

Supplement to the program

THE STORY OF JACOB AND JOSEPH

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The Story of Jacob and Joseph

Background

The story of Jacob and Joseph is part of the ancient Hebrew histories in the book of Genesis. Genesis follows a spiritual family lineage from the creation of man to the formation of the nation of Israel. The reason for the historical record of this family line is to show how God unfolded His revelation through a faithful people, while the other family lines fell prey to idolatry and superstition.

The family line of the Hebrews began with Adam and Eve's first two sons, Cain and Abel. Abel's worship to God was acceptable, while Cain's was not. Cain rebelled and killed his faithful brother. Then Adam and Eve had another son, Seth. After Seth the faithful family tree spread: ADAM-Seth-Enosh-Kenan-Mahalalel-Jared-Enoch-Methuselah-Lamech-NOAH-Shem-Arpachshad-Shelah-Ebah-Peleg-Reu-Serug-Nahor-Terah-ABRAHAM-ISAAC-JACOB (Israel)-JOSEPH and the twelve tribes.

The family line is very long. Only a few key figures along the way are picked out to talk about in detail. These main figures are Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and then Moses. Three generations within this family line lived in the land of Canaan—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. During this time God spoke through the father of each generation, thus the term *patriarch* which means *father*. When the patriarch was old and ready to pass on the family inheritance, it was always passed on to the son who held the firstborn position, often called the *birthright*. The birthright entitled the son not only to the inheritance, but to the leadership status of the family line as well. The patriarch would ask God's favor to follow the birthright. This favor was called the *blessing*. To receive the blessing meant more than having favor with God; it also meant that one became responsible for both the physical and spiritual welfare of the godly family lineage.

Introduction

The Story of Jacob and Joseph begins with God's announcement to Rebekah (Jacob's mother) that she will have twins and that the younger son will be the ruler and patriarch over God's people. It finishes with all of Jacob's descendants entering into the land of Egypt under Joseph's rule.

The setting for the first part of this story (Jacob) is found in Genesis 25:19-34, 27:1-33:20.

The setting for the second part (Joseph) is found in Genesis 37:1-36, 39:1-46:27.

The ultimate purpose of these stories in the book of Genesis is to show how God's guidance and blessings follow those that He called for His purposes, regardless of how fleshly and deceitful human nature can be.

The story line in this video moves along quickly and occasionally jumps from one text to another. It may be best to watch the video in sequences, using both your Bible and this guide for text reading and discussion time. See how well you can remember details in the scripture text as it compares to the story line in the video. Questions provided in this guide are designed to initiate discussion, not replace it. Be creative! Think up some of your own questions to help each other to learn more about the facts surrounding the biblical story.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

0:00:00-0:05:59

GOD SPEAKS TO REBEKAH ABOUT THE TWINS IN HER WOMB.

Genesis 25:19-26

God told Rebekah that there were “two nations in her womb....” Jacob was to later become the nation of Israel. What nation of people was Esau to become?

The Edomite nation. See Genesis 36:40.

How long were Isaac and Rebekah married before she gave birth to the twins?

20 years. See Genesis 25:20, 25

0:06:00-0:13:34

REBEKAH FAVORS JACOB. ESAU FORSAKES HIS SPIRITUAL BIRTHRIGHT FOR A MEAL.

Genesis 25:27-34

Do you think Rebekah acted properly when she spoke to Jacob about the prophecy made by God concerning Esau’s birthright?

Probably not. It was God’s prophecy. Could He not bring it to pass without her scheming?

What does Jacob and Esau’s concern for the birthright reveal about their priorities in life?

Esau seemed to care little for the authority and spiritual responsibilities he would eventually be blessed with. Jacob thought more on the future and what the birthright blessing included, even though he sought it through devious means.

0:13:35-0:27:38

REBEKAH AND JACOB DECEIVE ISAAC AND STEAL ESAU’S BLESSING. REBEKAH AND ISAAC SEND JACOB TO HARAN.

Genesis 27:1-28:5

Who do you think holds the blame for the trouble between Jacob and Esau—Rebekah or Isaac?

Maybe it was both! Does it not seem that it was their favoritism that drove these two brothers apart?

Why was it so important that Jacob take a wife from Rebekah’s family and not a local Hittite or Canaanite woman?

Hittites and Canaanites were direct descendants of Ham, the cursed son of Noah. See Genesis 10:6-20. The family of Laban was not only a relative of Rebekah, but he was also of the family lineage of Abraham. Laban’s grandfather was Abraham’s brother Nahor. See Genesis 22:20.

0:27:39-0:29:30

JACOB STOPS AT LUZ TO SLEEP FOR THE NIGHT. GOD SPEAKS TO JACOB FOR THE FIRST TIME THROUGH A DREAM.

Genesis 28:10-22

The video version of this story differs in many ways from the biblical account. Can you name three differences?

- (1) Jacob has the dream at night, not during the noonday sun.
- (2) In the dream there was a ladder or stairway, not a rock cliff.
- (3) There were angels ascending and descending on the ladder, not little children playing on the rocks.

0:29:31-0:31:48

JACOB COMES TO THE WELL WHERE HE MEETS RACHEL.

Genesis 29:1-14

The video record leaves out a significant detail about Jacob's encounter with Rachel. What is it?

After he kisses Rachel, he cries and talks to her about why he is there. See Genesis 29:12(a).

0:31:49-0:42:15

LABAN AGREES TO ALLOW RACHEL TO MARRY JACOB IN EXCHANGE FOR SEVEN YEARS OF SERVICE. THEN LABAN TRICKS JACOB INTO ANOTHER SEVEN YEARS.

Genesis 29:14-30

Jacob labored seven years to marry Rachel. But Laban tricked him and he had to labor seven more years. What does this show us about Jacob? Is he changing? Are your feelings toward Jacob changing at all?

0:42:16-0:44:19

LEAH AND RACHEL HAVE CHILDREN TO JACOB.

Genesis 29:31-30:24

Having children through a wife's maidservant was customary in early Eastern culture. Where do we find the first biblical reference to this custom?

Abraham and Hagar in Genesis 16:2-3.

Notice how the problem of favoritism continued into Jacob's life. In part two of the video, make special note of who it is that initiates mistreatment towards Rachel's eldest son!

0:44:20-0:46:35

JACOB INCREASES HIS FLOCKS.

Genesis 30:25-31:21

What do you think of the method Jacob used to effect the offspring of the breeding sheep?

Consider Genesis 31:4-12

0:46:36-0:51:00

JACOB FLEES FROM LABAN AND RETURNS TO CANAAN. JACOB MEETS ESAU AND THEY RECONCILE THEIR FEUD.

Genesis 33:1-9

An important event is left out of the story of Jacob, just before he meets with Esau. What is it and how does it suggest a change in Jacob's character?

The event is Jacob's encounter with the angel of God. Jacob meets his match and realizes that he can prosper *only* by the blessing of God. We know there is a character change because Jacob's name is changed from Jacob (heel-catcher) to Israel (struggles-with-God).

0:51:14-0:58:57

JOSEPH DREAMS ABOUT HIS FAMILY. JOSEPH IS DESPISED BECAUSE OF THE COAT HIS FATHER MADE FOR HIM.

Genesis 37:1-11

In Joseph's dreams he is exalted above even his mother and father. Could this mean that Benjamin had not been born to Rachel yet, since she died in childbirth?

See Genesis 35:16-19

Some scholars think that the coat given to Joseph was a special tunic that was worn by those who were given a ruling position such as overseer or foreman. Do you think it was Joseph's qualifications or his father's favoritism that lead to this exalted position?

Since the Bible doesn't record Joseph's qualifications, it is more than likely that his position was due to Jacob's favoritism, which only fueled the resentment between the brothers. See Genesis 37:3, 4

0:58:58-1:04:50

JOSEPH'S BROTHERS THROW HIM INTO A WELL, AND LATER SELL HIM TO ISHMAELITE TRADERS. THEY LATER TELL JACOB THAT JOSEPH IS DEAD.

Genesis 37:12-36

Which brother tried to help Joseph?

Reuben, who was actually the oldest son and most likely to be the heir. Consider what this implies about Reuben's character.

According to the biblical account, what did the brothers say happened to Joseph?

Actually, they said nothing! They simply handed Jacob the coat with blood on it. It was Jacob that said a wild beast killed Joseph.

1:04:51-1:12:20

JOSEPH BECOMES A SLAVE IN POTIPHAR'S HOUSEHOLD. POTIPHAR'S WIFE TRIES TO SEDUCE JOSEPH, THEN HAS HIM THROWN IN JAIL FOR RAPE.

Genesis 39:1-20

What two reasons does Joseph give for not sleeping with Potiphar's wife?

- (1) He wanted to be faithful to Potiphar's trust.
- (2) He would not commit adultery against God.

Notice that Joseph was willing to suffer the consequences rather than sin. Would we be strong enough to resist sin in this manner?

1:12:22-1:18:43

JOSEPH IS BLESSED EVEN WHILE IN JAIL. GOD GIVES JOSEPH INTERPRETATION TO THE DREAMS OF THE PALACE CUPBEARER AND BAKER.

Genesis 39:21-40:23

Was Joseph's high position in the prison due to personal wisdom or God's blessing?

Both. Joseph's wisdom and personal gifts were the result of God's blessing as well as the circumstances Joseph was put into. See Genesis 39:21-23

The cupbearer forgot his promise to Joseph, leaving him in prison for two more years. Might this have been a blessing in disguise?

Perhaps. Joseph was kept in prison until the circumstances were just right for his advancement. Had Joseph been freed any sooner he might not have been found in order to interpret Pharaoh's dream.

Do you think your faith is strong enough to trust God as Joseph did, even when circumstances are most difficult?

1:18:44-1:26:16

JOSEPH IS SUMMONED TO INTERPRET PHARAOH'S DREAM AND IS PLACED SECOND IN COMMAND OF ALL EGYPT.

Genesis 41:1-57

What is Joseph's reply to Pharaoh when asked to interpret the dream?

Joseph quickly denies any personal ownership of the spiritual gift, but faithfully gives the glory to God. See Genesis 41:15, 16.

Joseph, in effect, went from prisoner to prince. Can you think of other lives in the Bible, in church history, or in your experience that went from tragedy to triumph?

1:26:17

JOSEPH'S BROTHERS COME TO EGYPT TO BUY FOOD. JOSEPH REVEALS HIS IDENTITY TO HIS FAMILY.

Genesis 42:1-45:28

Why in God's providence was Joseph elevated to such a high position in Egypt?

To preserve the Hebrew people during the years of famine. See Genesis 45:5-7.

Why do you think Joseph treated his brothers with such harshness? Was it revenge?

If Joseph were acting out of vengeance, he would not have allowed himself to cry on two different occasions. See Genesis 42:24, 43:30. Joseph's treatment of his brothers was his way of prompting his brothers to come to terms with what they had done.

Notice which brother it was who offered to be taken as slave in place of Benjamin. Even though Judah was most responsible for selling Joseph into slavery, it would seem that this whole ordeal had forged in him a new character. What New Testament verses teach this principle of hardship and character?

See Romans 5:3, 4 and James 1:2-4

How old would Joseph have been when he finally revealed himself to his brothers?

39 years old. See 41:46, 53, 54 and 45:6