and grandchildren, and blessed them. He then returned to his home.

25 Two Camps

Beginnings

Genesis 32 - 33

Jacob and his family were going back to his homeland. Suddenly God's angels met him. With that, he knew he was not alone, so he called the place "Two Camps."

From there he sent messengers to his brother Esau saying, "I'm coming home with all my possessions, and I'm hoping you'll accept me."

The messengers came back and said, "Your brother is coming with four hundred men." This struck fear in Jacob's heart. He immediately divided everything into two camps, saying, "If Esau attacks one camp, the other can escape."

He prayed, "Oh God of Abraham and Isaac. You told me to come back to my country. You said I'd prosper here. I'm not worthy of the kindness you've shown me. I left this land with only my walking stick. Now I'm two camps.

"Please rescue me from my brother. You said my descendants would be as hard to count as the sand on the seashore."

He then prepared gifts for his brother, which included goats, sheep, camels, cows, and donkeys. He divided them into three groups and sent them ahead. He told his servants, "When Esau comes to the first group, say to him, 'Your slave Jacob is sending these to you. Look, you can see him back there.'" He told the second and third the same things. He was hoping these things would help Esau be more forgiving.

He then spent the night waiting for his brother's arrival in the morning. Since he couldn't sleep, he went off to be by himself.

Suddenly a man appeared and grabbed him. Jacob fought back, and the two of them wrestled all night. At daybreak the stranger saw that Jacob was determined not to lose this fight. So the man struck Jacob's side and dislocated

his hip socket. He said, "I've got to go. It's daybreak."

Jacob said, "I won't let you go until you bless me."

The man said, "What's your name?"

"I'm Jacob!"

The man said, "No, that's no longer your name. You'll be called Israel, which means 'wrestled with God.' You've fought with God, and have lived to tell about it."

Jacob said, "What's your name?"

The man said, "I'm not telling you my name." With that, he blessed Jacob.

Jacob called the place "God's Face." He said, "I've seen God's face and I'm still alive."

Jacob limped back to his camp. Off in the distance he could see Esau and his four hundred men coming. He put each of his families into different groups, and then he went out front. He bowed seven times as he hobbled toward his brother.

Esau ran up to him and gave him a hug. Both men cried. Esau then pointed to the people standing behind Jacob. "Who are these people with you?"

After Esau met Jacob's family, he said, "Why did you put all those animals along the way?"

"Oh, I gave those to you in hopes of winning your forgiveness."

Esau said, "No, no. I have enough. You keep them."

But Jacob insisted. "Please, accept my gifts. It would make me very happy." So Esau agreed.

Then Esau and his men went home that same day. Jacob went to an area near a city called Shechem. There he built an altar and called it "God, the God of Israel."

! *Genesis 34-35*

Jacob had eleven sons but only one daughter. Her name was Dinah. One day, she went out to be with some of the young women of that area. While she was there, a prince named Shechem saw her and raped her.

After he was done, he felt affection for her and spoke tenderly to her. He said to his father, "I love this girl and I want you to talk with her father so she can be my wife."

Jacob heard about his daughter's rape while his sons were away watching the cattle. Before they returned, Shechem's father came and talked to Jacob about the possibilities of a wedding.

Dinah's brothers were furious when they heard about all of this. They felt this was an outrage to the entire family of Israel.

The young man's father said, "Please think about the good that can come from this. My son loves your daughter. Let them get married. We'll then give you our daughters to marry, and we'll become one people."

Shechem said, "I'll do whatever you ask if you'll allow me to marry Dinah."

Jacob's sons thought of a plan to get revenge. They said, "We can't give you our women because your men aren't circumcised. That would be a disgrace to us. The only way we could agree to your terms is if every man in your city was circumcised. If you agree to this, we'll give you Dinah and take your daughters as our wives. But if you refuse to do this, we will take Dinah and leave."

Shechem and his father were happy with these terms. They went back to the city and met with all the men. They explained the agreement and then said, "This is a great deal for us. They have a lot of possessions. In time, it'll all be ours. All we have to do is be circumcised."

All the men agreed and were immediately circumcised. Three days later, they were still in great pain. Two of Dinah's brothers, Simeon and Levi, went into the city and totally caught the men by surprise. Systemically, they killed them all with swords. They also killed Shechem and his father and took Dinah from their house.

Afterwards, the other brothers went and plundered the city. They looted every house and all the fields. They took the women and children, their possessions, and all the livestock.

Jacob was shocked when he found out about this. He said to Simeon and Levi, "You've caused this whole land to turn against us. Once news of this gets out, all the surrounding towns will come at us with a mighty force and totally destroy us."

They said, "What choice did we have? They can't treat our sister like a prostitute."

God said to Jacob, "Hurry! Go to Bethel. Build an altar at the spot I appeared to you when you were running from Esau."

Jacob then gave instructions to his family and all the people with him. He said, "Purify your hearts and get rid of all your idols. We're going to Bethel, and I'm going to build an altar to God. He has always helped me wherever I've gone."

So the people gave him all their false gods and earrings. Jacob hid them under an oak near the town of Shechem.

They then went to Bethel, where Jacob built an altar. God sent a terror over the cities around them, so they were afraid to attack Jacob and his sons. God met with him and gave him all the promises of Abraham.

Afterwards they left Bethel and moved south. Along the way, Rachel died giving birth to her son Benjamin. She was buried near Bethlehem.

27 Sold into Slavery

Beginnings

Genesis 37 & 39:20

Jacob had twelve sons, but his favorite was Joseph. To show his love, Jacob gave Joseph a special coat made with many colors. This made the other sons jealous.

Joseph made things worse by telling his brothers about his unusual dreams. “In one dream, we were binding bundles of grain. My bundle suddenly stood upright, and your bundles bowed down to it!” This made his brothers angry. They couldn’t imagine Joseph ruling over them.

“In another dream, the sun, moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me!” Even his father questioned him on this. “Will your mother and I, as well as your brothers bow down to you?” Still, Jacob kept it in mind.

Some time later, the ten older brothers took the flocks to graze in a distant field. Jacob decided to send Joseph to see how they were doing.

When the brothers saw him coming, they said, “Here comes that ‘dreamer.’ Let’s kill him and throw him into a deep pit. Then we’ll see what happens to his dreams!”

Reuben was the oldest brother and said, “Don’t kill him! Just throw him into a pit.” His plan was to rescue the boy later and send him back to his father. So the brothers agreed, and threw Joseph into a pit.

Reuben went on an errand while the others ate a meal. While they were eating, a group of merchants came by on their way to Egypt. Suddenly one of the brothers, named Judah, had an idea. “Why should we kill Joseph? After all, he’s our brother. Instead, let’s sell him!” So they sold him to the merchants.

Reuben came back later and was shocked to see that the boy was gone. The brothers told him what they had done.

Together they thought of a story to tell their father. They killed a goat and dipped Joseph’s

coat in the blood. When they got home, they showed the coat to their father.

Jacob grabbed it and cried out, “Joseph has been killed by wild animals!” He tore his clothes and started crying for his son. The others tried to comfort him, but he mourned for Joseph from the depths of his heart. He said, “I’ll mourn his death for the rest of my life.”

Once Joseph arrived in Egypt, he was sold to a man named Potiphar. Joseph adjusted to his life as a slave and God prospered everything he did. He grew in his abilities and gained the respect of his master.

Eventually, Potiphar put Joseph in charge of the entire household, including the finances. Potiphar didn’t even know what he owned except for the food that was put in front of him.

One day, Potiphar’s wife asked Joseph to go to bed with her. He refused, telling her that this would be a sin to his master – and to God. But she was a determined woman, and wouldn’t take no for an answer. She pursued him every chance she got, but he always refused her.

One day, she saw an opportunity when her husband wasn’t home. She waited until Joseph came into the house, and then grabbed him. He tried to pull away, but she held onto his coat and wouldn’t let go. Finally he left the coat in her hands and ran away.

This made her furious, so she decided to get revenge. She screamed and the household servants came running. She told them that Joseph had come into her room and tried to pull her into bed. She said he ran away when she screamed. She showed them his coat as proof of what she was saying.

When her husband came home, she told him the same story. He was angry and had Joseph put in prison.

 *Genesis 38*

Judah was the fourth son of Jacob. There came a time when he left his brothers to live on his own. He married a Canaanite woman, who gave birth to three sons. When the time was right, Judah found a wife for his oldest son. Her name was Tamar.

Unfortunately, the oldest son was evil, and the Lord put him to death. Judah told his second son to have sex with Tamar so his oldest brother would have an heir, and the family name would continue on.

The second son slept with Tamar, but didn't like the idea of producing a child for his brother. So at the last moment during sex, he withdrew so she couldn't get pregnant. This made the Lord angry and he killed the second son.

Judah then told Tamar, "Go back and live as a widow in your father's house. I'll give you my youngest son when he grows up" So she did as she was told.

Years went by and yet Judah didn't give Tamar his youngest son. He was worried that his last son would die like his brothers. Still, she could see that the youngest was now old enough to marry.

About that same time, Judah's wife died. Afterwards, he and his friend traveled to a place to shear sheep. Someone told this to Tamar. She immediately changed her clothes, so she wouldn't look like a widow. She then covered her face with a veil.

She went and sat down next to the road, where her father-in-law would travel that day. He saw her and assumed she was a prostitute because she wore a veil over her face. He didn't know she was his daughter-in-law.

He said to her, "Let me sleep with you."
"What will you give me?"

He said, "When I get to my flock, I'll send you a young goat."

She said, "I'll have sex with you, but you must leave something with me so I can be sure you'll send me the young goat."

"What do you want?"

She said, "I want your walking stick and the ring you keep on the cord around your neck."

He gave these things to her, and then had sex with her. She became pregnant.

After they were done, she went home, removed her veil, and once again put on her widow clothes.

Once Judah got to his flock, he asked a friend to take the young goat back to the prostitute. He said, "Be sure to get the things I left with her."

When the friend got there, he couldn't find her. He asked some men who lived in that area, "Where is the prostitute that sits by this road?"

They said, "There has never been a prostitute sitting by this road."

The friend went back and told all of this to Judah. He laughed, "Then let her keep those things I gave her. I tried to fulfill my part of the bargain."

Three months later, someone told Judah, "Your daughter-in-law acted like a prostitute and now she's pregnant."

Judah was furious. He yelled, "Bring her here! We'll burn her."

As they were getting her, she sent a message to her father-in-law. It said, "I can identify the man who got me pregnant. These things belong to him. Do you recognize them?"

As soon as he saw his ring and walking stick, he knew what had happened. He said, "She's a better person than me. I promised to give her my youngest son, but didn't do it." He never went to bed with her again.

She gave birth to twin boys. As they were being born, one child stuck his hand out. The midwife tied a red thread around it, saying, "This is the firstborn."

Suddenly, the hand went back in and the other child was born. So they named that child, Perez, which means, "Break out." Then his brother was born. Because of the bright red thread on his wrist, they named him Zerah, which means "Bright."

29 Joseph's Rise to Power

Beginnings

Genesis 39:20 — 41:57

Life in prison was hard for Joseph, but God was with him and blessed him. His jailor came to respect him and finally started to use him as an assistant. Eventually Joseph was in charge of the entire prison.

One day, Pharaoh put his chief butler and chief baker in the prison. While they were there, each man had a dream. Joseph asked to hear them.

The butler said, "I saw three branches on a vine. They blossomed and then had grapes. I squeezed the grapes into Pharaoh's cup and served it to him."

"Ah," said Joseph, "the three branches are three days. In three days, Pharaoh will lift your head and you'll be given back your old job. Please, remember me, and ask Pharaoh to set me free from this prison. I've done nothing to deserve this."

After hearing this, the baker was eager to tell Joseph his dream. "I had three baskets of Pharaoh's bread on my head. Birds flew up and ate all the bread from out of the baskets."

"Oh," said Joseph, "the three baskets are also three days. In three days, Pharaoh will lift your head – off from you, and hang you from a tree until you're dead. Birds will eat your flesh."

It all happened just as Joseph said! Pharaoh restored the butler to his previous position, and hung the baker from a tree. Unfortunately, the butler soon forgot about Joseph.

Two years later, Pharaoh had two dreams. He woke up after the first one, but went back to sleep. He then had a second dream, but this time he was so troubled he couldn't go back to sleep.

He called for his counselors and told them his two dreams. They couldn't figure out their meanings. Suddenly the chief butler remembered Joseph. He told Pharaoh about the man in prison who interpreted his dream and the baker's dream.

Pharaoh sent guards to bring Joseph to him

immediately. They got him, cleaned him up, and brought him before Pharaoh. He told Joseph about his dreams.

"In the first one, I saw seven fat cows come out of the river and graze along its banks. Suddenly seven skinny cows came up out of the river and ate the fat ones. And yet, they were just as skinny as before."

"In my second dream I saw seven plump heads of grain growing on a stalk. Suddenly, seven dried-up heads of grain sprouted up on a stalk next to it. The thin heads of grain swallowed up the healthy ones. Still, they were as thin and dried up as before."

Joseph said, "God is telling you what he's about to do. The seven good cows and the seven good heads of grain are seven years of great abundance. After that, there'll be seven years of famine. It'll be so severe that the good years will be forgotten."

"Therefore, look for a wise man to put in charge of the land. Have him organize the collection of food during the good years and store it up for the bad years. If you don't do this, the country will be ruined by famine."

Pharaoh said to his officials, "Are we able to find anyone better than Joseph for this job? He has the spirit of God within him."

He turned to Joseph. "The people will submit to your commands. Next to me, you'll be the most powerful man in Egypt."

During the next seven years, Joseph traveled throughout the land, collecting and storing food. Then, just as God had shown him, the seven years of famine started. This famine also affected all the surrounding countries.

When the people of Egypt started to feel the famine, Joseph opened the storehouses and sold them grain. Soon all the countries around Egypt came and bought grain from Joseph.

30 Joseph's Family Reunion

Beginnings

Genesis 42 – 46

Jacob heard there was grain in Egypt, so he sent his ten oldest sons to go and buy food. He didn't send Benjamin because he was afraid of losing him.

When they arrived in Egypt, they went before the governor of the land. They didn't know it was Joseph. He recognized them, but pretended not to know them. He wanted to test them to see if they had changed.

"Where are you from?" When they answered, he glared at them. "You're spies!"

The brothers were shocked, "No, we're honest men – all the sons of a man who lives in Canaan. One of our brothers stayed at home, and the other one is ... uh ... gone."

Joseph said, "Prove it to me. I'll keep one of you here. The rest of you go home and bring back your younger brother. Then I'll know if you're telling the truth."

He kept Simeon, and sent the others home with sacks of grain. Without them knowing, he had their money put into the grain sacks.

They told Jacob what happened. They said, "We need to take Benjamin back to Egypt in order to get Simeon out of prison."

It was then they discovered the money in their sacks of grain. They were afraid, and Jacob said, "You're not taking Benjamin away from me! Joseph is gone, and now Simeon is gone. Benjamin is all I have left! If I lose him, I'll die with grief!"

In time their grain from Egypt was gone. Jacob told his sons to go back and buy more. Judah reminded him that they couldn't go back unless they took Benjamin with them. He said, "Send him with me. I'll guarantee his safety. Let us go. We need the food!"

Finally Jacob agreed, and the brothers returned to Egypt with Benjamin. They took double the money so they could return the money they found in their sacks.

When Joseph saw them, he told his servant to take them to his house for the noon meal. The brothers tried to return the money they had found, but the servants said they were not

missing any payments.

The next morning, the brothers were sent back to Canaan with their sacks full of grain. Joseph had his servant put a silver cup in the sack belonging to Benjamin. When the men had gone a short way, the servants of Joseph caught up with them and said, "One of you has stolen our master's silver cup!"

The brothers were shocked! "We wouldn't do such a thing. If you find that any of us have it, that person will die and the rest of us will become slaves of your master."

Each of the brothers opened his sack, and they found the cup in the one belonging to Benjamin. The brothers were horrified. They returned to the city with the guards, and fell down in front of Joseph. He asked, "Why have you done this?"

Judah replied, "How can we prove our innocence? All of us will now be your slaves."

"No! Only the guilty one will be my slave. The rest of you can go home to your father."

Judah said, "I promised our father that I'd guarantee Benjamin's safety. So allow me to be your slave instead of him. I can't bear to see my father's grief when the boy doesn't return to him."

When Joseph heard this, he started to cry. He said to his brothers. "I'm Joseph!"

The men were terrified and weren't able to answer him. He said, "Come! Come closer and see! I'm your brother, the one you sold into slavery! God sent me here to save your lives. There are still five years of famine left, and God brought me here to prepare a place for you!"

He then told them to go back and bring their father and their families to Egypt. Pharaoh heard of this and told Joseph, "The best of Egypt will be theirs!"

Jacob was stunned when his sons told him all that had happened. But his spirit revived when he heard what Joseph had said and done. Finally he, his children, and all their children went to Egypt. There Pharaoh provided for them because of Joseph.

31 The Birth of Moses

Beginnings

Exodus 1 – 2:10

The descendants of Jacob were called Hebrews or Israelites. Over the years, their numbers greatly increased in Egypt.

They were treated well until a new Pharaoh came to power; who didn't remember Joseph or anything he did. This new Pharaoh felt he needed to do something about the Hebrews, since their population was growing, and they were becoming powerful.

His first plan was to enslave the people and force them to make bricks and build cities. Still, the Israelites grew in numbers. So the Egyptians increased their workload and beat them. In spite of this, the Hebrew population continued to grow.

Pharaoh thought of an idea of how to stop this. He told the midwives, "When you help an Israelite woman deliver a child, kill all the baby boys as soon as they are born. Only the baby girls are allowed to live."

The midwives didn't obey Pharaoh. Instead they feared God and allowed the boys to live as well as the girls. They told Pharaoh, "The Hebrew women are much stronger than Egyptian women. They deliver their own children before we get to them." God blessed these women because they refused to kill the children.

The Israelite population continued to increase in number, so Pharaoh issued a new law for the nation. "Every Hebrew boy-child is

to be thrown into the Nile River."

During this time of persecution, a boy was born to one of the Hebrew families. His mother hid him for three months, but it became more difficult with each passing week.

Finally, she realized she needed to do something different. So she made a waterproof basket, put the child inside, and placed it in the Nile River among the reeds near the banks. The boy's sister was Miriam. She hid nearby to see what would happen to her brother.

Soon Pharaoh's daughter came down to the river to take a bath. She saw the basket floating among the reeds and sent her servants to get it. When she opened the basket, the baby started to cry and she felt sorry for it. She said, "This must be one of the Hebrew children."

Miriam came out of her hiding place and spoke up. "Do you want me to go find a Hebrew mother who can nurse this child?"

"Yes. I'd like that. Go get a nursing mother."

So the girl went and got her own mother – the mother of the baby. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Nurse this child for me and I'll pay you."

When the boy was old enough, his mother brought him back to Pharaoh's daughter and the boy became her son. She called him Moses (which means "pulled out") saying, "I pulled him out of the water."

32 Finding a Wife

Beginnings

Exodus 2:11-22 & 4:24-26

Pharaoh's daughter raised Moses as if he were her own son. When he was grown, he went out to his people and saw how they were being abused as slaves.

Suddenly, he saw an Egyptian beating one of his people. Moses looked around to see if anyone was watching. He then hit the Egyptian and killed him. He quickly hid the body in the sand.

The next day, he went out again, but this time he saw two Hebrews fighting. He stopped them and said, "With all of your problems, why are you fighting each other?"

They pulled back and yelled, "Who made you our leader? You're not our judge! Are you planning to kill us like you killed the Egyptian yesterday?"

Moses was shocked! He now realized his crime wasn't a secret. Soon Pharaoh found out about it and sent men to kill Moses. So he ran away and barely escaped Egypt with his life.

He ended up out in the wilderness, at a place called Midian. Once he got there, he sat down next to a well. Soon seven women came to the well to draw water for their sheep. They were the daughters of Jethro, the priest of Midian.

Suddenly, some shepherds come and started to chase the women away. Moses stepped in and defended them. After the fight, he helped the women draw the water for their sheep.

When they got back home, Jethro was surprised his daughters were back so soon. They said, "An Egyptian protected us from the shepherds, and he even helped draw water for the flock."

"So where is he? What! Did you leave him at the well? Go get him and invite him to come and have a meal with us."

Moses stayed with Jethro and his family, and eventually married one of his daughters, a woman named Zipporah. Together, they had two sons.

33 The Call of Moses

Beginnings

Exodus 3 – 4:18

After Moses married Zipporah, he became a shepherd for his father-in-law, Jethro. Forty years later, when Moses was 80 years old, he led his flock near a particular mountain.

Suddenly, off in the distance, he saw that a bush was on fire, but it wasn't being consumed. He went closer so he could see it better. When he was near, God called to him from out of the bush. "Moses, Moses."

He stepped back. "Yes, I'm here."

"Don't come any closer. Take off your shoes. You're standing on holy ground."

As Moses took off his sandals, the Lord said, "I'm the God of your fathers – the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Moses covered his face because he was afraid to look at God.

"My people are suffering in the land of Egypt. It's time to deliver them out of their slavery. I've selected you to lead them back to the land of Canaan. Therefore, go back to Egypt and talk to Pharaoh.

"Oh Lord, not me! I'm not the right one to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. I'm not able to talk to Pharaoh."

God was patient with Moses. "I'll be with you. When you think of this mountain, you'll remember that I sent you. Go to Egypt and bring my people back here to worship."

Moses said, "But if I stand before the people and say, 'the God of your fathers has sent me to you,' they'll say, 'What God? What's his name?' What should I tell them?"

God said, "I Am Who I Am! Tell them 'I AM' sent you to them. I am the God of Abraham. I am

the God of Isaac. I am the God of Jacob.

"The people will listen to you, but Pharaoh won't. Therefore I'll strike him with a hard blow. When I'm done, he'll finally let my people go."

Moses still hesitated. So God said to him, "What's in your hand?"

"Oh ... it's a shepherd's staff."

"Throw it on the ground."

He threw it on the ground and it became a poisonous snake! Moses jumped back in fear. Then God said, "Reach out and pick up the snake by the tail." Moses grabbed the tail, and instantly the snake once again became a shepherd's staff.

God said, "Put your hand inside your shirt." Moses did, and when he pulled it out it was covered with leprosy. "Put your hand back in your shirt." He did, and when he pulled it out, the leprosy was gone.

God said, "Show the people these signs and they'll believe you."

"Oh, Lord, I've never been able to talk well. I have a speech problem."

"Moses, who made your mouth? I'm the one who causes a person to be deaf, mute, blind or seeing! Go, and do as I say. I'll help you talk, and teach you what you're to say."

Moses bowed his head. "Lord, I just don't want to go. Please send someone else."

With this, the Lord became angry. "Your brother Aaron is coming to meet you. He speaks fluently. Take him and go to Egypt!"

So Moses went to Jethro and asked permission to return to Egypt.

34 Zipporah

Beginnings

! *Exodus 4:19-30 & 18:2*

Moses said to Jethro, his father-in-law, "I want to go back to Egypt to see if my family is still alive." Jethro agreed and gave his blessings for the trip.

The Lord said to Moses, "Go back to Egypt. Those who were trying to kill you are now dead."

So Moses made preparation for the journey. He then took his wife and sons and together they left Midian. He made sure he had God's staff with him.

At the same time, God said to Aaron, "Go and meet Moses in the wilderness." So he left Egypt and headed towards Midian.

As Moses traveled, the Lord gave him instructions of what he was to do once he was back in Egypt. God said, "Do all the wonders I've given you, but don't be surprised. Pharaoh won't listen to you! I have hardened his heart, so he won't let the people go willingly.

"Here is my message to him. 'Israel is my firstborn son. You refuse to let my son go and worship me. Therefore, I'll kill your firstborn son.'"

In the evening, Moses and his family made camp for the night. Suddenly the Lord attacked

Moses because his sons weren't circumcised.

Quickly Zipporah jumped up and grabbed a knife. She circumcised her sons and threw their foreskins at the feet of her husband. With that, the Lord let Moses go.

Zipporah looked at all the blood and yelled at Moses. "You're a bridegroom of blood to me."

The next day, Moses saw Aaron coming toward him. The two brothers greeted one another with joy. Moses told Aaron everything the Lord had said. He told him about the signs God had given him, and what he was to do. Together they went back and gathered the elders of Israel.

Aaron stood before the people and told them what the Lord had said to Moses. He showed them the signs from God.

The people were amazed with what they heard and saw. They believed Moses and Aaron, and bowed down and worshipped God.

Moses realized it was best to send his family back to Midian. There they could be under the protection of Jethro, his father-in-law.

35 Straw for Bricks

Beginnings

Exodus 5 – 7:13

Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, “This is what the Lord God of Israel says. ‘Let my people go into the wilderness for three days so they can worship me.’ ”

The Pharaoh was shocked and said, “Who does the God of the Hebrews think he is — telling me what to do? I don’t know him, and I’m certainly not going to let my slaves go into the wilderness.”

He then focused on Moses and Aaron. “All of your talk about worship is keeping my slaves from doing their work. Stop all this talk and get back to work!”

He then called for his slave drivers. “My slaves are lazy! They have so much time on their hands that they’re talking about going out into the wilderness and worshipping God.

“Well I’ll fix that. From now on, stop giving them straw for the bricks. Let them go get it themselves. Still, they’re to make just as many bricks as before. That’ll teach them not to stand around and listen to these fools!”

The slave drivers went and told the Israelite foremen what the Pharaoh said. “We’re not going to give you any more straw. You have to get it yourselves. Still you’re to produce just as many bricks as before.”

So the people immediately went throughout Egypt gathering straw. Because of this, they weren’t able to fulfill their allotted quota for making bricks. Therefore the slave drivers beat the foremen. They said, “You aren’t doing your job. You aren’t making enough bricks.”

The foremen went to Pharaoh. “Why are you treating your slaves this way? If we don’t have the straw, we can’t make the same amount of bricks as before.”

Pharaoh yelled at them. “You’re lazy – lazy I say! You’ve got time to stand around and say,

‘we want to go worship the Lord.’ So now it’s time to work. Go get your own straw, and I want the same amount of bricks as before.”

Moses was waiting for the foremen when they left Pharaoh. They said to him, “You have made us stink before Pharaoh. You put a sword in his hand, and he’s going to kill us with it.”

Moses went to the Lord and said, “Why did you send me here? You haven’t delivered the people. You’ve only caused them more trouble.”

The Lord said, “Oh Moses. You’re about to see what I’m going to do with Pharaoh. When I’m done, he’ll beg you to take these people away.

“Go tell the people that I am the Lord. I have heard their groaning, and I’m about to take them back to the land I promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

Moses went to the people and gave them this message, but they wouldn’t listen to him. They were defeated and discouraged.

Then the Lord told Moses to go and talk to Pharaoh again. “Tell him to let my people leave this land.”

Moses said, “I’m not any good at this. If the people of Israel won’t listen to me, why would Pharaoh?”

The Lord said, “Moses, I have made you like a god to Pharaoh, and Aaron your prophet. Go and I’ll give you the words to say.”

So Moses and his brother Aaron stood before Pharaoh and asked him to allow the people of Israel to go into the desert and worship. Pharaoh asked for a sign, so Aaron threw his staff on the ground and it became a snake. The court magicians and sorcerers threw their sticks on the ground and they also turned into snakes. Suddenly Aaron’s snake ate the rest of the snakes! Still, Pharaoh wouldn’t listen to them.

36 Pharaoh's Plagues

Beginnings

Exodus 7:8 – 9:35

The Lord told Moses and Aaron to go to Pharaoh in the morning when he was walking next to the Nile River. Moses said, "Because you refuse to free our people, the waters of Egypt will turn to blood. The fish will die and the water will be undrinkable." Aaron then struck the water with his staff and it turned into blood.

The court magicians also turned some water into blood. Therefore Pharaoh ignored Moses and Aaron. Soon the water throughout the land turned to blood and was undrinkable. The people had to dig wells to find fresh water.

After seven days, Moses told Pharaoh, "Because of your stubbornness, frogs will infest your land."

So Aaron stretched out his staff, and frogs started coming up out of the rivers and lakes. The magicians also made some frogs appear. Soon there were frogs everywhere. They went to every city street. They got into people's houses and into their food – and even into their beds!

Pharaoh said to Moses, "I've changed my mind. Your people can go into the wilderness and worship their God. Ask Him to get rid of the frogs."

Moses asked, "When do you want the frogs to leave?" Pharaoh said, "Tomorrow."

The next day the frogs died, and people gathered them up into big piles. Soon they started to stink! Pharaoh then changed his mind and refused to let the people go.

Next, Aaron struck the ground with his staff and the dust turned into lice. Soon, all the people and animals throughout Egypt were infested with lice. Pharaoh's magicians were unable to do this. They said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God!" Still he wouldn't let the people go.

Next, God sent swarms of flies to cover the land. But there were no flies in the part of Egypt where the Hebrews lived.

Pharaoh agreed to let the people go. Moses said the flies would be gone the next day, but he added, "Take care. Don't change your mind

again!" However, that is exactly what he did. Once the flies were gone, Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let the people go.

God sent a plague upon the livestock, but again it didn't affect the livestock of Israel. Pharaoh became more stubborn, and refused to let the Hebrews go.

Moses took a handful of ashes and tossed it into the air. It became a fine dust that spread through all of Egypt causing boils on all the people and animals. The magicians couldn't stand before Pharaoh because of their boils!

Pharaoh was angry, and refused to listen to Moses. God had told Moses that Pharaoh would act like this.

Moses went to Pharaoh with a special message from God. He said, "Up to this point I've restrained My hand against you. Now, My plagues will be directed toward you and your people. When I'm done, all the nations on earth will know I am the Lord!"

"Tomorrow I'll send a hailstorm like you've never seen before! All people and animals are to stay under shelters, or they'll die!"

The next day, fierce hail mixed with fire came down and ruined the crops that were in the fields. Yet, the hail didn't fall in the land where the Israelites lived.

Some of the Egyptians did as Moses told them. They put their animals and slaves under shelters. But others didn't, and their livestock and slaves died in the storm.

Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron. "I know I've sinned. I'm wrong and God is right. Please pray and ask Him to stop this storm. I'll let your people go."

Moses said, "This storm will stop as soon as I leave here." He started to leave, then turned to Pharaoh. "I know you don't fear God."

And it was true. As soon as Pharaoh saw the storm and the hail stop, he stubbornly turned against God and the people of Israel.

37 The Passover

Beginnings

Exodus 13:17 – 15:21

Moses went to Pharaoh and said, “If you don’t let the Israelites go, God will send locusts like you have never seen. They’ll cover the land and eat anything that wasn’t destroyed by the hail.”

Pharaoh’s officials begged him, “Please let them go. Egypt is already destroyed!” So Pharaoh said to Moses, “The men may go and worship.”

Moses said, “When we leave, we’ll take everyone with us – men and women, young and old. We’ll also take our animals with us.”

Pharaoh became angry, “Absolutely not!” He then had them thrown out of his court.

The next day Moses stretched out his staff, and the locusts came. Never had such a swarm of locusts invaded Egypt. They ate every green thing on the land. They were everywhere and even invaded the houses.

Pharaoh quickly called for Moses. He said, “I’m sorry for my sin. Please ask God to take the locusts away.” Moses prayed to God, and a wind carried the locusts into the Red Sea. Not one remained. When they were gone, Pharaoh again turned against God and the Israelites.

God then told Moses to stretch his hand toward the sky. When he did, darkness covered the land of Egypt. It was so thick, the people could feel it, and they couldn’t see anything. It lasted for three days. Still, the Israelites had light in their homes.

Pharaoh called Moses to him and said, “I’ll allow your people to go worship in the desert, but leave your flocks and herds.”

Moses shook his head. “No! We’ll take everyone and everything, including the animals.”

Pharaoh once again became angry. “I’m not letting the people go. Now get out of here and don’t ever come back! Mark my word. If I ever

see your face again, you’ll die!”

The Lord told Moses, “I’ll bring one more plague upon the Egyptians, and then Pharaoh will let the people go. He’ll insist that you leave!”

“Give my people these instructions. Each family is to select a one-year-old male lamb with no defects. They are to kill it and smear its blood above the door and on the doorposts. The people are to stay inside their houses. They won’t be safe outside of their houses.”

“Roast the meat of the lamb and eat it with your coats and sandals on, as if in a hurry. If it’s too much for one family to eat it all, they’re to invite another family to join them.”

“At midnight I’ll go throughout the land of Egypt and kill the firstborn of every family – from Pharaoh’s house down to the lowest slave. But when I see the blood on your houses, I’ll pass over you and won’t kill your firstborn.”

The Israelites did exactly as God instructed. That night, the Lord moved across the land of Egypt and killed the firstborn of every household. He even killed the firstborn of their livestock. There was loud crying and screaming in the night, because no household escaped this judgment of God. Yet, the Lord passed over the houses of the Israelites when he saw the blood on their doorposts.

Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and yelled at them, “Go! Go! Take your people, take your flocks, and go.”

All the Egyptians wanted the people to go because they were afraid that they might all die! They gave them things made of gold and silver. So the people left, while it was still night.

From that day on, the Israelites were to observe the Lord’s Passover every year. It was to be a reminder of what God did for them that night.

38 Crossing the Red Sea

Beginnings

Exodus 10 – 13:16

God led the Israelites out of Egypt by what appeared to be a pillar of fire. The fire became a pillar of cloud during the day. God didn't lead them straight to Canaan along the most direct route, but took them out into the wilderness toward the Red Sea.

He told Moses to have the people camp at a certain location next to the Sea. He said, "I'm going to make Pharaoh stubborn one more time, and he'll chase after you. After that, the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord."

Pharaoh saw that the Hebrews had gone to the Red Sea, and were hemmed in and vulnerable. He said to his servants, "Why did we let our slaves go? They should be here, serving us." So he took his army and chased after them.

The people of Israel saw this and yelled at Moses. "Why have you brought us here to die? If we were still serving the Egyptians, they would let us live. But now, because of you, we're about to die."

Moses told the people, "Don't be afraid! Watch and see what God is about to do. He'll fight your battle for you. Look at the Egyptians! You'll never see them again after today."

God said to Moses, "Lift your shepherd's staff in to the air, and point your hand out over the sea. The people of Israel are going to the other side – on dry ground."

Then the pillar of cloud that was in front of the Israelites moved behind them – between them and the Egyptians. It stayed there the rest of the day and into the night.

Moses pointed his hand toward the sea. And when he did, God caused a strong wind to sweep back the waters, so they formed a wall on the right side and on the left. And then the wind blew on the path between the two walls for the rest of that day and into the night – until the ground became dry.

That night, God told Moses and the Israelites to cross over to the other side, using the path between the walls of water. The people moved across the sea throughout the night.

Once they were across, God allowed the Egyptians to chase after them, using the same path. When they were in the middle of the sea, God caused them to be totally confused, and their chariot wheels started to break.

Suddenly, the Egyptian army saw the seriousness of their situation. They shouted, "Run! The Lord is fighting for the Israelites!" They turned and tried to run for safety.

God said to Moses, "Point your hand out over the water." So Moses pointed his hand toward the sea just as the sun was about to come up. Suddenly the walls of water crashed together, covering the entire Egyptian army. Not one of them survived!

The Israelites watched the power of God from the other side of the sea. And as the sun rose that morning, they saw the dead bodies washed up on the shore. Then the people worshiped the Lord with singing. They had seen the power of God and believed in Him, and they believed in His servant Moses.

39 What Is It?

Beginnings

Exodus 14:29 – 16:36

The people of Israel walked through the Red Sea on dry ground. Then God killed the Egyptian army when they tried to cross. From there, Moses led the people into the wilderness, toward Mount Sinai. They traveled for three days without finding water. They finally came to a pool, but it was undrinkable. The people complained and said, "What are we going to drink?"

The Lord said to Moses, "Cut down that small tree and throw it into the water." Moses threw the tree into the water, and instantly the water was drinkable.

God said, "If you obey me and follow my commandments, you won't be sick like the Egyptians. I am the Lord who heals you.

From there, the Israelites went and camped at a place that had twelve springs. They stayed there a little over a month, and then left and headed toward Mount Sinai.

As they traveled, they started complaining, "We should've died in Egypt. Yes, we were slaves, but at least we had plenty of food to eat. Every night we had a pot of meat and all the bread we wanted. Here we have nothing."

The Lord said to Moses, "I'm going to rain bread from heaven for the people. But I'll use this to see if they'll follow my instructions."

Moses said to the people, "You're not complaining against me and Aaron. You're

complaining against the Lord. Still, He's heard you. Tonight you'll have meat, and in the morning you'll have bread."

That evening, a flock of quail came and landed in the camp. This provided meat for the people to eat. In the morning, they saw that the ground was covered with heavy dew. When it evaporated, there was something on the ground that looked like frost. The people went and looked at it. They said, "What is it?" They tasted it and it was like a light wafer, sweetened with honey.

Moses said, "God will provide this bread from heaven six days out of every week. For the first five days, you're to gather only enough for one day. On the sixth day, you may gather enough for two days. In this way, you'll have food to eat on the Sabbath. It won't appear on the Sabbath.

Some of the people disobeyed God's instructions and gathered more than one day's worth. The next morning it stunk and was full of maggots. This didn't happen when they gathered more on the sixth day. It was still good to eat on the Sabbath. Some of the people went out to gather bread on the Sabbath, but found that there was none.

The people called the bread manna, which means, "What is it?" God provided manna for them for the entire forty years they were in the wilderness.

40 The Lord, My Banner

Beginnings

Exodus 17 – 18

As the people of Israel continued to move toward Mount Sinai, they camped at a place that had no water. They once again complained to Moses, “Why did you bring us here to die? At least in Egypt we had water. Is the Lord really with us?”

Moses yelled at the Lord, “What am I to do with these people! I bring them here, and now they’re about to stone me.”

The Lord said to Moses, “Take your staff and stand in front of the people. Have some of the elders with you. I’ll stand in front of the rock. Hit the rock and water will come out so the people can drink.”

Moses did as the Lord commanded and hit the rock. Water gushed out. It was enough for all the people and the livestock.

While they were at that same location, the people of Amalek attacked them. Moses told Joshua to organize the men for battle. Moses then stood on the side of the hill and held his hands in the air. As long as his hands were high in the air, Joshua was victorious. But when his hands came down, the people of Amalek started winning.

Moses’ arms became tired and heavy, so he sat on a stone with Aaron and Hur on each sides. They supported his hands, so he could keep them high in the air. The three men stayed there until the sun went down. Joshua was victorious over Amalek. Moses then built a monument and called it “The Lord, My Banner.”

Jethro was the father-in-law of Moses. He had watched over his daughter and her two sons while Moses was in Egypt. He brought them back once the Israelites camped at Mt Sinai.

Moses went out to greet his family. He told Jethro about what the Lord had done for the

people of Israel – how God’s hand was against Pharaoh and the Egyptians. He also shared some of their hardships, and how the Lord delivered them. Jethro then led the people in a sacrifice to God.

The next day, Moses sat down to do his work as a judge for the people. Jethro watched as people came with every dispute they had, great and small. It was up to Moses to decide who was right in each case. This went on all day. As he was judging, Moses was also teaching God’s laws to the people.

That evening Jethro said, “What you’re doing isn’t good. You’re wearing yourself down, as well as the people. You need to realize that this is too big of a job for one man to handle. Here is some advice, and I believe its God Will for you.

“It’s your job to teach the people about the Lord and his commandments. You’re also to represent their needs to God. You must keep yourself free to do this.

“So, select some good men who fear God. Make sure they don’t take bribes. If they do, the people won’t trust them. Place them at different levels over one another. Their full time job should be judging the people.

“They’re to deal with everyday problems, while bringing the more difficult conflicts to you. The people will be happy with this, but mainly it frees you to do God’s will.”

Moses listened to this advice, and followed it. He chose qualified men, and placed them at different levels of responsibility. These men devoted themselves to their new task. Still, all the difficult cases were brought to Moses.

After all of this was done, Moses said goodbye to his father-in-law, and Jethro went home.

Exodus 19- 20 & 24

The Israelites came to Mount Sinai three months after they left Egypt. They set up camp at the base, and Moses went up the mountain to talk with God. The Lord said, “Tell the people, ‘If you obey me and keep my commandments, then you’ll be my treasured possession. You’ll be my holy people among all the nations.’”

When Moses told this to the people, they all agreed and said, “We’ll do everything God says!”

So Moses went back up the mountain and told God that the people agreed to his conditions. Then the Lord said, “I want them to hear me talking to you so they’ll always trust you. Tell them to spend three days cleansing their hearts and washing their clothes. Then I’ll come down on the mountain and talk to them.”

So the people did as they were told. They washed their clothes and dedicated themselves to the Lord. Suddenly, on the third day, the mountain burned with fire. The ground shook, and a cloud covered the entire mountain. There was thunder and lightning, and the people heard what sounded like trumpets that grew louder and louder.

Then God said, “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt with a mighty hand!

You’re not to worship other gods.

You’re not to make idols of any kind.

You’re to keep my name holy and not misuse it.

You’re not to work on the seventh day, but instead, keep it holy.

Honor your parents and you’ll live long upon the earth.

You’re not to murder.

You’re not to commit adultery.

You’re not to steal.

You’re not to lie to others or about others.

You’re not to desire to have anything that belongs to someone else.”

The people cried out, “Tell God to stop talking to us. We’ll die if he keeps talking! Let him talk to you, and then you tell us what he said. We’ll listen to you.”

Moses said, “Don’t be afraid. God wants you to stand in awe of him, so you’ll stay away from sin.” Then Moses went up the mountain to talk with God.

God gave him detailed instructions on how the people were to live their lives and how they were to treat one another. God told how to offer sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins. He also gave instructions on how to build the Ark of God, so he could live among his people. Finally, God gave Moses two tablets of stone with his laws written by the finger of God.

42 The Golden Calf

Beginnings

Exodus 32

Moses stayed with God for forty days and forty nights. The people grew restless, and finally they went to Aaron and said, “We don’t know what’s happened to Moses. Make us a god we can see, one that will be with us.”

So they gave Aaron their gold earrings, and he melted them down. He then formed the gold into the shape of a calf. The people were happy with this and said, “This is the god who brought us out of Egypt!” They sacrificed to it and had a feast. Afterwards they celebrated with a wild party.

On the mountain, God said to Moses, “Go down to your people, the ones you brought out of Egypt. They’ve corrupted themselves and turned away from what I told them to do. They’ve made an idol and bowed down to it with sacrifices. Step aside and don’t stop Me. I’ll destroy them and make your descendants into a great nation.”

Moses pleaded with God, “Don’t be so angry with your people, the ones you brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. If you destroy them now, the Egyptians will laugh and say you brought them here to kill them. Remember your promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. You said their descendants would inherit the land, and become as numerous as the stars in the sky.” So the Lord listened to Moses and didn’t destroy the people.

Moses then went down the mountain with the two stone tablets God had given him. He got angry when he saw the calf and the dancing. He threw the two tablets down and shattered them on the ground. He burned the golden calf in the fire, ground it to powder, put it in water, and made the Israelites drink it.

Then Moses said to Aaron, “Why did you make this golden calf? Look at the people! See how it has caused them to go into deep sin.”

Aaron said, “Please don’t be angry with me. You know how wicked these people are. They said, ‘Make us a god.’ I told them to give me their gold. I threw it into the fire and ... out came this calf!”

Moses then stood at the gate of the camp. He saw how the people were still out of control. He shouted, “Those who are on the Lord’s side, come and stand with me!” The sons of Levi separated themselves from the rest of the people and stood with Moses. The Lord then commanded them to strap on their swords and fight against those who refused to stand with Moses. Three thousand men died that day.

Afterwards, Moses called the people together and said, “You have committed a great sin. I’ll go before the Lord, and maybe I can make an atonement for you.” With that, he went back up the mountain.

43 The Tabernacle

Beginnings

Exodus 33–40

Because the people of Israel had worshipped the golden calf, Moses went up the mountain and begged the Lord to forgive them. He said, “O Lord, your people have sinned against you. If you will forgive their sins ...” He couldn’t continue, but finally said, “If you can’t forgive them, blot me out of your book.”

The Lord said, “I’m not blotting your name out of my book, but I will blot out the names of the people who sinned against me.” Then God struck the people with a plague and many died.

After that, the Lord told Moses, “Lead your people to the land I promised them. I won’t go with you, but I’ll send my angel to guide you. If I lived among these obstinate people for even a moment, I’d destroy them.”

Moses went down and told the people that God wouldn’t live among them. The people broke down and cried. They grieved that their sin had cost them so much.

Moses went outside the camp and set up a meeting tent so he could talk with the Lord. As the people watched, the cloud of God came down and stood in front of the tent. There, Moses and God talked.

Moses said, “If I’m your friend, and if you’re pleased with me, then live among us. We want you to lead us. If you refuse, then we’ll stay here. Don’t make us leave. Without you among us, we’re no different from anyone else!”

The Lord replied, “You’re my friend, and I’m pleased with you. Therefore, I’ll do as you have asked.”

Then the Lord told Moses to cut out two more stone tablets and bring them up the mountain. Once there, the Lord said, “This is my agreement with you and your people. I’ll force the people out of Canaan with great miracles, but you must

obey my commandments.”

Moses stayed on the mountain and wrote down all the laws and commandments of God. He also wrote the Ten Commandments on the two tablets of stone. He was there for forty days and forty nights, and didn’t eat bread or drink water.

Afterwards, he went back to the people with God’s commands. He didn’t realize his face was glowing because of all the time he had spent with the Lord. This made the Israelites afraid, so Moses wore a veil when he talked to the people. He told them all the commandments the Lord had given him.

He said, “It’s time to build the Tabernacle, God’s dwelling place. Therefore, those who are willing to give an offering to the Lord are to bring gold, silver, bronze, special yarn, fine linen, animal skins, woods, oils, spices, stones, and gems. We need skilled craftsman who will dedicate themselves to build the Tabernacle, the tent that will surround it, and the furniture inside.”

The next day, people started bringing the things needed to build the Tabernacle. Skilled craftsmen came to do the work. Day after day, the people brought their gifts until finally Moses sent out word, “Stop bringing offerings. There is more than enough!”

The people were careful to build the tabernacle exactly as God had told Moses. It was finished exactly two years after they left Egypt – to the very day. Moses inspected the work and found they had done just as the Lord had commanded, so he blessed them.

Then a cloud came and hovered over the tent. As the people watched, the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle. So from that day on, in all of their travels, the Lord was with them.

44 Unholy Fire

Beginnings

Leviticus 10:1-7 & Numbers 9-11:3

God gave exact instructions to the people of Israel for how they were to worship him. Aaron, the brother of Moses, was chosen to be the high priest, and his sons were to serve with him. When Aaron would eventually die, they would replace him as high priest.

The congregation gathered at the Tabernacle for the ordination of these men. Moses anointed them with oil and made sacrifices to the Lord. He told Aaron and his sons that their ordination would last for seven days, and they were not leave the Tabernacle until it was over.

Aaron's oldest two sons were Nadab and Abihu. During this time of ordination, they decided on their own to burn incense before the Lord. But they hadn't yet been told how to do that. So they didn't know they were to use live coals from the altar. Since they didn't know that, they put coals from a common fire in to their censers.

As soon as they came into the presence of the Lord, fire blazed out and killed both men.

Everyone was shocked, but nothing could be said. Moses had some men take the bodies out of the camp. He told Aaron and his other sons that they had to continue with the ordination since they had already been anointed with oil before the Lord.

This meant that they couldn't properly mourn their loss. So the rest of Israel mourned the death of the two men, while their father and brothers continued at the Tabernacle.

On the second anniversary of leaving Egypt, the people of Israel celebrated Passover. They were still at Mount Sinai.

A cloud hovered over the Tabernacle during the day, and it looked like fire at night. God had told them that as long as the cloud hovered there, they were to stay where they were. But if the cloud lifted, they knew it was time to continue their travels.

One month later after celebrating Passover, it was time for them to move toward the land of Canaan. As the people watched, the cloud lifted and they set out from the mountain of God. They traveled toward the place where they were to enter the land of Canaan.

Within a short time, the people started complaining openly about their hardships. This made the Lord angry and he sent a fire among them, especially around the edges of the camp. Many people died. So the others ran to Moses for help. He prayed for them and the fire stopped. They named that place "Burning."

45 Graves of the Craving

Beginnings

Numbers 11:4–11:35

As the people of Israel traveled toward Canaan, they started complaining about the food. They said, “All we have to eat is this manna. We miss the meat and the fish and the vegetables we had in Egypt.” The grumbling spread from family to family, until Moses could hear it from every tent.

In frustration he prayed, “Lord, what have I done to deserve this heartache? Why have you done this to me? I didn’t give birth to these people, so why do I have to nurse them? I can’t take it any more! If this is what you want for me, then kill me right now.”

The Lord said to Moses, “Choose seventy leaders from the people and bring them to me. I will take some of the Spirit that is on you, and put it on them. They’ll help you bear the burden of the people.”

He also said, “Tell the people to prepare themselves. Tomorrow they’ll have meat to eat. They keep craving ... longing ... for Egypt, so they’ll eat meat until they’re totally sick of it.”

Moses went and told the people this, and then he called the seventy leaders to come before the Lord. When they arrived, only 68 men were there. Two of them were still back in the camp.

The Lord took some of the Spirit that was

on Moses and put it on the seventy men – all of them. Immediately, the men started prophesying, even the two who were still in the camp.

Joshua said to Moses, “Tell those two men to stop!”

Moses said, “Oh Joshua, don’t be jealous for me. I wish that God’s Spirit would fall on all his people.”

The next day, the Lord sent a wind that blew quail in from the sea. They dropped down to about three feet off the ground, and covered an area in all directions as far as a man could walk in a day.

People went out and caught them. They worked all day and into the night. The person who gathered the smallest amount of quail, still gathered thirty-three bushels full. Every family was able to get a large amount of meat for their family.

Still, God was angry with them because they longed for Egypt and wouldn’t trust his care for them. So, as the people were eating the meat – while it was still between their teeth – God struck them with a plague. Many died at that place and were buried there. So the people called it, “Graves of the Craving.”

46 Spitting in Her Face

Beginnings

Numbers 12

Miriam was the sister of Moses and Aaron. One day, she and Moses' wife had a disagreement. Because of this, Miriam and Aaron started criticizing Moses, calling his wife an Arabian woman – a Cushite!

They said, "Moses isn't the only one that God speaks through. He also speaks through us."

The Lord heard this complaint and knew that Moses was a quiet and humble man. Suddenly God said, "Moses, Aaron, Miriam – Come to the Tent of Meetings!"

Once they were there, the cloud of God came down and stood like a pillar before them. He said, "Aaron and Miriam, step forward."

Once they did, the Lord said, "When I talk to you or one of the prophets within the camp, I speak in dreams and visions. But that's not the way I talk to Moses. He and I come together as family members and talk openly. We look at one another and speak in plain language. How dare

you talk against my servant Moses!"

With that, God then turned away from them in anger and left. Aaron looked at Miriam and saw that her skin was white with leprosy. He cried out to Moses. "Please, my lord, don't punish us for our foolish talking. Please don't let your sister be like a baby who is born dead – whose flesh is rotting away."

Moses cried out to God, "Oh my Lord! Please heal my sister."

God said, "I'll heal her. Still, if her father spit in her face, she would live in disgrace for seven days. So she is to stay outside of the camp for seven days.

So Miriam was taken outside the camp and she stayed there for seven days. The people of Israel remained at that location until Miriam was allowed back in the camp. They then moved to the place where they were to enter into the land of Canaan.

47 Twelve Spies

Beginnings

Numbers 13 – 14

When the Israelites arrived at the border of Canaan, God said to Moses, “Send twelve men to search out the land.” So Moses selected one man from each tribe of Israel. He told them to go into the land and bring back information about the people and their cities. He also told them to bring back some of the fruit that was growing in the land.

The men stayed in Canaan for forty days. When they came back, two of them were carrying a large cluster of grapes on a pole between them.

When the men gave their report, ten of the men said, “It’s true, the land is great and flows with milk and honey. But, the people are big and powerful and live in cities with high walls.”

The other two men were Caleb and Joshua. They gave a different report. They said, “We must go up and take this land. We can do it!”

The other ten yelled, “No, we can’t attack these people! They are stronger than we are. We felt like grasshoppers next to them!”

The Israelites were afraid when they heard this report. They turned against Moses and said, “Did God bring us here to be killed? We could’ve died in Egypt! The men of this land will kill us and make slaves of our wives and children. We’re going to select a new leader and go back to Egypt.”

Joshua and Caleb ran out in front of the people and tore their clothes. They cried out, “This land is very good, and the Lord is about to give it to us! Don’t rebel against him because you’re afraid. The Lord is with us. We’ll swallow up these people!”

The people of Israel attacked Joshua and Caleb, but suddenly the glory of the Lord

appeared at the Tabernacle. God said to Moses, “How long will these people refuse to believe in me? They saw the wonders I did in Egypt. They saw the many miracles I did among them. Yet they still test me.

“Therefore these people won’t see the land I promised their fathers. I’m sending them back into the wilderness, and they’ll stay there for forty years until they’re all dead. Everyone who is twenty years old or older will not see the land, except for my servants Caleb and Joshua. They’ll go into Canaan because they followed me without hesitation. Since these people worried about their children, I’ll take their children into the land of Canaan, and give it to them.”

Moses told the Israelites what the Lord had said, and they broke down and cried. The ten men who brought back a bad report were suddenly struck by a plague and died. Early the next morning the people said, “We now realize we’ve sinned. We’ll go into the land as the Lord commanded.”

Moses said, “No! The Lord is sending you back into the wilderness. Don’t disobey him again. If you go into the land, you’ll be defeated because God is not going with you.”

Nevertheless, they went into Canaan against God’s will. And just like Moses said, they were defeated in battle. Many were killed and the rest came back in disgrace.

So the people of Israel turned back into the wilderness where they remained for the next forty years. All of the adults who came out of Egypt would die there. Still, the Lord was with them and met their needs. Their clothes and shoes didn’t get old, and God provided their daily food.

48 Korah's Rebellion

Beginnings

Numbers 16 – 17

As Israel went back into the wilderness, four men decided to set things straight concerning Moses and Aaron. The leader was Korah, from the tribe of Levi. They formed a group of two hundred fifty prominent men and went to Moses. They said, "You've taken your authority too far. We're a holy nation. The Lord is with all of us. Things don't have to always go through you."

Moses said to Korah, "I know what this is about. The Levites have been chosen to do the Lord's service. Now you want the priesthood as well. God has chosen the family of Aaron, so you are in rebellion against God. Tomorrow, all of us will stand before the Lord holding censers filled with fire and incense. The Lord will choose who he wants to lead the people."

Two of the organizers said, "We're not coming! You've brought us back into the wilderness to die. Now you're telling us what to do like a king. So, we won't be there!"

This made Moses angry. He said to the Lord, "I've never mistreated these people. I haven't taken anything from them. Yet they hate me."

The next day, Moses, Aaron, and all two hundred fifty men stood before the Lord with their censers filled with fire and incense. The entire congregation was there to watch.

The glory of the Lord appeared, and God said to Moses and Aaron, "Step out of the way. I'm going to destroy the entire congregation."

Moses fell down and begged, "Oh God, don't punish everyone for what a few people have done."

God said, "Tell the people to move away from the tents of the men who refused to come to this meeting." So everyone moved away from those tents. The two men came out and stood next to the door of their tents, along with their wives, children, and babies. Korah went and stood with them.

Moses spoke to the congregation. "If these men grow old and die a natural death, then you'll know that the Lord didn't send me to do these things. But if something unusual happens to them,

you'll know they were speaking against God."

Suddenly, the earth opened, and these men and their families fell into the hole. The ground closed up around them as if the earth swallowed them. People screamed and ran thinking they might be swallowed as well. Then fire came and killed all two hundred fifty men who were holding censers with incense.

The Lord said to Moses, "Collect all two hundred fifty censers from among the men's ashes. Hammered them into plating and use it to overlay the altar. This will remind the people that the priesthood is only for Aaron and his descendants."

Even with all of this, the people were still talking about the priesthood the next day. A crowd gathered around Moses and Aaron to talk about the people who died. They said, "You killed God's people."

Moses turned and saw that God's anger was hot against the crowd. He said to Aaron, "Quick, go get a censer and fill it with incense and fire. Run among the people and make atonement for their sins. God's anger is flowing out, and he's striking them with a plague." As Aaron did this, he saw that the plague had started. He made atonement for the people, standing between the dead and those who were alive. The plague stopped, but 14,700 died that day.

To solve the issue of the priesthood, the Lord said to Moses, "Have each tribe bring a walking stick. Put Aaron's name on Levi's walking stick. Place them in the Tabernacle. I'll make one of them sprout. This will make the people stop complaining about you!"

Moses followed the Lord's instructions. The next day, not only had Aaron's walking stick sprouted, it formed buds, blossomed, and produced almonds! The people saw this and were amazed. From that day, they didn't even want to go near the Tabernacle, in case they would die. Aaron's staff was put back into the Tabernacle for safekeeping.

49 Speak to the Rock

Beginnings

Numbers 20 – 21

The Israelites travelled to a place where there was no water. The people went to Moses and said, “We wish we would have died with our brothers under God’s hand. You brought us here with many promises, but we don’t see any farms, fig trees, or vineyards. On top of that, there’s no water for us or our livestock.”

The Lord said to Moses, “Gather the people together and stand in front of them with your staff. Speak to the rock, and it will give you water. There will be enough for the people and their livestock.”

So Moses stood in front of the people. He said, “You’re a bunch of rebels. Do I have to provide you water from this rock?” With that, he hit the rock two times with his staff. Water came gushing out, and everyone had enough.

But the Lord wasn’t pleased with Moses and Aaron. He said, “You didn’t trust my power. These people saw you disrespect my command. Therefore, you won’t take these people into the land I promised them.”

As the people of Israel moved on, they came to the border of Edom. Moses sent a message to their king asking permission to pass through their land. He assured the king that they wouldn’t disturb anything, and they would pay for any water they drank.

The king refused to let them pass through the land. He even sent his army to their borders and threatened war if the Israelites crossed into their land. So Moses turned away.

Shortly after that, the Lord said to Moses,

“Aaron is about to die. Therefore take the high priest’s garments off of him and put them on Eleazar, his son.”

Moses did this, and Aaron died soon afterwards. The people of Israel mourned his death for thirty days.

As the Israelites moved around Edom, the people started to complain again. They said, “We didn’t have to come here to die. We could’ve done that in Egypt. We have no water, and we hate this awful food!”

So the Lord sent poisonous snakes into the camp. People were bitten, and many died. They rushed to Moses and said, “We’ve sinned! We shouldn’t have spoken against you and the Lord. Please talk to God and ask him to take away these snakes.” So Moses prayed for the people.

The Lord said to Moses, “Make a snake out of bronze and put it on a pole. People will be healed from their snake bites if they look at the bronze snake.”

As the people of Israel traveled they came to the border of the Amorites. They sent a message to the king asking if they could travel through his land. They assured him that they would not take anything and would do no harm.

The king of the Amorites refused. Instead, he took his army and attacked Israel. So the people of Israel fought them and totally defeated them. They took over all their cities and lived in them. They controlled all the land right up to the Ammonite border.

50 Balaam's Donkey

Beginnings

Numbers 22:1-35

The Israelites camped in the valley of Moab, next to the Jordan River across from Jericho.

The king of Moab was a man named Balak. He was terrified when he saw the great mass of people in his valley. He had heard what they'd done to other kings. He said to the Midianites, "These people are more powerful than us. I'm afraid they'll totally destroy us."

Together, the two nations decided to send for Balaam, a prophet who lived in the east next to the Euphrates River. They sent gifts with a message, "Come quickly. A huge mass of people has come out of Egypt, and they're now in our valley. They're stronger than us, so we want you to curse them so we can defeat them and send them away. We know you're a prophet, and whoever you curse is cursed, and whoever you bless is blessed."

Balaam said, "Stay the night. In the morning I'll tell you what God told me to do."

During the night, God said to Balaam, "Who are these men staying with you?"

"They're from the king of Moab. He says there are a large mass of people come out of Egypt, and he wants me to go and curse them."

The Lord said, "No, you're not to go with them. You're not to curse those people, because they're blessed."

The next morning, Balaam told the delegation, "Go back to your king. The Lord won't let me go with you."

The delegation went back and gave Balak this message. The king then sent a delegation of more important people. Through them he said, "Don't let anything stop you from coming to me. If you'll curse these people, I'll make you a rich man."

Balaam said, "If the king filled my house with gold, I can only say what the Lord tells me to say. Still, stay the night. I'll see if the Lord says something different."

That night, the Lord said to Balaam, "Since

these men have come to you a second time, you may go with them. But, be careful. Only say what I tell you to say." So the next morning, Balaam saddled his donkey, took his two servants, and started on his journey to Moab.

As he traveled along, the Angel of the Lord stood in his path with a sword in his hand. The donkey looked up and saw the angel, so she turned and went into a field. Balaam beat her until she got back on the path.

The angel went down the path and stood at a place where there was a wall on both sides. The donkey looked up and saw the angel with his sword drawn. She pushed up against the wall, trapping Balaam's foot. He beat her again.

The angel went down the path, but this time he stood in a place where there was no room on either side. The donkey looked up and saw the angel, so she crouched down beneath Balaam.

Balaam flew into a rage. He took a stick and started beating his donkey. With that, God allowed the donkey to talk. She said, "Why have you beaten me three times?"

Balaam yelled at her. "Because you've made me look like a fool. If this was a sword instead of a stick, I'd kill you right here on the spot."

The donkey said, "Haven't I served you ever since you were born? Have I ever done this before?"

Balaam said, "No, you never have."

Suddenly, his eyes were opened and he saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the path with his sword drawn. Balaam bowed down before him.

The angel said, "You have beaten your donkey three times. Yet, if it hadn't been for her, I would have killed you and let her live."

Balaam said, "If you don't want me to go to Moab, I'll turn around and go home."

The angel said, "No, you may go. But be careful. Only say the words I give you to say." And with that, Balaam went on to Moab.

51 Balaam's Prophecy

Beginnings

Numbers 22:36 – 25:18 & 31:7-16

When Balaam arrived in Moab, King Balak said, "What took you so long? I said I'd make you a rich man. Didn't you believe me?"

Balaam said, "I'm here now, but understand. I can only say what God tells me to say."

So Balak took Balaam onto a high cliff overlooking the entire camp of Israel. Balaam had the king build altars to the Lord, and they sacrificed to Him. Balaam told the king to stay there while he went higher up the mountain to see what God wanted him to say. God gave him a message. So he went back to where King Balak and the elders of Moab were waiting.

Balaam looked out over the people and said, "King Balak sent for me. He said, 'Come and curse Jacob. Come and denounce Israel. But how can I curse those who God doesn't curse. How can I denounce those who God doesn't denounce? I stand on these cliffs and look out over these people. There is no other nation like them. Oh, that I had a privilege of dying like these righteous people die.'"

King Balak was shocked. He said, "I brought you here to curse these people – not to bless them!"

Balaam said, "I made it clear. I can only say what God tells me to say."

Balak said, "Come with me to a different spot. From there you will only see part of the people. Maybe you'll be able to curse them." They went to the second spot, and again they built altars and sacrificed to the Lord.

Balaam told the king, "Stay here while I go talk to God." The Lord met with Balaam and gave him words to say. He went back and said, "Oh King Balak, listen carefully to what I am about to say. God isn't like people. He doesn't change his mind. He told me to bless the people because the Lord lives among them. He's their king, and they're happy about that. He brought them out of Egypt with a mighty hand. So there isn't a curse for them. They'll be known for the great things God has done for them."

The king said, "If you can't curse them, at

least stop giving them a blessing." Again King Balak took Balaam to another place so he could see the people. He said, "Try one more time and see if there is a curse for these people from here.

Balaam once again had an altar built and they sacrificed to the Lord. But he didn't go up the mountain. As he looked across the valley, the Spirit of God came upon him. "Oh, the tents of Israel are beautiful. They're like a garden that has been planted by God. Whoever blesses these people will be blessed. Whoever curses these people will be cursed."

Balak was furious. He said, "I've brought you here to curse these people. I would've made you rich, but the Lord robbed you of those riches. Now go home!"

Balaam said, "I have one more message. Someone is coming. I can't see who it is. He is like a heavenly star. He'll be the King of Israel. He'll have victory over all of his enemies."

With that, Balaam left, and King Balak went back to his place. Later, Balaam went to the king and said, "I can't curse these people, but you can cause God to curse them." And he gave him a plan.

Shortly after that, the women of Moab went down to the camp of Israel. They had sex with the men, and then invited them to a festival for their idols. The men went, and soon they were worshipping the idols.

God was furious! He sent a plague and 24,000 people died. One of the Israelites brought a Midianite woman to his family tent. They walked right past Moses and the elders of Israel. The son of the high priest took a spear and went into the tent. He thrust the spear through them both, killing them on the spot.

With that, God stopped the plague. The Lord then told Moses, "Take your army. Go, kill the Moabites and the Midianites because of what they have done." The Israeli army went out and defeated both nations. Among the dead was the body of Balaam because of the advice he had given Balak.

52 The Death of Moses

Beginnings

Numbers 27:12-23 ☞

Deuteronomy 30 – 34

The Lord said to Moses, “Go up this mountain. There I’ll show you the land I’m giving Israel. You can’t go in with them because of your sin of hitting the rock. But I’ll let you see the land, and after that you’ll die.

Moses said, “Lord, select a man to lead these people – someone who can stand before them and make decisions that will be good for them. If you don’t, they’ll be like sheep without a shepherd.”

God said, “Joshua has the spirit of wisdom in him. Have him stand in front of Eleazar the priest while the entire congregation is watching. Make sure everyone can hear you give him the authority to lead the nation. Tell the people to obey him like they’ve obeyed you. Tell Joshua he should get advice from Eleazar.”

So Moses did as the Lord commanded. He took Joshua and had him stand before Eleazar and all the people. Moses then laid his hands on Joshua and commissioned him to lead the nation.

He then said to the people, “I have a command for you. It’s well within your ability to obey. If you do, you’ll have life and prosperity. Not obeying it will bring heartaches and death.

“The command is simply this. Love the Lord your God, and do what He says. If you do, He’ll

bless you as you go into the land. If you don’t, He’ll take everything you love away from you.”

“I’m asking heaven and earth to be a witness to what I’m saying. I set before you life and death, blessing and a curse. Therefore choose life. Love the Lord your God. Obey him and be faithful to him, because he is your life.”

Then Moses said to Joshua, “Be strong and courageous. The Lord will be with you and will go before you. Don’t be afraid or discouraged.”

After saying this, Moses went up the mountain, which was across from Jericho. There, God showed him the land of Israel. He was able to see it all, from the north to the south, from the east to the west. The Lord said, “This is the land I promised to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I’ve allowed you see it, but you can’t cross over into it.”

So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died, and the Lord buried him in the land of Moab. He was 120 years old when he died. Yet his eyesight was still good, and he was physically fit.

The people cried for thirty days after the death of Moses. There has never been another prophet in Israel like Moses. Yet, God promised the people that some day, a Great Prophet would come who would be like Moses.