

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

THE
GRACE AND TRUTH
STUDY BIBLE



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NIV, The Grace and Truth Study Bible
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OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis	1	Ecclesiastes	883
Exodus	76	Song of Songs	896
Leviticus	131	Isaiah	906
Numbers	167	Jeremiah	999
Deuteronomy	219	Lamentations	1090
Joshua	263	Ezekiel	1101
Judges	295	Daniel	1167
Ruth	328	Hosea	1188
1 Samuel	335	Joel	1204
2 Samuel	379	Amos	1211
1 Kings	418	Obadiah	1224
2 Kings	465	Jonah	1227
1 Chronicles	507	Micah	1232
2 Chronicles	550	Nahum	1242
Ezra	592	Habakkuk	1248
Nehemiah	609	Zephaniah	1253
Esther	629	Haggai	1258
Job	641	Zechariah	1263
Psalms	688	Malachi	1278
Proverbs	838		

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew	1287	1 Timothy	1675
Mark	1345	2 Timothy	1684
Luke	1383	Titus	1691
John	1439	Philemon	1697
Acts	1486	Hebrews	1700
Romans	1540	James	1723
1 Corinthians	1570	1 Peter	1732
2 Corinthians	1599	2 Peter	1744
Galatians	1617	1 John	1752
Ephesians	1628	2 John	1763
Philippians	1641	3 John	1766
Colossians	1652	Jude	1769
1 Thessalonians	1661	Revelation	1774
2 Thessalonians	1670		

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ALPHABETICAL ORDER OF THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

The books of the New Testament are indicated by italics.

<i>Acts</i>	1486	Judges	295
Amos	1211	1 Kings	418
1 Chronicles	507	2 Kings	465
2 Chronicles	550	Lamentations	1090
<i>Colossians</i>	1652	Leviticus	131
<i>1 Corinthians</i>	1570	<i>Luke</i>	1383
<i>2 Corinthians</i>	1599	Malachi	1278
Daniel	1167	<i>Mark</i>	1345
Deuteronomy	219	<i>Matthew</i>	1287
Ecclesiastes	883	Micah	1232
<i>Ephesians</i>	1628	Nahum	1242
Esther	629	Nehemiah	609
Exodus	76	Numbers	167
Ezekiel	1101	Obadiah	1224
Ezra	592	<i>1 Peter</i>	1732
<i>Galatians</i>	1617	<i>2 Peter</i>	1744
Genesis	1	<i>Philemon</i>	1697
Habakkuk	1248	<i>Philippians</i>	1641
Haggai	1258	Proverbs	838
<i>Hebrews</i>	1700	Psalms	688
Hosea	1188	<i>Revelation</i>	1774
Isaiah	906	<i>Romans</i>	1540
<i>James</i>	1723	Ruth	328
Jeremiah	999	1 Samuel	335
Job	641	2 Samuel	379
Joel	1204	Song of Songs	896
<i>John</i>	1439	<i>1 Thessalonians</i>	1661
<i>1 John</i>	1752	<i>2 Thessalonians</i>	1670
<i>2 John</i>	1763	<i>1 Timothy</i>	1675
<i>3 John</i>	1766	<i>2 Timothy</i>	1684
Jonah	1227	<i>Titus</i>	1691
Joshua	263	Zechariah	1263
<i>Jude</i>	1769	Zephaniah	1253

ABBREVIATIONS AND TRANSLITERATIONS

ABBREVIATIONS

General

c	century	etc.	and so on	NT	New Testament
c.	about, approximately	i.e.	that is	OT	Old Testament
cf.	compare, confer	KJV	King James (Authorized Version)	p., pp.	page, pages
ch., chs.	chapter, chapters	lit.	literally, literal	v., vv.	verse, verses
e.g.	for example				

The Old Testament

Genesis	Ge	Ecclesiastes	Ecc
Exodus	Ex	Song of Songs	SS
Leviticus	Lev	Isaiah	Isa
Numbers	Nu	Jeremiah	Jer
Deuteronomy	Dt	Lamentations	La
Joshua	Jos	Ezekiel	Eze
Judges	Jdg	Daniel	Da
Ruth	Ru	Hosea	Hos
1 Samuel	1Sa	Joel	Joel
2 Samuel	2Sa	Amos	Am
1 Kings	1Ki	Obadiah	Ob
2 Kings	2Ki	Jonah	Jnh
1 Chronicles	1Ch	Micah	Mic
2 Chronicles	2Ch	Nahum	Na
Ezra	Ezr	Habakkuk	Hab
Nehemiah	Ne	Zephaniah	Zep
Esther	Est	Haggai	Hag
Job	Job	Zechariah	Zec
Psalms	Ps	Malachi	Mal
Proverbs	Pr		

The New Testament

Matthew	Mt	1 Peter	1Pe
Mark	Mk	2 Peter	2Pe
Luke	Lk	1 John	1Jn
John	Jn	2 John	2Jn
Acts	Ac	3 John	3Jn
Romans	Ro	Jude	Jude
1 Corinthians	1Co	Revelation	Rev
2 Corinthians	2Co		
Galatians	Gal		
Ephesians	Eph		
Philippians	Php		
Colossians	Col		
1 Thessalonians	1Th		
2 Thessalonians	2Th		
1 Timothy	1Ti		
2 Timothy	2Ti		
Titus	Titus		
Philemon	Phm		
Hebrews	Heb		
James	Jas		

TRANSLITERATIONS

A simplified system has been used for transliterating words from ancient Biblical languages into English. The only transliterations calling for comment are these:

Transliteration	Pronunciation
ʾ	Glottal stop
h̄	Similar to the “ch” in the German word <i>Buch</i>
t̄	Similar to the “t” in the verb “tear”
ʿ	Similar to the glottal stop
š	Similar to the “ts” in “hits”
š̄	Similar to the “s” in “sing”

QUICK START GUIDE

What is The Grace and Truth Study Bible?

The *NIV Grace and Truth Study Bible* is an all new study Bible built by a team of scholars and pastors committed to delivering a trustworthy and approachable guide to Scripture to Bible readers. Unwavering in its commitment to evangelical steadfastness, this study Bible paints a stunning canvas of the goodness of God's redemptive plan revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What is a study Bible?

A study Bible contains the full text of the Bible, along with a library of study features that help the reader more completely grasp and understand what the text is saying. The study notes introduce and explain a wide variety of background information related to the biblical text, providing deeper insights for individuals who are ready to devote themselves to study of the text.

What do the features of this study Bible offer me?

Book introductions: Each book of the Bible has a “book introduction” that offers helpful information about that book of the Bible. The book introductions in this Bible give an overview of the book and provide helpful information to the reader.

Cross reference system: Where does this word or term appear in other parts of the Bible? A cross reference system gives you the ability to search the Scriptures for ideas and themes that reappear as terms are used in various books.

Study notes: What is the Bible saying here? God's Word was written down many years ago by different authors in different settings. The study notes at the bottom of each page help explain or give background on words, phrases, and the flow of the argument to aid you in greater understanding of what God is saying in his Word. Each note was thoughtfully crafted to guide you to more clearly understanding the Word of God.

Concordance: A concordance to the New International Version text is located at the back of the Bible. It will help you find the location of words or phrases that are found in the Scripture text.

Maps: Fourteen full-color maps at the end of this study Bible help readers to visualize the geographic context of what they are studying. The maps are supplemented by a complete map index.

*“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting
and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may
be thoroughly equipped for every good work”*

(2 Timothy 3:16–17).



THE GRACE AND TRUTH STUDY BIBLE: INTRODUCTION

God has given his children many good gifts, but the gift of his Word is among the most precious of all. The fact that God has spoken to us is breathtaking. He shows his love for us in speaking to us and giving us the Bible, so that we may know him. The Bible is God's self-revelation, and in its pages we have all that we need in order to know God, to know Christ, to know the Good News of the Gospel, and to know how we are to live as God's people.

So, where you find Christians, you find them reading and studying the Bible. *The Grace and Truth Study Bible* is intended to help Christians read God's Word, understand it, and develop a constant hunger to know more and more biblical truth. Every note, every explanation, is intended to help the reader understand the Word of God. It is designed so that you can read it at home, take it to Bible study and church, and know it for many rewarding years as a constant companion.

Grace and truth are two of the most wonderful words found in the Bible. Grace is the love God shows us despite our sin, and truth is the very foundation of our faith. Christianity is not defined only by beliefs but by eternal truths. Of course, grace and truth reveal God's own character, ultimately revealed to us in Jesus Christ, the Son, who is "full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14). These two words summarize biblical theology, and they are fitting as the name of this study Bible. Our hope is that readers of the Bible will learn to see grace and truth revealed on every page of God's Word.

The Bible is an unfolding story that begins with the creation of the world and ends with the promise of God's ultimate glory in the kingdom of Christ. Starting with Genesis and ending with Revelation, the Bible contains book after book that unveil the history of God's people and his purposes, bringing spiritual instruction to the reader. *The Grace and Truth Study Bible* contains helps and added material that are designed to maximize understanding. This study Bible will benefit new believers who are looking to understand the Christian faith for the first time, and it will help maturing Christians who are eager to dig deeper into biblical truth.

This entire project, and each of the writers and editors involved, is committed to the complete truthfulness and trustworthiness of the Bible. We believe that the Bible is verbally inspired, inerrant, infallible, and perfect. We affirm historic Christian orthodox teaching. This project is graciously evangelical, Reformed, and complementarian. Our hope is to serve Christians and the church. Every contributor to this project is a personal student of God's Word, as well as a scholar. In *The Grace and Truth Study Bible*, we are learning the Holy Scriptures together.

In the Old Testament, we see God's sovereignty and power in creation, the special creation of human beings made in God's image. We learn of our fall into sin and see God's loving determination to redeem sinful humanity. We learn of patriarchs and matriarchs in the faith and witness God's covenant love as he chooses Israel. God establishes his law, and then we meet prophets and kings and the consummate promise of a coming King and Messiah and Savior. In the

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New Testament we find the greatest good news of all: the Savior has come, Jesus Christ the Lord. We learn of the ministry of Jesus, hear him teach, and witness his fulfillment of all that the prophets foretold. We learn of Christ's death, burial, resurrection from the dead, and ascension to the Father, and we hear the apostles preach the gospel to the world for the very first time. We learn how to know Christ as our own Lord and Savior and how to live as Christians. The church is taught in truth and in the sure and certain hope of God's everlasting promises.

Every feature of this study Bible is intended to help readers see more, learn more, know more, and understand more of God's Word, in order that we will be more faithful in following Christ. Our greatest hope is that readers who are not yet believers in Jesus Christ will find him in these pages, trust him with their whole heart, confess him as the Christ, know him as Savior, follow him as Lord, repent of their sins, and receive God's forgiveness and the gift of life everlasting.

May the God of all glory, grace, and truth bless every reader of his Word and open our eyes to see. And may *The Grace and Truth Study Bible* serve to glorify God and edify the church. That is our fervent hope.

Now, join the great adventure and start reading the Word of God.

R. Albert Mohler, Jr.,
General Editor

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A study Bible of this scale and vision requires a massive team marked by deep commitment to the project from the very beginning. It is my privilege to recognize some key members of this outstanding team, without whom this study Bible would not exist. We have worked together seamlessly and with a spirit of joy.

An early step was to find just the right Old and New Testament editors, and we found them in James M. Hamilton and Benjamin L. Merkle. Both are outstanding scholars and teachers of the Bible, and they proposed a team of equally committed scholars of the Bible to write the project, book by book. They supervised the process of writing, ensured the quality and theological faithfulness of every note, and maintained our momentum. To both of them we owe a tremendous debt of gratitude. Through this project, their lifelong commitment to teaching the Bible is extended, and we are the richer for it.

Mitchell Chase, a most remarkable pastor and scholar, gave much of his life to this project as Managing Editor. It would not have happened without him. Throughout the project, his pastoral and academic skills were on full display. I am incredibly thankful for him.

Dallas Goebel and Joshua Hutchens served as Theological Reviewers for the Old and New Testaments, and their skills and commitment are reflected throughout the project.

The team at HarperCollins Christian, Zondervan, has been remarkable. Their vision for the project is a reflection of their own commitment to the publication of God's Word and resources that will help God's people. In particular, I want to thank John Kramp and Melinda Bouma for their leadership and guidance, and Shari Vanden Berg for her expertise and editorial care. The skills of Natalie Block as copyeditor are revealed in the precision and care apparent on every page.

Book by book through the Bible, 42 wonderful teachers of God's Word contributed to this project. Each of them took time from other pursuits to join in this effort, bringing their pastoral, biblical, and theological skills to this study Bible. Without them, this study Bible would not exist. With them, we shared the joy of helping God's people to understand the Bible more deeply. I am thankful for every one of them.

Ultimately, a project like this is a labor of love and devotion that finds its fulfillment only when it is used. Our hope and prayer is that every labor invested in this study Bible will mean that readers will grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. That will be enough.

Finally, we pray that all glory will be to the Triune God, whose Scripture we love and treasure. May God bless this study Bible so that it serves his people, not only in this generation, but for generations to come. To the everlasting glory of his name, that is our prayer.

R. Albert Mohler, Jr.,
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PREFACE

The goal of the New International Version (NIV) is to enable English-speaking people from around the world to read and hear God's eternal Word in their own language. Our work as translators is motivated by our conviction that the Bible is God's Word in written form. We believe that the Bible contains the divine answer to the deepest needs of humanity, sheds unique light on our path in a dark world and sets forth the way to our eternal well-being. Out of these deep convictions, we have sought to recreate as far as possible the experience of the original audience—blending transparency to the original text with accessibility for the millions of English speakers around the world. We have prioritized accuracy, clarity and literary quality with the goal of creating a translation suitable for public and private reading, evangelism, teaching, preaching, memorizing and liturgical use. We have also sought to preserve a measure of continuity with the long tradition of translating the Scriptures into English.

The complete NIV Bible was first published in 1978. It was a completely new translation made by over a hundred scholars working directly from the best available Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts. The translators came from the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, giving the translation an international scope. They were from many denominations and churches—including Anglican, Assemblies of God, Baptist, Brethren, Christian Reformed, Church of Christ, Evangelical Covenant, Evangelical Free, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Nazarene, Presbyterian, Wesleyan and others. This breadth of denominational and theological perspective helped to safeguard the translation from sectarian bias. For these reasons, and by the grace of God, the NIV has gained a wide readership in all parts of the English-speaking world.

The work of translating the Bible is never finished. As good as they are, English translations must be regularly updated so that they will continue to communicate accurately the meaning of God's Word. Updates are needed in order to reflect the latest developments in our understanding of the biblical world and its languages and to keep pace with changes in English usage. Recognizing, then, that the NIV would retain its ability to communicate God's Word accurately only if it were regularly updated, the original translators established the Committee on Bible Translation (CBT). The Committee is a self-perpetuating group of biblical scholars charged with keeping abreast of advances in biblical scholarship and changes in English and issuing periodic updates to the NIV. The CBT is an independent, self-governing body and has sole responsibility for the NIV text. The Committee mirrors the original group of translators in its diverse international and denominational makeup and in its unifying commitment to the Bible as God's inspired Word.

In obedience to its mandate, the Committee has issued periodic updates to the NIV. An initial revision was released in 1984. A more thorough revision process was completed in 2005, resulting in the separately published TNIV. The updated NIV you now have in your hands builds on both the original NIV and the TNIV and represents the latest effort of the Committee to articulate God's unchanging Word in the way the original authors might have said it had they been speaking in English to the global English-speaking audience today.

Translation Philosophy

The Committee's translating work has been governed by three widely accepted principles about the way people use words and about the way we understand them.

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First, the meaning of words is determined by the way that users of the language actually use them at any given time. For the biblical languages, therefore, the Committee utilizes the best and most recent scholarship on the way Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek words were being used in biblical times. At the same time, the Committee carefully studies the state of modern English. Good translation is like good communication: one must know the target audience so that the appropriate choices can be made about which English words to use to represent the original words of Scripture. From its inception, the NIV has had as its target the general English-speaking population all over the world, the “International” in its title reflecting this concern. The aim of the Committee is to put the Scriptures into natural English that will communicate effectively with the broadest possible audience of English speakers.

Modern technology has enhanced the Committee’s ability to choose the right English words to convey the meaning of the original text. The field of computational linguistics harnesses the power of computers to provide broadly applicable and current data about the state of the language. Translators can now access huge databases of modern English to better understand the current meaning and usage of key words. The Committee utilized this resource in preparing the 2011 edition of the NIV. An area of especially rapid and significant change in English is the way certain nouns and pronouns are used to refer to human beings. The Committee therefore requested experts in computational linguistics at Collins Dictionaries to pose some key questions about this usage to its database of English — the largest in the world, with over 4.4 billion words, gathered from several English-speaking countries and including both spoken and written English. (The Collins Study, called “The Development and Use of Gender Language in Contemporary English,” can be accessed at <http://www.thenivbible.com/about-the-niv/about-the-2011-edition/>.) The study revealed that the most popular words to describe the human race in modern U.S. English were “humanity,” “man” and “mankind.” The Committee then used this data in the updated NIV, choosing from among these three words (and occasionally others also) depending on the context.

A related issue creates a larger problem for modern translations: the move away from using the third-person masculine singular pronouns — “he/him/his” — to refer to men and women equally. This usage does persist in some forms of English, and this revision therefore occasionally uses these pronouns in a generic sense. But the tendency, recognized in day-to-day usage and confirmed by the Collins study, is away from the generic use of “he,” “him” and “his.” In recognition of this shift in language and in an effort to translate into the natural English that people are actually using, this revision of the NIV generally uses other constructions when the biblical text is plainly addressed to men and women equally. The reader will encounter especially frequently a “they,” “their” or “them” to express a generic singular idea. Thus, for instance, Mark 8:36 reads: “What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?” This generic use of the “distributive” or “singular” “they/ them/their” has been used for many centuries by respected writers of English and has now become established as standard English, spoken and written, all over the world.

A second linguistic principle that feeds into the Committee’s translation work is that meaning is found not in individual words, as vital as they are, but in larger clusters: phrases, clauses, sentences, discourses. Translation is not, as many people think, a matter of word substitution: English word *x* in place of Hebrew word *y*. Translators must first determine the meaning of the words of the biblical languages in the context of the passage and then select English

words that accurately communicate that meaning to modern listeners and readers. This means that accurate translation will not always reflect the exact structure of the original language. To be sure, there is debate over the degree to which translators should try to preserve the “form” of the original text in English. From the beginning, the NIV has taken a mediating position on this issue. The manual produced when the translation that became the NIV was first being planned states: “If the Greek or Hebrew syntax has a good parallel in modern English, it should be used. But if there is no good parallel, the English syntax appropriate to the meaning of the original is to be chosen.” It is fine, in other words, to carry over the form of the biblical languages into English—but not at the expense of natural expression. The principle that meaning resides in larger clusters of words means that the Committee has not insisted on a “word-for-word” approach to translation. We certainly believe that every word of Scripture is inspired by God and therefore to be carefully studied to determine what God is saying to us. It is for this reason that the Committee labors over every single word of the original texts, working hard to determine how each of those words contributes to what the text is saying. Ultimately, however, it is how these individual words function in combination with other words that determines meaning.

A third linguistic principle guiding the Committee in its translation work is the recognition that words have a spectrum of meaning. It is popular to define a word by using another word, or “gloss,” to substitute for it. This substitute word is then sometimes called the “literal” meaning of a word. In fact, however, words have a range of possible meanings. Those meanings will vary depending on the context, and words in one language will usually not occupy the same semantic range as words in another language. The Committee therefore studies each original word of Scripture in its context to identify its meaning in a particular verse and then chooses an appropriate English word (or phrase) to represent it. It is impossible, then, to translate any given Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek word with the same English word all the time. The Committee does try to translate related occurrences of a word in the original languages with the same English word in order to preserve the connection for the English reader. But the Committee generally privileges clear natural meaning over a concern with consistency in rendering particular words.

Textual Basis

For the Old Testament the standard Hebrew text, the Masoretic Text as published in the latest edition of *Biblia Hebraica*, has been used throughout. The Masoretic Text tradition contains marginal notations that offer variant readings. These have sometimes been followed instead of the text itself. Because such instances involve variants within the Masoretic tradition, they have not been indicated in the textual notes. In a few cases, words in the basic consonantal text have been divided differently than in the Masoretic Text. Such cases are usually indicated in the textual footnotes. The Dead Sea Scrolls contain biblical texts that represent an earlier stage of the transmission of the Hebrew text. They have been consulted, as have been the Samaritan Pentateuch and the ancient scribal traditions concerning deliberate textual changes. The translators also consulted the more important early versions. Readings from these versions, the Dead Sea Scrolls and the scribal traditions were occasionally followed where the Masoretic Text seemed doubtful and where accepted principles of textual criticism showed that one or more of these textual witnesses appeared to provide the correct reading. In rare cases, the translators have emended the Hebrew text where it appears to have become corrupted at an even earlier stage of its transmission. These departures from the Masoretic Text are also indicated in the textual

footnotes. Sometimes the vowel indicators (which are later additions to the basic consonantal text) found in the Masoretic Text did not, in the judgment of the translators, represent the correct vowels for the original text. Accordingly, some words have been read with a different set of vowels. These instances are usually not indicated in the footnotes.

The Greek text used in translating the New Testament has been an eclectic one, based on the latest editions of the Nestle-Aland/United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament. The translators have made their choices among the variant readings in accordance with widely accepted principles of New Testament textual criticism. Footnotes call attention to places where uncertainty remains.

The New Testament authors, writing in Greek, often quote the Old Testament from its ancient Greek version, the Septuagint. This is one reason why some of the Old Testament quotations in the NIV New Testament are not identical to the corresponding passages in the NIV Old Testament. Such quotations in the New Testament are indicated with the footnote "(see Septuagint)."

Footnotes and Formatting

Footnotes in this version are of several kinds, most of which need no explanation. Those giving alternative translations begin with "Or" and generally introduce the alternative with the last word preceding it in the text, except when it is a single-word alternative. When poetry is quoted in a footnote a slash mark indicates a line division.

It should be noted that references to diseases, minerals, flora and fauna, architectural details, clothing, jewelry, musical instruments and other articles cannot always be identified with precision. Also, linear measurements and measures of capacity can only be approximated (see the Table of Weights and Measures). Although *Selah*, used mainly in the Psalms, is probably a musical term, its meaning is uncertain. Since it may interrupt reading and distract the reader, this word has not been kept in the English text, but every occurrence has been signaled by a footnote.

As an aid to the reader, sectional headings have been inserted. They are not to be regarded as part of the biblical text and are not intended for oral reading. It is the Committee's hope that these headings may prove more helpful to the reader than the traditional chapter divisions, which were introduced long after the Bible was written.

Sometimes the chapter and/or verse numbering in English translations of the Old Testament differs from that found in published Hebrew texts. This is particularly the case in the Psalms, where the traditional titles are included in the Hebrew verse numbering. Such differences are indicated in the footnotes at the bottom of the page. In the New Testament, verse numbers that marked off portions of the traditional English text not supported by the best Greek manuscripts now appear in brackets, with a footnote indicating the text that has been omitted (see, for example, Matthew 17:[21]).

Mark 16:9–20 and John 7:53—8:11, although long accorded virtually equal status with the rest of the Gospels in which they stand, have a questionable standing in the textual history of the New Testament, as noted in the bracketed annotations with which they are set off. A different typeface has been chosen for these passages to indicate their uncertain status.

Basic formatting of the text, such as lining the poetry, paragraphing (both prose and poetry), setting up of (administrative-like) lists, indenting letters and lengthy prayers within narratives and the insertion of sectional headings, has been the work of the Committee. However, the choice between single-column and double-column formats has been left to the publishers. Also the issuing of "red-letter" editions is a publisher's choice—one that the Committee does not endorse.

The Committee has again been reminded that every human effort is flawed—including this revision of the NIV. We trust, however, that many will find in it an improved representation of the Word of God, through which they hear his call to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and to service in his kingdom. We offer this version of the Bible to him in whose name and for whose glory it has been made.

The Committee on Bible Translation



THE
OLD TESTAMENT



GENESIS

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Ge 1:1) are the first words of not only the book of Genesis but of the Bible as a whole. Genesis is a book about beginnings: the beginning of time and space, the heavens and the earth, the planets, the solar system, the galaxies, and life on earth—from the tiniest microbe to the mammoth blue whale. But it is primarily the beginning of the grand story of God and his image bearers, whom he made to demonstrate his glory and grace on the earth. Genesis functions as the opening scene of a great drama as it sets the props and introduces the main actors.

The universe is a theater for divine glory, and in this theater the main protagonists (God and humanity) take their place. Without this book, the rest of the biblical story would be incomprehensible, for in Genesis we find a doctrine of creation and descriptions of the significance, meaning, and goal of human life. Without this book it would be almost impossible to discover the impulse that drives the biblical narrative. It would be impossible to discover what the second Adam was all about without the first Adam, to understand the basis for marriage without the first two chapters of Genesis, to comprehend the new creation without understanding the old creation.

Many details in the New Testament presuppose a knowledge of details from this first Old Testament book, such as Jesus’ reference to the Son of Man being a ladder bridging heaven and earth (Ge 28; cf. Jn 1:51) and Paul’s statement in Romans 8 that God did not spare his own Son from judgment for sinners (Ge 22; cf. Ro 8:32). Probably the most important doctrine of the New Testament—that God justifies sinners through faith—is derived from Genesis 15:6, a verse quoted five times in the New Testament (Ro 4:3,9,22; Gal 3:6; Jas 2:23).

Genesis is the grand overture to the biblical story. It describes an originally good creation, humanity’s sin, the corruption of the world, and the beginning of its restoration, which is only completed in the consummation of all things. The end of the biblical story recapitulates the early chapters of Genesis in a restoration that goes beyond the very good world God made in Genesis. In the new creation, there is no night (Rev 21:25), no sea (Rev 21:1), and no temple (Rev 21:22). There is a great city instead of a garden (Rev 21:10) and trees of life on each side of the great river of life flowing from the throne of God (Rev 22:1–2). There will no more be death or curse (Rev 22:3–4), and the marriage will be between God and his people (Rev 21:1–3).

2 ◇◇ GENESIS INTRODUCTION

Genesis is structured by using genealogies to introduce each section. A majestic prologue is followed by ten sections, each introduced by a genealogical formula (Ge 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10,27; 25:12,19; 36:1; 37:2). This arrangement enables the reader to clearly see the origins of the human race and its destiny. Early on, the world that was lost due to rebellion, but Scripture announces a descendant (Ge 3:15) who will conquer and restore the pristine glory of the human race. The narrative follows that “offspring” through all kinds of obstacles. At various appropriate climactic moments, we see that the offspring will be the means by which God blesses the entire earth. The genealogical line of the human race is narrowed down to a single family, chosen by God to be the bearer of universal blessing (Ge 12). Three stories trace this lineage: the Abraham story (Ge 12–25), the Jacob story (Ge 25–36), and the Joseph story (Ge 37–50). Following crisis after crisis and many seemingly insurmountable obstacles, we read of a strange meeting between the most powerful ruler in the ancient world (the pharaoh of Egypt) and an old crippled figure named Jacob/Israel (Ge 47:7–10). Ironically the latter blesses the former, and his progeny is the means by which the then-known world receives life. When this old man is on his deathbed, he blesses the son through whom the restoration of God’s rule will take place: Judah (Ge 49:8–12). Judah’s line will eventually culminate in the birth of Jesus Christ, who brings salvation and restoration to the world.

Genesis is a theological book. It is not primarily a book about doctrine, nor a history book, nor a scientific treatise, nor a political tract. It presents God’s story of redemption—a redemption that is not just narrowly individualistic but one that is national and ultimately universal. When readers get bogged down by the absence of scientific and historical details, they are like observers seeking to find how many hours there are in a mile or how many colors there are in an hour. They are trying to examine a work of art with scientific rigor and methodology rather than drawing back and appreciating its breathtaking beauty. While history is important to the biblical narrative, it is noted primarily for theological reasons. Even the few events in the lives of the patriarchs in Genesis are selected from an immense number of possibilities because of their theological importance. Theology is the driving engine of the biblical narrative.



The Beginning

1 In the beginning^a God created^b the heavens^c and the earth.^d ²Now the earth was formless^e and empty,^f darkness was over the surface of the deep,^g and the Spirit of God^h was hoveringⁱ over the waters.

³And God said,^j “Let there be light,” and there was light.^k ⁴God saw that the light was good,^l and he separated the light from the darkness.^m ⁵God calledⁿ the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.”^o And there was evening, and there was morning^p — the first day.

⁶And God said,^q “Let there be a vault^r between the waters^s to separate water from water.” ⁷So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it.^t And it was so.^u ⁸God called^v the vault “sky.”^w And there was evening, and there was morning^x — the second day.

⁹And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place,^y and let dry ground^z appear.” And it was so.^a ¹⁰God called^b the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters^c he called “seas.”^d And God saw that it was good.^e

^{1:1} ^aPs 102:25; Pr 8:23; Isa 40:21; 41:4, 26; Jn 1:1-2
^bver 21, 27;
^cGe 2:3 ^cver 6;
^dNe 9:6;
^eJob 9:8;
^f37:18; Ps 96:5; 104:2; 115:15; 121:2; 136:5;
^gIsa 40:22; 42:5; 51:13; Jer 10:12; 51:15 ^dGe 14:19; 2Ki 19:15;
^hNe 9:6;
ⁱJob 38:4;
^jPs 90:2; 136:6; 146:6; Isa 37:16; 40:28; 42:5; 44:24; 45:12, 18; Jer 27:5; 32:17; Ac 14:15; 17:24; Eph 3:9; Col 1:16;
^kHeb 3:4; 11:3; Rev 4:11; 10:6
^l1:2 ^eIsa 23:1; 24:10; 27:10; 32:14; 34:11
^mIsa 45:18;
ⁿJer 4:23
^oGe 8:2;
^pJob 7:12; 26:8; 38:9; Ps 36:6; 42:7; 104:6; 107:24; Pr 30:4
^qGe 2:7;
^rJob 33:4;
^sPs 104:30;
^tIsa 32:15
^uDt 32:11;
^vIsa 31:5

¹¹Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation:^f seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.^g” And it was so.^h ¹²The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kindsⁱ and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.^j ¹³And there was evening, and there was morning^k — the third day.

¹⁴And God said, “Let there be lights^l in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night,^m and let them serve as signsⁿ to mark sacred times,^o and days and years,^p ¹⁵and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so.^q

^{1:3} ^jver 6; Ps 33:6, 9; 148:5; Heb 11:3 ^k2Co 4:6*; 1Jn 1:5-7
^l1:4 ^lver 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31; Ps 104:31; 119:68; Jer 31:35
^mver 14; Ex 10:21-23; Job 26:10; 38:19; Ps 18:28; 104:20;
ⁿ105:28; Isa 42:16; 43:7 ^oPs 104:10; Ge 2:19, 23 ^pPs 74:16
^qver 8, 13, 19, 23, 31 ^r1:6 ^qS ver 3 ^sS ver 1; Isa 44:24; 2Pe 3:5
^tver 9; Ps 24:2; 136:6 ^u1:7 ^tGe 7:11; Job 26:10; 38:8-11, 16; Ps 68:33; 148:4; Pr 8:28 ^vver 9, 11, 15, 24 ^w1:8 ^vS ver 5
^xJob 9:8; 37:18; Ps 19:1; 104:2; Isa 40:22; 44:24; 45:12;
^yJer 10:12; Zec 12:1 ^xS ver 5 ^y1:9 ^yJob 38:8-11; Ps 33:7; 104:6-9; Pr 8:29; Jer 5:22; 2Pe 3:5 ^zPs 95:5; Jnh 1:9; Hag 2:6
^aS ver 7 ^{1:10} ^bS ver 5 ^cPs 33:7 ^dJob 38:8; Ps 90:2; 95:5 ^eS ver 4 ^{1:11} ^fPs 65:9-13; 104:14 ^gver 12, 21, 24, 25; Ge 2:5; 6:20; 7:14; Lev 11:14, 19, 22; Dt 14:13, 18; 1Co 15:38
^hS ver 7 ^{1:12} ^lS ver 1 ⁱS ver 4 ^{1:13} ^kS ver 5 ^{1:14} ^lPs 74:16; 136:7 ^mS ver 4 ⁿJer 10:2 ^oPs 104:19 ^pGe 8:22; Jer 31:35-36; 33:20, 25 ^{1:15} ^qS ver 7

1:1–2 Genesis 1:1–2:3 is the prologue not only for the book of Genesis but for the Bible as a whole, and it is like a grand musical overture for the biblical symphony that will follow. It has its own introduction in verses 1–2 and then unfolds in a symmetrical seven-day sequence that corresponds to the Israelite workweek: six days of work followed by one day of rest. By working for six days and resting for one in worship, the Israelites imitate their Creator. The first three days match the second three in their form and content. God organizes what he created into a formal structure in days 1–3, and he fills it with content in days 4–6. A final day of rest caps the creation as the Creator delights in what he has made. The presence of God’s Spirit at the beginning, the centrality of the spoken word, and the use of the divine plural before the creation of humanity (Ge 1:26–28) signals the work of a triune God.

The main actor in the biblical story appears right at the beginning: God. The word “God” in verse 1 translates the Hebrew word *Elohim*, a title signifying the great Creator. God’s act of creation in verse 1 brings into being the stuff of reality, which is formless and empty in verse 2. The rest of the prologue will show how the Creator completes the creation so that he can cease working on the seventh day (2:1). **1:3–5** In Hebrew literature, the first word an individual speaks is indicative of his or her character. In his first recorded speech in Scripture, God dispels darkness with his command for the presence of light. Light is a central characteristic of God in the Bible (1Jn 1:5). God speaks, and light appears effortlessly. What is more, he sees his creation and takes delight in it. It is “good” in that it serves its

purpose to dispel darkness. The darkness is not good. God separates the light from the darkness and begins to name reality: light is “day,” darkness is “night.” This naming will continue through the next two days. The word “day” can signify daylight or the alternation of day and night. Later it describes an entire seven-day period (Ge 2:4).

1:6–8 The second day is introduced by a divine command, by which God separates “water from water” with the sky (described as a vault). This captures an ancient understanding of the world that envisioned the waters of the earth as separated from the waters above the earth by a giant dome. Unlike the gods of ancient Near Eastern myths, God does not form and separate parts of creation by fighting forces of chaos. He acts with an effortless spoken word. This is the only day God does not pronounce a verdict of goodness.

1:9–13 On the third day, God gives two divine commands: one that pushes back the waters to let dry ground appear, and one that produces plant life from the dry ground. God is shaping the earth into a place for the habitation and sustenance of animal and human life. This day concludes God’s creation of the structures of creation; in the next three days, he will fill these structures with content. After this day, God will no longer name the reality he makes. It will be up to humanity to continue this naming task (cf. 2:19–23).

1:14–19 On the fourth day, God creates lights to rule the light and the darkness of day one. The poetic structure of these verses resolves the tension of God creating light before he creates the sun and stars: the second triad of days correspond to the first triad. The fact that the astral bodies are unnamed downplays their mythological significance, since

4 ◇◇ GENESIS 1:16

16God made two great lights — the greater light^t to govern^s the day and the lesser light to govern^t the night.^u He also made the stars.^v 17God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth,¹⁸ to govern the day and the night,^w and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good.^x 19And there was evening, and there was morning^y — the fourth day.

20And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures,^z and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.”^a 21So God created^b the great creatures of the sea^c and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it,^d according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind.^e And God saw that it was good.^f 22God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.”^g 23And there was evening, and there was morning^h — the fifth day.

24And God said, “Let the land produce living creaturesⁱ according to their kinds:^j the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so.^k 25God made the wild animals^l according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds.^m And God saw that it was good.ⁿ

26Then God said, “Let us^o make mankind^p in our image,^q in our likeness,^r so that they may rule^s over the

1:16 ^tDt 17:3; Job 31:26; Jer 43:13; Eze 8:16
^sPs 136:8
^uPs 136:9
^vJob 38:33; Ps 74:16; 104:19; Jer 31:35; Jas 1:17
^wDt 4:19; Job 9:9; 38:7, 31-32; Ps 8:3; 33:6; Ecc 12:2; Isa 40:26; Jer 8:2; Am 5:8
^x1:18 ^wJer 33:20; 25 ^xS ver 4
^y1:19 ^yS ver 5
^z1:20 ^zPs 146:6
^aGe 2:19
^b1:21 ^bS ver 1
^cJob 3:8; 7:12; Ps 74:13; 148:7; Isa 27:1; Eze 32:2
^dPs 104:25-26 ^eS ver 11
^fS ver 4
^g1:22 ^gS ver 28; Ge 8:17; 9:1, 7, 19; 47:27; Lev 26:9; Eze 36:11
^h1:23 ^hS ver 5
ⁱ1:24 ⁱGe 2:19
^jS ver 11
^kS ver 7
^l1:25 ^lGe 7:21-22; Jer 27:5
^mS ver 11
ⁿS ver 4
^o1:26 ^oGe 3:5, 22; 11:7; Ps 100:3; Isa 6:8
^pIsa 45:18
^qver 27; Ge 5:3; 9:6; Ps 8:5; 82:6; 89:6; 1Co 11:7; 2Co 4:4; Col 1:15; 3:10; Jas 3:9
^rAc 17:28-29
^sGe 9:2; Ps 8:6-8
^tPs 8:8

fish in the sea and the birds in the sky,^t over the livestock and all the wild animals,^a and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

27 So God created^u mankind^v in his own image,^w in the image of God^k he created them; male and female^y he created them.^z

28 God blessed them and said to them,^a “Be fruitful and increase in number;^b fill the earth^c and subdue it. Rule over^d the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.^e”

29 Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.^f 30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground — everything that has the breath of life^g in it — I give every green plant for food.^h” And it was so.

31 God saw all that he had made,ⁱ and it was very good.^j And there was evening, and there was morning^k — the sixth day.

^a 26 Probable reading of the original Hebrew text (see Syriac); Masoretic Text *the earth*

1:27 ^uS ver 1 ^vGe 2:7; Ps 103:14; 119:73 ^wS ver 26 ^xGe 5:1 ^yGe 5:2; Mt 19:4; Mk 10:6; Gal 3:28 ^zDt 4:32 1:28 ^aGe 3:5; Jos 24:3; Ps 113:9; 127:3, 5 ^bS Ge 17:6 ^cS ver 22; Ge 6:1; Ac 17:26 ^dS ver 26; Ps 115:16 ^ePs 8:6-8 1:29 ^fGe 9:3; Dt 12:15; Ps 104:14; 1Ti 4:3 1:30 ^gGe 2:7; 7:22 ^hJob 38:41; Ps 78:25; 104:14, 27; 111:5; 136:25; 145:15; 147:9 1:31 ⁱPs 104:24; 136:5; Pr 3:19; Jer 10:12 ^jS ver 4; 1Ti 4:4 ^kS ver 5

their names (sun, moon) represented gods in the worldview of Israel’s neighbors.

1:20–23 On the fifth day, God gives two divine commands: one to populate the water and the sky (created on day two) with marine and avian life, and another to bless the life with the ability to reproduce. In these verses we also find the first word of blessing in the creation story, and its meaning is clear: to give life and not death, to enable animal life to flourish and prosper in the domain for which these animals were created. Fertility, pregnancy, reproduction, and the fullness of flourishing life are the prime indicators of blessing. **1:24–31** The sixth day has two parts. First, God makes animals for the land (vv. 24–25), and second, God makes human beings (vv. 26–31). God first creates three classes of land animals: domestic animals, animals like reptiles and insects that creep on the ground, and wild animals. Then, for the first time, there is a pause in the action as God takes counsel with himself. This pause signals the importance of the next creative act: God

decides to create humanity in his own image and likeness. The use of the plural to describe God (“our”) is probably a reference to the Trinity (cf. the Spirit of God in v. 2), but it could also be a reference to the divine court (the angels). God creates both genders in his image, with no hint of inequality between males and females. The words “image” and “likeness” connote both a unique relation to God (humanity is like him) and a unique relation to the rest of creation (humanity is to rule creation). Evidence from the ancient Near East shows us that ancient peoples erected statues of rulers to show the ruler’s dominion over that area. While God has created a good world, it is a world that is wild, and one that people need to tame and subdue and develop. They need to harness its energy, cultivate its plants, harvest its crops, and fill its spaces. Human work is a blessing and not a curse; it is a means by which God exercises his rule over the created order. With the final act of creation, God declared that all he had made was *very good*!

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.^l

²By the seventh day^m God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.ⁿ ³Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy,^o because on it he rested^p from all the work of creating^q that he had done.

Adam and Eve

⁴This is the account^r of the heavens and the earth when they were created,^s when the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

⁵Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth^a and no plant had yet sprung up,^t for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth^u and there was no one to work the ground,⁶ but streams^b came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. ⁷Then the LORD God formed^v a man^{cw} from the dust^x of the ground^y and breathed into his nostrils the breath^z of life,^a and the man became a living being.^b

⁸Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden;^c and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the

^{2:1} Dt 4:19; 17:3; 2Kl 17:16; 21:3; Ps 104:2; Isa 44:24; 45:12; 48:13; 51:13
^{2:2} Dt 5:14
ⁿ ver 2-3; Ex 20:11; 31:17; 34:21; Jn 5:17; Heb 4:4*
^{2:3} Ex 16:23; 20:10; 23:12; 31:15; 35:2; Lev 23:3; Ne 9:14; Isa 58:13; Jer 17:22
^p Ps 95:11; Heb 4:1-11
^q S Ge 1:1
^{2:4} Ge 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 27; 25:12; 19; 36:1, 9; 37:2 ^a Ge 1:1; Job 38:8-11
^{2:5} Ge 1:11
^u Job 38:28; Ps 65:9-10; Jer 10:13
^{2:7} Isa 29:16; 43:1, 21; 44:2
^w S Ge 1:27
^x Ge 3:19; 18:27; Job 4:19; 10:9; 17:16; 34:15; Ps 90:3; Ecc 3:20; 12:7
^y Ge 3:23; 4:2; Ps 103:14; Jer 18:6; 1Co 15:47
^z S Ge 1:2;

ground — trees^d that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life^e and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.^f

¹⁰A river^g watering the garden flowed from Eden;^h from there it was separated into four headwaters. ¹¹The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah,ⁱ where there is gold. ¹²(The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin^{dj} and onyx are also there.) ¹³The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush.^e ¹⁴The name of the third river is the Tigris;^k it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.^l

^a 5 Or land; also in verse 6 ^b 6 Or mist
^c 7 The Hebrew for man (*adam*) sounds like and may be related to the Hebrew for ground (*adamah*); it is also the name Adam (see verse 20).
^d 12 Or good; pearls ^e 13 Possibly southeast Mesopotamia
 Job 27:3; Isa 2:22 ^a S Ge 1:30; Isa 42:5; Ac 17:25 ^b Job 12:10; 32:8; 33:4; 34:14; Ps 104:29; Isa 57:16; Eze 37:5; 1Co 15:45*
^{2:8} c ver 10, 15; Ge 3:23, 24; 4:16; 13:10; Isa 51:3; Eze 28:13; 31:9, 16; 36:35; Joel 2:3 ^{2:9} d Eze 31:8 ^e Ge 3:22, 24; Pr 3:18; 11:30; S Rev 2:7 ^f Eze 47:12 ^{2:10} g Nu 24:6; Ps 46:4; Eze 47:5 ^h S ver 8 ^{2:11} i Ge 10:7; 25:18 ^{2:12} j Nu 11:7 ^{2:14} k Ge 41:1; Da 10:4
^l Ge 15:18; 31:21; Ex 23:31; Nu 22:5; Dt 1:7; 11:24; Jos 1:4; 2Sa 8:3; 1Kl 4:21; 2Kl 23:29; 24:7; 1Ch 5:9; 18:3; 2Ch 35:20; Jer 13:4; 46:2; 51:63; S Rev 9:14

2:1–3 The seventh day is a day of completion as God ceases from all his labors and rests in all his works. He does not speak or work, as he did on the other days. Like the second part of the sixth day (which broke the repetitive patterns), the seventh day is unique. It alone is mentioned three times, it is the only day God blesses, and it is the only day without a closing formula (“evening and morning”). The seventh day is a day searching for an ending, an ending that will eventually be fulfilled in the Sabbath rest God provides (Heb 4:9–11). **2:4** This next text is often considered a second creation account, but if it is, we can see it as a complementary creation account (vv. 4–25). Whereas the first account describes creation with a more panoramic vision (1:1–2:3), this section zooms in to focus on God’s creation of humanity and his personal and intimate care of his creation. Chapters 2–3 refer to God as “LORD God”—a name that captures God’s covenantal relationship with humanity. Whereas the first account used staccato-like repetition to describe a sequence of seven days, which climaxed with the creation of humanity and the Sabbath, this account begins with the creation of the male human and climaxes with the creation of the female human. While the first account focuses on the goodness of creation, this account recognizes that it is “not good” for the man to be alone (2:18). While the first account identifies humanity’s task of having dominion over the creation, this text makes clear that this dominion includes acts of gardening, protecting, and classifying. At the end of the prologue of creation in Genesis 1, God creates humanity in his image; the meaning of this image is more fully developed in Genesis 2, when the “LORD God” creates the human pair. Genesis 2:4 contains the first use of the genealogical formula “This is the account . . .” This formula serves as a title for the next sequence of events, which conclude at the end of

chapter 4. This text depicts the heaven and earth as parents of the man and woman. While humans owe their origin to the ground, it is God who creatively shapes this ground to make them and who inspires them with his breath. He does this in a very intimate way, crafting the man from the dust of the ground and the woman from the man’s side. **2:5–6** The world is not yet a habitable place for humanity. There is no plant life or (presumably) animal life. This is a problem God will partially rectify with the creation of humanity. These verses parallel the prologue in chapter 1, where creation is unformed and unfilled before God creates light (1:2). **2:7–9** God forms the man from the ground. In Hebrew, the words for “man” and “ground” are related. The linguistic similarity shows the close relationship between the two entities. God places the man in the garden he has already prepared for him. The man does not have to earn access to the garden; God places him within it to care for it. Among all the trees of the garden, two receive special focus: a “tree of life” and a “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (v. 9). In the new creation there will be only the tree of life (Rev 22:2). **2:10–14** These verses slow down the narrative’s pace by presenting a digression focusing on the source of life for the garden and the source for water for the regions outside the garden. A spring within the garden wells up and forms a river. As this river emerges from the garden, it divides into four rivers, two of which are still known today: the Tigris and Euphrates. The other two (the Pishon and Gihon) may have symbolic names, since they rhyme and since their meaning suggests the word “spring”: the springer and the gusher. Later prophetic texts present similar imagery of a mighty river flowing out of the temple (Eze 47). Later in the biblical story, Jesus is a new temple who promises the water of life to any who will believe in him (Jn 4:10–14; Rev 22:1–4).

¹⁵The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden^m to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden;ⁿ ¹⁷but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,^o for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”^p

¹⁸The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”^q

¹⁹Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals^r and all the birds in the sky.^s He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called^t each living creature,^u that was its name. ²⁰So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam^a no suitable helper^v was found. ²¹So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep;^w and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs^b and then closed up the place with flesh. ²²Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib^{c,x} he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³The man said,

“This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;^y

^{2:15} ^mS ver 8
^{2:16} ⁿGe 3:1-2
^{2:17} ^oGe 3:11, 17
^pGe 3:1, 3; 5:5;
9:29; Dt 30:15,
19; Jer 42:16;
Eze 3:18;
S Ro 5:12;
S 6:23
^{2:18} ^qPr 31:11;
1Co 11:9; 1Ti 2:13
^{2:19} ^rPs 8:7
^sS Ge 1:20
^tS Ge 1:5
^uGe 1:24
^{2:20} ^vGe 3:20;
4:1
^{2:21} ^wGe 15:12;
1Sa 26:12;
Job 33:15
^{2:22} ^x1Co 11:8,
9, 12; 1Ti 2:13
^{2:23} ^yGe 29:14;
Eph 5:28-30
^zS Ge 1:5
^a1Co 11:8
^{2:24} ^bMal 2:15
^cMt 19:5*;
Mk 10:7-8*;
1Co 6:16*;
Eph 5:31*
^{2:25} ^dGe 3:7,
10-11; Isa 47:3;
La 1:8
^{3:1} ^eJob 1:7;
2:2; 2Co 11:3;
Rev 12:9; 20:2
^fS Ge 2:17
^{3:2} ^gGe 2:16
^{3:3} ^hS Ge 2:17
^{3:4} ⁱS Jn 8:44;
2Co 11:3
^{3:5} ^jS Ge 1:26;
14:18, 19; Ps 7:8;
Isa 14:14;
Eze 28:2

she shall be called^z ‘woman,’
for she was taken out of man.^{a”}

²⁴That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united^b to his wife, and they become one flesh.^c

²⁵Adam and his wife were both naked,^d and they felt no shame.

The Fall

3 Now the serpent^e was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’^{f”}

²The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,^g ³but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’^h”

⁴“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman.ⁱ ⁵“For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God,^j knowing good and evil.”

⁶When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing

^a 20 Or *the man* ^b 21 Or *took part of the man’s side* ^c 22 Or *part*

2:15–17 After the brief digression regarding the rivers, the scene refocuses on the man God placed in the garden. In this place from which life in all of its fullness dwells, God gives the man the responsibility to “work” the land and to “take care of” it (v. 15). These two terms indicate the farmer’s important task of tilling the ground and taking care of it, but they also suggest a sacred function for the man, for these verbs also appear together in texts describing the duties of priests and Levites in the tabernacle (Nu 3:7–8, 38). The man is to enjoy the fruit of all the trees of the garden, but he must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil or else he will suffer death. God issues this negative command to protect the man. This forbidden tree probably represents moral autonomy. By eating from this tree and disobeying God, humanity will decide for itself what is good and evil.

2:18–25 God addresses the one “not good” of creation: the man is without the woman—thus showing the complementarity of Genesis 1 and 2. Human sexuality is an essential aspect of God’s creative design for humanity. To rectify the man’s loneliness, God first creates animals. After the man names the animals, thereby exercising dominion over them, God says they are an unsuitable solution for the man’s lack of companionship. They are decidedly *not* like him. God then puts the man to sleep and takes from his side a rib, from which he crafts a partner *like* him. When the man awakens, he sings to his new bride a song that names her “woman” but also shows her likeness to him. She is his God-given complement. The final verse of the passage provides an explanation for the institution of marriage. Marriage is not a social construction but a divine creation that explains the wonder and power of sexuality and the magnetism

between the sexes. The conclusion of the story emphasizes the complete openness and transparency between the first couple: they were naked and not ashamed.

3:1 This chapter shows how a deliberate act of human rebellion sundered the harmony between God and the human couple, with catastrophic consequences. A new character enters the scene: the serpent. By means of wordplay, the author alerts the reader to a potentially ominous development. The serpent is “crafty,” a pun on the word for “naked” that appears in Genesis 2:25. This shrewd serpent will cause the couple see their nudity as shameful. Moreover, the serpent *speaks*. This animal is much more than meets the eye. The content of the speech reveals the serpent’s maligned character. In the following verses, the serpent distorts God’s word and authority and questions his character.

3:2–3 The woman corrects the serpent’s misquote of God’s order. However, she goes on to add a further prohibition to the divine word: that God forbade the couple from even touching the tree. Additionally, she does not call the tree by its proper name. Perhaps this is an indication that the woman is subtly questioning God’s goodness and his seriousness in punishing sin.

3:4–5 The serpent reveals his true colors and boldly lies to the woman, telling her in the strongest possible terms that the divine penalty of death for eating the forbidden fruit is a lie, and that God is intent on forbidding people from enjoying life to the full. The serpent thus slanders God’s character by implying that God would be jealous of the human couple becoming like him.

3:6–7 Up to this point God has defined what is good. Now the woman sees that the fruit is good. It is good in three

to the eye, and also desirable^k for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband,^l who was with her, and he ate it.^m ⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked;ⁿ so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.^o

⁸Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking^p in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid^q from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”^r

¹⁰He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid^s because I was naked;^t so I hid.”

¹¹And he said, “Who told you that you were naked?^u Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”^v

¹²The man said, “The woman you put here with me^w — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

¹³Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me,^x and I ate.”

¹⁴So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this,

“Cursed^y are you above all livestock and all wild animals!

You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust^z all the days of your life.

3:6^k Jas 1:14-15; 1Jn 2:16
^lNu 30:7-8; Jer 44:15, 19, 24, ^m2Co 11:3; 1Ti 2:14
ⁿ3:7^o Ge 2:25
^o ver 21
^p3:8^p Lev 26:12; Dt 23:14
^qJob 13:16; 23:7; 31:33; 34:22, 23; Ps 5:5; 139:7-12; Isa 29:15; Jer 16:17; 23:24; 49:10; Rev 6:15-16
^r3:9^r Ge 4:9; 16:8; 18:9; 1Ki 19:9, 13
^s3:10^s Ex 19:16; 20:18; Dt 5:5; 1Sa 12:18
^tGe 2:25
^u3:11^u Ge 2:25
^v5 Ge 2:17
^w3:12^w Ge 2:22
^x3:13^x Ro 7:11; 2Co 11:3; 1Ti 2:14
^y3:14^y Dt 28:15-20
^z2 Ps 72:9; Isa 49:23; 65:25; Mic 7:17
¹3:15¹ Jn 8:44; Ac 13:10; 1Jn 3:8
²b Ge 16:11; Jdg 13:5; Isa 7:14; 8:3; 9:6; Mt 1:23; Lk 1:31; Gal 4:4; Rev 12:17
³c Ro 16:20; Heb 2:14
⁴3:16⁴ Ps 48:5-6; Isa 13:8; 21:3; 26:17; Jer 4:31; 6:24; Mic 4:9; 1Ti 2:15

¹⁵And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring^{aa} and hers;^b

he will crush^b your head,^c and you will strike his heel.”

¹⁶To the woman he said,

“I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children.^d

Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.^e”

¹⁷To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat from it,’^f

“Cursed^g is the ground^h because of you; through painful toilⁱ you will eat food from it all the days of your life.^j

¹⁸It will produce thorns and thistles^k for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.^l

^a 15 Or seed ^b 15 Or strike

^e1Co 11:3; Eph 5:22 ^{3:17} ^fS Ge 2:17 ^gGe 5:29; Nu 35:33; Ps 106:39; Isa 24:5; Jer 3:1; Ro 8:20-22 ^hGe 6:13; 8:21; Isa 54:9
ⁱGe 29:32; 31:42; Ex 3:7; Ps 66:11; 127:2; Ecc 1:13 ^jGe 47:9; Job 5:7; 7:1; 14:1; Ecc 2:23; Jer 20:18 ^{3:18} ^kJob 31:40; Isa 5:6; Heb 6:8
^lPs 104:14

ways: for satisfying physical pleasure (eating), for satisfying physical desires (seeing), and for becoming wise (power). First John 2:16 echoes this trio of seductive temptations when it speaks of “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” Once the woman yields to these desires, she quickly gives the fruit to her husband, who is with her. Her husband has probably been mesmerized by the scene and so eats the fruit passively. The consequence is immediate. Their eyes are opened as the serpent promised. They see their nakedness and must hide it from one another by making clothing. They also must hide from God in the midst of the garden. There will be a long history before the resurrected Jesus breaks bread, representing his broken body, for his blind disciples to eat on the Emmaus Road, which causes them to truly see again (Lk 24:31).

3:8–13 God addresses the man first, using rhetorical questions to help him understand the gravity of his offense. The man expresses fear, speaks of the need to cover his nakedness, and fails to take responsibility, instead blaming the woman (and by implication God) for his transgression. His response demonstrates the consequences of the “fall” for humanity: fear, shame, and blame. God addresses the woman next. She does not accept responsibility either. She blames the serpent.

3:14–15 Significantly, God does not engage in a back-and-forth dialogue with the serpent. He simply curses it to a life of humiliation, where it will literally bite the dust. But

God promises that the woman, who was deceived first, will become the means by which the serpent and his strategy will be defeated. The woman’s offspring will engage in battle with and eventually defeat the serpent’s offspring. The woman’s offspring will be bruised on the heel—a nonlethal blow—and the serpent’s head will be crushed. Accordingly, subsequent chapters of Genesis focus on the man and woman’s human descendants. By the end of Genesis, there is an expectation of a royal figure from Judah who will rule the nations and transform nature (49:8–12). Genesis 3:15 is the fountainhead of messianic prophecy.

3:16 God declares that the woman will have pain in childbirth. There will also be strife between her and her husband. The unity and transparency between the man and woman has been broken. When the promised descendant of the woman comes, the original unity will be restored. There will no longer be Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female (Gal 3:28). In Christ, all these judgments will be reversed.

3:17–19 God next judges the man, who is now alienated from the ground from which he came. Work, which was a divine mandate, becomes a struggle for existence. Adam also experiences pain as he labors to produce food. God further decrees that humans will die—they’ll return to the ground from which God created Adam. Death rules life. When the promised descendant of the woman finally comes, there will be a reversal, and life will rule death (Ro 5:21).

¹⁹By the sweat of your brow^m
you will eat your foodⁿ
until you return to the ground,
since from it you were taken;
for dust you are
and to dust you will return.”^o

²⁰Adam^a named his wife Eve,^{b,p} because she would become the mother of all the living.

²¹The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.^q
²²And the LORD God said, “The man has now become like one of us,^r knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life^s and eat, and live forever.”²³So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden^t to work the ground^u from which he had been taken. ²⁴After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side^c of the Garden of Eden^v cherubim^w and a flaming sword^x flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.^y

Cain and Abel

4 Adam^d made love to his wife^z Eve,^a and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain.^{eb} She said, “With the help of the LORD I have brought forth^f a man.”² Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.^c

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.^d ³In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering^e to the LORD.^f ⁴And Abel also brought an offering — fat portions^g from

3:19
^mPs 104:23;
ⁿGe 14:18;
Dt 8:3, 9;
23:4; Ru 1:16;
2:14; 2Th 3:10
^oS Ge 2:7;
S Job 7:21;
S Ps 146:4;
1Co 15:47;
Heb 9:27

3:20
^pS Ge 2:20;
^q2Co 11:3;
1Ti 2:13
3:21 ^qS ver 7
3:22 ^rS Ge 1:26
^sS Ge 2:9;
S Rev 2:7
3:23 ^rS Ge 2:8
^uS Ge 2:7
3:24 ^vS Ge 2:8
^wEx 25:18-
22; 1Sa 4:4;
2Sa 6:2; 22:11;
1Ki 6:27; 8:6;
2Ki 19:15;
2Ch 5:8;
Ps 18:10; 80:1;
99:1; 1Sa 37:16;
Eze 10:1; 28:16
^xJob 40:19;
Ps 104:4;
1Sa 27:1
^yS Ge 2:9
4:1 ^zver 17,
²⁵ ^aS Ge 2:20
^bHeb 11:4;
1Jn 3:12;
Jude 11
4:2 ^cMt 23:35;
Lk 11:51;
Heb 11:4; 12:24
^dS Ge 2:7
4:3 ^eLev 2:1-
2; 1Sa 43:23;
Jer 41:5
^fNu 18:12
4:4 ^gLev 3:16;
2Ch 29:35
^hEx 13:2,
12; Dt 15:19
ⁱHeb 11:4

some of the firstborn of his flock.^h The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering,ⁱ but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

⁶Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry?^j Why is your face downcast?⁷ If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door;^k it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.”^l

⁸Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.”⁹ While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.^m

⁹Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?”ⁿ

“I don’t know,^o” he replied. “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

¹⁰The LORD said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground.^p ¹¹Now you are under a curse^q and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. ¹²When you work

^a 20 Or *The man* ^b 20 *Eve* probably means *living*. ^c 24 Or *placed in front* ^d 1 Or *The man* ^e 1 *Cain* sounds like the Hebrew for *brought forth* or *acquired*. ^f 1 Or *have acquired*
^g 8 Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, Vulgate and Syriac; Masoretic Text does not have “*Let’s go out to the field.*”

^{4:6} 1Jnh 4:4 ^{4:7} ^kGe 44:16; Nu 32:23; 1Sa 59:12 1Job 11:15; 22:27; Ps 27:3; 46:2; S Ro 6:16 ^{4:8} ^mMt 23:35; Lk 11:51; 1Jn 3:12; Jude 11 ^{4:9} ⁿS Ge 3:9 ^oS Jn 8:44 ^{4:10} ^pGe 9:5; 37:20, 26; Ex 21:12; Nu 35:33; Dt 21:7, 9; 2Sa 4:11; Job 16:18; 24:2; 31:38; Ps 9:12; 106:38; Heb 12:24; Rev 6:9-10 ^{4:11} ^qDt 11:28; 2Ki 2:24

3:20–21 The man names his wife Eve, which means “life.” Here, the man shows belief in God’s promise that life will finally triumph over death and that Eve will have children, one of whom will eventually crush the head of the serpent (Ge 3:15). God then provides better clothing for the couple. Obtaining animal skins would have required the death of animals in the garden. Here, then, is God’s first act of violence, which he performs in order to cover the shame and guilt of human beings. This is the first step in a long road, which will eventually lead to the complete removal of shame and guilt for human beings through another, more effective sacrificial death—a death that will result in robes of righteousness.

3:22–24 God must punish the couple by exiling them from the Garden of Eden. If they remain, they might eat from the tree of life and live forever. In their fallen state, eating from the tree would be a curse instead of a gift. Under a future new covenant, eternal life will become a reality (Jer 31:31–34). Life is now characterized by exile as the human couple—and therefore the human race—are exiled from Eden. Powerful angelic figures called cherubim bar the way to the tree of life. Later, God instructs the Israelites to create golden cherubim and to place them in the tabernacle (Ex 25:18–19). Humanity cannot return to the garden, but God, in his grace, will bring the garden to them.

4:1–8 The narrative’s focus shifts to the birth of children. Children are part of God’s creation blessing. Eve reminds herself of Yahweh’s help in the birth of her first son. She sees herself as a co-creator and names her son accordingly. The name Cain sounds like the Hebrew word for “created” or “acquired.” The second son quickly follows, and his name, Abel, means “vapor” or “breath,” suggesting he will have a short life. The scene then shifts quickly to the brothers’ adulthood and to an altar, where the brothers bring gifts to worship Yahweh. The text uses the word “brother” frequently to remind readers of the close relationship between the two children and to emphasize the heinous nature of Cain’s later act. Abel’s gift was acceptable to God. Cain’s offering, however, displeased the Lord. Cain could rectify God’s displeasure and his own jealousy by making amends. God describes sin as a wild beast ready to master Cain and tells Cain that he must master sin instead.

4:9–16 Two rhetorical questions in verse 9 reveal huge differences in the speakers’ worldviews. God’s question to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” reminds Cain of his failure to uphold a fundamental social responsibility. Cain’s rhetorical question, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” discloses his post-fall state of mind. To Cain the answer to his question is obviously negative, but to a person who did not experience the fall, the answer would be clearly positive. In Luke 10:29, the

the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you.^r You will be a restless wanderer^s on the earth.^t

¹³Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is more than I can bear. ¹⁴Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence;^u I will be a restless wanderer on the earth,^v and whoever finds me will kill me.”^w

¹⁵But the LORD said to him, “Not so^a; anyone who kills Cain^x will suffer vengeance^y seven times over.”^z Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. ¹⁶So Cain went out from the LORD’s presence^a and lived in the land of Nod,^b east of Eden.^b

¹⁷Cain made love to his wife,^c and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Cain was then building a city,^d and he named it after his son^e Enoch. ¹⁸To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad was the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael was the father of Methushael, and Methushael was the father of Lamech.

¹⁹Lamech married^f two women,^g one named Adah and the other Zillah. ²⁰Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who live in tents and raise livestock. ²¹His brother’s name was Jubal; he was the father of all who play stringed instruments^h and pipes.ⁱ ²²Zillah also had a son, Tubal-Cain, who forged^j all kinds of tools out of^k bronze and iron. Tubal-Cain’s sister was Naamah.

4:12 ^rDt 28:15-24; ^sPs 37:25; 59:15; 109:10
^tver 14
4:14 ^u2Ki 17:18; Ps 51:11; 139:7-12; Jer 7:15; 52:3 ^vver 12; Dt 28:64-67
^wGe 9:6; Ex 21:12, 14; Lev 24:17; Nu 35:19, 21, 27, 33; 1Ki 2:32; 2Ki 11:16
4:15 ^xEze 9:4, 6 ^yEx 21:20
^zver 24; Lev 26:21; Ps 79:12
4:16 ^aJude 11
^bS Ge 2:8
4:17 ^cS ver 1
^dPs 55:9
^ePs 49:11
4:19 ^fGe 6:2
^gGe 29:28; Dt 21:15; Ru 4:11; 1Sa 1:2
4:21 ^hGe 31:27; Ex 15:20; 1Sa 16:16; 1Ch 25:3; Ps 33:2; 43:4; Isa 16:11; Da 3:5
ⁱJob 21:12; 30:31; Ps 150:4
4:22 ^jEx 35:35; 1Sa 13:19; 2Ki 24:14
4:23 ^kGe 9:5-6; Ex 20:13; 21:12; 23:7; Lev 19:18; 24:17; Dt 27:24; 32:35
4:24 ^lDt 32:35; 2Ki 9:7; Ps 18:47; 94:1; Isa 35:4;

²³Lamech said to his wives,

“Adah and Zillah, listen to me; wives of Lamech, hear my words.

I have killed^k a man for wounding me, a young man for injuring me.

²⁴If Cain is avenged^l seven times,^m then Lamech seventy-seven times.ⁿ”

²⁵Adam made love to his wife^o again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth,^d saying, “God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him.”^q ²⁶Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh.^r

At that time people began to call on^e the name of the LORD.^s

From Adam to Noah

5 This is the written account^t of Adam’s family line.^u

When God created mankind, he made them in the likeness of God.^v ²He created them^w male and female^x and blessed

^a 15 Septuagint, Vulgate and Syriac; Hebrew *Very well* ^b 16 *Nod* means *wandering* (see verses 12 and 14). ^c 22 Or *who instructed all who work in*
^d 25 *Seth* probably means *granted*. ^e 26 Or to *proclaim*

Jer 51:56; Na 1:2 ^mS ver 15 ⁿMt 18:22 4:25 ^over 1 ^pGe 5:3; 1Ch 1:1 ^qver 8 4:26 ^rGe 5:6; 1Ch 1:1; Lk 3:38 ^sGe 12:8; 13:4; 21:33; 22:9; 26:25; 33:20; 35:1; Ex 17:15; 1Ki 18:24; Ps 116:17; Joel 2:32; Zep 3:9; S Ac 2:21 5:1 ^tS Ge 2:4, ^u1Ch 1:1 ^vS Ge 1:27; Col 3:10 5:2 ^wGe 1:28 ^xS Ge 1:27; Mt 19:4; Mk 10:6; Gal 3:28

religious leader’s self-justifying question to Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?” echoes Cain’s response here. Jesus’ story of the Good Samaritan is the needed corrective (Lk 10:30–36).

Though Cain murdered Abel in secret, the murder does not escape God’s notice. If only humans could hear what God hears! But they are deaf to the cries of the victims of oppression. The blood of Abel, an innocent man, cries out from the ground, seeking justice from God, the divine arbiter (Ge 4:10). In the fullness of time, the blood of the woman’s promised offspring will cry out for mercy to God on behalf of the guilty (Heb 12:24). While God punishes Cain, he demonstrates grace in sparing his life. Cain expresses fear of persecution, which may suggest that other people are alive at this time (Ge 4:15). Cain then departs from the LORD’s presence (4:16).

4:17–22 Where did Cain get his wife (v. 17)? There are a number of possibilities. First, it is possible that many years have transpired and that by this point Cain has many younger sisters. One of these could have been his wife. Or another possible interpretation is that there were other human beings besides Adam and Eve living at this time. The text is not concerned about answering these questions. Verses 18–22 begin a genealogy that culminates in an individual who is noted for vengeance and violence (v. 23). The names Enoch and Irad (v. 18) sound similar to the names of two cities mentioned in Mesopotamian lore: Uruk and Eridu. The genealogy climaxes with Lamech, the first recorded polygamist in the Bible. Lamech’s children are responsible for the development of arts and culture: his sons live in

settlements and domesticate animals, and they play music and develop metallurgy. The children’s names connote their contributions.

4:23–24 This genealogy concludes with a speech stressing unrestrained, limitless violence. Lamech, the seventh descendant from Adam in Cain’s line of descendants, magnifies the number seven to express an infinite bloodlust. If God would avenge Cain’s death seven times, Lamech will take matters into his own hands and avenge his own death 77 times (v. 24). This genealogy demonstrates human progress in the development of civilization, but these verses also show a dark side. Lamech is willing to kill anyone who injures him, no matter what the person’s age. Much later in the biblical narrative, Peter will ask Jesus how often one should forgive. The answer is “seventy-seven times” (Mt 18:22–23).

4:25–26 A characteristic of Hebrew narrative is to finish a plotline in a particular story before returning to earlier events and resuming them. So here the story backtracks to resume loose ends dealing with the murder of Abel, which happened generations earlier (vv. 8–16). Adam and Eve have another child, Seth, and Seth initiates another line of descendants. They focus on worship instead of violence. The line associated with Seth and Enosh, which is detailed in the next chapter, contrasts sharply with the line of Cain.

5:1–20 The next section describes ten generations of the line of Adam through his son Seth (5:1–6:8). The verses reiterate God’s creation of humanity in his likeness in Genesis 1:26–28 with some slight variations. As God created humans “in his own image” (1:27), so Adam has a son “in his own image”

them. And he named them “Mankind”^a when they were created.

³When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image;^y and he named him Seth.^z ⁴After Seth was born, Adam lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. ⁵Altogether, Adam lived a total of 930 years, and then he died.^a

⁶When Seth had lived 105 years, he became the father^b of Enosh.^b ⁷After he became the father of Enosh, Seth lived 807 years and had other sons and daughters. ⁸Altogether, Seth lived a total of 912 years, and then he died.

⁹When Enosh had lived 90 years, he became the father of Kenan.^c ¹⁰After he became the father of Kenan, Enosh lived 815 years and had other sons and daughters. ¹¹Altogether, Enosh lived a total of 905 years, and then he died.

¹²When Kenan had lived 70 years, he became the father of Mahalalel.^d ¹³After he became the father of Mahalalel, Kenan lived 840 years and had other sons and daughters. ¹⁴Altogether, Kenan lived a total of 910 years, and then he died.

¹⁵When Mahalalel had lived 65 years, he became the father of Jared.^e ¹⁶After he became the father of Jared, Mahalalel lived 830 years and had other sons and daughters. ¹⁷Altogether, Mahalalel lived a total of 895 years, and then he died.

¹⁸When Jared had lived 162 years, he became the father of Enoch.^f ¹⁹After he became the father of Enoch, Jared lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. ²⁰Altogether, Jared lived a total of 962 years, and then he died.

^{5:3} ^yS Ge 1:26; 1Co 15:49; ^zS Ge 4:25; Lk 3:38
^{5:5} ^aS Ge 2:17; Heb 9:27
^{5:6} ^bS Ge 4:26; Lk 3:38
^{5:9} ^c1Ch 1:2; Lk 3:37
^{5:12} ^d1Ch 1:2; Lk 3:37
^{5:15} ^e1Ch 1:2; Lk 3:37
^{5:18} ^f1Ch 1:3; Lk 3:37; Jude 14

^{5:21} ^g1Ch 1:3; Lk 3:37
^{5:22} ^hver 24; Ge 6:9; 17:1; 24:40; 48:15; 2Ki 20:3; Ps 116:9; Mic 6:8; Mal 2:6
^{5:24} ⁱS ver 22; J2Ki 2:1, 11; Ps 49:15; 73:24; 89:48; Heb 11:5
^{5:25} ^k1Ch 1:3; Lk 3:36
^{5:29} ^l1Ch 1:3; Lk 3:36
^mS Ge 3:17; Ro 8:20
^{5:32} ⁿGe 7:6, 11; 8:13; ^oLk 3:36
^pGe 6:10; 9:18; 10:1; 1Ch 1:4; Isa 65:20
^{6:1} ^qS Ge 1:28
^{6:2} ^rJob 1:6; ^{fn}; 2:1; ^{fn} ^sver 4
^lDt 21:11
^uS Ge 4:19

²¹When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah.^g ²²After he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked faithfully with God^h 300 years and had other sons and daughters. ²³Altogether, Enoch lived a total of 365 years. ²⁴Enoch walked faithfully with God;ⁱ then he was no more, because God took him away.^j

²⁵When Methuselah had lived 187 years, he became the father of Lamech.^k ²⁶After he became the father of Lamech, Methuselah lived 782 years and had other sons and daughters. ²⁷Altogether, Methuselah lived a total of 969 years, and then he died.

²⁸When Lamech had lived 182 years, he had a son. ²⁹He named him Noah^{cl} and said, “He will comfort us in the labor and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the LORD has cursed.^m” ³⁰After Noah was born, Lamech lived 595 years and had other sons and daughters. ³¹Altogether, Lamech lived a total of 777 years, and then he died.

³²After Noah was 500 years old,ⁿ he became the father of Shem,^o Ham and Japheth.^p

Wickedness in the World

6 When human beings began to increase in number on the earth^q and daughters were born to them,^r the sons of God^r saw that the daughters^s of humans were beautiful,^t and they married^u any of them they chose. ³Then the LORD said, “My Spir-

^a 2 Hebrew *adam* ^b 6 *Father* may mean *ancestor*; also in verses 7-26. ^c 29 *Noah* sounds like the Hebrew for *comfort*.

(5:3). Thus, sonship is associated with the image, and it is clear that the image was not lost as a result of human sin. The first member of the genealogy sets the pattern for the entire genealogy: a father produces one particular son at a certain age, then lives for a number of years and produces other sons and daughters. Finally, he dies. Throughout the genealogy we see prolific blessing and longevity of life.

5:21–32 Only Enoch breaks the pattern and escapes death (vv. 21–24). Enoch “walked faithfully with God,” indicating he shared close fellowship with God. This is reminiscent of God walking with Adam and Eve in the garden (3:8). But Enoch walks with God only after the birth of Methuselah, indicating that something about this birth was a turning point in Enoch’s life. When we calculate the ages, we find that Methuselah died in the year of the flood. Perhaps his birth was a harbinger of judgment to come. Notably, Enoch does not die. Communion with God results in escape from death.

In verse 29, Lamech—a different Lamech from the one in Cain’s line (4:18–24)—expresses his hope for relief from the curse. Like the Lamech of Cain’s genealogy, this Lamech also speaks. But his speech celebrates life and expresses hope for an end to the curse and the deliverance of humanity from painful toil. The genealogy culminates in life with the

birth of Lamech’s son Noah—the tenth generation after Adam—who will bring relief from the curse (cf. 3:15). Noah has three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth (5:32).

6:1–2 The narrative resumes an earlier undeveloped theme, so it presents a flashback. The previous two chapters have described two lines of descendants, the proliferations of sons and daughters, violence, marriages, and long lifespans. The identity of the “sons of God” (v. 2) is a difficult interpretative problem, but what is clear is that the intermarriage of the sons of God with the daughters of humans was sinful. The identity of the “sons of God” is disputed. Perhaps they are rebellious angelic figures much like the serpent in chapter 3 (cf. the “angels” or “sons of God” in Hebrew in Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Da 3:25), who appear in human form and impregnate human women, from which come the Nephilim mentioned in Genesis 6:4. Or perhaps they are ordinary human beings—a line of ancient kings with an insatiable lust like Lamech (Cain’s descendant), who viewed themselves as divine. Or perhaps they are human descendants from the godly line of Seth—as opposed to the wicked line of Cain. Their sin, then, is to marry into the line of Cain.

6:3 The mention of 120 years may refer either to God’s restricting the number of years a human can live because

it^v will not contend with^a humans forever,^w for they are mortal^b;^x their days will be a hundred and twenty years.”

⁴The Nephilim^y were on the earth in those days — and also afterward — when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans^z and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.^a

⁵The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth,^b and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.^c ⁶The LORD regretted^d that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. ⁷So the LORD said, “I will wipe from the face of the earth^e the human race I have created — and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground — for I regret that I have made them.” ⁸But Noah⁹ found favor in the eyes of the LORD.^h

Noah and the Flood

⁹This is the accountⁱ of Noah and his family.

Noah was a righteous man, blameless^j among the people of his time,^k and he walked faithfully with God.^l ¹⁰Noah had three sons: Shem,^m Ham and Japheth.ⁿ

¹¹Now the earth was corrupt^o in God’s sight and was full of violence.^p ¹²God saw how corrupt^q the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways.^r ¹³So God said to Noah, “I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth

6:3 ^v Job 34:14; Gal 5:16-17
^w Isa 57:16; 1Pe 3:20
^x Job 10:9; Ps 78:39; 103:14; Isa 40:6
^y Nu 13:33
^z ver 2 ^a Ge 11:4
^a 6:5 ^b Ge 38:7; Job 34:26; Jer 1:16; 44:5; Eze 3:19
^c Ge 8:21; Ps 14:1-3
^d 6:6 ^d Ex 32:14; 1Sa 15:11, 35; 2Sa 24:16; 1Ch 21:15; Isa 63:10; Jer 18:7-10; Eph 4:30
^e 6:7 ^e Eze 33:28; Zep 1:2, 18
^f ver 17; Ge 7:4, 21; Dt 28:63; 29:20
^g 6:8 ^g Eze 14:14
^h Ge 19:19; 39:4; Ex 33:12, 13, 17; 34:9; Nu 11:15; Ru 2:2; Lk 1:30; Ac 7:46
ⁱ 6:9 ⁱ S Ge 2:4
^j Ge 17:1; Dt 18:13; 2Sa 22:24; Job 1:1; 4:6; 9:21; 12:4; 31:6; Ps 15:2; 18:23; 19:13; 37:37; Pr 2:7 ^k Ge 7:1; Ps 37:39; Jer 15:1; Eze 14:14; 20; Da 10:11; S Lk 1:6; Heb 11:7; 2Pe 2:5
^l S Ge 5:22
^m Lk 3:36
ⁿ S Ge 5:32
^o 6:11 ^o Dt 31:29;

is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy^s both them and the earth.^t ¹⁴So make yourself an ark of cypress^u wood;^u make rooms in it and coat it with pitch^v inside and out. ¹⁵This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high.^d ¹⁶Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof an opening one cubit^e high all around.^f Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks. ¹⁷I am going to bring floodwaters^w on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish.^x ¹⁸But I will establish my covenant with you,^y and you will enter the ark^z — you and your sons and your wife and your sons’ wives with you. ¹⁹You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you.^a ²⁰Two^b of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal

^a 3 Or *My spirit will not remain in* ^b 3 Or *corrupt* ^c 14 The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain. ^d 15 That is, about 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high or about 135 meters long, 23 meters wide and 14 meters high ^e 16 That is, about 18 inches or about 45 centimeters ^f 16 The meaning of the Hebrew for this clause is uncertain.

Jdg 2:19 ^p Ps 7:9; 73:6; Eze 7:23; 8:17; 28:16; Mal 2:16
^q 6:12 ^q Ex 32:7; Dt 4:16; 9:12, 24 ^r Ps 14:1-3 ^s 6:13 ^s Dt 28:63; 2Ki 8:19; Eze 9:14; Jer 44:11 ^t ver 17; Ge 7:4, 21-23; Job 34:15; Isa 5:6; 24:1-3; Jer 44:27; Eze 7:2-3 ^u 6:14 ^u Heb 11:7; 1Pe 3:20
^v Ex 2:3 ^v 6:17 ^v Ps 29:10 ^w S ver 7, S 13; 2Pe 2:5 ^x 6:18 ^x Ge 9:9-16; 17:7; 19:12; Ex 6:4; 34:10, 27; Dt 29:13, 14-15; Ps 25:10; 74:20; 106:45; Isa 55:3; Jer 32:40; Eze 16:60; Hag 2:5; 1Pe 3:20 ^y Ge 7:1, 7, 13 ^z 6:19 ^z Ge 7:15 ^{aa} 6:20 ^{aa} Ge 7:15

of evil or to the amount of time that passes before the judgment of the flood. If it is a limitation on age, this time limit does not materialize immediately in Scripture, but we do see a gradual reduction in lifespans in the genealogy in chapter 11.

6:4 The identity of the Nephilim is debated. Some scholars think the Nephilim may have been produced by the extraordinary and supernatural unions between angels or otherworldly spirits in human form (referred to as the “sons of God”) married to human women (see the note on Genesis 6:1–2). These marriages occurred before the flood and afterward (cf. Nu 13:33), and the children of these unions were referred to as Nephilim. Others think the Nephilim may have been a term for human heroic warriors who were *not* the offspring of the sons of God and human women. The Nephilim would be a separate group of people living at the same time as the marriages between angels and women. Genesis 6:4 indicates that the Nephilim, described as “men of renown,” were ancient heroic warriors and that these men were present on the earth both during the days of the unnatural marriages and afterwards (i.e. before the flood and after). In this reading, the text demythologizes the Nephilim by stating that they were on the earth both when unnatural marriages were occurring and when these marriages were not (i.e. “and also afterwards”).

6:5–8 The immediate context suggests that the events referenced in Genesis 6:1–4 lead to human depravity on an unimaginable scale and result in God’s decision to destroy the human race. God’s judgment is never arbitrary, and his standard of holiness is immutable. God once looked on the world with wonder and delight (1:31); now the sight of it breaks his heart. God will begin a new creation with this new Adam (meaning Noah). In Hebrew, the name “Noah” read backwards is “grace,” and thus there is an important wordplay that interlocks Noah’s name and God’s grace.

6:9–22 Human sin causes a deluge of universal proportions that wipes out all humanity except Noah and his family (6:9–9:29). Noah’s righteousness marks him as being the savior of the world, but that righteousness is the result of God’s grace (6:8). Noah is in a right relationship with God. The text offers further descriptions of the rampant evil before presenting God’s instructions to Noah to build a boat. The boat (measuring 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high) has three levels. God’s decision to destroy the earth is contrasted with his decision to make a covenant to save it. God announces the covenant here in verse 18 but will ratify it later (9:1–17). Noah is not a hero like the human survivors in other ancient Near Eastern flood stories. He simply obeys God.

and of every kind^c of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive.^d ²¹You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them.”

²²Noah did everything just as God commanded him.^e

7 The LORD then said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and your whole family,^f because I have found you righteous^g in this generation. ²Take with you seven pairs of every kind of clean^h animal, a male and its mate, and one pair of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate, ³and also seven pairs of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep their various kinds aliveⁱ throughout the earth. ⁴Seven days from now I will send rain^j on the earth^k for forty days^l and forty nights,^m and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made.ⁿ”

⁵And Noah did all that the LORD commanded him.^o

⁶Noah was six hundred years old^p when the floodwaters came on the earth. ⁷And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives entered the ark^q to escape the waters of the flood. ⁸Pairs of clean and unclean^r animals, of birds and of all creatures that move along the ground, ⁹male and female, came to Noah and entered the ark, as God had commanded Noah.^s ¹⁰And after the seven days^t the floodwaters came on the earth.

¹¹In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life,^u on the seventeenth day of the second month^v — on that day all the springs of the great deep^w burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens^x were opened. ¹²And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.^y

¹³On that very day Noah and his sons,^z Shem, Ham and Japheth, together with his wife and the wives of his three sons, entered the ark.^a ¹⁴They had with them every wild animal according to its kind, all livestock according to their kinds, every

6:20 ^cS Ge 1:11
^dGe 7:3
 6:22 ^eGe 7:5, 9,16; Ex 7:6; 39:43; 40:16, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 32
 7:1 ^fS Ge 6:18; Mt 24:38; Lk 17:26-27; Heb 11:7; 1Pe 3:20; 2Pe 2:5
 9Ge 6:9; Eze 14:14
 7:2 ^hver 8; Ge 8:20; Lev 10:10; 11:47; Dt 14:3-20; Eze 44:23; Hag 2:12; Ac 10:14-15
 7:3 ⁱGe 6:20
 7:4 ^jGe 8:2
^k1Ki 13:34; Jer 28:16
^lNu 13:25; Dt 9:9; 1Sa 17:16; 1Ki 19:8
^mver 12, 17; Ex 24:18; 32:1; 34:28; Dt 9:9, 11, 18, 25; 10:10; Job 37:6, 13; Mt 4:2
ⁿS Ge 6:7, 13
 7:5 ^oS Ge 6:22
 7:6 ^pS Ge 5:32
 7:7 ^qS Ge 6:18
 7:8 ^rS ver 2
 7:9 ^sS Ge 6:22
 7:10 ^tS ver 4
 7:11 ^uS Ge 5:32
^vGe 8:4, 14
^wS Ge 1:7; Job 28:11; Ps 36:6; 42:7; Pr 8:24; Isa 51:10; Eze 26:19
^xGe 8:2; 2Ki 7:2; Ps 78:23; Isa 24:18; Mal 3:10
 7:12 ^yS ver 4; S 1Sa 12:17; S Job 28:26
 7:13 ^zGe 8:16; 1Pe 3:20; 2Pe 2:5
^aS Ge 6:18
 7:14 ^bS Ge 1:11
 7:15 ^cver 8-9; Ge 6:19
 7:16 ^dS Ge 6:22
 7:17 ^eS ver 4
 7:19 ^fPs 104:6

creature that moves along the ground according to its kind,^b everything with wings. ¹⁵Pairs of all creatures that have the breath of life in them came to Noah and entered the ark.^c ¹⁶The animals going in were male and female of every living thing, as God had commanded Noah.^d Then the LORD shut him in.

¹⁷For forty days^e the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased they lifted the ark high above the earth.

¹⁸The waters rose and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. ¹⁹They rose greatly on the earth, and all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered.^f

²⁰The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than fifteen cubits.^{a, b} ²¹Every living thing that moved on land perished — birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind.^h ²²Everything on dry land that had the breath of lifeⁱ in its nostrils died. ²³Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; people and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds were wiped from the earth.^j Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark.^k

²⁴The waters flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days.^l

8 But God remembered^m Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark, and he sent a wind over the earth,ⁿ and the waters receded. ²Now the springs of the deep and the floodgates of the heavens^o had been

^a 20 That is, about 23 feet or about 6.8 meters

^b 20 Or rose more than fifteen cubits, and the mountains were covered

7:20 ^gGe 8:4-5; 2Pe 3:6 7:21 ^hS Ge 6:7, 13; 2Pe 3:6
 7:22 ⁱS Ge 1:30 7:23 ^jJob 14:19; 21:18; 22:11, 16; Ps 90:5; Isa 28:2; Mt 24:39; Lk 17:27; 1Pe 3:20; 2Pe 2:5 ^kHeb 11:7
 7:24 ^lGe 8:3; Job 12:15 8:1 ^mGe 9:15; 19:29; 21:1; 30:22; Ex 2:24; Nu 10:9; Ru 4:13; 1Sa 1:11, 19; 2Ki 20:3; 1Ch 16:15; Ne 1:8; 5:19; 13:14, 22, 31; Job 14:13; Ps 105:42; 106:4; Lk 1:54, 72 ⁿEx 14:21; Jos 2:10; 3:16; Job 12:15; Ps 66:6; Isa 11:15; 44:27; Na 1:4
 8:2 ^oS Ge 7:11

7:1–10 The Hebrew narrative style often features repetition but adds significant details in the retelling: in this case, Noah’s age when the flood occurred and his entrance into the ark. God tells Noah and his family to enter the ark and to take seven pairs of clean animals. This further clarifies the original command to take two animals. The later priestly categories of clean and unclean animals (Lev 11; Dt 14) have ancient roots.

7:11–16 These verses specify the exact date of the flood (v. 11). The scene is a return to the unformed chaos of Genesis 1:2 before God created light. The repetition in these verses signals the importance of Noah and his family’s entrance

into the ark; it creates suspense by making it seem that God is delaying in shutting the door to the ark.

7:17–24 The narrative’s focus shifts to the flood itself, using repetition to depict a deluge. The consequences are massive. The repetition of “all” and “every” reinforces the comprehensive destruction; the salvation of those in the ark is an intentional contrast.

8:1–12 In the midst of the cataclysm of judgment, God remembers Noah and brings the flood to an end. He sends a wind over the earth to make the waters subside, just as the Spirit of God had hovered over the waters in Genesis 1:2. The similarity is intentional, indicating that the post-flood

closed, and the rain^d had stopped falling from the sky. ³The water receded steadily from the earth. At the end of the hundred and fifty days^e the water had gone down, ⁴and on the seventeenth day of the seventh month^f the ark came to rest on the mountains^g of Ararat. ⁵The waters continued to recede until the tenth month, and on the first day of the tenth month the tops of the mountains became visible.

⁶After forty days^h Noah opened a window he had made in the ark ⁷and sent out a raven,ⁱ and it kept flying back and forth until the water had dried up from the earth.^j ⁸Then he sent out a dove^k to see if the water had receded from the surface of the ground. ⁹But the dove could find nowhere to perch because there was water over all the surface of the earth; so it returned to Noah in the ark. He reached out his hand and took the dove and brought it back to himself in the ark. ¹⁰He waited seven more days and again sent out the dove from the ark. ¹¹When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth.^l ¹²He waited seven more days and sent the dove out again, but this time it did not return to him.

¹³By the first day of the first month of Noah's six hundred and first year,^m the water had dried up from the earth. Noah then removed the covering from the ark and saw that the surface of the ground was dry. ¹⁴By the twenty-seventh day of the second monthⁿ the earth was completely dry.

¹⁵Then God said to Noah, ¹⁶"Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives.^b ¹⁷Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you — the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground — so they can

8:2 P S Ge 7:4
8:3 S Ge 7:24
8:4 S Ge 7:11
S Ge 7:20
2Ki 19:37;
Jer 51:27
8:6 S Ge 7:12
8:7 S Lev 11:15;
Dt 14:14;
1Ki 17:4, 6;
Job 38:41;
Ps 147:9;
Pr 30:17;
Isa 34:11;
Lk 12:24 ^o ver 11
8:8 S Job 30:31;
Ps 55:6; 74:19;
SS 2:12, 14;
Isa 38:14;
59:11; 60:8;
Jer 48:28;
Eze 7:16;
Hos 7:11; 11:11;
Na 2:7; Mt 3:16;
10:16; Jn 1:32
8:11 S ver 7
8:13 S Ge 5:32
8:14 S Ge 7:11
8:16 S Ge 7:13
8:17 S Ge 1:22
8:18 ^d Pe 3:20;
2Pe 2:5
8:20 S Ge 12:7-
8; 13:18; 22:9;
26:25; 33:20;
35:7; Ex 17:15;
24:4 S Ge 7:8
9 Ge 22:2,
13; Ex 10:25;
20:24; 40:29;
Lev 1:3; 4:29;
6:8-13; Nu 6:11;
Jdg 6:26; 11:31;
1Sa 20:29;
Job 1:5; 42:8
8:21 ^h Ex 29:18,
25; Lev 1:9,
13; 2:9; 4:31;
Nu 15:3,
7; 2Co 2:15
S Ge 3:17
i Ge 6:5; Ps 51:5;
Jer 17:9;
Mt 15:19;
Ro 1:21
k Jer 44:11
l Ge 9:11, 15;
Isa 54:9

multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number on it."^c

¹⁸So Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives.^d ¹⁹All the animals and all the creatures that move along the ground and all the birds — everything that moves on land — came out of the ark, one kind after another.

²⁰Then Noah built an altar to the LORD^e and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean^f birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings^g on it. ²¹The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma^h and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the groundⁱ because of humans, even though^a every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood.^j And never again will I destroy^k all living creatures,^l as I have done.

²²"As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest,^m cold and heat, summer and winter,ⁿ day and night will never cease."^o

God's Covenant With Noah

9 Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.^p ²The fear and dread of you will fall on all the beasts of the earth, and on all the birds in the sky, on every creature that moves along the ground, and on all the fish in the sea; they are given into your hands.^q ³Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you.^r Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything.^s

^a 21 Or *humans, for*

8:22 ^m Jos 3:15; Ps 67:6; Jer 5:24 ⁿ Ps 74:17; Zec 14:8 ^o S Ge 1:14
9:1 P S Ge 1:22 9:2 S Ge 1:26 9:3 S Ge 1:29 S Ac 10:15; Col 2:16

world is a new creation. Noah seeks to determine whether it is safe to depart from the ark by sending out birds to see if they will return bearing a sign of life. In Hebrew, a literary device highlights the dove returning with an olive leaf in its mouth. This literary device invites readers to enter the story and see the leaf for themselves. The dove with an olive branch in its mouth has become a symbol for peace in Christianity.

8:13–22 Noah uncovers the ark and sees for himself that the flood is over. The flood lasted for one solar year. Noah does not leave the ark until God commands him to. Whereas before the flood no one had any time for God, now the people's first act upon leaving the ark is to worship God. Noah builds an altar and sacrifices some of the clean animals as burnt offerings—offerings that were totally consumed on the altar and represented complete dedication to God. This act pleases God and is the foundation for a new order based on God's promise never to destroy the world again in such

a manner, despite human evil. The idea of God smelling a pleasing aroma from the sacrifice is an anthropomorphism, a description of God in human terms. The description of the aroma as pleasing indicates that God accepted it completely. Before the flood, God was grieved by human sin, but now he takes delight in this offering of worship.

9:1–7 In language echoing Genesis 1, God commands Noah and his family to multiply on the earth. But humans now have an altered relationship with the animal creation. Dominion takes the form of "fear," and humans have license to consume animals, with the exception of blood, which belongs only to God. But humans cannot kill other human beings because of their status as God's image bearers. The account emphasizes capital punishment not because human life is cheap but because it is valuable. After the flood, humans continue to multiply, exercise dominion, and bear the image of God, but in a diminished form. There is now fear, and humans must be protected from one another.

⁴“But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it. ⁵And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. ⁶I will demand an accounting from every animal. ⁷And from each human being, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being.”^w

⁶“Whoever sheds human blood,
by humans shall their blood be
shed;^x
for in the image of God^y
has God made mankind.

⁷As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it.”^z

⁸Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: ⁹“I now establish my covenant with you^a and with your descendants after you ¹⁰and with every living creature that was with you — the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you — every living creature on earth. ¹¹I establish my covenant^b with you:^c Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.”^d

¹²And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant^e I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come:^f ¹³I have set my rainbow^g in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow^h appears in the clouds, ¹⁵I will remember my covenantⁱ between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life.” ¹⁶Whenever the rainbow^k appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the

9:4 ¹ Lev 3:17; 7:26; 17:10-14; 19:26; Dt 12:16, 23-25; 15:23; 15a 14:33; Eze 33:25; Ac 15:20, 29
9:5 ¹ Ge 42:22; 50:15; 1Ki 2:32; 2Ch 24:22; Ps 9:12
⁶ Ex 21:28-32
^w Ge 4:10
9:6 ^a S Ge 4:14; S Jdg 9:24; S Mt 26:52
^y S Ge 1:26
9:7 ^z S Ge 1:22
9:9 ^a ver 11; S Ge 6:18
9:11 ^b ver 16; Isa 24:5; 33:8; Hos 6:7
^c S ver 9
^d S Ge 8:21
9:12 ^e ver 17; Ge 17:11
^f Ge 17:12; Ex 12:14; Lev 3:17; 6:18; 17:7; Nu 10:8
9:13 ^g ver 14; Eze 1:28; Rev 4:3; 10:1
9:14 ^h S ver 13
9:15 ⁱ S Ge 8:1; Ex 2:24; 6:5; 34:10; Lev 26:42, 45; Dt 7:9; Ps 89:34; 103:18; 105:8; 106:45; Eze 16:60
^j S Ge 8:21
9:16 ^k ver 13
^l S ver 11; Ge 17:7, 13, 19; 2Sa 7:13; 23:5; Ps 105:9-10; Isa 9:7; 54:10; 55:3; 59:21; 61:8; Jer 31:31-34; 32:40; 33:21; Eze 16:60; 37:26; S Heb 13:20
9:17 ^m S ver 12

everlasting covenant^l between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.”

¹⁷So God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant^m I have established between me and all life on the earth.”

The Sons of Noah

¹⁸The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth.ⁿ (Ham was the father of Canaan.)^o ¹⁹These were the three sons of Noah,^p and from them came the people who were scattered over the whole earth.^q

²⁰Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded^a to plant a vineyard. ²¹When he drank some of its wine,^r he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. ²²Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father naked^s and told his two brothers outside. ²³But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father’s naked body. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father naked.

²⁴When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, ²⁵he said,

“Cursed^t be Canaan!^u
The lowest of slaves
will he be to his brothers.”^v

²⁶He also said,

“Praise be to the LORD, the God of
Shem!^w
May Canaan be the slave^x of Shem.

^a 20 Or soil, was the first

9:18 ⁿ S Ge 5:32; Lk 3:36 ^o ver 25-27; Ge 10:6, 15 9:19 ^p Ge 5:32
9:19 ^q S Ge 1:22; 10:32; 11:4, 8, 9 9:21 ^r Ge 19:35 9:22 ^s Hab 2:15
9:25 ^t Ge 27:12 ^u ver 18; Ex 20:5; Ps 79:8; Isa 14:21; Jer 31:29; 32:18
^v Ge 25:23; 27:29, 37, 40; 37:10; 49:8; Nu 24:18; Jos 9:23
9:26 ^w Ge 14:20; Ex 18:10; Ps 7:17 ^x 1Ki 9:21

9:8–17 God finally ratifies the covenant with Noah, which he announced in Genesis 6:18 and repeated in Genesis 8:21–22. It is a covenant with all of creation. The Hebrew wording suggests God is reestablishing a covenant that originated at creation and had been broken, rather than establishing a completely new covenant. The covenant comes complete with a sign: the rainbow. This is God’s unilateral disarmament treaty. The bow is a weapon of war that God tosses aside. The judgment of the flood is over and will never happen again.

9:18–27 The narrative now mentions Noah’s sons and, curiously, specifies that Ham was the father of Canaan. A Hebrew narrative technique is to provide the audience with a detail that later becomes significant—in this case, it alerts readers to Ham’s later behavior. Verses 20–29 describe an incident that explains why the narrator included this detail about Canaan in verse 18. A considerable amount of time has passed, during which Noah has become a vintner and gets drunk. Ham sins against his father by seeing his nakedness.

Interpreters have often pondered what act the phrase “saw his father naked” refers to and why Noah cursed Canaan, Ham’s son, rather than Ham himself. The wording “saw his father naked,” which can be translated as “to see nakedness,” does not suggest voyeurism but likely some type of sexual sin. In the original Hebrew, Deuteronomy 22:30 uses a phrase similar to the one we see here to prohibit a man from committing incest with his mother. If this is the scenario that is implied in Genesis, Canaan was born through Ham’s mother and cursed by Ham’s father. On the other hand, this text may simply reflect a concern for modesty, and the curse stresses the solidarity between the generations. Canaan’s curse is reflected in the later history of the Israelite conquest of Canaan, and the depravity of the Canaanites is traced back to their ancestor. But the curses give way to blessing—particularly to Shem, of whom it is said, “Praise be to the LORD, the God of Shem” (Ge 9:26). Shem’s blessing extends to Japheth and to the rest of the peoples of the world.

27 May God extend Japheth's^a territory;^y may Japheth live in the tents of Shem,^z and may Canaan be the slave of Japheth."

28 After the flood Noah lived 350 years. 29 Noah lived a total of 950 years, and then he died.^a

The Table of Nations

10 This is the account^b of Shem, Ham and Japheth,^c Noah's sons,^d who themselves had sons after the flood.

The Japhethites

10:2–5pp // 1Ch 1:5–7

2 The sons^b of Japheth: Gomer,^e Magog,^f Madai, Javan,^g Tubal,^h Meshekⁱ and Tiras.

3 The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz,^j Riphath and Togarmah.^k

4 The sons of Javan: Elishah,^l Tarshish,^m the Kittitesⁿ and the Rodanites.^c ⁵(From these the maritime peoples spread out into their territories by their clans within their nations, each with its own language.)^o

9:27 ^yGe 10:2-5
^zEph 2:13-14;
 3:6
 9:29 ^aS Ge 2:17
 10:1 ^bGe 2:4
^cS Ge 5:32
^dver 32; 1Ch 1:4
 10:2 ^eEze 38:6
^fEze 38:2;
 39:6; Rev 20:8
^gEze 27:19
^hIsa 66:19;
 Eze 27:13; 32:26
ⁱEze 39:1
 10:3 ^jJer 51:27
^kEze 27:14;
 38:6
 10:4 ^lEze 27:7
^mPs 48:7;
 72:10; Isa 2:16;
 23:1, 6, 10, 14;
 60:9; 66:19;
 Jer 10:9;
 Eze 27:12, 25;
 38:13; Jnh 1:3
ⁿNu 24:24;
 Isa 23:12;
 Jer 2:10;
 Eze 27:6;
 Da 11:30
 10:5 ^oGe 9:27
 10:6 ^p2Kl 19:9;
 2Ch 12:3; 16:8;
 Isa 11:11; 18:1;
 20:3; 43:3;
 Jer 46:9;
 Eze 30:4, 9;
 38:5; Na 3:9;
 Zep 2:12; 3:10
^qEze 27:10;
 38:5 ^rS Ge 9:18
 10:7 ^sIsa 43:3
^tS Ge 2:11

The Hamites

10:6–20pp // 1Ch 1:8–16

6 The sons of Ham: Cush,^p Egypt, Put^q and Canaan.^r

7 The sons of Cush: Seba,^s Havilah,^t Sabtah, Raamah^u and Sabteka.

The sons of Raamah: Sheba^v and Dedan.^w

8 Cush was the father^d of Nimrod,^x who became a mighty warrior on the earth. 9 He was a mighty^y hunter^z before the LORD; that is why it is said, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD." 10 The first centers of his kingdom were Babylon,^a

^a 27 Japheth sounds like the Hebrew for extend.
^b 2 Sons may mean descendants or successors or nations; also in verses 3, 4, 6, 7, 20-23, 29 and 31.
^c 4 Some manuscripts of the Masoretic Text and Samaritan Pentateuch (see also Septuagint and 1 Chron. 1:7); most manuscripts of the Masoretic Text Dodanites ^d 8 Father may mean ancestor or predecessor or founder; also in verses 13, 15, 24 and 26.

^u Eze 27:22 ^v Ge 25:3; 1Kl 10:1; 2Ch 9:1; Job 1:15; 6:19; 16:11; Ps 72:10, 15; Isa 60:6; Jer 6:20; Eze 27:22; 38:13; Joel 3:8
^w 1Ch 1:32; Isa 21:13; Jer 25:23-24; 49:8; Eze 27:15, 20; 38:13
^x 10:8 ^x Mic 5:6 ^y 10:9 ^y 2Ch 14:9; 16:8; Isa 18:2 ^z Ge 25:27; 27:3
^a 10:10 ^a Ge 11:9; 2Ch 36:17; Isa 13:1; 47:1; Jer 21:2; 25:12; 50:1

9:28–29 The conclusion to the Noah story summarizes the account of the flood and gives Noah's age. His death concludes an old era. No one will again reach his age (950) as the divine judgment on human age begins to take effect (6:3). 10:1 Genesis 10 details Noah's three sons' descendants and their dispersion over the earth. The order of the names—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—is always the same. Ham is clearly identified as the youngest son (9:24), but there is some debate over who is identified as the eldest brother in 10:21. This map of humanity is unique in ancient literature. It depicts the locations of 70 nations, the number signifying completeness. While the list tracks Noah's descendants, the lines are blurred between individuals and nations, and political relations are more important than blood relations. Generally, the list reflects the nations and their connection to Israel. It is written from an Israelite perspective, moving from the more distant peoples to those nearer the Israelites. Northern nations appear first (Japheth in Asia), southern nations come second (Ham in Africa), and the ancestors of Israel are last (Shem in Palestine). The dispersion of nations is not a natural consequence but a result of divine judgment. Chronologically, the tower of Babel incident (11:1–9) took place prior to the dispersion we see reflected in this Table of Nations (10:1–32). The table is placed here in Genesis 10 to stress the themes of name and glory. The tower of Babel incident interrupts the genealogy of Shem (which means "name" and intends to show how God will make a great name). It shows, by contrast, how humanity wishes to make a great name for itself through power and might. But this is a dead end leading to dispersion. All is not lost, however, as the genealogy of Shem continues pointing to the fulfillment of the divine goal to make Abraham's name great (12:1).

10:2–5 The narrative first mentions Japheth's descendants, who are associated with regions found generally north of and distant from Israel. Many of these names are linked to Indo-European cultures and peoples. Magog may be related to Gog and becomes linked to an anti-God symbol (Eze 38:2), whereas Madai refers to the Medes and Javan the Greeks. Tubal and Meshek are nearly always linked in the Bible and are symbols of godlessness (Eze 38:2, cf. Ps 120:5). Tiras may be related to the Etruscans from Italy or the tribes from Anatolia (Turkey). Ashkenaz is situated near northern Mesopotamia (Jer 51:27). The list concludes with seafaring peoples. Elishah and the Kittites are related to Cyprus; Tarshish was related either to Asia Minor or distant southwestern Spain (cf. Jnh 1:3); and the Rodanites were related to the ancient Mediterranean island of Rhodes. 10:6–7 Ham's descendants appear next. The text offers additional details related to Noah's curse on Canaan (9:25) and the notorious pre-flood anti-heroes (6:4). Cush refers to ancient Ethiopia, and Egypt includes both upper (southern) and lower (northern) Egypt, while Put refers to an area probably comprising parts of southern Eritrea and western Yemen. Finally, Canaan is known from ancient texts to refer to the land comprising southern Lebanon down to the desert region (Negev) of modern Israel. The various descendants are found within these sketched-out regions. 10:8–12 Verses 8–12 depart from the terse genealogical style and provide crucial background information for the story of the tower of Babel (11:1–9). From a literary point of view, these verses both look back to the story of the flood (6:4) and forward to the tower of Babel. Nimrod is the only person in the entire genealogy of chapter 10 whose actions are described. His name is from a Hebrew word meaning "rebellion," and this word probably defines him. Nimrod is

Uruk,^b Akkad and Kalneh,^c in^a Shinar.^{bd}
 11 From that land he went to Assyria,^e where he built Nineveh,^f Rehoboth Ir,^g Calah¹² and Resen, which is between Nineveh and Calah — which is the great city.

13 Egypt was the father of the Ludites, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites, 14 Pathrusites, Kasluhites (from whom the Philistines⁹ came) and Caphtorites.^h

15 Canaanⁱ was the father of Sidon^j his firstborn,^{dk} and of the Hittites,^l 16 Jebusites,^m Amorites,ⁿ Girgashites,^o 17 Hivites,^p Arkites, Sinites, 18 Arvadites,^q Zemarites and Hamathites.^r

Later the Canaanite^s clans scattered 19 and the borders of Canaanⁱ reached from Sidon^u toward Gerar^v as far as Gaza,^w and then toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboyim,^x as far as Lasha.

20 These are the sons of Ham by their clans and languages, in their territories and nations.

The Semites

10:21–31 ppp // Ge 11:10–27; 1Ch 1:17–27

21 Sons were also born to Shem, whose older brother was^e Japheth; Shem was the ancestor of all the sons of Eber.^y

10:10^b Ezr 4:9
 c Isa 10:9;
 Am 6:2
 d Ge 11:2; 14:1;
 Zec 5:11
 10:11^e Ps 83:8;
 Mic 5:6
 f 2Kl 19:36;
 Isa 37:37;
 Jnh 1:2; 3:2;
 3; 4:11; Na 1:1;
 Zep 2:13
 10:14^g Ge 21:32;
 34; 26:1;
 8; Jos 13:2;
 Jdg 3:3;
 Isa 14:31;
 Jer 47:1;
 4; Am 9:7
 h Dt 2:23;
 1Ch 1:12
 10:15ⁱ S Ge 9:18
 i ver 19; Jos 11:8;
 Jdg 10:6;
 Isa 23:2,4;
 Jer 25:22; 27:3;
 47:4; Eze 28:21;
 32:30; Joel 3:4;
 Zec 9:2
 k Ex 4:22;
 Nu 1:20; 3:2;
 18:15; 26:5;
 33:4^l Ge 15:20;
 23:3,20;
 25:10; 26:34;
 27:46; 49:32;
 Nu 13:29;
 Jos 1:4;
 1Sa 26:6;
 Eze 16:3
 10:16
 m Jdg 19:10;
 1Ch 11:4;
 Ezr 9:1ⁿ Ex 3:8;
 Nu 13:29;
 21:13; 32:39;

22 The sons of Shem:

Elam,^z Ashur,^a Arphaxad,^b Lud and Aram.^c

23 The sons of Aram:

Uz,^d Hul, Gether and Meshek.^f

24 Arphaxad was the father of⁹ Shelah, and Shelah the father of Eber.^e

25 Two sons were born to Eber:

One was named Peleg,^h because in his time the earth was divided; his brother was named Joktan.

26 Joktan was the father of

Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, 27 Hadoram, Uzal,^f Diklah,

^a 10 Or Uruk and Akkad — all of them in ^b 10 That is, Babylonia ^c 11 Or Nineveh with its city squares

^d 15 Or of the Sidonians, the foremost ^e 21 Or Shem, the older brother of ^f 23 See Septuagint and 1 Chron. 1:17; Hebrew Mash. ^g 24 Hebrew; Septuagint father of Cainan, and Cainan was the father of ^h 25 Peleg means division.

Dt 1:4; Jos 2:10; 2Ch 8:7^o Ge 15:18-21; Dt 7:1 10:17^p Ge 34:2; 36:2; Ex 3:8; Dt 7:1; Jdg 3:3 10:18^q Eze 27:8^r 1Ch 18:3
^s Ge 12:6; 13:7; 50:11; Ex 13:11; Nu 13:29; 14:25; 21:3; 33:4,0; Dt 1:7; Jdg 1:1 10:19^t Ge 11:31; 12:1; 13:12; 17:8; 24:3; 26:34; 27:46; 28:1, 6, 8; 31:18; 35:6; 37:1; Lev 25:38^u S ver 15; Ge 49:13; Jos 19:28; Jdg 1:31; 18:28; 2Sa 24:6^v 2Ch 14:13^w Dt 2:23; Jos 10:41; 11:22; 15:47; Jdg 1:18; 6:4; 16:1,21; 1Sa 6:17; Jer 25:20; 47:1; Am 1:6; Zep 2:4^x Ge 14:2; Dt 29:23 10:21^y ver 24; Nu 24:24
 10:22^z Ge 14:1; Isa 11:11; 21:2; Jer 25:25; 49:34; Eze 32:24; Da 8:2
^a Nu 24:22,24; Eze 27:23^b Lk 3:36^c Jdg 3:10; 1Kl 11:25; 19:15; 20:34; 22:31; 2Kl 5:1; 8:7 10:23^d Ge 22:21; Job 1:1; Jer 25:20; La 4:21 10:24^e S ver 21; Lk 3:35 10:27^f Eze 27:19

a mighty hunter and empire builder, so much so that his name is proverbial. The fact that his name is associated with God means that his activity is so notorious that even Yahweh takes notice. In ancient Near Eastern ideology, kings proved their mettle by demonstrating their hunting prowess and undertaking building projects. The fact that Nimrod begins his empire building in Babel exemplifies his defiance of God. His kingdom building occupied not only the south of Mesopotamia (10:10) but also the north (v. 11). Many of these city-state empires were well known in the ancient world, and others like Resen have not been identified. Babylon is linked to the tower of Babel (11:1–9), which indicates that Nimrod could have been the ruler who inspired people to engage in this act of rebellion (as the Jewish historian Josephus concludes). Uruk was an ancient city famous because of its king, Gilgamesh. Akkad became the seat of an empire under the great Sargon. Assyria, with its capital city of Nineveh, was a famous northern center in Mesopotamia.

10:13–14 Egypt gave rise to peoples not always ethnically related. Some of them are known, but others like the Anamites have not been identified. Some, like the Ludites, may have originated in North Africa but emigrated to Asia Minor, where they founded the kingdom of Lydia. The same may be true for the Caphtorites, who became associated with Crete, and perhaps the Philistines as well, who are found in Asia Minor and were involved in a mass migration of Sea Peoples south and east at the end of the Bronze Age. The Philistines eventually landed on the coast of the promised land and organized a confederation of five cities; they were a constant enemy of Israel.

10:15–20 The list of Canaan's ten descendants becomes a prototype for lists of the peoples Israel would conquer in

fulfillment of Noah's curse (cf. Ge 15:19–20; Dt 7:1; Jos 1–12). Sidon was a city-empire in modern-day Lebanon. The Hittites originated in southeastern Turkey but eventually ended up in Lebanon and Israel. The Jebusites were the ancient inhabitants of Jerusalem, which was also known as Jebus, a city later conquered by David. The Amorites were known as people living in Canaan and northern Syria, and their name was given to them by Mesopotamians who called them Amurru (i.e., “People from the West”). Little is known about the Girgashites and many of the other peoples mentioned. The peoples in Genesis 10:17–18 are associated with the northern border of Canaan. The reference to the scattering of the Canaanites alludes to their later conquest by the Israelites and, as a result, leads to a description of Canaan's boundaries, which largely correlates with the boundaries of Israel during its height under Solomon: Phoenicia in the north (Sidon), down to the border of Egypt to the south (Gaza), and as far east as the southern end of the Dead Sea (Sodom, etc.). The reference to Sodom serves further to tarnish the reputation of the Canaanites, as the name becomes proverbial for sexual depravity (cf. Ge 13:13; 18–19). 10:21–31 The narrative now identifies Shem's descendants, following the branch associated with Joktan (v. 25). Shem is the father of the Semitic families, and the text distinguishes his line from the others in three ways. First, the text emphasizes Shem by placing his name at the front of the sentence in verse 21. Second, the text notes his relation to his brother Japheth. Third, the text specifies that he is the ancestor of Eber, who is the father of the Hebrews. Some of the peoples or cultures listed here are unknown, like Arphaxad, Hul, Gether, Meshek, Shelah, and perhaps Lud

²⁸Obal, Abimael, Sheba,^g ²⁹Ophir,^h Havilah and Jobab. All these were sons of Joktan.

³⁰The region where they lived stretched from Mesha toward Sephar, in the eastern hill country.

³¹These are the sons of Shem by their clans and languages, in their territories and nations.

³²These are the clans of Noah's sons, according to their lines of descent, within their nations. From these the nations spread out over the earthⁱ after the flood.

The Tower of Babel

11 Now the whole world had one language^k and a common speech. ²As people moved eastward,^a they found a plain in Shinar^{bl} and settled there.

³They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks^m and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone,ⁿ and tar^o for mortar. ⁴Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens,^p so that we may make a name^q for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered^r over the face of the whole earth."^s

⁵But the LORD came down^t to see the city and the tower the people were building. ⁶The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language^u they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. ⁷Come, let us^v go down^w and confuse their language so they will not understand each other."^x

10:28 ^g1Ki 10:1; Job 6:19; Ps 72:10, 15; Isa 60:6; Eze 27:22
10:29 ^h1Ki 9:28; 10:11; 1Ch 29:4; Job 22:24; 28:16; Ps 45:9; Isa 13:12
10:32 ⁱS ver 1
11:1 ^kver 6
11:2 ^lS Ge 10:10
11:3 ^mEx 1:14; 5:7; Jer 43:9
ⁿIsa 9:10; Am 5:11
^oGe 14:10
11:4 ^pDt 1:28; 6:10; 9:1; Job 20:6; Jer 51:53
^qGe 6:4
^rDt 30:3; 1Ki 22:17; Est 3:8; Ps 44:11; Jer 31:10; 40:15; Eze 6:8; Joel 3:2
^sS Ge 9:19; Dt 4:27
11:5 ^tver 7; Ge 18:21; Ex 3:8; 19:11, 18, 20; Ps 18:9; 144:5
11:6 ^uS ver 1
11:7 ^vS Ge 1:26
^wS ver 5
^xGe 4:23; Dt 28:49; Isa 28:11; 33:19; Jer 5:15; 1Co 14:2, 11
11:8 ^yS Ge 9:19; Dt 32:8; S Lk 1:51
11:9 ^zS Ge 10:10
^aPs 55:9
^bAc 2:5-11
^cIsa 2:10, 21; 13:14; 24:1

⁸So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth,^y and they stopped building the city. ⁹That is why it was called Babel^{cz} — because there the LORD confused the language^a of the whole world.^b From there the LORD scattered^c them over the face of the whole earth.

From Shem to Abram

11:10–27pp // Ge 10:21–31; 1Ch 1:17–27

¹⁰This is the account^d of Shem's family line.

Two years after the flood, when Shem was 100 years old, he became the father^d of Arphaxad.^e ¹¹And after he became the father of Arphaxad, Shem lived 500 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹²When Arphaxad had lived 35 years, he became the father of Shelah.^f ¹³And after he became the father of Shelah, Arphaxad lived 403 years and had other sons and daughters.^g

¹⁴When Shelah had lived 30 years, he became the father of Eber.^h ¹⁵And after he

^a 2 Or *from the east*; or *in the east* ^b 2 That is, Babylonia ^c 9 That is, Babylon; *Babel* sounds like the Hebrew for *confused*. ^d 10 *Father* may mean *ancestor*; also in verses 11-25.
^e 12,13 Hebrew; Septuagint (see also Luke 3:35, 36 and note at Gen. 10:24) *35 years, he became the father of Cainan, Arphaxad lived 430 years and had other sons and daughters, and then he died. When Cainan had lived 130 years, he became the father of Shelah. And after he became the father of Shelah, Cainan lived 330 years and had other sons and daughters*
11:10 ^dS Ge 2:4 ^eLk 3:36 11:12 ^fLk 3:35 11:14 ^gLk 3:35

(which may be linked to Asia Minor). Aram was located in northeastern Syria, and its language became common to the ancient Near East. Uz is associated with Job and was located near Aram (cf. Jer 25:1). Peleg's name means "divided," and it anticipates the tower of Babel incident in Genesis 11:1–9. Genesis 11:10–26 lists his line of descent. Little is known about the 13 peoples descended from the prolific Joktan, but they seem to be associated with south Arabia.

10:32 The phrase "after the flood" in this chapter's concluding verse echoes the chapter's beginning (v. 1). The reference to the nations spreading over the earth indicates that the next story, the tower of Babel (11:1–9), takes place prior to the dispersion reflected in this genealogy.

11:1–9 This passage is a significant vignette inserted in the genealogical lists to describe the human race's persistent rebellion even after the flood. Nothing seems to have changed. Here the survivors of the flood have reached the point that they want to build a city and a tower whose top will reach the heavens. This is, again, an attempt to erase the boundary between humanity and God, but this time it is not just one couple (Adam and Eve) involved; the human community takes part. The mention of the tyrant Nimrod and his kingdom building has prepared readers

for this rebellion (10:8–12). The ancient towers (ziggurats) that dotted the Mesopotamian landscape provide ample proof of humanity's attempts to contact the divine. The Bible says that the most famous of these places, Babylon (whose name means "the gateway to heaven"), is actually the gateway to *confusion*, for it was there that God brought about linguistic confusion and diversity. The humans want to make a name for themselves by building a tower that reaches heaven. They want the tower to make contact with heaven, but it is so tiny and deficient that God has to come down to see it (11:5). The people attempt to build a gateway to heaven with their bricks to communicate with the gods, but instead God confuses their language so they cannot even communicate with one another.

11:10–26 This genealogy concludes the last section of primal history, and it is integrated tightly into the overall structure. It represents the second branch of Shem's genealogy, focusing on Peleg's descendants rather than Joktan's. The tower builders have been overreaching their human status in order to make a name for themselves, much like the notorious pre-flood heroes (6:4). But now God will make a name for humanity through someone named "Name" (which is the meaning of "Shem"). The genealogical list

became the father of Eber, Shelah lived 403 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁶When Eber had lived 34 years, he became the father of Peleg.^h ¹⁷And after he became the father of Peleg, Eber lived 430 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁸When Peleg had lived 30 years, he became the father of Reu.ⁱ ¹⁹And after he became the father of Reu, Peleg lived 209 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁰When Reu had lived 32 years, he became the father of Serug.^j ²¹And after he became the father of Serug, Reu lived 207 years and had other sons and daughters.

²²When Serug had lived 30 years, he became the father of Nahor.^k ²³And after he became the father of Nahor, Serug lived 200 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁴When Nahor had lived 29 years, he became the father of Terah.^l ²⁵And after he became the father of Terah, Nahor lived 119 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁶After Terah had lived 70 years, he became the father of Abram,^m Nahorⁿ and Haran.^o

Abram's Family

²⁷This is the account^p of Terah's family line.

Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor^q and Haran. And Haran became the father of Lot.^r ²⁸While his father Terah was still alive, Haran died in Ur of

^{11:16} ^hLk 3:35
^{11:18} ⁱLk 3:35
^{11:20} ^jLk 3:35
^{11:22} ^kLk 3:34
^{11:24} ^lLk 3:34
^{11:26} ^mLk 3:34
ⁿJos 24:2
^o2Kl 19:12;
 Isa 37:12;
 Eze 27:23
^{11:27} ^pS Ge 2:4
^qver 29;
 Ge 31:53
^rver 31;
 Ge 12:4; 13:1,
 5, 8, 12; 14:12;
 19:1; Lk 17:28;
 2Pe 2:7
^{11:28} ^sver 31;
 Ge 15:7; Ne 9:7;
 Job 1:17; 16:11;
 Eze 23:23;
 Ac 7:4
^{11:29} ^tS ver 27,
 31; Ge 22:20,
 23; 24:10, 15, 24;
 29:5 ^uGe 12:5,
 11; 16:1; 17:15
^vGe 22:20
^{11:30} ^wGe 16:1;
 18:11; 25:21;
 29:31; 30:1,
 22; Jdg 13:2;
 15a 1:5; Ps 113:9;
 Lk 1:7, 36
^{11:31} ^xS ver 27
^yGe 38:11;
 Lev 18:15;
 20:12; Ru 1:6,
 22; 2:20;
 4:15; 15a 4:19;
 1Ch 2:4;
 Eze 22:11;
 Mic 7:6
^zS ver 28
^aS Ge 10:19
^bS ver 29;
 Ge 12:4; 27:43;
 28:5, 10; 29:4;
 2Kl 19:12;
 Eze 27:23
^{11:32} ^cJos 24:2

the Chaldeans,^s in the land of his birth. ²⁹Abram and Nahor^t both married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai,^u and the name of Nahor's wife was Milkah;^v she was the daughter of Haran, the father of both Milkah and Iskah. ³⁰Now Sarai was childless because she was not able to conceive.^w

³¹Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot^x son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law^y Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans^z to go to Canaan.^a But when they came to Harran,^b they settled there.

³²Terah^c lived 205 years, and he died in Harran.

The Call of Abram

12 The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household^d to the land^e I will show you.^f

²"I will make you into a great nation,^g and I will bless you;^h I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.^{ai}

^a 2 Or *be seen as blessed*

^{12:1} ^dGe 20:13; 24:4, 27, 40 ^eS Ge 10:19 ^fGe 15:7; 26:2; Jos 24:3; Ac 7:3*; Heb 11:8 ^{12:2} ^gGe 13:16; 15:5; 17:2, 4; 18:18; 22:17; 26:4; 28:3, 14; 32:12; 35:11; 41:49; 46:3; 47:27; 48:4, 16, 19; Ex 1:7; 5:5; 32:13; Dt 1:10; 10:22; 13:17; 26:5; Jos 11:4; 24:3; 2Sa 17:11; 1Kl 3:8; 4:20; 1Ch 27:23; 2Ch 1:9; Ne 9:23; Ps 107:38; Isa 6:13; 10:22; 48:19; 51:2; 54:3; 60:22; Jer 33:22; Mic 4:7 ^hGe 24:1, 35; 25:11; 26:3; 28:4; Ex 20:24; Nu 22:12; 23:8, 20; 24:9; Ps 67:6; 115:12; Isa 44:3; 61:9; 65:23; Mal 3:12 ⁱGe 22:18; Isa 19:24; Jer 4:2; Hag 2:19; Zec 8:13

parallels the pre-flood list (5:1–32) in that both feature ten names and supply the ages of each person. Significantly, the last member of each list has three children (5:32; 11:26). The post-flood list contains no explicit mentions of death, but lifespans decrease quickly, thus showing the effect of God's decision to limit the human lifespan (6:3). At the same time, there is a reminder in each listing of God's blessing, as each member has sons and daughters. In the post-flood list, the age at which Terah (the last in the genealogy) becomes a father is strikingly different from all the others, and it is twice the age of the previous oldest (Arphaxad). The number seven (stressing completion) has been a feature in every genealogy so far. In Cain's genealogy, Lamech is the seventh from Adam, and he seeks 77-fold vengeance. At the end of Seth's genealogy, Lamech dies at the age of 777, and Enoch, the seventh from Adam, is taken to heaven. There are 70 nations in the Table of Nations, and at the end of the Shemite genealogy, Terah is 70 years old when he has Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

11:27–32 Genesis 11:27–25:11 focuses on Abraham. The short paragraph in Genesis 11:27–32 provides important background information for the subsequent story. The death of Abram's brother (Haran) and the sterility of Abram's wife (Sarai) signal an important theme: the power of death. "Ur of the Chaldeans" (v. 28) is a later designation for the ancient city of Ur, located in Southern Mesopotamia. The Chaldean

civilization appeared long after Abram, but the use of this term locates Abram's roots for a later audience. In verse 31, Terah takes his family, leaves the southern Mesopotamian city of Ur, and arrives in Harran, a major city in northwestern Mesopotamia. The text contains no report of a divine call provoking the departure, but apparently that is what prompted this move (12:1; Ac 7:2).

12:1–3 Here begins Abram's epic journey from Mesopotamia to the destination to which God calls him. God calls Abram to leave his home, and Abram leaves. His obedience to God's call will change the world. This is the first recorded speech from God following the story of the tower of Babel. God now intends to restore the conditions of Genesis 1–2. In chapters 1–11 there were five distinct uses of the word "curse" (Ge 3:14, 17; 4:11; 8:21; 9:25), but now in three verses we find five uses of the word "blessing." The word "blessing" means "to impart life." Through Abram, God is going to raise to life a dead world. In Genesis 12:1–3, God blesses Abram and his descendants; then he commissions them to an unstoppable mission to bless all families of the world. From one point of view, Abram's future journey looks like the ordinary trek of a family (11:31), but it was nothing of the sort. It was his response to God's call. Abram must leave three circles of familiarity: his country, his people, and his father's household. He is leaving everything from his past.

³I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse;^j and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.^{k,a}

⁴So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot^l went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old^m when he set out from Harran.ⁿ ⁵He took his wife Sarai,^o his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated^p and the people^q they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan,^r and they arrived there.

⁶Abram traveled through the land^s as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh^t at Shechem.^u At that time the Canaanites^v were in the land. ⁷The LORD appeared to Abram^w and said, “To your offspring^b I will give this land.^{x,y}” So he built an altar there to the LORD,^z who had appeared to him.

⁸From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel^a and pitched his tent,^b with Bethel on the west and Ai^c on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.^d

⁹Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.^e

Abram in Egypt

12:10–20 Ref // Ge 20:1–18; 26:1–11

¹⁰Now there was a famine in the land,^f and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe.^g ¹¹As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai,^h “I know what a beautiful womanⁱ you are. ¹²When the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife.’ Then

they will kill me but will let you live. ¹³Say you are my sister,^j so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you.”

¹⁴When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that Sarai was a very beautiful woman.^k ¹⁵And when Pharaoh’s officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace. ¹⁶He treated Abram well for her sake, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.^l

¹⁷But the LORD inflicted^m serious diseases on Pharaoh and his householdⁿ because of Abram’s wife Sarai. ¹⁸So Pharaoh summoned Abram. “What have you done to me?”^o he said. “Why didn’t you tell me she was your wife?”^p ¹⁹Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’^q so that I took her to be my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go!” ²⁰Then Pharaoh gave orders about Abram to his men, and they sent him on his way, with his wife and everything he had.

^a 3 Or earth / will use your name in blessings (see 48:20) ^b 7 Or seed

12:3 ^l Ge 27:29; Ex 23:22; Nu 24:9; Dt 30:7 ^k Ge 15:5; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:4, 14; Dt 9:5; Ps 72:17; Isa 19:25; Ac 3:25; Gal 3:8*
 12:4 ^l S Ge 11:27 ^m Ge 16:3, 16; 17:1, 17, 24; 21:5 ⁿ S Ge 11:31
 12:5 ^o S Ge 11:29 ^p ver 16; Ge 13:2, 6; 31:18; 46:6
 ^q Ge 14:14; 15:3; 17:23; Ecc 2:7
 ^r Ge 11:31; 16:3; Heb 11:8
 12:6 ^s Heb 11:9
 ^t Ge 35:4; Dt 11:30; Jos 24:26; Jdg 7:1; 9:6
 ^u Ge 33:18; 37:12; Jos 17:7; 20:7; 24:1; Jdg 8:31; 21:19; 1Ki 12:1; Ps 60:6; 108:7
 ^v S Ge 10:18
 12:7 ^w Ge 17:1; 18:1; 26:2; 35:1; Ex 6:3; Ac 7:2
 ^x Ex 3:8; Nu 10:29; Dt 30:5; Heb 11:8
 ^y Ge 13:15, 17; 15:18; 17:8; 23:18; 24:7; 26:3–4; 28:13; 35:12; 48:4; 50:24; Ex 6:4, 8; 13:5, 11; 32:13; 33:1; Nu 11:12; Dt 1:8; 2:31; 9:5; 11:9; 34:4; 2Ki 25:21; 1Ch 16:16; 2Ch 20:7;

Ps 105:9–11; Jer 25:5; Eze 47:14; Ac 7:5; Ro 4:13; Gal 3:16*
 ^z S Ge 8:20; 13:4
 ^a 12:8 ^a Ge 13:3; 28:11, 19; 35:1, 8, 15; Jos 7:2; 8:9; 1Sa 7:16; 1Ki 12:29; Hos 12:4; Am 3:14; 4:4
 ^b Ge 26:25; 33:19; Heb 11:9
 ^c Jos 7:2; 12:9; Eze 2:28; Ne 7:32; Jer 49:3
 ^d S Ge 4:26; S 8:20
 ^e 12:9 ^e Ge 13:1, 3; 20:1; 24:62; Nu 13:17; 33:40; Dt 34:3; Jos 10:40
 ^f 12:10 ^f Ge 41:27, 57; 42:5; 43:1; 47:4, 13; Ru 1:1; 2Sa 21:1; 2Ki 8:1; Ps 105:19
 ^g Ge 41:30, 54, 56; 47:20; Ps 105:16
 ^h 12:11 ^h S Ge 11:29
 ⁱ ver 14; Ge 24:16; 26:7; 29:17; 39:6
 ^j 12:13 ⁱ Ge 20:2; 26:7
 ^k 12:14 ^k S ver 11
 ^l 12:16 ^l S ver 5; Ge 24:35; 26:14; 30:43; 32:5; 34:23; 47:17; Job 1:3; 31:25
 ^m 12:17 ^m 2Ki 15:5; Job 30:11; Isa 53:4, 10
 ⁿ 1Ch 16:21; Ps 105:14
 ^o 12:18 ^o Ge 20:9; 26:10; 29:25; 31:26; 44:15
 ^p Isa 43:27; 51:2; Eze 16:3
 ^q 12:19 ^q Ge 20:5; 26:9

12:4–5 The author speaks volumes with the words “Abram went” (v. 4). Abram obeys God’s call and begins a journey that will change the world. While the Bible focuses on Abram and Sarai, their journey does not consist of them alone but involves about one thousand people. For example, later Abram musters 318 trained men to battle the armies of four kings (14:14).

12:6–9 Abram’s first stop in the land of Canaan is Shechem; he pauses near a landmark, the large “tree of Moreh” (v. 6). These trees may have been considered sacred sites, for the narrative mentions other trees at the places where Abram settles (13:18; 14:13; 18:1). When the Israelites later conquer the land, they gather at Shechem to affirm the covenant (Jos 8:30–35). Shechem (meaning “shoulders”) received its name from its topography. Two mountains—Gerizim and Ebal—create the appearance of shoulders. Abram makes two more stops after Shechem: he stops between Bethel and Ai and the south country; then he travels to the Negev, the desert region of Canaan. Abram thus passes through the entire land from north to south. At Shechem he experiences the first of several crucial revelations from God, as God promises him this land (which is currently occupied, Ge 12:6–7). Abram builds an altar, laying claim to the land; his act is equivalent to raising a flag. Abram also pitches a tent between Bethel

and Ai, an act that indicates he has a nomadic lifestyle. He will not have a permanent settlement in Canaan. The author of Hebrews draws on this fact to illustrate that Christians have no permanent home in this earth (Heb 11:9–10). From the location between Bethel and Ai, Abram reinstates the lost practice of worship (cf. Ge 4:26).

12:10–20 Abram deals with an obstacle to his settling in the land of promise: famine. Famines were a fact of life in this region of the ancient world, and many years later Abram’s descendant Jacob will deal with the same problem, as will some distant descendants later on (Ru 1:1–5). Abram leaves the land of promise for Egypt. He lies to protect himself from danger and puts his wife in danger, and this entails a threat to the promise that he will become a great nation. When the Egyptian officials see Sarai’s beauty, they “praised her to Pharaoh” (Ge 12:15). This is the first use of the verb “praise” in the Bible. We praise things and people we love. People see a commendable quality and talk it up. God delivers both Abram and Sarai; the same God who brought them up from Ur brings them up from Egypt, anticipating the later events in the book of Exodus. The plagues God inflicts on the Egyptians lead Abram and Sarai to leave Egypt. Sometimes events in the lives of the ancestors foreshadow events in the nation of Israel.

Abram and Lot Separate

13 So Abram went up from Egypt^f to the Negev,⁵ with his wife and everything he had, and Lot^t went with him. ²Abram had become very wealthy^u in livestock^v and in silver and gold.

³From the Negev^w he went from place to place until he came to Bethel,^x to the place between Bethel and Ai^y where his tent had been earlier ⁴and where he had first built an altar.^z ⁷There Abram called on the name of the LORD.^a

⁵Now Lot,^b who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. ⁶But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together. ⁷And quarreling^d arose between Abram's herders and Lot's. The Canaanites^e and Perizzites^f were also living in the land^g at that time.

⁸So Abram said to Lot,^h "Let's not have any quarreling between you and me,ⁱ or between your herders and mine, for we are close relatives.^j ⁹Is not the whole land before you? Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left."^k

¹⁰Lot looked around and saw that the whole plain^l of the Jordan toward Zoar^m was well watered, like the garden of the LORD,ⁿ like the land of Egypt.^o (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom^p and Gomorrah.)^q ¹¹So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company: ¹²Abram lived in the land of Canaan,^r while Lot^s lived among the cities of the plain^t and pitched his tents near Sodom.^u

^{13:1} ^fGe 45:25
^sS Ge 12:9
^tS Ge 11:27
^{13:2} ^uS Ge 12:5;
26:13; Pr 10:22
^vGe 32:15;
Job 1:3; 42:12
^{13:3} ^wS Ge 12:9
^xS Ge 12:8
^yJos 7:2
^{13:4} ^zS Ge 12:7
^aS Ge 4:26
^{13:5} ^bS Ge 11:27
^{13:6} ^cS Ge 12:5;
33:9; 36:7
^{13:7} ^dGe 26:20;
21; Nu 20:3
^eS Ge 10:18
^fGe 15:20;
34:30; Ex 3:8;
Jdg 1:4
^gGe 12:6;
34:30
^{13:8} ^hS Ge 11:27
ⁱPr 15:18; 20:3
^jGe 19:9;
Ex 2:14;
Nu 16:13;
Ps 133:1
^{13:9} ^kGe 20:15;
34:10; 47:6;
Jer 40:4
^{13:10} ^lKl 7:46;
2Ch 4:17
^mGe 14:2;
19:22, 30;
Nu 13:29;
33:48; Dt 34:3;
Isa 15:5;
Jer 48:34
ⁿGe 2:8-10;
Isa 51:3;
Eze 31:8-9
^oGe 46:7
^pDt 29:23;
Job 39:6;
Ps 107:34;
Jer 4:26
^qGe 14:8;
19:17-29
^{13:12}
^rS Ge 10:19
^sS Ge 11:27
^tS ver 10;
Ge 19:17, 25, 29
^uGe 14:12
^{13:13} ^vGe 19:4;
Isa 1:10; 3:9

¹³Now the people of Sodom^v were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD.^w

¹⁴The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west.^x ¹⁵All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring^a forever.^y ¹⁶I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted.^z ¹⁷Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land,^a for I am giving it to you."^b

¹⁸So Abram went to live near the great trees of Mamre^c at Hebron,^d where he pitched his tents. There he built an altar to the LORD.^e

Abram Rescues Lot

14 At the time when Amraphel was king of Shinar,^{bf} Arioch king of Ellasar, Kedorlaomer^g king of Elam^h and Tidal king of Goyim, ²these kings went to war against Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboyim,ⁱ and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar).^j ³All these latter kings joined forces in the Valley of Siddim^k (that is, the Dead Sea Valley^l). ⁴For twelve years

^a ¹⁵ Or *seed*; also in verse 16 ^b ¹ That is, Babylonia; also in verse 9

^w Ge 18:20; 19:5; 20:6; 39:9; Nu 32:23; 1Sa 12:23; 2Sa 12:13; Ps 51:4; Eze 16:49-50; 2Pe 2:8 ^{13:14} ^x Ge 28:14; 32:12; 48:16; Dt 3:27; 13:17; Isa 54:3 ^{13:15} ^y S Ge 12:7; Gal 3:16^e
^{13:16} ^z S Ge 12:2; 16:10; 17:20; 21:13, 18; 25:16; Nu 23:10
^{13:17} ^a ver 15; Nu 13:17-25 ^b S Ge 12:7; 15:7 ^{13:18} ^c Ge 14:13, 24; 18:1; 23:17, 19; 25:9; 49:30; 50:13 ^d Ge 23:2; 35:27; 37:14; Nu 13:22; Jos 10:3, 36; Jdg 1:10; 1Sa 30:31; 2Sa 2:1, 3, 11; 1Ch 11:1 ^e S Ge 8:20
^{14:1} ^f S Ge 10:10 ^g ver 4, 9, 17 ^h S Ge 10:22 ^{14:2} ⁱ S Ge 10:19
^{14:3} ^j S Ge 13:10 ^{14:3} ^k ver 8, 10 ^l Nu 34:3, 12; Dt 3:17; Jos 3:16; 12:3; 15:2, 5; 18:19

13:1-13 This passage describes the separation that occurs between Abram and his nephew Lot. They have both become very wealthy and do not have enough space for the two of them to settle together in the land. Lot's shepherds quarrel with Abram's shepherds, and Lot and Abram agree to separate so that they will have more room for their flocks. Abram gives Lot the first choice of the land, and Lot is attracted by the sight of the plain of the Jordan. The phrase "garden of the LORD" (v. 10) conjures up images of Eden (cf. Isa 51:3), and the comparison to Egypt alludes to the fertile land produced by the Nile. But the jarring reference to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 13:10 sounds an ominous note. Lot's eyes lead him, as Eve's did when the serpent tempted her in Eden (3:6). When Lot chooses to live near Sodom, he effectively eliminates himself from being Abram's heir. The reference to the people of Sodom in verse 13 becomes important in the larger storyline (chs. 18-19) and highlights the nature of Lot's choice. Sodom might be a prosperous city, but it is not a righteous one.

13:14-18 God affirms his promise to Abram for the second time since Abram's departure from Ur (cf. 12:7). Here he describes the land in all its dimensions as well as Abram's

numerous progeny—promising that they will be as numerous as the dust of the earth. When God tells Abram to walk the length and breadth of the land, he is essentially calling Abram to lay a legal claim to it. By building another altar in the southern area of Hebron, Abram dedicates the land to the Lord. The narrative further specifies that this location is "near the great trees of Mamre" (13:18). Mamre was a local Canaanite who probably owned the land on which these landmark trees were situated.

14:1-12 This chapter involves Lot again and portrays him as living in Sodom. It shows how Abram distinguishes himself in battle to save his nephew and his family, leading to another blessing from God. The frequent notes specifying updated place names (e.g., vv. 2,3) demonstrate that the text bears the mark of great antiquity. It is difficult to identify historically some of the kings from Mesopotamia (Shinar and Elam) and also the kings of the five cities of the plain in the area of Canaan. Often ancient people groups fought wars motivated by greed and power, and the defeated party would have to pay annual tribute to the victors. The five kings of Canaan decide to rebel against the four Mesopotamian kings by withholding tribute. It is not

they had been subject to Kedorlaomer,^m but in the thirteenth year they rebelled.

⁵In the fourteenth year, Kedorlaomerⁿ and the kings allied with him went out and defeated the Rephaites^o in Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zuzites in Ham, the Emites^p in Shaveh Kiriathaim ⁶and the Horites^q in the hill country of Seir,^r as far as El Paran^s near the desert. ⁷Then they turned back and went to En Mishpat (that is, Kadesh),^t and they conquered the whole territory of the Amalekites,^u as well as the Amorites^v who were living in Hazezon Tamar.^w

⁸Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah,^x the king of Admah, the king of Zeboyim^y and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar)^z marched out and drew up their battle lines in the Valley of Siddim^a ⁹against Kedorlaomer^b king of Elam,^c Tidal king of Goyim, Amraphel king of Shinar and Arioch king of Ellasar — four kings against five. ¹⁰Now the Valley of Siddim^d was full of tar^e pits, and when the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah^f fled, some of the men fell into them and the rest fled to the hills.^g ¹¹The four kings seized all the goods^h of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food; then they went away. ¹²They also carried off Abram's nephew Lotⁱ and his possessions, since he was living in Sodom.

¹³A man who had escaped came and reported this to Abram the Hebrew.^j Now Abram was living near the great trees of Mamre^k the Amorite, a brother^a of Eshkol^l and Aner, all of whom were allied with Abram. ¹⁴When Abram heard that his relative^m had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trainedⁿ men born in his household^o and went in pursuit as far as Dan.^p ¹⁵During the night Abram divided his men^q to attack them and he routed them,

14:4 ^mS ver 1
14:5 ⁿS ver 1
^oGe 15:20;
Dt 21:1, 20; 3:11;
13; Jos 12:4;
13:12; 17:15;
1Ch 20:4
P Dt 2:10
14:6
^qGe 36:20;
Dt 2:12, 22
^rGe 32:3;
33:14, 16; 36:8;
Dt 1:2; 2:1, 5,
22; Jos 11:17;
24:4; 1Ch 4:42;
Isa 34:5;
Eze 25:8;
35:2; Am 1:6
^sGe 21:21;
Nu 10:12;
12:16; 13:3, 26;
Hab 3:3
14:7 ^tGe 16:14;
20:1; Nu 13:26;
20:1; 32:8;
Dt 1:2;
Jos 10:41;
Jdg 11:16;
Ps 29:8
^uEx 17:8;
Nu 13:29; 14:25;
24:20; Dt 25:17;
Jdg 3:13; 6:3;
10:12; 12:15;
1Sa 14:4, 8; 15:2;
28:18; 2Sa 1:1;
1Ch 4:43;
Ps 83:7
^vNu 13:29;
Dt 1:4; Jos 2:10;
13:4 ^w2Ch 20:2;
Eze 48:28
14:8
^xS Ge 13:10
^yDt 29:23;
Hos 11:8
^zS Ge 13:10
^aS ver 3
14:9 ^bS ver 1
^cS Ge 10:12
14:10 ^dS ver 3
^eGe 11:3 ^fver 17,
21
^gGe 19:17,
30; Jos 2:16;
Ps 11:1
14:11 ^hver 16, 21
14:12 ⁱS Ge 11:27
14:13 ^jGe 37:28;
39:14, 17;
40:15; 41:12;

pursuing them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus.^r ¹⁶He recovered^s all the goods^t and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people.

¹⁷After Abram returned from defeating Kedorlaomer^u and the kings allied with him, the king of Sodom^v came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).^w

¹⁸Then Melchizedek^x king of Salem^y brought out bread^z and wine.^a He was priest of God Most High,^b ¹⁹and he blessed Abram,^c saying,

“Blessed be Abram by God Most High,^d Creator of heaven and earth.^e

²⁰And praise be to God Most High,^f who delivered your enemies into your hand.”

Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.^g

²¹The king of Sodom^h said to Abram, “Give me the people and keep the goodsⁱ for yourself.”

²²But Abram said to the king of Sodom,^j “With raised hand^k I have sworn an oath to the LORD, God Most High,^l Creator of heaven and earth,^m ²³that I will accept nothing

^a 13 Or a relative; or an ally

43:32; Ex 3:18; 1Sa 4:6; 14:11 ^kver 24; S Ge 13:18 ^lNu 13:23; 32:9; Dt 1:24 14:14 ^mver 12 ⁿDt 4:9; Pr 22:6 ^oS Ge 12:5 ^pDt 34:1; Jdg 18:29; 1Ki 15:20 14:15 ^qJdg 7:16 ^rGe 15:2; 2Sa 8:5; 1Ki 20:34; 2Ki 16:9; Isa 7:8; 8:4; 10:9; 17:1; Jer 49:23, 27; Eze 27:18; Am 1:3-5 14:16 ^s1Sa 30:8, 18 ^tS ver 11
14:17 ^uS ver 1 ^vS ver 10 ^w2Sa 18:18 14:18 ^xPs 110:4; Heb 5:6; 7:17, 21 ^yPs 76:2; Heb 7:2 ^zS Ge 3:19 ^aJdg 9:13; 19:19; Est 1:10; Ps 104:15; Pr 31:6; Ecc 10:19; SS 12 ^bver 22; Ps 7:8, 17; Da 7:27
14:19 ^cHeb 7:6 ^dver 18 ^ever 22; S Ge 1:1; 24:3; Jos 2:11; Ps 148:5; Mt 11:25 14:20 ^fS Ge 9:26; S 24:27 ^gGe 28:22; Dt 14:22; 26:12; Lk 18:12; Heb 7:4 14:21 ^hS ver 10 ⁱS ver 11 14:22 ^jS ver 10
^kEx 6:8; Nu 14:30; Dt 32:40; Ne 9:15; Eze 20:5; Da 12:7; Rev 10:5-6 ^lS ver 18 ^mS ver 19

long before the four Mesopotamian kings invade, seeking to punish the rebels. They largely attack the outskirts of Canaan, the eastern side of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea, before turning to the south. There, in the valley of Siddim—an area featuring salt pits—the five kings of the plain meet the four Mesopotamian kings in battle. The four Mesopotamian kings capture Sodom, and with it Lot. This then brings Abram into the picture.

14:13–17 “Abram the Hebrew” (v. 13) hears about Lot’s capture and, with some Canaanite allies, rallies to save his nephew. This is the first reference to Abram’s ethnic identity (cf. 39:14; 41:12). Abram musters 318 trained men—a detail that indicates the size of Abram’s entourage. This is a small group compared to the armies of the Mesopotamian kings (cf. Jdg 7:1–7). Abram nevertheless overtakes the armies as they are leaving Canaan.

14:18–20 The king of Sodom is going to offer Abram the rewards due to a conqueror, but a mysterious figure’s sudden intervention provides Abram with a far greater blessing.

This king, Melchizedek (meaning “king of righteousness”), emerges from Salem (“peace”), which is probably an alternative name for nearby Jerusalem (Ps 76:2). The king is also a priest of the “God Most High” (Ge 14:18). This rare title for God describes his unique exalted status: he is *high* above all. It is a title of transcendence. Melchizedek recognizes this God as the “Creator of heaven and earth” (v. 19), which harks back to Genesis 1:1 and 12:3 and is a reminder that Abram will someday be a blessing not only to Sodom but to the entire earth. As God blessed the first human couple and Noah (Ge 1:26–28; 9:1), so now Melchizedek blesses Abram after Abram risked his life to save others. Recognizing the majesty of this king, Abram offers to him the first tithe recorded in the Bible. Psalm 110 alludes to this story of blessing, and Hebrews 5–7 reflects extensively on a future priest-king who is even greater than Melchizedek—the Lord Jesus Christ.

14:21–24 The king of Sodom wants to negotiate with Abram: the king of Sodom would take the persons while Abram

belonging to you,ⁿ not even a thread or the strap of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, 'I made Abram rich.' ²⁴I will accept nothing but what my men have eaten and the share that belongs to the men who went with me — to Aner, Eshkol and Mamre.^o Let them have their share."

The LORD's Covenant With Abram

15 After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram^p in a vision:^q

"Do not be afraid,^r Abram.
I am your shield,^{as}
your very great reward.^{bt}"

²But Abram said, "Sovereign LORD,^u what can you give me since I remain childless^v and the one who will inherit^c my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?^w" ³And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant^x in my household^y will be my heir."

⁴Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir."^z ⁵He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars^a — if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring^d be."^b

⁶Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.^c

⁷He also said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out^d of Ur of the Chaldeans^e to give you this land to take possession of it."^f

⁸But Abram said, "Sovereign LORD,^g how can I know^h that I will gain possession of it?"ⁱ

⁹So the LORD said to him, "Bring me a heifer,^j a goat and a ram, each three years old,^k along with a dove and a young pigeon."^l

14:23 ⁿ 1Sa 15:3, 19; 2Ki 5:16; Est 8:11; 9:10, 15
14:24
^o S Ge 13:18
^p 1Sa 15:10; 2Sa 7:4; 1Ki 6:11; 12:22; Jer 1:13; Eze 3:16; Da 10:1
^q Ge 46:2; Nu 12:6; 24:4; Ru 1:20; Job 33:15
^r Ge 21:17; 26:24; 46:3; Ex 14:13; 20:20; 2Ki 6:16; 2Ch 20:15, 17; Ps 27:1; Isa 7:4; 41:10, 13-14; 43:1, 5; Jer 1:8; Hag 2:5
^s Dt 33:29; 2Sa 22:3, 31; Ps 3:3; 5:12; 18:2; 28:7; 33:20; 84:11; 119:114; 144:2; Pr 2:7; 30:5
^t Ps 18:20; 37:25; 58:11; Isa 3:10
^u 15:2 ^u ver 8; Isa 49:22; Jer 44:26; Eze 5:11; 16:48 ^v Ac 7:5
^w S Ge 14:15
^x 15:3 ^x Ge 24:2, 34 ^y S Ge 12:5
^z 15:4 ^z Gal 4:28
^a 15:5 ^a Job 11:8; 35:5; Ps 8:3; 147:4; Jer 33:22
^b S Ge 12:2; S Jer 30:19; Ro 4:18*; Heb 11:12
^c 15:6 ^c Ps 106:31; Ro 4:3*; 20:24*; Gal 3:6*; Jas 2:23*
^d 15:7 ^d Ge 12:1; Ex 20:2; Ac 7:3;

¹⁰Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other;^m the birds, however, he did not cut in half.ⁿ ¹¹Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses,^o but Abram drove them away.

¹²As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep,^p and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. ¹³Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that for four hundred years^q your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved^r and mistreated there. ¹⁴But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out^s with great possessions.^t ¹⁵You, however, will go to your ancestors^u in peace and be buried at a good old age.^v ¹⁶In the fourth generation^w your descendants will come back here,^x for the sin of the Amorites^y has not yet reached its full measure."

¹⁷When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch^z appeared and passed between the pieces.^a ¹⁸On that day the LORD made

^a 1 Or *sovereign* ^b 1 Or *shield*; / *your reward will be very great* ^c 2 The meaning of the Hebrew for this phrase is uncertain. ^d 5 Or *seed*

Heb 11:8 ^e S Ge 11:28; Ac 7:4 ^f S Ge 13:17; 17:8; 28:4; 35:12; 48:4; Ex 6:8; Dt 9:5 ^g S ver 2 ^h Lk 1:18 ⁱ Dt 12:20; 19:8
^j 15:9 ^j Nu 19:2; Dt 21:3; Hos 4:16; Am 4:1 ^k 1Sa 1:24 ^l Lev 11:4; 5:7, 11; 12:8 ^m 15:10 ^m ver 17; Jer 34:18 ⁿ Lev 11:7; 5:8 ^o 15:11 ^o Dt 28:26; Jer 7:33 ^p S Ge 2:21 ^q 15:13 ^q ver 16; Ex 12:40; Nu 20:15; Ac 7:6, 17; Gal 3:17 ^r Ex 11:1; 3:7; 5:6, 10-14, 18; 6:5; Dt 5:15; Job 3:11
^s 15:14 ^s Ge 50:24; Ex 3:8; 6:6-8; 12:25; Nu 10:29; Jos 1:2; Ac 7:7*
^t Ex 12:32-38 ^u 15:15 ^u Ge 47:30; 49:29; Dt 31:16; 2Sa 7:12; 1Ki 1:21; Ps 49:19 ^v Ge 25:8; 35:29; Ex 23:26; Dt 34:7; Jos 14:11; Jdg 8:32; 1Ch 29:28; Job 5:26; 21:23; 42:17; Ps 91:16; Pr 3:16; 9:11; Isa 65:20
^w 15:16 ^w S ver 13; Ex 12:40 ^x Ge 28:15; 46:4; 48:21; 50:24; Ex 3:8, 17
^y Lev 18:28; Jos 13:4; Jdg 10:11; 1Ki 21:26; 2Ki 16:3; 21:11; Eze 16:3
^z 15:17 ^z Jdg 7:16, 20; 15:4, 5 ^a S ver 10

took the goods. But Abram responds by appealing to his dependence on the God of heaven and earth. The king of Sodom will not be the reason Abram is wealthy (v. 23). Abram takes nothing of the spoils except food for the people who came with him.

15:1–6 In this chapter, we see for the first time dialogue between the Lord and Abram. The childless Abram is fearful about his future. He thinks that his servant, Eliezer of Damascus, will have to be his surrogate heir (a practice common in the ancient world), but God reassures him that he will in fact have his own children—as many as the stars. Abram believes God's word, throwing himself upon God's promises. As a result of Abram's faith, God declares him righteous. Long before the Law of Moses, Abram is righteous before God (Ro 4:1–3).

15:7–17 Now that the question of an heir has been dealt with, the question of land is paramount in Abram's mind. To quell Abram's fear about inheriting land, and also because Abram is now righteous, God makes a covenant with him according to the custom of the day. The parties of the covenant walk between the cut halves of animal carcasses and pledge fealty to each other on graphic pain of death (cf. Jer 34:8–22). The carcasses were vivid reminders of

what would happen if a party were to violate the oath. As Adam entered a deep sleep before entering the covenant of marriage, Abram enters a deep sleep as well when he hears God's message of blessing. Though his descendants will leave the promised land and enter bondage, they will later be liberated. The promise is delayed because of divine patience. God is giving the Amorites, who were a Canaanite people, additional time before their sin escalates and brings judgment. His patience with sin is intended to bring about repentance (Ro 2:4). The fact that Abram sees a blazing torch passing between the carcasses suggests that God is unconditionally making this covenant. By this action, God is effectively calling a curse upon himself were he to break the covenant, which is an impossibility. Later in the biblical story, the divine fire will reappear to announce the dawning of deliverance for the captive Israelites (Ex 3:1–3).

15:18–21 These verses summarize the chapter. God has made a covenant with his righteous servant. The expression "made a covenant" (v. 18) can also be worded "cut a covenant," and it probably derives from the previous ritual of cutting in half animal carcasses. The terminology indicates that God is instituting a new relationship. The promised land

a covenant with Abram^b and said, “To your descendants I give this land,^c from the Wadi^a of Egypt^d to the great river, the Euphrates^e — ¹⁹the land of the Kenites,^f Kenizzites, Kadmonites, ²⁰Hittites,^g Perizzites,^h Rephaites,ⁱ ²¹Amorites, Canaanites, Gergashites and Jebusites.”^j

Hagar and Ishmael

16 Now Sarai,^k Abram’s wife, had borne him no children.^l But she had an Egyptian slave^m named Hagar;ⁿ ²so she said to Abram, “The LORD has kept me from having children.^o Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her.”^p

Abram agreed to what Sarai said. ³So after Abram had been living in Canaan^q ten years,^r Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. ⁴He slept with Hagar,^s and she conceived.

When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress.^t ⁵Then Sarai said to Abram, “You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me.”^u

⁶“Your slave is in your hands,^v” Abram said. “Do with her whatever you think best.” Then Sarai mistreated^w Hagar; so she fled from her.

⁷The angel of the LORD^x found Hagar near a spring^y in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur.^z ⁸And he said, “Hagar,³ slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?”^b

“I’m running away from my mistress Sarai,” she answered.

⁹Then the angel of the LORD told her, “Go back to your mistress and submit to her.”

¹⁰The angel added, “I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count.”^c

15:18 ^b Ge 17:2, 4, 7; Ex 6:4; 34:10, 27; 1Ch 16:16; Ps 105:9
^c S Ge 12:7
^d Nu 34:5; Jos 15:4, 47; 1Kl 8:65; 2Kl 24:7; 2Ch 7:8; Isa 27:12; Jer 37:5; 46:2; La 4:17; Eze 30:22; 47:19
^e S Ge 2:14
^f 15:19 ^f Nu 24:21; Jdg 1:16; 4:11, 17; 5:24; 1Sa 15:6; 27:10; 30:29; 1Ch 2:55
^g 15:20
^h S Ge 10:15; S Dt 7:1
ⁱ S Ge 10:17
^j S Ge 14:5
^k 15:21
^l S Ge 10:16; Jos 3:10; 24:11; Ne 9:8
^m 16:1 ^k S Ge 11:29
ⁿ S Ge 11:30; Lk 1:7, 36; Gal 4:24-25
^o Ge 21:9; 24:61; 29:24, 29; 31:33; 46:18
^p ver 3-4, 8, 15; Ge 21:14; 25:12
^q 16:2 ^o Ge 29:31; 30:2 ^p Ge 19:32; 30:3-4, 9-10
^r 16:3 ^q S Ge 12:5
^s S Ge 12:4
^t 16:4 ^s ver 1
^u S Ge 30:1; 1Sa 1:6
^v 16:5 ^u Ge 31:53; Ex 5:21; Jdg 11:27; 1Sa 24:12; 15; 26:10, 23; Ps 50:6; 75:7
^w 16:6 ^v Jos 9:25
^x Ge 31:50
^y 16:7 ^x ver 11; Ge 21:17; 22:11; 15; 24:7, 40; 31:11; 48:16; Ex 3:2; 14:19; 23:20, 23; 32:34; 33:2; Nu 22:22; Jdg 2:1; 6:11; 13:3; 2Sa 24:16; 1Kl 19:5; 2Kl 1:3; 19:35; Ps 34:7

¹¹The angel of the LORD^d also said to her:

“You are now pregnant and you will give birth to a son.^e You shall name him^f Ishmael,^g for the LORD has heard of your misery.^h”

¹²He will be a wild donkeyⁱ of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward^c all his brothers.^j”

¹³She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: “You are the God who sees me,^k” for she said, “I have now seen^d the One who sees me.”^l ¹⁴That is why the well^m was called Beer Lahai Roi^e; ⁿit is still there, between Kadesh^o and Bered.

¹⁵So Hagar^p bore Abram a son,^q and Abram gave the name Ishmael^r to the son she had borne. ¹⁶Abram was eighty-six years old^s when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

The Covenant of Circumcision

17 When Abram was ninety-nine years old,^t the LORD appeared to him^u and said, “I am God Almighty;^v walk before me faithfully and be blameless.^w ²Then I

^a 18 Or river ^b 11 Ishmael means God hears.
^c 12 Or live to the east / of ^d 13 Or seen the back of
^e 14 Beer Lahai Roi means well of the Living One who sees me. ^f 1 Hebrew El-Shaddai

Zec 1:11; S Ac 5:19 ^y ver 14; Ge 21:9 ^z Ge 20:1; 25:18; Ex 15:22; 1Sa 15:7; 27:8 ^{16:8} ^a S ver 1 ^b S Ge 3:9
^{16:10} ^c S Ge 13:16 ^{16:11} ^d S ver 7; S Ac 5:19 ^e S Ge 3:15 ^f Ge 12:2-3; 18:19; Ne 9:7; Isa 44:1; Am 3:2; Mt 1:21; Lk 1:13, 31 ^g Ge 17:19; 21:3; 37:25, 28; 39:1; Jdg 8:24 ^h Ge 29:32; 31:42; Ex 2:24; 3:7, 9; 4:31; Nu 20:16; Dt 26:7; 1Sa 9:16 ^{16:12} ⁱ Job 6:5; 11:12; 24:5; 39:5; Ps 104:11; Jer 2:24; Hos 8:9 ^j Ge 25:18 ^{16:13} ^k Ps 139:1-12
^l Ge 32:30; 33:10; Ex 24:10; 33:20, 23; Nu 12:8; Jdg 6:22; 13:22; Isa 6:5 ^{16:14} ^m S ver 7 ⁿ Ge 24:62; 25:11 ^o S Ge 14:7
^{16:15} ^p S ver 1 ^q Ge 21:9; Gal 4:22 ^r Ge 17:18; 25:12; 28:9
^{16:16} ^s S Ge 12:4 ^{17:1} ^t S Ge 12:4 ^u S Ge 12:7 ^v Ge 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; 49:25; Ex 6:3; Ru 1:20; Job 5:17; 6:4, 14; 22:21; 33:19; 36:16; Isa 13:6; Joel 1:15; Mic 6:9 ^w S Ge 5:22; 20:5; Dt 18:13; 1Kl 3:6; 9:4; Job 1:1; Ps 15:2; 18:23; 78:72; 101:2

currently belongs to various Canaanite peoples, but in due time Abraham’s descendants will inherit it.

16:1–6 This chapter focuses on the delay of the promise. This time it is not Abram who doubts the promise but Sarai. Ten years have passed since God made the promise, and Sarai believes she can fulfill it by using a surrogate—her slave Hagar. Employing a surrogate was an accepted practice in the ancient Near East. Abram has sexual relations with Hagar, and when she becomes pregnant, Hagar looks down on Sarai. This, too, was a common occurrence in the ancient world. Sarai mistreats her slave and drives her away into the desert.

16:7–16 An angel appears to this fugitive slave in her dire circumstances, a clear indication of God’s compassion, par-

ticularly for the marginalized. This is the first appearance of the “angel of the LORD,” a special angel who represents God in a distinct way. This text emphasizes this angel by recording three separate speeches he gives (vv. 9,10,11). Naming is a feature of the narrative. God’s naming of Hagar’s son stresses God’s compassion, as her future son will be named “God hears” (Ishmael). Hagar names God “the God who sees me,” which results in the location being named Beer Lahai Roi. This site was located about 40 miles south of Hebron, which is where Hagar had been living with Sarai. This is the only example of a person naming God in the Bible.

17:1–8 The episode recorded in this chapter is crucial to Abraham’s story because it uses the word “covenant” 13

will make my covenant between me and you^x and will greatly increase your numbers.^y

³Abram fell facedown,^z and God said to him, ⁴“As for me, this is my covenant with you:^a You will be the father of many nations.^b ⁵No longer will you be called Abram^a; your name will be Abraham,^{bc} for I have made you a father of many nations.^d ⁶I will make you very fruitful;^e I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you.^f ⁷I will establish my covenant^g as an everlasting covenant^h between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your Godⁱ and the God of your descendants after you.^j ⁸The whole land of Canaan,^k where you now reside as a foreigner,^l I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you;^m and I will be their God.ⁿ”

⁹Then God said to Abraham, “As for you, you must keep my covenant,^o you and your descendants after you for the generations to come.^p ¹⁰This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised.^q ¹¹You are to undergo circumcision,^r and it will be the sign of the covenant^s between me and you. ¹²For the generations to come^t every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised,^u including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner — those who are not your offspring. ¹³Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised.^v My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant.^w ¹⁴Any uncircumcised male, who has not been

17:2
x S Ge 15:18;
S 22:16-18
y S Ge 12:2
17:3 z ver 17;
Ge 18:2; 19:1;
33:3; Ex 18:7;
Nu 14:5;
Jos 5:14; 7:6;
Jdg 13:20;
Eze 1:28; 3:23
17:4 a S Ge 15:18
b ver 16;
S Ge 12:2; 25:23
17:5 c ver 15;
Ge 32:28;
35:10; 37:3;
13; 43:6; 46:2;
1Ki 18:31;
2Ki 17:34;
1Ch 1:34;
Ne 9:7;
Isa 48:1;
S Jn 1:4,2
d Ro 4:17*
17:6 e Ge 1:28;
22:17; 26:22;
28:3; 35:11;
41:52; 47:27;
48:4; 49:22;
Lev 26:9;
Dt 7:13 f ver 16,
19; Ge 18:10;
21:1; 36:31;
Isa 51:2; Mt 1:6
17:7 g S Ge 6:18;
S Ge 15:18;
Lev 26:9,15
h S Ge 9:16;
S Heb 13:20
i Ex 6:7; 20:2;
29:45,46;
Lev 11:44-45;
18:2; 22:33;
25:38; 26:12,
45; Nu 15:41;
Dt 4:20; 7:6,21;
29:13; 2Sa 7:24;
Jer 14:9;
Rev 21:7
j Ro 9:8;
Gal 3:16
17:8
k S Ge 10:19
l Ge 23:4;
28:4; 35:27;
37:1; Ex 6:4;
1Ch 29:15
m S Ge 12:7;
S 15:7 n S ver 7;
Jer 31:1

circumcised^x in the flesh, will be cut off from his people;^y he has broken my covenant.^z”

¹⁵God also said to Abraham, “As for Sarai^a your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah.^b ¹⁶I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her.^c I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations;^d kings of peoples will come from her.”

¹⁷Abraham fell facedown;^e he laughed^f and said to himself, “Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old?^g Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?”^h ¹⁸And Abraham said to God, “If only Ishmaelⁱ might live under your blessing!”^j

¹⁹Then God said, “Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son,^k and you will call him Isaac.^{cl} I will establish my covenant with him^m as an everlasting covenantⁿ for his descendants after him. ²⁰And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers.^o He will be the father of twelve rulers,^p and I will make him into a great nation.^q ²¹But my covenant^f I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you^s by this time next

^a S Abram means exalted father. ^b S Abraham probably means father of many. ^c 19 Isaac means he laughs.

17:9 o Ge 22:18; Ex 19:5; Dt 5:2 p Ge 18:19 17:10 q ver 23; Ge 21:4; Lev 12:3; Jos 5:2, 5, 7; Jn 7:22; Ac 7:8; Ro 4:11 17:11 f Ex 12:48; Dt 10:16 s S Ge 9:12; Ro 4:11 17:12 s Ge 9:12 u Ge 21:4; Lev 12:3; Jos 5:2; S Lk 1:59 17:13 v Ex 12:44, 48 w S Ge 9:16 17:14 x ver 23 y Ex 4:24-26; 12:15, 19; 30:33; Lev 7:20, 25; 17:4; 18:29; 19:8; 20:17; Nu 9:13; 15:30; 19:13; Dt 17:12; Jos 5:2-8; Job 38:15; Ps 37:28 z Eze 44:7 17:15 a S Ge 11:29 b ver 5 17:16 c S ver 6; S Isa 29:22 d S ver 4; Ge 24:60; Gal 4:31 17:17 e S ver 3 f Ge 18:12; 21:6 g S Ge 12:4 h Ge 18:11, 13; 21:7; 24:1, 36; Jer 20:15; Lk 1:18; Ro 4:19; Gal 4:23; Heb 11:11 17:18 i S Ge 16:15 j Ge 21:11 17:19 k S ver 6, 21; Ge 18:14; 21:2; Isa 1:20 l S Ge 16:11; Mt 1:21; Lk 1:13, 31 m Ge 26:3; 50:24; Ex 13:11; Dt 1:8 n S Ge 9:16; S Gal 3:16 17:20 o S Ge 13:16 p Ge 25:12-16 q Ge 25:18; 48:19 17:21 r Ex 34:10 s ver 19

times; Abram and Sarai also receive new names in this chapter. A new name means a new destiny. God confirms the covenant and adds a covenant sign—circumcision. Thirteen years have elapsed since chapter 16, and there has still been no sign of an heir. “God Almighty” calls Abram to faithfulness. This name for God is the characteristic one for the patriarchs (Ex 6:3) and stresses his omnipotence. This entire episode emphasizes God’s supernatural power to multiply descendants abundantly. Abram is to live every step of his whole life before God. This is not in contrast to Abram’s faith in Genesis 15:6; there is no incompatibility between faith and works. True faith leads to faithfulness. To ratify the covenant, God gives Abram (“exalted father”) a new name: Abraham (“father of a multitude”). His expanded name means expanded progeny. Abraham will not just father one nation but many. Moreover, Abraham will be the father of a royal line: the Davidic dynasty. God’s ultimate aim is to be the God of Abraham and the patriarch’s descendants.

17:9–14 These verses introduce the covenant sign: circumcision, the practice of removing the prepuce or foreskin from the male genital organ. Circumcision was a well-known practice in the ancient world, often used to mark a boy’s transition from childhood to manhood. The Israelites are unique in their practicing circumcision on an eight-day-old infant. It is hardly coincidental that Abram and Sarai are to be the parents of a multitude, and that God gives them the cutting away of a part of the male sexual organ as a sign. It is a sign that God’s promise of children will happen as a result of a transformation of human effort—effort inspired by faith in the promise (15:6).

17:15–22 God now changes Sarai’s name (perhaps meaning “my princess”) to Sarah (“princess”) to indicate her role as a mother of many nations and a royal dynasty. The sheer outlandishness of the promise leads Abraham to burst out in laughter. It seems ludicrous to him that a one-hundred-year-old man and a ninety-year-old woman could bear a child. God names the child Isaac (“laughter”) as a reminder

year.”^t ²²When he had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him.^u

²³On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and all those born in his household^v or bought with his money, every male in his household, and circumcised them, as God told him.^w ²⁴Abraham was ninety-nine years old^x when he was circumcised,^y ²⁵and his son Ishmael^z was thirteen; ²⁶Abraham and his son Ishmael were both circumcised on that very day. ²⁷And every male in Abraham’s household^a, including those born in his household or bought from a foreigner, was circumcised with him.

The Three Visitors

18 The LORD appeared to Abraham^b near the great trees of Mamre^c while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent^d in the heat of the day. ²Abraham looked up^e and saw three men^f standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.^g

³He said, “If I have found favor in your eyes,^h my lord,^a do not pass your servantⁱ by. ⁴Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet^j and rest under this tree. ⁵Let me get you something to eat,^k so you can be refreshed and then go on your way — now that you have come to your servant.”

“Very well,” they answered, “do as you say.”

⁶So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. “Quick,” he said, “get three seahs^b of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread.”^l

⁷Then he ran to the herd and select- ed a choice, tender calf^m and gave it to a

17:21 ^tGe 18:10, 14
17:22
^uGe 18:33;
35:13; Nu 12:9
17:23 ^vS Ge 12:5
^wS ver 10, S 14
17:24
^xS Ge 12:4
^yRo 4:11
17:25 ^zGe 16:16
17:27 ^aGe 14:14
18:1 ^bS Ge 12:7;
Ac 7:2
^cS Ge 13:18
^dGe 19:1; 23:10;
18; 34:20,
24; Ru 4:1;
Ps 69:12;
Heb 11:9
18:2 ^eGe 24:63
^fver 16, 22;
^gGe 19:1, 10;
32:24; Jos 5:13;
Jdg 13:6-11;
Hos 12:3-4;
Heb 13:2
^hS Ge 17:3;
S 43:28
18:3 ⁱGe 19:19;
39:4; Ru 2:2,
10, 13; 1Sa 1:18;
Est 2:15
^jGe 32:4, 18,
20; 33:5
18:4 ^kGe 19:2;
24:32; 43:24;
Jdg 19:21;
2Sa 11:8;
S Lk 7:44
18:5 ^lJdg 13:15;
19:5
18:6 ^mGe 19:3;
2Sa 13:8
18:7
ⁿ1Sa 28:24;
Lk 15:23
18:8 ^o1Sa 7:15,
22 ^pJdg 4:19;
5:25 ^qJdg 6:19
18:9 ^rS Ge 3:9
^sGe 24:67;
Heb 11:9
18:10
^tS Ge 17:21;
21:2; 2Ki 4:16
^uS Ge 17:6;
Ro 9:9⁺

servant, who hurried to prepare it. ⁸He then brought some curdsⁿ and milk^o and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them.^p While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

⁹“Where is your wife Sarah?”^q they asked him.

“There, in the tent,^r” he said.

¹⁰Then one of them said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year,^s and Sarah your wife will have a son.”^t

Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. ¹¹Abraham and Sarah were already very old,^u and Sarah was past the age of childbearing.^v ¹²So Sarah laughed^w to herself as she thought, “After I am worn out and my lord^x is old, will I now have this pleasure?”

¹³Then the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really have a child, now that I am old?’^y ¹⁴Is anything too hard for the LORD?^z I will return to you at the appointed time next year,^a and Sarah will have a son.”^b

¹⁵Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, “I did not laugh.”

But he said, “Yes, you did laugh.”

Abraham Pleads for Sodom

¹⁶When the men^c got up to leave, they looked down toward Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them

^a 3 Or eyes, Lord ^b 6 That is, probably about 36 pounds or about 16 kilograms

18:11 ^uS Ge 17:17; Lk 1:18 ^vS Ge 11:30; Ro 4:19; Heb 11:11-12
18:12 ^wS Ge 17:17 ^x1Pe 3:6 ^y18:13 ^zS Ge 17:17
18:14 ^zJob 42:2; Isa 40:29; 50:2; 51:9; Jer 32:17, 27; S Mt 19:26;
Ro 4:21 ^aS ver 10 ^bS Ge 17:19; Ro 9:9⁺; Gal 4:23 ^c18:16 ^cS ver 2

of the so-called impossibility of the promise. Isaac—not Ishmael—will be the child of promise. Isaac is a child of faith (belief in the promise), and Ishmael a child of works (trust in human effort; see Gal 4:22–31).

17:23–27 The author offers a detailed description of Abraham’s obedience. On the very day God spoke to him, at the age of ninety-nine, Abraham is circumcised along with all the males in his house. The sign in his flesh is a constant reminder of his faith in God’s promise to bring universal blessing through his descendants (12:3).

18:1–15 Yahweh has appeared to Abraham already (12:7; 17:1), but here he appears to Abraham in a human form for the first time. The three visitors are clearly human beings but are supernatural as well. This first visit is an important one because the men come to announce the birth of the first child of promise, Isaac. Later in Scripture, an entire choir of angels announces the birth of Jesus, the promised one (Lk 2:13–15). Early Christian interpreters saw this visit as a shadow of the Trinity, though it is difficult to distinguish who is who. It seems clear that two of the men are angels, since Abraham stands before the Lord in Genesis 18:16, and later two angelic visitors go down to visit Sodom (18:22;

19:1). Yet the pronouns used to address the three alternate between the plural and singular. The passage also describes Abraham’s character as he hastens to be hospitable to these guests. The description of a ninety-nine-year-old man running to greet his guests creates a memorable mental image. Abraham is eager to be generous and hospitable. The meal he prepares is fit for royalty as meat was a rare luxury. Three seahs of flour (18:6) represented 36 pounds or 16 kilograms—a large amount.

This time Sarah is the one who laughs in disbelief during the meal after the divine announcement. She laughs because of her and her husband’s ages. She clearly thinks their biological clocks stopped long ago. Then, for the first time the narrator reveals one of the visitor’s divine identity. The Lord rebukes Sarah for her unbelief by asking, “Is anything too hard for the LORD?” (v. 14). God has promised Abraham that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars in the sky. Sarah’s empty womb and her advanced age are no obstacles to divine power.

18:16–33 The theme of God’s righteousness in executing justice now emerges, and we see Abraham’s role in his plan. The Lord invites Abraham into the divine counsel precisely

on their way. ¹⁷Then the LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham^d what I am about to do?^e ¹⁸Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation,^f and all nations on earth will be blessed through him.^g ¹⁹For I have chosen him^g, so that he will direct his children^h and his household after him to keep the way of the LORDⁱ by doing what is right and just,^j so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.”^k

²⁰Then the LORD said, “The outcry against Sodom^l and Gomorrah is so great^m and their sin so grievousⁿ ²¹that I will go down^o and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will kill.”

²²The men^p turned away and went toward Sodom,^q but Abraham remained standing before the LORD.^{br} ²³Then Abraham approached him and said: “Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?^s ²⁴What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare^c the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it?^t ²⁵Far be it from you to do such a thing^u — to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous^v and the wicked alike.^w Far be it from you! Will not the Judge^x of all the earth do right?”^y

²⁶The LORD said, “If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.^z”

²⁷Then Abraham spoke up again: “Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes,^a ²⁸what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five people?”

“If I find forty-five there,” he said, “I will not destroy it.”

18:17 ^dAm 3:7
^eGe 19:24;
Job 1:16;
Ps 107:34
18:18
^fS Ge 12:2;
Gal 3:8*
18:19 ^gGe 17:9
^hDt 4:9-10;
6:7 ⁱJos 24:15;
Eph 6:4
^jGe 22:12, 18;
26:5; 2Sa 8:15;
Ps 17:2; 99:4;
Jer 23:5
^kS Ge 16:11;
S Isa 14:1
18:20 ^lIsa 1:10;
Jer 23:14;
Eze 16:46
^mGe 19:13
ⁿS Ge 13:13
18:21 ^oS Ge 11:5
18:22 ^pS ver 2
^qGe 19:1 ^rver 1;
Ge 19:27
18:23 ^sEx 23:7;
Lev 4:3, 22,
27; Nu 16:22;
Dt 27:25;
2Sa 24:17;
Ps 11:4-7; 94:21;
Eze 18:4;
2Pe 2:9
18:24 ^tver 26;
Jer 5:1
18:25 ^uGe 44:7,
17; Dt 32:4;
Job 8:3-7;
34:10 ^vIsa 5:20;
Am 5:15;
Mal 2:17; 3:18
^wDt 1:16-17
^xJdg 11:27;
Job 9:15;
Ps 7:11; 94:2;
Heb 12:23
^yGe 20:4;
Dt 32:4;
2Ch 19:7;
Ezr 9:15;
Ne 9:33;
Job 8:3, 20;
34:10; 36:23;
Ps 58:11; 75:7;
94:2; 119:137;
Isa 3:10-11;
Eze 18:25;
Da 4:37; 9:14;
Mal 2:17; Ro 3:6
18:26 ^zS ver 24

²⁹Once again he spoke to him, “What if only forty are found there?”

He said, “For the sake of forty, I will not do it.”

³⁰Then he said, “May the Lord not be angry,^b but let me speak. What if only thirty can be found there?”

He answered, “I will not do it if I find thirty there.”

³¹Abraham said, “Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, what if only twenty can be found there?”

He said, “For the sake of twenty, I will not destroy it.”

³²Then he said, “May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more.^c What if only ten can be found there?”

He answered, “For the sake of ten,^d I will not destroy it.”

³³When the LORD had finished speaking^e with Abraham, he left,^f and Abraham returned home.^g

Sodom and Gomorrah Destroyed

19 The two angels^h arrived at Sodomⁱ in the evening, and Lot^j was sitting in the gateway of the city.^k When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground.^l ²“My lords,” he said, “please turn aside to your servant’s house. You can wash your feet^m and spend the night and then go on your way early in the morning.”

^a 18 Or will use his name in blessings (see 48:20)

^b 22 Masoretic Text; an ancient Hebrew scribal tradition but the LORD remained standing before Abraham ^c 24 Or forgive; also in verse 26

18:27 ^aS Ge 2:7; S Job 2:8 18:30 ^bver 32; Ge 44:18; Ex 32:22
18:32 ^cS ver 30; Jdg 6:39 ^dJer 5:1 18:33 ^eEx 31:18 ^fS Ge 17:22
^gGe 31:55 19:1 ^hS Ge 18:2; Heb 13:2 ⁱGe 18:22 ^jS Ge 11:27
^kS Ge 18:1 ^lS Ge 17:3; 48:12; Ru 2:10; 1Sa 25:23; 2Sa 14:33; 2Ki 2:15
19:2 ^mS Ge 18:4; Lk 7:44

because he has chosen Abraham to bless the world and because Abraham will teach his descendants the way of the Lord (v. 19). The covenant depends on commitment, not only divine but human as well. This tension is finally resolved not only in Abraham’s later sacrifice of Isaac (22:16–18) but in Jesus Christ’s sacrifice for all (including Abraham).

God reveals to Abraham that he must go down to investigate the crimes committed by the people of Sodom. This statement is not meant to indicate that there are any limits to God’s omniscience; rather, it highlights the importance of ensuring justice. God’s inclusion of Abraham in his plan reveals God’s desire for him to have a role in influencing the course of history. Abraham sizes up the situation quickly and intercedes for the righteous people in Sodom. Since he is concerned for justice and righteousness, he is concerned that God be just. When he hears about God’s impending decision to judge Sodom, Abraham intercedes with God to spare the wicked city for the sake of the righteous, start-

ing with fifty righteous people and ending with ten. God’s consistent answer to Abraham’s intercession is always *no* to unjust judgment. His reluctance to judge is so powerful that even ten righteous people could have spared the sinful city. In the future, God would save the world for the sake of one righteous man (Ro 5:12–21).

19:1–11 Two angels come to Sodom to determine its culpability for judgment. They meet Lot in the gate of the city. He persuades them to spend the night under his roof, where he provides them hospitality, offering a much more modest fare than Abraham’s royal treatment. While the angels are in Lot’s house, the entire population of the city surrounds them, intent on assault and rape. Lot’s cowardly efforts to fend them off (by offering them his daughters in order to protect his guests) fail, and he is only saved when the angels blind the lustful crowd. The multitude is so depraved that they even grope to find the door after they lose their vision.

“No,” they answered, “we will spend the night in the square.”ⁿ

³But he insisted^o so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house.^p He prepared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast,^q and they ate.^r ⁴Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom^s — both young and old — surrounded the house. ⁵They called to Lot, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them.”^t

⁶Lot went outside to meet them^u and shut the door behind him ⁷and said, “No, my friends. Don’t do this wicked thing. ⁸Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don’t do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof.”^v

⁹“Get out of our way,” they replied. “This fellow came here as a foreigner,^w and now he wants to play the judge!^x We’ll treat you worse than them.” They kept bringing pressure on Lot and moved forward to break down the door.

¹⁰But the men^y inside reached out and pulled Lot back into the house and shut the door. ¹¹Then they struck the men who were at the door of the house, young and old, with blindness^z so that they could not find the door.

¹²The two men said to Lot, “Do you have anyone else here — sons-in-law, sons or daughters, or anyone else in the city who belongs to you?^a Get them out of here, ¹³because we^b are going to destroy this place. The outcry to the LORD against its people is so great^c that he has sent us to destroy it.”^d

¹⁴So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were pledged to marry^a his daughters. He said, “Hurry and get out of this place, because the LORD is about to destroy the city!^e” But his sons-in-law thought he was joking.^f

19:2 ⁿJdg 19:15, 20
 19:3 ^oGe 33:11
 P Job 31:32
^qEx 12:39
^rS Pe 18:6
 19:4 ^sS Ge 13:13
 19:5 ^tS Ge 13:13;
 Lev 18:22;
 Dt 23:18;
 Jdg 19:22;
 Ro 1:24-27
 19:6 ^uJdg 19:23
 19:8
^vJdg 19:24;
 2Pe 2:7-8
 19:9 ^wGe 23:4
^xS Ge 13:8;
 Ac 7:27
 19:10
^yS Ge 18:2
 19:11 ^zDt 28:28-29;
 2Ki 6:18;
 Ac 13:11
 19:12 ^aS Ge 6:18
 19:13 ^bEx 12:29;
 2Sa 24:16;
 2Ki 19:35;
 1Ch 21:12;
 2Ch 32:21
^cGe 18:20
^d1Ch 21:15;
 Ps 78:49;
 Jer 21:12; 25:18;
 44:22; 51:45
 19:14
^eNu 16:21;
 Rev 18:4
^fEx 9:21;
 1Ki 13:18;
 Jer 5:12; 43:2;
 Lk 17:28
 19:15
^gNu 16:26;
 Job 21:18;
 Ps 58:9; 73:19;
 90:5 ^hRev 18:4
 19:16 ⁱ2Pe 2:7
^jEx 34:6;
 Ps 33:18-19
 19:17 ^k1Ki 19:3;
 Jer 48:6
^lver 26
^mS Ge 13:12
ⁿS ver 19;
 S Ge 14:10;
 Mt 24:16
 19:19
^oS Ge 6:8;
 S 18:3
 P Ge 24:12;
 39:21; 40:14;
 47:29; Ru 1:8;
 2:20; 3:10
^qS ver 17, 30

¹⁵With the coming of dawn, the angels urged Lot, saying, “Hurry! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away^g when the city is punished.”^h

¹⁶When he hesitated, the men grasped his hand and the hands of his wife and of his two daughtersⁱ and led them safely out of the city, for the LORD was merciful to them.^j ¹⁷As soon as they had brought them out, one of them said, “Flee for your lives!^k Don’t look back,^l and don’t stop anywhere in the plain!^m Flee to the mountainsⁿ or you will be swept away!”

¹⁸But Lot said to them, “No, my lords,^b please! ¹⁹Your^c servant has found favor in your^c eyes,^o and you^c have shown great kindness^p to me in sparing my life. But I can’t flee to the mountains;^q this disaster will overtake me, and I’ll die. ²⁰Look, here is a town near enough to run to, and it is small. Let me flee to it — it is very small, isn’t it? Then my life will be spared.”

²¹He said to him, “Very well, I will grant this request^t too; I will not overthrow the town you speak of. ²²But flee there quickly, because I cannot do anything until you reach it.” (That is why the town was called Zoar.^{ds})

²³By the time Lot reached Zoar,^t the sun had risen over the land. ²⁴Then the LORD rained down burning sulfur^u on Sodom and Gomorrah^v — from the LORD out of the heavens.^w ²⁵Thus he overthrew those cities^x and the entire plain,^y destroying all those living in the cities — and also the vegetation in the land.^z ²⁶But Lot’s wife

^a 14 Or *were married to* ^b 18 Or *No, Lord*; or *No, my lord* ^c 19 The Hebrew is singular.
^d 22 *Zoar* means *small*.

19:21 ^f1Sa 25:35; 2Sa 14:8; Job 42:9 19:22 ^sS Ge 13:10
 19:23 ^tS Ge 13:10 19:24 ^uJob 18:15; Ps 11:6; Isa 30:33; 34:9;
 Eze 38:22 ^vDt 29:23; Isa 1:9; 13:19; Jer 49:18; 50:40; Am 4:11
^wS Ge 18:17; S Lev 10:2; S Mt 10:15; Lk 17:29
 19:25 ^xS ver 24; Eze 26:16; Zep 3:8; Hag 2:22 ^yS Ge 13:12
^zPs 107:34; Isa 1:10; Jer 20:16; 23:14; La 4:6; Eze 16:48

19:12–22 After determining the extent of the people of Sodom’s depravity, the angels seek to evacuate Lot’s household from the coming judgment. Just as Abraham and Sarah laughed in unbelief when God told them about the birth of Isaac, Lot’s sons-in-law laugh when they hear about the coming judgment. But divine judgment is no joke. The angels force Lot and his immediate family to leave the city—a result of God’s decision to show mercy to them (v. 16). Lot pleads for permission to take refuge in a small city nearby, for he believes the journey will be too taxing. The angels grant his request and affirm that they cannot do anything until Lot and his family are safe. This is probably because of Abraham’s intercession (18:16–33).

19:23–29 The narrator graphically describes the destruction of Sodom and notes two individuals’ observations of the event and its aftermath. Lot’s wife looks back on Sodom and turns into a pillar of salt. The Hebrew word translated “looked back” connotes a long, lingering look (v. 26). The many salt pillars in the area would have served as reminders of this particular catastrophe. Later, Jesus speaks of this incident. He reminds his audience to remember Lot’s wife in the coming judgment of Jerusalem; he urges them not to delay their escape from the coming judgment (Lk 17:32). Abraham also sees Sodom’s smoke rising like smoke from a furnace. His prayer of intercession was the reason for Lot and his family’s deliverance.

looked back,^a and she became a pillar of salt.^b

²⁷Early the next morning Abraham got up and returned to the place where he had stood before the LORD.^c ²⁸He looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, toward all the land of the plain, and he saw dense smoke rising from the land, like smoke from a furnace.^d

²⁹So when God destroyed the cities of the plain,^e he remembered^f Abraham, and he brought Lot out of the catastrophe^g that overthrew the cities where Lot had lived.^h

Lot and His Daughters

³⁰Lot and his two daughters left Zoarⁱ and settled in the mountains,^j for he was afraid to stay in Zoar. He and his two daughters lived in a cave. ³¹One day the older daughter said to the younger, “Our father is old, and there is no man around here to give us children — as is the custom all over the earth. ³²Let’s get our father to drink wine and then sleep with him and preserve our family line^k through our father.”^l

³³That night they got their father to drink wine, and the older daughter went in and slept with him. He was not aware of it when she lay down or when she got up.^m

³⁴The next day the older daughter said to the younger, “Last night I slept with my father. Let’s get him to drink wine again tonight, and you go in and sleep with him so we can preserve our family line through our father.”ⁿ ³⁵So they got their father to drink wine^o that night also, and the younger daughter went in and slept with him. Again he was not aware of it when she lay down or when she got up.^p

³⁶So both of Lot’s daughters became pregnant by their father.^q ³⁷The older daughter had a son, and she named him Moab^r; he is the father of the Moabites^s of today. ³⁸The younger daughter also had

^{19:26} ^aS ver 17
^bLk 17:32

^{19:27} ^cGe 18:22

^{19:28} ^dGe 15:17;

Ex 19:18;

Rev 9:2; 18:9

^{19:29}

^eS Ge 13:12

^fS Ge 8:1

^g2Pe 2:7

^hGe 14:12;

Eze 14:16

^{19:30} ⁱver 22;

^S Ge 13:10

^jS ver 19;

^S Ge 14:10

^{19:32}

^kS Ge 16:2

^lver 34, 36;

Ge 38:18

^{19:33} ^mver 35

^{19:34} ⁿS ver 32

^{19:35} ^oGe 9:21

^pver 33

^{19:36} ^qS ver 32

^{19:37} ^rGe 36:35;

Ex 15:15;

Nu 25:1;

Isa 15:1; 25:10;

Jer 25:21;

48:1; Eze 25:8;

Zep 2:9

^sNu 22:4;

24:17; Dt 2:9;

Jdg 3:28;

Ru 1:4, 22;

1Sa 14:47;

22:3-4; 2Sa 8:2;

2Kl 1:1; 3:4;

Ezr 9:1;

Ps 108:9;

Jer 48:1

^{19:38}

^tNu 21:24;

Dt 2:19; 23:3;

Jos 12:2;

Jdg 3:13; 10:6,

7; 1Sa 11:1-11;

14:47; 1Ch 19:1;

2Ch 20:23;

26:8; 27:5;

Ne 2:19; 4:3;

Jer 25:21;

40:14; 49:1;

Eze 21:28; 25:2;

Am 1:13

^{20:1} ^uGe 18:1

^vS Ge 12:9

^wS Ge 14:7

^xS Ge 16:7

^yGe 26:3

^zGe 26:1, 6, 17

a son, and she named him Ben-Ammi^b; he is the father of the Ammonites^c of today.

Abraham and Abimelek

20:1–18Ref // Ge 12:10–20; 26:1–11

20 Now Abraham moved on from there^u into the region of the Negev^v and lived between Kadesh^w and Shur.^x For a while^y he stayed in Gerar,^z and there Abraham said of his wife Sarah, “She is my sister.”^a Then Abimelek^b king of Gerar sent for Sarah and took her.^c

³But God came to Abimelek^d in a dream^e one night and said to him, “You are as good as dead^f because of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman.”^g

⁴Now Abimelek had not gone near her, so he said, “Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation?^h ⁵Did he not say to me, ‘She is my sister,’ⁱ and didn’t she also say, ‘He is my brother’? I have done this with a clear conscience^j and clean hands.”^k

⁶Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know you did this with a clear conscience, and so I have kept^l you from sinning against me.^m That is why I did not let you touch her. ⁷Now return the man’s wife, for he is a prophet,ⁿ and he will pray for you^o and you will live. But if you do not return her, you may be sure that you and all who belong to you will die.”^p

⁸Early the next morning Abimelek summoned all his officials, and when he told

^a 37 Moab sounds like the Hebrew for *from father*.

^b 38 Ben-Ammi means *son of my father’s people*.

^c 38 Hebrew Bene-Ammon

^{20:2} ^aver 12; ^S Ge 12:13 ^bver 14; ^{Ge} 21:22; ^{26:1} ^cS Ge 12:15

^{20:3} ^dNu 22:9, 20 ^eGe 28:12; ^{31:10, 24;} ^{37:5, 9;} ^{40:5;} ^{41:1;}

^{Nu} 12:6; ^{Dt} 13:1; ^{Job} 33:15; ^{Da} 2:1; ^{4:5} ^fEx 10:7; ^{12:33;} ^{Ps} 105:38

⁹ver 7; ^{Ge} 26:11; ^{1Ch} 16:21; ^{Ps} 105:14 ^{20:4} ^hS Ge 18:25

^{20:5} ⁱS Ge 12:19 ^jS Ge 17:1 ^uPs 7:8; ^{25:21;} ^{26:6;} ^{41:12}

^{20:6} ^l1Sa 25:26, 34 ^mS Ge 13:13; ^{Ps} 41:4; ^{51:4} ^{20:7} ⁿDt 18:18;

^{34:10;} ^{2Kl} 3:11; ^{5:3;} ^{1Ch} 16:22; ^{Ps} 105:15 ^over 17; ^{Ex} 8:8; ^{Nu} 11:2;

^{12:13;} ^{1Sa} 7:5; ^{1Kl} 13:6; ^{Job} 42:8; ^{Jer} 18:20; ^{37:3;} ^{42:2} ^pS ver 3;

^S Ps 9:5

19:30–38 Lot’s daughters become the ancestors of the Moabite and Ammonite peoples through incest. Like their mother, whose longing gaze back to Sodom showed her enthrallment with the world, the daughters were influenced by their peers’ sexual immorality. For them, even incest is an option in a time of desperation. Thus, in a bizarre way, their father’s earlier proposal comes back to haunt him (v. 8). As a Moabite woman, Ruth could trace her lineage back to this dark event. She will be an ancestor of the great Son of David, Jesus (Ru 4:18–22; cf. Mt 1:5).

20:1–7 This passage recalls Genesis 12:10–20 because, in both passages, Abraham lies to an authority figure about Sarah’s identity. However, whereas in Genesis 12 Abraham left the promised land because of a famine, here Abraham neither leaves the land nor faces the threat of famine. The text simply notes that he journeys to Gerar, which

was located on the west coast of Israel in the land of the Philistines (cf. 21:32–34). Abraham fears that the residents of Gerar will harm him because he has such a beautiful wife; consequently, he again lies about his relationship to her. The narrative’s suspense is heightened because this event occurs just before the birth of Isaac (ch. 21). Abimelek, the king of Gerar, takes Sarah into his harem, but God prevents him from having sexual relations with her by speaking to him through a dream. This is the first instance of God speaking to someone in a dream in the biblical record. Recognizing that Abimelek was misinformed and thus innocent of wrongdoing, God instructs Abimelek to return Sarah to her husband and experience Abraham’s prophetic intercession. This is the first time the word “prophet” occurs in the Bible, and it is associated with intercession (20:7).

them all that had happened, they were very much afraid. ⁹Then Abimelek called Abraham in and said, “What have you done to us? How have I wronged you that you have brought such great guilt upon me and my kingdom? You have done things to me that should never be done.” ¹⁰And Abimelek asked Abraham, “What was your reason for doing this?”

¹¹Abraham replied, “I said to myself, ‘There is surely no fear of God^f in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.’^s ¹²Besides, she really is my sister,^t the daughter of my father though not of my mother; and she became my wife. ¹³And when God had me wander^u from my father’s household,^v I said to her, ‘This is how you can show your love to me: Everywhere we go, say of me, “He is my brother.”’”

¹⁴Then Abimelek^w brought sheep and cattle and male and female slaves and gave them to Abraham,^x and he returned Sarah his wife to him. ¹⁵And Abimelek said, “My land is before you; live wherever you like.”^y

¹⁶To Sarah he said, “I am giving your brother a thousand shekels^a of silver. This is to cover the offense against you before all who are with you; you are completely vindicated.”

¹⁷Then Abraham prayed to God,^z and God healed Abimelek, his wife and his female slaves so they could have children again, ¹⁸for the LORD had kept all the women in Abimelek’s household from conceiving because of Abraham’s wife Sarah.^a

The Birth of Isaac

21 Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah^b as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised.^c ²Sarah be-

20:9
^qS Ge 12:18;
 34:7
 20:11 ^rGe 42:18;
 Ne 5:15;
 Job 31:23;
 Ps 36:1; Pr 16:6
^sS Ge 12:12;
 31:31
 20:12
^tS Ge 12:13
 20:13 ^uDt 26:5;
 1Ch 16:20;
 Isa 30:28; 63:17
^vS Ge 12:1
 20:14 ^wS ver 2
^xGe 12:16
 20:15 ^yGe 13:9;
 S 45:18
 20:17 ^zS ver 7;
 Job 42:9
 20:18 ^aGe 12:17
 21:1 ^b1Sa 2:21
^cS Ge 8:1;
 S 17:16, 21;
 18:14; Gal 4:23;
 Heb 11:11
 21:2
^dS Ge 17:19;
 S 30:6
^eGal 4:22;
 Heb 11:11
^fS Ge 18:10
 21:3 ^gS Ge 16:11;
 S 17:19;
 Jos 24:3
 21:4 ^hGe 17:10,
 12; Ac 7:8
 21:5 ⁱS Ge 12:4;
 Heb 6:15
 21:6 ^jGe 17:17;
 Job 8:21;
 Ps 126:2;
 Isa 12:6; 35:2;
 44:23; 52:9;
 54:1
 21:7 ^kS Ge 17:17
 21:8 ^l1Sa 11:23
 21:9
^mS Ge 16:15
ⁿGe 39:14;
 Gal 4:29
 21:10 ^oGe 39:17
^pGe 25:6;
 Gal 4:30^{*}
 21:11 ^qGe 17:18
 21:12 ^rMt 1:2;
 Ro 9:7*;
 Heb 11:18*
 21:13 ^sver 18;
 S Ge 13:16

came pregnant and bore a son^d to Abraham in his old age,^e at the very time God had promised him.^f ³Abraham gave the name Isaac^g to the son Sarah bore him. ⁴When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him,^h as God commanded him. ⁵Abraham was a hundred years oldⁱ when his son Isaac was born to him.

⁶Sarah said, “God has brought me laughter,^j and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.” ⁷And she added, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”^k

Hagar and Ishmael Sent Away

⁸The child grew and was weaned,^l and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast. ⁹But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham^m was mocking,ⁿ ¹⁰and she said to Abraham, “Get rid of that slave woman^o and her son, for that woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac.”^p

¹¹The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son.^q ¹²But God said to him, “Do not be so distressed about the boy and your slave woman. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring^c will be reckoned.^r ¹³I will make the son of the slave into a nation^s also, because he is your offspring.”

¹⁴Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave

^a 16 That is, about 25 pounds or about 12 kilograms ^b 3 Isaac means *he laughs*.
^c 12 Or *seed*

20:8–18 Abimelek’s remonstrance with Abraham makes it clear that he has been innocent in this matter, and he returns Sarah to Abraham with the enormous sum of 1,000 shekels of silver as compensation. We learn that a long period of time has passed between the time Sarah joined Abimelek’s harem and her return to Abraham: ever since Abimelek took Sarah into his harem, the women of Gerar have been unable to conceive (v. 18). Significantly, it is only when Abraham prays to God that God lifts this curse of sterility. God closed these women’s wombs (cf. 12:2), but soon he will open Sarah’s womb (21:1). This is a classic example of the blessing of the nations coming from Abraham (12:3). A much later psalm uses this incident to praise God (Ps 105:12–15).

21:1–7 The first verse in this chapter twice says that God’s promise was fulfilled, emphasizing that we can trust God’s word (v. 1). Everything in this section stresses the fulfillment of what was an incredible promise to a childless couple. The account particularly emphasizes the couple’s old age (vv. 5, 7). In the original Hebrew, the boy’s name occurs at

the very end of verse 3 as a reminder of the promise. This verse could be translated as “Abraham called the name of his son, whom Sarah bore to him, *Isaac*.” The rite of circumcision imprints—in the boy’s body—Abraham’s trust in God for the fulfillment of the promise (v. 4). This time Sarah laughs out of joy, not disbelief (v. 6), and her laughter evokes Isaac’s name.

21:8–13 The narrative moves forward to the time when Isaac is weaned, which would normally occur around three years of age. During the celebration, Sarah sees Ishmael mocking her son (v. 9). In Hebrew, the word translated here as “mocking” is the same word used earlier for Sarah’s laughter. In this new context, it describes laughing *at* someone. Sarah correctly discerns that there will be serious problems about the identity of Abraham’s heir if Hagar and her son remain in the household. While it seems wrong to Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away, God asks him to listen to his wife.

21:14–21 Abraham sends off Hagar and her son. By this time, Ishmael is almost 17 years old. Abraham places bread on

them to Hagar.^t He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the Desert of Beersheba.^u

¹⁵When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. ¹⁶Then she went off and sat down about a bowshot away, for she thought, “I cannot watch the boy die.” And as she sat there, she^a began to sob.^v

¹⁷God heard the boy crying,^w and the angel of God^x called to Hagar from heaven^y and said to her, “What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid;^z God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. ¹⁸Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.^a”

¹⁹Then God opened her eyes^b and she saw a well of water.^c So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

²⁰God was with the boy^d as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer. ²¹While he was living in the Desert of Paran,^e his mother got a wife for him^f from Egypt.

The Treaty at Beersheba

²²At that time Abimelek^g and Phicol the commander of his forces^h said to Abraham, “God is with you in everything you do.ⁱ ²³Now swear^j to me here before God that you will not deal falsely with me or my children or my descendants.^k Show to me and the country where you now reside as a foreigner the same kindness I have shown to you.”^l

²⁴Abraham said, “I swear it.”

²⁵Then Abraham complained to Abimelek about a well of water that Abimelek’s servants had seized.^m ²⁶But Abimelek said,

^{21:14} ¹⁵ Ge 16:1
^u ver 31, 32;
Ge 22:19; 26:33;
28:10; 46:1,
5; Jos 15:28;
19:2; Jdg 20:1;
1Sa 3:20;
1Ch 4:28;
Ne 11:27

^{21:16} ^v Jer 6:26;
Am 8:10;
Zec 12:10

^{21:17} ^w Ex 3:7;
Nu 20:16;
Dt 26:7; Ps 6:8

^x S Ge 16:7
^y Ge 22:11, 15
^z S Ge 15:1

^{21:18} ^a ver 13;
S Ge 17:20

^{21:19} ^b Nu 22:31
^c S Ge 16:7

^{21:20} ^d Ge 26:3,
24; 28:15; 39:2,
21, 23; Lk 1:166

^{21:21} ^e S Ge 14:6
^f Ge 24:4, 38;
28:2; 34:4, 8;
Jdg 14:2

^{21:22}
^g S Ge 20:2

^h ver 32;
Ge 26:26

ⁱ ver 23;
Ge 26:28;
28:15; 31:3,
5, 42; 39:2,
3; 1Sa 3:19;

16:18; 2Ch 1:1;
Ps 46:7;
Isa 7:14; 8:8,
10; 41:10; 43:5

^{21:23} ^j ver 31;
Ge 25:33;
26:31; 31:53;

Jos 2:12; 1Ki 2:8
^k 1Sa 24:21
^l S ver 22;
Jos 2:12

^{21:25}
^m Ge 26:15, 18,
20-22

^{21:27} ⁿ ver 31,
32; Ge 26:28,
31; 31:44, 53

^{21:30}
^o Ge 31:44,
47, 48, 50, 52;
Jos 22:27, 28,

“I don’t know who has done this. You did not tell me, and I heard about it only today.”

²⁷So Abraham brought sheep and cattle and gave them to Abimelek, and the two men made a treaty.ⁿ ²⁸Abraham set apart seven ewe lambs from the flock, ²⁹and Abimelek asked Abraham, “What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs you have set apart by themselves?”

³⁰He replied, “Accept these seven lambs from my hand as a witness^o that I dug this well.^p”

³¹So that place was called Beersheba,^q because the two men swore an oath^r there.

³²After the treaty^s had been made at Beersheba, ^tAbimelek and Phicol the commander of his forces^u returned to the land of the Philistines.^v ³³Abraham planted a tamarisk tree^w in Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the LORD,^x the Eternal God.^y ³⁴And Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines^z for a long time.

Abraham Tested

22 Some time later God tested^a Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!”

“Here I am,”^b he replied.

²Then God said, “Take your son^c, your only son, whom you love — Isaac — and go to the region of Moriah.^d Sacrifice him

^a 16 Hebrew; Septuagint *the child* ^b 31 Beersheba can mean *well of seven* and *well of the oath*.

34; 24:27; Isa 19:20; Mal 2:14 ^p ver 25; Ge 26:25, 32
^{21:31} ^q S ver 14 ^r S ver 23, S 27 ^{21:32} ^s S ver 27 ¹ S ver 14
^u S ver 22 ^v S Ge 10:14 ^{21:33} ^w 1Sa 22:6; 31:13 ^z S Ge 4:26
^y Ex 15:18; Dt 32:40; 33:27; Job 36:26; Ps 10:16; 45:6; 90:2;
93:2; 102:24; 103:19; 146:10; Isa 40:28; Jer 10:10; Hab 1:12; 3:6;
Heb 13:8 ^{21:34} ^z S Ge 10:14 ^{22:1} ^a Ex 15:25; 16:4; 20:20; Dt 8:2,
16; 13:3; Jdg 2:22; 3:1; 2Ch 32:31; Ps 66:10; Heb 11:17; Jas 1:12-13
^b ver 11; Ge 31:11; 46:2; 1Sa 3:4, 6, 8; Isa 6:8 ^{22:2} ^c ver 12, 16;
Jn 3:16; Heb 11:17; 1Jn 4:9 ^d 2Ch 3:1

Hagar’s shoulder and sends Ishmael off with her. Hagar moves to Beersheba, about 25 miles south of Hebron, where she had lived. While wandering in the desert, she runs out of water. Fatigued by dehydration, she leaves Ishmael and begins to cry, as Ishmael does as well. God hears Ishmael’s cry and opens Hagar’s eyes to see a pool of water. The little family survives and thrives—a testament to God’s mercy. **21:22–34** Abraham makes a covenant with Abimelek and his people, who dwell in the land of the Philistines. This reference to the Philistines suggests that the author is using a later and more familiar name for the land, since the Philistines did not arrive in Israel until long after Abraham’s time. Abimelek and his people desire a covenant with Abraham because they see the clear presence of God in his life. After the birth of his child, Abraham begins to bless the nations. But Abraham raises a complaint about a crucial matter in the ancient world, particularly in the desert region. Water was precious, and water sources were even more so. Some of Abimelek’s men have seized some of Abraham’s wells. After Abraham and Abimelek resolve this issue, they make a cov-

enant, complete with an oath and the gift of seven lambs to seal it. The name of this covenant place is Beersheba, which means “well of the oath” or “well of seven.” Later, God will make a covenant in which his very life—living water—will flow to all nations. He will gather it from another well, and a Samaritan woman will drink from it (Jn 4).

22:1–2 Abraham has proven himself to be a man of faith, and here at the end of his journey, his faith is tested to the uttermost. The promise of a descendant has materialized (Ge 21). Now the question is: Will Abraham continue to trust in God despite his promises appearing to be threatened? The phrase that begins this section, “Some time later” (22:1), loosely connects this episode with the previous storyline. But Isaac is probably now in his mid-teens, able to accompany his father on a three-day journey and able to carry wood up a mountain for a burnt offering. The beginning of the chapter notes that God is testing Abraham, and this provides the audience with the needed perspective on the remainder of the chapter. God is always good, even when he does not appear to be so. The key for his followers is to

there as a burnt offering^e on a mountain I will show you.^f

³Early the next morning^g Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. ⁴On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.^h”

⁶Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac,ⁱ and he himself carried the fire and the knife.^j As the two of them went on together, ⁷Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, “Father?” “Yes, my son?” Abraham replied.

“The fire and wood are here,” Isaac said, “but where is the lamb^k for the burnt offering?”

⁸Abraham answered, “God himself will provide^l the lamb^m for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together.

⁹When they reached the place God had told him about,ⁿ Abraham built an altar^o there and arranged the wood^p on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar,^q on top of the wood. ¹⁰Then he reached out his hand and took the knife^r to slay his son.^s ¹¹But the angel of the LORD^t called out to him from heaven,^u “Abraham! Abraham!”^v “Here I am,”^w he replied.

¹²“Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God,^x because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.”^y

22:2 ^eS Ge 8:20
^fver 9
22:3 ^gJos 8:10
22:5 ^hEx 24:14
22:6 ⁱJn 19:17
^jver 10;
Jdg 19:29
22:7 ^kEx 29:38-42; Lev 1:10;
Rev 13:8
22:8 ^lver 14,
^mver 13;
S Jn 1:29
22:9 ⁿver 2
^oS Ge 4:26;
S 8:20 ^pLev 1:7;
1Ki 18:33
^qHeb 11:17-19;
Jas 2:21
22:10 ^rS ver 6
^sver 3;
S Ge 18:19
22:11 ^tS Ge 16:7;
^uS Ge 21:17
^vGe 4:6;2
^wS ver 1
22:12
^xS Ge 18:19;
42:18; Ex 18:21;
1Sa 15:22;
Job 1:1;
37:24; Pr 8:13;
Jas 2:21-22
^yS ver 2;
Jn 3:16; 1Jn 4:9
22:13 ^zS ver 8
^aS Ge 8:20;
Ro 8:32
22:14 ^bEx 17:15;
Jdg 6:24
^c1Sa 30:29
^dver 8
22:15 ^eS Ge 16:7;
^fS Ge 21:17
22:16 ^gEx 13:11;
32:13; 33:1;
1Sa 45:23;
62:8; Jer 22:5;
44:26; 49:13;
51:14; Am 6:8;
Lk 1:73;
Heb 6:13
^hS ver 2
22:17 ⁱS Ge 12:2
^jHeb 6:14*

¹³Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram^a caught by its horns.² He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.^a ¹⁴So Abraham called^b that place The LORD^c Will Provide. And to this day it is said, “On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.^d”

¹⁵The angel of the LORD^e called to Abraham from heaven^f a second time ¹⁶and said, “I swear by myself,^g declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son,^h ¹⁷I will surely bless youⁱ and make your descendants^j as numerous as the stars in the sky^k and as the sand on the seashore.^l Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies,^m ¹⁸and through your offspring^b all nations on earth will be blessed,^cⁿ because you have obeyed me.”^o

¹⁹Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba.^p And Abraham stayed in Beersheba.

Nahor's Sons

²⁰Some time later Abraham was told, “Milkah is also a mother; she has borne sons to your brother Nahor:^q ²¹Uz^r the first-born, Buz^s his brother, Kemuel (the father

^a 13 Many manuscripts of the Masoretic Text, Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint and Syriac; most manuscripts of the Masoretic Text *a ram behind him* ^b 18 Or *seed* ^c 18 Or *and all nations on earth will use the name of your offspring in blessings* (see 48:20)

^k S Ge 15:5; Ex 32:13; Dt 7:7; 28:62 ^l S Ge 12:2; S 26:24; Hos 11:10; Ro 9:27; Heb 11:12 ^m Ge 24:60; Est 9:2 ⁿ 22:18 ^o S Ge 12:2, 3; Ac 3:25*; Gal 3:8* ^p S ver 10; Ge 17:2, 9; Ps 105:9
22:19 ^p Ge 21:14; 26:23; 28:10 ^q S Ge 11:29
22:21 ^r S Ge 10:23 ^s Job 32:2; Jer 25:23

trust in the divine word (cf. 3:1–2). God asks Abraham to give up his future (Isaac) completely to him. At the beginning of Abraham’s journey, God commanded Abraham to give up his past (12:1). Here, Abraham’s only response to the divine command is, “Here I am” (22:1). These will be the only words he will speak to God in this chapter (cf. v. 11). The narrative records no arguing, questioning, doubting, or cajoling (cf. 15:2,3; 17:17–18; 18:16–33). Abraham’s silence is not ominous. He has a settled faith. He is totally and completely available to God.

22:3–14 Abraham sees the mountain of sacrifice “on the third day” (v. 4). This is the first reference in the Bible to a testing period. A short testing period is three days, and a longer period is 40 days. Abraham reveals his faith in the promise when he tells his servants that he and Isaac will return after the sacrifice (cf. Heb 11:17–19). Abraham and Isaac’s journey up the mountain is a very personal journey between them, indicated by the repeated use of familial terms (“Father,” “my son”) and the description of togetherness (Ge 22:6,8). The absence of a sacrificial animal piques Isaac’s curiosity. His father’s answer—that God will provide a lamb (v. 8)—is the turning point in the story. The end of the story is disclosed here in the middle (v. 13); it is also

here that Abraham names the place of sacrifice, “The LORD Will Provide” (v. 14).

In verse 9, five rapid-fire narrative verbs quickly move the story to its climax. This is the only example in the Bible of an offering being placed on an altar while the thing being offered is still alive. This also suggests that Isaac was a willing sacrifice, as he likely could have overpowered his aged father if he had wanted to escape. Paul refers to Abraham’s sacrifice in making the point that in Christ, God did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all (Ro 8:32) and also in asking Christians to present their bodies daily as a living sacrifice to God (Ro 12:1).

22:15–19 This section marks a significant development as God swears for the first time in the Bible, guaranteeing that Abraham’s descendants will bless the world. The narrator also emphatically reiterates God’s promise to Abraham. Abraham’s great faith has led to great obedience and great blessing. The fact that the text only mentions Abraham’s return to his servants does not imply that Isaac has departed. This test has been mainly about Abraham.

22:20–24 Ancillary genealogical information signifies closure for this episode in Abraham’s life. These verses clarify Rebekah’s ancestry, specifying that she is the daughter of

of Aram), ²²Kesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlahp and Bethuel.¹⁷ ²³Bethuel became the father of Rebekah.¹⁸ Milkah bore these eight sons to Abraham's brother Nahor.¹⁹ ²⁴His concubine,²⁰ whose name was Reumah, also had sons: Tebah, Gaham, Tahash and Maakah.

The Death of Sarah

23 Sarah lived to be a hundred and twenty-seven years old. ²She died at Kiriath Arba^x (that is, Hebron)^y in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went to mourn for Sarah and to weep over her.^z

³Then Abraham rose from beside his dead wife and spoke to the Hittites.^a ⁴He said, ⁴"I am a foreigner and stranger^b among you. Sell me some property for a burial site here so I can bury my dead."^c

⁵The Hittites replied to Abraham, ⁶"Sir, listen to us. You are a mighty prince^d among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will refuse you his tomb for burying your dead."

⁷Then Abraham rose and bowed down before the people of the land, the Hittites. ⁸He said to them, "If you are willing to let me bury my dead, then listen to me and intercede with Ephron son of Zohar^e on my behalf ⁹so he will sell me the cave of Machpelah,^f which belongs to him and is at the end of his field. Ask him to sell it to me for the full price as a burial site among you."

¹⁰Ephron the Hittite was sitting among his people and he replied to Abraham in the hearing of all the Hittites^g who had come to the gate^h of his city. ¹¹"No, my lord," he said. "Listen to me; I give^{bi} you the field, and I give^b you the cave that is in it. I give^b it to you in the presence of my people. Bury your dead."

22:22
^tGe 24:15, 47; 25:20
 22:23 ^uGe 24:15
^vS Ge 11:29
 22:24
^wGe 25:6;
 35:22; 36:12;
 Jdg 8:31;
 2Sa 3:7;
 1Ki 2:22; 11:3;
 1Ch 1:32; SS 6:8
 23:2 ^xJos 14:15;
 15:13; 20:7;
 21:11 ^yver 19;
^zS Ge 13:18
^zGe 24:67
 23:3
^aS Ge 10:15
 23:4
^bS Ge 17:8;
 19:9; Ex 2:22;
 Lev 25:23;
 Ps 39:12;
 105:12; 119:19;
 Heb 11:9, 13
^cGe 49:30;
 Ac 7:16
 23:6 ^dGe 14:14-16; 24:35
 23:8 ^eGe 25:9
 23:9 ^fver 17, 19;
 Ge 25:9; 47:30;
 49:30; 50:13
 23:10 ^gver 18
^hS Ge 18:1;
 Dt 22:15; 25:7;
 Jos 20:4;
 Ru 4:11;
 2Sa 15:2;
 2Ki 15:35;
 Ps 127:5;
 Pr 31:23;
 Jer 26:10;
 36:10
 23:11 ⁱ2Sa 24:23
 23:15 ^jEze 45:12
 23:16
^k2Sa 24:24;
 Jer 32:9;
 Zec 11:12
^l2Sa 14:26
 23:17 ^mS ver 9
ⁿS Ge 13:18
 23:18
^oS Ge 12:7
^pver 10
^qS Ge 18:1

¹²Again Abraham bowed down before the people of the land ¹³and he said to Ephron in their hearing, "Listen to me, if you will. I will pay the price of the field. Accept it from me so I can bury my dead there."

¹⁴Ephron answered Abraham, ¹⁵"Listen to me, my lord; the land is worth four hundred shekels^c of silver,^j but what is that between you and me? Bury your dead."

¹⁶Abraham agreed to Ephron's terms and weighed out for him the price he had named in the hearing of the Hittites: four hundred shekels of silver,^k according to the weight current among the merchants.^l

¹⁷So Ephron's field in Machpelah^m near Mamreⁿ — both the field and the cave in it, and all the trees within the borders of the field — was deeded¹⁸ to Abraham as his property^o in the presence of all the Hittites^p who had come to the gate^q of the city. ¹⁹Afterward Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave in the field of Machpelah^r near Mamre (which is at Hebron^s) in the land of Canaan.^t ²⁰So the field and the cave in it were deeded^u to Abraham by the Hittites as a burial site.^v

Isaac and Rebekah

24 Abraham was now very old,^w and the LORD had blessed^x him in every way.^y ²He said to the senior servant^z in his household, the one in charge of all that he

^a 3 Or *the descendants of Heth*; also in verses 5, 7, 10, 16, 18 and 20 ^b 11 Or *sell*
^c 15 That is, about 10 pounds or about 4.6 kilograms

23:19 ^fS ver 9 ^gS Ge 13:18; Jos 14:13; 1Ch 29:27 ^hGe 49:31
 23:20 ⁱJer 32:10 ^jS Ge 10:15; 35:29; 47:30; 49:30; 50:5, 13
 24:1 ^wS Ge 17:17; Jos 23:1 ^xGe 12:2; Gal 3:9 ^yver 35
 24:2 ^zS Ge 15:3

Abraham's brother Nahor's son, Bethuel. This information about Rebekah provides a nice segue for chapter 24 and Isaac's marriage to Rebekah. There are 12 sons listed in Nahor's genealogy, as there will be 12 sons of Ishmael (25:13) and 12 sons of Jacob (chs. 29–30).

23:1–9 Sarah is 127 years old when she dies. Hers is the shortest natural life span recorded in Genesis. At the time of Sarah's death, Isaac was 37, and Abraham was 137. Abraham knows of some local Hittites—probably not the people group from Asia Minor but one more closely linked to Canaanites—who own land, and he wishes to purchase a grave for his wife. He has in mind the cave of Machpelah, which a local resident named Ephron owns. The cave's name suggests that it was double cave, suggesting either that it had two entrances or two chambers.

23:10–16 The purchase of the land takes place within the city gate where there are many witnesses. Abraham and Ephron negotiate the price with exaggerated generosity and politeness, as was a standard method of bargaining in the ancient

world. The final price of 400 shekels is exorbitant when we remember that the cost of a slave at that time was 20 shekels, and much later King David paid 50 shekels—a good price—for both the temple land and animals for sacrifice (2Sa 24:24).

23:17–20 Abraham owns land for the first time and thus becomes a permanent resident of the land. The narrative places great emphasis on the final transaction and Abraham's legal status as an official owner of a title deed of land in Canaan. This is the only land that Abraham receives while he is alive, and it is a grave for his wife.

24:1–9 The story of the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah is recorded in the longest chapter in the book of Genesis. Finding a proper spouse for Isaac was important for the future of Abraham's descendants, who will bless the world. That God is the one by whom the oath is sworn (v. 3) and that he is the one who promised Abraham offspring (v. 7) emphasizes that he was actively involved in bringing Isaac and Rebekah together. After noting the divine blessing upon Abraham, as well as his advanced age, the narrative records Abraham's

had,^a “Put your hand under my thigh.^b ³I want you to swear^c by the LORD, the God of heaven^d and the God of earth,^e that you will not get a wife for my son^f from the daughters of the Canaanites,^g among whom I am living,^h ⁴but will go to my country and my own relativesⁱ and get a wife for my son Isaac.”^j

⁵The servant asked him, “What if the woman is unwilling to come back with me to this land?^k Shall I then take your son back to the country you came from?”^l

⁶“Make sure that you do not take my son back there,”^m Abraham said. ⁷“The LORD, the God of heaven,ⁿ who brought me out of my father’s household and my native land^o and who spoke to me and promised me on oath, saying, ‘To your offspring^{op} I will give this land’^q — he will send his angel before you^r so that you can get a wife for my son from there. ⁸If the woman is unwilling to come back with you, then you will be released from this oath^s of mine. Only do not take my son back there.”^t ⁹So the servant put his hand under the thigh^u of his master^v Abraham and swore an oath to him concerning this matter.

¹⁰Then the servant left, taking with him ten of his master’s camels^w loaded with all kinds of good things^x from his master. He set out for Aram Naharaim^{by} and made his way to the town of Nahor.^z ¹¹He had the camels kneel down near the well^a outside the town; it was toward evening, the time the women go out to draw water.^b

¹²Then he prayed, “LORD, God of my master Abraham,^c make me successful^d today, and show kindness^e to my master Abraham. ¹³See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water.^f ¹⁴May it be that when I say to a young woman, ‘Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,’ and she says, ‘Drink,^g and I’ll water your camels too’^h — let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac.ⁱ By this

24:2^a Ge 39:4-6^b ver 9; Ge 47:29
24:3^c Ge 47:31; 50:25^d ver 7^e S Ge 14:19; S Nu 20:14^f Dt 7:3; 2Co 6:14-17^g S Ge 10:15-19^h ver 37
24:4ⁱ S Ge 12:1; Jdg 14:3^j S ver 29; S Ge 21:21
24:5^k ver 39^l Heb 11:15
24:6^m ver 8
24:7ⁿ ver 3^o Ge 12:1^p Ro 4:13; Gal 3:16^q
S Ge 12:7^r S Ge 16:7
24:8^s ver 41; Jos 2:12, 17, 20; 9:20^t S ver 6
24:9^u S ver 2^v Ge 32:4; 33:8
24:10^w ver 19; 1Ki 10:2; 1Ch 12:40; Isa 30:6
^x ver 22, 30, 47, 53; Ge 43:11; 45:23^y Nu 23:7; Dt 23:4; Jdg 3:8
^z S Ge 11:29
24:11^a Ex 2:15^b ver 13; Ge 29:2, 9-10; Ex 2:16; 1Sa 9:11; Jn 4:7
24:12^c ver 27, 42, 48; Ge 26:24; 28:13; 31:42, 53; 32:9; 43:23; 46:3; Ex 3:6, 15, 16; 4:5; 1Ki 18:36; Ps 75:9; 94:7^d ver 21, 40, 51, 56; Ge 27:20; Ne 1:11
^e S Ge 19:19; Jos 2:12; Job 10:12
24:13^f S ver 11, 43; Ge 29:8
24:14^g ver 18, 46^h ver 19
ⁱ ver 44
^j Jos 2:12; Jdg 6:17, 37; 1Sa 14:10; 1Ki 13:3;

I will know^j that you have shown kindness to my master.”

¹⁵Before he had finished praying,^k Rebekah^l came out with her jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel^m son of Milkah,ⁿ who was the wife of Abraham’s brother Nahor.^o ¹⁶The woman was very beautiful,^p a virgin;^q no man had ever slept with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jar and came up again.

¹⁷The servant hurried to meet her and said, “Please give me a little water from your jar.”^r

¹⁸“Drink,^s my lord,” she said, and quickly lowered the jar to her hands and gave him a drink.

¹⁹After she had given him a drink, she said, “I’ll draw water for your camels^t too,^u until they have had enough to drink.”

²⁰So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, ran back to the well to draw more water, and drew enough for all his camels.^v

²¹Without saying a word, the man watched her closely to learn whether or not the LORD had made his journey successful.^w

²²When the camels had finished drinking, the man took out a gold nose ring^x weighing a beka^c and two gold bracelets^y weighing ten shekels.^d ²³Then he asked, “Whose daughter are you?^z Please tell me, is there room in your father’s house for us to spend the night?^a”

²⁴She answered him, “I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son that Milkah bore to Nahor.^b” ²⁵And she added, “We have plenty of straw and fodder,^c as well as room for you to spend the night.”

^a 7 Or seed ^b 10 That is, Northwest Mesopotamia
^c 22 That is, about 1/5 ounce or about 5.7 grams
^d 22 That is, about 4 ounces or about 115 grams

Ps 86:17; Isa 38:7; Jer 44:29 24:15^k ver 45^l S Ge 22:23
^m S Ge 22:22ⁿ S Ge 11:29^o S Ge 11:29 24:16^p S Ge 12:11
^q Dt 22:15-21 24:17^r ver 45; 1Ki 17:10; Jn 4:7 24:18^s S ver 14
24:19^t S ver 10^u ver 14 24:20^v ver 46 24:21^w S ver 12
24:22^x ver 47; Ge 41:42; Isa 3:21; Eze 16:11-12^y S ver 10
24:23^z ver 47^a Jdg 19:15; 20:4 24:24^b ver 29, 47; S Ge 11:29
24:25^c ver 32; Jdg 19:19

making arrangements for his servant (probably Eliezer; cf. 15:2–3) to travel to Mesopotamia to obtain a wife for his son, Isaac, before Abraham blesses him (25:5). Abraham offers a double prohibition—Isaac’s wife must not be one of the surrounding Canaanites, whose morality is suspect, and Isaac must never go back to Mesopotamia since Canaan is the land of promise. Abraham’s servant takes an oath that he will seek a wife for Isaac. The servant assures Abraham that he will comply with the oath by placing his hand under Abraham’s thigh, near the circumcised organ of life (24:9). **24:10–27** This passage describes the servant’s journey to and meeting with Isaac’s future wife, Rebekah. The servant leads a large caravan: ten camels carry goods, which indi-

cates that Abraham was prepared to offer a high price for his son’s wife. This high price aligns with ancient customs. Divine guidance becomes the leading theme of the story as the servant prays and God answers. The servant encounters Rebekah at a well in the evening, when the heat is less intense. Her character is sterling as she gives water to the stranger and his animals first before looking after her own needs (v. 14). She is morally pure (v. 16). Faithful instruction is on her tongue (Pr 31:26). When the servant is convinced that God has directed him to the right woman, he wastes no time in giving her expensive gifts. He finds out she is linked to Abraham’s family, since she is the granddaughter of Abraham’s brother Nahor (Ge 24:24; cf. 22:23).

²⁶Then the man bowed down and worshiped the LORD,^d ²⁷saying, “Praise be to the LORD,^e the God of my master Abraham,^f who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness^g to my master. As for me, the LORD has led me on the journey^h to the house of my master’s relatives.”ⁱ

²⁸The young woman ran and told her mother’s household about these things.^j ²⁹Now Rebekah had a brother named Laban,^k and he hurried out to the man at the spring. ³⁰As soon as he had seen the nose ring, and the bracelets on his sister’s arms,^l and had heard Rebekah tell what the man said to her, he went out to the man and found him standing by the camels near the spring. ³¹“Come, you who are blessed by the LORD,”^m he said. “Why are you standing out here? I have prepared the house and a place for the camels.”

³²So the man went to the house, and the camels were unloaded. Straw and fodderⁿ were brought for the camels, and water for him and his men to wash their feet.^o ³³Then food was set before him, but he said, “I will not eat until I have told you what I have to say.”

“Then tell us,” Laban said.

³⁴So he said, “I am Abraham’s servant.^p ³⁵The LORD has blessed^q my master abundantly,^r and he has become wealthy.^s He has given him sheep and cattle, silver and gold, male and female servants, and camels and donkeys.^t ³⁶My master’s wife Sarah has borne him a son in her old age,^u and he has given him everything he owns.^v ³⁷And my master made me swear an oath,^w and said, “You must not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live,^x ³⁸but go to my father’s family and to my own clan, and get a wife for my son.”^y

³⁹“Then I asked my master, ‘What if the woman will not come back with me?’^z

⁴⁰“He replied, ‘The LORD, before whom I have walked faithfully,^a will send his angel with you^b and make your journey a success,^c so that you can get a wife for my son from my own clan and from my father’s family.^d ⁴¹You will be released from my oath if, when you go to my clan, they

24:26
d ver 48, 52;
Ex 4:31; 12:27;
1Ch 29:20;
2Ch 20:18
24:27
e Ge 14:20;
Ex 18:10;
Ru 4:14;
1Sa 25:32;
2Sa 18:28;
1Ki 1:48;
8:56; Ps 28:6;
41:13; 68:19;
106:48; Lk 1:68
f S ver 12
g ver 49;
Ge 32:10;
47:29; Jos 2:14;
Ps 98:3 h ver 21
i S ver 12, 48;
S Ge 12:1
24:28 l Ge 29:12
24:29 k ver 4;
Ge 25:20;
27:43; 28:2, 5;
29:5, 12, 13
24:30
l S ver 10;
Eze 23:42
24:31
m Ge 26:29;
Ps 115:15
24:32 n S ver 25
o S Ge 18:4
24:34
p S Ge 15:3
24:35
q S Ge 12:2
r ver 1
s S Ge 23:6
t S Ge 12:16
24:36
u S Ge 17:17
v Ge 25:5; 26:14
24:37
w Ge 50:5, 25
x ver 3
24:38
y S Ge 21:21
24:39 z S ver 5
24:40
a S Ge 5:22
b S Ge 16:7
c S ver 12
d S Ge 12:1
24:41 e S ver 8
24:42 f S ver 12
24:43 g S ver 13
h Pr 30:19;
Isa 7:14
i S ver 14
24:44 j ver 14
24:45 k 1Sa 1:13
l ver 15
m S ver 17;
Jn 4:7
24:46 n ver 18-19
o ver 20
24:47 p ver 23
q S Ge 22:22
r S ver 24
s S ver 22
t S ver 10;
Isa 3:19;
Eze 16:11-12

refuse to give her to you — then you will be released from my oath.”^e

⁴²“When I came to the spring today, I said, ‘LORD, God of my master Abraham, if you will, please grant success^f to the journey on which I have come. ⁴³See, I am standing beside this spring.^g If a young woman^h comes out to draw water and I say to her, “Please let me drink a little water from your jar,”ⁱ ⁴⁴and if she says to me, “Drink, and I’ll draw water for your camels too,” let her be the one the LORD has chosen for my master’s son.”^j

⁴⁵“Before I finished praying in my heart,^k Rebekah came out, with her jar on her shoulder.^l She went down to the spring and drew water, and I said to her, ‘Please give me a drink.’^m

⁴⁶“She quickly lowered her jar from her shoulder and said, ‘Drink, and I’ll water your camels too.’ⁿ So I drank, and she watered the camels also.^o

⁴⁷“I asked her, ‘Whose daughter are you?’^p

“She said, ‘The daughter of Bethuel^q son of Nahor, whom Milkah bore to him.’^r

“Then I put the ring in her nose^s and the bracelets on her arms,^t ⁴⁸and I bowed down and worshiped the LORD.^u I praised the LORD, the God of my master Abraham,^v who had led me on the right road to get the granddaughter of my master’s brother for his son.^w ⁴⁹Now if you will show kindness and faithfulness^x to my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so I may know which way to turn.”

⁵⁰Laban and Bethuel^y answered, “This is from the LORD;^z we can say nothing to you one way or the other.^a ⁵¹Here is Rebekah; take her and go, and let her become the wife of your master’s son, as the LORD has directed.”^b

⁵²When Abraham’s servant heard what they said, he bowed down to the ground before the LORD.^c ⁵³Then the servant brought out gold and silver jewelry and articles of clothing^d and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave costly gifts^e to her brother and

24:48 u S ver 26 v S ver 12 w S ver 27 24:49 x S ver 27
24:50 y Ge 22:22 z Ps 118:23 a Ge 31:7, 24, 29, 42; 48:16
24:51 b S ver 12 24:52 c S ver 26 24:53 d Ge 45:22; Ex 3:22;
12:35; 2Ki 5:5 e S ver 10, 22

24:28–60 When Rebekah shares the news about the man she met at the well, her brother Laban runs to meet him. The text implies that Laban responds with such haste in part because he has spotted the gold jewelry Rebekah is wearing. Before Abraham’s servant sits down to eat and enjoy Rebekah’s family’s hospitality, he tells his story to

the family, particularly emphasizing God’s leading and guidance in his task of seeking a wife for Isaac. The family recognizes God’s leading in this account, and they agree to Rebekah’s marriage with Isaac. The servant pays the bride price, some of which he gives to Rebekah herself (v. 53). When the caravan departs, Rebekah’s family bless her with

to her mother. ⁵⁴Then he and the men who were with him ate and drank and spent the night there.

When they got up the next morning, he said, “Send me on my way^f to my master.”

⁵⁵But her brother and her mother replied, “Let the young woman remain with us ten days or so;^g then you^a may go.”

⁵⁶But he said to them, “Do not detain me, now that the LORD has granted success^h to my journey. Send me on my wayⁱ so I may go to my master.”

⁵⁷Then they said, “Let’s call the young woman and ask her about it.”^j ⁵⁸So they called Rebekah and asked her, “Will you go with this man?”

“I will go,”^k she said.

⁵⁹So they sent their sister Rebekah on her way,^l along with her nurse^m and Abraham’s servant and his men. ⁶⁰And they blessedⁿ Rebekah and said to her,

“Our sister, may you increase to thousands upon thousands;^o may your offspring possess the cities of their enemies.”^p

⁶¹Then Rebekah and her attendants^q got ready and mounted the camels and went back with the man. So the servant took Rebekah and left.

⁶²Now Isaac had come from Beer Lahai Roi,^r for he was living in the Negev.^s ⁶³He went out to the field one evening to meditate,^t and as he looked up,^u he saw camels approaching. ⁶⁴Rebekah also looked up and saw Isaac. She got down from her camel^v and asked the servant, “Who is that man in the field coming to meet us?”

“He is my master,” the servant answered. So she took her veil^w and covered herself.

⁶⁶Then the servant told Isaac all he had done. ⁶⁷Isaac brought her into the tent^x of

24:54 ^fver 56, 59; Ge 30:25
24:55
^gJdg 19:4
24:56 ^hS ver 12
ⁱS ver 54
24:57 Jdg 19:3
24:58 ^kRu 1:16
24:59 ^lS ver 54
^mGe 35:8
24:60
ⁿGe 27:4, 19; 28:1; 31:55; 48:9, 15, 20; Jos 22:6
^oS Ge 17:16
^pGe 22:17; Ps 127:5; Pr 27:11
24:61
^qS Ge 16:1; 30:3; 46:25
24:62
^rS Ge 16:14
^sS Ge 12:9
24:63 ^tJos 1:8; Ps 1:2; 77:12; 119:15, 27, 48, 97, 148; 143:5; 145:5 ^uGe 18:2
24:64
^vGe 31:17, 34; 1Sa 30:17
24:65
^wGe 38:14; SS 1:7; 4:1, 3; 6:7; Isa 47:2
24:67 ^xGe 31:33
^yS Ge 18:9
^zGe 25:20; 49:31
^aGe 29:18, 20; 34:3; Jdg 16:4
^bGe 23:1-2
25:2 ^cJer 25:25
^dGe 36:35; 37:28, 36; Ex 2:15; Nu 22:4; 25:6, 18; 31:2; Jos 13:21; Jdg 6:1, 3; 7:1; 8:1, 22, 24; 9:17; 1Kl 11:18; Ps 83:9; Isa 9:4; 10:26; 60:6; Hab 3:7
^eJob 2:11; 8:1
25:3 ^fS Ge 10:7
^gS Ge 10:7
25:4 ^hIsa 60:6

his mother Sarah,^y and he married Rebekah.^z So she became his wife, and he loved her;^a and Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.^b

The Death of Abraham

25:1–4pp // 1Ch 1:32–33

25 Abraham had taken another wife, whose name was Keturah. ²She bore him Zimran,^c Jokshan, Medan, Midian,^d Ishbak and Shuah.^e ³Jokshan was the father of Sheba^f and Dedan;^g the descendants of Dedan were the Ashurites, the Letushites and the Leummites. ⁴The sons of Midian were Ephah,^h Epher, Hanok, Abida and Eldaah. All these were descendants of Keturah.

⁵Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac. ⁶But while he was still living, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubinesⁱ and sent them away from his son Isaac^k to the land of the east.^l

⁷Abraham lived a hundred and seventy-five years.^m ⁸Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age,ⁿ an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people.^o ⁹His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him^p in the cave of Machpelah^q near Mamre,^r in the field of Ephron^s son of Zohar the Hittite,^t ¹⁰the field Abraham had bought from the Hittites.^u There Abraham was buried with his wife Sarah. ¹¹After Abraham’s death, God blessed his

^a 55 Or she ^b 63 The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain. ^c 10 Or the descendants of Heth

25:5 ^fS Ge 24:36 ^gS Ge 22:24 ^hS Ge 21:10, 14 ⁱGe 29:1; Jdg 6:3, 33; 1Kl 4:30; Job 1:3; Eze 25:4 ^j25:7 ^mver 26; Ge 12:4; 35:28; 47:9, 28; 50:22, 26; Job 4:216 ^{25:8} ⁿS Ge 15:15 ^over 17; Ge 35:29; 49:29, 33; Nu 20:24; 31:2; Dt 31:14; 32:50; 34:5
25:9 ^pGe 35:29; 47:30; 49:31 ^qS Ge 23:9 ^rS Ge 13:18 ^sGe 23:8
^tGe 49:29; 50:13 ^{25:10} ^uS Ge 10:15

a blessing that echoes God’s blessing of Abraham after the near-sacrifice of Isaac (v. 60; cf. 22:17).

24:61–67 The chapter closes with the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah. She veils herself, as was the custom of the bride before a wedding. Isaac’s bringing Rebekah into his mother’s tent is a laconic description of marriage (v. 67). Abraham’s request and the servant’s oath have been fulfilled.

25:1–4 The text offers a smooth transition to the next major story in the patriarchal narratives. Verses 1–11 describe Abraham’s last acts: his fatherhood of other peoples, his singling out of Isaac for the transmission of his blessing, and his death. Abraham’s marriage to Keturah probably happened well before the events of chapter 24, where Abraham seems ready to die. The author calls Keturah a wife (v. 1), which could indicate she was a secondary wife whom Abraham married before Sarah died. First Chronicles 1:32 describes Keturah as a concubine, and Genesis 25:6

mentions Abraham’s concubines. Many of the names of Abraham’s descendants here are eponymous; they are the names given to tribes and peoples in the Arabian Peninsula. Abraham is fulfilling the promise in Genesis 17 that he would be the father of many peoples.

25:5–11 Before Abraham dies, he provides for his other children before sending them away from his principal heir, Isaac. The author describes death as being gathered to one’s people. Abraham is buried with Sarah in the cave of Machpelah. In his death, Abraham receives a foretaste of the inheritance of the land of Canaan (15:18–21), the land of promise, and even the entire world. God’s promise of land to Abraham will be fulfilled when his descendants inherit the land of Canaan (15:18–21) and then the world (Mt 5:5; Ro 4:13). Abraham is 175 years old when he dies. He had Isaac when he was 100 years old. Abraham was 75 when God called him; thus, he lived the life of faith for 100 years.

son Isaac,^v who then lived near Beer Lahai Roi.^w

Ishmael's Sons

25:12–16pp // 1Ch 1:29–31

¹²This is the account^x of the family line of Abraham's son Ishmael, whom Sarah's slave, Hagar^y the Egyptian, bore to Abraham.^z

¹³These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, listed in the order of their birth: Nebaioth^a the firstborn of Ishmael, Kedar,^b Adbeel, Mibsam, ¹⁴Mishma, Dumah, ^cMassa, ¹⁵Hadad, Tema, ^dJetur, ^eNaphish and Kedemah. ¹⁶These were the sons of Ishmael, and these are the names of the twelve tribal rulers^f according to their settlements and camps. ¹⁷Ishmael lived a hundred and thirty-seven years. He breathed his last and died, and he was gathered to his people.^h

¹⁸His descendantsⁱ settled in the area from Havilah to Shur,^j near the eastern border of Egypt, as you go toward Ashur. And they lived in hostility toward^a all the tribes related to them.^k

Jacob and Esau

¹⁹This is the account^l of the family line of Abraham's son Isaac.

Abraham became the father of Isaac, ²⁰and Isaac was forty years old^m when he married Rebekahⁿ daughter of Bethuel^o the Aramean from Paddan Aram^{bp} and sister of Laban^q the Aramean.^r

²¹Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was childless.^s The LORD answered his prayer,^t and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. ²²The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the LORD.^u

²³The LORD said to her,

25:11 ^vS Ge 12:2
^wS Ge 16:14
 25:12 ^xS Ge 2:4
^yS Ge 16:1
^zS Ge 17:20;
 21:18
 25:13 ^aGe 28:9;
 36:3 ^bPs 120:5;
 SS 1:5; Isa 21:16;
 42:11; 60:7;
 Jer 2:10; 49:28;
 Eze 27:21
 25:14
^cJos 15:52;
 Isa 21:11; Ob 1
 25:15
^dJob 6:19;
 Isa 21:14;
 Jer 25:23
^e1Ch 5:19
 25:16 ^fGe 17:20
^gS Ge 13:16;
 Ps 83:6
 25:17 ^hS ver 8
 25:18
ⁱS Ge 17:20;
 21:18 ^jS Ge 16:7
^kGe 16:12
 25:19 ^lS Ge 2:4
 25:20 ^mver 26;
 Ge 26:34; 35:28
ⁿS Ge 24:67
^oS Ge 22:22
^pGe 28:2, 5, 6;
 30:20; 31:18;
 33:18; 35:9;
 26; 46:15; 48:7
^qS Ge 24:29
^rGe 31:20, 24;
 Dt 26:5
 25:21
^sS Ge 11:30
^tGe 30:17;
 22; 1Sa 1:17;
 23; 1Ch 5:20;
 2Ch 33:13;
 Eze 8:23;
 Ps 127:3
 25:22 ^uEx 18:15;
 28:30; 33:7;
 Lev 24:12;
 Nu 9:6–8; 27:5;
 21; Dt 17:9;
 Jdg 18:5;
 1Sa 9:9; 10:22;
 14:36; 22:10;
 1Ki 22:8;
 2Ki 3:11; 22:13;
 Isa 30:2;
 Jer 21:2; 37:7;
 17; Eze 14:7;
 20:1, 3

"Two nations^v are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger."^w

²⁴When the time came for her to give birth,^x there were twin boys in her womb.^y ²⁵The first to come out was red,^z and his whole body was like a hairy garment;^a so they named him Esau.^{cb} ²⁶After this, his brother came out,^c with his hand grasping Esau's heel;^d so he was named Jacob.^{de} Isaac was sixty years old^f when Rebekah gave birth to them.

²⁷The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter,^g a man of the open country,^h while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents. ²⁸Isaac, who had a taste for wild game,ⁱ loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.^j

²⁹Once when Jacob was cooking some stew,^k Esau came in from the open country,^l famished. ³⁰He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew!^m I'm famished!" (That is why he was also called Edom.ⁿ)^o

³¹Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright.^o"

³²"Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?"

^a 18 Or lived to the east of ^b 20 That is, Northwest Mesopotamia ^c 25 Esau may mean hairy. ^d 26 Jacob means he grasps the heel, a Hebrew idiom for he deceives. ^e 30 Edom means red.

25:23 ^vS Ge 17:4 ^wS Ge 9:25; 48:14, 19; Ro 9:11–12*
 25:24, ^xLk 1:57; 2:6 ^yGe 38:27 ^z25:25 ¹1Sa 16:12 ^aGe 27:11
^bGe 27:1, 15 ^{25:26} ^cGe 38:29 ^dHos 12:3 ^eGe 27:36; 32:27;
 Dt 23:7; Jos 24:4; Ob 10, 12 ^fS ver 7, S 20 ^{25:27} ^gS Ge 10:9
^hver 29; Ge 27:3, 5 ^{25:28} ¹Ge 27:3, 4, 9, 14, 19 ^lGe 27:6; 37:3
 25:29 ^k2Ki 4:38–40 ^lS ver 27 ^{25:30} ^mver 34 ⁿGe 32:3; 36:1, 8,
 8–9, 19; Nu 20:14; Dt 23:7; Ps 137:7; Jer 25:21; 40:11; 49:7
 25:31 ^oDt 21:16–17; 1Ch 5:1–2

25:12–18 This new genealogy is a very short section in the book of Genesis. Before the author can continue following Isaac's line, he describes the line of Abraham's son through Hagar, Ishmael. The genealogy showcases God's faithfulness to his promise of blessing, as Ishmael has 12 sons just like his later relative Jacob. Many of the names are eponyms. His descendants are located in the Arabian Peninsula, a rather isolated setting, which suggests that they brought isolation upon themselves in fulfillment of the prophecy about Ismael in Genesis 16:12.

25:19–34 The account of Isaac and Rebekah recorded in this passage recalls the struggles of Abraham and Sarah to conceive a child, providing the framework for the entire narrative to follow (25:19–36:43). It details the obstacles Rebekah and Isaac faced in having children, Isaac's prayers, and the birth of two very different children. The account also offers a brief contrast of the children's adult lives. God's

word to Rebekah (25:23) is key to the events that unfold. She learns that the twins struggling in her womb is indicative of the struggling they will engage in outside her womb, but God has intervened to establish that the younger of the two will be the principal heir and the transmitter of divine blessing. This divine verdict reverses the status quo of society. When the twins are born, Rebekah and Isaac give them names indicating their physical attributes. In Hebrew, the name Esau sounds like "hairy," while Jacob means "deceiver." Jacob emerges from the womb clutching Esau's heel. The final verses of this passage record a character-revealing incident that takes place when Jacob and Esau are adults. Jacob takes advantage of his famished brother by selling him food in exchange for his birthright, which Esau treats with contempt (cf. Heb 12:16). Jacob's name thus becomes synonymous with deception and intrigue (Ge 27:36; cf. Jer 9:3). Later, when Jacob emerges from a struggle with God,

³³But Jacob said, “Swear^p to me first.” So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright^q to Jacob.

³⁴Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew.^r He ate and drank, and then got up and left.

So Esau despised his birthright.

Isaac and Abimelek

26:1–11Ref // Ge 12:10–20; 20:1–18

26 Now there was a famine in the land^s—besides the previous famine in Abraham’s time—and Isaac went to Abimelek king of the Philistines^t in Gerar.^u ²The LORD appeared^v to Isaac and said, “Do not go down to Egypt;^w live in the land where I tell you to live.^x ³Stay in this land for a while,^y and I will be with you² and will bless you.^a For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands^b and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham.^c ⁴I will make your descendants^d as numerous as the stars in the sky^e and will give them all these lands,^f and through your offspring^g all nations on earth will be blessed,^h ⁵because Abraham obeyed me^h and did everything I required of him, keeping my commands, my decreesⁱ and my instructions.^j ⁶So Isaac stayed in Gerar.^k

⁷When the men of that place asked him about his wife, he said, “She is my sister,^l because he was afraid to say, “She is my wife.” He thought, “The men of this place might kill me on account of Rebekah, because she is beautiful.”

⁸When Isaac had been there a long time, Abimelek king of the Philistines^m looked

25:33
 P S Ge 21:23;
 S 47:31
 q Ge 27:36;
 Heb 12:16
 25:34 r ver 30
 26:1
 s Ge 12:10;
 S Dt 32:24
 t S Ge 10:14;
 Jdg 10:6
 u S Ge 20:1
 26:2 v S Ge 12:7
 w Ge 46:3
 x S Ge 12:1
 26:3 y Ge 20:1
 z S Ge 21:20;
 27:45; 31:3;
 5; 32:9; 35:3;
 48:21; Ex 3:12;
 33:14-16;
 Nu 23:21;
 Dt 31:23;
 Jos 1:5;
 Isa 43:2;
 Jer 1:8, 19;
 Hag 1:13
 a ver 12;
 S Ge 12:2
 b S Ge 12:7;
 Ac 7:5
 c S Ge 17:19
 26:4 d ver 24;
 Ge 48:4
 e S Ge 12:2;
 S Nu 10:36
 f S Ge 12:7
 g S Ge 12:3;
 Ac 3:25*;
 Gal 3:8
 26:5
 h S Ge 18:19
 i Ps 119:80,
 112;
 Eze 18:21
 j Lev 18:4, 5,
 26; 19:19, 37;
 20:8, 22; 25:18;
 26:3; Nu 15:40;
 Dt 4:40; 6:2;
 11:1; 1Ki 2:3
 26:6 k S Ge 20:1
 26:7 l S Ge 12:13
 26:8
 m S Ge 10:14
 26:9
 n S Ge 12:19

down from a window and saw Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah. ⁹So Abimelek summoned Isaac and said, “She is really your wife! Why did you say, ‘She is my sister?’”

Isaac answered him, “Because I thought I might lose my life on account of her.”

¹⁰Then Abimelek said, “What is this you have done to us?^o One of the men might well have slept with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us.”

¹¹So Abimelek gave orders to all the people: “Anyone who harms^p this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.”^q

¹²Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold,^r because the LORD blessed him.^s ¹³The man became rich, and his wealth continued to grow until he became very wealthy.^t ¹⁴He had so many flocks and herds and servants^u that the Philistines envied him.^v ¹⁵So all the wells^w that his father’s servants had dug in the time of his father Abraham, the Philistines stopped up,^x filling them with earth.

¹⁶Then Abimelek said to Isaac, “Move away from us;^y you have become too powerful for us.^z”

¹⁷So Isaac moved away from there and encamped in the Valley of Gerar,^a where he settled. ¹⁸Isaac reopened the wells^b that had been dug in the time of his father Abraham,

^a 4 Or seed ^b 4 Or and all nations on earth will use the name of your offspring in blessings (see 48:20)

26:10 ^o S Ge 12:18 26:11 ^p 1Sa 24:6; 26:9; Ps 105:15 ^q S Ge 20:3
 26:12 ^r Mt 13:8 ^s S ver 3 26:13 ^t S Ge 13:2; S Dt 8:18
 26:14 ^u S Ge 12:16; S 24:36; 32:23 ^v Ge 37:11 26:15 ^w S Ge 21:30
^x S Ge 21:25 26:16 ^y ver 27; Jdg 11:7 ^z Ex 1:9; Ps 105:24-25
 26:17 ^a S Ge 20:1 26:18 ^b S Ge 21:30

he receives a new name—Israel (Ge 32:28). Paul sees God’s choice of Jacob over Esau as one of the main proofs for the doctrine of election (Ro 9:10–13).

26:1–5 This chapter is intended to show the transmission of the Abrahamic blessing to Isaac. God urges Isaac not to go down to Egypt (cf. 12:10–20) but to stay in Canaan and dwell with the Philistines. God confirms the covenant with Isaac and repeats to him the promises of presence, progeny, and patrimony (land). God refers to Abraham’s faithful obedience as a basis for the covenant, since he kept “my commands, my decrees and my instructions” (26:5). While these terms clearly refer to later laws (Dt 11:1), this verse is neither anachronistic, nor does it suggest that God revealed to Abraham all the later laws of the Mosaic code. Rather, Abraham was righteous (i.e., he kept the law) by living a life of faith in God’s promises (Ge 15:6).

26:6–11 Isaac repeats his father Abraham’s sins by lying about his wife (12:10–20; 20:1–18). The three accounts in which a patriarch lies about his wife’s identity differ in the means by which the local people discover the truth about the patriarch’s relationship to his wife: in chapter 12 the pharaoh was alerted to the truth by plagues, and in chapter 20 Abimelek learned the truth in a dream. Here, the

local people are alerted to the truth simply by sight. The Gentile king’s concern to avoid guilt because of possible adultery makes him seem much more religiously sensitive than God’s elect child of promise.

26:12–16 Isaac is extraordinarily blessed, reaping a one-hundredfold bumper crop and becoming extremely wealthy. The three terms “rich,” “wealth,” and “wealthy” used to describe Isaac’s accumulation of goods come from the same Hebrew word. But Isaac’s wealth leads the Philistines to become jealous, and they respond by blocking up wells (that Abraham had dug) in order to diminish Isaac’s blessing. Finally, Abimelek orders Isaac to leave because of his growing power.

26:17–25 Wherever Isaac goes, blessing follows, particularly in the form of wells and water (which is necessary for blessing). He reopens wells that the Philistines had stopped up in the days of Abraham to show that the same blessing of lifegiving water flows now to him. He faces opposition at Esek (“dispute”) and Sitnah (“opposition”), where he digs wells and the water flows. He then moves on to Rehoboth (“room”), where he finally gets some space to breathe. But wherever he goes, he is blessed despite opposition. Finally, God appears to him in Beersheba to renew his promises

which the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham died, and he gave them the same names his father had given them.

¹⁹Isaac's servants dug in the valley and discovered a well of fresh water there. ²⁰But the herders of Gerar quarreled^c with those of Isaac and said, "The water is ours!"^d So he named the well Esek,^a because they disputed with him. ²¹Then they dug another well, but they quarreled^e over that one also; so he named it Sitnah.^b ²²He moved on from there and dug another well, and no one quarreled over it. He named it Rehoboth,^{cf} saying, "Now the LORD has given us room^g and we will flourish^h in the land."

²³From there he went up to Beersheba.ⁱ ²⁴That night the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham.^j Do not be afraid,^k for I am with you;^l I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants^m for the sake of my servant Abraham."ⁿ

²⁵Isaac built an altar^o there and called on the name of the LORD.^p There he pitched his tent, and there his servants dug a well.^q

²⁶Meanwhile, Abimelek had come to him from Gerar, with Ahuzzath his personal adviser and Phicol the commander of his forces.^r ²⁷Isaac asked them, "Why have you come to me, since you were hostile to me and sent me away?"^s

²⁸They answered, "We saw clearly that the LORD was with you;^t so we said, 'There ought to be a sworn agreement between us' — between us and you. Let us make a treaty^u with you ²⁹that you will do us no harm,^v just as we did not harm you but always treated you well and sent you away peacefully. And now you are blessed by the LORD."^w

³⁰Isaac then made a feast^x for them, and they ate and drank. ³¹Early the next morning the men swore an oath^y to each other.

26:20
 c S Ge 13:7
 d Ge 21:25
 26:21 e S Ge 13:7
 26:22 f Ge 36:37
 9 Ps 18:19;
 Isa 33:20;
 54:2; Am 9:11
 h S Ge 17:6
 26:23
 i S Ge 22:19
 26:24
 j S Ge 24:12
 k S Ge 15:1;
 S Jos 8:1
 l S Ge 21:20
 m S ver 4
 n ver 4; Ge 17:7;
 S 22:17; 28:14;
 30:27; 39:5;
 Dt 13:17
 26:25
 o S Ge 8:20
 p S Ge 4:26;
 S Ac 2:21
 q S Ge 21:30
 26:26
 r S Ge 21:22
 26:27 s S ver 16
 26:28
 t S Ge 21:22
 u S Ge 21:27;
 Jos 9:6
 26:29
 v Ge 31:29, 52
 w S Ge 24:31
 26:30
 x Ge 31:54;
 Ex 18:12; 24:11;
 1Sa 20:27
 26:31
 y S Ge 21:23, 27
 26:32
 z S Ge 21:30
 26:33
 a S Ge 21:14
 26:34
 b S Ge 25:20
 c S Ge 10:15;
 28:9; 36:2;
 Jos 3:10;
 1Sa 26:6;
 1Ki 10:29
 26:35
 d Ge 27:46;
 28:8; Job 7:16
 27:1 e Ge 48:10;
 Dt 34:7; 1Sa 3:2
 f S Ge 25:25
 27:2 g Ge 47:29;
 1Ki 2:1
 27:3
 h S Ge 25:27

Then Isaac sent them on their way, and they went away peacefully.

³²That day Isaac's servants came and told him about the well^z they had dug. They said, "We've found water!" ³³He called it Shibah,^d and to this day the name of the town has been Beersheba.^{ea}

Jacob Takes Esau's Blessing

³⁴When Esau was forty years old,^b he married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and also Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite.^c ³⁵They were a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah.^d

27 When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see,^e he called for Esau his older son^f and said to him, "My son."

"Here I am," he answered.

²Isaac said, "I am now an old man and don't know the day of my death.^g ³Now then, get your equipment — your quiver and bow — and go out to the open country^h to hunt some wild game for me. ⁴Prepare me the kind of tasty food I likeⁱ and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing^j before I die."^k

⁵Now Rebekah was listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau. When Esau left for the open country^l to hunt game and bring it back, ⁶Rebekah said to her son Jacob,^m "Look, I overheard your father say to your brother Esau, ⁷'Bring me some game and prepare me some tasty food to eat, so that I may give you my blessing in the presence of the LORD before I die.'ⁿ ⁸Now, my son, listen

^a 20 Esek means *dispute*. ^b 21 Sitnah means *opposition*. ^c 22 Rehoboth means *room*.

^d 33 Shibah can mean *oath* or *seven*.

^e 33 Beersheba can mean *well of the oath* and *well of seven*.

27:4, ^l S Ge 25:28 ⁱ ver 10, 25, 31; S Ge 24:60; 49:28; Dt 33:1; Heb 11:20
^k ver 7 ^{27:5} S Ge 25:27 ^{27:6} M S Ge 25:28 ^{27:7} ⁿ ver 4

now that Isaac is back in the land of Canaan. Isaac builds an altar there and worships while his servants dig a well.

26:26–33 This event begins *before* Isaac builds the altar in Beersheba. Frequently, Hebrew narratives finish a storyline (vv. 17–25) before backtracking and starting another one. Abimelek sees that the blessing of Abraham has been transmitted to Isaac (cf. 21:22), and he wishes to confirm a covenant with him through the ritual of an oath and meal. The place is named Beersheba because the servants' discovery of a well coincides with the covenant oath. The naming is a reaffirmation of the original naming in the time of Abraham.

26:34–35 This episode ends with information about Isaac's eldest son, Esau, in order to show a further reason why he is rejected from inheriting the blessing. Esau marries local Canaanite women who become a source of tension and anxiety to his parents, no doubt due to their clearly different values and worldview.

27:1–4 This chapter begins by noting crucial background information: Isaac is now old and blind. He knows he will not live much longer and wishes to transmit the Abrahamic blessing to his oldest son before he dies. He is either unaware of God's message to Rebekah about her sons' futures (25:23), has forgotten it, or chooses to ignore it. He wishes to fortify himself with a good meal before he passes on the blessing, so he sends Esau to hunt for some of his favorite food.

27:5–13 When Rebekah hears of her husband's plan, she concocts one of her own, for she recalls God's message to her that "the older will serve the younger" (25:23). She allays Jacob's objections and cooks a meal; additionally, she disguises Jacob so that his arms feel like Esau's arms, assuming the plan will work because Isaac is blind. She believes in God's message so much that she is even willing to accept a curse from her husband if he discovers the deception (27:12–13).

carefully and do what I tell you:^o ⁹Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats,^p so I can prepare some tasty food for your father, just the way he likes it.^q ¹⁰Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing^r before he dies.”

¹¹Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, “But my brother Esau is a hairy man^s while I have smooth skin. ¹²What if my father touches me?^t I would appear to be tricking him and would bring down a curse^u on myself rather than a blessing.”

¹³His mother said to him, “My son, let the curse fall on me.^v Just do what I say;^w go and get them for me.”

¹⁴So he went and got them and brought them to his mother, and she prepared some tasty food, just the way his father liked it.^x

¹⁵Then Rebekah took the best clothes^y of Esau her older son,^z which she had in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob. ¹⁶She also covered his hands and the smooth part of his neck with the goat-skins.^a ¹⁷Then she handed to her son Jacob the tasty food and the bread she had made.

¹⁸He went to his father and said, “My father.”

“Yes, my son,” he answered. “Who is it?”^b

¹⁹Jacob said to his father, “I am Esau your firstborn.^c I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game,^d so that you may give me your blessing.”^e

²⁰Isaac asked his son, “How did you find it so quickly, my son?”

“The LORD your God gave me success,^f” he replied.

²¹Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Come near so I can touch you,^g my son, to know whether you really are my son Esau or not.”

²²Jacob went close to his father Isaac,^h who touchedⁱ him and said, “The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.” ²³He did not recognize him, for his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau;^j so he proceeded to bless him.

²⁴“Are you really my son Esau?” he asked.

“I am,” he replied.

27:8 ^over 13, 43
 27:9 ^p1Sa 16:20
^qS Ge 25:28
 27:10 ^rS ver 4
 27:11 ^sGe 25:25
 27:12 ^tver 22
^uS Ge 9:25
 27:13 ^vMt 27:25
^wS ver 8
 27:14
^xS Ge 25:28
 27:15 ^yver 27;
 SS 4:11
^zS Ge 25:25
 27:16
^aver 22-23
 27:18 ^bver 32
 27:19 ^cver 32
^dS Ge 25:28
^eS ver 4
 27:20
^fS Ge 24:12
 27:21 ^gver 12
 27:22 ^hGe 45:4
ⁱver 12
 27:23 ^jver 16
 27:25 ^kS ver 4
 27:27 ^lGe 31:28, 55; 33:4; 48:10; Ex 4:27; 18:7; Ru 1:9; 1Sa 20:41; 2Sa 14:33; 19:39
^mHeb 11:20
ⁿS ver 15
^oPs 65:9-13
 27:28
^pDt 33:13; 2Sa 1:21; Job 18:16; 29:19; Pr 3:20; Isa 26:19; Hos 14:5; Hag 1:10; Zec 8:12
^qver 39; Ge 49:25; Lev 26:20; Dt 33:13
^rPs 65:9; 72:16 ^sver 37; Nu 18:12; Dt 7:13; 33:28; 2Ki 18:32; Ps 4:7; Isa 36:17; Jer 31:12; 40:10
 27:29
^t2Sa 8:14; Ps 68:31; 72:11; Isa 19:21, 23; 27:13; 45:14, 23; 49:7, 23; 60:12, 14; 66:23; Jer 12:17;

²⁵Then he said, “My son, bring me some of your game to eat, so that I may give you my blessing.”^k

Jacob brought it to him and he ate; and he brought some wine and he drank.

²⁶Then his father Isaac said to him, “Come here, my son, and kiss me.”

²⁷So he went to him and kissed^l him^m. When Isaac caught the smell of his clothes,ⁿ he blessed him and said,

“Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed.^o

²⁸May God give you heaven’s dew^p and earth’s richness^q— an abundance of grain^r and new wine.^s

²⁹May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you.^t Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you.^u

May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed.^v”

³⁰After Isaac finished blessing him, and Jacob had scarcely left his father’s presence, his brother Esau came in from hunting. ³¹He too prepared some tasty food and brought it to his father. Then he said to him, “My father, please sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing.”^w

³²His father Isaac asked him, “Who are you?”^x

“I am your son,” he answered, “your firstborn, Esau.”^y

³³Isaac trembled violently and said, “Who was it, then, that hunted game and brought it to me?^z I ate it just before you came and I blessed him — and indeed he will be blessed!^a”

³⁴When Esau heard his father’s words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry^b and

Da 2:44; Zec 14:17-18 ^uS Ge 9:25; S 25:23; S 37:7 ^vver 33; Ge 12:3 27:31 ^wS ver 4 27:32 ^xver 18 ^yver 19 27:33 ^zver 35 ^aS ver 29 27:34 ^bHeb 12:17

27:14–29 Rebekah’s plan seems to work smoothly. The narrative creates some suspense as Isaac is not convinced by Jacob’s pretense until Jacob comes near to him, and Isaac feels his hands—which Jacob has disguised to feel like Esau’s hands. Isaac’s blessing on Jacob (vv. 28–29) adds additional details to the Abrahamic blessing: material prosperity (“abundance of grain” and “new wine”), universal rule (“nations serve you”), special election (lordship over relatives), and unstoppable mission of blessing (opponents cursed). **27:30–41** As soon as Jacob departs, Esau arrives prepared to receive his father’s blessing. Both he and his father are shocked at the turn of events. Esau’s speech about his

brother’s deception features two clever wordplays in Hebrew, one related to Jacob’s name, the other to his stolen blessing. Esau says that Jacob was aptly named because he “jacobed” Esau (i.e., took advantage of him) twice: he wrested from him his birthright and blessing. Esau is reduced to tears and receives a diminished blessing that includes no material prosperity, dwelling in isolation, and independence from his brother. In his bitterness, Esau plans to murder his brother. The author of Hebrews uses the example of Esau to warn believers of the irreversible consequences of sin: Esau sold his birthright and could not get it back even though he wept bitterly (Heb 12:16).

said to his father, “Bless^c me — me too, my father!”

³⁵But he said, “Your brother came deceitfully^d and took your blessing.”^e

³⁶Esau said, “Isn’t he rightly named Jacob^{a?}”^f This is the second time he has taken advantage of^g me: He took my birthright,^h and now he’s taken my blessing!”ⁱ Then he asked, “Haven’t you reserved any blessing for me?”

³⁷Isaac answered Esau, “I have made him lord over you and have made all his relatives his servants, and I have sustained him with grain and new wine.^j So what can I possibly do for you, my son?”

³⁸Esau said to his father, “Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father!” Then Esau wept aloud.^k

³⁹His father Isaac answered him,^l

“Your dwelling will be
away from the earth’s richness,
away from the dew^m of heaven
above.ⁿ

⁴⁰You will live by the sword
and you will serve^o
your brother.^p

But when you grow restless,
you will throw his yoke
from off your neck.^q”

⁴¹Esau held a grudge^r against Jacob^s because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, “The days of mourning^t for my father are near; then I will kill^u my brother Jacob.”^v

⁴²When Rebekah was told what her older son Esau^w had said, she sent for her younger son Jacob and said to him, “Your brother Esau is planning to avenge himself by killing you.^x ⁴³Now then, my son, do what I say:^y Flee at once to my brother Laban^z in Harran.^a ⁴⁴Stay with him for a while^b until your brother’s fury subsides. ⁴⁵When your brother is no longer angry with you and forgets what you did to him,^c I’ll send word for you to come back from there.^d Why should I lose both of you in one day?”

^{27:34} ^c Ex 12:32
^{27:35} ^d Jer 9:4;
12:6 ^e ver 19, 45

^{27:36}

^f S Ge 25:26

^g Ge 29:25;

^{31:20, 26;}

^{34:13; 1Sa 28:12}

^h S Ge 25:33

ⁱ Heb 12:16-17

^{27:37} ^j S ver 28;

^{Dt 16:13;}

^{Ezr 6:9;}

^{Isa 16:10;}

^{Jer 40:12}

^{27:38}

^k Ge 29:11;

^{Nu 14:1;}

^{Jdg 2:4; 21:2;}

^{Ru 1:9; 1Sa 11:4;}

^{30:4; Heb 12:17}

^{27:39}

^l Heb 11:20

^m ver 28

ⁿ Ge 36:6

^{27:40}

^o 2Sa 8:14

^p S Ge 9:25

^q 2Ki 8:20-22

^{27:41} ^r Ge 37:4;

^{49:23; 50:15;}

^{15a 17:28}

^s Ge 31:17; 32:11;

^{Hos 10:14}

^t Ge 50:4,

^{10; Nu 20:29}

^u ver 42 ^v Ob 10

^{27:42} ^w Ge 32:3,

^{11; 33:4} ^x ver 41

^{27:43} ^y S ver 8

^z S Ge 24:29

^a S Ge 11:31

^{27:44}

^b Ge 31:38, 41

^{27:45} ^c S ver 35

^d S Ge 26:3

^{27:46}

^e S Ge 10:15

^f S Ge 10:15-19

^g S Ge 26:35;

^{S Job 7:7}

^{28:1}

^h S Ge 24:60

ⁱ Ge 24:3

^{28:2}

^j S Ge 25:20

^k S Ge 25:20

^l S Ge 21:21;

^{S 24:29}

^{28:3} ^m S Ge 17:1

ⁿ Ge 48:16;

^{Nu 6:24;}

^{Ru 2:4;}

^{Ps 129:8;}

^{134:3; Jer 31:23}

^o S Ge 17:6

^p S Ge 12:2

^{28:4}

^q S Ge 12:2, 3

⁴⁶Then Rebekah said to Isaac, “I’m disgusted with living because of these Hittite^e women. If Jacob takes a wife from among the women of this land,^f from Hittite women like these, my life will not be worth living.”^g

28 So Isaac called for Jacob and blessed^h him. Then he commanded him: “Do not marry a Canaanite woman.ⁱ ²Go at once to Paddan Aram,^{bj} to the house of your mother’s father Bethuel.^k Take a wife for yourself there, from among the daughters of Laban, your mother’s brother.^l ³May God Almighty^{cm} blessⁿ you and make you fruitful^o and increase your numbers^p until you become a community of peoples. ⁴May he give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham,^q so that you may take possession of the land^r where you now reside as a foreigner,^s the land God gave to Abraham.” ⁵Then Isaac sent Jacob on his way,^t and he went to Paddan Aram,^u to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramean,^v the brother of Rebekah,^w who was the mother of Jacob and Esau.

⁶Now Esau learned that Isaac had blessed Jacob and had sent him to Paddan Aram to take a wife from there, and that when he blessed him he commanded him, “Do not marry a Canaanite woman,”^x ⁷and that Jacob had obeyed his father and mother and had gone to Paddan Aram. ⁸Esau then realized how displeasing the Canaanite women^y were to his father Isaac;^z ⁹so he went to Ishmael^a and married Mahalath, the sister of Nebaioth^b and daughter of Ishmael son of Abraham, in addition to the wives he already had.^c

^a ³⁶ *Jacob means he grasps the heel*, a Hebrew idiom for *he takes advantage of or he deceives*.

^b ² That is, Northwest Mesopotamia; also in verses 5, 6 and 7 ^c ³ *Hebrew El-Shaddai*

^f S Ge 15:7 ^g S Ge 17:8 ^{28:5} ^l S Ge 11:31 ^u Hos 12:12 ^v S Ge 25:20
^w S Ge 24:29 ^{28:6} ^x S ver 1 ^{28:8} ^y S Ge 10:15-19 ^z S Ge 26:35
^{28:9} ^a S Ge 16:15 ^b S Ge 25:13 ^c S Ge 26:34

27:42–46 Ever the schemer, Rebekah devises another plan, this time to rescue Jacob from Esau’s murderous designs. While Abraham was vehemently opposed to sending Isaac to Mesopotamia (ch. 24), Rebekah is forced to do the unthinkable and send her own son there because of her deception. She also makes a tragic miscalculation, for she thinks Jacob will stay with her relatives “for a while” (27:44) before he will return, but a little while turns out to be 20 years. She will never see him again. She invents an excuse for her husband to send Jacob to Mesopotamia: the risk that Jacob might marry a local Canaanite woman (cf. 9:25).

28:1–5 In response to Rebekah’s concerns that Jacob might marry a Canaanite, Isaac sends him to Mesopotamia to obtain a wife and blesses him again. This blessing contains one addition that previous blessings lack: Jacob’s descendants will become a community of peoples. Jacob remembers this blessing on his deathbed (48:3–4), but for now he receives this blessing from Isaac (28:4) before departing for Paddan Aram, located roughly 500 miles from Beersheba.

28:6–9 When Esau discovers that Jacob has departed ostensibly to avoid marrying a Canaanite woman, he travels to the southeast, where Ishmael lived, and marries one of

Jacob's Dream at Bethel

¹⁰Jacob left Beersheba^d and set out for Harran.^e ¹¹When he reached a certain place,^f he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head^g and lay down to sleep. ¹²He had a dream^h in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.ⁱ ¹³There above it^a stood the LORD,^j and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac.^k I will give you and your descendants the land^l on which you are lying.^m ¹⁴Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and youⁿ will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south.^o All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.^{b,p} ¹⁵I am with you^q and will watch over you^r wherever you go,^s and I will bring you back to this land.^t I will not leave you^u until I have done what I have promised you.^{v,w}

¹⁶When Jacob awoke from his sleep,^x he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it." ¹⁷He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place!^y This is none other than the house of God;^z this is the gate of heaven."

¹⁸Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head^a and set it up as a pillar^b and poured oil on top of it.^c ¹⁹He called that place Bethel,^{c,d} though the city used to be called Luz.^e

28:10
^dS Ge 21:14
^eS Ge 11:31
28:11^f S Ge 12:8
^gver 18
28:12
^hS Ge 20:3;
37:19ⁱ Jn 1:51
28:13
ⁱS Ge 12:7;
35:7,9; 48:3
^kS Ge 24:12;
48:16; 49:25;
50:17^j S Ge 12:7
^mGe 46:4;
48:21
28:14ⁿ Ge 26:4
^oS Ge 12:2;
S 13:14; S 26:24
^pS Ge 12:3;
Ac 3:25; Gal 3:8
28:15
^qS Ge 21:20
^rver 20;
Ps 121:5;
7-8^s ver 22;
Ge 35:3^t ver 21;
S Ge 15:16;
30:25; 31:30
^uDt 31:6;
8; Jos 1:5;
Ne 4:14;
Ps 9:10
^vLev 26:42
^wPs 105:10
28:16^x 1Ki 3:15;
Jer 31:26
28:17^y Ex 3:5;
19:21; Jos 5:15;
Ps 68:24,
35^z ver 22;
Ge 32:2;
1Ch 22:1;
2Ch 3:1
28:18^a ver 11
^bver 22;
Ge 31:13, 45, 51;
35:14; Ex 24:4;
Jos 24:26,
27; Isa 19:19
^cLev 8:11;
Jos 4:9

²⁰Then Jacob made a vow,^f saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me^g on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear^h ²¹so that I return safelyⁱ to my father's household,^j then the LORD^d will be my God^k ²²and^e this stone that I have set up as a pillar^l will be God's house,^m and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.ⁿ"

Jacob Arrives in Paddan Aram

29 Then Jacob continued on his journey and came to the land of the eastern peoples.^o ²There he saw a well in the open country, with three flocks of sheep lying near it because the flocks were watered from that well.^p The stone^q over the mouth of the well was large. ³When all the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would roll the stone^r away from the well's mouth and water the sheep.^s Then they would return the stone to its place over the mouth of the well.

^a 13 Or *There beside him* ^b 14 Or *will use your name and the name of your offspring in blessings* (see 48:20) ^c 19 Bethel means *house of God*.
^d 20,21 Or *Since God . . . father's household, the LORD* ^e 21,22 Or *household, and the LORD will be my God, 22 then*

28:19^d S Ge 12:8^e Ge 35:6; 48:3; Jos 16:2; 18:13; Jdg 1:23, 26
28:20^f Ge 31:13; Lev 7:16; 22:18; 23:38; 27:2, 9; Nu 6:2; 15:3;
Dt 12:6; Jdg 11:30; 1Sa 1:21; 2Sa 15:8^g S ver 15^h 1Ti 6:8
28:21ⁱ Jdg 11:31^j S ver 15^k Ex 15:2; Dt 26:17; Jos 24:18; Ps 48:14;
118:28 28:22^l S ver 18; 1Sa 7:12^m S ver 17ⁿ S Ge 14:20;
S Nu 18:21; Lk 18:12 29:1^o S Ge 25:6 29:2^p S Ge 24:11^q ver 3,
8, 10 29:3^r S ver 2^s ver 8

Ishmael's daughters. Sadly, until now he has been unaware that his Canaanite wives displease his parents. **28:10–17** The author backtracks to describe a particular stopover on Jacob's journey from Beersheba to Harran. About two to three days into his journey, Jacob stops at a place called Luz, located about 60 miles from Beersheba. Ironically, the first time Jacob will truly wake up is when he goes to sleep, for it is in the quietness of inactivity that he hears God. This is the second dream in the Bible in which someone explicitly experiences a revelation from God (cf. 20:3). Jacob dreams of a stairway to heaven on which angels descend and ascend, taking their directions from the Lord, who stands at the top of the staircase. The stairway is more like a ramp than a ladder, resembling the tower of Babel structure, which rebellious humans constructed to unite heaven to earth. In an act of grace, God himself gives the Abraham promise directly to Jacob. God now for the first time calls himself not only the God of Abraham but also the God of Isaac. Despite everything, he will also be Jacob's God. When Jacob awakens, awe overwhelms him. The words translated "afraid" and "awesome" (28:17) come from the same Hebrew word meaning fear. Together they capture the awe-inspiring experience of a creature coming into the presence of its Creator. Jacob responds that this place is significant because it is none other than the house of God ("Bethel") and the gateway of heaven, the place where

heaven and earth are united. Jesus will eventually serve as such a bridge between heaven and earth (Jn 1:51), finally bringing the Bible's storyline into complete unity (Rev 21:3). **28:18–22** When Jacob rises the next morning, he consecrates the site, names it, and makes a vow. He sets up the stone he'd used as a headrest to make a pillar and pours oil on it. A standing stone could mark the place where someone made a covenant (31:45), indicate the location of a tomb (35:20), or represent the 12 tribes of Israel (Ex 24:4). Gentiles frequently used them in Canaanite sanctuaries to represent divinities (cf. Ex 23:24; Dt 16:22). Jacob renames the site Bethel ("house of God") because of his experience, and he makes a vow—the first vow recorded in the Bible. He asks for divine presence, protection, provision, and guidance in exchange for his personal commitment to God, consecration of Bethel as a site of worship, and the giving of tithes. Perhaps Jacob, ever the bargainer, is still being Jacob here. **29:1–14** When Jacob arrives in Harran, he comes to a well. Wells often serve as the sites of significant encounters in the Bible. Abraham's servant met Jacob's mother at a well (ch. 24), Jacob will meet his future wife at a well (29:9), Moses will meet his future spouse at a well (Ex 2:15–21), and Jesus will introduce a woman at a well to a new relationship with God (Jn 4). Jacob talks to some local shepherds and learns his uncle Laban is well. When his cousin Rachel appears on the scene, Jacob is so excited that he singlehand-

4 Jacob asked the shepherds, “My brothers, where are you from?”^t

“We’re from Harran,^u” they replied.

5 He said to them, “Do you know Laban, Nahor’s grandson?”^v

“Yes, we know him,” they answered.

6 Then Jacob asked them, “Is he well?”

“Yes, he is,” they said, “and here comes his daughter Rachel^w with the sheep.”^x

7 “Look,” he said, “the sun is still high; it is not time for the flocks to be gathered. Water the sheep and take them back to pasture.”

8 “We can’t,” they replied, “until all the flocks are gathered and the stone^y has been rolled away from the mouth of the well. Then we will water^z the sheep.”

9 While he was still talking with them, Rachel came with her father’s sheep,^a for she was a shepherd. 10 When Jacob saw Rachel^b daughter of his uncle Laban, and Laban’s sheep, he went over and rolled the stone^c away from the mouth of the well and watered^d his uncle’s sheep.^e 11 Then Jacob kissed^f Rachel and began to weep aloud.^g 12 He had told Rachel that he was a relative^h of her father and a son of Rebekah.ⁱ So she ran and told her father.^j

13 As soon as Laban^k heard the news about Jacob, his sister’s son, he hurried to meet him. He embraced him^l and kissed him and brought him to his home, and there Jacob told him all these things. 14 Then Laban said to him, “You are my own flesh and blood.”^m

Jacob Marries Leah and Rachel

After Jacob had stayed with him for a whole month, 15 Laban said to him, “Just because you are a relativeⁿ of mine, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages^o should be.”

16 Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah,^p and the name of the younger was Rachel.^q 17 Leah

29:4 ^tGe 42:7; Jdg 19:17
^uS Ge 11:31

29:5
^vS Ge 11:29
29:6

^wGe 30:22-24; 35:16; 46:19, 22
^xEx 2:16

29:8 ^yS ver 2
^zS Ge 24:13

29:9 ^aEx 2:16
29:10 ^bver 16
^cS ver 2

^dS Ge 24:11
^ever 3; Ex 2:17
29:11 ^fver 13
9 Ge 33:4;

42:24; 43:30; 45:2, 14-15; 46:29; 50:1, 17; Ru 1:9

29:12 ^gver 15
^hS Ge 24:29
ⁱGe 24:28

29:13
^kS Ge 24:29
^lGe 33:4; 45:14-15, 14; 48:10; Ex 4:27; 18:7; Lk 15:20

29:14
^mGe 2:23; 37:27; Jdg 9:2;

25a 5:1; 19:12-13; 20:1; Ne 5:5; Isa 58:7

29:15 ⁿver 12
^oGe 30:28, 32; 31:7, 41

29:16 ^pver 17, 23, 28, 30; Ge 30:9; 35:23; 47:30; 49:31; Ru 4:11
^qver 9-10

29:17 ^rS ver 16
^sS Ge 12:11

29:18
^tS Ge 24:67
^uver 20, 27, 30; Ge 30:26;

Hos 12:12
29:20
^vS ver 18;

Ge 31:15
^wSS 8:7; Hos 12:12

29:21 ^xJdg 15:1
29:22
^yJdg 14:10;

Isa 25:6; Jn 2:1-2

29:23 ^zS ver 16

had weak^a eyes, but Rachel^r had a lovely figure and was beautiful.^s 18 Jacob was in love with Rachel^t and said, “I’ll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel.”^u

19 Laban said, “It’s better that I give her to you than to some other man. Stay here with me.” 20 So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel,^v but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.^w

21 Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife. My time is completed, and I want to make love to her.”^x

22 So Laban brought together all the people of the place and gave a feast.^y 23 But when evening came, he took his daughter Leah^z and brought her to Jacob, and Jacob made love to her. 24 And Laban gave his servant Zilpah^a to his daughter as her attendant.^b

25 When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me?^c I served you for Rachel, didn’t I? Why have you deceived me?^d”

26 Laban replied, “It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one.^e 27 Finish this daughter’s bridal week;^f then we will give you the younger one also, in return for another seven years of work.^g”

28 And Jacob did so. He finished the week with Leah, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife.^h 29 Laban gave his servant Bilhahⁱ to his daughter Rachel as her attendant.^j 30 Jacob made love to Rachel also, and his love for Rachel was greater than his love for Leah.^k And he worked for Laban another seven years.^l

^a 17 Or delicate

29:24 ^aGe 30:9 ^bS Ge 16:1 29:25 ^cS Ge 12:18 ^dS Ge 27:36

29:26 ^eJdg 15:2; 1Sa 14:49; 18:17, 20; 2Sa 6:23

29:27 ^fJdg 14:12 ^gS ver 18; Ge 31:41 29:28 ^hS ver 16; S Ge 4:19

29:29 ⁱGe 30:3; 35:22; 49:4; Dt 22:30; 1Ch 5:1 ^jS Ge 16:1

29:30 ^kS ver 16 ^lS ver 20

edly removes the stone from the well. In the previous story, he had moved a stone because of a divine encounter, and now he moves one because of a human encounter. When Jacob tells Rachel about his identity, she runs home, and Laban (her father) comes to meet Jacob and welcome him as his own “flesh and blood” (Ge 29:14), an expression that refers to a blood relative (Jdg 9:2, 2Sa 5:1).

29:15–19 After Jacob has lived with Laban for a month, Jacob agrees to work seven years in order to marry Laban’s younger daughter Rachel, who is much more beautiful than her older sister Leah. The seven years are equivalent to a bride price or a dowry, which he will pay to Laban (cf. 24:53; 1Sa 18:25).

29:20–30 When the time for Jacob and Rachel’s wedding arrives, there is a weeklong celebration (v. 27; cf. Jdg 14:12). But at the last moment Laban switches Leah for Rachel, and Jacob unknowingly weds her. The narrator uses the Hebrew

construction “there was Leah” (Ge 29:25) to describe Jacob’s discovery the morning after the wedding. This makes it feel as if the readers are seeing Jacob’s shocking discovery through their own eyes. Several facts explain why Jacob did not know Leah was the woman he wed the previous night: it was night and therefore dark, she would have had a veil on during the wedding celebrations, and wine probably impaired his judgment. Jacob’s irate complaint to Laban about this deception (v. 26) ironically echoes Isaac’s complaint about Jacob’s deceit (27:35). Jacob is learning lessons about the biblical principle of retribution. Jacob thus must work another seven years in order to marry Rachel. Laban is much like Rebekah, and he deceived Jacob just as Rebekah helped Jacob deceive his father, Isaac. As Jacob the younger brother deceived his older brother, Rachel’s older sister deceives him. The old adage is true in Jacob’s life: what goes around comes around.

Jacob's Children

³¹When the LORD saw that Leah was not loved,^m he enabled her to conceive,ⁿ but Rachel remained childless. ³²Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son.^o She named him Reuben,^{ap} for she said, "It is because the LORD has seen my misery,^q Surely my husband will love me now."

³³She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "Because the LORD heard that I am not loved,^r he gave me this one too." So she named him Simeon.^{bs}

³⁴Again she conceived, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "Now at last my husband will become attached to me,^t because I have borne him three sons." So he was named Levi.^{cu}

³⁵She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "This time I will praise the LORD." So she named him Judah.^{dv} Then she stopped having children.^w

30 When Rachel saw that she was not bearing Jacob any children,^x she became jealous of her sister.^y So she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I'll die!"

²Jacob became angry with her and said, "Am I in the place of God,^z who has kept you from having children?"^a

³Then she said, "Here is Bilhah,^b my servant.^c Sleep with her so that she can bear children for me and I too can build a family through her."^d

⁴So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife.^e Jacob slept with her,^f ⁵and she became pregnant and bore him a son. ⁶Then Rachel said, "God has vindicated me;^g ⁹he has listened to my plea and given me a son."^h Because of this she named him Dan.^{ei}

^{29:31} ^m ver 33; Dt 21:15-17
ⁿ S Ge 11:30; S 16:2; Ru 4:13; 1Sa 1:19; Ps 127:3
^{29:32}
^o Ge 30:23; Ru 4:13; 1Sa 1:20
^p Ge 37:21; 46:8; 48:5, 14; 49:3; Ex 6:14; Nu 1:5, 20; 26:5; Dt 33:6; Jos 4:12; 1Ch 5:1, 3
^q S Ge 16:11
^{29:33} ^r S ver 31
^s Ge 34:25; 46:10; 48:5; 49:5; Ex 6:15; Nu 1:6, 22; 34:20; 1Ch 4:24; Eze 48:24
^{29:34}
^t Ge 30:20; 1Sa 1:2-4
^u Ge 34:25; 46:11; 49:5-7; Ex 2:1; 6:16, 19; Nu 1:47; 3:17-20; 26:57; Dt 33:8; 1Ch 6:1, 16; 23:6-24, 13-14
^{29:35}
^v Ge 35:23; 37:26; 38:1; 43:8; 44:14, 18; 46:12; 49:8; 1Ch 2:3; 4:1; 1Sa 48:1; Mt 1:2-3
^w Ge 30:9
30:1
^x S Ge 11:30; 1Sa 49:21; 54:1
^y S Ge 16:4; Lev 18:18
^z Ge 50:19; Dt 32:35; 2Kl 5:7
¹ S Ge 16:2
30:3 ^b ver 7; S Ge 29:29
^c S Ge 24:61
^d Ge 16:2

⁷Rachel's servant Bilhah^j conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. ⁸Then Rachel said, "I have had a great struggle with my sister, and I have won."^k So she named him Naphtali.^{fl}

⁹When Leah^m saw that she had stopped having children,ⁿ she took her servant Zilpah^o and gave her to Jacob as a wife.^p ¹⁰Leah's servant Zilpah^q bore Jacob a son. ¹¹Then Leah said, "What good fortune!"^g So she named him Gad.^{hr}

¹²Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. ¹³Then Leah said, "How happy I am! The women will call me^s happy."^t So she named him Asher.^{iu}

¹⁴During wheat harvest,^v Reuben went out into the fields and found some mandrake plants,^w which he brought to his mother Leah. Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes."

^a ³² Reuben sounds like the Hebrew for *he has seen my misery*; the name means *see, a son*. ^b ³³ Simeon probably means *one who hears*. ^c ³⁴ Levi sounds like and may be derived from the Hebrew for *attached*. ^d ³⁵ Judah sounds like and may be derived from the Hebrew for *praise*. ^e ⁶ Dan here means *he has vindicated*. ^f ⁸ Naphtali means *my struggle*. ^g ¹¹ Or "A troop is coming!" ^h ¹¹ Gad can mean *good fortune or a troop*. ⁱ ¹³ Asher means *happy*.

^{30:4} ^e ver 9, 18 ^f Ge 16:3-4 ^{30:6} ^g Ps 35:24; 43:1 ^h ver 23; Ge 21:2; Ru 4:13; 1Sa 1:20 ⁱ Ge 46:23; 49:16-17; Nu 26:42-43; Jos 19:40-48; Jdg 1:34; 13:2; 18:2; Jer 4:15; 8:16; Eze 48:1 ^{30:7} ^j S ver 3
^{30:8} ^k Ge 32:28; Hos 12:3-4 ^l Ge 35:25; 46:24; 49:21; Nu 1:42; 26:48; Dt 33:23; Jdg 4:6; 5:18; 1Ch 7:13 ^{30:9} ^m S Ge 29:16
ⁿ Ge 29:35 ^o Ge 29:24 ^p S ver 4 ^{30:10} ^q Ge 46:18
^{30:11} ^r Ge 35:26; 46:16; 49:19; Ex 1:4; Nu 1:24; 26:18; Jos 4:12; 1Ch 5:11; 12:8; Jer 49:1 ^{30:13} ^s Ps 127:3 ^t Ru 4:14; Ps 127:4-5; Lk 1:48 ^u Ge 35:26; 46:17; 49:20; Nu 1:40; 26:47; Dt 33:24; Jos 19:24-31; 1Ch 7:30-31 ^{30:14} ^v Ex 34:22; Jdg 15:1; Ru 2:23; 1Sa 6:13; 12:17 ^w ver 15, 16; SS 7:13

29:31–35 Genesis 29–30 recounts the births of most of the Israelites' tribal ancestors. Despite the dysfunction we see in Jacob's marriages, we must never lose sight of the fact that God's blessing is occurring in Jacob's family. God is at work in the mystery and mess of human life. The birth of the children is clearly a gift from God. Leah views her first four children as a result of God showing compassion on her because her husband does not love her. The children's names link to life situations and suggest that Leah is attempting to address her plight. Reuben means "see, a son" and suggests that God has observed that Leah is unloved (cf. Ps 119:153). Simeon's name is associated with the Hebrew word "hear." Leah interprets this as God paying attention to her neglected status. Levi's birth suggests that finally Jacob might become "attached" to her because she has given him three sons. Finally, with her fourth child, Judah, she simply praises the Lord, for this is what Judah means. Leah is the first person to explicitly praise the Lord in the Bible, and her child will be the one in whom God's promise will be fully realized.

30:1–13 Rachel's jealousy of her sister may be one of the reasons why the Law of Moses later prohibits a man from being

married to two sisters (Lev 18:18). Rachel's desperation to have children may be difficult for people in modern western culture to comprehend, but in the ancient world, a woman's self-worth was determined by her offspring. Rachel's solution for her predicament is the same as Sarah's in Genesis 16: she gives her servant Bilhah to Jacob so that she can have children through her. Bilhah's children have names that signify events in Rachel's life—in this case, they reflect her struggle with her sister. Dan means "judge" or "vindicate." Thus, God has vindicated her with the birth of Dan. Naphtali means "struggle," reflecting Rachel's fight for status with her sister. God will later give a new name to Jacob: Israel, meaning "he struggles with God" because he struggled with God and humans and was a victor (Ge 32:28). In this distorted sibling rivalry, Leah resorts to the same methods as Rachel and gives Jacob her servant Zilpah, through whom she has two children who restore her happiness: Gad ("good fortune") and Asher ("happiness").

30:14–24 The rivalry reaches a new low when Leah procures Jacob's services in exchange for an aphrodisiac (cf. SS 7:13). Ancient peoples believed mandrakes induced pregnancy since their roots resembled a human form. But these verses

15But she said to her, “Wasn’t it enough^x that you took away my husband? Will you take my son’s mandrakes too?”

“Very well,” Rachel said, “he can sleep with you tonight in return for your son’s mandrakes.”^y

16So when Jacob came in from the fields that evening, Leah went out to meet him. “You must sleep with me,” she said. “I have hired you with my son’s mandrakes.”^z So he slept with her that night.

17God listened to Leah,^a and she became pregnant and bore Jacob a fifth son. 18Then Leah said, “God has rewarded me for giving my servant to my husband.”^b So she named him Issachar.^{ac}

19Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son. 20Then Leah said, “God has presented me with a precious gift. This time my husband will treat me with honor,^d because I have borne him six sons.” So she named him Zebulun.^{be}

21Some time later she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah.^f

22Then God remembered Rachel;^g he listened to her^h and enabled her to conceive.ⁱ

23She became pregnant and gave birth to a son^j and said, “God has taken away my disgrace.”^k 24She named him Joseph,^{cl} and said, “May the LORD add to me another son.”^m

Jacob’s Flocks Increase

25After Rachel gave birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, “Send me on my wayⁿ so I can go back to my own homeland.”^o 26Give me my wives and children, for whom I have served you,^p and I will be on my way. You know how much work I’ve done for you.”

27But Laban said to him, “If I have found favor in your eyes,^q please stay. I have learned by divination^r that the LORD has blessed me because of you.”^s 28He added, “Name your wages,^t and I will pay them.”

30:15 ^xNu 16:9, 13; Isa 7:13; Eze 34:18
^yGe 38:16; Eze 16:33; Hos 9:1

30:16 ^zS ver 14
30:17
^aS Ge 25:21
30:18 ^pS ver 4
^cGe 46:13; 49:14; Nu 1:8, 28, 29; 26:25; Dt 27:12; 33:18; Jos 17:10; 19:17; 21:6, 28; Jdg 5:15; 10:11; 1Ch 7:1

30:20
^dS Ge 29:34; 1Pe 3:7
^eGe 35:23; 46:14; 49:13; Nu 1:30; 26:27; 34:25; Dt 33:18; Jdg 5:18
30:21 ^gGe 34:1; 46:15

30:22 ^hS Ge 8:1
^hS Ge 25:21
ⁱS Ge 11:30
30:23 ⁱS ver 6; S Ge 29:32
^kIsa 4:1; 25:8; 45:17; 54:4; Lk 1:25

30:24
^jS Ge 29:6; 32:22; 33:2, 7; 35:24; 37:2; 39:1; 49:22-26; Dt 33:13
^mGe 35:17; 1Sa 4:20

30:25
ⁿS Ge 24:54
^oS Ge 28:15
30:26
^pS Ge 29:18

30:27
^qGe 33:10; 50:4; Est 2:15
^rGe 44:5, 15; Lev 19:26; Nu 22:7; 23:23; 24:1; Jos 13:22; 2Ki 17:17; Jer 27:9
^sver 30; S Ge 26:24; 31:38; Dt 28:11; 2Sa 6:11
30:28
^tS Ge 29:15

29Jacob said to him, “You know how I have worked for you^u and how your livestock has fared under my care.^v 30The little you had before I came has increased greatly, and the LORD has blessed you wherever I have been.^w But now, when may I do something for my own household?^x”

31“What shall I give you?” he asked.

“Don’t give me anything,” Jacob replied. “But if you will do this one thing for me, I will go on tending your flocks and watching over them: 32Let me go through all your flocks today and remove from them every speckled or spotted sheep, every dark-colored lamb and every spotted or speckled goat.^y They will be my wages.^z 33And my honesty will testify for me in the future, whenever you check on the wages you have paid me. Any goat in my possession that is not speckled or spotted, or any lamb that is not dark-colored,^a will be considered stolen.^b”

34“Agreed,” said Laban. “Let it be as you have said.”³⁵ That same day he removed all the male goats that were streaked or spotted, and all the speckled or spotted female goats (all that had white on them) and all the dark-colored lambs,^c and he placed them in the care of his sons.^d 36Then he put a three-day journey^e between himself and Jacob, while Jacob continued to tend the rest of Laban’s flocks.

37Jacob, however, took fresh-cut branches from poplar, almond^f and plane trees^g and made white stripes on them by peeling the bark and exposing the white inner

^a 18 Issachar sounds like the Hebrew for reward.

^b 20 Zebulun probably means honor.

^c 24 Joseph means may he add.

30:29 ^uGe 31:6 ^vGe 31:38-40 30:30 ^wS ver 27 ^x1Ti 5:8
30:32 ^yver 33, 35, 39, 40; Ge 31:8, 12 ^zS Ge 29:15 30:33 ^aS ver 32
^bGe 31:39 30:35 ^cS ver 32 ^dGe 31:1 30:36 ^eGe 31:22; Ex 3:18; 5:3; 8:27 30:37 ^fJer 1:11 ^gEze 31:8

show that God had a plan for Leah, and thus it is Leah who gets pregnant and not Rachel. Leah misconstrues Issachar’s birth as a reward for her giving Bilhah to Jacob (Ge 30:18). She regards her next son, Zebulun, as a gift, thinking that her husband will treat her with honor because she has given him six sons. The reference to Leah’s daughter Dinah seems to be an afterthought, as she is the only female mentioned and is not one of the tribal ancestors of Israel.

When Rachel finally gets pregnant, it has nothing to do with the mandrakes. God enables her to conceive. Her first child signals an end to her disgrace as a woman who is childless in this culture. The name Joseph means “may he add.” Joseph not only takes away his mother’s reproach, but later he will also take away the curse of famine from the world (Ge 37–50).

30:25–36 The previous verses detailed the birth of Jacob’s children, but this section describes Jacob’s acquisition of

wealth. If God was present in the previous blessing, he is just as present in this blessing. Jacob desires to return to his home but must ask permission to leave. He will act without this permission later when he sees that Laban is upset with him (31:2, 20). Even though Laban is a polytheist who has household idols (31:19) and practices divination, he still knows he has received incredible blessing because of Jacob’s presence (cf. 12:3). To compensate Jacob further, Laban agrees to a plan. After a long period of time, all speckled and spotted animals will belong to Jacob. Laban then sets out to cheat his son-in-law and decrease the size of the herd he will acquire by removing all the speckled and spotted animals from his flock. Then he puts significant distance between himself and Jacob’s flocks so that there can be no chance of interbreeding.

30:37–43 One of the culture’s beliefs was that showing something to animals mating would affect the offspring.

wood of the branches.^h ³⁸Then he placed the peeled branchesⁱ in all the watering troughs,^j so that they would be directly in front of the flocks when they came to drink. When the flocks were in heat^k and came to drink, ³⁹they mated in front of the branches.^l And they bore young that were streaked or speckled or spotted.^m ⁴⁰Jacob set apart the young of the flock by themselves, but made the rest face the streaked and dark-colored animalsⁿ that belonged to Laban. Thus he made separate flocks for himself and did not put them with Laban's animals. ⁴¹Whenever the stronger females were in heat,^o Jacob would place the branches in the troughs in front of the animals so they would mate near the branches,^p ⁴²but if the animals were weak, he would not place them there. So the weak animals went to Laban and the strong ones to Jacob.^q ⁴³In this way the man grew exceedingly prosperous and came to own large flocks, and female and male servants, and camels and donkeys.^r

Jacob Flees From Laban

31 Jacob heard that Laban's sons^s were saying, "Jacob has taken everything our father owned and has gained all this wealth from what belonged to our father."^t ²And Jacob noticed that Laban's attitude toward him was not what it had been.^u

³Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Go back^v to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you."^w

⁴So Jacob sent word to Rachel and Leah to come out to the fields where his flocks were. ⁵He said to them, "I see that your father's^x attitude toward me is not what it was before,^y but the God of my father has been with me.^z ⁶You know that I've worked for your father with all my strength,^a ⁷yet your father has cheated^b me by changing my wages^c ten times.^d However, God has

30:37^h 1 ver 38, 41
 30:38ⁱ S ver 37
 j Ex 2:16
 k ver 41; Jer 2:24
 30:39^l ver 41
 m S ver 32
 30:40
 n S ver 32
 30:41^o S ver 38
 p S ver 37
 30:42^q Ge 31:1, 9, 16, 43
 30:43
 r S Ge 12:16
 31:1^s Ge 30:35
 t S Ge 30:42
 31:2^u ver 5
 31:3^v ver 13; Ge 32:9; Dt 30:3; Isa 10:21; 35:10; Jer 30:3; 42:12
 w S Ge 21:22; S 26:3
 31:5^x ver 29, 42, 53; Ge 43:23; Da 2:23^y ver 2
 z S Ge 21:22; S 26:3
 31:6^a Ge 30:29
 31:7^b Lev 6:2; Am 8:5
 c S Ge 29:15
 d ver 41; Nu 14:22; Job 19:3
 e ver 52; S Ge 24:50
 31:8
 f S Ge 30:32
 31:9^g Job 39:2; Eze 31:6
 h S Ge 30:42
 31:10
 i S Ge 20:3
 31:11^j S Ge 16:7
 k S Ge 20:3
 l S Ge 22:1; S Ex 3:4
 31:12
 m S Ge 30:32
 n Ex 3:7
 31:13
 o Ge 28:10-22
 p S Ge 28:18
 q S Ge 28:20
 r S ver 3
 31:14^s 2Sa 20:1; 1Ki 12:16
 31:15^t Dt 15:3; 23:20; Ru 2:10; 2Sa 15:19; 1Ki 8:41; Ob 11
 u S Ge 29:20

not allowed him to harm me.^e ⁸If he said, 'The speckled ones will be your wages,' then all the flocks gave birth to speckled young; and if he said, 'The streaked ones will be your wages,'^f then all the flocks bore streaked young. ⁹So God has taken away your father's livestock^g and has given them to me.^h

¹⁰"In breeding season I once had a dreamⁱ in which I looked up and saw that the male goats mating with the flock were streaked, speckled or spotted. ¹¹The angel of God^j said to me in the dream,^k 'Jacob.' I answered, 'Here I am.'^l ¹²And he said, 'Look up and see that all the male goats mating with the flock are streaked, speckled or spotted,^m for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you.ⁿ ¹³I am the God of Bethel,^o where you anointed a pillar^p and where you made a vow^q to me. Now leave this land at once and go back to your native land.'^r

¹⁴Then Rachel and Leah replied, "Do we still have any share^s in the inheritance of our father's estate? ¹⁵Does he not regard us as foreigners?^t Not only has he sold us, but he has used up what was paid for us.^u ¹⁶Surely all the wealth that God took away from our father belongs to us and our children.^v So do whatever God has told you."

¹⁷Then Jacob put his children and his wives^w on camels,^x ¹⁸and he drove all his livestock ahead of him, along with all the goods he had accumulated^y in Paddan Aram,^{az} to go to his father Isaac^a in the land of Canaan.^b

¹⁹When Laban had gone to shear his sheep,^c Rachel stole her father's household gods.^d ²⁰Moreover, Jacob deceived^e Laban the Aramean^f by not telling him he

^a 18 That is, Northwest Mesopotamia

31:16^v S Ge 30:42 31:17^w S Ge 27:41^x S Ge 24:63-64
 31:18^y S Ge 12:5^z S Ge 25:20^a Ge 35:27^b S Ge 10:19
 31:19^c Ge 38:12, 13; 1Sa 25:2, 4, 7; 2Sa 13:23^d ver 30, 32, 34-35;
 Ge 35:2; Jos 24:14; Jdg 17:5; 18:14, 17, 24, 30; 1Sa 7:3; 19:13;
 2Ki 23:24; Hos 3:4 31:20^e S Ge 27:36^f S Ge 25:20

So if the female animal saw mottled branches while mating, her lambs would be speckled. In this story, Jacob outwits Laban using visual cues for his animals. But later he sees it not as genetic manipulation but as divine providence and therefore a miracle (31:10–13). Over the course of about six years, Jacob becomes extremely wealthy. **31:1–16** Jacob realizes he is no longer on good terms with Laban, and God tells him to return home. This is the first time that God has explicitly spoken to Jacob while Jacob is in Mesopotamia. His exile is over. But before leaving, he seeks his wives' approval. In order to garner their approval, he mentions that their father has cheated him by changing his wages "ten times" (v. 7). The number is not to be taken literally but simply stresses numerous occasions of deceit. Jacob recounts further that the angel

of the Lord intervened to multiply his flock. He calls this angel the "God of Bethel" (v. 13); this is the only time God is so named, and this identification calls Jacob back to his roots and the divine revelation he experienced at Bethel (ch. 28). Jacob can rest assured that God is going to return him to his homeland. Rachel and Leah concur with Jacob's assessment and even add to his complaint by saying that their father has essentially treated them as strangers and has "used up what was paid for us" (31:15)—the bride price. **31:17–21** Jacob flees for his homeland with his family and possessions. He departs unannounced and essentially sneaks away. Rachel adds insult to injury by stealing her father's household gods. These idols were protective personal deities that Laban kept in a household shrine.

was running away.⁹ ²¹So he fled^h with all he had, crossed the Euphrates River,ⁱ and headed for the hill country of Gilead.^j

Laban Pursues Jacob

²²On the third day^k Laban was told that Jacob had fled.^l ²³Taking his relatives^m with himⁿ, he pursued Jacob for seven days and caught up with him in the hill country of Gilead.^o ²⁴Then God came to Laban the Aramean^p in a dream at night and said to him,^q “Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.”^r

²⁵Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country of Gilead^s when Laban overtook him, and Laban and his relatives camped there too. ²⁶Then Laban said to Jacob, “What have you done? You’ve deceived me,^u and you’ve carried off my daughters like captives in war.^v ²⁷Why did you run off secretly and deceive me? Why didn’t you tell me,^w so I could send you away with joy and singing to the music of timbrels^x and harps?^y ²⁸You didn’t even let me kiss my grandchildren and my daughters goodbye.^z You have done a foolish thing. ²⁹I have the power to harm you;^a but last night the God of your father^b said to me, ‘Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.’^c ³⁰Now you have gone off because you longed to return to your father’s household.^d But why did you steal^e my gods?^f”

³¹Jacob answered Laban, “I was afraid, because I thought you would take your daughters away from me by force.^g ³²But if you find anyone who has your gods, that person shall not live.^h In the presence of our relatives, see for yourself whether there is anything of yours here with me; and if so, take it.” Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the gods.ⁱ

³³So Laban went into Jacob’s tent and into Leah’s tent^j and into the tent of the two female servants,^k but he found nothing.^l

31:20 ⁹ ver 27
31:21 ^h ver 22;
Ex 2:15; 14:5;
1Ki 18:4,6;
19:3; Jer 26:21
1S Ge 2:14
1 ver 23, 25;
Ge 37:25;
Nu 26:30;
32:1; Dt 3:10;
Jos 12:2;
Jer 22:6

31:22
^k S Ge 30:36
^l S ver 21

31:23 ^m ver 37
ⁿ Ex 14:9
^o S ver 21

31:24
^p S Ge 25:20
^q S Ge 20:3
^r S Ge 24:50

31:25 ^s S ver 21
31:26
^t S Ge 12:18

^u S Ge 27:36
^v Ge 34:29;
1Sa 30:2-3

31:27 ^w ver 20
^x Ex 15:20;
Jdg 11:34;

1Sa 10:5;
2Sa 6:5;
Ps 68:25;

1Sa 24:8;
Jer 31:4
^y S Ge 4:21

31:28 ^z ver 55;
^a S Ge 27:27;
Ru 1:14;

Ac 20:37
31:29 ^a S ver 7;
^b S Ge 26:29

^b S ver 5
^c S Ge 24:50

31:30
^d S Ge 28:15;
Job 29:2

^e Ge 44:8
^f S ver 19

31:31
^g S Ge 20:11

31:32 ^h Ge 44:9
ⁱ S ver 19

31:33 ^j Ge 24:67
^k S Ge 16:1
^l ver 37

31:34 ^m S ver 19
ⁿ S Ge 24:67-
64, ^o ver 37;

Ge 44:12
31:35 ^p Ex 20:12;
Lev 19:3, 32;
Dt 21:18; 27:16;
Jer 35:18

After he came out of Leah’s tent, he entered Rachel’s tent. ³⁴Now Rachel had taken the household gods^m and put them inside her camel’s saddleⁿ and was sitting on them. Laban searched^o through everything in the tent but found nothing.

³⁵Rachel said to her father, “Don’t be angry, my lord, that I cannot stand up in your presence;^p I’m having my period.^q” So he searched but could not find the household gods.^r

³⁶Jacob was angry and took Laban to task. “What is my crime?” he asked Laban. “How have I wronged^s you that you hunt me down?^t ³⁷Now that you have searched through all my goods, what have you found that belongs to your household?^u Put it here in front of your relatives^v and mine, and let them judge between the two of us.^w

³⁸“I have been with you for twenty years now.^x Your sheep and goats have not miscarried,^y nor have I eaten rams from your flocks. ³⁹I did not bring you animals torn by wild beasts; I bore the loss myself. And you demanded payment from me for whatever was stolen^z by day or night.^a ⁴⁰This was my situation: The heat consumed me in the daytime and the cold at night, and sleep fled from my eyes.^b ⁴¹It was like this for the twenty years^c I was in your household. I worked for you fourteen years for your two daughters^d and six years for your flocks,^e and you changed my wages^f ten times.^g ⁴²If the God of my father,^h the God of Abrahamⁱ and the Fear of Isaac,^j had not been with me,^k you would surely have sent me away empty-handed. But God has seen my hardship and the toil of my hands,^l and last night he rebuked you.^m”

⁹ Lev 15:19-23 ^r ver 19 31:36 ^s 1Sa 19:5; 20:32 ^t 1Sa 23:23; 24:11 31:37 ^u ver 33 ^v ver 23 ^w Dt 1:16; 16:18 31:38 ^x S Ge 27:44 ^y S Ge 30:27 31:39 ^z Ge 30:33 ^a Ex 22:13 31:40 ^b Ps 132:4; 2Co 11:27 31:41 ^c S Ge 27:44 ^d Ge 29:30 ^e S Ge 30:32 ^f S Ge 29:15 ^g S ver 7 31:42 ^h S ver 5; ⁱ S Ex 3:15 ^j S Ge 24:12 ^k 1 ver 53; ^l Ge 46:1 ^m S Ge 21:22; ⁿ Ps 124:1-2 ^o S Ge 3:17 ^p S Ge 24:50

31:22–34 When Laban hears about Jacob’s flight, he pursues him and overtakes him after seven days. Before he does, however, God intervenes in a dream and forbids Laban from harming his son-in-law. God thus fulfills his part of Jacob’s vow (28:20–22). Laban’s exaggerated lament to Jacob that he didn’t have the chance to send away his family with a great celebration reveals again his deceitful character. By now his only concern is to have his stolen gods returned. Jacob’s promise that the thief will receive the death sentence demonstrates that he is ignorant of Rachel’s guilt.

31:35–55 Jacob and Laban are finally reconciled, and the reconciliation is confirmed by a covenant ritual, complete with oath, sacrifice, and meal. Before that happens, Laban is mocked in his search for his gods. When he encounters Rachel, she tells him she is menstruating and thus unable to move from her seat on the container that is hiding the gods.

Because she is bleeding, which ancients associated with loss of life, she would ritually defile anything she touched. Under this logic, she was actually defiling Laban’s idols. Jacob’s harsh exchange with his father-in-law following Laban’s futile search is a litany of Jacob being cheated and exploited for 20 years (cf. v. 7). Nonetheless he realizes that God has been faithful to the vow Jacob made with him while in Bethel (28:20). Twice Jacob calls God “the Fear of Isaac” (31:42,53), the only time such a title for God occurs in the Bible. The names of the stones used in the covenant between Laban and Jacob (“Jegar Sahadutha” and “Galeed”; v. 47) refer to the same heap of stones in Aramaic and Canaanite. These stones now provide a boundary and nonaggression treaty between Jacob and Laban. The place name Mizpah suggests that God will be a witness to Jacob’s actions should he hurt Laban’s daughters.

⁴³Laban answered Jacob, “The women are my daughters, the children are my children, and the flocks are my flocks.ⁿ All you see is mine. Yet what can I do today about these daughters of mine, or about the children they have borne? ⁴⁴Come now, let’s make a covenant,^o you and I, and let it serve as a witness between us.”^p

⁴⁵So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar.^q ⁴⁶He said to his relatives, “Gather some stones.” So they took stones and piled them in a heap,^r and they ate there by the heap. ⁴⁷Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha, and Jacob called it Galeed.^{as}

⁴⁸Laban said, “This heap^t is a witness between you and me today.”^u That is why it was called Galeed. ⁴⁹It was also called Mizpah,^{bv} because he said, “May the LORD keep watch between you and me when we are away from each other. ⁵⁰If you mistreat^w my daughters or if you take any wives besides my daughters, even though no one is with us, remember that God is a witness^x between you and me.”^y

⁵¹Laban also said to Jacob, “Here is this heap,^z and here is this pillar^a I have set up between you and me. ⁵²This heap is a witness, and this pillar is a witness,^b that I will not go past this heap to your side to harm you and that you will not go past this heap^c and pillar to my side to harm me.^d ⁵³May the God of Abraham^e and the God of Nahor,^f the God of their father, judge between us.”^g

So Jacob took an oath^h in the name of the Fear of his father Isaac.ⁱ ⁵⁴He offered a sacrifice^j there in the hill country and invited his relatives to a meal.^k After they had eaten, they spent the night there.

⁵⁵Early the next morning Laban kissed his grandchildren and his daughters^l and blessed^m them. Then he left and returned home.^{cn}

31:43
ⁿ Ge 30:32, 42
 31:44
^o S Ge 21:27
^p S Ge 21:30
 31:45
^q S Ge 28:18
 31:46 ^r ver 48, 51, 52
 31:47
^s S Ge 21:30
 31:48 ^t S ver 46
^u S Ge 21:30;
 Jer 29:23; 42:5
 31:49 ^v Jos 11:3;
 Jdg 10:17; 11:29
 31:50 ^w Ge 16:6
^x Dt 31:19;
 Jos 24:27;
 Jdg 11:10;
 1Sa 12:5;
 20:14, 23, 42;
 Job 16:19;
 Jer 29:23;
 42:5; Mic 1:2
^y S Ge 21:30;
 S Dt 4:26;
 S Jer 7:11
 31:51 ^z S ver 46
^a S Ge 28:18
 31:52
^b S Ge 21:30
^c S ver 46
^d S ver 7;
 S Ge 26:29
 31:53
^e S Ge 24:12
^f S Ge 11:27
^g S Ge 16:5
^h S Ge 21:23, 27
ⁱ S ver 42
 31:54 ^j Ge 46:1;
 Ex 24:5; Lev 3:1
^k S Ge 26:30
 31:55 ^l S ver 28;
 Ru 1:9
^m S Ge 24:60;
 S Ex 39:43
ⁿ Ge 18:33
 32:1 ^o S Ge 16:11;
 2Ki 6:16-17;
 1Ch 21:15;
 Ps 34:7; 35:5;
 91:11; Da 6:22
 32:2
^p S Ge 28:17
^q Jos 13:26, 30;
 21:38; 2Sa 2:8,
 29; 17:24; 19:32;
 1Ki 2:8; 4:14;
 1Ch 6:80

Jacob Prepares to Meet Esau

32 ^dJacob also went on his way, and the angels of God^o met him. ²When Jacob saw them, he said, “This is the camp of God!”^p So he named that place Mahanaim.^{eq}

³Jacob sent messengers^r ahead of him to his brother Esau^s in the land of Seir,^t the country of Edom.^u ⁴He instructed them: “This is what you are to say to my lord^v Esau: ‘Your servant^w Jacob says, I have been staying with Laban^x and have remained there till now. ⁵I have cattle and donkeys, sheep and goats, male and female servants.^y Now I am sending this message to my lord,^z that I may find favor in your eyes.’”^a⁷

⁶When the messengers returned to Jacob, they said, “We went to your brother Esau, and now he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him.”^b

⁷In great fear^c and distress^d Jacob divided the people who were with him into two groups,^e and the flocks and herds and camels as well. ⁸He thought, “If Esau comes and attacks one group,^f the group^g that is left may escape.”

⁹Then Jacob prayed, “O God of my father Abraham,^f God of my father Isaac,^g LORD, you who said to me, ‘Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper,’^h ¹⁰I am unworthy of all the

^a 47 The Aramaic *Jegar Sahadutha* and the Hebrew *Galeed* both mean *witness heap*.
^b 49 *Mizpah* means *watchtower*. ^c 55 In Hebrew texts this verse (31:55) is numbered 32:1.
^d In Hebrew texts 32:1-32 is numbered 32:2-33.
^e 2 *Mahanaim* means *two camps*. ^f 7 *Or camps*
^g 8 *Or camp*
 32:3 ^r Nu 21:21; Jdg 11:17 ^s S Ge 27:41-42 ^t S Ge 14:6; S Nu 24:18
^u S Ge 25:30; S 36:16 ^v S Ge 24:9 ^w S Ge 18:3 ^x Ge 31:41
 32:5 ^y S Ge 12:16 ^z S Ge 24:9 ^a Ge 33:8, 10, 15; 34:11; 47:25, 29; 50:4;
 Ru 2:13 ^b Ge 33:1 ^c 32:7 ^d ver 11 ^e Ge 35:3; Ps 4:1; 77:2; 107:6
^f ver 10; Ge 33:1 ^g 32:9 ^h S Ge 24:12 ⁱ S Ge 28:13 ^j S Ge 26:3; 31:13

32:1–6 Angels are key to this section. The Hebrew word translated “angels” in verse 1 is also used for the “messengers” Jacob sends out to meet his brother, Esau (v. 3). So as God sends his angels to announce his coming to Jacob, Jacob sends his messengers to announce his coming to his brother Esau. The last time Jacob saw angels was on his departure from Canaan (28:10–12); now he sees what is likely “two camps” of them as he enters Canaan. Jacob names the place where he meets the angels Mahanaim (“two camps”), which probably refers to the two camps of angels. These are the only two places in the Old Testament where the phrase “angels of God” appears (28:12; 32:1). This is surely the land where heaven meets earth, and the angels’ appearance is an announcement of another divine appearance. There is no longer one group of angels ascending the ladder to heaven and another descending; they are both now on earth, signaling a momentous event.

The word “camp” becomes a theme of the passage as Jacob describes his own family this way (32:10) and seeks to pacify his brother with a “gift”—a word that sounds similar to “camp” in Hebrew (vv. 13, 18, 20, 21). Esau was living in the land of Seir, a region southeast of the Dead Sea, in a mountainous desert area. The news that he is bringing 400 men with him bodes ill for Jacob. **32:7–12** Jacob is afraid and distressed. The last time we saw such fear in the story was when Isaac heard that Jacob had stolen his brother’s blessing (27:33). Jacob divides his family and strategizes how to minimize the damage that his brother could inflict. He divides his family into two camps, an echo of the two camps of angels. His prayer is an example of a lament in which a petitioner pleads for help in a dire crisis. Here Jacob is in a desperate situation and appeals to God’s earlier promises.

kindness and faithfulnessⁱ you have shown your servant. I had only my staff^j when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two camps.^k ¹¹Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid^l he will come and attack me,^m and also the mothers with their children.ⁿ ¹²But you have said, ‘I will surely make you prosper and will make your descendants like the sand^o of the sea, which cannot be counted.^p’”

¹³He spent the night there, and from what he had with him he selected a gift^q for his brother Esau: ¹⁴two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams,^r ¹⁵thirty female camels with their young, forty cows and ten bulls, and twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys.^s ¹⁶He put them in the care of his servants, each herd by itself, and said to his servants, “Go ahead of me, and keep some space between the herds.”^t

¹⁷He instructed the one in the lead: “When my brother Esau meets you and asks, ‘Who do you belong to, and where are you going, and who owns all these animals in front of you?’ ¹⁸then you are to say, ‘They belong to your servant^u Jacob. They are a gift^v sent to my lord Esau, and he is coming behind us.’”

¹⁹He also instructed the second, the third and all the others who followed the herds: “You are to say the same thing to Esau when you meet him. ²⁰And be sure to say, ‘Your servant^w Jacob is coming behind us.’” For he thought, “I will pacify him with these gifts^x I am sending on ahead;^y later, when I see him, perhaps he will receive me.”^z ²¹So Jacob’s gifts^a went on ahead of him, but he himself spent the night in the camp.

32:10
ⁱS Ge 24:27
^jGe 38:18;
 47:31; Nu 17:2
^kS ver 7
 32:11 ^lS ver 7
^mGe 43:18;
 Ps 59:2
ⁿS Ge 27:41
 32:12
^oS Ge 22:17;
 1Ki 4:20, 29
^pS Ge 12:2;
 S 13:14;
 Hos 1:10;
 Ro 9:27
 32:13 ^qver 13-
 15, 18, 20,
 21; Ge 33:10;
 43:11, 15, 25,
 26; 1Sa 16:20;
 Pr 18:16; 21:14
 32:14 ^rNu 7:88
 32:15
^sS Ge 13:2;
 42:26; 45:23
 32:16 ^tGe 33:8
 32:18
^uS Ge 18:3
^vS ver 13
 32:20
^wS Ge 18:3
^xS ver 13;
 1Sa 9:7;
 2Ki 8:8;
 Jer 40:5
^y1Sa 25:19
^zGe 33:10;
 Ex 28:38;
 Lev 1:4; Mal 1:8
 32:21 ^aS ver 13
 32:22
^bS Ge 30:24
^cNu 21:24;
 Dt 2:37; 3:16;
 Jos 12:2
 32:23
^dS Ge 26:14
 32:24 ^eDa 10:8
^fS Ge 18:2
 32:25 ^gver 32
 32:26
^hHos 12:4
 32:27
ⁱS Ge 25:26
 32:28 1Sa 1:26;
 56:5; 60:14;
 62:2, 4, 12;
 65:15 ^kS Ge 17:5
^lS Ge 30:8

Jacob Wrestles With God

²²That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons^b and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.^c ²³After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions.^d ²⁴So Jacob was left alone,^e and a man^f wrestled with him till daybreak. ²⁵When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob’s hip^g so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. ²⁶Then the man said, “Let me go, for it is daybreak.”

But Jacob replied, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.”^h

²⁷The man asked him, “What is your name?”

“Jacob,”ⁱ he answered.

²⁸Then the man said, “Your name^j will no longer be Jacob, but Israel,^{ak} because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome.”^l

²⁹Jacob said, “Please tell me your name.”^m

But he replied, “Why do you ask my name?”ⁿ Then he blessed^o him there.

³⁰So Jacob called the place Peniel,^b saying, “It is because I saw God face to face,^p and yet my life was spared.”

³¹The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel,^q and he was limping because of his hip. ³²Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the tendon attached to the socket of the hip,^r because the socket of Jacob’s hip was touched near the tendon.

^a 28 *Israel* probably means *he struggles with God*.

^b 30 *Peniel* means *face of God*. ^c 31 Hebrew *Penuel*, a variant of *Peniel*

32:29 ^mEx 3:13; 6:3; Jdg 13:17 ⁿJdg 13:18 ^oGe 25:11; 35:9; 48:3
 32:30 ^pS Ge 16:13; 1Co 13:12 ^qJdg 8:9 ^r32:32 ^lver 25

32:13–21 After praying, Jacob continues to strategize, sending different waves of gifts to Esau. He takes care to ensure Esau understands these gifts are from his brother Jacob. Jacob’s intentions are clear: “I will pacify him with these gifts” (v. 20). By sending these gifts ahead to Esau, Jacob seeks to atone for cheating his brother.

32:22–29 Jacob has a divine encounter. He wrestles with a man during the night until the break of day. Jacob at first thinks his opponent is a mere human; later he finds out the truth (v. 30). The Hebrew word for “wrestle” sounds like “Jacob,” as does the name for the river, the Jabbok. Thus, the location, the main actor, and his action all combine to show the momentous nature of what is taking place. During the fight, the assailant cripples Jacob with a blow to his thigh. Crippled in pain, Jacob becomes aware he is fighting with a supernatural opponent, and he holds on, desperately seeking a blessing. He can not simply steal it as he had from his brother. But he cannot get the blessing until he tells his assailant his name. This recalls the earlier

encounter when he deceived his father by saying that his name was Esau. Now he must admit his identity as Jacob, a deceiver, to get the blessing from God, whom he cannot fool. By admitting his true name, Jacob may have thought he would be destroyed, but he is in fact blessed. He gets a new name, Israel, which God defines as the one who struggles with God and wins. But how does anyone win a fight with God? Brokenness leads to blessing. Not content to be blessed, Jacob wants to know the true identity of his divine opponent. That will have to wait for another era (Ex 3:15).

32:30–32 Jacob leaves in the morning, naming this location “Peniel,” which means “face of God.” Israel, formerly Jacob, renames the site from Jabbok to Peniel because he has emerged alive from an encounter with God. Clearly he did not see God face to face in a literal way, but he had a powerful personal encounter. As Jacob struggled in and outside the womb with his brother and others, he has a similar struggle with God in the womb of the Jabbok when he returns to Canaan, and he is born again there as Israel. A

Jacob Meets Esau

33 Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men;⁵ so he divided the children among Leah, Rachel and the two female servants.[†] ²He put the female servants and their children^u in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph^v in the rear. ³He himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground^w seven times^x as he approached his brother.

⁴But Esau^y ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him.^z And they wept.^{aa} ⁵Then Esau looked up and saw the women and children. “Who are these with you?” he asked.

Jacob answered, “They are the children God has graciously given your servant.”^{bb}

⁶Then the female servants and their children^c approached and bowed down.^d ⁷Next, Leah and her children^e came and bowed down.^f Last of all came Joseph and Rachel,^g and they too bowed down.

⁸Esau asked, “What’s the meaning of all these flocks and herds I met?”^h

“To find favor in your eyes, my lord,”ⁱ he said.

⁹But Esau said, “I already have plenty,^j my brother. Keep what you have for yourself.”

¹⁰“No, please!” said Jacob. “If I have found favor in your eyes,^k accept this gift^l from me. For to see your face is like seeing the face of God,^m now that you have received me favorably.ⁿ ¹¹Please accept the present^o that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me^p and I have all I need.”^q And because Jacob insisted,^r Esau accepted it.

¹²Then Esau said, “Let us be on our way; I’ll accompany you.”

¹³But Jacob said to him, “My lord^s knows that the children are tender and that I

33:1^s S Ge 32:6
 1^s Ge 32:7
 33:2^u ver 6
 5^s Ge 30:24
 33:3^w ver 6,
 7; S Ge 17:3;
 37:7-10; 42:6;
 43:26; 44:14;
 48:12; 1Sa 20:41
 2^z Ki 5:10, 14
 33:4
 5^s Ge 27:41-42
 2^s Ge 29:11;
 Lk 15:20
 3^s Ge 27:27
 33:5^b S Ge 18:3;
 Ge 48:9;
 Ps 127:3;
 Isa 8:18
 33:6^c ver 2
 d^s ver 3
 33:7^e ver 2
 f^s ver 3
 9^s Ge 30:24
 33:8^h Ge 32:14-
 16¹ S Ge 24:9;
 S 32:5
 33:9^j ver 11;
 S Ge 13:6
 33:10
 k^s Ge 30:27;
 S 32:5
 l^s Ge 32:13
 m^s Ge 16:13
 n^s Ge 32:20
 33:11
 o¹ Sa 25:27;
 30:26
 p² Ge 30:43
 q^s ver 9
 r¹ Ge 19:3
 33:13^s ver 8
 1^s Sa 40:11;
 Jer 31:8
 33:14^u Ex 12:38
 5^s Ge 14:6
 33:15
 w^s Ge 32:5
 33:16
 x^s Ge 14:6
 33:17
 y¹ Jos 13:27;
 Jdg 8:5, 6, 8,
 14-16; 1Ki 7:46;
 2Ch 4:17;
 Ps 60:6; 108:7
 33:18
 z^s Ge 25:20
 2^s Ge 12:6
 33:19^b Ge 34:2;
 Jdg 9:28;

must care for the ewes and cows that are nursing their young.[†] If they are driven hard just one day, all the animals will die. ¹⁴So let my lord go on ahead of his servant, while I move along slowly at the pace of the flocks and herds^u before me and the pace of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir.^v”

¹⁵Esau said, “Then let me leave some of my men with you.”

“But why do that?” Jacob asked. “Just let me find favor in the eyes of my lord.”^w

¹⁶So that day Esau started on his way back to Seir.^x ¹⁷Jacob, however, went to Sukkoth,^y where he built a place for himself and made shelters for his livestock. That is why the place is called Sukkoth.^a

¹⁸After Jacob came from Paddan Aram,^{bz} he arrived safely at the city of Shechem^a in Canaan and camped within sight of the city. ¹⁹For a hundred pieces of silver,^c he bought from the sons of Hamor,^b the father of Shechem,^c the plot of ground^d where he pitched his tent.^e ²⁰There he set up an altar^f and called it El Elohe Israel.^d

Dinah and the Shechemites

34 Now Dinah,^g the daughter Leah had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the land. ²When Shechem^h son of Hamorⁱ the Hivite,^j the ruler of that area, saw her, he took her and raped her.^k

^a 17 *Sukkoth* means *shelters*. ^b 18 That is, Northwest Mesopotamia ^c 19 Hebrew *hundred kesitahs*; a *kesitah* was a unit of money of unknown weight and value. ^d 20 *El Elohe Israel* can mean *El is the God of Israel or mighty is the God of Israel*.

Ac 7:16 ^c Ge 34:2; Jos 24:32 ^d Ge 34:10, 16, 21; 47:27; Jn 4:5
 e^s Ge 12:8 ^f S Ge 4:26; S 8:20 ^g 34:1 ^g S Ge 30:21
 34:2 ^h S Ge 33:19 ⁱ S Ge 33:19 ⁱ S Ge 10:17 ^k Dt 21:14; 2Sa 13:14

later editor adds that this story explains a current Israelite eating practice. Israelites do not eat the tendon attached to the hip because that is where the father of Israel was crippled in his struggle with God. Christians now eat bread and drink wine because of a being greater than Jacob whose body was broken and whose blood was shed for human sin. **33:1-16** Jacob is no longer a coward driven by fear. Now he puts himself in front of his family and humbly approaches his brother. Jacob meets Esau face to face as he had met God face to face. Any hostility that Esau may have harbored has vanished as both brothers embrace each other weeping. The events of the previous night have changed everything. In fact, the narrative contains an echo of the evening before when Jacob saw God’s face. Now he sees the same God in his brother’s face (v. 10). Later, the apostle John will declare that it is impossible to love God, whom we cannot see, while hating a brother or sister, whom we can see (1Jn 4:20). **33:17-20** Jacob had told Esau that he would come to him later in Seir (v. 14), but he goes to Sukkoth instead. It seems

that Jacob had no intention of going to Seir, which was located southeast of Canaan below the Dead Sea. Perhaps he still distrusts Esau, or perhaps he thinks he will journey there later. Sukkoth is on the east side of the Jordan, and here Jacob seems to build a permanent dwelling, as well as shelters for his livestock, which accounts for the place name. He moves from there to Shechem, following in his grandfather Abraham’s footsteps (12:6). Like his grandfather, Jacob is a semi-nomad; he looks for pasture for his sheep and settles near a town for a while, where he can engage with the townspeople. Here in Shechem Jacob purchases land—the second instance of a patriarch purchasing land (cf. Ge 23). Here is the first time God is identified with Israel in a title: El Elohe Israel (33:20). To this God, Jacob (like Abraham) builds an altar. **34:1-5** This chapter of the Jacob story details Abraham’s descendants’ first major clash with Canaanite people. It results in the rape of Dinah, the destruction of the men of Shechem, and the assimilation of the Shechemite women

³His heart was drawn to Dinah^l daughter of Jacob;^m he lovedⁿ the young woman and spoke tenderly^o to her. ⁴And Shechem said to his father Hamor, “Get me this girl as my wife.”^p

⁵When Jacob heard that his daughter Dinah had been defiled,^q his sons were in the fields with his livestock; so he did nothing about it until they came home.

⁶Then Shechem’s father Hamor went out to talk with Jacob.^r ⁷Meanwhile, Jacob’s sons had come in from the fields as soon as they heard what had happened. They were shocked^s and furious,^t because Shechem had done an outrageous thing in^a Israel^u by sleeping with Jacob’s daughter — a thing that should not be done.^v

⁸But Hamor said to them, “My son Shechem has his heart set on your daughter. Please give her to him as his wife.^w ⁹Intermarry with us; give us your daughters and take our daughters for yourselves.^x ¹⁰You can settle among us;^y the land is open to you.^z Live in it, trade^b in it,^a and acquire property in it.^b”

¹¹Then Shechem said to Dinah’s father and brothers, “Let me find favor in your eyes,^c and I will give you whatever you ask. ¹²Make the price for the bride^d and the gift I am to bring as great as you like, and I’ll pay whatever you ask me. Only give me the young woman as my wife.”

¹³Because their sister Dinah had been defiled,^e Jacob’s sons replied deceitfully^f as they spoke to Shechem and his father Hamor. ¹⁴They said to them, “We can’t do such a thing; we can’t give our sister to a man who is not circumcised.^g That would be a disgrace to us. ¹⁵We will enter into an agreement with you on one condition^h only: that you become like us by circumcising all your

34:3 ^lver 26
^mver 19
ⁿS Ge 24:67
^oGe 50:21;
Isa 14:1; 40:2

34:4

^pS Ge 21:21

34:5 ^qver 2, 13,
27; Ge 35:22;
49:4; Dt 27:20;
33:6; 1Ch 5:1

34:6

^rJdg 14:2-5

34:7 ^s1Co 5:2

^tGe 39:19;
49:6-7;

2Sa 12:5; 13:21;

Est 7:7; Pr 6:34

^uDt 22:21;

Jdg 19:23;

20:6; 2Sa 13:12;

Jer 29:23

^vS Ge 20:9

34:8

^wS Ge 21:21;

Dt 21:11

34:9 ^xver 16,

21; Dt 7:3;

Jos 23:12

34:10 ^yver 23;

Ge 46:34; 47:6;

27 ^zS Ge 13:9

^aGe 42:34

^bS Ge 33:19

34:11 ^cS Ge 32:5

34:12

^dEx 22:16;

Dt 22:29;

1Sa 18:25

34:13 ^eS ver 5

^fS Ge 27:36

34:14

^gGe 17:14;

Jdg 14:3;

1Sa 31:4;

Isa 52:1

34:15 ^h1Sa 11:2

ⁱver 22;

Ex 12:48

34:16 ⁱS ver 9

^kS Ge 33:19

34:19 ^lGe 49:3;

1Ch 11:21 ^mver 3

34:20

ⁿS Ge 18:1

34:21

^oS Ge 33:19

^pS ver 9

34:22 ^qS ver 15

males.ⁱ ¹⁶Then we will give you our daughters and take your daughters for ourselves.^j We’ll settle among you and become one people with you.^k ¹⁷But if you will not agree to be circumcised, we’ll take our sister and go.”

¹⁸Their proposal seemed good to Hamor and his son Shechem. ¹⁹The young man, who was the most honored^l of all his father’s family, lost no time in doing what they said, because he was delighted with Jacob’s daughter.^m ²⁰So Hamor and his son Shechem went to the gate of their cityⁿ to speak to the men of their city. ²¹“These men are friendly toward us,” they said. “Let them live in our land and trade in it;^o the land has plenty of room for them. We can marry their daughters and they can marry ours.^p ²²But the men will agree to live with us as one people only on the condition that our males be circumcised,^q as they themselves are. ²³Won’t their livestock, their property and all their other animals become ours?^r So let us agree to their terms, and they will settle among us.^s”

²⁴All the men who went out of the city gate^t agreed with Hamor and his son Shechem, and every male in the city was circumcised.

²⁵Three days later, while all of them were still in pain,^u two of Jacob’s sons, Simeon^v and Levi,^w Dinah’s brothers, took their swords^x and attacked the unsuspecting city,^y killing every male.^z ²⁶They put Hamor and his son Shechem to the sword^a and took Dinah^b from Shechem’s house and left.

^a 7 Or *against* ^b 10 Or *move about freely*; also in verse 21

34:23 ^rver 28; S Ge 12:16 ^sS ver 10 34:24 ^tS Ge 18:1

34:25 ^uJos 5:8 ^vS Ge 29:33 ^wS Ge 29:34 ^xGe 49:5; Mal 2:16

^yJdg 18:7, 10, 27; Eze 38:11 ^zGe 49:7 34:26 ^aS ver 7; Ge 48:22

^bver 3

and children into the family of Jacob, now Israel. Shechem rapes Dinah when she goes to visit some of the women of the area. With this note, the writer is giving an insight about the local Canaanite population. Shechem follows in the sins of the Canaanites’ ancestor (9:25). After he rapes Dinah, Shechem desires to marry her; this differs from a rape account later in the biblical narrative, after which the rapist abuses his victim further (2Sa 13). When Jacob hears what has happened, he keeps quiet, perhaps not willing to start a feud with the Canaanites. Jacob’s passive behavior—in spite of the great injustice committed against his daughter—leads to his sons taking revenge; later, David’s lack of action in dealing with his daughter’s rape will also lead to his son taking revenge for the act (2Sa 13).

34:6–12 Shechem’s father reacts to his son’s action by essentially legalizing the union through marriage, without any thought of rebuking his son. When Jacob’s sons find out, they are “shocked and furious” (v. 7). This is the same verb form that the author used previously to describe God’s

reaction to the evil of human beings before the flood. The term is translated “deeply troubled” (6:6) there. The solution the Canaanites proposed to Jacob’s family included not only a large bride price but also assimilation to the local population, with all its advantages. Such assimilation to the Canaanite standard of morality threatened to compromise God’s promise that Israel would become a blessing to the nations.

34:13–24 Jacob appears to take a passive role as his sons reply deceitfully to the Shechemites to avenge the family’s honor. They plot to accept Hamor and his son’s request only if all his men are circumcised. Thus, they plan to use a religious symbol as a tool for revenge. Hamor and Shechem convince their people of the value of being circumcised because, in their estimation, it will lead to the acquisition of great wealth.

34:25–31 Crippled with pain after being circumcised, the men of Shechem are easy victims for Simeon and Levi, who slaughter them and deliver Dinah (who was evidently being