

## Understanding the Old Testament 4

We have come to the end of the patriarchal period (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). We saw Jacob's wrestling match with God and how his name was changed to Israel. His 12 sons will become the 12 tribes of Israel. We left off where Joseph became second in Egypt. The story of the interaction with his brothers when they came to Egypt to buy food is a great drama. Be sure and read it!

Joseph's gift of interpreting dreams had saved the nations of that region of the world from famine. Because of his position in the nation of Egypt, his family was given the most fertile region in the Nile Delta. Before Israel died, he gave a prophetic word over his sons. The one that is important in our thread through the Old Covenant is the one given over Judah. *8 "Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you. 9 You are a lion's cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness--who dares to rouse him? 10 The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his. 11 He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes. 12 His eyes will be darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk.* Genesis 49:8-12 (NIV) This is full of Messianic symbolism. He will be praised and worshipped (bow down) by his brothers. He will be victorious over his enemies. He is compared to a lion. He will rule (scepter) until Shiloh comes (the one to whom the rule belongs – God) Nations will obey him. Even in verse 11 many rabbi see Messianic portent.

This is not merely looking back and trying to fit Jesus' ancestors as the line of the Seed. This is confirmed by Jewish leaders who do not believe that Jesus is the Messiah. We followed the line of the Seed up to Jacob, but now we know which of the 12 sons was chosen as the line of the Messiah. We also have some new descriptions of the Messiah. Joseph seemed to be the hero of the day, but Judah was the one that God chose to fulfill the promises.

There is an incredible revelation of the sovereignty of God in Joseph's conversation with his brother after his father's death. They feared he would get revenge on them and so they concocted a lie. They agreed together to say that Israel's deathbed wish was that Joseph forgive them. Joseph's response was *"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."* Genesis 50:20 (NIV) He knew that God used even their jealousy to bring about good.

When God entered into the covenant with Abram, He predicted a period of enslavement. *13 Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be*

*enslaved and mistreated four hundred years.* Gen 15:13 (NIV) When another Pharaoh came to power, Joseph and his family lost their position in the land and went into enslavement.

But God had predicted their return to the Promised Land. *16 In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.*" Gen 15:16 (NIV) As we follow the character of God, it is important for us to note that God's sentence of annihilation came after 400 years of patience. The priest Melchizadek surely preached the truth to these people, but they chose evil. Just as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah and the world before the flood, the culture was so permeated with evil, violence, and suffering, the only way to stop the pain was a death sentence. Archeologists have discovered fields of 1000s of sacrifice babies from the cultures that inhabited the land. STDs were rampant because of their evil worship practices.

We now move to the book of Exodus. After the 400 years in Egypt (430 according to Exodus 12:40), the family of Israel had grown to millions. The nation of Egypt feared them. The Pharaoh decided to kill all the baby boys. A boy was born to the line of Levi. They hid him as long as they could and then set him adrift in a basket. The Pharaoh's daughter found him and her heart was moved. She adopted him and raised him as her own in the palace. Moses (drawn out) found out that he was an Israelite. He tried to settle a dispute and ended up killing an Egyptian. At the age of 40, He fled to the land of Midian, as he was afraid the Pharaoh would execute him.

For 40 years he lived in the wilderness as a shepherd. Then he had an encounter with God. The reason given reveals again the heart of God to us. *23 During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. 24 God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. 25 So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.* Ex 2:23-25 (NIV) While shepherding his flock. Moses saw a burning bush. Let us read the story from Exodus 3. Did you see another revelation of the name of God? I AM –*hayah* "I am he who is" or "I am he who exists". It is the middle two syllables of JHWH.

Moses reluctantly went with Aaron his brother as his spokesman, even though Moses ended up doing most of the speaking. Imagine this man that had been shepherd for 40 years, now 80 years of age, going to confront the most powerful man on earth. In this portion of Scripture we have a cluster of miracles. Almost every miracle was to show the Egyptians that their gods were not gods. During the first half of the signs, Pharaoh hardened his heart. Then God hardened it. The last sign was the death of the firstborn. They worshipped Pharaoh as god, so the next Pharaoh would die during the death of the firstborn.

God gave the Israelites specific instruction as to how to avoid this last plague. They were to take a lamb for each household and slay it. The blood was to go over the lintel and on the doorposts. They literally made the sign of the cross in doing so. The death that came passed by the houses that were marked with the blood of the lamb. What an amazing picture of the saving work of the Messiah to come! That was the first Passover. The next morning their calendar was changed to begin a new year.

The text tells us that a great number of people went with them out of Egypt. (Exodus 12:38) The plagues seemed so harsh, and yet they resulted in many people discovering that the gods of Egypt were only myths. They knew the God of Israel was the true God, and they were ready to cast their lot with the Israelites.

Has your view of a harsh Old Testament God changed in any way?

Do you see long periods of testing followed by amazing victories?

Apply that to your life.

What have we learned about the Seed?

How does this all fit in with the covenants?

What does the passage say about the requirements of the lamb? Exodus 12:3-10