

## Understanding the Old Testament 3

Review:

Names of God: JHWH (the eternal God) El Shadday (God Almighty) Jehovah Jireh (The Lord Provides) and we saw in Ishmael's name that "the Lord hears".

The theme of the Lamb: We saw Abraham predict to Isaac that the Lord Himself would provide the lamb.

Lineage of the Seed: The promises indicate that the line is now through Abraham (Through his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed.)

Covenants: Noahic Covenant, Abramic Covenant, and the Covenant of Circumcision.

We are in the midst of the patriarchal period. Isaac, the son of promise. Abraham sends his servant to get a wife (Rebekah) for him from his relatives. It is a fascinating story in Genesis 24. It is an amazing shadow of how the Lord finds a wife for His Son, the Son of promise, Jesus.

God renewed the covenant He made with Abraham to Isaac in Genesis 26:4. Isaac had fraternal twin boys, Jacob and Esau. They were very different. Esau was a man's man, a hunter. The firstborn was by tradition the one who would receive the birthright and blessing. That was just fine with Isaac because he loved him best.

Jacob was more of a homebody. Naturally, Rebekah favored him. One day when Esau was returning from a hunt, Jacob had been cooking lentil stew. He was so hungry that Jacob was able to make a deal for Esau's birthright in exchange for the stew.

Later, when it was time to pass on the blessing before Isaac's death, Isaac called for Esau to prepare a venison meal and then he would bless him. While Esau was hunting, Rebekah had Jacob bring in venison stew and disguised himself as Esau. His father couldn't see, so he put on the skin of an animal to make himself smell and feel like Esau. Isaac gave him the blessing and then Jacob fled for his life. He knew Esau would be a little more than angry.

He fled to the area Rebekah's family was from. On the way, he camped for the night. God met him in a dream we refer to as Jacob's ladder. He could see the angels of God ascending and descending from heaven at that place. The Lord renewed the covenant with him, Genesis 28:13-15. Now we see the line of the Seed is to go through Jacob. Jacob makes a deal with God. How is his deal like some of our deals with God? Does God owe Jacob anything?

Jacob means one that supplants or undermines, but he met his match in Laban, his uncle. He made a deal to work for him for 7 years for Rachael, who he was all goggle eyed over. On the wedding night, Laban slipped his younger daughter, Leah in Rachael's place. They must have been drinking pretty hard because Jacob didn't realize it until morning. It was a tradition for the oldest girl to marry first, so Laban

made sure that happened. Then, after another deal for seven years of labor, he gave him Rachael too. In the end, Jacob outfoxed Laban and ended up with most of his herds and his daughters. He decided it was time to go back and see his family and face his brother Esau.

Jacob sent his wives and their children ahead of him with the flocks and gifts for Esau, hoping to pacify him. Then he had a strange encounter with God. See Genesis 32:22-32. How is it possible that a man could wrestle with God?

The Lord changed his name from Jacob to Israel. His destiny has been changed from one that supplants to one that prevails with God. This is the man for whom the nation of Israel is named. After this crippling experience, we see a very different Jacob. See Genesis 35:1-15. The covenant is renewed again with him, perhaps because he is now called Israel. He hears and obeys God's voice. Notice in verse 2 they put away their other gods. These were usually little silver or gold figures only a few inches tall. Consider the fact that it was when he was crippled that he finally gave up the other gods. How is that similar to our walk with God?

Through his four wives, Israel had 12 sons. These were the fathers of the tribes of Israel. Joseph was the next to youngest and the one that Israel favored. The similarities with Joseph and Jesus are utterly amazing. The story of Joseph begins with his dreams. He foresaw in his dreams that his family would bow before him. It probably wasn't the best thing to tell his family, as it made his brothers all the more resentful of him. One day when he was sent by his father to check on the brothers they sold him to slave traders. The dipped the coat his father Israel had given him in animal blood and brought it back to their father.

In Egypt, Joseph was sold to one of a captain of Pharaoh's army. He quickly rose to overseer of the household. The wife of the captain tried to seduce him, but he said he could not sin against her husband and God. Feeling scorned, she accused him of trying to rape her and had him thrown in prison.

In prison, the blessing of God brought him as head assistant to the jailor. Some of the Pharaoh's servants were jailed. They had dreams which he interpreted correctly. He asked the one who was going to be restored to his position to tell the Pharaoh about his wrongful imprisonment, but the man forgot.

Eventually, Pharaoh had a troubling dream finally the man remembered him and told Pharaoh how he had correctly interpreted their dreams, and Pharaoh called for him. His correct interpretation saved Egypt, the surrounding nations, and his own family from starvation. Joseph was made second in charge of all Egypt. This concludes the patriarchal period.

Was all that time Joseph served as a servant necessary? Imagine how discouraged we would be in his shoes before the Pharaoh summoned him. Is there any way he could have imagined what God was doing? What can we learn from that? Was God at work in all his situations?