

The Bible Story In A Year

Week 4

When we concluded the previous week, we saw Jacob and Laban separating, as the angel of God had called Jacob to return to Canaan (Genesis 31:11-13). Remember that Jacob has become prosperous, has two wives, two concubines, eleven sons, and one daughter. Up to this point, we have seen the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob grow according to God's promise. But, it will take some time for God's promises to be fulfilled in the Bible story.

1) Jacob returns to Canaan. After leaving Laban, Jacob and Esau met peacefully after about 20 years. Along the way, Jacob wrestled with a "man," who dislocated Jacob's hip (32:24-25) and changed his name to Israel (32:26-28). Later, Jacob lived in Shechem in the land of Canaan for a time (33:16-20) before being called by God to go to Luz (Bethel, 35:1). In Bethel, God appeared to Jacob again and blessed him (35:10-15). From there, Jacob moved toward Ephrath (Bethlehem). However, while they were on the way, Rachel died in childbirth and Benjamin was born (35:16-20). Finally, Jacob arrived back to his father Isaac at Mamre in Kiriath-arba (Hebron, 35:27). Now, Jacob has twelve sons and one daughter.

2) Joseph's journey to Egypt. Remember that the relationships in Jacob's family were quite troubled, beginning with the conflicts between his wives. Now we learn that Joseph (Rachel's firstborn) was Jacob's favorite son (Genesis 37:3-4). Then, Joseph (who was 17 years old) had two dreams that resulted in his brothers hating him even more (37:5), as the dreams indicated that Joseph's parents and brothers would bow down to him (37:10-11). After this, Joseph's brothers took advantage of an opportunity to kill him (37:18-20). However, Reuben suggested they spare his life (37:21-22). So, Joseph was thrown into a pit, sold to the Ishmaelites/Midianites, and taken to Egypt (37:23-28). But, Joseph's brothers took his coat of many

colors to Jacob to make it appear he had been killed by a wild animal (37:31-35).

3) Joseph prospers in Egypt. Joseph was sold to an officer of Pharaoh in Egypt named Potiphar (Genesis 37:36; 39:1). But, the Lord was with him and caused everything Joseph did to be successful so that Joseph was given authority over everything in Potiphar's house (39:2-6). However, Joseph was falsely accused of forcing himself on his master's wife and was arrested (39:7-20). Still, God was with Joseph in prison so that everything he did prospered and he was given authority there (39:21-23). In prison, two of the Egyptian king's servants met Joseph (40:1-4), as they both had dreams they wanted interpreted. Joseph interpreted them and the outcome happened just as Joseph had said, with the chief baker being executed and the chief cupbearer being restored to his former position (40:20-23). After two years, Pharaoh himself had dreams and looked for someone who could interpret them (41:1-8). Then, the cupbearer remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh about him (41:9-13). Pharaoh sent for Joseph and Joseph interpreted the dreams. The meaning of the dreams were the same: There would be seven years of great abundance followed by seven years of devastating famine (41:28-32). Therefore, Joseph counselled Pharaoh to appoint a wise man over the land to store up the excess during the abundant years so people could survive the famine (41:33-36). Pharaoh chose Joseph to oversee this work (41:37-43). Joseph was now 30 years old.

4) Joseph and his brothers. Others came to buy food from Joseph in Egypt during the famine (Genesis 41:57). This included Joseph's brothers (except Benjamin, 42:1-5). Unbeknownst to them, they bowed before their brother in Egypt, seeking food from him (42:6-9). Joseph remembered his dreams and determined to put his brothers to the test, seeing if they would treat their father and their youngest brother Benjamin as they had treated him

previously. After passing his various tests, Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, asked about his father, and instructed them to relocate their families to Egypt through the famine (to the land of Goshen, 45:1-15). Joseph realized now that God had sent him to Egypt to keep them alive (and thus, the lineage needed to fulfill the promises made to Abraham, 45:7-8)!

5) Jacob's family moves to Egypt. Jacob was initially in disbelief to hear Joseph was still alive. However, after he began traveling, God told him not to be afraid to go down to Egypt (Genesis 46:2-4). Before Jacob's death, he blessed Joseph's two sons (Manasseh and Ephraim) by making them as his own (thus giving Joseph the inheritance of the firstborn, chapter 48). Then, Jacob made prophetic statements concerning each of his twelve sons (chapter 49). Of particular note concerning the Bible story is that kings would come through Judah until One specific King would come (49:8-11). After Jacob died, his sons buried him in Canaan. Although Joseph's brothers were afraid Joseph would be vengeful toward them, Joseph realized how God had used all that had happened for good (50:15-21). Joseph lived to be 110 (50:22). Before he died, he said that God would bring the family out of Egypt to the Canaan land – and they were to bring his bones with him when that happened (50:24-26).

While there have been many twists and turns through the book of Genesis that may leave us questioning how God will fulfill His promises, there are plenty of signs still encouraging us to watch for their fulfillment. Particularly, we have seen how God saved His chosen people through a severe famine. Now, they will spend some time in Egypt and grow from a large family into an emerging nation when the book of Exodus begins.

Discipleship Questions

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Teaching: What did you learn from this lesson?

Rebuking: What are some ways this lesson challenges you to live differently?

Correcting: How does this lesson help you make positive changes for Christ?

Training & Equipping: How can you apply this lesson to be trained and equipped in God's service?