

AUNT HATTIE'S BIBLE STORIES

by Harriet I. Fisher

Fisher's retelling of Bible stories for children through the character of Aunt Hattie, presenting the narratives of Scripture in warm, engaging language designed to teach young readers about God's love and purposes.

7 Chapters

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00.4-FOREWORD

FOREWORD

My Dear Boys and Girls:

There is an old saying that "All the world loves a story." The Bible is the greatest story book ever written for in it may be found stories to suit all tastes.

There are delightful stories of the palace, the king's court, the tent and the great out-of-doors. Many thrilling stories of war and fearless warriors may be found and also those of great building formations and agricultural plans. If one chooses romance, no more beautiful love stories are to be found in literature than in this book which came from the hands of the Almighty GOD.

In writing these stories I have tried to show you how these men and women of the bible were real folk who lived in real places, had temptations and difficulties such as we have and more than all of how, when they were willing to let Him, GOD used them to carry out His great plans and purposes for this world.

As we read about these characters of olden times let us turn away from their faults, follow their good behaviour and receive wisdom to do large things in GOD's name.

Lovingly,

AUNT HATTIE

And let us pray that these stories, perhaps written for a small audience in pre-war America, might find themselves into the homes of children the world-wide -- for truly with the internet, there is no limit to where these stories might go.

01-CHAPTER 1 ADAM

Chapter 1

ADAM

What are houses made for? What a foolish question! Of course, they are made for people to live in.

When a house is built, what is the next thing to be done? Furnish it. Right! For it isn't much of a place until it is fitted with tables, chairs, beds and other things. And then what? It needs people to live in it. Right again!

GOD wanted someone to love Him and so He made man; but before He created this man He had to make a place in which he could live. So He made the earth, with its mountains, valleys, plains, rivers, lakes and seas, and in some places He hung up as decoration lovely foliage and sparkling waterfalls; in other places were playing fountains, like the geysers; and again there were beautiful rock gardens hidden away in lonely spots and corners.

After this the animals were made, and not one of them was cross or fierce. Some of them were made to be man's servants, as the donkey, camel, horse and dog. Some were very beautiful, as the birds and the fur-bearing animals; and some were very strong, as the elephant and the lion; but each one however made, had its own place to fill.

And then, right after GOD's great house, the earth, was all finished and everything was in place and comfortable, He said, "Now, I'll make the greatest of all My creations, I'll make man, the one for whom I have prepared this beautiful place, and I'll give it to him and let him rule it under My guidance."

Then GOD formed man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into him life so that man became alive and GOD made him in His own image. This man had not only life with a physical body and a mind, but also a spiritual life. Only through this spiritual life could man have fellowship with GOD, could he understand Him and love Him and know and appreciate all He has done for him in making this world, furnishing it and putting him here to live. This, which He gave only to man, is called GOD consciousness. In this way men know GOD, animals do not.

I think that after Adam had been living on this earth for a little while as GOD was talking things over with him one day, He said, "Adam, look at all these birds and animals, and not a name for any of them. How would you like to find a name for each pair?" I wonder if Adam looked around for a dictionary to help him.

Anyhow, the Bible says that GOD brought all the animals and birds to him to be named. I think they must have had a parade, and all the animals walked or flew, in pairs, past Adam's home, and as they came along, Adam had their names ready. It looks as if Adam was very wise to be able to do that, but I think he had been going to school to GOD and had learned much about this world

from Him, just like we should do.

Now, back again to the great animal parade. Did you ever stop to think how Adam must have felt when he saw all of those animals? There they were, and each one had a partner, someone to talk to him in his own language; Adam only, had no one, and I think that for the first time in his life he was lonesome and disappointed.

But GOD knew all about this, and had a plan for Adam all ready in His mind. One night when he went to bed GOD caused Adam to sleep unusually hard. While he was asleep GOD took out one of his ribs and with that rib He made a helper to be Adam's special partner -- a woman. You want to know how GOD did that? GOD can do all things, but He doesn't often tell us how, and all that we know is the fact that He did it. So far as that goes we don't really know how He made anything.

I am sure Adam was very glad to have a wife to love him and whom he could love. It is just like GOD to want to make His people happy.

Because GOD wanted Adam and his wife to know that He was over them and all creation, He had to test them. He said to them, "Now, here is all this beautiful garden, I want you to live in it and carry out my instructions. You will find fruit and nut trees that will furnish you with food; you may eat of all but one. Over there is the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Do not eat of its fruit, for if you do you will surely die." Thus they were warned lest they should lose both the physical life and the spiritual life that GOD had given them.

Adam and his wife, Eve, seemed to think that was all right and were very happy. Did you ever think of that garden? Every leaf and limb on every tree, every rose, every lily, every flower of every kind was perfect. Adam didn't have to go around spraying and sprinkling things with Paris green to keep the harmful bugs away, for there were none; neither were there any weeds to pull. All he had to do was to till, plant and cultivate the garden.

They got along very well for no one knows how long, and were satisfied and happy. I think GOD came down every day and took a walk with them through the garden and talked things over. They loved GOD very much and He loved them.

Time went on and one day Eve was working around in the garden when she met a very beautiful creature who began to talk with her.

"Did GOD tell you not to eat of every tree of the garden?" he asked her.

"Yes, we may eat of the fruit of all the trees excepting that one over there in the middle of the garden. He said we shouldn't eat any of that fruit, or even to touch it, lest we die," she answered.

Who was that good looking creature talking to Eve? It was Satan who had entered into one of the beautiful animals of the garden and in this form spoke to her. Satan is a liar and he told Eve a lie, for he said, "Oh no, you won't die if you eat that fruit."

GOD had certainly said to them that if they ate it they would surely die. Eve made a great mistake in listening to this fine-looking, but deceitful creature, and another mistake she made was that she didn't quote GOD's Word rightly. She said that GOD had told them they were not to eat this fruit, or even to touch it. She added that, and then she said, "lest ye die," or in other words, if you do you

may die; which was not as strong as what GOD had said.

It didn't pay Eve to lie about what GOD said and to listen to Satan, but the more she listened the more she wanted to hear what this evil creature had to say.

The next thing he told her was that GOD knew that if they ate this fruit, their eyes would be opened and they would be as gods and know good and evil. Eve was greatly interested and thought that sounded fine. Thoughtfully, she went over and began to look at the fruit of this tree; she saw three things about it; it was good for food, it was nice to look at, and it would make them wise. So she ate some and along came Adam and she tempted him to eat some, too.

Oh, what a mistake they made in listening to Satan and disobeying GOD! The moment they disobeyed GOD, sin came into their hearts and they saw that they were naked, a thing they had not known before. Instead of receiving all of the blessings Satan had promised, they were very unhappy and all of their joy was gone. They lost the spiritual life, the fellowship with GOD, that He had given them. They really died spiritually as GOD had warned. They had lost a great deal!

"We had better make ourselves some clothes," said Adam, and they sewed some fig leaves together for aprons.

That evening when GOD came to walk with them, Adam and Eve ran away and hid behind the trees. They knew they had sinned and they did not want to see GOD.

"Adam, where are you?" GOD called.

"I heard you call, but I am naked, and so I ran away and hid," answered Adam.

"Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I told you not to eat?" said GOD. Then Adam was such a coward that he blamed his wife and said, "She gave me of that forbidden fruit and I ate it."

Turning to the woman, GOD said, "What is this you have done?" She tried to lay the blame on Satan, and said he had fooled her and that she did eat. Then GOD said to the serpent which had allowed Satan to live in him, "Because you have done this thing, you are cursed above all cattle and above every beast of the field; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life, and I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed; it shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel."

That speech is rather long and hard to understand, so I'll put it into simpler words. GOD said to the serpent, "Because you let Satan speak through you, you are cursed, and instead of walking upright as you do now (he must have had legs), I'll make you crawl on the ground and eat dust all of your life." The next time you see a snake, think what it was before it was cursed. Some snakes have beautiful colors and all are very graceful, but that is about all that is left of their first beauty.

Then GOD went on to talk to Satan. He said that Satan and the woman would be enemies and that Satan's followers and the children of the woman would hate each other. By the seed of the woman GOD meant His own SON, JESUS CHRIST, who should be born of a woman and who would bruise Satan and overcome him, but until that time Satan would keep right after the heels of the LORD JESUS when He would come to earth.

All of this word came true, for when He was here on earth Satan ran after Him all of the time until He died on the cross. And on the cross, Satan even bruised His heel, just like GOD said would happen! Then JESUS arose from the dead and Satan could do no more to Him, but he still goes after His people.

JESUS is coming to earth again, and when He dies He will bruise Satan's head. That is, JESUS CHRIST will overcome Satan so that he cannot trouble us any more. That was a great promise to make, wasn't it?

After GOD got through talking to Satan, He told Eve what her punishment was to be for disobeying Him. He said that through great pain and suffering her children would be born, and also Adam would rule over her and be the head of the house.

Adam, too, had to bear his punishment. GOD told him that since he had sinned, life would not be so easy; that weeds, thorns and thistles would grow up in the field. Until that day, Adam could have gone outside and picked his wife beautiful roses and he would never have stuck his finger on the sharp thorns on them, because there were no thorns. And because of Adam, JESUS CHRIST would one day have to wear a crown of those very thorns that were the result of Adam's sin.

Adam would now have to work very hard to make a living for himself and family; and also that this should continue as long as he should live, and, that when he died his earthly body would go back to dust again, for that was what it was made of in the beginning.

For all this disobedience and sin Adam was very sorry, and he must have begun to think of that promise GOD had given to him about the seed of the woman. Anyway, we know that when he came to name his wife, who up to this time had no name, he called her Eve, which means "life-giver." So GOD must have given him faith in the One to be one day born of woman, even His own SON, JESUS CHRIST. However, this terrible thing sin had been planted in their hearts and there it stayed.

Do you remember that I told you before, Adam and Eve made themselves some clothes of fig leaves, but GOD wasn't satisfied with that kind of a dress, so He made them some clothes out of the skins of animals. I wonder why He did that? Do you remember that GOD had said if Adam sinned he would die? In making coats of skins, wouldn't that mean that some animals would have to die? It was as though GOD was saying, "When you sinned, death entered your body. But now you are sorry for your sin, and when I look upon these coats of skins I will accept the death of the animal in your place, and the coat will cover your nakedness."

It was a picture of how JESUS CHRIST, GOD's SON, would one day shed His blood on the cross that we spoke of earlier. Then, if men would believe on Him, GOD would accept His death in place of the sinner and would give him eternal life. That is what conversion, or salvation means. When we repent of our sins and ask GOD to forgive He restores that spiritual life, that fellowship with Him, which Adam and Eve lost.

Last of all, GOD said, "This man knows good and evil, and for fear he may eat of the tree of life and live forever with evil sin in his heart, I will have to put him out of the garden."

He drove Adam and Eve from their home and lest they go back again, He put cherubim, that is, cherubs or living creatures, sent from Heaven, to stand at the gate and keep them away.

Poor Adam and Eve! I can see them as they left the garden. The Bible says that GOD drove them out, for I am sure they did not want to go. I think they looked the garden all over for the last time, and were sorry they had listened to Satan and disobeyed GOD. But it was too late now, for their beautiful home was gone forever, and they had to go out into the dark world and work very hard to make a living.

After a while GOD gave them two sons, Cain and Abel. When the boys grew up and were old enough to bring an offering to the LORD, Cain brought fruit, grain and vegetables, and Abel brought a lamb for sacrifice.

GOD was not pleased with Abel's offering but not with Cain's. What was the difference? It was as if Cain said, "Well, GOD, here are the products of my farm. I'm glad to give them to you. I think I am a pretty good fellow." And as though Abel said, "LORD, here I am a great sinner and worthy only of death. Here is a lamb to die for me. Will you accept it in my place?"

GOD was pleased to accept Abel's offering, but He was not at all satisfied with Cain's and that made Cain very angry. GOD said, "Cain, what makes you so angry? All you have to do is to bring an offering for sacrifice and all will be accepted." In fact, GOD even told Cain to look outside his door. He had brought a lamb to him and all he had to do was to accept it. But Cain wouldn't listen, and all of this made him very, very angry. And a few days later out in the field, his anger was so great toward his brother that he killed him.

GOD punished Cain by sending him into a far country away from His presence forever.

So Adam and Eve had great sorrow. One of their sons was dead and the other, because of sin, was driven away from them. But, before a great while, GOD gave them another son whom they named Seth, and through whom many years later, came the promised REDEEMER.

Adam and Eve sinned and the curse of death came upon them in spirit and in body, just as GOD said it would. Because we are their children we have been born with sin in our hearts also, and the curse of death rests upon us. Perhaps some of you are thinking this punishment isn't fair since we cannot help the evil that was done.

That is the very reason that GOD sent the LORD JESUS CHRIST to earth to die for us and to take away the curse of death so that all who believe in Him will live with Him forever.

~ end of chapter 1 ~

02-CHAPTER 2 NOAH

Chapter 2

NOAH

Suppose that you were living in Iowa and one day a man came to your house and asked your father to build a boat for him, a very, very large boat. Your father might say that he could do it all right, but what would he do with it when it was finished? There is no river nor lake within a hundred miles of your home with water enough to float it and the sea is more than a thousand miles away.

He would be no more surprised than Noah was when GOD came and told him about the same thing. You see it was this way. After Adam sinned, as I told you in the first story, man knew good and evil. But instead of obeying GOD, this terrible monster, sin, which had gotten into man's heart led him to listen to Satan more than to GOD.

For fifteen hundred years this went on and GOD was patient with these sinful people. Then the bible says the wickedness of man was so great that even his thoughts and imaginations were evil all the time. Something had to be done, for the whole earth was full of violence.

In all the world GOD knew only one man that really loved Him and his name was Noah. The Bible tells us that he found grace in the eyes of the LORD and that he was a just man and perfect in his generation. That means he was as good as he knew how to be in the evil world in which he lived. Another thing it says is that, "Noah walked with GOD," and that explains why he was just and good, for anyone who walks with GOD goes GOD's way.

I think, one day when GOD and Noah were out for a walk, GOD said, "Noah, everything looks bad and the whole world is full of violence." When the LORD JESUS was here He explained a little more what that meant. He said that they were "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage." Well, isn't it all right to eat food and drink water and get married? Oh, yes, but He meant much more than that! You see, men and women had become so sinful that all they thought of was to satisfy their own selfish appetites. They ate what they wanted, they drank what they wanted, they married, were divorced and were married again. They had drinking parties and fought and murdered each other.

Then GOD continued by saying, "I am going to destroy all the earth with a flood, and Noah, I want you to build a boat of gopherwood and smear it within and without with pitch. Pitch was something like tar and filled up all the cracks so that the water couldn't get in.

GOD gave Noah the measurements. The boat, or ark, was to be four hundred fifty feet long, seventy-five feet wide and forty-five feet high. So perfect were these measurements that even today our greatest boats are built on the same scale. The boat was to be divided into three stories, and away up on the roof or highest deck, he was to build a small dome with a window in the top of it. Also he was to put a door in one side of the boat, or Ark.

Noah was a man of great faith and when GOD told him to do anything, no matter what it was, or whether he understood it or not, he never stopped to ask how it was going to come out, but "he did as the Lord commanded Him."

In those days men lived to be very old and Noah was about five hundred years old when he began to build the ark. How long do you suppose it took him to make it? A hundred and twenty years. I think through those years, many of his friends and neighbors came over to see what he was doing. The Bible says that Noah told them what GOD was going to do to this old earth and preached righteousness to them. But they wouldn't listen to him and not one believed what he said. I suspect they made fun of him and called him strange.

FINALLY, the big boat was done, made in every way just as the LORD had instructed.

When GOD gave Noah directions about the building of the ark, He also talked to him about other things. He said, "Noah, I am going to save you and your family from the flood and I will make my contract with you." And then He told him to take a pair of every kind of animals, birds and creeping things and put them in the ark. But of the clean beasts, that is, the ones used for sacrifices, as the lamb and young ox, he was to take seven pairs. GOD then told all of the animals to go to Noah's ark, and they obeyed their CREATOR.

Finally, the day came when all was ready and GOD said, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark, for thee have I seen righteous in this generation."

Let us imagine we are seeing those animals marching two and two into the big boat. I think, yes, that is right, Mr. and Mrs. Elephant are leading the parade, for they are among the biggest. Here they come swinging their long trunks like band leaders' batons, as much as to say, "Right this way. Follow us." Mr. and Mrs. Camel are next, followed by Mr. and Mrs. Lion and the Tigers. By the way, when GOD told the animals to go to the Ark, He also told them not to eat Mr. Noah or any of his family or any of their fellow animals. And they didn't! Who is that funny looking couple that can't keep up? Oh, that is Mr. and Mrs. Kangaroo, jumping along as usual.

Mr. and Mrs. Zebra look fine in their new spring stripes, and Oh, look! There is Doctor and Mrs. Giraffe. How proud and haughty they are, with their heads held so high. Look out for that tree branch! The chimpanzees and baboons are chattering to each other as they go along. Why! I never knew there were so many animals, rhinoceroses, hippopotamuses, cows, horses, bears, sheep, goats, cats and dogs. Every kind of animal was there, not one was missing.

I wonder if the creeping things will come next? Yes, slowly they are arriving, the tortoises, snails, turtles, lizards and all such creatures. Even snakes!

And now for the feathered folk. The walking birds are first, I think. I mean by that the birds that can't fly very high or far. Perhaps Professor and Mrs. Peacock will lead them. Sure enough, there they come, stepping along in all their glory, followed by lovely Doctor and Mrs. Swan, and Messrs. and Mesdames Chicken, DUCK, goose, Turkey and Guinea.

Oh, look at the air parade, headed right for the door of the boat, and in they go! Who are they? Those in the lead must be the mono-planes, the kind made for landing on the ground. Doctor and Mrs. Eagle are leading and every once in a while, just to be noticed, they make a nose dive. Then there are the hawks, crows, ravens, owls, jays and a great number more whose names I do not

know. Now come the birds of plumage, among them the pheasants and the golden birds of paradise. How very graceful and beautiful they are.

But do look at those seaplanes. Oh, no! Not seaplanes at all, just the water birds, like the cormorants, gulls, wild ducks and geese.

Listen! Don't speak a word! Did you ever hear such wonderful music? It sounds as though heaven's gate had been left open. Soft, sweet and full of lovely melody. Oh, it is the songbirds' choir, giving a farewell concert! Do you hear the canaries, larks, wrens, nightingales, robins, blue birds, phoebe birds, orioles and mocking birds? What are they singing? Let us listen closely. They are singing very softly, now. I think it is a song of praise, worship and devotion to the One who loves righteousness and hates sin, GOD their CREATOR.

And now they have all gone in, the last notes fade away and are lost in the quiet and loneliness of the evening, and GOD comes and shuts the door and seals it.

Did you ever stop to think that when Noah and his family went into the big boat it was on the dry ground? He had no reason for going in only that GOD told him to and he obeyed. How foolish he must have seemed to his neighbors. I think Noah went all around and told them once more to come with him into the ark, and if they had believed, they, too, might have been saved.

Not a drop of rain had fallen, everything was dry all around the big boat and seven days passed before it began to rain. Noah might have said, "Surely there is no hurry," but no, he did "as the Lord commanded him."

Then it began to rain and rain and rain for forty days and nights with never a moment's pause. Forty days is almost six weeks and that is a very long rain. The Bible says it not only rained out of the windows of Heaven but that the fountains of the great deep were broken up. Of course the great deep is the sea. So the waters from the sea and from the heavens began to cover the earth.

Think of the people who had refused to believe Noah. They thought he was foolish but now when it was too late, they found they were the foolish ones.

I think, that one night after the waters had become pretty deep, the old boat began to creak and rock and then to float. The higher the waters rose, the higher the boat rose. There was only one window and that looked upward toward Heaven, and Noah and his family couldn't see the suffering and death of the drowning people around them. They were away from the judgment of sin. The same waters that drowned the people outside, bore up the boat and took care of the people inside.

The Bible says that in the last days, sin and wickedness will be great in the earth just as in the days of Noah, and that the LORD JESUS is coming again in judgment. He has sent out many messengers, like Noah, to tell the people to believe in Him and be saved. I am afraid they are doing just as those men and women did in Noah's time. They mock, make fun and won't believe.

The water covered the earth twenty-two feet deep on the highest mountains, and there it stayed for one hundred and fifty days or five months before it began to go back. In two months more the ark rested on Mount Ararat.

Noah thought that it was about time to see what was going on outside. So he opened the window one morning and let a raven fly out, and it never came back. Then one day he sent out a dove which flew around a little while and then returned. You see, that is the difference between the two birds. Ravens eat the flesh of decayed animals, and this raven probably found plenty of that kind of food floating around. Doves never eat anything but fruit, leaves and herbs, and so this dove came right back for there was no place for her to rest nor to find the food which she liked.

A week more passed by and then Noah sent out the dove again and when it came back it had a fresh, green olive leaf in its mouth. What a thrill it must have brought to Mr. and Mrs. Noah and their family! Now they knew that the waters had gone down so much that the trees were beginning to send out their leaves once more. The next time he let the dove out it didn't come back. I suppose it found a nice place somewhere to make a nest in the tree.

Just think how anxious every one must have been to get out of the boat where they had been for a whole year. Finally one glad day GOD came to the door, tore off the seals, and with a great hand of love knocked and called, "Noah, come on out! It is all over. the ground is dry."

"Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons and thy sons' wives with thee. Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee, of all flesh, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth" (Genesis 8:16-17).

How happy they were when they heard that call. Here they come. See them? Noah and his family first, and then all the animals begin to wake up, have a big stretch and big YAWN! GOD had told them all to take a long nap when the rain first started to fall, and most of them are just now waking up. I wonder if they wondered what happened?

I wonder if the song birds gathered above the ark for a parting concert and sang, "Oh LORD, our LORD, how excellent is thy name in all the earth," and then flew away to find new homes in the trees of the mountains.

I suppose Noah's family had a busy time for a while getting moved out of the ark and building new homes on a clean washed earth.

About the first thing Noah did was to build an altar, a place to make an offering for sin and to worship GOD.

GOD was so pleased with Noah for this that He made a wonderful promise to Noah and to all who should live afterwards, even down to us today. He said He would never destroy the earth again with a flood, and then He added another promise, "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."

Then GOD blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth."

He also said, "Noah, I am giving you the power to rule over the earth all that is in it. Some of the animals are stronger than you are, but I'll put the fear of man in their hearts so that you can control them."

Last of all, I think GOD led Noah out of doors one morning just after a shower and said, "See that rainbow flashing its wondrous beauty on the circle of sky, dipping its ends to meet the waving grasses of the hill slopes? Noah, that is to be a sign between you and all men and Me. Every time I look upon the rainbow I will remember my promise not to send a flood upon the earth."

And every time we look upon a rainbow, we too, can know that GOD looks and remembers.

~ end of chapter 2 ~

03-CHAPTER 3 ABRAHAM

Chapter 3

ABRAHAM

"Abraham?!"

"Behold , here I am."

Who called?

GOD.

Who answered?

Abraham.

Who was this man to whom GOD spoke so freely? I'll tell you the story.

Turn to the map in the back of your Bible, called "Assyria and the Adjacent lands." Do you see those two rivers that unite and flow into the Persian Gulf? On the west river find a city called Ur. Oh, yes, now we have it! It is in the land of Chaldea. Even today the ruins of the ancient city may be seen, but history doesn't tell us much about it, nor about the people who lived there. One thing we do know, and that is, they were moon-worshippers.

But why did they worship the moon? At this time of the world's history, which was about two thousand years before CHRIST, there was so much sin in the earth that GOD had forgotten and people did not so much as know there was a GOD. So they looked at the moon and said within themselves, "See, he marches across the sky, he gives us light when we are good, and when we are bad he hides himself and leaves our nights dark."

There was one man in Ur whose thoughts were reaching out beyond the moon and who longed to know the GOD who had made the moon. When anyone really wants to know GOD, then GOD always makes Himself known to him.

One day, when Abram, for that was his name, was walking alone maybe looking at the moon and thinking in his heart about the mysteries and wonders of life. GOD spoke to him, and it is written down for us in Genesis 12:1-3 : "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed"

My! It must have surprised Abram to hear that message. First GOD said, "I want you to get out of your country," that is, out of Ur of the Chaldees. Abram might have said, "I love every foot of it, for it is my own home."

Then, secondly, GOD told him to get away from all his kindred or relatives. "Leave my folk with whom I have lived all my life?" "Yes, and one thing more, I want you to leave your father's house." That meant not only to leave his cousins, uncles and aunts, but his very own father, brothers and sisters. The only one he could take with him was his wife, for he had no children at that time.

Abram must have been filled with wonder at all of this, but imagine how he felt when GOD said, "And go unto a land that I will show you." GOD didn't give him a map and mark out the route and say, "I am sending you over to this place or that place," although GOD knew all the time where He was sending him.

When Terah, Abram's father, heard about this message from GOD to his son, Abram, he said, "I guess the whole family had better start on this trip." So they packed up their tents and all of their belongings, loaded them on their camels, and set out.

Now, let us go back to our map again. Starting at Ur they went north and west until they came to Haran. See it away up north of Mesopotamia? When they got there they thought it was a pretty good place in which to camp for a while, and they stayed until Terah, Abram's father, died. You see, GOD had told Abram to go by himself, but I suppose he hated to tell his father not to go. Just the same, because Abram did not fully obey, he did not reach the promised land until after his father died. That's the way it is with us sometimes. We know what we ought to do but we lose so much of the blessing because we do not fully obey.

In this talk that GOD gave to Abram away over there in Ur, He not only told him what he should do, but He gave him seven promises, or things He would do for Abram.

Let us look at them and count them, See Genesis 12:2-3.

1. "I will make of thee a great nation."
2. "I will bless thee."
3. "And make thy name great."
4. "And thou shalt be a blessing."
5. "And I will bless them that bless thee."
6. "And curse him that curseth thee."
7. "And in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

In the Bible the number seven stands for perfection, so this was a perfect promise, nothing was left out. GOD's full plan for Abram was included in this sevenfold promise and all through the Bible we find it carried out to the last detail.

Now come back to the story again. Abram knew GOD had spoken to him and he believed all the promises and obeyed the commands.

After his father, Terah, died up there in Haran, he took his wife, Sarah and his nephew Lot, packed up their belongings, loaded the camels and were off on their journey once more.

This time they went south from Haran, crossing into what is now Palestine and continuing until they came into the center of the land to a place called Shechem. When they arrived there they found the land already occupied by a people called Canaanites, for the country was then known as Canaan. Lest Abram be downhearted and think he had made a mistake and gone into the wrong country, GOD came and talked to him again.

He told him that He would give all of this land to Abram's seed, that means his children and grandchildren. So Abram built an altar there and worshipped GOD. Not long afterwards he moved a few miles away and set up his tent between Bethel and Hai and built an altar there.

Wherever, in this land, Abram went he built an altar. I wonder why he did that. When anyone worships GOD it must be done through sacrifice. We are all born with sin in our hearts and GOD has said if we sin we must die. In olden times men who were sorry for their sins killed an animal such as a lamb, goat or young ox, took its blood and sprinkled it upon the altar and asked GOD to accept the blood of the animal in place of their own blood. GOD was willing to do so until the day when His own Son JESUS CHRIST, died on the Cross and shed His blood to take away our sin.

So Abram built an altar and offered sacrifices to GOD, confessing in this way, that he had sin in his heart and asking GOD to forgive him and to have fellowship with him.

Abram was truly a man who believed what GOD said, but GOD had to test him and I am sorry to say that a few times he failed GOD. When the Bible tells the story of a man's life it tells the bad as well as the good.

Abram moved his tent again and traveled toward the south. Everywhere he went, there had been no rain and there was no grass nor grain for the camels and cattle and not much for him and his family to eat, for food was very scarce.

Abram had GOD's promise to take care of him, but for a time he seemed to have forgotten it when he heard of plenty of grain down in Egypt, he said, "I think we had better go down." Now, GOD's promises were good only in the land He had given to Abram and not in Egypt.

When he reached Egypt Abram was very miserable and told Pharaoh, king of Egypt, a lie about his wife and Pharaoh sent Abram, Sarah his wife, and all that he had back to his own land. Abram must have felt very sorry about it for we find him going back to Bethel where he had built an altar a long time before. When he got there he worshipped GOD and found it was better to be in a land of famine with GOD, than in a land of plenty without Him.

Abram's nephew, Lot, who had always lived with him, had a great many cattle and sheep of his own, and the herdmen who took care of them were always quarreling with those who took care of Abram's flocks. Lot came to Abram to see what could be done about it and Abram, always kind and generous, said, "Is not the whole land before you? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me; if thou will take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left."

I think Lot should have said, "Uncle Abram, it is all yours. You take first choice." But he didn't, for he was very selfish. From where they were standing at Bethel they could look down over the rich Jordan valley in which were the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot thought it looked like Egypt where they had seen so much wealth and so he chose all this good land and moved his family, his

cattle and everything he owned, and set up his tent near to the wicked cities.

I do not suppose Lot thought he would ever be friendly with any of those bad people. When he went there he was thinking of the good crops he could raise and the money he could make, but we'll find out later how it turned out.

After Lot had moved away from Bethel and Abram was left alone, GOD came to him again. I think he was standing on the hill of Bethel when GOD said to him, "Lift up your eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

"For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever.

"And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.

"Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee" (Genesis 13:14-17).

Abram obeyed the command and went down to Hebron. Do you see it on the map?

Some time after Lot settled near Sodom, five kings of the nations living over east of the Jordan joined together to make war against the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah and three other kings of near-by nations. Now Lot had by this time moved into Sodom, and when this war came on, he and all his family were taken captives. Uncle Abram heard of the trouble and might have said, "Well, it is good enough for him. He knew the men of Sodom were bad, but he was bound to go there, so let him get out the best way he can." But Abram didn't say that. His only thought was to save Lot and his family.

He formed an army of three hundred of his own servants and set out to rescue the ones he loved. Sure enough, he found them and brought them back to Sodom, not only them, but also the people of Sodom.

The king of Sodom saw them coming and hurried to meet Abram and all the company whom he had rescued. In the meantime a man by the name of Melchizedek, king of Salem, who was a priest of the Most High GOD came to give Abram bread and wine and to bless him for his great victory.

Then the king of Sodom told Abram if he would give him his people he could have all the goods that belonged to them. Abram said, "No, thank you, I won't take even a shoe-string, for if I do, then you might say that you had made Abram rich."

GOD was so pleased with Abram that He came to talk to him again. This time He said, "Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." In other words, "Abram, I'll be around you like a shield so that no one can hurt you, and I will give you riches far greater than those the king of Sodom wanted to give you."

Down in his heart all these years, Abram had a great wish. He wanted a son, and time went on and no son came. Abram thought this was a good time to speak about it, so he asked GOD if he should adopt his servant Eliezer's son and make him his heir.

GOD said, "No, Abram, I am going to give you a son of your very own. Come out of your tent and let me show you something. Look up to the sky." I think it was a moonless night and the Milky Way was bright with stars. "Count them, Abram." And Abram began, one, two, three, four, five, six, and then the fact of the great number came over him and he cried, "Why, GOD, I can't count them. There are too many." Then GOD said, "You'll have as many children, grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren as there are stars." And Abram believed what GOD said.

That night, when Abram was asleep, GOD came to him in a dream and told him very strange things that would happen to his family long after he was dead. He said this nation of whom Abram was to be the father, would be strangers in a strange land for four hundred years and then would be set free. All of this was very hard for Abram to understand.

The years passed and Abram and Sarah, his wife, were growing old and still GOD's promise of a son had not been fulfilled. Sarah became impatient and thought she would fix things up her own way. It was a custom of those days for men to have more than one wife, although that was not GOD's way. Sarah got to thinking that if she gave Hagar, her maid, to Abram for a wife, if GOD have Hagar a son, she would adopt it and raise it for her own. Sarah talked it over with Abram and he agreed.

When men and women take things into their own hands and do not follow GOD's plans and wait His time, trouble always follows, and it did with Sarah and Abram. It wasn't long before Sarah began to be very jealous of Hagar and to hate her.

When Hagar's son, Ishmael, was born Sarah wasn't as happy as she thought she would be, but they had to live together and make the best of it.

A few more years passed by and then one day GOD came again to talk to Abram. This time He said, "Abram, I will make my covenant with you and will multiply you exceedingly, and I am going to change your name from Abram, which means 'father,' to Abraham, which means 'father of many nations.'"

Then GOD went on to tell him that Sarah, his wife, would have a son. That was almost too good to believe, and Abraham was so pleased with the promise that he fell on his face and laughed.

Not long afterward Abraham was sitting in his tent door one hot summer day when he saw three men coming to call on him. He ran out to meet them and gave them a hearty welcome. Really, two of these men were angels and the other was the LORD, Himself, from Heaven.

Abraham invited them to stop under the shade of the trees and hurried around to wait upon them and to make them comfortable. Then he went into the tent to tell Sarah to get dinner, quickly. He rushed out to the field and got the finest calf of his flock and told his servants to dress it. It wasn't long before Sarah and the servants had the meal ready, and Abraham stood by while his guests ate. He seemed to realize they were more than ordinary visitors.

After dinner was over they asked where Sarah was and he told them she was in the tent. Then they went on to say, so that she could hear, that the long promised son was soon to come to them. Now, Abraham was about a hundred years old and Sarah was ninety and GOD doesn't usually send sons and daughters to such old people. Sarah laughed to herself and thought they must be joking, but the men said she ought not to laugh; for it was really true.

When the guests arose to go on their way toward Sodom, according to the oriental custom, Abraham went with them. The LORD was much pleased with Abraham and decided to tell him why they were going to Sodom and what they were going to do to that wicked city. The other two heavenly beings went on and left the LORD talking with Abraham. Of course, Abraham was greatly concerned because his nephew, Lot, lived in that wicked city that was about to be destroyed. So he pleaded long and hard for mercy on the people of Sodom. Finally, the LORD said He would save the city if they could find ten good people living in it.

Abraham went back very much worried about his relatives. When Lot went to live in Sodom he not only brought trouble on himself but on others also. Isn't that the way it always is? Sin brings the sinner and all his family to grief.

The next day the LORD drove Lot, his wife and daughters out of Sodom and then destroyed the city. So you see, Lot, when he was an old man, lost everything he had and was driven out into the cold world to find a new home.

The LORD loved Abraham and respected him so much that He saved Lot because Abraham asked Him to and not because Lot was worthy. Thus the "fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

I think Abraham spent a long sleepless night and then rose early in the morning and went to the top of the hill and lo, he saw the whole valley of the Jordan filled with smoke as from a great furnace, for Sodom and Gomorrah were burning. Abraham's only comfort was the fact that he had done his best for Lot, although, in his willfulness, Lot wouldn't listen.

Can you not see noble, faithful, old Abraham bow his head in agony of soul and in sorrow at Lot's condition? But there is no record that he ever visited Lot again. Lot had made his choice, had his way, and he had to suffer the results.

I suppose because of better pasture and farming lands, Abraham moved down to Gerar which was on the border of his country. So long as he lived well in the land he kept up his worship on the altars, but when he moved away and lived near the boundary he always got into trouble.

When he lived in the land and in fellowship with GOD, he wasn't a bit afraid of anyone or anything, for GOD was right there to be a shield to him as He had promised. But now he moved out on the edge and he began to be afraid and, one day, I think it was when Sarah moved about the tent as usual, it all came over him, as it did years before when he was out of the land in Egypt, how very, very pretty and good looking she was. He thought she surely carried her years well for one who was ninety, and he was greatly troubled about her. "Why," he thought to himself, "this king of Gerar will kill me and take Sarah." So he said to Sarah, "If the king should want you, tell him you are my sister." This was partly the truth, for she was his half sister.

Now, Sarah wasn't any more beautiful than she ever had been, but Abraham was out of fellowship with GOD and afraid of his life.

It wasn't long until Abimelech, king of Gerar, sent for Sarah to come to his house. Then GOD came to Abimelech in a dream and told him he couldn't have Sarah for she belonged to another, and that he must send her back.

In the morning Abimelech called for Abraham to come to see him and talk things over. Can you imagine how a good man like Abraham felt when he was rebuked by a heathen? Finally they got affairs all settled and Abimelech gave Abraham a present of sheep, oxen, menservants and maidservants and restored to him Sarah, his wife.

And now the time drew near for the fulfillment of the promise of a son to Abraham and Sarah. When the baby came they named him Isaac, which means "laughter." I think Abraham, although a hundred years old, went about very proudly and happily that day. And Sarah, dear Sarah, indeed she must have been exceedingly happy and have looked into the face of her son and thanking GOD for the great gift, for she held a secret in her heart that told her the baby's birth was only through GOD's power. The Bible says she laughed so that every one who heard her laughed too.

According to the custom of those days Isaac was weaned when he was about three years old and his father made a great feast to celebrate the event. Everything went along very well until Sarah saw Ishmael, Hagar's son, who was about fourteen years old, making faces at Isaac.

My, but Sarah was angry, and she told Abraham she wouldn't put up with this any longer, that he would have to put the servant and her son out of the house. She didn't want them any where near, for this son of a servant could not be heir with her son, Isaac.

Sarah should have taken time to think how she had brought this whole trouble on herself by trying to fix things in her own way; and Abraham, dear me, how sad he must have felt to have to drive his own son away. But, of course, he had listened to Sarah instead of to GOD, and now they must both face the results of their own foolishness.

It was another day of sorrow for Abraham and so greatly was he grieved that GOD came and talked to him about it. He said, "Never mind, Abraham, do as Sarah says, for it is in Isaac that your nation is to be blessed. But I will also make of Ishmael a great nation because he is your son."

I think Abraham must have spent another night of sober thinking. He might have been saved all this trouble if he had only waited instead of being impatient. Next morning, heavy of heart and sad of face, he got up early, packed some bread and a bottle of water in a sack, and putting them on Hagar's shoulder sent her and Ishmael away. That seemed pretty hard for all of them, but GOD Himself, came and took care of the woman and her son.

When Isaac was about seventeen years old GOD brought the hardest test of all into Abraham's life. It was more than just to prove Abraham, it was a great and wonderful picture of what the FATHER in Heaven was going to do when His Son should be born on the earth.

One day, I think it was when Abraham was alone that GOD called, "Abraham!" and he answered, "Behold, here I am." It is a great thing to live within calling distance and be able to answer when GOD calls.

What special message did GOD have for this man Abraham? A very unusual one. He said, "Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and go into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

Abraham must have been almost overcome when he heard those words and he might have said, "Why, LORD, do I understand you right? It is through Isaac that all the promises are to come. He is

the son that you promised so long and his mother and I love him so much, I can't think you mean what you say!"

But he didn't say any such thing for the Bible says that early the next morning he "saddled his ass and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up and went unto the place of which God had told him."

Mount Moriah was three days journey from where Abraham lived and the third day as they went along, they caught their first view of it. By the way, that is the mountain on which Jerusalem was built later.

With the mountain in sight Abraham said to the servants, "Abide ye here... and I and the lad will go yonder, and worship and come again to you." "And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it upon Isaac his son; and took the fire in his hand and a knife and they went both of them together."

As they walked along Isaac said, "My Father, ...Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" I think those words must have touched Abraham very deeply, but his faith in GOD and his willingness to obey kept him up.

Abraham told Isaac that GOD would provide Himself a lamb. When they got to the place that GOD had chosen, Abraham set about to build the altar and piled the wood upon it.

This finished he bound Isaac and put him on the altar, and stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son. Just at that very moment the angel of the LORD called to him out of Heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" and Abraham said, "Here am I." GOD said, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me."

And then Abraham loosed Isaac and when he turned around, near-by in a clump of trees was a ram for an offering.

Isaac was the dearest of all earthly things to Abraham, but GOD wanted to be first in his love and now He knew that He was.

I think Abraham praised GOD and put his arms around Isaac, and I think they both cried a little. There is no joy like that which comes from perfect obedience to GOD's Word.

There must have been a great time in Heaven the day that Isaac was offered. All the angels must have been interested in what was going on down on Mount Moriah, for twice the angel of the LORD called out from Heaven, the first time to stay Abraham's hand and the second time to tell Abraham that because he has not withheld his only son Isaac:

"That in blessing, I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of Heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed because thou have obeyed my voice."

A few years later Sarah, the only woman in the Bible whose full age is recorded, died at the age of one hundred twenty-seven years. This was the first death in Abraham's family and having no cemetery lot he had to look around for one. He finally decided on the cave of Machpelah near

where they lived at Hebron, which he bought of the sons of Heth and there he buried Sarah.

I will tell you of how Abraham found a wife for Isaac in the next story.

After Sarah died, Abraham married a woman by the name of Keturah who bore him many sons.

Abraham gave all of his property to Isaac, but to these sons and to Ishmael he gave gifts and sent them away from Isaac to live in the east country.

Abraham died when he was one hundred and seventy-five years old, and Isaac and Ishmael buried him beside Sarah in the cave of Machpelah.

So ended the life of the man whom GOD called His "Friend." Abraham made some mistakes but he was full of faith in GOD and was always ready to obey His Word.

We stand when the great hymns of our nation are sung. Let us bow reverently in the presence of so great a man as Abraham.

~ end of chapter 3 ~

04-CHAPTER 4 ISAAC

Chapter 4

ISAAC

From the story of Abraham to the story of Isaac is like passing from the rapids of Niagara into the smooth quiet waters of the river as it flows peacefully to Lake Ontario.

Abraham was not only a man of great faith but of great power - he knew how to get things done. His whole life was one of stirring activity. His son, Isaac, however, was quiet and thoughtful.

Of Isaac's earlier years I have told you in the story of Abraham.

After Sarah, Isaac's mother died, he and his father continued to live in Hebron, and Isaac was very lonely and mourned for his mother. Although he was forty years old he was not married and now it was time for him to be getting settled in life.

It was the custom of those days for the parents to choose the wife for the son, and so Abraham began to make arrangements. Because a great nation was to come from his family, it was of great importance for Isaac to have the right one for his life companion. Therefore, one day Abraham called his servant Eliezer to him and said, "Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: And I will make thee to swear by the Lord, the God of Heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son, Isaac."

When he said, "Put thy hand under my thigh," he followed the custom of the day and it meant that the servant, by doing so, would be duty bound to carry out the will of his master.

Why didn't Abraham want Isaac to marry a Canaanite? You see GOD had promised He would give this land to him and his family and he had accepted it by faith. If Isaac had married a Canaanite, then her father could have given her part of the land of Canaan and they might have said that Isaac received the land from his wife and not by faith in GOD's Word.

Another reason was that Abraham wanted Isaac to marry into his own family. Eliezer, the servant, also one who believed in prayer, answered his master and said, "But Master, when I get up there to the land of your relatives, maybe the young woman will not be willing to come home with me. Then shall I come back and get your son Isaac, and take him up there?"

"Oh, no!" Abraham said, "don't ever do such a thing as that, but the same LORD God of Heaven who called me out of the land of my fathers and promised me this land, shall send his angel to go before thee and lead you to take a wife unto my son." Then he told his servant that if the young woman refused to come back with him, he would have done his best and would be set free from his promise.

At last it was arranged, and Eliezer took of Abraham's servants and camels and made them ready for the long journey. Abraham and Isaac thought it wise to send a very nice present to help the servant in coaxing the young lady to come. Hence they put in some very lovely jewels of gold and silver, and also a complete outfit of very beautiful garments, just the kind that girls like.

I suppose it took many days to make the trip, for it must have been several hundred miles and camels do not travel as fast as autos. It was near evening when they came in sight of the city of Abraham's relatives in Mesopotamia. Eliezer stopped the camels just outside the city and made them kneel down by the well about the time the maidens would be coming to draw water for the evening meal.

And then Abraham's faithful servant prayed to the GOD of his master that He would direct him to the one whom He had chosen to be the bride of his master's son. He said, "Let it come to pass that the damsel to whom I shall say 'Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink,' and she shall say, 'Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also.' Let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant, Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master."

Before he had finished his prayer, Rebekah came to the well with her pitcher on her shoulder. She was very beautiful, a rare type of Syrian loveliness, a picture indeed, midst the soft glow of the evening shadows.

Eliezer's heart beat faster as he ran to meet her, hoping against hope that she was the one, and listening for the words of his prayer to know her. Surely his master's GOD had heard, for when he said, "Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water from thy pitcher," she generously said, "Drink my lord," and then, wonders of wonders, she spoke the words of his prayer - "I will draw water for thy camels also," and she drew enough for them all.

The servant was deeply touched by the whole scene, and while the camels were drinking, he went to the treasure bag he had brought with him and took out golden earrings, two lovely bracelets and ten shekels of gold, and gave them to her. Questioning her, he said, "Whose daughter art thou? Tell me, I pray thee, is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in?"

She replied that she was Bethuel's daughter and granddaughter of Nahor, and that there was plenty of room and food to care for all of them.

Then the faithful servant gave thanks to GOD, and said, "Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth; I being in the way the Lord led me." Isn't it a great thing to be in the way of the LORD so He can lead us? So many folks are all the time going their own way and expecting GOD to be with them and then grumbling when things do not come out right.

Rebekah, just like girls nowadays, was greatly pleased with the gifts and ran home to tell the family. Laban, Rebekah's brother, was quite excited about the tale she had to tell and, especially so, when he saw the costly gifts she had received. He ran down to the well where the camels were waiting and gave the men a very cordial welcome to their home where things were even then being made ready for them.

When they got to the house all the friendliness of an eastern home was showered upon them and when they had made themselves ready, they were invited to sit down to dinner. But Eliezer would not allow his hunger and all of these friendly people to lead him away from his mission, so he said to Bethuel and his household, "I will not eat until I have told my errand." They said, "Speak on."

He began by telling them he was Abraham's servant and of the manner in which the LORD had blessed his master making him very rich and great, for, Abraham had not only flocks and herds, but silver, gold, maidservants, menservants, camels and asses. But most of all he told them about his master's son Isaac who would receive all of his father's wealth, and that Abraham wanted Isaac to take a wife of his father's house and not from among the Canaanites, and that it was for this purpose he had come. He also told them how he had prayed to his master's GOD for guidance and that Rebekah had been the answer to his prayer in every detail.

He ended by saying, "Now, if I have been rightly led, tell me. If not, tell me that also, that I may go my way."

Laban and Bethuel answered at once that the thing was from the LORD and they had no right to put forward their own ideas. "Behold," they said, "Rebekah is before thee. Take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the Lord has spoken."

Eliezer's heart was full to overflowing and he bowed himself to the ground and worshipped GOD and then brought forth the gifts Abraham had sent, jewels of silver and of gold and fine clothing. He not only gave to Rebekah but to her mother and to her brother Laban.

And now Eliezer was ready for his dinner and they all ate of the delicious meal that had been prepared for them and afterwards had a good night's rest. The next morning Eliezer was up early and eager to start back to his master. All of this had come very suddenly upon the family, and, while they were willing for Rebekah to go, they realized that they would likely never see her again, and they begged Abraham's servant to wait a few days, at least ten, so that they could part with her more easily. But he was anxious to be off and said, "Hinder me not, seeing the Lord has prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master."

They called Rebekah and asked her if she was willing to go with this man and she said she was. I think that it where she showed her faith in GOD and believed that He was calling her to leave all and go.

Just imagine the excitement in that home that morning. I know her mother and sisters must have cried as they gathered her belongings together and made her ready for the journey. Rebekah's nurse, Deborah, was given to her to go with her, and indeed, she cared for her all the rest of her life.

The camels were loaded and brought to the house. The men mounted first and led the caravan, Rebekah, Deborah and some maidservants following on their camels. I think Rebekah looked back and waved her handkerchief as long as she could see her loved ones, and then after a quick turn in the road they were hidden forever from her sight.

I think her family went into the house dazed with the whole experience. Their beautiful Rebekah was gone and their hearts were filled with sorrow.

Rebekah, while realizing all of this, knew that GOD had called her and that she was facing her life's work. I think as she rode along those long stony trails that the same questions came to her that would come to a present-day girl under similar circumstances. What kind of a man was Abraham's son? She had heard he was very rich, but would he be stingy or generous? Would he be good looking? Would he be one whom she could love and admire?

Days passed on, some were pleasant and some were wearisome, but every one brought her nearer to the one to whom she was promised.

About this time Isaac was beginning to think it was time for the caravan to return, and the story says that he went out to take a walk one evening and to think. What was he thinking about? I think he said to himself, "I wonder what kind of a choice dad's servant will make for me? I hope she will be as good to me as mother was and as good looking. My, those camels are dreadfully slow, something must have gone wrong. It seems to me they should surely have been here today." Then Isaac lifted up his eyes and "Behold, the camels were coming."

Yes, and Rebekah caught sight of Isaac about that time and she asked the servant who that man was walking through the field to meet them. When he told her it was Isaac she stopped her camel and got off that she might put a veil over her face as was the custom of those days.

By this time Isaac had come up and Eliezer told all of the story. Isaac took Rebekah home with him and I guess it was love at first sight for the Bible says he loved her and that she comforted him.

Twenty years passed by and they had no children, and yet GOD had promised to make of the family a great nation. Isaac, though a man of faith, couldn't understand it, so he talked to GOD about it. That is a good thing for any one to do if he is a child of GOD. GOD listened to Isaac and one day twin boys, whom they name Jacob and Esau, were born to them.

When Rebekah asked the LORD about these children He told her that they would bring forth two nations and that the older would serve the younger. In the next story I'll tell you how this prophecy came true.

Famines are quite frequent even today, in Palestine. One came about this time in our story, and Isaac took his family, his flocks and his herds and went down on the border toward Egypt. GOD came to him and told him not to go to Egypt, but to stay in the land He had given to him. "Sojourn in this land and I will be with thee and bless thee," GOD said. In fact, He went over all the promises He had made to his father Abraham.

Isaac saw good crops down in Gerar, just bordering Egypt, and moved down there, and as it was with his father, the nearer he got to Egypt, the more unhappy he became and a great fear came upon him. He looked at Rebekah and said to himself, "My, my, isn't she beautiful? If King Abimelech sees her I am as good as dead." So he told her to say she was his sister. That was the same story his father told about his mother, only Sarah was his half-sister, so I suppose it was only half a lie. But that is the way, when a father tells half a falsehood his son usually tells a whole one.

Isaac's fears were justified, for the king had Rebekah taken to his palace after she had said she was Isaac's sister. One day Abimelech was looking out of his window and he saw Isaac and Rebekah having a real loving time together and he said to himself, "Well, look at them! And she said she was his sister. I can't believe it." So he called Isaac and asked him why he had told him

this lie. Isaac, very humbly said, that he was afraid they would kill him and take her if he said that she was his wife.

Then Abimelech issued a command to all his men stating that Rebekah was Isaac's wife and that whoever harmed either of them should be put to death.

Isaac lived in Gerar for some time after that and greatly increased in earthly riches, but spiritually he became very poor, for we never hear anything of an altar of worship being built while he lived there. Also he had lots of trouble with the Philistines who were very envious of his success.

When Abraham lived there, years before, he dug several wells and the Philistines had filled them up for they didn't like to have Abraham in their country. Now Isaac digged again these wells and about as fast as he cleaned them out, the Philistines fought to get them. Instead of fighting back, Isaac passed on to another place.

Every time he moved he went farther away from the border of Egypt and finally he moved to Beer-sheba and the very night he reached there, the LORD appeared to him. Then Isaac built an altar and called upon the name of the LORD. And so Isaac found GOD just where he left Him, at the place of prayer.

Isaac lived to be a hundred and eighty years of age. When he died, his sons, Jacob and Esau, buried him in the came of Machpelah beside his father and mother.

So ended the life of another of GOD's faithful ones.

~ end of chapter 4 ~

05-CHAPTER 5 JACOB

Chapter 5

Jacob

JACOB'S BIRTHRIGHT AND BLESSING

Twin boys?

Yes, twin boys.

For twenty years Isaac and Rebekah had been looking forward, in faith, to the fulfillment of GOD's promise for a son and now what a thrill to have the gift of two sons, whom they named Jacob and Esau.

The first thing Jacob did was to take hold of little Esau's heel as much as to say, "Here, I want to be first." Of course he did not know what he was doing but that trait went with him through life, and it was for that reason he was named Jacob, which means "supplanter," or one who pushes aside another and puts himself in his place.

The boys, though twins, were very different in nature. Jacob, a shepherd, was a sly schemer, even though he did understand the things of GOD. Esau was a great sportsman, who loved to hunt and with it all a happy-go-lucky fellow, having a good time and caring for little else than the pleasure of the present moment. He was born first and to him, naturally, would come the birthright and the blessing.

Perhaps we have better stop here to learn what was meant by these gifts. The birthright included three things, (1) the father's blessing and place as head of the family; (2) the honor of being in the direct line of the promised One, the LORD JESUS CHRIST; and (3) the privilege of being the family priest and offering the sacrifices.

GOD had spoken to Rebekah, their mother, before they were born and told her that the birthright, in this instance, would be given to the younger boy, Jacob. This was breaking a fixed custom but GOD has a perfect right to choose whomsoever He will to carry out His great plans.

Into this family, as the boys grew up, came a division. Isaac loved Esau the better because he brought him deer meat, called venison, of which he was very fond. Rebekah especially loved Jacob and her heart was all wrapped up in him.

Rebekah, evidently, had told Jacob that GOD had said he was to receive the birthright and the blessing. He seemed to have an understanding of the value of these spiritual things but that was the only way he was above or better than Esau.

Time went on and nothing was done to secure for Jacob these longed-for gifts and he and his mother began to be uneasy about it.

One day Jacob made a nice kettle of bean soup and had it all cooked when Esau came in from a hunting trip and oh, boy, was he hungry? Did that bean soup smell good? I'll say it did. Esau said, "Jacob, give me some soup, I am about to faint, I am so hungry."

Jacob had been waiting for just such a chance and was ready for him. "I'll sell you some bean soup for your birthright," he said in a very tactful way. Esau never stopped to think what that meant but, as usual, thought only of the present and of how hungry he was. He thought to himself that if he didn't get some food right away he would die and then what good would the birthright do him.

Before he gave him the soup Jacob made Esau swear that he would give him the birthright. How cheap to sell out for a bowl of soup, but maybe we do the same things in a different way. GOD has promised to us, through faith in JESUS CHRIST, an eternal birthright and along comes Satan and we sell out to him for the pleasures of this world and the satisfaction of the present moment.

Neither of these men did right. In fact Jacob bought what was really his own and Esau had nothing to sell. It was the same old story of not being willing to wait GOD's time.

A long time after this, when Isaac was old and blind, he sent for Esau and told him that if he would bring him a nice mess of deer meat he would give him the blessing. Of course he knew it belonged to Jacob, but Isaac wanted his favorite son to have it.

Rebekah was in the next room and heard it all. She said to herself, "Oh, he will give it to Esau, will he? I guess I had better take a hand in this." So she called Jacob and in the language of the present day, they framed old, blind Isaac, while Esau was gone to hunt for deer meat.

Rebekah told Jacob to hurry out and kill two kids of the goats and bring them to her. She said she would fix delicious meat for his father and Jacob could give it to him and get the blessing before Esau returned.

Jacob was afraid and said, "Now, mother, you know Esau has lots of hair on his hands and Dad will feel my hands and know it is I and not Esau and I'll get a cursing instead of a blessing." Rebekah said, "Never mind son, you do as I say and if necessary I'll take the cursing."

So Jacob did as his mother said and the kids were dressed and prepared. Then Rebekah got out Esau's best suit of clothes and had Jacob put it on. This done, she took pieces of the goat skins with the hair and put them on the backs of Jacob's hands and on the back of his neck.

When the meat was ready to serve she gave it to Jacob and he carried it in to his father, Isaac, and said, "Father, here I am." Isaac said, "Who are you, my son?" Jacob answered, "I am Esau, your first born. I have done according as you bade me; arise, I pray you and eat of my deer meat that your soul may bless me."

Isaac thought that if it were Esau he had gotten back very quickly and Jacob realizing this, explained that the LORD had helped him. Wasn't he daring, to lie and then bring the LORD into it?

Old Isaac was blind but he likewise was suspicious. Things didn't ring true, so he said, "Come here, my son, let me see if you are really Esau." So Jacob went close to his father who felt of him and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." And then he asked again, "Are you my very son, Esau?" Jacob again lied, saying, "I am."

Isaac ate the dinner they had prepared for him and then called his son Jacob, thinking he was Esau, and told him to kiss him and gave to him the wonderful blessing. "And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed: Therefore God give thee of the dew of Heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine" (Genesis 27:27-28).

"Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee" (Genesis 27:29).

Jacob had no sooner gotten away from his father's presence than Esau came in fresh from the hunt, bearing the meat for which his father had asked for, and saying, "Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me."

Poor old Isaac was greatly excited and said, "Who are you?" Esau answered, "I am Esau, your son, your first born son Esau." Then Isaac felt ashamed that he had promised the blessing to Esau when GOD had said it should go to Jacob and so he stayed his word saying, "Yes, I have given him the blessing and he shall be blessed."

Esau was very angry and said, "Supplanter is a good name for Jacob for he has pushed me aside twice and stepped into my place. He took away my birthright and now he has stolen my blessing."

You see they were all wrong; they were trying both to help and to hinder GOD in carrying out His plans, rather than to wait for His direction.

The only blessing Isaac had for Esau was that he should become rich and serve his brother. That didn't make him feel any better and his hatred toward Jacob grew more bitter every day until he said, "Never mind. Just wait until Dad is dead and then I'll kill him."

Someone carried this word to Rebekah and in great anxiety she called Jacob to tell him his life was in danger. Always thinking of the future, she suggested to Jacob that he go up to Haran and stay a few days with her relatives. She promised that she would send for him when Esau's wrath had passed away.

To Isaac she put it in a very different way. I fancy I can hear her sad tones as she said, "Isaac, these daughters of Heth, whom Esau has married, make me weary, and if Jacob should marry one of them my life would not be worth living. What shall I do about it?"

They talked the matter over and sent for Jacob. Isaac told him to go to Padanaram (Haran) to his mother's people and find a wife of the daughters of his Uncle Laban, and Isaac blessed Jacob and sent him away.

So their home was broken up and so far as we know Rebekah never saw her loved son again. I think she cried many times for the son she had sent away and all because of her own foolishness.

JACOB AT BETHEL

Jacob, a man used to the loving care of his mother and the quiet comforts of home, fled from the face of his brother Esau. On and on he went over miles of rough, mountainous paths, perhaps thinking every moment that Esau would overtake him. When the sun set and the chill of night was

coming on he rolled some stones together for a pillow and lay down to rest. Weary of body he was soon asleep and lo, GOD came to talk to him in a wonderful dream. I think GOD had been wanting to talk to him for some time but had waited until he was alone and quiet.

Many times GOD wants to talk to us but we are not still long enough to listen to Him.

In this dream Jacob saw angels running up and down a ladder that reached from earth to Heaven, and behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

Wasn't it gracious of the LORD to promise all of this when he was not worthy of any of it? Jacob was afraid, for he had a guilty conscience, and the presence of the LORD made his sin look blacker than ever. He got up early the next morning, piled up the stones he had used for a pillow, poured oil over them and called the name of the place Bethel.

Jacob, always a bargainer, now told the LORD that if He would be with him on his way, give him bread to eat and clothing to put on and lead him back home in peace, then the LORD would be his GOD. Foolish Jacob, the LORD had already told him He would do all this and much more, but Jacob did not see the greatness and power of GOD's promise, and thought only of his own personal needs and desires.

On he journeyed many days, until one day he came to a well in a field, where flocks of sheep were gathered. He thought he was near the end of his journey and so inquired of the shepherds who told him they were from Haran.

Jacob asked them if they knew Laban and they answered, "Yes, we do and there comes Rachel, his daughter, with her sheep." Jacob wanted them to hurry and water their sheep and take them away but they said not until all the flocks had been brought together. I think Jacob wanted to be alone when he met Rachel.

By this time Rachel had come up with her flock and Jacob rolled away the stone and watered her sheep for her. Then he kissed Rachel and broke down and cried for joy that at last the long journey was over and he had found his Uncle Laban's home.

Visitors were few and far between and especially members of their own family from a far away land. So Rachel hurried to tell her father, Laban, who on hearing the news, ran out to meet Jacob and to welcome him to his home.

I am sure they had a great time visiting. Laban would want to know all about his sister, Rebekah and family, and very likely she had sent loving messages to her brother.

JACOB AT HARAN

Jacob was an energetic, capable fellow and made himself very useful in Laban's home life. Laban saw this and after Jacob had been there about a month, he said to him, "You are my relative, and

must not work for me for nothing. What wages do you want?"

Jacob wasn't long in finding an answer for ever since he had met Rachel that first evening by the well he had loved her with all his heart. Wages? He would give his very life for the one he loved, and so he told Laban he would serve him seven years for Rachel, his daughter. Laban agreed and the bargain was made.

The Bible says that Jacob's love for Rachel was so great that the seven years seemed but a day. At the end of the time Jacob said, "Give me my wife." Now Rachel had an older sister, Leah, who was not very good looking, and as it was the custom for the older sisters to marry first, Laban played a trick on Jacob. Brides wore veils over their faces in those days and the first thing Jacob knew he had married Leah instead of Rachel.

He was very angry at Laban and told him so, but Laban said never mind, that he could have Rachel too, if he would serve him seven more years. Because of his deep love for her he was willing to do anything, so the second agreement was made.

It was very unkind and hateful of Laban to do such a thing but we must remember Jacob had played about the same kind of game on his brother, Esau, and he was being paid back in his own coin.

Time went on and in the course of years Leah had four sons, Rueben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah. Rachel had no children and she so much wanted a son. She had a maid by the name of Bilhah, whom she gave to Jacob for a wife and then her sons, Dan and Naphtali, were born they were regarded as Rachel's children. Then Leah gave her maid Zilpah, to Jacob and her two sons, Gad and Asher, were raised as Leah's. All of this was not according to GOD's plan, but it was the custom of the day.

Later, Leah had two more sons of her own, whom she named Issachar and Zebulun, and also a daughter, Dinah. Then GOD heard Rachel's prayer for a son of her very own, whom she called Joseph, and who was to become, years afterwards, a great blessing to his family.

Now, Jacob wanted to be free to do for himself, for he had served Laban a long time, but Laban was not willing to part with him for he had learned by experience that GOD had prospered him for Jacob's sake. He told Jacob he would pay him any wages that he would ask if he would only stay with him. But it wasn't money Jacob was looking for. He wanted Laban to give him what belonged to him and to have the privilege of making a home for his family and a place for his flocks.

You will remember that both Laban and Jacob were schemers of the deepest dye and the only thing to Jacob's credit above Laban's was his belief in the Word of GOD. GOD had chosen Jacob for a great place in His plans but it was only through GOD's grace and patience that he became in later years a worthy follower of GOD.

As was mentioned before, Laban asked Jacob to name the wages he wanted, and, as usual, he was ready with a plan. He said to Laban, "Do not give me anything, but I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll go through the herds of cattle and the flocks of sheep and goats and take out of them all the ring-streaked, speckled and spotted ones and put them in a place by themselves, and then I'll put all of the brown ones by themselves. My share will be all the little ring-streaked, speckled and spotted calves born from now on and all the plain brown ones will be yours."

Laban said that was a good plan and then took all the ring-streaked, speckled and spotted cattle and gave them to his sons and told them to take them away three days' journey.

Laban thought he had played a good one on Jacob for he was left with only plain brown cattle and sheep, and it didn't look as though he would have very many speckled calves to call his own. It was a mean, selfish trick, but Jacob was as skilful as ever, and his scheming head was very busy.

He knew a great deal about what is known nowadays as "animal husbandry," that is, how to breed stock, and it wasn't very long until the finest little calves were being born ring-streaked, speckled and spotted, which he put in a flock alone and marked them for himself. All of the rest, most of them weak and poor, he put in a flock and kept for Laban.

When Laban's son came over to see the flocks they said, "Jacob has cheated Dad. Just look at his flocks and then look at ours. Furthermore Dad has given him all that ever he had." They told their father who went right down to see the flocks and Jacob saw that he was very angry. Things looked dark for both Jacob and Laban, but Laban returned home still angry.

Then GOD came to Jacob when he was out in the field and told him that if he returned to his own land, where his father lived, He would be with him. Jacob sent to the camp for Rachel and Leah to come to the field to talk things over with him. He said, "Your father is not pleased with me, but GOD has been with me. You well know how hard I have worked for your father and you also know how he has deceived me and changed my wages ten times. He has not hurt me physically, because GOD would not let him and all through these years GOD has cared for me and blessed me. GOD sent an angel to tell me that He has seen all that Laban has done to me, and also that He was the GOD of Bethel, where I anointed the pillar, and where I made a promise to Him. He said for me to arise and return unto the land of my father."

Rachel and Leah, being women of good sense, saw Jacob's point of view. They said their father had not treated them right and to him they were no more than strangers, so that whatever GOD wanted Jacob to do would be satisfactory to them.

JACOB AND THE MISPAH COVENANT

They began at once to arrange for the journey back to Canaan. The camels and asses were loaded. The flocks and herds, now of great number, were placed in charge of servants and all were soon on their way while Laban was off shearing sheep.

Three days later Laban returned and found out about the flight and also that someone had taken the household idols, for even though JEHOVAH was named in this Syrian home, idols were also worshipped.

Gathering his men together they set out to catch up with Jacob and his family to get back, if possible, the gods. He was very angry, but GOD came to him in a dream and told him to be careful what he said to Jacob, and not to speak to him good or bad.

For seven days they hurried forward until they overtook Jacob where he had made a camp on Mount Gilead and there they also camped.

Needless to say Laban sought at once to speak with his son-in-law, saying, "Why have you run from me and carried away my daughters as though they were captives in battle? Why didn't you tell me you wanted to go and I would have had a farewell party for you with lots of fun, songs and music on the harp and the tambourine? You didn't give me a chance to kiss my children and grandchildren goodbye. You have acted foolishly. It was in my power to hurt you, only GOD told me not to speak to you good or evil. And now, Jacob, I know your heart longs for your father's house and you want to go along on your journey, but why did you steal my gods?"

Jacob answered that if he had told him he was going to leave he would have kept his daughters by force. But, he added, that, so far as the gods were concerned (he did not know Rachel had taken them) whoever had them should die. So Laban rushed around from one tent to another hunting for them. Finally he reached Rachel's tent, who knowing he was coming, hurriedly put the idols into her camel's saddle and sat on them, and although her father hunted all around he did not find them.

Then Jacob had his inning and told Laban all that had been burning in his heart these many years. He said, "Where have I sinned that you pursue me so hotly? You have searched all my stuff and what have you found? If you have found anything that belongs to you, set it out so that all can see it, and my men and your men can judge between us. Twenty years I have worked for you. I have taken care of your flocks and if an animal was injured or torn of beasts I took the loss myself. If a sheep was stolen by day or by night you charged it to me.

"Sometimes there was no rain and then again frosts killed the crops and there was little food for the stock. Many a night I have had no sleep because of anxiety. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your cattle and you have changed my wages ten times. Except the GOD of my father, the GOD of Abraham and the fear of Isaac had been with me you wouldn't have given me a thing. GOD has seen my affliction and the labor of my hands and warned you in a dream last night."

Laban, unable to answer this biting charge said, "Come, let us make a covenant between us." Therefore Jacob and his sons made a pillar of stones and gave it the name of Galeed or Mizpah, meaning a witness or a watch-tower and Laban said, "The LORD watch between us while we are absent one from the other." That is to say, he asked the LORD to see that neither of them harmed the other behind his back. These words are often called the Mizpah benediction and one almost has to file when their origin is thought of, for it means, "The LORD watch you, because I sure don't trust you!"

Laban, to make the covenant more binding, continued by saying, "Behold, this heap of stones, this pillar which is cast up between us, will be for a witness, that I'll not step over to your side, nor are you to step over to my side. The GOD of Abraham, and the GOD of Nahor, the GOD of their father judge between us." And Jacob swore to the covenant in the name of his father Isaac, and offered sacrifices upon the mount, and they ate bread and stayed out under the stars of Heaven all night. Early in the morning Laban kissed his daughters and grandchildren and returned home.

Thus ended the partnership of two men, Jacob and Laban, who had lived together for twenty years and all the time each had a very selfish desire to deceive the other. Not a very happy way to live, was it? Such lives usually separate as these did, with each one doubting the other even though

they were separated one from the other.

JACOB MEETS ESAU

The present difficulties settled, Jacob at last faced toward home and as he journeyed a host of angels met him. Some think GOD sent them to welcome him back to his own land and to guide and protect him.

One would think that now surely Jacob must be very happy for he was going home but instead of that he was very wretched, for his thoughts were all taken up with a bad conscience, which is always bringing up things we try to forget. He wondered if Esau had gotten over his angry spell. I think, too, he was homesick to see mother and dad. His mother had said he should stay up at Haran only a few days and then come back but he had been gone many years.

Jacob thought the whole situation over and over again in his mind. He decided to send a company of messengers ahead to the country of Edom where Esau lived and find out if possible, his brother's attitude toward him.

When the delegation started out Jacob instructed them to say to Esau, "Your servant, Jacob, says to tell you that he has been all these years with Laban, and that he has oxen, asses, flocks, menservants and womenservants, and he is returning and wants to know if you will receive him graciously."

A few days later they returned to Jacob with the news that they found Esau and that he was coming to meet him with a company of four hundred men. Jacob was terribly frightened. Four hundred men coming to meet him and Esau leading. What should he do?

He decided to divide the people, the flocks, the herds and the camels into two bands. Then if Esau smote the first company, perhaps the other could escape. Jacob prayed, "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude."

When he prayed it sounded as though he depended upon GOD but he did just what lots of people do today, when he got through praying he turned to his own planning in his own way.

He decided to arrange a present for Esau and so he chose two hundred and twenty goats, two hundred and twenty sheep, thirty milk-camels with their colts, fifty cattle and thirty asses, each kind in a drove by themselves, gave them into the hands of servants and sent them on ahead, telling them that when they met Esau and he asked whose these were, they should answer, "They be thy servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he is behind us. And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall ye speak unto Esau, when ye find him. And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me."

So they went to meet Esau, but Jacob and his family stayed in the camp. In the night, for Jacob could not sleep, he got up, took Rachel and Leah and their maidservants and his eleven sons and sent them over to the other side of the brook Jabbok that they might be better protected.

"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day."

Let us think a little bit about this great, commanding, yet fearful and uneasy Jacob. He was going back home in obedience to the call of GOD, for Jacob always had believed GOD's Word and had respect for it whether or not he obeyed it. Yet, even though under the guidance of GOD, he had too much confidence in his own strength and in his own schemes and GOD had to bring him to see that he was nothing in himself and that GOD must be the controlling power in his life.

So GOD sent an angel in the form of a man, to wrestle with Jacob. Yes, the angel could have overcome him at once but he wanted Jacob to realize that he was against a power greater than his own. All night the wrestling match went on, and as day began to dawn, the angel touched Jacob's thigh and put it out of joint. Then, his strength gone, Jacob fought harder. The angel said, "Let me go," but Jacob realizing he would be left a helpless cripple shouted, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

The angel said, "What is thy name?" He answered "Jacob." And the angel said, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." Jacob asked the angel what his name was but he wouldn't tell him although he did bless him and then went his way.

Jacob, supplanter; Israel, prince with GOD. Who wouldn't rather be a prince than a supplanter? Doesn't it seem foolish to us as we read this story to think of how all through the years of sorrow, worry and trouble he might have been a prince of GOD living a satisfied, wholesome, GOD-controlled life? Is your name Jacob or Israel?

Jacob called the place Peniel. See it on the map? Peniel means the face of GOD and Jacob said there he had seen GOD face to face and lived. When he walked over to join the family he limped and I think ever after that when anyone asked him why he was lame that he said it was the sign of his spiritual victory.

Strange to say that although he had been victorious it was not all at once that Jacob walked as Israel, for now he lifted up his eyes and saw Esau with his great company of horsemen coming over the top of the distant hills, and Jacob returned to his schemes. He divided the family into three groups with Rachel and Joseph last. Then he, himself, went ahead and we find him bowing down seven times as he approaches Esau and oh, joy! Esau forgot all of his ill-feelings when he saw his brother, Jacob, and ran to meet him and kissed him in true oriental style, and they were both so happy they cried.

When they had found their voices out of all this excitement, Esau said, "Who are those with thee?" And then Jacob had all of his family come up and he introduced them to his brother.

Esau asked Jacob what the idea was of all those droves of stock he met out on the highway as he came up. Jacob said, "That is a present for you, to fix up the past so that you will be gracious to me." Esau said he had a great plenty and that Jacob should keep it for himself, but Jacob made him take it.

JACOB AGAIN IN CANAAN

After Jacob and Esau had visited for a while Jacob began to ask about the roads and the best way to get into Canaan. Esau wanted him to follow him to Seir but Jacob stayed a while at Succoth, on the east of the Jordan, and then after a time he passed over Jordan and went to the city of Shechem and bought a piece of land and set up his tent upon it. Jacob should have gone right to Bethel as GOD had told him to do.

His daughter Dinah thought she would go and call upon the girls of Shechem and the first thing she knew the prince of the Hivites had fallen in love with her. Before the affair was ended Dinah's brothers had murdered all the men of Shechem, rescued their sister and spoiled the city, that is, took all of its wealth.

When Jacob found out about it he was very sorry and told his sons that they would bring trouble on the whole family by doing such terrible things. Jacob was partly to blame, for, had he gone to Bethel as GOD had told him to, it wouldn't have happened.

Then GOD came with a definite command to him. He said, "Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother."

It seems that back of all this there was a reason why Jacob was not making any headway and was having so much trouble. The Bible says that after GOD called him to go up to Bethel he gathered his household together and told them there would have to be a house-cleaning of all sorts of things of which GOD did not approve. You remember Rachel had the household gods of her father. And perhaps, when they took all of the wealth of the city of Shechem there were idols in this gain. Also, they were wearing little idols for earrings. All of these things had to be given up, for in Jacob's family only the true GOD was to be worshipped.

When these idols were gathered together Jacob took them out and buried them under an oak tree. With these troublesome things left behind the family of Jacob journeyed to Bethel. I am sure he thought of the night he spent there so lonely and sad and again of the beautiful dream and GOD's promises.

At Bethel, Jacob built an altar and worshipped GOD with sacrifices. When he was there before he called the place Bethel, which means "house of GOD." Now he called it El-Bethel, or "the GOD of the house of GOD." You see by this time it was not so much the place but the GOD of the place that Jacob was worshipping. GOD was pleased with Jacob's sacrifice and came down to renew His covenant with him. He told him again that his name was no more Jacob but Israel and from then on he walked more like a prince than a supplanter.

Jacob then journeyed to Hebron to visit his father, Isaac. When they were not far from Bethlehem GOD gave to Rachel another son whom she named Benoni or "son of sorrow," for she realized she was dying and she knew her death would be a great grief to Jacob who loved her dearly. After she died Jacob named the baby Benjamin, or "son of my right hand," for he said the child would be a strength and comfort to him.

Jacob buried Rachel in the place where she died, and erected a pillar over her grave. That very place is still preserved, although it is marked by a rather modern tomb.

I am sure Jacob was glad to see his father, Isaac, when he reached Hebron, but I know he also missed his mother, especially at this time when he was mourning for Rachel. No story of the Bible records a more beautiful, tender and abiding love than that of Jacob for Rachel.

It wasn't long until Isaac died at the age of one hundred and eighty years. Esau came to the funeral and he and Jacob buried their father in the cave of Machpelah beside Abraham and Sarah.

In the story of Joseph I'll tell you more of the later years of Jacob's life at Hebron for they are very closely linked together.

~ end of chapter 5 ~

06-CHAPTER 6 JOSEPH

Chapter 6

Joseph

JOSEPH'S BOYHOOD

"So you like the story of Joseph, do you? Don't you think he had a pretty hard time?"

"Oh yes," answered Alice, "but I know how it turned out."

I believe that is the way with most of us. The story has so beautiful an ending that we forget the cruelties and hardships of the opening chapters.

Do you remember in the story of Jacob that when Joseph was born his father and mother were very happy for they had been praying for many years for a son?

It was soon after Joseph's birth that Jacob asked his father-in-law for permission to return to Canaan, his own land. We hear no more of Joseph until he is seventeen years of age, living with his father and brothers at Hebron.

Jacob had twelve sons; two, Joseph and Benjamin, were the sons of Rachel, his most loved wife, who died on the way to Bethlehem when Benjamin was born. Jacob's heart was wrapped around both of these motherless children but he especially loved Joseph. The Bible says he loved him because he was the son of his old age and then, too, we cannot help but see that Joseph took an unusual interest in his father's affairs and disliked the evil doings of his brothers, which made them hate him.

Jacob, unwisely, it seems to me, showed special favor by giving Joseph a very beautiful coat made of stripes of different colors, one of the kind worn by those of a higher class.

It really seemed that everything went against Joseph so far as his brothers' love was concerned. While he was but an innocent, sincere boy he had some dreams which he told his father and brothers. These dreams did not come from eating mince pie and doughnuts, but were dreams that GOD gave to him concerning his future and that of his family.

One night he dreamed he was out in the field with his brothers binding sheaves, and that his brothers' sheaves bowed down to his sheaf. Naturally, when he told it to his brothers they hated him more than ever. They asked him if he thought he was going to rule over them.

Then another time he dreamed that the sun, moon and eleven stars bowed down to him. Again he related the dream and his father scolded him, saying, "Do you think your father and mother and brothers are all going to bow down to you?" The hatred of his brothers increased every day, but something in Joseph's words, spoken so simply, made his father think seriously.

Jacob was rich in flocks and herds, which means he had many cattle and sheep. The pasture around Hebron was scarce and sometimes the shepherds had to take the stock far away to find feed for them. His sons had gone at this time to Shechem, after fifty miles north of Hebron where grass was more plentiful.

Jacob's sons were not very trustworthy and after a time he sent Joseph to see how things were going and to bring him a report. When he reached Shechem his brothers were not there but Joseph learned from a man whom he met that they had gone farther north to the valley of Dothan where later he found them.

But that bright, striped coat of many colors could be seen a long way off and his brothers saw him coming and knew him, and said one to the other, "Behold, this dreamer cometh!" Their anger toward him stirred afresh as he drew near, and they planned then and there to kill him.

Reuben, who was the oldest of the family, and held more or less of a responsibility over his younger brother, heard the plans and made up his mind to save Joseph from their hands. He said, "No, do not kill him, do not shed any blood, but let us throw him into the pit," thinking he could later rescue him and send him home.

As soon as Joseph came up he fell into the hands of these jealous, envious brothers who tore off his beautiful coat, threw him into an old well and then sat down and ate their lunch with the pitiful cries and pleadings of Joseph ringing in their ears.

While they were eating, along came a company of Ishmaelites, also called Midianites, traders, with their camels loaded with spices, ointments and gum, on their way from Gilead to Egypt. With the coming of the caravan, Judah, one of the sons of Jacob, thought of a way to rid themselves of Joseph. He suggested that they sell him to these travelers instead of killing him. Therefore they bargained with them and sold Joseph for twenty pieces of silver, which was a little more than eleven dollars in our money. Very soon Joseph was on his way to Egypt.

I am sure his greatest concern was for his father, for Joseph knew he would worry when he did not return. But Joseph knew the GOD of his father and had a great faith which kept him looking up and believing that even though his present circumstances were very difficult, GOD would yet lead him through. He also was conscious of a clean heart before GOD and that it was no sin of his that had led him into trouble.

While Joseph was on his long journey to Egypt we will find out what his brothers were doing. It seems that Reuben was not with the others when they sold Joseph. Perhaps he had to look after some distant flocks, and when he returned in the evening he hurried to the pit to rescue his young brother and send him home. Of course the pit was empty and Reuben was filled with great sorrow and cried, "The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?" Meaning to say he was responsible for Joseph's safety and now what should he do?

We do not know whether they explained the matter to Reuben, but we do know that they killed a little lamb and dipped Joseph's coat in its blood and took it home to their father, saying, "See, Dad, we found this bloody coat. Do you know whether or not it is Joseph's?"

Jacob knew at once that it belonged to his beloved son and decided a wild beast had killed him. He was broken-hearted and mourned many days and could not be comforted, but his sons carried

this ugly sin in their hearts forever afterwards.

JOSEPH IN PRISON IN EGYPT

When the Ishmaelites got to Egypt they sold Joseph to an officer of Pharaoh, an Egyptian named Potiphar, who was captain of the guard. The Bible says the LORD was with Joseph and made all that he did to prosper.

As time passed, Potiphar saw the presence of GOD in Joseph's life and made him to be overseer of his house. From the very day that Joseph took charge, GOD blessed the Egyptian's house and all his fields for Joseph's sake. He did so well that Potiphar placed more and more important duties upon him until the Bible says he paid no attention to his own affairs only that he had enough to eat.

Joseph was very good looking and had a fine appearance which made him very charming. Human nature seems always to have been the same, and Potiphar's wife cast her sinful eyes upon Joseph. Over and over again she sought to lay with him. He manfully explained to her that his master had put all his affairs into his hands, withholding only her, his wife, and surely he must and would be loyal and true.

One day when Joseph was in Potiphar's palace, Mrs. Potiphar again tempted Joseph, and, because he refused and turned to leave she caught hold of his cloak, a loose garment worn around the shoulders, but Joseph ran out and away.

She was very angry and to get even, she kept Joseph's cloak until her husband came home, then she lied and pretended that he had wanted to lay with her in Potiphar's absence. Then it was her husband's turn to be angry and he cast Joseph into prison where the king's prisoners were kept.

It is hard to be punished when we do wrong, but to suffer for doing right is very trying, indeed. However, the LORD knew all about it and was with Joseph through all of those dark prison years.

The keeper of the prison was very pleased with this young Hebrew and after a time made him a "Trustee" and gave him charge of all of the prisoners and whatsoever he did prospered.

Several years passed by and then the king's chief butler and chief baker offended him, and he had them cast into the prison where Joseph was. One night each of these dreamed a dream and when Joseph came into their cells the next morning on his prison duties, they were both looking very sad and he asked them what was the matter. They said they had dreamed dreams and there was no one to tell the meaning of them.

Then Joseph said, "Do you not know that GOD, alone, can explain dreams? If you will tell me your dreams I'll ask GOD to give me the meaning."

The chief butler told his story first. He said he had dreamed that he saw a vine with three branches, which budded, blossomed and put forth grapes. Then he took Pharaoh's cup, pressed the grapes into it and gave it to him.

Joseph said the three branches were three days until Pharaoh should send for him and restore him to his place as chief butler. Joseph was very anxious to get out of prison and asked the butler to speak of him to the king when he should again serve him and ask him to release him, for he said, "I was stolen away out of my land and here I am in prison. I did nothing wrong at either time

to receive such treatment."

The chief baker was so encouraged with the explanation of the dream of the chief butler that he told Joseph his dream. He said that he dreamed he had three white baskets on his head, and in the top basket were all manner of baked meats for Pharaoh, and the birds came and ate up all the food.

Joseph said the three baskets were three days and within that time Pharaoh would sentence him to hang from a tree and the birds would eat his flesh.

So it came to pass that the third day was Pharaoh's birthday. He had a banquet and to further celebrate the occasion, he restored the chief butler and hanged the chief baker according to Joseph's explanations of the dreams

It seems hard to forget the evil things men do to us, but I am afraid it is very easy to forget the good deeds and the chief butler forgot all about Joseph and his plea for freedom.

JOSEPH EXALTED IN EGYPT

Two years passed by and then Pharaoh had two dreams, very, very strange dreams. These dreams made such an impression on his mind that he was greatly troubled and sent for all the magicians and all the wise men of Egypt to tell him what his dreams meant, but none were able to help him in any way.

It was then that the chief butler remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh the whole story of his dream and the one of the chief baker and of Joseph's correct explanation of the dreams.

Joseph was called at once, and after making himself ready stood before the king. I wonder if being shut up several years in prison had caused the glow of health to fade from his face. It may have, but of one thing I am sure, although modest and shy, he still had a clear eye, a firm voice and a commanding personality.

The king, eager to know the meaning of his dreams, said to Joseph, "I have dreamed a dream and none of my wise men are able to tell the meaning, and I heard of you, that you can understand dreams and explain them."

Joseph answered, "It is not in me, GOD shall give Pharaoh the answer of peace."

Then Pharaoh told how he had dreamed that he stood on the bank of the river and seven fat-fleshed, well-favored cows came up out of the water and fed in the meadows. Afterward, seven poor, bony, lean-fleshed cows, the worst he had ever seen in all Egypt, came and ate up all the seven fat cows. And when the lean cattle had eaten all of the fat cattle they looked as poor and thin as ever.

And then Pharaoh said he had dreamed a second dream. This time he saw seven good, full ears of corn growing on one stalk and again seven withered, thin, blighted ears sprung up and ate up all the seven good ears. He was sorry that none of the magicians could explain the dreams for him and he was in great agony of mind.

Joseph, who was equal to the task, because he put his trust in the LORD, said to Pharaoh, "The dreams both mean the same. GOD is showing you what He is about to do. The seven good cows and the seven good ears are the same and mean a period of seven years. The seven poor, lean cows and the seven poor, blighted ears of corn are the same, a period of seven years. What GOD is about to do He is showing Pharaoh. Behold, there will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt, and then afterwards shall come seven years of famine and the good years will be forgotten in the land of Egypt, for the years of famine will be hard. The reason Pharaoh's dream was double was because the thing was established by GOD and He will shortly bring it to pass."

How tense and silent Pharaoh and his court must have been at these words, but Joseph, under the power of the SPIRIT of GOD went right on, for he not only was able to give the explanation of the dreams but also the answer to the problem. He advised Pharaoh to find a man wise and careful, who, with a set of officers, should be placed in charge of the land of Egypt.

Joseph told him to take up, for the government, one-fifth of all the land for the seven plenteous years and let the officers gather all of the crops of those good years that were to come and lay them up under the hand of the king. "Let them store it in cities so that when the years of famine come, Egypt will not suffer."

Pharaoh and all of his court were very much pleased with Joseph's wise and helpful advice. The king looked over his official family and very thoughtfully said, "Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom the SPIRIT of GOD is?"

And then, I think it was that it came to Pharaoh that Joseph was the very one, and turning to the young Hebrew he said, "Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt."

And Pharaoh took off his signet ring and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him with the garments of royalty, and put a gold chain around his neck and had Joseph ride in the chariot next behind his, and made the people bow to him. So Joseph ruled over Egypt, subject only to Pharaoh himself.

I wonder what was in Joseph's mind that night as he lay down to rest in the royal palace, his first night out of prison. There must have been the happy realization of freedom and then I am sure the bed was soft and not much like the cold prison floor on which he had so long been sleeping. I think his mind went back over the thirteen years which had passed since he bade his father good-bye and started for Dothan to see how his brothers were getting along.

I know he had never forgotten his father and had shed many tears as he thought of his father's love for him. He may have thought, too, of his brothers and wondered what they would think, now, to see him governor of all Egypt.

Thirteen years of trials, Oh, so hard and uncalled for. I believe he might have said to himself, "Yes, sometimes my faith was very weak and I thought GOD had forgotten, and then again GOD sent such strong proof of His presence that I was able to go on. I thought the chief butler would get me

out of prison two years ago, but he forgot me. Oh, well, it is all over now and it hasn't hurt me."

So the darkness scattered, a new day dawned, and Joseph took up the duties of his office.

First of all Pharaoh changed his name from Joseph to Zaphnath-paaneah and gave him a bride, Asenath, daughter of Potipherah, priest of On.

Pharaoh was never for one instant disappointed in his choice of a man to govern the kingdom. The first thing Joseph did was to drive all over the land of Egypt and acquaint himself with the entire situation.

The seven plenteous years were on "and the earth brought forth by handfuls." Joseph organized the whole nation and placed officers in every quarter to oversee the saving of the crops.

Huge store houses were built in the cities and filled with grain. The Bible says that Joseph had corn stored in quantities like the sands of the sea, until they gave up trying to count it.

During these years Joseph had two sons born, whom he named Manasseh which means forgetting, and Ephraim meaning fruitful; for he said, God has "made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house" and has "caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."

The seven years of plenty came to an end and the great famine began as Joseph foretold. In Egypt the people had no bread and came to Pharaoh hungry and he sent them to Joseph who opened the store houses and sold them corn. As the famine spread, all the countries round about sent to Egypt where they heard there was food.

The Bible says "And the famine was over all the face of the earth: and Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands."

At the first the Egyptians paid for the corn in money. When the money was gone Joseph had them to bring their cattle in exchange for food. The next year they gave their land and finally themselves as servants, so when the famine was over Pharaoh owned the whole kingdom, money, cattle, land and people.

JOSEPH'S FAMILY AND THE FAMINE

Now the story goes back to Joseph's family in Hebron who were beginning to be concerned about food for themselves and their cattle. One day Jacob said to his sons, "Why do ye look one upon another?" In other words, "what are you worrying about? Are you short of food?" Then he told them he had heard there was corn in Egypt and that they had better go down and buy a supply.

Benjamin, Joseph's full brother, was not allowed to accompany his brothers on the trip for his father was afraid trouble might come to him as it had to Joseph.

What a stirring scene it must have been as they prepared for the journey. As we know, Jacob was owner of great flocks and herds even when Joseph was at home. After these years the eleven sons had grown to manhood and each had his own share of stock which must have greatly increased by this time.

To care for such large numbers took several hundred menservants, maidservants and herdsmen. Can you think then, of what it meant to bring food from Egypt, a wearisome journey of about two hundred and fifty miles, much of that way over desert sands? It has been estimated that the caravan included no less than eight hundred asses and many servants.

As they neared the city of Pharaoh they found many others going on the same mission for the famine was everywhere.

Joseph, as the king's governor, was in charge of all the grain. When his brothers came into his presence he knew them. As they bowed down to the earth before him, little did they think that this handsome man in the royal robes of Egypt and who held so much power, was the young brother whom they had so cruelly treated and sold as a slave more than twenty years before.

Yes, Joseph knew them, and as they bowed before him he remembered the dreams he had dreamed when he was a boy, how his brothers' sheaves bowed down to his sheaf, and the sun, moon and stars showed him respect. I think he also remembered how angry they were when he told them his dreams.

Not wanting them to recognize him at this time, he pretended a rough manner toward them and demanded to know where they came from. Very humbly they said they had come from Canaan to buy corn.

"Oh, no," he said, "You are spies, come down to see our poverty."

"Oh, no, my lord," they earnestly replied, "We are not spies, but are come to buy corn. We are all the sons of one man and are telling you the truth."

Joseph again pretended not to believe them and insisted they must be spies. Then they told him a little more of their family history. They said, "We are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan. The youngest is not with us, we left him at home with father, and the other is dead."

Joseph still stood firm in his view that they were spies and said, "By the life of Pharaoh, you will not leave Egypt until your youngest brother comes. One of you may go and get him while I keep the rest of you in prison. Then I'll see if you are telling the truth."

Why do you think Joseph treated his brothers in this manner? Was he spiteful toward them because they had mistreated him? I believe we know Joseph well enough to know that was not so. These men were strong-willed and selfish and needed to be humbled. I believe GOD led Joseph in his dealings with them that they might be sorry for their sin, not only toward their brother, but before GOD Himself.

Joseph put them all in prison for three days, at the end of which he went in to talk to them. He suggested that they choose one to stay in prison in Egypt until the rest of them returned with grain for the family and stock, and came again to Egypt bringing their youngest brother.

It must have been interesting to Joseph to hear what they said to each other, not knowing he could understand them for he spoke to them through an interpreter.

The first thing of which they thought when this trouble came was the sin to their brother so many years before. "We are guilty toward our brother," they said one to the other. "Don't you remember how he cried and pled with us to have mercy, but we wouldn't listen. So now this trouble has come upon us."

Reuben said, "Didn't I tell you not to sin against the child? Now his blood is upon us."

By this time Joseph had heard about all he could bear, and had to go aside and weep. Coming back, he chose Simeon as the one to stay in prison. He bound him before their eyes and took him away. I wonder if Simeon was the one who was the most determined to get rid of Joseph and the most hard-hearted of all.

Simeon, bound in prison, Joseph gave orders for the brothers' sacks to be filled with corn, and also provided plenty of food for the return journey. Then they paid Joseph the money, but unknown to them, he gave it to his steward and told him to put each man's money back in his sack.

The asses loaded, the journey back to Canaan was begun. I think it was a sober, thoughtful company of brothers who wended their weary way. The memory of their murderous treatment of Joseph and their father's grief was in their minds and now that Simeon was bound in prison what would their father say.

The first day out they stopped at an inn for lunch, and as one of them opened his sack to take out feed for his ass, he found the money in the sack's mouth. He hurried to tell the others and all were afraid and said one to another, "What is this that GOD has done to us?"

When they reached home they told Jacob their father, all that had happened; how the lord of the land had treated them roughly and accused them of being spies and how they had told him they were twelve brothers, sons of one father, one brother was dead and the youngest stayed at home. Also they told how he had sent them home with food but had kept Simeon whose face, he said, they would not see again until they had brought Benjamin, the youngest son, with them to Egypt.

And then another surprise awaited them. When they unloaded their asses and emptied the corn each man found his money tied up in his sack. A great fear settled upon the whole family.

Jacob said, "You have taken my children away from me. Joseph is dead, Simeon is as good as dead, and now you want to take Benjamin away; all these things are against me." Jacob didn't know that instead of being against him really all these things were working for his good. Perhaps for just a little while he had forgotten the GOD of Bethel.

Reuben said, "Father, if anything happens to Benjamin you may slay my two sons. Put him in my care when we go down again, and I'll see that he comes back safely." But Jacob was not satisfied and said, "My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead and he is left alone. If mischief befall him by the way in which you go, then I'll die."

Some time passed by and the famine continued and food was getting scarce. The corn was about gone and Jacob told his sons they must go to Egypt for more.

This time Judah talked to Jacob, saying, "This man in Egypt said we couldn't so much as see his face unless we brought Benjamin. If you will let him go, well and good, if not there is no need for us

to make the trip."

His father asked why in the world they ever told the lord of the land that there was another brother. To this he answered that it was because he asked them about their family, if their father were yet alive and also if they had another brother. They had told him the truth, for how did they know he would ask them to bring Benjamin down.

Judah continued his pleadings with his father, "Send the lad with me, and we will start at once, so that we and our children can have food and not die. I'll stand responsible for him, and if he doesn't come back with us I'll bear the blame forever."

Finally Jacob gave in and said, "Very well, if it must be so. Then take the man a present, some of our best fruits, a little ointment, a little honey, spices, gum, nuts and almonds. Take double money in your hands, also the money you found in your sacks when you returned before. It might have been an oversight. Take your brother, and may GOD Almighty give you mercy before the man that he may send away your brother, Simeon, and let Benjamin return. If my children all die, then they all die."

JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS RE-UNITED

Again they made the long tiresome journey, taking with them Benjamin and also the gifts. In due time they stood before Joseph, who, as soon as he saw them, gave orders for a great dinner to be served to them in his own house.

The more Joseph did for his brothers, the more they feared he was laying some trap for them. They became so troubled that they took the steward aside and confided their anxieties to him, telling him that their only purpose in coming was to buy food. Also they spoke about finding the money in the sacks when they returned from the last trip. They begged him to believe they were honest and showed him that they had brought back the money.

The steward assured them that he knew all about the money and that he was the person who had put it in their sacks and added that GOD was really the One who had been good to them. At this time Simeon was brought out to them.

The servants took the eleven brothers to Joseph's house where they refreshed themselves and prepared for the banquet. I think it was a new and unusual experience for them, being shepherds, to be entertained in a royal palace.

When Joseph arrived and they were called to the great banqueting hall they brought the present from their father and gave it to Joseph and all bowed down before him in a very humble way. Joseph, through an interpreter, asked if their father was still alive. They told him he was alive and in very good health. He glanced over their faces until he saw Benjamin, and asked if this was the one who had not come before and when they said he was, Joseph said to him, "GOD be gracious to you, my son."

Joseph's heart was so touched that he had to run away into another room to weep. Then he washed his eyes and returned, bidding his servants serve the dinner. He placed his brothers at a table by themselves and he sat at a table by himself, for the Egyptians and Hebrews did not eat together in those days.

They were seated according to their ages, the oldest first and the youngest last, and Joseph ordered that Benjamin should be served five times as much as the others. My, I do not see how he could eat so much, but anyhow it showed Joseph's deep love for his brother.

When the men were ready for the return journey, Joseph gave specific orders; first, they were to load every beast to the limit and into the sack or saddle-bag of each brother they were to put the money; second, he told them to put his silver cup into Benjamin's sack with his money.

Knowing nothing of the money or the cup, they started out early in the morning full of happiness, for they were returning with both Simeon and Benjamin and an abundance of food. But their joy was short-lived, for lo, a black cloud loomed in the distance. Joseph's steward was chasing them.

The caravan halted and the steward said to them, "Where have you returned evil for good? Some one of you has stolen my lord's drinking cup. You have done evil in so doing."

Of course they were all troubled beyond expression. They said they had done nothing at all dishonest and if any one of them had the silver cup then that one should die and the rest of them should be servants.

"Very well," the steward said, "be it as you say. Whoever has the cup will be my servant and the rest may go on."

What an exciting, anxious time it was as every man slipped his saddle-bag off the ass onto the ground. First Reuben opened his sack and last of all, Benjamin, in whose sack, sure enough, the cup was found. Bewildered and sore troubled, they gave way to their feelings in true oriental fashion, tearing their clothes and weeping and wailing.

There was nothing to do but pack up the asses again, return to the city and go directly to Joseph's house where again they fell before him on their faces.

Joseph asked why they had done this thing and said they should have know he would have found it out.

Judah, the spokesman, said, "What shall we say unto my lord? What shall we speak or how shall we clear ourselves? GOD has found out the sins of your servants (meaning their conduct toward Joseph). Behold! we are my lord's servants, both we and he also with whom the cup was found."

Joseph replied that he did not wish to hold any of them excepting the one who had the cup, the rest could hurry home to their father.

With these words piercing his very heart, Judah came forward with one of the finest pleas ever made.

He said, "Oh, my lord, let your servant, I pray you, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not anger burn against your servant, for you are as Pharaoh. You asked us about our father and we said we had a father, an old man, and another brother, who was the child of his old age, and we also had one brother who had died, but this youngest child is the only one left of his mother and his father loves him very much. You told us to bring him down so you could see him. We told you father would die if this child left him, but you insisted and said we need not come again unless we brought him. In parting, father told us again how his loved wife had two sons, that one was torn of

beasts so that he never saw him again, and that if the other, his youngest one were taken away and mischief were to befall him, surely he would go down to his grave in sorrow. Now, if we go back without Benjamin, father will die, and we will be held responsible. I promised father I would bear the blame forever if anything happened to the child. Now, my lord, I pray you let me stay and be your servant in place of the lad. I'll be your servant forever if you will let him return to our father. I couldn't bear to see the sorrow in father's face when he sees Benjamin is not with us."

Joseph had kept from weeping as long as he could and now he cried to his servants to clear the room of all but these men, and Joseph stood alone before his brothers and wept so loudly that he was heard by the Egyptians and those of Pharaoh's house.

Then he spoke to his brothers: "I am Joseph. Doth my father yet live?" As he talked to them in their own language and with such words they were confused and troubled. Joseph called them to come to him and again he said, "I am Joseph, your brother whom you sold into Egypt. Don't be grieved, nor angry with yourselves that you sold me hither. GOD sent me down here ahead of you to save your lives. For two years the famine has been on and there are yet five years in which we will have no crops. GOD sent me to preserve you a family in the earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So you see it wasn't you, but GOD had a hand in it all. He has made me lord over Pharaoh's house and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

"Hurry and go to father and tell him his son, Joseph, says that GOD has made him ruler over all Egypt and to hasten and come down and he and all his family can live in Goshen. Tell him to bring all the flocks and herds and I'll take care of all of you for the next five years of famine. Tell him that Benjamin recognizes that truly his brother has spoken these words."

And Joseph kissed Benjamin and wept over him and kissed also all his brothers.

The news of Joseph's brothers' visit to Egypt was told to Pharaoh who was greatly pleased to hear about it and told Joseph to load their beasts and send them back to Canaan with an invitation to Jacob and all his family to come to Egypt and to live on the best of the land.

He also commanded Joseph to send wagons up to Canaan in which the women and children could ride on the return journey to Egypt. So Joseph made great preparations. To each of his brothers he gave changes of clothing but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of clothing.

To his father he sent ten asses loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten asses loaded with corn and bread for the journey. So Joseph sent his brothers home and as they started off he said, "See that you fall not out by the way." He knew them pretty well and thought he would warn them.

When they got home they told Jacob that Joseph was alive and governor of all the land of Egypt. Jacob just about fainted and wouldn't believe them. They told him all that Joseph had said and still he wouldn't believe. Then they showed him the wagons, all loaded with good things for the journey back to Egypt, and finally he believed and said, "It is enough; Joseph, my son is yet alive; I will go to see him before I die."

Jacob's sons were not always reliable and their father knew it, but when they were able to back up their words with wagons loaded with good things, he was forced to believe.

I think every Christian carries a train with him. With what is your train loaded? When you talk of GOD's goodness and invite men to come to Him, will your train carry the proof of the truth of what you say?

Jacob, also called Israel, prepared to move to Egypt. What a procession it must have been. There were about seventy in Jacob's family including the grandchildren, and there must have been several hundred servants including herdsman, menservants and maidservants. The flocks and herds we can only estimate at many thousands.

The first stop was at Beer-Sheba where Jacob offered sacrifices unto GOD and GOD came and gave him permission to go down into Egypt, saying they would become a great nation there. He said He would go with him and bring them back into the land again, and also that he would see his son, Joseph.

When they reached Egypt Jacob sent Judah ahead to ask Joseph the way to Goshen, the land set apart for them. As soon as Joseph knew they were coming he made ready his chariot and hurried out to meet his father. And what a meeting it was! Twenty-two years had passed since he last saw his father and great changes had come to them both. Jacob said now that he had seen Joseph once more he was willing to die.

Pharaoh, hearing of the arrival of his governor's family, sent them a very cordial greeting, telling them the land of Egypt was before them, and the best of it for shepherds should be theirs, even the land of Goshen.

After a time Joseph took his father, Jacob, to call upon Pharaoh and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. Pharaoh asked him how old he was and he answered, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are one hundred and thirty years; few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and I have not attained unto the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." In other words he had not lived as long on the earth as his father Isaac and his grandfather Abraham.

Joseph took care of his father and family in the land of Egypt. Seventeen years after coming into the land Jacob died at the age of one hundred and forty-seven years. Before he died he gave a personal word to each of his sons, the most important being to Judah through whom our LORD JESUS CHRIST was to come. He also blessed Joseph's sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

After their father died Joseph and his brothers took the body back to Hebron and buried it in the cave of Machpelah, beside Leah, his first wife, and with Abraham and Sarah, and Isaac and Rebekah.

Again the brothers were troubled about their past sin in selling Joseph, thinking now that their father was dead he would hate them and pay them back. But Joseph wasn't that kind of a man and assured them of his abiding love for them and although they had thought to do him harm yet it was GOD doing them good and saving the nation.

Is there anything in human life worse than to carry around a guilty conscience? These brothers were never free from the memory of the awful haunting crime committed against their younger brother. It followed and reproached them at every turn of life's way.

Suppose after the sale of Joseph these men had been sorry for their sin and confessed the whole terrible thing to their father, what a load would have been lifted. No, their confession would not have restored Joseph and they would always have carried a great sorrow, but the burden of unconfessed would have been lifted.

We, too, sin against our heavenly FATHER but he says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Joseph reigned over Egypt for eighty years and died at the age of one hundred and ten; not as long as his father and grandfathers had lived, but a life full of good deeds and great works.

I am sure Joseph must have made some mistakes but there is no recorded sin in the story of his life. Before he died he made request that his body should be preserved and taken back to Canaan when the family should return to their own land, which thing they did.

In the Old Testament GOD made many patterns or representations to teach some great truth to be fulfilled in the New Testament. These were called types and were sometimes a person, an event, a thing, an institution or a ceremonial. The fulfillment of these types were called anti-types.

JOSEPH A TYPE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

The Bible doesn't say in so many words that Joseph was a type of the LORD JESUS CHRIST but we find many ways in which he was just like Him.

Let us think of the story we have just been reading and see how many we can find.

Miss Grace Saxe in her book on Genesis, among others, lists the following:

1. Both Joseph and JESUS CHRIST were the beloved sons of their fathers.
2. Joseph lived in Hebron with his father. JESUS CHRIST lives in Heaven with His FATHER.
3. Joseph was perfectly willing to go to his brethren when his father sent him. JESUS CHRIST was willing to come down to earth when His FATHER sent Him.
4. Joseph was not afraid to tell his father when his brothers sinned and they hated him. JESUS CHRIST spoke against the sins of His brothers, according to the flesh, and they hated Him.
5. Joseph's brothers plotted against him to put him to death. JESUS CHRIST's brothers, the Jews, did the same.
6. Judah sold Joseph for twenty pieces of silver. Judas sold JESUS CHRIST for thirty pieces of silver.
7. Joseph was carried down into Egypt and so was JESUS CHRIST.
8. Both Joseph and JESUS CHRIST were accused wrongfully.
9. Joseph was put into prison which is the place of death. JESUS CHRIST was put upon the Cross.
10. Joseph was taken out of the place of death. JESUS CHRIST was taken out of the tomb.

11. Joseph was given all power in Egypt. JESUS CHRIST was given all power in Heaven.

12. All must receive bread through Joseph. All must receive spiritual bread through JESUS CHRIST.

13. Joseph gives all honor to the king and delivers all things into his hands. JESUS CHRIST gives all honor to the KING (GOD) and delivers all things into His hands.

And thus we see how Joseph was a wonderful pattern or type of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

~ end of book ~

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