

Genesis 25:19-50:26 Notes

I. The Generations of Isaac (25:19-35:29)

- In this section we see God's plan moving forward. He has established the foundation for the nation of Israel in Abraham and his life in which he laid down the core values of the nation, which were the Abrahamic Covenant and faith. But now we see God's plan continuing through Isaac and then his son Jacob. We see the Lord continuing to make them into the great nation that he promised to Abraham.
- In addition to understanding that God is moving his plan forward, we need to also understand that the main point of this section is to show that God is with his people. He is with Isaac and Jacob. And therefore he fights for them and helps them. If you look throughout this section you will see a continual repetition of this concept of the Lord being "with" them. God says he will be with them, they recognize God has been with me, even others recognize that God is with them. And so this is the emphasis. And again this will be important for Israel as a nation to understand down the road because this will be the same for them. God will be with them and will fight for them.
- **The Birth of Esau and Jacob (25:19-28)**
- We pick up here with Isaac and Rebekah. And from these first few verses, what do we know about Rebekah? She is barren. Who should this make us automatically think of? Sarah, which we saw previously. And this actually continues to set the stage for the rest of Scripture where barren women will conceive and bear a child and that child will have a significant role in Israel's history. But, on a side note, if you want to have an even greater birth than a barren woman conceiving and bearing a child, what would trump even that? A virgin giving birth, which you have with who? Jesus.
- So Rebekah conceives and while she is pregnant the two sons are struggling against each other in the womb. And the Lord declares to her that she has two nations dwelling in her womb and then what is the last part that he says, which is very important for what comes later? The older shall what? Serve the younger. And so we again have the Lord ordaining the destinies of not only the children but also the resulting nations.
- The kids are born and Esau is the first to come out, followed by Jacob who is holding the heel of Esau. And what you need to understand here is that Jacob is a schemer and his name, Jacob, actually carries that idea to it as well. And so we will see he will continually be trying to scheme. And we'll see that even in the next section.
- Real quick, before we move on to the next section, notice in verse 27 that Esau was a skillful hunter and Jacob dwelt in tents. Keep that in mind.
- **Esau Sells His Birthright (25:29-34)**
- You're probably familiar with this story but you have Jacob cooking and Esau comes in from the field exhausted or starving and asks Jacob for some of the food he is making (may be some irony since Esau is supposed to be the skilled hunter). The food here translated as "stew" in some translations is literally "red stuff" and

Moses points out that this is why Esau's nation is called "Edom," which is the same word here for "red stuff." It is a continual reminder to Esau and his descendants of what they gave up just for some red stuff.

- But anyways back to the story what does Jacob demand from Esau in exchange for this red stuff? His birthright. Now the birthright is significant not only in terms of possessions but also in the sense that it gives you the right to continue the family heritage, which in this case what would it give to the son of Isaac who had this birthright? The right to continue the Abrahamic Covenant. This is very significant.
- So you see Jacob has a strong desire to obtain this, even if by scheming, and this stands in stark contrast to Esau, who the text says despised the birthright. He didn't care about continuing the family heritage, which included the Abrahamic Covenant.
- **God Reaffirms Promises to Isaac (26:1-5)**
- In this small section we see the Lord reaffirm with Isaac the covenant promises made to Abraham. This again shows that the plan is continuing to move forward. But real quick also notice what we had mentioned before. In verse 3 the Lord states that he will be with Isaac. Remember we mentioned that one of the main points of this section was to show that God is with Isaac and he is going to fight for him and his people.
- **Isaac and Abimelech (26:6-35)**
- We then see Isaac using a play out of his father's playbook in the next section where he claims that his wife is his sister and all that. And we see here that God protects Isaac in the same way he protected Abraham, which again shows that the "I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you" part of the Abrahamic Covenant is still in effect with Isaac.
- Also real quick notice in verse 12 that Isaac reaped a hundredfold in his crops, which shows the Lord's blessing and again we see the Lord making this line into the great nation that was promised before.
- The last couple verses of this section point out that Esau took wives from the Canaanites, which why was this bad? Who said not to take wives from the Canaanites? Abraham. Because he knew the detrimental influence they would have. And so we see Esau further disqualifying himself from that chosen line.
- **The Blessing (27:1-40)**
- Now again we have a likely familiar story to a lot of you. We start out by having Isaac call Esau and he tells him to prepare for him a meal so that he can eat and then bless him. Why is this weird based on what we have heard before? Who should Isaac have been calling to bless here? Jacob. Why? Because the Lord's declaration that the older shall serve the younger. And so we often focus on Jacob and Rebekah scheming here, but who else is scheming? Isaac with Esau.
- And real quick I should point out that this blessing ties in with the birthright mentioned before and again affirms that it will be through this son that the heritage, in this case the Abrahamic Covenant, will continue through. And so the blessing seems to be the formal acknowledgement of the heir.

- So Esau goes out to hunt for the food, but who overhears all of this? Rebekah. And so she works with Jacob to develop a scheme to deceive Isaac into blessing Jacob. So she fixes a meal and they get Esau's cloak and cover Jacob with hair and then Jacob goes in to see Isaac. And this scheme seems so great and almost foolproof until what happens? Jacob speaks. And his voice is not like the voice of his brother Esau. And this should have sabotaged the whole plan but it ends up working, why? Because God caused it to work. There is no reason that should have worked but God made it work to accomplish his plan. And this is an important reality that we are going to see time and time again in the life of Jacob. Where Jacob will scheme and the Lord will intervene to help and keep the plan moving forward. One professor I had described this as "Jacob schemes but God redeems."
- So here we see that essentially the scheme of Jacob and Rebekah didn't really work in a sense (Jacob gets the blessing and birthright but then Esau wants to kill him so he has to leave the land), and Isaac and Esau's scheme definitely didn't work, and so who's plan ultimately is the one that worked? God's. And that's the point.
- **Jacob Sent Away (27:41-28:5)**
- Esau wants to kill Jacob and so Jacob has to flee and go outside of the land. Isaac and Rebekah send him to Rebekah's relatives in Paddan-Aram and tell him to find a wife there and to not take a wife from among the Canaanites.
- **Esau Marries Another Canaanite (28:6-9)**
- Esau continues to dig himself into a deeper hole as he marries another Canaanite woman to go against his father's instruction about not marrying Canaanite women.
- **Jacob at Bethel (28:10-22)**
- Back to Jacob. As Jacob is traveling to his relatives, he stops at a place called "Luz," which he later names "Bethel." And while he is there, he has a dream where he sees angels ascending and descending upon a ladder or stairway that connected earth and heaven. This dream emphasizes that God is present and again affirms what we have said all along that God is with Jacob. God has not abandoned his people but rather he is with them. Do you remember in John 1 when Jesus says that you will see angels ascending and descending on the son of man? What is his point? He is saying that God is with you. I am with you. Just like I was with Jacob so I am with you. And you can understand then too why one of the names of Jesus is Immanuel, which means what? God with us. Jesus is saying I haven't left, I am with you.
- And the Lord then reiterates the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant to Jacob but again notice what he says in verse 15. "I am with you." This dream and all these promises proclaim to Jacob that the Lord is with you, he has not left you, but rather he is present.
- Jacob understands this and is why he then names the place Bethel, which means what? House of God. He understands God is present and he is with me.
- But then as we look more at his response in the following verses, we see that he still has some room to grow and again he is always looking for a way to kind of

scheme. Look at verses 20-21. What does he say? He says that if the Lord is faithful to all of these things, then the Lord shall be his God. It's almost as if he is saying, "Lord if you do all of these things, then you can be my God." This shows that he doesn't quite get it yet and will need to grow in his understanding of the Lord and his relationship to him.

- **Jacob Marries Leah and Rachel (29:1-30)**

- In this chapter we have Jacob arriving in the land of his relatives and he meets Rachel who is the daughter of Rebekah's brother, Laban. And what you need to know about Laban is that he also is a schemer kind of like Jacob, but he's actually much better at that than Jacob as we'll see in his interactions with Jacob. But we'll also see that even though this is the case, the Lord is with Jacob and so he will fight for Jacob even in the midst of Laban trying to scheme against him.
- So Jacob loves Rachel and wants to marry her. Laban agrees that he can marry her after Jacob works for him for seven years. And you know the story. After the seven years are up they hold a feast but Laban schemes and gives who to Jacob during the night? Leah, Rachel's sister. Jacob confronts Laban and Laban tells Jacob to finish the week of the wedding feast for Leah and then he will give Rachel to him as long as Jacob works another seven years for him. Laban knows, as we'll see later, that he has been blessed because of Jacob and so he works it out to get him to serve another seven years. And on top of that he gives Rachel to him just after the wedding feast for Leah is completed probably in order to try to cause division amongst the family. He is a true schemer.

- **Jacob's Children (29:31-30:24)**

- And even though there is division amongst the family, it doesn't prevent God's plan from moving forward. Because what ends up happening at the end of chapter 29 and into chapter 30? They all start having a ton of kids. As one scholar put it, it's like they have a child bearing competition. And so you start to see God's plan in making this line into a great nation continue forward.
- Don't miss here in verse 31. What do we see there that is important based on what we talked about before? Rachel is barren. And remember what we established before that in Scripture, when barren women conceive and give birth, that child is going to be significant. And which child of Rachel in particular is going to be significant later on in Genesis? Joseph. And so this theme continues.

- **God Causes Jacob to Prosper (30:25-43)**

- The last part of this chapter shows once again that God is with Jacob and he will fight for him even in the midst of Jacob scheming as well as Laban scheming.
- Jacob knows that he needs to get back to the land and so he tells Laban that he needs to go. So they end up striking up this deal where Jacob will take all the flock that are speckled or spotted and every black lamb. Laban agrees to this but again remember Laban is a schemer so what does he do? He has his sons remove all the flock that are striped, spotted, and speckled, and all the black lambs and they took them a three days' journey away.
- So then of course you have Jacob trying to once again scheme. What does he do? He takes some sticks and peels them so that the white inside is exposed and he places these peeled sticks into the troughs of the flock because where the flocks

came to drink was also where they bred. And so Jacob's thought is that when the flocks would mate, they would see these striped sticks and therefore produce striped and speckled flocks. Now we have to point out, is this actually how this works? If you put a striped stick before an animal when mating, will it produce a striped offspring? No. This is a ridiculous scheme and a method that some people point out wasn't even viewed that seriously back in that time.

- And you may say, "well it worked didn't it?" Cause yes, the result ended up being that the flocks produced speckled and spotted offspring. But was this actually because of the sticks? No. It was ultimately because of who? God. And we again come back to that idea that "Jacob schemes but God redeems." That's what you have going on here.
- And so God works here to prosper Jacob in spite of Laban's scheme. So Jacob now has grown in terms of offspring as well as in possessions and so the main thing missing is land. He needs to get back to the land. And that's what we turn to next.
- **Jacob Flees (31:1-55)**
- Jacob needs to get back to the land and in fact notice in verse 3 that the Lord instructs Jacob to return to the land. But also notice what he says at the end of that verse, and "I will be with you." Again we see the theme of God being with Jacob.
- But we again have Jacob scheming in how he tries to return to the land. What does he do? He waits until Laban goes away to shear his sheep and then he takes his wives and kids and all his possessions and leaves for the land of Canaan. But was this a good idea? Was it a good plan to try to secretly run away when Laban was gone and not tell him he was leaving? No. And we have to understand a couple reasons why it wasn't good.
- First of all, if you are traveling with kids and livestock, are you going to move very fast? No. You will move very slowly and we see this unfold because Laban gathers his kinsmen and it only takes them a few days to catch up with them.
- Second, in the culture of that time, since Jacob and his family and all his possessions were under the roof of Laban, Laban would have been considered the head over all of those things. And so if you one day suddenly disappear with his daughters and grandchildren, what have you done? Essentially this is considered kidnapping. And back then especially, this was potentially punished by death. This seems to be supported by the beginning of verse 29. Notice what Laban says there, "It is in my power to do you harm." He has the right to punish Jacob whether by death or imprisonment.
- And so you can see that this was not a very good plan at all on Jacob's part. But we have to remember our motto, "Jacob schemes but God redeems." And so what ends up happening? God intervenes. Notice the rest of verse 29. Even though Laban recognizes he could harm Jacob, what does he say? "But God spoke to me." God intervenes to protect Jacob and again we see the Lord being with Jacob.
- And even Jacob begins to recognize that ultimately all that he has is due to the Lord being present and with him and fighting on his behalf. Look at verse 42. He recognizes that if God had not been on his side, he would have nothing. He's beginning to learn.

- So Jacob and Laban then go there separate ways. And Jacob has dealt with one obstacle in getting back to the land but an even bigger obstacle is still awaiting him and to that we now turn to in the next chapter.
- **The Next Obstacle: Esau (32:1-21)**
- After Laban is dealt with, Jacob still has the bigger obstacle of Esau to face when trying to enter the land. Last we saw of Esau, he was focused on killing Jacob and so this now needs to be overcome as well.
- [The angels at the beginning of this chapter may be God indicating to Jacob that he is still with him]
- And again we have Jacob scheming here in preparation for his encounter with Esau and he does so with a couple different plans.
- His first plan, which we see in verses 7-8, is to divide his camp into two separate camps. The thought being that if one camp gets attacked, then maybe the other will survive. However, in splitting his camp up, he has also made two weaker camps rather than one stronger one that may have a better chance to protect itself.
- He then prays to the Lord asking for help and asking that the Lord would deliver him from Esau, which is great but at the same time we see that he is still struggling with actually trusting the Lord in all of this. That this is the case is seen in the next section.
- In this next section we see Jacob's other scheme. In this scheme he decides to send Esau a gift, which essentially is a bribe. And in verse 20 he admits that this may or may not work since "perhaps he will accept me." So after praying to the Lord, Jacob decides on essentially trying to bribe Esau, which again proves that he is struggling to trust the Lord.
- **Jacob Wrestles with God (32:22-32)**
- We see at the beginning of this section that Jacob actually tries one more scheme in which he takes his two wives and two female servants and his kids across the Jabbok river. This seems to be another attempt at creating a separation between his family and Esau just in case it goes badly. But again this isn't a great plan because if Esau deals with the rest of the camp then the family is just sitting ducks and the river they just crossed could probably easily be crossed by Esau and his men since Jacob was able to send his family across it.
- It is at this time though when Jacob is left alone that he begins wrestling with a man that he eventually realizes to be God. And we have to understand what is going on here. Essentially what we have here is in Jacob wrestling with God, this is reenacting Jacob's life up to this point. God is revealing that he has always been a wrestler, a schemer. And do you notice how at a certain point it kind of seems like Jacob is actually winning? But then what happens God just touches his hip socket and it's pretty much over. And this again gives us a picture of Jacob's life up to this point. Because Jacob continually throughout his life thinks that he is winning but in reality who is in control? God. This wrestling match helps us to interpret all that has been going on so far, "Jacob schemes but God redeems."
- God then asks Jacob what his name is, not because he doesn't know his name but rather so Jacob understands that not only is his name Jacob but he has continually been a Jacob in his life, a schemer or wrestler.

- But then notice what God does here. He changes Jacob's name to what? Israel. This is important because the name Israel can mean "he fights/strives with God" or probably a better translation is "God strives or fights" with the implication being "God fights for you." This is what Jacob needs to understand. He has striven with God, yes, and he has striven with men and prevailed but it is not because of his own strength or cunning but rather it is because God fights for him. That's what he needs to understand. And this is not only foundational for Jacob's life but also for the nation of Israel as a whole. They need to understand that God fights for them, as we see through the rest of the OT.
- And notice what Jacob calls the place after this. Peniel, which means "the face of God." And this confirms what we said before that the man he was wrestling with was God.
- And so even though things seem to be heading in the right direction with Jacob he is still going to struggle with continuing to act as a "Jacob," which is what we see next.
- **Jacob Meets Esau (33:1-20)**
- So after this wrestling match, you still have Jacob scheming. And so we have another plan that Jacob hatches here and this time what does he do? As he sees Esau coming, he divides his family into three groups: Rachel and her kid; Leah and her kids; and the two servants and their kids. He then puts the servants and their kids in front, followed by Leah and her kids, and then Rachel and her son, Joseph, last. What's the idea here? If Esau starts attacking then those in the back might be able to escape. So if you were in Jacob's family and you wondered where you ranked on how much he loved you, now you know. And so you already start to see, which son does he love the most? Joseph.
- This again is not trusting the Lord but God turns it around once again and graciously allows him to have a peaceful interaction with Esau. And they then part their separate ways, with Esau returning to Seir and Jacob heading to the land of Canaan and settling in Shechem.
- **The Defiling of Dinah (34:1-31)**
- In this chapter we have the terrible event of Jacob's daughter, Dinah, being raped by Shechem, the prince of the land. He then tells his father, Hamor, that he wants him to get this girl to be his wife. And upon learning of this terrible event, you would expect Jacob to take some sort of action but what does he do? Nothing. And it seems that Jacob is actually scheming again to try and use this situation to his advantage. Because as we see a little later in verses 8-10, Hamor speaks to them about trading with each other, getting property in their land, and even intermarrying. This is terrible.
- And so Jacob is not only not taking action for what was done to his daughter but then by trying to unite with the Canaanites in intermarriage he is putting the line of the seed in danger. This is an all around terrible situation. And you can start to also see why God ends up having to get them out of the land later on when he sends them where? Egypt. Because he knows that if they stay in the land with the Canaanites, they are going to become more and more like the Canaanites.

- But notice when the brothers hear of this they are very angry. And they hatch this plan where they say they'll agree to give Dinah as a wife to Shechem as long as all the males in the city are circumcised. So then all the males get circumcised and while they are recovering from this, Simeon and Levi go through the town and kill all the males.
- While this was a better response than Jacob, it was also bad in that the crime only demanded the execution of those involved and not the whole city. Even though they acted wrongly they understood that the crime needed to be dealt with.
- But notice at the end there Jacob's response to the actions of his sons. Notice what he is primarily concerned about here. Himself (v. 30).
- **The Return to Bethel (35:1-15)**
- God then tells Jacob to arise and go to Bethel. Why is this significant? Remember when Jacob was originally fleeing from Esau on his way to his relatives where did he stop? Bethel. And what happened there? That's where he had the dream of the angels ascending and descending on the stairway. And do you remember the ridiculous bargain thing Jacob made there? He said what? If you bring me safely back then you will be my God. And so by sending Jacob back to Bethel, God is saying, "I did it. I was with you and I brought you back. I am your God."
- And this is why Jacob then collects all the foreign gods and gets rid of them because he recognizes that the Lord is in fact his God.
- We then see the Lord reminding and officially changing Jacob's name to Israel. You need to act like an Israel, no longer like a Jacob. And he reaffirms the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant to again show that the Lord's plan is moving forward and it is moving forward through the line of Jacob.
- **The Deaths of Rachel and Isaac (35:16-29)**
- We then have the account of Rachel's death as she gives birth to Benjamin. We now have all the 12 sons of Jacob who will become the 12 tribes of Israel.
- Also notice real quick in verse 22 that Reuben slept with Bilhah, Jacob's concubine. The reason for this is because back in that culture this action was normally done in order to assert your authority as either the new king or as the rightful heir. So Reuben is either trying to usurp his father's authority or he is trying to assert that he is the rightful firstborn and heir of the 12 sons. But in doing this immoral act to try and assert his dominance, Reuben actually loses his dominance and from this point forward is just the wannabe firstborn who doesn't really have much authority within the family.
- We then see Isaac dies and Esau and Jacob bury him.

II. The Generations of Esau (36:1-37:1)

- We have here the generations of Esau mentioned here just like we had the lines of the others who were outside the chosen line mentioned before. So we see even though Esau is outside the chosen line, he still receives some sort of blessing from the Lord to allow him to become a nation.

III. The Generations of Jacob (37:2-50:26)

- As we enter this last section of the book of Genesis, we once again need to understand what the main point of this section is. We have seen, through the life of the patriarchs, that the Lord is laying a foundation for Israel of certain core values that will be at the very core of who Israel is as a nation. In Abraham we have seen the elements of the Abrahamic Covenant and faith and in Isaac and Jacob we have seen the reality that God is with his people and fights for his people, which is emphasized even in the name "Israel."
- And this last section will build on this by establishing the main point that God turns evil to good. This should hopefully sound familiar because this is exactly what Joseph says at the end of this book, "you meant it for evil but God meant it for good." And so you are going to see that theme unfold throughout these chapters as God is consistently turning evil to good and that not only means evil actions or events but also the evil of people and transforming them to good.
- One professor I had summarized how all of these values connect, "That's what Israel is going to testify for the rest of their existence. Is that because of the Abrahamic covenant they are supposed to have faith in a God that is present and fighting to turn evil to good" (Chou)
- Hopefully a lot of the Joseph story is familiar to you and so we are going to just walk through this pretty briefly and point out some things along the way.
- **Joseph's Dreams (37:2-11)**
- As we begin the story of Joseph we need to clarify some things. First, at this point in the story we can often think of Joseph as this little kid, but how old does the text say he is in verse 2? Seventeen. He's not this cute little kid but rather he's an older teenager.
- And what else do we know about Joseph from the opening verses of this chapter? We also know that Jacob loved him more than any of his other sons. So he was the favorite and this shouldn't surprise us here because we already knew that based on Jacob's actions earlier, remember? Like when he was meeting Esau and he lines up his family essentially in the order in how much he loved them and we saw Joseph was last to allow the most protection just in case anything went wrong. And you know the brothers didn't forget about that. But this favoritism is also shown in this part of the story by Jacob doing what? Giving Joseph a robe or garment. And literally this is a long sleeved robe or garment not necessarily one of many colors. It could have been many colors but we don't know for sure [this idea of a coat of many colors comes from the LXX and Vulgate]. And this style of garment seems to be connected with royalty (2 Samuel 13:18). And this seems to suggest that as you now once again have the question of which of Jacob's sons is the line of the seed going to continue through, who seems to get Jacob's vote? Joseph, which seems clear by the giving of this garment.
- But anyways with all this context you can see why the brothers are as angered as they are when Joseph then tells them of his dreams where they are bowing before him.
- **Joseph Sold into Slavery (37:12-36)**

- So then the story continues on as one day when the brothers are out shepherding the flock, Jacob sends Joseph to check on them. And as he approaches the brothers scheme to do what? Kill him and then throw him in a pit.
- But then who chimes in at this moment? Reuben. And what do you remember about him? He has been disqualified but he is the wannabe so he interjects and suggests that they not kill him but instead just throw him in a pit. And his plan was so that he could come back later and save him and bring him to his father and maybe that would help restore him.
- But then you know the story, as they are sitting there eating they see a caravan of merchants heading down to Egypt and they decide to sell him to them instead. But you need to notice something here because it is very important. Whose idea is it to sell Joseph to these merchants? Judah. So you have Judah come on the stage and when he suggests his plan, notice what the end of verse 27 says, “And his brothers listened to him.” Who do we start to see is the real leader here? Judah. It’s not Reuben, his plan is unraveling, and it’s not Joseph cause he is in the pit. It’s Judah. And you are going to need to pay attention to this guy because these chapters not only tell us about Joseph but also about Judah. And at this point what do we see about Judah? Is he wicked or good? Wicked. And this is something God is going to have to change, just like the theme we mentioned, God turns evil to good.
- And so the brothers go through with this plan and they take Joseph’s garment and dip it in blood and tell Jacob that the wild animals killed Joseph. And don’t miss something extremely ironic here. Remember when Jacob deceived his father, Isaac, he did so with the use of clothing and now here Jacob is being deceived by his sons with the use of clothing.
- **Judah’s Wickedness (38:1-30)**
- We don’t have the time to go into all the details of this chapter but what we see here is what we established before, that Judah is wicked. This is seen in his interactions with his family as well as the ultimate example of his wickedness where after his wife dies, he ends up sleeping with his daughter in law thinking she is a cult prostitute. And when it is found out that his daughter in law is pregnant, he is quick to want to condemn her to death for her sin. That is until she reveals that he is the father and then he drops the whole thing.
- And what we find from this account is that Judah is wicked but also we see that he doesn’t really want to take responsibility in any way that’ll potentially come back on him and harm him. Like in selling Joseph he gives the reason so that his blood won’t be on our hands, and here he doesn’t really deal with the wicked actions of his sons, and then also when he finds out that he is the father of his daughter in law’s children he just kind of drops the whole thing.
- He doesn’t really take that responsibility and as we move through these chapters we are going to see that it is in this way that the Lord is going to transform Judah from evil to good.
- **Joseph in Potiphar’s House (39:1-23)**
- We now come back to the story of Joseph where we find that he has been sold to Potiphar, who is an officer of Pharaoh and the captain of the guard. We don’t

know for sure what Potiphar's role as captain of the guard was but some scholars have argued that he is the chief executioner actually, which is why he has a prison in his house, which we'll see later.

- And notice that as Joseph works in this house the Lord causes him to prosper and Potiphar notices this and so he makes Joseph the overseer of his house. And the Lord then blesses Potiphar's house. This ties back to the Abrahamic Covenant right? I will bless those who bless you and also in you the families of the earth will be blessed.
- But then the whole situation with Potiphar's wife occurs where she tries to seduce Joseph but he flees. And then she lies to her husband about what happened and so then what does Potiphar do? He throws him in prison. Real quick we need to point out a couple things here. What would you have actually expected Potiphar to do when he received this news from his wife? Execute Joseph. And who would have been the perfect person to do that? Potiphar. But the fact that he throws Joseph in prison may reveal that not only does he value Joseph but also he may not fully believe his wife.
- This seems to also be supported because he throws him in prison, which is where? In his basement. And then what does he do with Joseph? He puts him in charge of the prisoners in the prison. It worked upstairs so why not in prison as well?
- So then you have Joseph in prison for potentially up to 10 years and in this time the Lord will continue to refine and grow him.
- **The Cupbearer and the Baker (40:1-23)**
- You then have this account of when Joseph is in prison he interacts with these two prisoners: Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker. And they both have dreams and Joseph then interprets these dreams for them. He tells the cupbearer that his dream means that in three days Pharaoh will lift up his head and restore him to his position. And then the baker, seeing that that dream was good, tells Joseph his dream. Joseph tells him, and there's a play on words here, that in three days Pharaoh will lift up your head...off of you. And both of these situations came to pass.
- But real quick also notice though that Joseph asked the cupbearer to do what? When he was restored, to remember Joseph. But what do we see happened at the end of this chapter? Did the cupbearer immediately remember him? No, he forgot. And so Joseph has to wait another couple of years in prison and again God is refining him.
- **Joseph Interprets Pharaoh's Dreams (41:1-36)**
- So two years after Joseph interpreted the dreams of the cupbearer and the baker, Pharaoh has two dreams. Remember these? He dreams about seven plump and attractive cows that are swallowed by seven ugly and thin cows and then he also dreams of seven ears of grain that were plump and good being swallowed up by seven ears of grain that were thin and blighted by the east wind. He then asks for someone to interpret these dreams, but no one can and it is at that moment that the cupbearer remembers who? Joseph.
- So they send for Joseph and do you notice what he does in verse 14 before he comes to Pharaoh? He shaves. This is important for something we will talk about later on in Exodus. But for now remember that he shaved at this moment.

- So Joseph comes and he interprets Pharaoh's dreams that there will be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Joseph then gives his plan for what they should do in preparation and this pleases Pharaoh.
- **Joseph Rises to Power (41:37-57)**
- Pharaoh then elevates Joseph into a position of power, which essentially he makes him number 2 over the whole nation. Second only to Pharaoh. And we see God using Joseph to bring blessing to Egypt as well as to other nations as the famine starts to come. Again this points to God using his people to be a blessing to all the nations.
- We have seen how God has used and changed Joseph up until this point and now we need to see if his brothers have changed at all as well.
- **The Brothers' First Visit (42:1-38)**
- At the end of Chapter 41 we see that the famine is severe all over and so this also impacts the land of Canaan where Joseph's family lives. So Jacob sends his sons, minus Benjamin, down to Egypt to buy some food. This then leads to them interacting with Joseph and even though he recognized them, they did not recognize him.
- And so Joseph accuses them of being spies and what does he ask for as proof that they are who they say they are? He asks that they bring their youngest son (Benjamin) to him. Why does he want to see Benjamin? Because Benjamin is the only other son of Rachel and he is the one now that Jacob loves and so Joseph is wondering, "did you do the same thing to Benjamin that you did to me? Did you get rid of him like you got rid of me?" And obviously he wouldn't just take their word for it, so he demands Benjamin be brought to him. He wants to know if they have actually changed.
- So he sends them back but he keeps who locked up until they return again? Simeon. Why Simeon? If you look back in verses 21-22, you see that the brothers are talking about how they wronged Joseph and now judgment is coming back on them but then you also have Reuben saying that he told them not sin against the boy but they did not listen to him. And Joseph overhears this (v. 23) and so he knows that Reuben wasn't responsible and so then if you move down the pecking order, who should have stepped up after Reuben? The second born, Simeon. It's sort of narrowing down who the actual leader was.
- So he sends the rest back and he puts their money back in their sacks, which they find later and are afraid and then when they arrive home they recount all of this to Jacob and explain that in order to go back and get more food they need to bring Benjamin with them.
- Jacob is obviously not wanting to send Benjamin with them seeing as what happened last time he sent his favorite son to them. But notice something important here. At the end of this chapter, who steps up to try to convince Jacob to send Benjamin with them? Reuben. What does Reuben say here? He says that he will bear the responsibility and if Benjamin doesn't come back with them then what does he say Jacob can do? Kill Reuben's two sons. Why is this a ridiculous offer? First of all, Reuben sort of gets off free and doesn't get harmed himself, but then second, who are Reuben's sons in relation to Jacob? Their his grandsons. Do

you think Jacob would want to kill his grandsons? No. This is a ridiculous plan and again you see Reuben is merely the wannabe and not the actual leader and that is confirmed by Jacob rejecting Reuben's offer.

- **The Brothers' Second Visit (43:1-34)**

- Some time goes by, they run out of food and need to go back down to Egypt. However, they still need to convince Jacob to send Benjamin with them. And at this moment, who steps up? Judah. And what does Judah do here? Look at verse 9. He states, "I myself" (in the Hebrew this is emphatic), "I myself will be a pledge of his safety." What is Judah doing? He is taking responsibility, which remember he hasn't been willing to do before. And he also says that if he does not bring Benjamin back, then what? "Let me bear the blame forever." The term for "blame" here is the same word for "sin." And so Judah is essentially saying, "I will be as sin to you forever." This is a big deal. In an honor/shame culture like Israel this is huge. Judah is willing to bear the shame his entire life. In that sense, him dying would have been the easier way out but bearing the shame the rest of his life is even more severe. So not only is Judah taking responsibility but he is also allowing harm to come to him. Completely different than how he was before.
- So Jacob agrees and the brothers travel back down to Egypt and they are brought to Joseph again.

- **Joseph Tests His Brothers (44:1-34)**

- Joseph then orchestrates a test in which he puts food in their sacks as well as their money but then he also places his silver cup in Benjamin's bag. He then sends his brothers off but then sends his steward to go after them and confront them about taking the silver cup. They then find the cup in Benjamin's bag and they all head back to Joseph.
- Joseph declares that he will only take Benjamin to be his servant because it was found in his bag. Do you see what Joseph is doing here? Again he is testing them to see if they have actually changed. Will they actually defend Benjamin or just leave him and kind of do what they did to him?
- But then notice verse 18. Who steps up? Judah. And he recounts the whole conversation they had previously with Joseph as well as the conversation Judah had with Jacob. And he explains that he was the pledge of safety that Benjamin would be brought back. And look at verse 33. This is so profound. What does he say there? He asks that he would take the place of Benjamin and he would be a servant instead. What do we call this? Substitution. He is willing to take the place of Benjamin. But also this ties into the idea of corporate solidarity that we have mentioned before because the reason he can actually be this substitute is because he is the leader. And as the leader, this would be a fair exchange. This is what it means to be a leader. And we are going to see later on in Israel's history that this ability of corporate solidarity is tied in with what it means to be a king and we are going to see in just a little bit that the kingly line is through who? Judah. And so this all starts to make sense and tie together that Judah is demonstrating what a true leader and eventually what a true king should look like, one who has corporate solidarity with his people and as such can be a substitute for his people.

That is a true leader and a true king. And we see that ultimately unfold later on with Jesus' substitution for us on the cross. He is the true king and leader who can substitute for his people.

- Judah has changed, he takes the responsibility and then we come into chapter 45. And we need to keep in mind, who is ultimately responsible for this transformation? God. He is the one who turns evil to good.

- **The Reveal (45:1-28)**

- At this point, Joseph can no longer control himself and he sends everyone out except for his brothers and what does he say in verse 3? "I am Joseph." In an absolute shocking moment, Joseph reveals that he is in fact their brother. And to help capture the shock of this moment I had a professor in college who, during a chapel message, taught on this passage and the example he used has stuck with me. He stated that the only semi-equivalent shocking reveal to this would have been in Star Wars when Darth Vader revealed himself to be Luke's dad. And that shock is what you have to picture here. And you can also see the emotion embedded in here.

- And so they weep together and Joseph tells them of what God has done in all of this. And we see that since Pharaoh values Joseph so much he tells him to send for his father and have his whole family come to dwell in Egypt. And that's what happens. The brothers return to Jacob and tell him that Joseph is alive and he believes and they begin to head to Egypt.

- **The Journey to Egypt (46:1-34)**

- So Jacob and all his family start to head to Egypt and notice in verses 2-3 that the Lord speaks to Jacob and what does he tell him? Don't be afraid to go down to Egypt. Why is this significant? Because Jacob knew that he should not leave the land, just like Isaac and Abraham learned, but the Lord is affirming to him that this is all part of the plan. It'll be there that he will make them into a great nation and he will be with them to bring them back out again. This also connects with the prophecy the Lord made to Abraham that his descendants would be afflicted in a foreign land for 400 years and so this is setting the stage for that. This is all part of the plan.

- So they come to the land and do you remember where they settle in Egypt? Goshen. This is important because not only is it a good and fertile land but also it is pretty isolated. Remember why we mentioned before that God needed to get Israel out of the land? Because they were being corrupted by the Canaanites and so God brings them to a place that they can grow into a great nation without that corruption.

- **Blessing in Egypt (47:1-31)**

- We see here that Jacob meets Pharaoh and blesses him, which again ties into the idea that "in you the families of the earth shall be blessed."
- And we also see the Egyptian people selling everything to Pharaoh in order to receive food and so they survive but we see that it is at a cost, which will likely come into play later.

- But in contrast to the Egyptians, notice verse 27. Israel gained possessions and what? Were fruitful and multiplied greatly. Again connecting back to show God's plan is still on track and is moving forward.
- **Jacob Blesses Ephraim and Manasseh (48:1-22)**
- Jacob is nearing the end of his life and so Joseph brings his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh to Jacob so that he will bless them. These two sons will often function almost as Joseph having a double portion in that they will take Joseph's spot when talking about Jacob's sons.
- We see another example of God's election here in that Jacob gives the blessing to Ephraim who is the younger brother.
- **Jacob Blesses His Sons (49:1-27)**
- In this section you have Jacob blessing his sons with prophetic announcements that give the destiny for each of these sons. And we have to remember that these 12 sons will make up the tribes of Israel and so these prophetic announcements will impact the tribes, which means they will have an impact on the nation of Israel in the future.
- Unfortunately we don't have the time to go in detail through all of these different prophetic announcements, but we will just point out a couple things and focus primarily on one blessing in particular.
- Notice that Reuben is the first one addressed and we see that he is disqualified from having preeminence, which affirms what we said before, because he slept with Jacob's concubine.
- Then you have Simeon and Levi who killed the people of the city of Shechem and as a result their tribes are both going to be scattered throughout Israel. Levi is the tribe of the priests and so their scattering seems to be a good thing, but this may suggest that Simeon's scattering is not (essentially they are dissolved into the tribe of Judah at a later point).
- Then we come to Judah, which as I'm sure you can imagine is important because he is the leader and this is going to be affirmed here. And we actually see that it will be through Judah's line that the line of the seed will continue. We need to pay particular attention to verse 10, which is a very important verse. The first half of the verse states that "the scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet." This clearly indicates that his line is the royal line that kings will come through. The next phrase is also key. Some translations may say something like "until tribute comes to him" or "until he to whom it belongs shall come." But literally, and some translations say this as well, the text says, "Until Shiloh comes." The name Shiloh, comes from the root meaning "peace," for example this root is connected with the term shalom. And so Shiloh, is the one who is connected with peace and will bring peace. Which is also picked up later like in Isaiah 9:6, which refers to the Messiah as the "Prince of Peace." So this Shiloh will be from the royal line and will bring peace and notice what else this verse says, "and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples." The "peoples" indicates that this is referring to the whole world, which seems to be connecting with the Abrahamic Covenant and how that covenant indicates a worldwide effect and we see that it is through this Shiloh that this worldwide effect is going to

come about. And then in verse 11 we also see some elements that appear like new creation terminology where a vine is like something you can tie a donkey to, which wouldn't do much good with a vine like today but maybe this vine being referred to is now almost like a tree and sturdy enough to tie a donkey to. And then washing garments in wine or grape juice seems to indicate that these things are as plentiful as water. Again possibly pointing to a new creation. This ties in the blessing to all the nations to the blessing of new creation.

- This Shiloh will fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant and all that is tied in with that, which is the Noahic Covenant and the blessing of creation. It will be through this Shiloh that we can get back to original creation and that blessing and rest.
- We don't really have time to go through the rest of these but note also that Joseph will be fruitful, which we clearly see played out in the tribes later on with Manasseh and Ephraim being very fruitful tribes.
- **The Death of Jacob (49:28-50:14)**
- We then see Jacob dies and there is weeping for him, but notice it is not just his family that weeps but also who? The Egyptians. They weep for him as well, which shows that they valued Jacob and also their weeping for Jacob starts to put Israel on display even to the Canaanites who notice this great mourning of the Egyptians. So they bury Jacob back in the land of Canaan and then they return to Egypt.
- **The Conversation (50:15-21)**
- After Jacob dies, Joseph's brothers are afraid that Joseph is going to get revenge on them and so they talk with him and it is in this conversation that you have the famous phrase that has been the theme of this section. Joseph declares to his brothers that even though they meant it for evil, God meant it for good. We have seen this unfold already in the lives of individuals as well as how God has orchestrated events, but it is also fitting to occur towards the end of this book because it serves as a reminder to Israel and to us that our God is the God who turns evil to good and this includes even the fall, which we saw at the beginning of Genesis. God will work to turn to good as well.
- **Joseph Dies (50:22-26)**
- The book then ends with the death of Joseph. But notice where he is buried. In Egypt. And before he dies he asks that when God brings his people back out of this land, that they would bring his bones with them to bury in the land that God had promised them. And this is a reminder that they need to get back to the land. Remember this is part of the Abrahamic Covenant (land, seed, and blessing). They need to get back and this sets the stage for how that is going to happen, which leads us into the book of Exodus.