

CHAPTER SEVEN

1 JACOB AND JUDAH

2 THE PROPHET MOSES

3 PHARAOH AND THE PASSOVER

1 JACOB AND JUDAH

Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age, an old man and satisfied with life; and he was gathered to his people. Then his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah ... there Abraham was buried with Sarah his wife.

Genesis 25:8-10 NASB

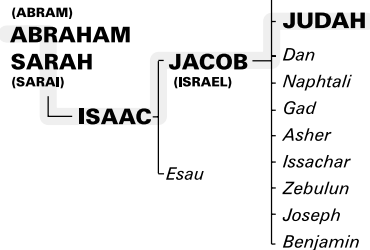
With Abraham gone, what would happen now? Just as God had said, Ishmael's offspring became a family of great nations. God also renewed his promise with Isaac, telling him that he would be the father of the nation through whom THE DELIVERER would come. Both Ishmael and Isaac lived long lives and died.

JACOB

Isaac had two sons: Esau and Jacob. Esau was like Cain, patterning his life around his own ideas, doing his own thing. On the other hand, Jacob trusted God and therefore, the Lord considered him righteous. Jacob often came to God offering blood sacrifices on an altar.

2000 BC

1900 BC



So Jacob...built an altar there...because there God appeared to him.

Genesis 35:6,7 NKJV

Jacob believed the principles found in God's Word, that...
...without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Hebrews 9:22

For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.

Leviticus 17:11

Although Jacob often failed in life, God was the ultimate focus of his trust. Later his name was changed to *Israel* which means *God prevails*. God also renewed his promise with Jacob, the same promise he had made to Abraham and Isaac. The Lord told Jacob...

"I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac...All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring."

Genesis 28:13,14

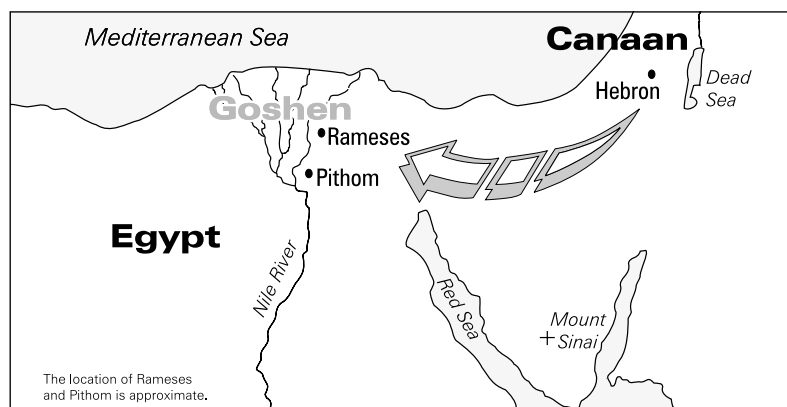
God was saying that one of Jacob's descendants would be a blessing to every nation—a reference to THE PROMISED DELIVERER.

Jacob (or Israel) had twelve sons from whom descended twelve tribes.¹ Before Jacob died, he told his son *Judah* that it would be through his tribe that THE DELIVERER would come.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived semi-nomadic lives in Canaan. In the final years of Jacob's life, famine hit the country and he, along with his sons and their families, moved into Egypt. At the time, this ragtag band numbered only seventy souls. Egypt received and treated them well. Another of Jacob's twelve sons—Joseph—had been taken to Egypt as a slave years before and, through wise usage of his talents under the direction of God, he had become an indispensable lieutenant to the Egyptian Pharaoh. Because of this, Pharaoh was favorably disposed toward Joseph's family, and gave them land in the rich Nile delta in an area called Goshen. They settled there to wait out the famine.

Three hundred and fifty years later, they were still in Egypt, but by then it is estimated that there were two and a half million Israelites. The descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had indeed become a great nation, but they were in the wrong country. They had been promised the land of Canaan, not Goshen in Egypt. However, God had not forgotten his promise. He had told Jacob long before the seventy had fled the famine in Canaan ...

"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." *Genesis 28:15*



2 THE PROPHET MOSES

Two and a half million Israelites in Egypt could hardly be ignored. The Egyptian king (or Pharaoh) came up with an idea.

“Look,” he said to his people, “the Israelites have become much too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country.”

So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh.

But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly. They made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields ...

Exodus 1:8-11,12-14

But God had not forgotten his promises. The Scripture says ...

God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.

Exodus 2:24,25

God had plans to deliver the children of Abraham from their slavery. God’s man was in place—an Israelite named *Moses*. Moses had been born in Egypt to parents who had descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (or Israel). At birth, Moses was condemned to die. Providentially, he was rescued and raised as a member of Pharaoh’s household with access to the best education in the land. As an adult, Moses murdered an Egyptian in defense of an Israelite, and then fled for his life into the desert. It was there that he became a shepherd, and for the next forty years learned to lead sheep. It was an education designed by God.

Now Moses ... led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up.

Exodus 2:23 to 3:1-2

One can't help but think that Moses stood staring at the bush for some time. He must have been perplexed. What's going on here?! Wouldn't his wife be glad to hear about this—a wood that burned yet wasn't consumed would make great fuel for her kitchen stove!

So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up."

When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!"

Exodus 3:3,4

A talking tree no less! One can imagine Moses looking around, all in a sweat, hoping no one was listening. What would he look like, carrying on a conversation with a shrub?!

And Moses said, "Here I am."

"Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob."

Exodus 3:4-6

Moses' blood must have chilled. He knew about the eternal Most High God. He knew that God was the Creator-Owner of all living. He knew that the Lord was a holy God who separated himself from mankind because of their sin. Moses himself was a sinner—a murderer.

Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.

So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

Exodus 3:6,7,10

Moses must have sighed with relief. God was not coming to judge his sin, but to give him a job. But there was a problem. Moses was a shepherd and the task looked formidable. Who was he anyway? People wouldn't put reams of confidence in a fellow who said he spoke to a bramble bush. Moses said to God,

"Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you, and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"

God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” Exodus 3:13,14

I AM means *the self-existent one*, the God who exists by his own power.

This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.

Go, assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—appeared to me and said: “I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt. And I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into ... a land flowing with milk and honey.”’

The elders of Israel will listen to you.” Exodus 3:15-18

Though Moses struggled with misgivings, he also knew that when God made a promise, he always kept His Word. So Moses packed his bags and headed back to Egypt, back to Pharaoh and the Israelite slaves. On the way, he met his brother Aaron whom God had sent to be his spokesman.

Moses and Aaron brought together all the elders of the Israelites, and Aaron told them everything the LORD had said to Moses.

... and they believed. And when they heard that the LORD was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped. Exodus 4:29,30,31

It happened just the way that God said it would. The people believed and worshiped the Lord. God was keeping his promise.

3 PHARAOH AND THE PASSOVER

It was one thing for Moses and Aaron to convince the leaders of Israel that God had spoken, but the whole effort of selling Pharaoh on the idea conjured up a quagmire of nightmarish problems.

Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘Let my people go ...’”

Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go.” Exodus 5:1,2

Well, Pharaoh was right on one account—he did not know the LORD. Egypt venerated a multitude of gods—the sun-god, the god of storms, the Nile River—even Pharaoh was a god. Each god was represented by a different symbol: the vulture, the frog, the scorpion, and so on. The ancient Egyptians worshiped the creation rather than the Creator. Not only was Pharaoh ignorant of the one true God, he was closed to the whole idea of becoming acquainted. For him to worship the Creator and submit to his will would mean a considerable loss of power and status. Letting the Israelites go would be hard on the economy—a major loss of free labor. Pharaoh was adamantly opposed to such an idea.

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh ... I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them ... with mighty acts of judgment.”

Exodus 6:1,6

God told his prophet Moses that He would bring judgments on Egypt in the form of plagues. Only under these conditions would Pharaoh let the Israelites go. Such news was rather disconcerting. If God brought plagues on Egypt, what would Pharaoh do in retaliation? The Lord encouraged the Israelites by reminding them of his promise to their forefathers.

“I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God ... And I will bring you to the land I swore [or pledged] with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.”

Exodus 6:7,8

GOD’S PEOPLE

God said the Israelites would be his people. This did not mean that *only* the people of Israel could follow the true God, but it did mean that the Lord was making it easier for the different nations of the earth to know just what God was like. All that the world would need to do is look at one nation and they would see how God dealt with mankind! We will see later how well Israel fulfilled this assigned role.

God had said he would bring plagues on Egypt in order to deliver Israel. In the process, he would teach both nations something about himself.

Israelites: The lesson to be learned ...

*"Then you **will know that I am the LORD** your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians."*

Exodus 6:7

Egyptians: The lesson to be learned ...

*"And the Egyptians **will know that I am the LORD** when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it."*

Exodus 7:5

God was going to teach both nations the same thing—that He alone is God. However, Pharaoh would have nothing to do with Moses and Aaron. So God told them:

"Go to Pharaoh in the morning as he goes out to the water. Wait on the bank of the Nile to meet him ... Then say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to say to you: Let my people go ... But until now you have not listened.'

"This is what the LORD says: 'By this you will know that I am the LORD: ... I will strike the water of the Nile, and it will be changed into blood. The fish in the Nile will die, and the river will stink; the Egyptians will not be able to drink its water.'"

Exodus 7:15-18

And that's exactly what happened. God struck right at the heart of the ancient Egyptian religion by making one of their gods, the Nile, turn to blood. He made the river abhorrent to them! But ...

... Pharaoh's heart became hard; he would not listen to Moses and Aaron ... and did not take even this to heart.

Exodus 7:22,23

GOD VERSUS GODS

And so a cycle began. God would warn Pharaoh to let the Israelites go; Pharaoh would say NO; and God would bring a plague, each one targeting another of the Egyptian gods.

First the Nile was turned to *blood*.

Then God sent a scourge of *frogs*—in every nook and cranny. In food, in beds—everywhere.

This was followed by swarms of aggressive *gnats*.²

Flies supplanted the gnats.

Then an epidemic struck the *cattle*—they all died.

After that, the people were tormented with festering *boils*.

Then a massive *hail* storm ravaged their crops.

What the hail left behind was devoured by a horde of *locusts*. Finally, the true God struck at the false god, the sun, with a curse of *darkness* so thick it could be felt.

In all, God sent ten plagues—the last and most devastating one was yet to come. God spoke to Moses and Aaron:

Now the LORD had said to Moses, “I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. After that, he will let you go from here, and when he does, he will drive you out completely.”

“This is what the LORD says: ‘About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the slave girl, who is at her hand mill ...’”

Exodus 11:1,4,5

The last plague was indeed the worst, falling on Egyptians and Israelites alike if they did not follow God’s instructions. God, as a just God, was bringing judgment on sin, but as a God of love, he was also mercifully providing a way of escape. It did not matter whether one was an Egyptian or an Israelite, when it came to God’s justice or love, they stood equal in his presence. Though both *could* experience God’s love, both *would* experience God’s judgment if they did not listen. God said:

Take a lamb ...

“...on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household.”

Exodus 12:1,3

A male, without blemish. It couldn’t be deformed or defective in any way. God was asking for a perfect lamb.

“The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats.”

Exodus 12:5

Kill the lamb at the appointed time.

“Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight.”

Exodus 12:6

Apply the blood to the door posts and the lintel.

“Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs.”

Exodus 12:7

Stay inside the house until morning.

“Not one of you shall go out the door of his house until morning.”

Exodus 12:22

Do not break any of the bones.

“It must be eaten inside one house; take none of the meat outside the house. Do not break any of the bones.”

Exodus 12:46

I will pass over.

“On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn—both men and animals—and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD.

The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.”

Exodus 12:12,13

When God came in judgment to kill the firstborn, He would *pass over* every house where the blood was applied—whether Israelite or Egyptian. The blood on the doors was outward evidence that the inhabitants of that house trusted God, believing what he said was true.



CONSIDER

You can imagine what would have happened if a fellow had reasoned to himself, “This is ridiculous, killing the best lamb. I have an old cripple, it will do.”

Or, if one called to his friends, “Hey guys, it’s a beautiful night. Let’s have our party outside.”

Would God have withheld judgment and simply passed over? Obviously not. They may have done it with the best of intentions, but they would not be following God’s instructions. They would be *doing their own thing*—just like Cain, and the people of Noah’s day. The Lord would judge them along with the Egyptians because they refused to trust him. They would be getting just what they deserved.

On the other hand, what if an Egyptian happened by, and heard that God was going to send a final plague? And that Egyptian got to thinking: “You know, our gods are false. The Israelites worship the only true God. I want that God to be my God. What does the Lord require of me?” And then that same Egyptian, putting his faith solely in God, followed the instructions for the Passover. Would God *pass over* his house that night? Would he escape punishment? Yes, he would—because he believed the Lord and was coming to God in God’s way. His faith would be honored by God who would extend to him grace and mercy.

At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon, and the firstborn of all the livestock as well.

Pharaoh and all his officials and all the Egyptians got up during the night, and there was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead.

During the night Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship the LORD as you have requested. Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go. And also bless me.”

The Egyptians urged the people to hurry and leave the country. “For otherwise,” they said, “we will all die!”

And on that very day the LORD brought the Israelites out of Egypt...

Exodus 12:29-33,51

GOD KEEPS HIS WORD

God had been gracious with Pharaoh by giving him a clear message through the prophet Moses. He had given him many chances to let the Israelites go, but when Pharaoh continued to refuse, God judged the Egyptians just as he said he would do. God is not like us. We may threaten to discipline our children and then fail to follow through, but God always keeps His Word.

On the other hand, the Israelites experienced the Lord's kindness because they believed him. When he came in judgment, wherever he saw the blood applied, he passed over. The firstborn lived—but only because a lamb died. It had been this way from the very beginning. God had accepted Abel's sacrifice, as a death payment in Abel's place. When Abraham offered his son as a sacrifice, the ram died in the boy's place. Now with the Passover, the lamb died in the place of the firstborn.

These substitutionary sacrifices were visible statements of each person's trust in God as their Savior. Because they believed the Lord, they obeyed him.

This feast was to become a tradition for the Israelites. Every year they were to eat the *Passover* as a reminder of God delivering them from slavery.

"This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD—a lasting ordinance."

Exodus 12:14

Even to this day, many descendants of Abraham and Ishmael still apply the blood of a sacrifice to the doors or walls of their house as a sign of God's protection from evil. Whether or not this custom originated from one who remembered being saved from God's judgment by following these instructions, we do not know. What we do know is that God powerfully demonstrated his mercy to all those who believed.

And so the Israelites were freed from their bondage and thrust out of the land by their former masters. God had kept his promise—it happened just the way he said it would.