

August 1, 1993

"Adam and Eve"
Genesis 1-5

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

Subject
Fall of

11A

I. Adam is a shortened form of Hebrew "Adamah" which means "redness of color." Adam itself means "red earth," and without doubt relates the first representative of humankind to the earth (dust) from which his physical being was formed. This being was the pinnacle of the Creator's efforts in creating the earth, including all chemicals, plants, and animals. The first such creature, later to become man, was named "Adam" and was created by God Almighty as a special animal with the ability to control or subdue all other parts of God's earthly creation. That which made that animal distinctive from all other parts of God's earthly creation was that he was created by God with a special, unique potential to receive his own (God's) eternal nature. This potential is referred to in the Genesis account (King James Version) as "image." A pronounced distinction is made in the Genesis record from God to his creation when the creation of man is first noted in Gen. 1:26, but "in our image" at that time indicates only the potential to be created "after our likeness" later. This being with an eternal (spiritual) potential was created in the image of God in Day Six of the creation of the world, and both genders were created with the ability to multiply (procreate their own kind). In the seventh division of God's "creating time," Day Seven, God made of one of the male beings which he had created in Day Six an eternal being (in his, God's, own likeness) by breathing into his physical being (nostrils) an eternal spirit which made a component of the being eternal (God's likeness), Gen. 2:7. This male being now, for the first time, can justifiably be called appropriately, MAN. Man as a physical being was indeed made from the earth even as the other animals were, and therefore needed physical nourishment from earth's soil to maintain his physical life, Gen. 2:7, 19. Adam was a physical animal created in God's image (with the potential of receiving an eternal spirit from God) in Day Six, but he could not be defined as a man in the final sense of that term until Day Seven when God breathed into him an eternal spirit. Now the creature was a man with an eternal soul, and he had God's likeness in that respect, Gen. 5:1. A man is identified with the lower animals, because a part of his being can physically die and become earth, dust again. He is also identified with his Creator, because he has an eternal component (soul) which never ceases to exist. Adam's spirit was alive (with God) as long as the will of God was followed, but Adam disobeyed God and his spirit died (became separated from God). All men (human beings) after Adam were (subject to physical death because of Adam's sin. Likewise, when a human becomes conscious of his or her rebellious-against-God's will, he or she must be spiritually quickened by God. This quickening must be at the individual's request upon realizing ones spiritual condition before God. Becoming properly related to God is an exercise of the individual's will, John 3:6, 14-16; Rev. 22:17. God's final and only Mediator to bring about such a reconciliation is God's Son and Savior of those who exercise faith in him, Jesus Christ. Jesus was a special creation of God through the power and person of one of the triune Godhead, the Holy Spirit. As Adam became the first man through a miraculous act of the Creator God, so through God's Holy Spirit

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I Cor.
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not a created being like Adam but through the cooperation of a woman

his Son, Jesus the Messiah (Christ), was also created, Gen. 2:7; Matt. 1:20; Lk 3:38. As God promised Satan in Gen. 3:15 (to use the female of the species), he used a female (Mary, later wife of Joseph) to give birth to Jesus, the only begotten Son of God. This Jesus God made the agent to undo Satan's confusion which caused mankind first to disobey his Creator, Jehovah God, Acts 2:29-36. Before sending Jesus Christ to earth as the God-man to salvage any human spirit who will trust his (Jesus') righteous living, being crucified for sin (that which separates people from God), and being raised to life after death, God had worked with a special people, the Israelites, to receive proper living standards (the Law) for all human beings to follow. The Israelites were physical descendants of one Abraham who exercised an acceptable (to God) faith in God's promise to deliver mankind from their disobedience. God's mission for the Israelites (Jews) was to incorporate his will (given to Moses some 400 years after Abraham first exercised faith in God) into their daily living, and then by example communicate God's will and plan to all humanity. The Jews failed God's assignment, and God thereafter turned primarily to the remainder of Adam's descendants (nonJews) for those who would honor his (God's) will through faith. Jesus promised that he would return to God's immediate presence but would return to earth (at God the Father's discretion) and claim those who, in his absence, had placed their trust in Him. At that time all who are or who have trusted God's Savior, Jesus Christ, will receive new bodies for their spirits, I Cor. 15:50-58.

Gen 2:18

Gen 5:2

II. After Adam became a man (an eternal being), he followed God's suggestion by associating with and naming all the lower animals, but he (Adam) became dissatisfied with this arrangement, Gen. 2:20. As a result God agreed that he needed one of his own kind and determined to create Adam a comparable companion. For a reason not explained explicitly in Scripture, God did not breathe into a female adamic creature an eternal spirit as he had done with the male Adam. Instead, he involved Adam, the man, in creating the first woman, Eve, to have an eternal spirit. With this arrangement their offspring were both physical and spiritual in their being, Gen. 5:3; I Cor. 15:44-46. I believe God's reason for using the male in the process of creating the female was to establish his (God's) approval of the proper relationship in sexual intimacy constituting marriage, one male and one female publicly and singularly dedicated to one another. In that way God sanctified (blessed, approved) marriage as an institution, Matt. 19:4-8. In the history of mankind's spiritual development, the female has held a special place in God's plan for bringing about mankind's spiritual reclamation. God told Satan in Gen. 3:15 that he (God) would make a seed (offspring) of the female an adversary of Satan and that that offspring would defeat Satan's purpose in enticing God's created mankind away from God. As one follows that term seed through the Scriptures, an interesting picture unfolds. In Psa. 22, a Psalm of David and definitely Messianic in content, David states in vs. 30 that a seed shall serve the Lord and that that period of service shall be accounted for the Lord as a generation. In Lk 21:32 Jesus said that his second coming would happen after that generation (period of service) was completed. (See Gen. 22:18; Isa. 53:8,10; Lk 11:30; Acts 8:33; Gal. 3:16.)

But note in Gen 5:2 that men could still mate with creatures made in God's image but not in His like man.

Read together #1

Lk 21:32
Read together #2

#3

Mat 8:38

✓ 776
929

Gen 1:26

Strong's enumeration

1823 ~~image~~ likeness
6754 ~~likeness~~ image
not the same meanings

1823. 7770? = dem-coth

6754. 034 = tsek-lem

see over

likeness - [with spirit]

Gen. 1:26; 5:1,3

Ex. 20:4

Deut. 4:16,17,18,23,25; 5:8

Psa 17:15; Isa. 40:18

Ezek. 1:5

Acts 14:11

Rom. 6:5; 8:3

Philip 2:7

image - [with body]

Gen. 1:26, 27; 9:6; 5:3

Rom. 1:23

I Cor. 11:7; 15:49

II Cor. 3:18

Heb. 1:3; 10:1

See over

August 1, 1993

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Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
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all men & women today have that image, but Jesus said they almost forgot to bring a pin to draw eternal life John 3:1

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~~God's Holy Spirit~~ his Son, Jesus the Messiah (Christ), was also created, Gen. 2:7; Matt. 1:20; Lk 3:38. As God promised Satan in Gen. 3:15 (to use the female of the species), he used a female (Mary, later wife of Joseph) to give birth to Jesus, the only begotten Son of God. This Jesus God made the agent to undo Satan's confusion which caused mankind first to disobey his Creator, Jehovah God, Acts 2:29-36. Before sending Jesus Christ to earth as the God-man to salvage any human spirit who will trust his (Jesus') righteous living, being crucified for sin (that which separates people from God), and being raised to life after death, God had worked with a special people, the Israelites, to receive proper living standards (the Law) for all human beings to follow. The Israelites were physical descendants of one Abraham who exercised an acceptable (to God) faith in God's promise to deliver mankind from their disobedience. God's mission for the Israelites (Jews) was to incorporate his will (given to Moses some 400 years after Abraham first exercised faith in God) into their daily living, and then by example communicate God's will and plan to all humanity. The Jews failed God's assignment, and God thereafter turned primarily to the remainder of Adam's descendants (nonJews) for those who would honor his (God's) will through faith. Jesus promised that he would return to God's immediate presence but would return to earth (at God the Father's discretion) and claim those who, in his absence, had placed their trust in Him. At that time all who are or who have trusted God's Savior, Jesus Christ, will receive new bodies for their spirits, I Cor. 15:50-58.

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Aug. 31, 1997

"God Created All"
Gen. 1

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Chap. 1 of the Book of Genesis (Beginnings) covers an account of the only God's exclusively creating the world on which we humans were created and live by the same, the only God. No human death (separation) is evident in this chapter. The evidence of the world's being a part of (having a relationship with other heavenly bodies), what we call the universe, occurs on Day Four. That evidence, however, does not necessarily extend beyond our own galaxy. Vs. 16 includes "the stars also," and these stars could have been of other solar systems than ours but still in our galaxy. If stars of other galaxies are intended, such information is not explicit in the text. The sequence of Days (light) succeeded by Nights (darkness) occurs in Day One, but our sun and our moon, as such, were not created by God until Day Four, vs. 16. The progression of the complexity of God's creation agrees generally with most of today's scientists' positions. Where there is a difference, I believe God's position to be the correct one! Vs. 2 states plainly that the agent of God in creating the earth was God in his person of the Holy Spirit. We know from later revelation from God's Word that God and his Spirit are one with God's Son (Logos - Word, John 1:1,14; 10:30; 15:26), and we refer to our God, through our faith in Jesus Christ, as the Trinity or Godhead, Matt. 28:19; Rom. 1:20; Col. 2:8-10. The orderly progression of God's creating the earth began by the Creator producing all of the elements, at the beginning, from nothing. The earth's elements when God first created them were without form and void, i.e., they had no coherence because of the manner in which they were spaced. In a beginning physics course I learned that matter can not be created nor destroyed, and I still believe that axiom when it circumscribes human ability. However, today I do not believe God is limited to that proposition, nor has he ever been. So, on Day One God created from nothing the matter which, over time, took the forms we experience in our day, including mankind's physical nature. Only through faith in God's Word can one believe (know) what God did in Day One, that our Creator God can bring into existence matter from nothing, Heb. 11:3.

II. On Day Two our God's creative process took some of the created elements noted above and began to relate them to one another so that the planet earth took a unique form and was separated from the other elements. One should note that our God did these acts by simply saying the words, vss. 3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26, and 29, and again note Heb. 11:3. In our day we have design engineers, architects, etc., who conceive ideas and who then depict those ideas through blueprints, schematics, etc. Mechanical, electronic, etc., engineers implement the ideas by constructing what has been designed and communicated to them. There is an element of that same process in the way the Godhead created the earth, its contents, and its atmosphere (heavens). God the Father sent his Spirit to implement his creative concepts, vs. 2. When human beings, part of God's creation, introduced acts unacceptable to God (sin), the Father sent his only Son, Jesus the Christ, to earth in the form of a human being to create a way (truth and life) for mankind to reestablish

mankind's perfect relationship with his Creator, through faith in his Son's sacrificial death, burial and resurrection, II Cor. 5:19.

III. On Day Three God arranged the earth's surface so that the water and earth (soil) were separated. The soil at God's command brought forth simple plants characterized as grass. Following simple plants, God said that the earth should bring forth herbs (shrubs) and trees. These plants were to produce seeds which would in turn reproduce their own kind. On Day Four God related the earth to other heavenly bodies so as to produce different seasons. Among those other heavenly bodies were our sun and our moon, the earth's only satellite. From the beginning God's creative acts pleased him, vs. 4,10,12,18,21,25. On the last day, Day Six, the Bible states that when mankind was created in God's image, with the potential for God's likeness, God beheld that that day was very good, vs. 31. On Day Five God created in the waters living creatures and flying creatures in the atmosphere (heavens). The water creatures developed into very large animals, whales, vs. 21. With God's blessings and the ability to multiply, the fish and fowl multiplied extensively, vs. 21-22. Beginning with Day Six the complexity and sophistication of the creatures which God was creating reached their apex. These creatures are characterized as cattle but included "everything that creepeth (is locomotive) upon the earth," vs. 25. These creatures could reproduce their own kind as could the plants. After God's creative acts through the creation of complex animals (designated cattle), God was still not satisfied that his earthly creation had reached the ultimate summit of his plan. In vs. 26 God, in consultation with himself in his threefold nature (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), said, "Let us make a creature to be designated man, in our image, after[wards in] our likeness, and permit those beings to have dominion over the fish in the sea, the fowl of the air, the cattle, and every other creeping thing [lower animals] over the entire earth." Man was to be a unique creation, for God first created the elements (inanimate matter), then plant life, then the lower animals, and finally God created an animal of the dust (like the lower animals), who had a personality, and a free will to make autonomous choices. In God's image mankind was distinctive with ability to project himself mentally and logically in time and space. In fact, they were made up of body, a superior mind, and we will see next week in Chap. 2 an added feature (God's likeness) which will give humanity an eternal spirit and which makes him united with God in fellowship (spiritually alive). What we are saying is that man was a distinct creation as was the inanimate elements (inorganic), as was the plants, and later the lower animals (without God's image or potential to attain God's likeness, i.e., eternal, spiritual life). Vss. 27-31 relate the remainder of Day Six of initial creation. Vs. 27 stresses the point that God at this time had created the distinct creature, man, who was at first created with God's image. In this stage of creation he was able and was told to multiply even as the lower animals were created and encouraged. Mankind at this stage had the ability to procreate his own kind, i.e., there were males and females of the species man, vs. 27. In fact, God admonished mankind to "be fruitful, multiply, and populate the entire earth," vs. 28. The Creator even provided food without labor for their nutritional sustenance. And so God blessed mankind and his environment at the end of Day Six after God had finished his creation and rested. He assessed the results of his creation as "VERY GOOD!"

August 1, 1993
Spec. Supp. for
Pastor Doug.

"Image and Likeness"

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

IMAGE, ^{tshelem}, ^{tselem} - P. 511 in Strong's Main Concordance; No. 6754 on p. 99 of his The Hebrew Bible: resemblance or a representative figure.

LIKENESS, ^{demooth} - p. 606 in Strong's Main Concordance; No. 1823 on p. 31 of his The Hebrew Bible: fashioned like (from No. 1819 ^{damah} which means "comparable")

The fact that two terms (communicative concepts) are used here, Gen. 1:26, is highly significant, I believe. Connotational differences are differentiated by our English "representative" (image) versus "in-fashion-of" or "comparable" (eternal Spirit [spirits]), i.e., the "image" is not comparable but the "likeness" can withstand the definition of comparison (both eternal following a given human being's creation by God). God is Spirit (John 4:24), and the Bible, I believe, gives no hint of any physical identity in which God the Father inhabits. In the person of the Holy Spirit he resided in our Lord as a human being and in believers, I Cor. 3:15; II Cor. 6:16. Believers are said to be at one (atonement) with God the Father through faith in his only begotten (by means of the Holy Spirit the same Spirit that was in Jesus Christ) Son Jesus, the Savior.

WA

August 8, 1993
Supplement

"Adam's Sin"
8-1-93 Follow Up

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

love-
separates
I John
4:18
look at
22-24
+
3:8 together

The following is a response to a question about what the Bible has to say regarding a sentence in the 8-1-93 outline on Adam and Eve as follows: "All men (human beings) after Adam were subject to physical death because of Adam's sin." I believe that Adam did transgress God's commandment (Gen. 2:16-17; 3:6), and that he did die spiritually and physically as a result of that disobedience. The spiritual death (separation from God) was immediate due to the fact that Adam was no longer in his complete (perfect) spiritual condition (innocent), Gen. 3:17, 22-24. His physical death (return to dust), of course, is stated simply in Gen. 5:5. God was with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden before their disobedience, i.e., they were spiritually alive, Gen. 3:8. God's separating the two from himself was, I believe, an act of mercy as expressed in Gen. 3:22-24. The "live forever" in vs. 22 is continuing to live eternally and physically apart from God's love, mercy, and peace (separated from God).

So much for my interpretation of Gen. 2-5. The most explicit explanation of the effect of Adam's sin on humanity found elsewhere in Scripture appears in Paul's letter to the church at Rome at 5:12-21. Here and in I Cor. 15:21-22 "death" could mean either physical or spiritual or both, but remember believers all die physically but will not only live eternally (with God) spiritually but will also receive a new body as well, I Cor. 15:51-53. I admit that this position is interpretive, but I feel comfortable with this conclusion based upon what little I know of the whole of Scripture. However, this still does not speak directly to the final condition of the human spirit of an infant who experiences physical death at, say, three months of age. Personally, I believe that God's grace will make every such spirit (innocent) welcome into his presence as he fellowshiped early with Adam and Eve in the Garden during the period of their innocence. The two Bible references which would affirm my belief are II Sam. 12:15-23 and Lk 18:15-16.

I cannot agree with many people who profess Christianity and who interpret this account of Adam's and Eve's activity as "original sin" because of the procreative act they performed. The Scripture (both Covenants) make sexual activity itself acceptable to God as he ordained it: two people, one male and one female who are publicly committed exclusively to one another, and who honor God's will in relating to each other (mutually recognizing each other's spiritual autonomy and honoring each other's concerns during the remainder of their physical lives together). God even encouraged such sexual activity, Gen. 1:28; 8:17; 9:7; 35:11.

I also believe that all physical death is due to sin but not necessarily due to the given person experiencing physical death. Before Adam's disobedience there was no death (separation) in the Garden, and God has promised a coming state of life for all with faith in our Lord Jesus Christ in which, not only will there be no death, but also there will be no tears even! We will again have access to the tree of life and this time be able to eat of it freely, Rev. 21:4; 22:2! What joy God brought to the earth in Jesus Christ!

Sept. 7, 1997

"God's Ultimate Gift, A Soul"
Gen. 2

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Chap. 1 of Genesis relates an account of God's (the only God) creation of the earth, its relation to other heavenly bodies, plant life on the earth, animal life on the earth, and lastly, man in God's own image with the potential to become like God in having incorporated into his (man's) being a living, eternal soul. In Chap. 2 God adds further details which occurred during Day Seven in which the Bible states that God rested "from all his work which God created and made," vs. 2. This second chapter gives information which, I believe, is essential to the understanding of mankind's relationship with his or her Creator. God tells us that after his six days of creative activities, the earth and its environment (heavens) were finished. Basic matter (inorganic) was created; plants (organic) were created along with their recurring reproduction; the lower animals (not in God's image) were created with the ability to procreate. And finally, mankind (in God's image) were especially created with physical (male and female) reproductive ability. Man was the crown of all of God's creative process. Chap. 2:1 relates a broad synopsis of what God did in Chap. 1 as noted immediately above. Beginning in vss. 2-3 God introduces Day Seven stating that this Day of Rest was and is to be hallowed as a special day. Some Bible students believe that Chap. 2 involves what they call "the law of recurrence" whereby the information is simply a retelling of Chap. 1, but in a different way. I cannot subscribe to that theory because of the importance and newness of what occurred in Chap. 2. God gave special significance to Day Seven, for God rested on that day, sanctified it, and especially blessed it, vss. 2-3. That day, the seventh day of every seven, has been considered sacred (holy) by God from the finishing of his creation in six days to the present time. Special recognition of the seventh day (Sabbath) was incorporated into the Law given to Moses on Mt. Sinai as one of the Ten Commandments (No. 4, Exod. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:13-15). Why was the seventh day so special to God and therefore to his people? Because our Creator had at this time finished his physical creation of the earth and heavens and "all the host of them," vs. 1, and God changed man's spiritual status by making a man in his (God's) likeness so that the man was not only physical but spiritual (eternal) like God, vs. 7. Mankind before God gave him a soul had a physical body like the lower animals (made from earth, dust). He also had a mind, not only like the lower animals (both had brains which controlled their bodily sensory systems so that physical pain and pleasure were experienced), but man's intellect uniquely had a cognizance or awareness of what thoughts and actions represent what we call wisdom or folly. Further, mankind alone had the necessary physical organs and necessary intelligence to produce and use sounds which represent physical and/or mental concepts, speech. These unique abilities enabled man to comply with God's command to "have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves about upon the earth," Gen. 1:28. Another uniqueness of mankind over the lower animals was and is an individual perception of self as a unique being, a unique personality.

II. In vs. 7 when God tells us that he not only had made mankind physically (of the dust of the ground), but now in Day Seven, God "breathed into a man [a male] the breath of [spiritual, eternal] life, and that man became a living [spiritual] soul." How important Day Seven is to the man whom God had made like himself, eternal! This man was placed in Eden to the east by God where God had planted a special garden. We must realize that when God gave this man an eternal spirit, the man was able for the first time to commune (have fellowship) with God and had a conscience to know that God was his Creator. In other words, this man had, for the first time, the ability of a physical animal to sense his obligation to do God's bidding (will). To test the man's will, I believe, God planted in the special garden two special trees which bore edible fruit. God told the man Adam (first named in vs. 19 - "the man") that he could eat the fruit of one of the two trees, the one which God's Word calls, "the tree of [which sustains spiritual] life," vs. 9. The other special tree bore fruit which Adam was told by God would cause him to die (spiritually) if he ate it. This latter tree God called "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," vs. 9. The lesson learned from the choice which Adam was permitted to make as an eternal being (with a soul) was that eternal, spiritual life is dependent upon a human being's doing God's will. In vss. 10-14 God's Word describes the geography (physical location) of the four streams and the lands adjacent to them where Eden was situated. The Lord God put the man Adam in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and tend it. As he placed Adam there he strictly commanded him to eat the fruits of every tree in the special garden except "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." In other words, until Adam knowingly disobeyed God his Creator, he was innocent as a newborn child is today. Until an innocent child is aware (has reached the age of accountability) of his or her spiritual condition before God, he or she is spiritually alive, but thereafter spiritually dead (separated from God), II Sam. 12:19-23; Matt. 18:2-3.

III. One of the great mysteries in the Bible to me is why God did not take one of the female humankind (in God's image) as he did the male Adam and breathe into her a living soul, but he did not. Rather, he involved Adam in a very special way to create a human female (in God's likeness) with a soul. The need for the spiritually alive female for Adam happened in an unusual way also. God gave Adam the task of naming every one of the lower animals so that Adam might find a soul-mate, vs. 18. Adam meticulously noted and named every animal which God had created, but there was in Adam's spiritual (Godlikeness) nature something that displeased Adam about every animal, including the females there with God's image but without his likeness. So God created, in Day Seven, a female human being incorporating a part (rib) of Adam, and she did satisfy Adam, vss. 23-25. It was a woman, Mary, who gave birth to God's only begotten Son. Also, it was that Son who told Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, one night that all human beings, to be under the Lordship of God (in his Kingdom), he or she must be reborn from above (spiritually) even to see (recognize) God's Lordship, i.e., to please the Creator God, John 3:5-6, 10-18; 6:44. When Jesus first talked with Nicodemus that night, the latter had been made in God's image, but Jesus told him that he did not have God's likeness, that he must be reborn by God's Spirit, i.e. from above.

Sept. 7, 1997

"God's Ultimate Gift, A Soul"
Gen. 2

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Chap. 1 of Genesis relates an account of God's (the only God) creation of the earth, its relation to other heavenly bodies, plant life on the earth, animal life on the earth, and lastly, man in God's own image with the potential to become like God in having incorporated into his (man's) being a living, eternal soul. In Chap. 2 God adds further details which occurred during Day Seven in which the Bible states that God rested "from all his work which God created and made," vs. 2. This second chapter gives information which, I believe, is essential to the understanding of mankind's relationship with his or her Creator. God tells us that after his six days of creative activities, the earth and its environment (heavens) were finished. Basic matter (inorganic) was created; plants (organic) were created along with their recurring reproduction; the lower animals (not in God's image) were created with the ability to procreate. And finally, mankind (in God's image) were especially created with physical (male and female) reproductive ability. Man was the crown of all of God's creative process. Chap. 2:1 relates a broad synopsis of what God^o in Chap. 1 as noted immediately above. Beginning in vss. 2-3 God introduces Day Seven stating that this Day of Rest was and is to be hallowed as a special day. Some Bible students believe that Chap. 2 involves what they call "the law of recurrence" whereby the information is simply a retelling of Chap. 1, but in a different way. I cannot subscribe to that theory because of the importance and newness of what occurred in Chap. 2. God gave special significance to Day Seven, for God rested on that day, sanctified it, and especially blessed it, vss. 2-3. That day, the seventh day of every seven, has been considered sacred (holy) by God from the finishing of his creation in six days to the present time. Special recognition of the seventh day (Sabbath) was incorporated into the Law given to Moses on Mt. Sinai as one of the Ten Commandments (No. 4, Exod. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:13-15). Why was the seventh day so special to God and therefore to his people? Because our Creator had at this time finished his physical creation of the earth and heavens and "all the host of them," vs. 1, and God changed man's spiritual status by making a man in his (God's) likeness so that the man was not only physical but spiritual (eternal) like God, vs. 7. Mankind before God gave him a soul had a physical body like the lower animals (made from earth, dust). He also had a mind, not only like the lower animals (both had brains which controlled their bodily sensory systems so that physical pain and pleasure were experienced), but man's intellect uniquely had a cognizance or awareness of what thoughts and actions represent what we call wisdom or folly. Further, mankind alone had the necessary physical organs and necessary intelligence to produce and use sounds which represent physical and/or mental concepts, speech. These unique abilities enabled man to comply with God's command to "have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves about upon the earth," Gen. 1:28. Another uniqueness of mankind over the lower animals was and is an individual perception of self as a unique being, a unique personality.

II. In vs. 7 when God tells us that he not only had made mankind physically (of the dust of the ground), but now in Day Seven, God "breathed into a man [a male] the breath of [spiritual, eternal] life, and that man became a living [spiritual] soul." How important Day Seven is to the man whom God had made like himself, eternal! This man was placed in Eden to the east by God where God had planted a special garden. We must realize that when God gave this man an eternal spirit, the man was able for the first time to commune (have fellowship) with God and had a conscience to know that God was his Creator. In other words, this man had, for the first time, the ability of a physical animal to sense his obligation to do God's bidding (will). To test the man's will, I believe, God planted in the special garden two special trees which bore edible fruit. God told the man Adam (first named in vs. 19 - "the man") that he could eat the fruit of one of the two trees, the one which God's Word calls, "the tree of [which sustains spiritual] life," vs. 9. The other special tree bore fruit which Adam was told by God would cause him to die (spiritually) if he ate it. This latter tree God called "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," vs. 9. The lesson learned from the choice which Adam was permitted to make as an eternal being (with a soul) was that eternal, spiritual life is dependent upon a human being's doing God's will. In vss. 10-14 God's Word describes the geography (physical location) of the four streams and the lands adjacent to them where Eden was situated. The Lord God put the man Adam in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and tend it. As he placed Adam there he strictly commanded him to eat the fruits of every tree in the special garden except "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." In other words, until Adam knowingly disobeyed God his Creator, he was innocent as a newborn child is today. Until an innocent child is aware (has reached the age of accountability) of his or her spiritual condition before God, he or she is spiritually alive, but thereafter spiritually dead (separated from God), II Sam. 12:19-23; Matt. 18:2-3.

III. One of the great mysteries in the Bible to me is why God did not take one of the female humankind (in God's image) as he did the male Adam and breathe into her a living soul, but he did not. Rather, he involved Adam in a very special way to create a human female (in God's likeness) with a soul. The need for the spiritually alive female for Adam happened in an unusual way also. God gave Adam the task of naming every one of the lower animals so that Adam might find a soul-mate, vs. 18. Adam meticulously noted and named every animal which God had created, but there was in Adam's spiritual (Godlikeness) nature something that displeased Adam about every animal, including the females there with God's image but without his likeness. So God created, in Day Seven, a female human being incorporating a part (rib) of Adam, and she did satisfy Adam, vss. 23-25. It was a woman, Mary, who gave birth to God's only begotten Son. Also, it was that Son who told Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, one night that all human beings, to be under the Lordship of God (in his Kingdom), he or she must be reborn from above (spiritually) even to see (recognize) God's Lordship, i.e., to please the Creator God, John 3:5-6,10-18; 6:44. When Jesus first talked with Nicodemus that night, the latter had been made in God's image, but Jesus told him that he did not have God's likeness.

Sept. 14, 1997

"Mankind Yields To Temptation"
Gen. 3

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Chap. 2 of Genesis related the first time that mankind was innocent and did not know from practice what pleased or displeased his Creator God. We are not told explicitly what Adam and Eve were to do to displease God and thereby become separated from God (spiritually dead) except that Adam had been told by God not to eat of a certain fruit in the "midst of the garden." Some believe that the eating of that certain fruit is only representative of some physical act, and that the actual activity involved the procreative process. Therefore, they conclude that human sexual activity is inherently contrary to God's will, evil. I believe that this position is incorrect, but the original evil was disobeying God's Word. God had given specific instruction to Adam not to eat a certain fruit which was pleasant to taste, to see, and to make one wise like God, i.e., to know what is good and what is evil (Jam. 4:17). The sin of eating of the forbidden fruit, then, was that such an act expressed unbelief in God's Word. What constitutes sin in our day? Disbelieving God's Word by not accepting, through faith, God the Father's Son, Jesus as Savior and Lord, when God's Holy Spirit presents that Son as the only spiritual Savior.

II. Without any introduction whatsoever the first verse of Chap. 3 states that the serpent (Satan) was more subtle (cunning) than any of the creatures which God had made on earth. Close attention to the language of vs. 1 gives no hint that God created or did not create Satan. We do know that Satan is one of the angelic beings of which we know only sparingly from Scriptures. Jesus said at Lk 10:18 that he had witnessed Satan's fall from heaven as lightning. The adversary Satan is mentioned as one "going to and fro in the earth" at Job 1:7; 2:2. In these two chapters the Scripture presents a dialogue between God and Satan concerning Job's loyalty to God. God allowed Satan in this instance to torture Job but not to take Job's life. Biblical evidence is that Satan will continue to aggravate mankind to distrust God's Word until God finally takes God's and mankind's adversary away after Jesus comes again and rules the earth, Rev. 20:10. But before that, Satan, who will have a place in heaven, will be thrown out of heaven with his fellow fallen angels onto earth, Rev. 12:7-12, where and when the sacrificial blood of the Lamb will overcome Satan. See also, Isa. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:13-19; Lk 22:3; II Cor. 11:13-15; II Thes. 2:3-4; Rev. 13:11-15.

III. It is interesting to observe how a master deceiver operates to fool others. Satan did not approach Adam whom God had told personally not to eat the fruit of the "tree of knowledge of good and evil" before God had created Eve. Obviously Eve had been told by Adam about God's Word concerning the forbidden fruit. Satan said to Eve, "Yea [What I am about to introduce to you is very important!], has God said, 'You are not to eat of every tree of the garden?'" Eve answered Satan, "We are allowed to eat the fruit from every tree in the garden except from the tree in the middle of the garden. God has said, 'You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die [spiritually],'" vss. 2-3. At this point

Satan substituted his own words, "And the Serpent [Satan] said to Eve, 'You shall not [really] surely die [physically], for God knows that in the day you eat [the forbidden fruit] thereof, then your eyes will be opened, and you shall be as God, knowing good from evil, [no longer be innocent],'" vss. 4-5. Satan was, in effect, calling God a liar, i.e., expressing disbelief in God's Word. (Rom. 1:24-25; Heb. 6:17-18) This communication interchange presented mankind with the first temptation, i.e., to disobey God's Word. How would the tempted person react to the first temptation? The woman looked at the forbidden (by God) fruit which was desirable in appearance, mentally and spiritually appealing (To defy God's Word was tantalizing.). She ate the fruit from the tree in the midst of the garden. Note the consistency of the master deceiver's temptation of Eve with that of his tempting our Lord in the wilderness just before Jesus' public service began, food (flesh), authority (political influence), and security (religious, will God keep his Word?). Satan practices the same approach today with us, before and after we are God's children through personal faith in Jesus. God's Word states, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world," i.e., temporary and passes away, but "the one who does the will of God abideth forever," John 1:12-13; 11:25-26; I John 2:16-17.

IV. Not only did Eve eat the fruit, but she influenced her husband Adam who likewise ate, yielding to the temptation to disobey God's Word. The immediate effect of their disobeying God's Word was that they wanted to shield themselves from God. To do so they made themselves coverings of fig leaves to separate themselves from God's presence. God sought them out (John 15:16) in the garden, and Adam explained their feeble efforts to separate themselves from God. God asked, "Who told you you needed a shield from me? Have you eaten of the fruit which I commanded that you not eat?" Adam blamed Eve, and attempted to shift the blame upon God, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, gave the fruit to me, and I did eat," vs. 12. The Lord God then asked Eve, "What have you done?" The woman, in turn, blamed Satan, "The serpent (Satan) deceived me, and I did eat," vs. 13. At this juncture God passed judgment on the serpent first, then Eve, and lastly Adam. We should note that neither Adam nor Eve admitted that he or she had disobeyed God's command (sinned). Further, they attempted to cover their trespasses by their own works with fig leaves rather than ask for God's forgiveness. Satan was relegated to the lowest status among the earth's creatures which God had created. Most importantly God promised to put enmity (antagonism) between Satan and Eve's seed (Jesus Christ, Gal. 3:16), vs. 15. God's judgment on Eve and all women was that she would suffer in conceiving and bearing offspring as well as to be subject to her husband. Adam's judgment was that he and all men would have to work for sustenance and die physically, vss. 17-19. Instead of the fig leaves, which the humans had made for themselves, God made coats of animal skins to cover their separation from God (blood was shed, Heb. 9:12-28). In mercy God drove Adam and Eve away from the tree of life so that they would not live fleshly lives forever separated from God (spiritually dead), vss. 22-24; Rev. 22:14.

Sep. 21, 1997

"The Results of Disobedience"
Gen. 4

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. The first two human beings (spiritually alive), Adam and Eve, in exercising their choices which God had given them, chose to disobey God's Word. The result of their evil choice was far-reaching in that every person who has lived since has suffered physical death, except see II Kin. 2:11; Heb. 11:5. I confess that I do not fully understand this arrangement, but well into the New Covenant text God reveals explicitly that in Adam (the result of his and Eve's disobedience) all die (physically and spiritually). However, through faith in Jesus Christ all (anyone) can be made alive (spiritually only), I Cor. 15:20-28. The mystery is in the fact that every human being must die (physically) because of the state-of-being which Adam's disobedience brought upon everyone (including himself) of his issue, all humanity. The only plausible explanation which occurs to me is that God drove Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden and away from the tree of life, and this arrangement meant that the first human couple (and all following) would not continue indefinitely in sinful misery spiritually separated (dead) from God. Jehovah God is perfect and cannot tolerate sin, Deut. 32:4. For any person (all are sinful, Rom. 3:21-28) to approach Almighty God there must be a Mediator. That requirement was satisfied by God himself through his only Son, Jesus the Messiah. That is why faith in his Son is the best Good News that mankind can hear and accept, I Tim. 2:5.

II. In the package of sin, apart from the two deaths involved (physical and spiritual), is included strife and unhappiness. The nature of mankind changed from one of childlike innocence to one of greed and selfishness. It is the latter nature that Adam's choice passed to all his offspring, including us. The bitter fight and struggle which face every person in life is treated by Paul in his letter to the believers in the first century of Christianity. In Rom. 7 the apostle outlines how he, a believer in the Lordship of Jesus as Savior, struggled daily with his Adamic nature. Paul's conclusion in that chapter is that only through Christ can a believer accomplish victory over daily intrusions into one's desire to live for God, "O wretched man that I am. Who can deliver me from this body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, with the mind [spiritual determination] I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin," Rom. 7:24-25. Adamic weakness is ever present, but now God has made it possible for anyone to know God's love, forgiveness, mercy and grace through faith in his only Son, Jesus the Savior. Jesus, our Lord himself, said, "- - the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh [Adamic] is weak," Matt. 26:41. Evidence throughout Scripture makes obvious the awful, far-reaching results of sin to all humanity. When Eve first conceived and bore a son (Cain, whom I have acquired from God), she must have thought that, now God is keeping his promise, a seed from me will "bruise Satan's heel," Gen. 3:15. But such was not to occur for many thousands of years when Mary conceived and bore our Lord Jesus. God is not only patient but potent, Lk 1:34-35, 37. After Eve gave birth to Cain, she soon gave birth to another son,

Abel (breath from nothing). Both sons apparently learned about God from their parents, for both worshiped the Lord at a given place and at a given time. Abel became a rancher while Cain became a dirt farmer. From the product of their labors, they each brought offerings to Jehovah. We are not told a specific reason why God accepted Abel's offering of firstlings (choice, fattest) of his flock, nor why God was not pleased with Cain's offering of his "fruit of the ground," vs. 3. The offerings, per se, were not what brought about God's displeasure or pleasure, I believe, but note that God had "respect unto Able and to his offering," vs. 4. The person's attitude was evidently also involved. In this regard, note Jesus' assessment of offerings made to God at Mk 12:38-44. The offerings there were not the important part of the gifts to God, but rather the attitudes of the givers. The gifts of the Jewish leaders were self-applauding, show and pretense, but the widow gave her two mites (copper coins) simply out of a love for God's blessings. The Bible states that "unto Cain and his offering, he [God] had not respect," vs. 5. Taking into account what Jesus said and what God's Word at Heb. 11:4 states into account, I believe that Cain did not consider that God had been the giver of the crop from which he brought his offering, i.e., Cain gave to God what Cain himself had supplied. Abel, however, gave an offering as a return to God of what God himself had supplied. Abel's act of faith God's word states, "by it [Abel's offering] he [Abel] although dead, still speaks [to us]," Heb. 11:4. When God's Law came later, the Jews came, over time, to believe that by keeping that Law, people could earn for themselves God's favor after which God was obligated to those people to do their bidding. Many people today who profess to be Christians at the same time believe that their good works must be combined with Jesus' sacrifice to earn eternal life. God has been entirely consistent with mankind since Abel's and Cain's time, for God's Word applicable to us believers today is: "For by [God's] grace you have been saved through faith [in Jesus]; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we [who are pleasing God by trusting Jesus] are his [God's] workmanship, [re]created, [John 3:3-7], in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God had before prepared that we should walk in them," Eph. 2:8-10. (italics mine - WA)

III. Cain took God's displeasure very seriously. He walked around with a long face and hated Abel even after God had told Cain that a change of attitude [Cain's] would rectify God's position. Cain defied God by killing Abel. When God asked Cain where Abel was, the older brother lied and answered God with another question, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" God knew of Cain's act, that he had shed Abel's blood (taken his life, Lev. 17:11). God passed judgment upon Cain by assigning him to be a fugitive among his people and reducing the productivity of the soil for his crops. Cain complained, and God declared (by a special mark) that anyone who would kill Cain would receive a sevenfold retribution thereby. Nonetheless, Cain left Eden to the east to Nod (Wandering), married, sired a son, Enoch, built a city and named it after his son, Enoch. Vs. 18 notes six generations of Cain, the last head of which married two wives, Adah and Zillah. Adah bore Jabal, a nomad who became a herdsman. Jabel's brother, Jubal, became a musician. Zillah bore Tubalcain who became a metal craftsman. Lamech told his wives that he, like Cain, had murdered. Twice he had killed in self-defense making him eleven times more displeasing than Cain, his forefather. Sin was rampant in Cain's posterity.

Sep. 28, 1997

"The Genealogy of Adam"
Gen. 5

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. To some people Chap. 5 of Genesis is the first of many such passages in the Bible which they refer to as "begat and died" chapters. Vs. 1 of Chap. 5 states that "This is the book of the generations [genealogy] of Adam." However, a very pertinent part of that genealogy begins at Gen. 4:25, and, therefore I have chosen to include the last two verses of Chap. 4 with Chap. 5. Adam and Eve engaged in sexual intercourse, and Eve bore a son whom she called Seth (the appointed one). This name she gave her newborn son, because she said, "For God has appointed me another seed instead of Abel whom Cain killed," Gen. 4:25. In 4:26 God tells us that Adam and Eve's son Seth fathered a son Enos (Heb. Enosh, and Gk Enos). When Adam's grandson was born, it became necessary for Enos to pray to God rather than speak personally to God as Adam and Eve did originally, Gen. 2:8. We should remember that not only did Adam's son Seth have a son named Enos, and several generations later Jared had a son named Enoch, the same name as Cain's first son. Many Bible students have wrestled with this apparent duplication of names in the first section of Genesis. One of the "solutions" has been to assume the answer to be in the different sources which Moses used in writing the Genesis account. In this case the Yahweh (P) and Elohim (E) have somehow been noted twice with a resulting degree of confusion. Those who subscribe to this approach are left with an unsolvable mystery without patching and piecing together different sections of the Genesis text. I do not subscribe to the Atruc-Graf-Wellhausen Hypothesis (the JEDP, so called "Scientific Criticism") and have another reason for the duplication, of course. Remember that Cain chose to leave his family and the presence of God because of God's judgment against him for killing his brother Abel, Gen. 4:16. I believe that, because of his separation from Adam and Eve and their other offspring, the names Enos, Enoch, etc., perhaps meant "firstborn," etc. Other names in Cain's and Seth's genealogies were perhaps likewise duplicated. For example, note Methusael and Lamech (Gen. 4:18) and Methusalah and Lamech (Gen. 5:25). If you have ever attempted to trace your own genealogy back a few generations you no doubt have found names duplicated (John, Mary, etc.) which can cause confusion.

II. Chap. 5 begins with a synoptical reference to God's having created mankind male and female and called their name Adam. They were both one as indicated by their name Adam. They were both created in God's likeness (with eternal souls). At age 130 Adam fathered Seth, his first son after Abel and Cain. Adam lived for 800 years after Seth was born, "and he begat [other] sons and daughters," vs. 4. We can affirm from several biblical citations that both Cain and Jared fathered Enochs (Gen. 4:17; 5:18; Lk 3:37; Jude 14). A very important difference between these two Enochs should be made. Cain's son Enoch is not described as one who was begotten, as Seth was, in Adam's "own likeness, [and] after his image," cf. Gen. 4:17 with Gen. 5:3. To me this difference distinguishes between the lineage through whom our Lord Jesus Christ will come. That purity of our Lord's lineage follows after Noah's family (Shem, not Ham

or Japheth), and after Abraham's family (Isaac, not Ishmael), Isaac's family (Jacob, not Esau), and Jacob's family (Judah, not one of the other eleven). This process of lineage selection by God bothered Paul, God's apostle, and he was enlightened by God's Holy Spirit in Paul's letter (God's Word) to the first century believers in Rome. At Rom. 9 Paul was grieved that many of his own people according to fleshly lineage were unwilling to accept God's Messiah, Jesus. In Rom. 9:6-8 God's Word states, "Neither, because they are [physical] seed of Abraham, are they children [spiritually speaking]; but 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called.'" That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as [spiritual] seed," John 8:44,47,52-59. This spiritual lineage reveals a mystery in God's decisions, but Rom. 9 concludes that the secret is contained in God's sovereignty, Rom. 9:14-29. God is the Potter, people are the clay. If you are trusting Jesus as your personal Savior and Lord, God has molded you into his likeness, John 3:6,16-18.

III. Adam lived to the age of 930, and then he died. Adam's son Seth fathered a son when he was 105 years old, but lived until he was 912. Seth's son Enos' first son was Cainan, but Enos had other sons and daughters, vs. 10. At age 70 Cainan fathered Mahalaleel who lived 895 years after fathering Jared at age 65 along with other children. Jared was 162 years old when his son Enoch was born. Jared died at age 962. Enoch lived 65 years and fathered Methuselah. In the midst of all this "begatting and dying" a peculiar thing happened! After Methuselah was born, Enoch "walked with God" for three hundred years and did not die! Why did he not die? Because "God took him," vs. 24. Why did God take him? Because he had been walking with God for 300 years. Enoch only lived 365 years which was a relatively short time for the period. His son Methuselah lived for 969 years, for example. His son's birth must have had a profound effect upon Enoch, for it was at that time that Enoch began his long (eternal) walk with his Creator. Enoch was translated which means that he was taken directly to heaven by God without having experienced physical or mortal death. Only one other person in the Bible was translated to heaven. The other person was Elijah, II Kings 2:11. This interesting and glorious process of taking mortals directly from earth to heaven is, I believe, the same process promised by God for those who are (or have trusted) trusting Jesus when the Lord returns to earth for us, his ecclesia. That promise God makes to us at I Cor. 15:51-58 and I Thess. 4:13-18. "Behold I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep [die physically], but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet will sound, the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we [believers who are still physically alive] shall be changed [translated] - - - Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," I Cor. 15:51-52,57-58. "Then [when Jesus returns] we who are alive [physically] and remain [on earth] shall be caught up together with them [believers who have died] in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever [eternally] be with the Lord," I Thess. 4:17. Sin was rampant in Noah's day as it will be when the Lord Jesus returns for us, Gen. 6:5; Matt. 24:37-44; I Pet. 3:20.

Oct. 5, 1997

"God's Grief And Grace"
Gen. 6

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Last week in outlining "the generations of Adam" we began with the last two verses of Chapter Four and continued on through Gen. 5:27 when Lamech was born to Methuselah who then died. I made this break within Chapter Five deliberately because of what happened at 5:28. In 5:28 Lamech fathered a son who had a notable impact on human history. That son was Noah which means "Rest" and which is akin to the term "Sabbath." The use of the need to rest in this latter instance appears, in retrospect, to be a second rest for a spiritual reason as God had rested after completing his physical creation of the physical world and its environs (heavens). But mankind beginning with Adam and Eve and after God had breathed into them his eternal Spirit (spiritual life), became exceedingly evil (sinful) in God's sight. It happened this way: "When men began to multiply [greatly] on the face [surface] of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair (physically desirable); and they took them wives of all which they chose," vs. 1-2. To Bible students through the years this phenomenon has been a paradox. A number of those students concluded that the "sons of God" were angelic in nature but were still able to cohabit with "the daughters of men." Other students believe that "the daughters of men" were the descendants of Cain who had moved eastward away from Seth whom we remember from Gen. 5:3 as a son of Adam and who carried the image and likeness of his father Adam. A third theory having to do with "the daughters of men" refers back to the creation of mankind before God breathed into Adam God's eternal Spirit. For this last theory to be practical, a biological procreative possibility for cross-breeding would be necessary between those men with God's image and those men with God's image and with God's likeness, Gen. 1:27 and Gen. 2:7. Mankind with only God's image, created by God before he especially created Eve, had only the potential for God's likeness. Therefore, "the daughters of men" could have been different biologically (because of the time element) from the daughters of the "Sons of God", vs. 2. Still, I believe that crossbreeding did take place, and the result was a group of people of immense physical bodies (giants), vs. 4; Num. 13:33; Deut. 1:28. They were probably also covered with more body hair than the "sons of God." This hairy covering stayed in the lineage in the offspring of "the sons of God" even as late as one of Isaac's twins, Esau, Gen. 25:25. When Esau and Jacob were born, God did not like Esau, and, even though he was the firstborn of Isaac, God chose Jacob to inherit the promises of God, Mal. 1:2-3; Rom. 9:13. Of the three theories concerning "the sons of God" and "the daughters of men," (angelic sons, Cain's sons, and sons with God's image but not God's likeness), I believe the last, because, in my opinion, that theory maintains Biblical integrity from Genesis through the New Covenant, John 8:44.

II. There can be no doubt that the mongrelization of "the sons of God" with the "daughters of men" brought about spiritual havoc upon the entire earth. This awful condition of mankind's spiritual status before God is given explicitly in vs. 5, "And God saw that

the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination [thought and intent] of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." If that leaves any question in anyone's mind, hear further, "And it made the Lord sorry that he had made man upon the earth, and it grieved him in his heart. And the Lord said, 'I will destroy man - - from the face of the earth; both man and beast, and lower animals and birds, for I am sorry that I made them,' " vss. 6-7. But then, just as God was contemplating these actions, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord," vs. 8. God's grace is ever ready to forgive when any person has faith in God's Word, Heb. 7:25; 11:7. Noah through faith in God's Word revered God and opposed the evil of the world's population in his day. Noah's faith made him righteous in God's sight. "Noah was a just man and blameless in his generations, and [as Enoch had done], Noah walked with God," vs. 9. Yes, in the midst of this spiritual morass Noah "walked with God," and he also fathered three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. God chose this time to take the step which Noah's name means, a "rest," by eliminating all humankind on earth except Noah who was "walking with God" and his family, II Pet. 2:5.

III. To implement a new start for humanity, God chose to wash the earth clean with a flood. His action was not to destroy all life upon the earth, but only the ungodly were to be eliminated, only that which "before God was corrupt," vs. 11. "- - all flesh had corrupted his [God's] way upon the earth," vs. 12. God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh is come before me with the violence which they have caused, and now I will destroy them with the earth," vs. 13. God then instructed Noah to build a large water craft in which he, his family, and all desirable animals would escape a forthcoming flood over the earth. We should keep in mind that when God told Noah anything, he believed it. That belief in God's Word is what pleases the Lord. Just as today, putting ones eternal destiny through a simple, childlike faith in a Jewish carpenter who lived, taught, was humiliated by his own people, and who by his people in conjunction with the Roman political authority, was put to death in a most hurtful fashion, so now is human wisdom put to the ultimate test. "For the message of the cross is to them who are to perish foolishness; but unto us who are believers it is the power of God. For it is written [God has spoken.], "I will destroy the wisdom of the [worldly] wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. - - - God has made foolish the wisdom of this world. - - - Jesus Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God," I Cor. 1:18-2:5.

IV. Noah believed God's weather forecast, "And pay close attention, I, even I, am bringing a flood of waters upon the earth - - and everything that is in the earth shall die," vs. 17. However, God promised (made a covenant with) Noah to save him and his wife and his three sons and their wives, and the pairs of (male and female) every lower animal which he brought aboard the ark with them, vss. 18-19; I Pet. 3:20. The people were so spiritually corrupt in Noah's day that Jesus had proclaimed God's will to them through Noah, but they had refused to heed God's message. Peter (God's Word) wrote that they are now awaiting God's judgment in Hades, I Pet.3:19;

Oct. 5, 1997

"God's Grief And Grace"
Gen. 6

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

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Oct. 12, 1997

"Noah's Bon Voyage"
Gen. 7

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. In Chapter 6 we did not take time to examine the craft which Noah built to conform to God's Word to him. Through Noah's faith in God's command, he spent many years in designing and constructing to God's specifications (Gen. 6:14-16) the ship which would prevail during the coming flood and which God promised Noah would come upon the earth. The flood God said would kill upon the earth's surface all life except Noah and his family, eight souls in all, I Pet. 3:20, and the animals taken aboard the ark. We will now take the time to examine the mechanics of the ship which Noah built. The material of which the craft was constructed was given as gopher wood in Gen. 6:14. This instance is the only place in the Bible where this type of wood is mentioned. The word "gopher" means "resin" or "pitch," i.e., trees bearing such a substance such as conifers, pine, fir, or cypress. This wood would not only be permeated with pitch or resin but would also be a source of such substance which would not absorb water readily, nor would destructive bugs or vermin have eaten or attacked it for nesting, etc. Also, the pitch with which Noah and his workers were told to seal the cracks in the hull could have come from the same trees. God had told Noah, "And shall pitch it within and without with pitch [tar]," Gen. 6:14. God instructed Noah to build within the ship's hull compartments, rooms, and nests to accommodate the animals, his family, and store the supply of food for them all. Next God gives the dimensions of the ship. Given that a cubit is about eighteen inches in length, the length of the ship would have been about 450 feet from bow to stern or 300 cubits. To give ourselves a perspective of the length, we can note that a football field is 300 feet in length so that Noah's ark was as long as one and one-half times the length of a football field between goal lines. To continue the comparison, the ark's width was 50 cubits wide or 75 feet, and a football field is 160 feet wide. The height of the ark was 30 cubits or 45 feet. The ratio of the dimensions of the craft was roughly equivalent to an American battleship which are approximately 600 feet long, 100 feet wide, and 30 feet high (draft dimension). The ark was definitely not a big square box but rather sleek in overall shape. To follow God's instruction Noah would have to have been rather skilled in carpentry and geometric design. A window was built high along the top for ventilation, oxygen in and putrid air fumes out. The ship had tiered levels with three in all. I believe that there was only one door into the ship, probably about midway between bow and stern. Since the ark is compared to a haven to sustain the remnant of all mankind in a spiritual sense, the one door fits nicely (I Pet. 3:20) into Jesus' statement that, "Truthfully, truthfully, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved [be spiritually alive with God], and shall go in and out, and find pasture [spiritual sustenance]," John 10:7-9.

II. I want us to note especially in Gen. 6:20 that God's Word states that the animals were not caught or forced to enter the ship, but

rather, "[they] shall come unto thee [Noah]." They must have volunteered! The time had come for Noah, his family, and the animals to enter the rescue vessel. We should note and stress that of all the people living on earth, only eight, Noah and his immediate family, were worthy of salvation. Jesus said, "But as the days of Noah were, so shall also [the moral climate] the coming of the Son of man be," Matt., 24:37-39; I Cor. 15:51-52. When the Lord gave the order for Noah and the others on the passenger list to board the ark, God gave again the reason for their qualifications for being thus saved, "for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation," vs. 1. And what makes us today eligible to be called by God, righteous? We are told by God at John 3:16-18; Rom. 3:21-4:8; 5:1. Noah had faith in what God told him (God's Word), and that faith saved him, Heb. 11:7.

III. A man once offered a reward to anyone who could prove a contradiction in the Bible. Someone submitted that contradiction exists between Gen. 6:19 and Gen. 7:2, because the former citation called for only two of each kind of animal whereas the latter called for seven. A court case determined that there was no contradiction, because of the distinction made that the seven were of two kinds of animals both clean and unclean, Gen. 8:20; Lev. 10:10; 11. God called for all of the ark's passengers to enter the ship seven days before the rains were to begin, vs. 4. Noah was 600 years of age at this time, and he had been a long time building the ark. He had been proclaiming God's promise of a flood during this time in word and in deed. No doubt all the people in the area scoffed at Noah about his "obsession" with God's Word, II Pet. 3:1-7. Now he and his family are safe in the ship for a full seven days waiting for the rains to begin. I believe that if even one of the scoffers had knocked on the door (Matt. 7:8; Rev. 3:20) and told Noah that he/she had changed his or her mind, Noah would have let the person in, and God would have blessed the conversion. But not one did. They went about their daily schedules disallowing Noah's proclamation of God's Word. Poor old Noah with his curious viewpoint! After the seven days of grace had come and gone, the rains began, and note in vs. 11 that, not only did water come down from the sky, but also the "fountains of the great deep were opened." At this time God had "shut them in [the ship]," vs. 16. For forty days and forty nights the water level came up and so did the ship which Noah had sealed with pitch inside and out as God had told him. The water covered the whole earth even rising above hills and then, higher and higher above the tallest mountains, vss. 19-20. The ark continued to stay afloat above the rising tide. Some believe that the flood covered only the Near East, but that would have required a miracle by God to have piled the water up contrary to the basic law of physics, water maintains its own level. Also, the Biblical evidence does not claim such a miracle, as such. All life on earth was killed. However, no such mention is made of the sea creatures. But of other fleshly beings only Noah and his family and the animals on the ark remained alive, vs. 23. The waters covered the entire earth for 150 days (five months) after the forty days and nights of rain, vss. 12, 24. We must remember that in a deluge of sin upon the earth, there is God's promise of deliverance.

Oct. 19, 1997

"God Remembered Noah"
Gen. 8

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. In Chap. 7 we learned that "the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days," plus it had rained before that for "forty days and forty nights." If one adds the seven days which Noah and his family stayed in the ark before the rains began, Noah, his family and the animal entourage were aboard the ark for a total of $7+40+150$ or 197 days. Then after that long time the flood waters were "assuaging" or subsiding for another approximately four months. A rough calculation would put the ark afloat for about five months and on the mountain for another seven months. One must remember that the Jewish calendar is based on a lunar month of twenty-eight days each. The total period in which Noah was in the ark was one year and seventeen days given a thirty-day month as we calculate months. The mountains on which they finally landed was in the Ararat Range. Ararat is the word meaning "high or holy ground" from which the modern term Armenia is derived. The peak which has come to be known as Ararat is called Massis by the Armenians themselves and is actually a mountain with two peaks, the higher of which rises to about 17,260 feet above sea level and the other peak about 4,000 feet lower (13,260 feet). The Araxes River flows around the mountain and onward to the Caspian Sea to the east. Mount Ararat is on the border between Iran and Turkey and is called Noah's Mountain by the Iranians. The mountain (Ararat) on which Noah landed is about 500 miles to the north of where he began in the Tigris-Euphrates Rivers area. We should not leave a study of Ararat without noting that the prophet Jeremiah pronounced a "Thus saith the Lord" against Babylon in "the day of trouble." At Jer. 51:27 the prophet refers to those kingdoms against Babylon (cf. Rev. 17-18) will be the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashchenaz. Ararat is the central area with tentacles reaching out to Russia, Turkey, and Iran (Persia). Minni refers to the source area of the Euphrates River (Ham's area?), and Ashchenaz (Ashkenaz) refers to a great grandson of Noah, i.e., Japheth's son's (Gomer) son, I Chron. 1:6. I believe that Japheth's people eventually settled the Orient.

II. Noah was for over a year under rather cramped circumstances undergoing the results of his having obeyed God's Word. The famous sailor could have during this long, trying period become discouraged and given up on God's promise. God has forgotten me and my family! And what about all these animals which God told me to tend, they can not remain alive much longer. Perhaps just as Noah was about to give up, "God remembered Noah and every living thing, and all the cattle (animals) that were with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the water assuaged (subsided or abated)," vs. 1. The rains stopped and the springs no longer flowed from the earth's depths. For 150 days as the flood waters slowly subsided, the ark, ever so slowly, lowered and settled upon the mountain of Ararat. After the ark came to rest on the mountain peak, Noah could see only the tops of the mountains. He waited another forty days and opened the window for a better view of their surroundings. Through the open window he released a raven (crow), and the raven did not return. Ravens are scavengers and, I believe,

that with all the dead animals about, he would have found ample food to devour. When the crow did not return to the ship, Noah released a dove through the window. Unlike the crow the dove found no food about, so she returned to the ark. Noah put his hand out and the dove was taken back into safety. After another week, he released the dove again, and this time the dove returned the same day with a fresh plucked olive leaf in her mouth. With this evidence Noah knew that the waters were sufficiently abated to accommodate their departure from the ark. However, for good measure, he waited another week and released the dove the third time. This time the dove did not return at all to the ark which was a definite sign that Noah could remove the covering from the ark and wait for further Word from God. "And God spoke to Noah, saying, 'Leave the ark, you, your wife, and your sons and their wives with you. Take also with you every living thing that you brought - - that they may breed abundantly on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply,' " vss. 16-17. It was Noah's nature to follow God's Word explicitly.

III. What was Noah's first action when he and his family and the animals were safely off the ark? He "built an altar unto the Lord; and took every clean beast, and every clean fowl, and offered [them as] burnt offerings on the altar," vs. 20. Recall that Noah had followed God's instruction when assembling the animals before embarking upon the voyage to include extra animals which were clean. The reason for the extras, we here learn, were for this sacrifice when God had kept his promise to Noah. Noah's recognition of God's using him in this way for implementing this one-time spiritual rest for all life upon the earth, pleased God. When the clean animals were burnt for an offering (recognition) to God, "the Lord smelled a soothing aroma, and the Lord said in his heart, 'I will never curse the ground any more for man's sake although the imagination (intent and thought) of man's heart is evil from his youth (from the age of accountability); neither will I again smite any more every thing living as I have done,' " vs. 21. Further, God promised that as long as the earth remains, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night will continue, vs. 22. In other words, God will maintain his natural pattern so that mankind can plan his affairs. This promise of God to maintain his faith in mankind even though he recognized that mankind is universally, innately inclined to disobey the will of the God who creates them, is a singularly, very significant relationship which God has announced in his eternal Word to his created human beings, John 3:14-17; Acts 4:10-12; Rom. 3:23; Gal. 3:6-14. As we follow God's relations with mankind throughout his Word, Old and New Covenants, this arrangement of God's perpetual offering of forgiveness continues until the master deceiver (Satan) is delivered from the earth, Rev. 20:10. But as in our day, not everyone has been/is willing to accept God's plan (believe his Word) of spiritual salvation. That plan is that a person (anyone) receive God's only begotten Son, Jesus the Savior, as his or her personal Savior and Lord of life through faith in God's promise in his Word, John 6:35-40. Noah had faith in God's Word and thereby "became heir of God's righteousness," Heb. 11:7. Noah was faithful and patient to receive God's promise, Heb. 11:39-40; I Pet. 3:18-20; II Pet. 2:5. Thank God for his grace!

Oct. 26, 1997

"The New Beginning"
Gen. 9

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. After Noah and his family disembarked from the ark and made an offering to the Lord, God blessed them and told them to be fruitful, and replenish the earth. A significant change happened as mankind related to the lower animals. Thereafter the animals would fear and dread mankind. Remember that when Noah was bringing the lower animals into the ark, we learned (Gen. 6:20) that they did not fear Noah but voluntarily came into him? Now, in vs. 2, the Lord said that this arrangement was changed. This new fear and dread of the animals for humankind was universal, i.e., beasts, fowl, and even the fish in the sea were afraid. The Lord said that they were to be at the disposal of (given or delivered to) mankind. Before the flood men and animals ate only vegetation (Gen. 1:29-30), but after the deluge mankind were told by the Lord that they were free to make food of the animals as well as the plants, "Every moving thing that liveth shall be food for you, even as the green herb have I given you, everything," vs. 3. Some current animal enthusiasts have taken this passage to mean that mankind was originally told by God to be vegetarians, and, people are better without eating other animals. My reaction to such a proposition is that morally all mankind, with the exception of only eight persons (Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives), were totally evil, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination (intent and thought) of the thoughts of his heart were only evil continually," Gen. 6:5. Whether one should make the direct connection of ones food to ones spiritual condition is interpretive. However, the fact that the lower animals became fearful and dreadful of people after they became human food is more obvious. There was one condition which God laid down before people were to eat meat. They were not to eat meat while it contained its own blood. Such meat according to orthodox Judaism was and is not koshered, i.e., suitable for human food. There are two reasons for not eating slaughtered animals containing their own blood, I believe. First, killing animals by spilling their blood is less painful and more merciful for the animals. This method of slaying involves rapidly opening a main artery such as the aorta at the neck. Secondly, the blood is considered the life of an organism. This position is evident throughout the Bible. In vs. 4 God states that a body's life and that same body's blood are synonymous. We should note that at Acts 15:13-20; 21:25 the eating of blood was considered inappropriate even for Gentile believers, but compare this position with Rom. 14:13-23 and I Cor. 8:8-13; 10:24-25; I Tim. 4:1-5. When we believers say that our Lord Jesus shed his blood for our sins, we are saying, at the same time, that Jesus gave his mortal, physical life for our spiritual salvation. We are being redeemed by the loss of his life, his blood, Isa. 53:3-11; Matt. 20:28; 26:28; John 10:11; Rom. 5:1-21; I John 3:16. It is, therefore, our faith in Jesus' shed blood (the taking of Jesus' life) that makes us acceptable to God, and just as Jesus was raised from the dead, so will we believers be raised to life eternal.

II. In vss. 5-6 God's Word continues to emphasize the relationship

of a live body and the blood which sustains that life. A person should not shed the blood of another person, and if an animal kills a human, that animal should be killed. When a person is murdered by another person or killed by a lower animal, the act is an affront to the Creator who made that dead person in his own image. Because of that fact, human life is precious in God's sight. "Who sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man," vss. 5-6. Capital punishment for murder is God's requirement here. I believe that at present the government in which a person lives has the obligation to exercise capital punishment upon those murderers who are incorrigible and uncivilly present danger to others. Jesus' position about murder is given in Matt. 5:20-22. Murder follows hate and at that stage persons should exercise self-discipline. Continuing to call the hated person bad names only intensifies the separation between the two. One's goal should be reconciliation, not murder. Such reconciliation typifies what God has made possible for all mankind through the shed blood of his only begotten Son, Jesus the Messiah (Savior). While we were yet sinners, God sent Jesus to die for all who will trust him, Rom. 5:3-8.

III. In vs. 7 God again admonishes Noah and his family to be fruitful and multiply, bringing forth abundantly in the earth. God spoke to Noah and his sons telling them that he was then establishing a covenant with him and all of his descendants (us). The covenant also includes the lower animals which came through the flood period. Never again would God destroy with a flood as in the immediate past diluvial episode, vs. 11. Further, the sign of the permanency of God's covenant will be that rainbows would appear at times when clouds gather for rain. These bows are not only to remind mankind of God's promise but God also, vs. 16.

IV. The rest of the chapter, vss. 18-29, relate what Noah and his family did as they began to populate the entire earth as God had told them to do. Noah chose farming as his vocation and planted a vineyard of grapes. The valleys in the Ararat Range were very fertile due, in part, to the settling of large amounts of humus (mulch) following the flood. Noah's vineyard must have produced a bumper crop, and with a portion of the grapes he made wine. He overindulged and in a drunken state he undressed in his tent and became unconscious. We are not told why, but his son Ham entered the tent while his father was drunk and nude. He saw his father's condition and apparently observed, with some interest, Noah's nakedness. Ham must have snickered and told his brothers Shem and Japheth about his father's sin. They carefully, discreetly covered Noah with a blanket without looking at him. After Noah sobered and learned what had happened to him, note that he did not curse Ham but rather Ham's son, Canaan, the descendants of whom Moses and the Israelites were about to engage when Moses wrote Genesis. Noah stated that his curse would cause Canaan and his descendants to be subservient to the descendants of Shem and Japheth. Noah stated that Shem's Lord is God, and we remember that through Shem's lineage Jesus our Lord came, Lk 3:36. Noah died after reaching the age of 950 years.

Nov. 2, 1997

"Nations Form And Divide"
Gen. 10

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. When Noah was 600 years of age, the flood came as God had promised, and the world was renewed spiritually. The world's most noteworthy sailor lived another 350 years after the flood, for he died at the age of 950, Gen. 9:28-29. After relating these facts, God's Word tells us how Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth kept God's command, with their wives of course, to repopulate (replenish) the earth with humankind. As people were born of the three couples, their descendants became the different nations of the earth's population. The academic fields given to a study of how mankind developed during this period and later is ethnology/anthropology. The information given in this chapter is very important in understanding the later development of all humanity and how the peoples were relating to one another. It is here that all of Noah's posterity was gathering into groups, but there continued to be coherence among them all because of the language commonality. We should note that the Bible's treatment of all of humanity (See also I Chron. 1-5.) begins with the peoples of Ham and Japheth but immediately bypasses their posterity specifically and continues the lineage of Shem. The reason for this treatment is, I believe, because Shem's line is the peoples through whom God the Father's Messiah will come, the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, the Biblical evidence appears to give the picture that, immediately following the flood, Ham's and Japheth's offspring were the primary and dominant peoples, especially Ham's.

II. Japheth's sons were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. From these seven sons came seven grandsons of Japheth by Gomer and Javan. We are not told of the offspring of the other five sons of Japheth, but we do know from vs. 5 that they were all Gentiles (not descendants of Shem) who settled along the coastlines of bodies of water. Some anthropologists and ethnologists who have studied and analyzed, primarily from the linguistic perspective, the genealogy of these peoples, say that from Magog came the Slavs, Russians, Poles, Croatians, and others in northern Europe and East Asia. Japheth's grandson Javan fathered the lineage which included the Medes, Persians, Afghans and Kurds. Javan's offspring included the Greeks and Romans from whom came the French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italians. From Tiras came the Germans, Scandinavians, and the Anglo-Saxon races. When North, Central, and South America were settled initially, most of the new settlers came from the descendants of Japheth-Tiras (English) and Japheth-Javan (Spanish and French). It is my opinion that the Orient was settled at the beginning by one of Japheth's sons (Madai?) who journeyed very early to the Far East area and was the progenitor of the current day Orientals. They have been the most prolific, as God commanded, of all the sons of Noah, for today over half of the earth's population consists of Chinese, Japanese, Indian (even American Indians, Native Americans, could have been from the Orient through Alaska, etc.), Pakistanians, and other Orientals. In regard to the world's total population, demographers are amazed by the world population increase. In 1960 the world had about three billion inhabitants. The demographers predicted then that the earth's population would double in

forty years, in 2001, to six billion. The current world population is 5,869,671,805 which means that we are at this time ahead of the 1960 estimate.

III. Ham had four sons, Cush, Mizraim, Phut, and Canaan. Recall that it was the last son of Ham, Canaan, whom Noah cursed when Noah's son Ham violated his father's privacy. The mystery of why a generation was skipped for the curse to apply remains unknown. We do know that when Moses wrote Genesis, the Israelites were about to engage the Canaanites to claim the promised land west of the Jordan River. The descendants of Ham's son Cush were the peoples who moved to Egypt, Libya, Ethiopia, and southward into Africa. Of Cush's son, Nimrod, the Word states, "he began to be a mighty one in the earth," vs. 8. Further, the Lord noted that Nimrod was "a mighty hunter," vs. 9. This reference is not to one who hunted wild game, but rather means that he sought out men to be his followers. We would call him today a politician or statesman. He attempted to organize all people under his own leadership and was quite successful. The Word explains what is meant by Nimrod's being "a mighty hunter" in vs. 10. "And the beginning of his (Nimrod's) kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh in the land [area] of Shinar [Babylon]. Out of that [he] went to Asshur [Assyria] and built other cities, Nineveh, Rehoboth, and Caleh which was the main city, i.e., the capital." It is evident from the Bible account here that Nimrod, Ham's grandson, was a person with an intense political ambition. He was a king (had a kingdom), and from what followed at Babel, he demonstrated what we would call today, I believe, an absolute monarch or dictator. In any case, his activity became known as that which constitutes rebellion against the Lord God, spiritual confusion (Babylon), Rev. 18:1 - 19:6. Ham's descendants were, immediately following the flood, the most politically powerful of all of Noah's offspring. Ham's people established the first of what we call today a civilization. After the flood the people of darker pigmentation were the most prominent people on earth in the sense of human leadership. The peoples of the northern regions who today are Caucasian (white) were not to reach their prominence until millennia later. By fleshly racial status, the race who will eventually rule the entire world will be a descendant (humanly speaking) of Shem, Jer. 23:5-6; Lk 1:34-35; 3:23,36; Rom. 9:5; I Cor. 15:24-28.

IV. In the Genesis account of the history of mankind, after vs. 20 the Bible's attention is given primarily to the descendants of Shem. After that, all peoples apart from Shem's people are enemies of God's people, because, I believe, God's main purpose was to prepare a people by whom will be born God's Son, the Savior of all people everywhere who will believe God's Word. When that Savior came to earth, the relationship between God and his creatures constituting humanity changed so that, spiritually speaking, there is no racial differences among all peoples of the earth, Rom. 3:22,29-30; 10:12. After God raised his Savior, Jesus, from physical death, he sent his Holy Spirit at the next celebration of Pentecost to speak to a gathering of Jews and Jewish proselytes in Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit spoke to the entire assembly in their various languages, "And they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean? [because] we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God,'" Acts 2:11-12.

August 8, 1993

"Abraham and Sarah"
Genesis 11-25

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. The first major character in the Old Covenant was Adam; the second, Noah who had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth; and the third was Abraham. Abraham means, "the father of many nations, a multitude," because of God's promise to him to make of his posterity many nations. His name originally given by his father, Terah, was Abram which means "exalted father," Gen. 17:5. Abram was a descendant of Noah's son, Shem (Gen. 11:10-26), through whom God was eventually to produce the "seed" who was to destroy Satan's effect (spiritual separation from God) on humanity through the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, Gen. 3:15. It is noteworthy that God took the initiative in blessing Abram at 12:1. The Lord asked Abram to leave the area of his birth, childhood, and his father's household at age 75. Terah had left the town of Ur of the Chaldees with his family of two sons, Abram and Nahor. One son, Haran, had died at Ur, but Terah, on his way to the land of Canaan, stopped in an area [because of failing health?] which he called Haran after his son who had died at Ur, Gen. 11:31-32; Acts 7:2-4. Before his death Haran fathered a son Lot, who went with Terah as did Abram and Sarai, Abram's wife. Haran also had two daughters: Milcah who married her uncle Nahor and Iscah. It should be noted that Sarai (my princess) was a daughter of Terah, half sister of Abram, her husband, Gen. 20:12. She was extremely attractive physically, Gen. 12:11,14. One must be aware of the scarcity of available spouses for the males in those places at that time, e.g., Abram's nephew, Lot, was living in the mountainous area out of Zoar in a cave for protection at one time. He had two daughters and the three of them lived in the cave. After a long time, the older daughter realized that under these conditions she and her sister would become spinsters and die childless, a terrible fate for a woman at that time and place with no one to care for them in their old age. She devised a plan whereby the two of them could conceive. On a given night "they made their father drink wine" until he was not conscience of his actions. The elder slept with her father that night, and the younger did the same the following night. The results were that the elder daughter later gave birth to a son, the forefather of the Moabites, and the younger also gave birth to a son, the forefather of the Ammonites, Gen. 19:30-38. (Noah, Abram's forefather, also had an experience with alcohol consumption earlier, Gen. 9:20-24.)

II. After Terah, Abram's father, died in Haran in northern Mesopotamia, Abram took his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot and, under the Lord's command, went south into the Negev wilderness (desert). A famine there made life difficult causing Abram to move on eastward into Egypt. Abram knew that Sarai's striking beauty would put both him and her in danger if the political leader (Pharaoh) learned of her. Sure enough, Pharaoh's lieutenants saw Sarai and reported her beauty to him who took her to his palace. By prearrangement he was told that she was Abram's sister. He gave Abram a large dowry for her and made plans to marry her, but the Lord sent plagues indicating to the Pharaoh that he should not have Sarai. Pharaoh

confronted Abram with the lie, sent him away with Sarai and the dowry which consisted of many animals and servants. Their stay in Egypt made both Abram and Lot rich (Abram was very rich, Gen. 13:2.). They journeyed back through the Negev to Bethel where Abram had evidently built an altar on his way down from Haran, Gen. 13:3-4. As they began to settle in this place, Lot and Abram became concerned, because their enormous herds were overgrazing the land. Abram told Lot to choose the area he wanted to have so Lot went into the Jordan plain to the east while Abram stayed to the west in the land of Canaan. In struggles with the clans in the area, Lot was captured and his goods taken. Abram rescued Lot and retrieved his possessions. At that time Abram met the king of Salem (later Jerusalem), Melchizedek, who was God's priest (Heb. 7:1-4) and to whom Abram paid a tithe of the spoils of the wars he had just won.

III. The Lord appeared to Abram and promised him that he would protect him, but Abram complained that he had no children which God had promised. After ten years in Canaan, Sarai gave up on God and decided to take matters under her own control. She implemented her decision by persuading Abram to impregnate her maid, an Egyptian named Hagar. At this time Abram was 86 years of age. Immediately after Hagar became pregnant, Sarai began to mistreat her and she (Hagar) fled into the desert. There an angel of the Lord told her to return and submit herself again to Sarai. God promised her that she would prosper with an innumerable posterity as a result of the child she was to bear. He even named the child for her, Ishmael. This incident intensified Abram's desire for a child by Sarai, and for 13 more years (age 99 for Abram) Abram wrestled with God's promise of an heir by Sarai. Then the Lord appeared to him as he was overcome with emotion, fell on his face, and listened as God addressed him. God again renewed the promise adding that, not only would his family multiply exceedingly, but he would father a multitude of nations. This promise was highly significant, because it magnified the role for descendants of Abram in God's plan. The change was so expanded that God changed the names of both Abram and Sarai at this time to Abraham and Sarah and promised him and his seed after him the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession. Abraham laughed nervously when God told him he would yet become a father by Sarah. Not only was Abraham listening to the Lord, but so was Sarah within the tent. She laughed also. Abraham had reminded the Lord that he was 100 years old and Sarah was 90, well beyond the child bearing age. The Lord told Abraham that as God he was able to do what appeared impossible to mankind. Sarah demonstrated her character by, in her fear of God, denying that she had laughed at God's promise. However, the Lord visited Sarah with a miracle, and she conceived and bare Abraham a son in God's own time. And guess what name Abraham gave to his long-awaited son: LAUGHTER (Isaac)! Not only that, but Sarah nursed the child Isaac herself! Throughout his life Abraham had faith in God's promise although that faith was sorely tested at times. "By faith Abraham when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed. - - For he was waiting for a city with firm foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Through faith also Sarah herself received strength, because she judged him faithful who had promised. And these all through faith received not the promise - - - [because] without us they are not complete," Heb. 11:9-11, 39-40.

W4

August 8, 1993

"Abraham and Sarah"
Genesis 11-25

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

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A son of
Gen. 10:16
9 sons
Iscah
Milcah
Celestia

letter to
dilem

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of trees
25-14

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Sarai died
Age 127
Hebrew
Gen. 23:1-2
Abraham died
Age 175
for remarking
to a child
Gen. 25:7-8
175
137(127+10)
38

I. We noted in Chap. 10 that Ham's grandson Nimrod became a well-known politician shortly after the flood and organized the people who followed him. During this period of Nimrod's ascendancy, he was operating in the area immediately to the east of the Tigris River in what later became known as Persia and today is Iran-Iraq. A chief reason which expedited Nimrod's political influence was that all people's language was the same. Some of Nimrod's following traveled westward to Shinar. Shinar was the region containing the cities of Babel, Erech (Iraq?), Accad, and Calneh, Gen. 10:10. Here Nimrod established his kingdom headquarters at Babel although his political control extended on westward as we noted also in Chap. 10. In the area of Shinar building tall buildings was not possible, because of the lack of stone and rock. The only building materials available were clay for brick and slime (asphalt) for mortar. Shinar lay on the alluvial (sand and clay deposit) plain of Babylonia which for many centuries was perhaps the most fertile region on earth. This fertility produced food supplies which gave the inhabitants a superior advantage over the population in outlying areas. As a result, the people of Shinar became very affluent. Affluence is a hard taskmaster for a people who cannot meet the moral challenge such wealth presents. Our Lord Jesus said of wealth, "Truly, I say to you that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven [be subject to the will of God]." When his disciples heard what Jesus had said, they were amazed and asked, "Who then can be saved [be spiritually quickened, made eternally alive]?" Jesus' response was, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible," Matt. 19:23-26. The citizens of the United States of America are, I believe, on the precipice if a moral pitfall if we do not heed God's Word concerning the evil consequences of depending upon materialism as the supreme goal of life and of the nation. Jesus also said, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," Matt. 6:21.

II. Under the leadership of Cush's son, Nimrod, the people of his rich kingdom decided to make brick and establish a city in which they would build a tower that would "have a top reaching to heaven." To us in the last years of the twentieth century, this notion seems ludicrous, even comical. But the problem with their thinking was not the mechanics of building a tower (ziggurat) to make them citizens of heaven, but these people under Nimrod's leadership were assuming that they could be equal to God by living where God lives. Their physical activity represented a rebellion against the Creator God. They were attempting to make themselves, not merely creatures of God, but rather, by their own efforts, equal to God. They were attempting to bypass the need to have faith in God, and justify themselves by their own efforts. They said, "Let us build a tower which top may reach unto heaven, and let us make us a name [equal to God's name], for ourselves lest we be scattered [weakened] abroad over the whole earth," vs. 4. Of course God knew what these people were attempting and noted the city and tower which his creatures, "children of men" were doing. God said, "Behold, the people is

one, and they have one language; this [rebellion against God] they begin to do; and now nothing will they be restrained from doing which they have proposed (imagined) to do," vs. 6. God then proceeded to "confound their language" so that they would not be able to coordinate their projects. Further, the Lord scattered the people about the entire earth. This dispersion halted the building of the city and the tower. The name of the city was Babylon or Babel which in Hebrew means "confusion." The confusion was the result of God's confounding mankind's language (into many) and scattering them all over the earth, vs. 9. We are not given the details of exactly how God did these two things, but last week we noted how God miraculously, on the first Pentecost after the Lord's ascension, enabled various people who knew only their own languages to understand the good news being proclaimed as Jesus' disciples spoke in their (the disciples') tongue which was Aramaic (Assyrian dialect of Hebrew). As William Cowper once said, "God works in mysterious ways, his wonders to perform."

III. As we have noted earlier, God's Word relates information about all peoples of the earth, but the majority of the Scriptures are given to the lineage of Shem from whom our Lord Jesus Christ came. That lineage is given at Matt. 1:1-17 and Lk 3:23-38. From the beginning of creation when God saw that mankind would, by nature, refuse to obey God's will for him, the Lord made provision for a Savior who would redeem sinful mankind, Gen. 3:15; I John 2:1-2, and be forgiving of mankind's weaknesses, Gen. 8:21; I John 1:8-10.

IV. Now we turn from the rebellious offspring of Ham and Japheth, two sons of Noah, to his third son, Shem. (The spiritual condition of Ham's and Japheth's descendants [Gentiles] is given in God's Word at Rom. 1:18-32.) Shem was 100 years old and fathered a son Arphaxad just two years after leaving the ark. Shem lived another 500 years during which he begat other sons and daughters. The heads of each subsequent family after Noah's son Shem were: Arphaxad, Salah, Eber, Peleg, Reru, Serug, Nahor, and Terah. When we reach Terah, we learn that Terah had three sons, Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Terah and his family lived in Ur in Chaldea. Chaldea was a country which bordered on the Persian Gulf and constituted the southern part of Babylonia. Here the river deposits of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers made agriculture most profitable. Babylon was the capital of Chaldea. One of Terah's sons, Haran, died before Terah and his family left Ur for a distant land promised to Abram. Before they left Ur, Abram married Sarai and Nahor married Milcah, his brother Haran's daughter. Sarai was Abram's wife and the daughter of Abram's father, Terah, but not of Abram's mother. Hence, Abram was Sarai's half brother, Gen. 20:12-13. From today's perspective, we could say that this intermarriage involves incest and was contrary to God's Law. However, a close examination of the time it happened discloses that: 1) Abram had a belief in the one true God but lived among a people who followed evil gods and practices, and 2) God's Law had not been given nor codified until for over 430 years later, Gal.3:6-18. I believe that intermarriage was the only way Abram and his family could have followed God's leading.

Nov. 16, 1997

"God's Covenant With Abram"
Gen. 12

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Our attention now turns away from all of the descendants of Noah's two sons Ham and Japheth to the offspring of Noah's other son, Shem. We have noted earlier that the remainder of the Bible is devoted to the people (Shem and his descendants) who are the lineage of God's coming from heaven to earth as a human being, Jesus the Son of Mary and God himself, Matt. 1:18-25; II Cor. 5:19. At this point in our study of God's Word, we should keep in mind that our perspective of chronology slows to a more even pace. In the first eleven chapters, and especially the early section, the time elements were not easily followed. God's creation of first the elements, then the simple plant life, followed by the lower animals, and finally sophisticated animals with their pinnacle being humankind, involved time spans which we cannot determine with absolute certainty. Our best scientific judgment is based upon such things as the carbon fourteen testing. But when God created something physical from nothing (Heb. 11:3), he could have started with something old when it first appeared. For example, a man in God's likeness was created by taking a man in God's image and breathing into him an eternal spirit (Gen. 1:26; 2:7). How old was Adam when God made him eternal (with God's likeness)? Also, how old was Eve when God created her by involving Adam in her creation, Gen. 2:21-23? Answers to these questions we are not given in the Bible. Therefore, we are limited in our knowledge and left with a mystery which only the Creator understands. We did learn in Gen. 1-11 that mankind did not meet God's expectations for them. Adam and Eve themselves violated his command for them. One of their sons murdered another son. Through the following generations until Noah was born only one, Enoch, "walked with God" (pleased the Lord). People universally turned from God's will until Noah "found grace in the eyes of the Lord," Gen. 6:8. God was so displeased with mankind generally that, "it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth," Gen. 6:6. Mankind, "grieved him (the Lord) at his heart." Because Noah and his family (eight souls in all) pleased God, they were spared God's cleansing of the entire earth by water, a flood. Thereafter, the sons of Noah multiplied and those descendants, organized under Ham's grandson, Nimrod, openly rebelled against the Lord God by seeking to become equal to God in heaven. Even though God's patience was tried by man's rebellion, the Lord continued to be forgiving and prepared, ever so gradually, for the appearance of his final solution to man's overcoming, through faith in his Son, Jesus Christ, the evil interruption of God's plan for humanity. That solution would be his coming to earth personally to remedy mankind's spiritual plight by defeating Satan, the deceiver of God's creation, Rev. 20:10.

II. In Chap. 12 we see God's beginning that long preparation of human salvation by choosing a man who was born amidst the earth's evil population who were ignoring God. But in Abram God found a man of faith who was willing to sacrifice his own goals for God's way. From this man of faith came Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. It is evident that multitudes have chosen Abram's faith as a founda-

tion for pleasing God. Abram's faith was counted by God as righteousness, Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3. Humanly speaking all of God's Word was given through Abram's posterity. God appeared to Abram and promised him three things, and God laid down one condition: Abram was to leave his homeland and his father's household and proceed to another place where God would lead him. God would: 1) give to Abram and his seed after him the land where God would lead him, 2) make Abram's name great and of Abram and his descendants a great nation, and 3) bless all who would bless Abram and his descendants, and curse all who would curse Abram and his descendants, and through Abram bring a blessing to all families of the earth, vss. 1-3. Thus, the Lord made a covenant with Abram.

III. Some Bible students have noted what for them is a problem regarding whether Abram left Ur in Chaldea as commanded by God, or did he simply follow his father Terah north to Charan (Haran)? In other words, was leaving Ur the choice of Terah or Abram? When Stephen (one of the first deacons) at Acts 7:2-4 addressed the Jewish council in Jerusalem, he said that Abram was called by God "when he was in Mesopotamia (Chaldea), before he lived in Charan. - - - from there, when his father was dead, he moved into the land [Palestine], wherein you [the Jews] now live." I believe God's Word at Acts 7:2-4 although at Gen. 11:31 it is stated, "Terah took Abram his son - - - and they went from Ur - - - to go to the land of Canaan." There Abram's father Terah was given the position of leadership (through seniority) in this account, I believe. However, I believe that the idea to leave Ur was Abram's answer to God's call. Why was God wanting Abram to leave the Chaldeans? The proper answer is given at Josh. 24:2 where Joshua told all the assembled Israelites, "Thus saith the Lord God, '[When] Your fathers dwelt [in Ur] even Terah the father of Abram, and the father of Na[c]hor, served other gods, and I [God] took your father Abram and led him throughout all the land of Canaan.'"

IV. Abram did not follow God's command explicitly when he left Charan after Terah died. Abram at age seventy-five took his nephew Lot with him to Canaan which meant that he did not leave every member of his father's family when he left for Canaan. He took Sarai, Lot and all their possessions, and left Charan, "and into the land of Canaan they came," vs. 5. Again, the Lord appeared to Abram after he journeyed to Shechem on the Moreh Plain where the Canaanites had settled (descendants of Ham). The Canaanites were barbaric and uncivilized. Finally Abram, under instructions from God, reached the land which the Lord had promised him. The Lord appeared again to Abram, and he erected an altar to God and worshiped to recognize God's leadership in what he was doing. He left Shechem and went to a mountain just east of Bethel (house of God) about twelve miles north of Jerusalem. There Abram pitched his tent, built another altar to God, and worshiped. He then traveled to the south and began to experience a severe famine. In what constituted a lack of faith, Abram went into Egypt to avoid the drought for food. He instructed Sarai, because of her outstanding beauty, to tell the Egyptians that she was his sister for his own safety. The Pharaoh did discover and take Sarai into his household to be his wife. The Egyptian ruler lavished gifts upon Abram while planning to take Sarai to be his bride. God plagued the Pharaoh who learned of Abram's trick, and who chided Abram and sent them out of Egypt, even with the gifts which he had given Abram.

Nov. 23, 1997

"Abram And Lot Separate"
Gen. 13

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. At the end of Chap. 12 we learned that Abram, his wife Sarai, and his nephew Lot were literally driven out of Egypt by the Pharaoh. Pharaoh was planning to marry Sarai until he learned that Abram had tricked him by declaring that Sarai was only Abram's sister, not his wife. But recall that during the time that Pharaoh was courting Sarai, the Egyptian ruler lavished upon Abram what amounted to a sizable dowry. The amazing aspect of this temporary arrangement between Pharaoh and Sarai was that when the Egyptian became what was perhaps disgusted, he sent (forced) Abram out of Egypt apparently with the entire dowry. Is this position (that Abram became rich in the process) really correct, a safe assumption? The facts cannot be otherwise when we examine the opening of Chap. 13. There we learn that when "Abram went up out of Egypt, he, his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him to Negev [south of the area of the Salt (Dead) Sea]. And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold," (my italics-WA) vss. 1-2. The Pharaoh must have been extremely generous! From the desert area in the south, Abram journeyed with his entourage on north to between Ai and Bethel, about twelve miles north of Jerusalem. He returned there, because that place was where he had first built an altar and set up his tent upon reaching the land of the Canaanites on his original journey from Charran (Haran). This place was where Abram first called upon the name of the Lord after the Lord had appeared unto him.

II. Lot was the son of Haran, Abram's brother, and Lot's sisters were Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abram's brother, and Iscah, the daughter of Haran (redundancy intended). At any rate, Lot must have been a favorite relative of Abram, because he appears to have been a "father" to him after Haran, Lot's father, brother of Abram, died. Haran evidently died when Lot was quite young, because Haran died even before the family left Ur in Chaldea to go to Charran. The evidence is that Lot did accept Abram's Lord as his own, also. Recall that one of the reasons that God required Abram to leave the Chaldeans, his father Terah, and his grandfather, Nahor, all were worshipers of idols and not the Lord God, Josh. 24:2-3,14. For the above reasons, I believe, Abram kept Lot with him and protected him everywhere they went. Before they left Bethel originally and went down into Egypt, the rich land was able to support the stock (goats, sheep, and cattle) of both Lot and Abram. During their sojourn in Egypt the land had apparently deteriorated (The famine had taken its toll.) and was unable to support both of their flocks upon their return, vs. 6. We are not told of Lot's household status until later, but he was well-off in possessions. Abram and Lot were living in an area where the Canaanites (descendants of Ham) and Perizzites (rustic open country dwellers) lived, vs. 7. Both Abram and Lot owned or hired herdmen to tend their flocks, very likely because their herds were so large. These herdmen began to complain about the scarce feeding problems. Abram told Lot, "Let's not become antagonistic toward one another about the feeding ranges of our flocks, for we are family. I will tell you my position in the matter. There are ample ranges for our flocks if we choose

to expand. I will give to you your choice. Would you prefer to expand to the east along the Jordan valley or to the west farther into Canaan?" Abram's offer demonstrated his love for Lot and his (Abram's) utter generosity toward his nephew whom he had apparently reared, as noted above.

III. From where Abram and Lot were located when the former offered the choice of locations, Lot could see the large expanse of the Jordan River valley to the east, the large plain along the Jordan. The land lay all the way from the Jordan to the east to the area around the southern end of the of Dead Sea. Not only was the soil very fertile, but all of the land was amply watered. The Word tells us that the land around the end of the Dead Sea (at Zoar) was, at that time, as luscious in crop and stock production as had been "the garden of the Lord," the Garden of Eden. Further, crop production was bountiful as Abram and Lot had seen along the great Nile River basin in Egypt while they were there escaping the drought in Canaan. Lot did not hesitate to make his choice of land to the east, and Abram remained in Canaan. As Lot moved about with his flocks, he pitched his tent as far east as the town of Sodom. But Lot learned immediately that the inhabitants around and in Sodom "were wicked [backbiters of one another] and sinful [displeasing] before the Lord exceedingly," vs. 13.

IV. The Lord appeared to Abram, after Lot had moved eastward, and told him, "Lift up now your eyes, and look from the place where you stand northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward. For all the land which you can see, to you will I give it, and to your descendants forever. And I will make your descendants [as numerous] as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the [particles] of the earth's dust, then can your descendants be [counted] numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length and width of it, for I will give it to thee," vss. 14-17. After this promise of the Lord to Abram, the patriarch moved southward to Hebron about nineteen miles southwest of Jerusalem toward Beersheba. Hebron has been known since the time of Abram for its old, huge oak trees. In fact, the area was known as the "plain of Mamre." "Mamre" used in vs. 18 means literally "strength," probably relating to the oaks which grew and still grow there. Abram built another altar just outside Hebron and worshiped the Lord there again. He lived the remainder of his life in the area of Hebron, and never actually owned land personally except a tract he purchased from Ephron of the children of Heth (Canaan's son) at Hebron, Gen. 23:16-20; Acts 7:5. In the Lord's calculation, however, Abram was the possessor of the land and his descendants who came after him, Gal. 3:10-14. We believers in Jesus Christ as citizens of God's kingdom will inherit the entire earth, including the Near East, Matt. 5:1-5; Rom. 4:1-5:2. The earth's real estate is here a figure of speech which includes the promise of God to all who have faith in the promises made by God, to all who believe the Lord's Word.

"Standing on the promises of Christ the Lord,
Bound to him eternally by love's strong cord,
Overcoming daily with the Spirit's Sword [Word],
[I'm] standing on the promises of God my Savior."

I. Recall that in Chap. 11 all the peoples of the area on either side of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers spoke the same language, and therefore, their efforts were concerted. Under these conditions the people rebelled against the will of God under Nimrod, Cush's son. Thereafter God confounded their efforts in two ways: language difference and geographical scattering. As Abram was growing up, this division of the people brought about clans of people into groups with common interests and pursuits. By the time of Abram's seventy-fifth year when he had left Charan (Haran), spent time in Egypt during the famine, and returned to Bethel, clans were living to the east of the Jordan River. These clans were led by kings as their chief leaders were called, and loyal citizens followed. (The people organized politically very much like the American Indians did when the Europeans arrived in the Americas in the thirteenth century AD. The various tribes were called "nations", and their leaders were "Chiefs.") At times, when several of these "kings" had a common interest or enemy, the kingly leaders would operate as a league against other groups of clans. The geographic areas commanded by the leaders would probably constitute what we would call a community or village today. In some instances certain leagues of these "nations" (Heb., "Goyim") were given general command or counsel by one leader. An example of this general leadership is noted in vss. 1,9, "Tidal king of nations." Groups of people settled their group differences in Abram's time exactly as humankind did and do as in WW I and II. A chief difference is the number of human lives involved and lost, and property destroyed. In WW I ten million military personnel were slain, and as a result of the general, sudden mix of the peoples of the world, a worldwide epidemic of influenza killed an additional twenty million, including 540,000 in the U. S. in 1918. In WW II the U. S. alone had a total of 16,353,659 military personnel serving with a total of 1,079,162 casualties, including 407,316 killed. We could consider such figures to overshadow the "small" wars noted in Gen. 14. However, if you take into account what was happening to our "father of faith," Abram, at that time, these "skirmishes" were of ultimate importance to the lineage of the Judeo-Christian faith.

II. Whether the war given in vss. 1-3 is the first war ever fought in human history we do not know for sure, but we do know that it is the first war recorded in the Bible. Four kings of Shinar (Chaldea or Babylonia), Ellasar (area south of Ur), Elam (area named for one of Shem's sons, Gen. 10:22), and the Tidal king mentioned above. These four kings made (declared) war against the five kings to the south around the southern end of the salt sea (Dead Sea). The latter five kings reigned at Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela (Zoar). The five kings were captured by the four kings of Shinar, etc., listed above and were forced to pay tribute to them for twelve years. In the thirteenth year they rebelled against the tribes to the north. The next year a king Chedorlaomer, a Tidal king, leading the northern forces, marched south against the southern tribes of Sodom, etc., and slaughtered the inhabitants there. The

land in the Sodom area contained many slime (asphalt-crude petroleum) pits, and as the routed local inhabitants attempted to flee from the northern invaders, many of them were slain as they fell into the asphalt pits. Evidently, the subterranean crude oil was so abundant that it flowed from discharge openings in the earth. An aside: Is it possible that these petroleum deposits were so prolific that they, along with natural gas which often accompanies petroleum, were the fuel which Jehovah used later utterly to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah because of their citizens' sins against God? As the Sodomites either were killed in the oil pits or fled to the mountains (higher ground where there were no oil pits), the victorious invaders plundered the area and gathered the remaining people and all of their valuables, including food and livestock, and made preparation to take it all back home to the north. Among those captured were Abram's nephew Lot, his family, servants, and his livestock, for they, you will recall, had chosen to move to the Sodom area (Gen. 13:10-11), rather than stay with Abram in the land of Canaan.

III. As the victorious kings and their "troops" left for home, one of the Sodomites escaped. That escapee knew Lot's relationship with Abram over in Canaan, and proceeded to Canaan and tell Abram of Lot's circumstance. I have attempted to stress the affection and love Abram had for his nephew Lot. This profound devotion was put to the extreme test when Abram learned of Lot's capture. The action Abram took reveals to us also more about his material status. He was still encamped among the oaks of Mamre near the families of Eshcol and Aner, brothers of Mamre. But in Abram's household, which included his hired hands or slaves, were three hundred and eighteen men trained in mobile defensive weaponry. Abram's love for Lot made his defensive abilities also an offensive force. He took these trained men and pursued the kings from the north beginning at Dan. Using darkness of night in his strategy, he formed groups and defeated the northern alliance all the way to Hobah near Damascus. There Abram's opposition was completely overcome, and they gave up all the booty they had taken in the Sodom area. This booty included the men, women, children, and all the possessions (livestock, etc.). Abram and his victorious "troops" returned the inhabitants back to the Sodom area, including his nephew Lot. As they approached Sodom, the king there at his palace at Shaveh welcomed the triumphant Abram.

IV. A mysterious person, Melchizedek who was king of Salem, met Abram and blessed him in "the name of the most high God," vss. 18-19. Melchizedek "was the priest [one who relates humanity to God] of the possessor of heaven and earth." What makes Melchizedek so mysterious? Where did he learn that there is really only one God (monotheism)? Who were his ancestors? Why did he choose to celebrate being God's priest by offering Abram, God's faithful one, bread and wine? Genesis, the record of human genealogies does not even mention Melchizedek's parents! This unusual priest assured Abram that God himself had "delivered thine [Abram's] enemies into thy hand," vs. 20. To recognize Melchizedek's true priesthood under God, Abram gave him a tithe of all his material booty. God's Word at Hebrews, Chap. 5, likens Jesus as God's only priest (God's Son) who is entirely separated from all other priests such as the Aaronic priesthood. Jesus' priestly function can therefore be likened to Melchizedek's. Abram was so persuaded by Melchizedek's blessing that he refused to honor the Sodom king's offer to keep the people taken from Sodom and let Abram keep the goods.

Dec. 7, 1997

"Abram's Postwar Trauma"
Gen. 15

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Every person should have two plans for his or her life, one for immediate (today's) concerns and another for long-range goals. What are your plans for today and tomorrow, and what do you expect your condition and circumstance to be in five years, ten years, and beyond? Abram had God's promise that his contribution to God's plan would be substantial because of God's promise at Gen. 12:1-3, and Abram believed God's promise. When Abram chose to put his life in jeopardy in the war with the northern forces, he was aware that he could have been killed. He no doubt, experienced a fear during his time in battle, a fear that came to be known for our WW I forces in Europe as "fox hole" religion. Now in Chap. 15 Abram realized that he had been successful in rescuing his nephew and his family and goods from King Chedorlaomer, but God had promised him that his seed would become a mighty nation of an innumerable population. The patriarch was about eighty-five years of age, and nothing was happening to prove God's promise. His wife Sarai was already too old to be bearing a child, and apparently Abram felt that his long-range plans were just not being fulfilled.

II. Just after Abram's war experience, the word of the Lord came to him in a vision. Abram must have remembered God's priest, Melchizedek, blessing him in God's name and assuring him that it was God who had been with him in the recent war and kept him safe and successful. In the vision the Lord said to Abram, "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield [protector] and your exceeding great reward," vs. 1. I believe that Abram was a practical man, and, even though he had faith in God's promise, he was attempting to understand how he (Abram) would fit into God's plan. His response to God's assurance in the vision was to request a better understanding of what was to happen next. "And Abram said, 'Lord God, what will you give me, seeing I go [cannot have a child] childless, and even the heir of my estate [at present] is this Eliezer of Damascus?'" Eliezer was Abram's chief servant, and by local custom at the time, the person who would be heir of Abram's estate unless he had an offspring of his own. Eliezer was from Damascus which was some distance from Hebron, Abram's home. Abram must have found him to be very good at supervising and managing his (Abram's) affairs. Abram said further to God, "My perception is (Behold), to me you have given no seed, and, therefore my possessions will be taken from my posterity," vs. 3. Again, the Lord told Abram that, "This [Eliezer] is not to be your heir, but one [who] will come from your own bowels [body] shall be your heir," vs. 4. This vision evidently happened at night, for the Lord led him from his tent out into the night and under the stars. God told him to look up at the stars and note the myriad of heavenly bodies. Of course Abram could not count the array of stars, but God promised again that Abram's offspring would outnumber the plethora of all stars there. At this point in God's assurance, Abram's faith was reaffirmed, "And he believed the Lord [the Lord's promise], and he [the Lord] counted it [Abram's belief, faith] to him for righteousness," vs. 6. (Psa. 32:1-2; Rom. 4:3,9,16-5:1) Simply put, God was demonstrating his loving

mercy toward Abram, because Abram trusted God's promise under conditions which were, to Abram, impossible. Abram was rich in material possessions, but he felt a need for more which is only possible for God to supply. I am reminded here of what our Lord Jesus said to the rich young ruler of the Jews at Mk 10:17-27.

III. I stated above that I believe that Abram was very practical minded. We know from the above that Abram believed God's promise, but even after this belief had been completely affirmed (vs. 6), (Abram understood that it was, in fact, the Lord who had chosen and led him from Ur of the Chaldees to this new land away from his family), Abram sought further proof of God's direction in his life. God gave to him a sign, "And he [Abram] said, 'Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it [the land which you have promised to me]," vs. 8. God then outlined a procedure which, in our day, would constitute a legal contract between two parties. In this connection we should recall Gideon's response to a similar situation. The children of Israel had sinned, and the angel of the Lord came and sat down with Gideon under an oak tree. God's messenger told Gideon that God would deliver the Israelites from their enemies under Gideon's leadership. Gideon asked God to be specific in the promise by making dew to collect on a fleece laid upon the ground. Then he wanted God to withhold the dew the following night. The Lord confirmed his promise as requested, and Gideon's troops were thereafter victorious under Gideon's leadership, Jud. 6:36-40. The Lord invites his followers to prove his promises. Another example, at Mal. 3:10 God told the Israelites to "prove [test] me now herewith saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing - -." Likewise, Elijah asked God to demonstrate that Elijah was indeed God's prophet at I Kings 18:36-40. Baal's "prophets" learned of God's truth in much sorrow. And how are we, who are trusting Jesus as our Lord and personal Savior for eternal life, to know that we are pleasing God? The answer is found at John 3:5,14-18; 14:1-7; Rom. 8:14-17, 31-39.

IV. Back to God's contract with Abram concerning the Lord's promise that Abram would indeed inherit the land of Palestine. God instructed Abram to, "Take me [God] a heifer, a female goat, a ram (all three to be three years old), a turtledove, and a young pigeon. Abram killed (shed blood) and dressed all except the fowl, cut them into halves, laid the pieces side by side, and kept the buzzards away until darkness came. As the sun was setting, a deep sleep (paralysis) fell upon Abram, and, his mind became profoundly fearful (filled with awe). The Lord spoke to Abram, "Your posterity (seed) will be in another land [Egypt] as strangers for many years (400), but God will judge those who enslave your people. They will return to your land with great possessions. Before that you will live a long life, die, and be buried, because the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full (complete)," vss. 13-16. (Note the long range plan of God, which is similar to the promise to Abram, and for us today, Lk 21:24; Rom. 11:25; Heb. 11:39-40.) As God spoke, Abram saw a brilliant flame pass between the pieces of the sacrificed animals. The Lord assured Abram that his people (of faith in his God) would have and enjoy the land between the Nile in Egypt and the Euphrates in Iraq-Iran, vss. 17-21. I believe that this area will be the headquarters of the coming thousand-year reign of our Lord Jesus Christ in the kingdom of God on earth.

August 15, 1993

"Ishmael and Hagar"
Genesis 16-25

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. When Abraham left the town of Haran in Mesopotamia, he, for the first time, was completely independent to make life's decisions without the supervision and domination of his Father, because his Father, Terah, had died. God told Abraham to continue on his trek to a promised land where the patriarch would establish a nation. Rather than continue on around the "fertile crescent" area, Abraham chose to go south which took him into an arid land, the Negev Desert area. Initially this decision appeared to be a catastrophe and could have been the end of the family. However, God's position and reputation were in the balance, because he had promised Abraham a significant future. Abraham broke camp and moved westward into Egypt. There, because of events which we examined last week, Abraham was helped immensely materially. Among the possessions he received and carried away to Canaan Land were several servants, both males and females. Among the female servants given to Abraham was a young maiden named Hagar.

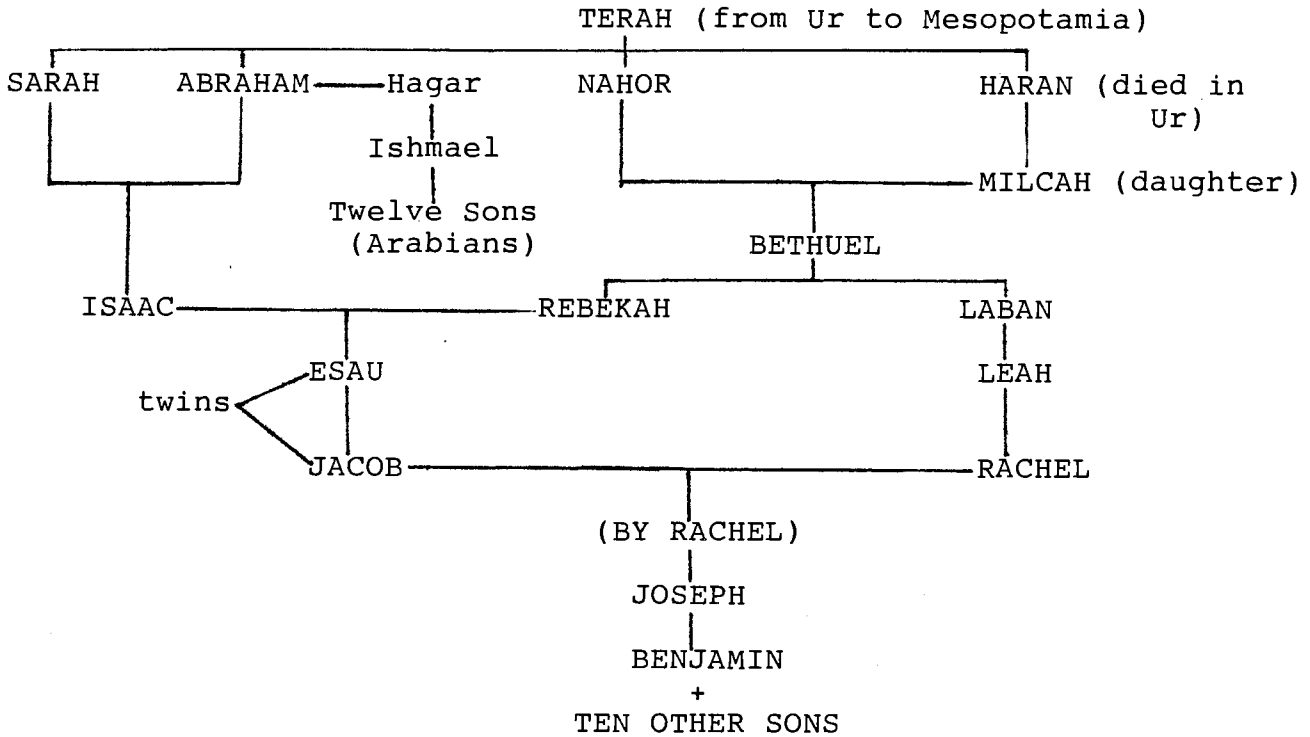
II. Hagar evidently was chosen by Abraham's wife, Sarah, to be her maid to perform domestic chores associated with Sarah's responsibilities. Hagar was an Egyptian who had been in servitude all her life, for she was very humble. With ten years in Canaan, Sarah believed (contrary to God's promise) that she would never bear a child of her own. Consequently, she made Hagar to be Abraham's concubine with the hope that at least through her there would be a baby in their lives. Sure enough, Hagar became pregnant by Abraham. When Sarah knew that Hagar was with child, she (Sarah) became extremely envious and began to browbeat her maid who was now bearing her (Sarah's) husband's (Abraham's) child. Even an humble Egyptian slave girl could not withstand such humiliation. Hagar fled into the desert where a messenger of the Lord appeared to her at an oasis and asked her why she was there. She explained her circumstance, and the messenger assured her that the son she was carrying would be blessed so that his heirs (hers as well) would become a significant people, large in number. Her posterity would be so distinctive in the area that they would be wild and opposed by others out of envy. The angel asked her to return to Abraham's household and become again subject to her mistress, Sarah. Hagar obeyed the Lord's messenger, and she subsequently gave birth to a son. The child was named Ishmael which means "whom God hears." He was born when Abraham was 86 years of age and was the first child of his father. [A tenet of Islam is that Ishmael was the son whom Abraham took to Mt. Moriah for sacrifice, but see Gen. 22.] When Ishmael was 13 years old, God made a covenant with Abraham which required that all males be circumcised. In that covenant (Gen. 17:2-27) God indicated that he had blessed Ishmael so that he would have twelve sons who would be princes and become a mighty nation, vs. 20. But God noted that his (God's) perpetual covenant would not be with Ishmael but with a son yet to be born of Sarah, whose name would be Isaac, vs. 21. After God detailed the covenant with Abraham, the latter took every male including the servants under his command and trimmed the foreskins from their male organs includ-

ing his own, vs. 23. At the time of this first rite of circumcision, Abraham was 99 and Ishmael was 13.

III. As God had promised, and in God's own time, Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son, Gen. 21:1-2. The son, Isaac, nursed until he was about three years of age. The custom was that when a child was weaned, a festive occasion honoring the event was held. At the affair (a feast) the young teenager (about 16), Ishmael, made fun of his half-brother, Isaac. That probably would have been overlooked by most people, but Isaac's doting mother, Sarah, saw the mocking of her only child. Ishmael's frivolous actions and attitude infuriated Sarah who immediately insisted that Abraham throw Hagar and Ishmael out of the household. Sarah's request (order?) profoundly grieved Abraham who prayed about whether he should comply with Sarah's request. God told Abraham to follow Sarah's wishes (Gen. 21:12-13) for two reasons. One, God promised to take care of Hagar and Ishmael, because the latter was his (Abraham's) son; and second, God would make his covenant continue through Isaac, not Ishmael. Abraham obeyed God by giving Hagar and Ishmael water and food the next morning and sending them from his home. Hagar dutifully left the home she had known for years and went out into the desert area of Beersheba. There she exhausted the food and water and gave up hope. She left the starving, thirsty lad under a shrub and went a distance where she would not witness his demise. Ishmael began to weep, God heard his cry, and said to Hagar, "Go and hold up his hand, for he is to be the father of a great nation." She did so, lifted up her eyes, and saw a well of water where they drank and were refreshed. That incident became the first of the many blessings which prospered Ishmael. He became a well-known hunter with bow and arrow. He moved with his mother eastward into the Wilderness of Paran in the north end of the Sinaitic Peninsula. No doubt his mother felt somewhat more comfortable among her own people, the Egyptians, who occupied the Sinai. She chose for Ishmael a wife from the Egyptians there, Gen. 21:21.

IV. As God had promised Abraham and Hagar, Hagar's son, Ishmael, had twelve sons. Their names are given at Gen. 25:13-15 and I Chron. 1:29-31 as Nebajoth, Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadar, Tema, Jetur, Naphish and Kedemah. Nebajoth and Kedar are both named at Isa. 60:1-12 as owners of flocks that will bless Israel at the times the Gentiles also look to Israel for glory and give glory to her. Kedar is mentioned again at Ezek. 27:21 where it is observed that that province (of Kedar) was peopled by Arabians. From this information it is reasonable to believe that the offspring of Ishmael were Arabians who are today, for the most part, Mohammedans. Presently they look to Mohammed as the Jews look to Abraham as the religious founders of their faiths. Both groups need desperately the Way, the Truth, and the Life, Jesus Christ, Jehovah's Savior. I believe that they too will come to accept him eventually, Isa. 45:23; 60:7-9; Rom. 11:25-28; 14:11; Philip. 2:9-11.

WA



PARTIAL GENEALOGY OF TERAH, FATHER OF ABRAHAM (Above)

MUHAMMAD AND ISHMAEL

Islam is a religion founded by Muhammad in the 600's AD. He was an Arab (therefore a son of Ishmael) born in Mecca about 570 AD. He taught a strong monotheism referring to God as Allah and asserting that he, Muhammad, was his messenger. Those who accept Muhammad and his teachings are called Muslims which is Arabic for "one who submits" (to God). Islam means in Arabic "submission." Muhammad died in 632 AD after having proclaimed his message for 22 years. The Muslim's holy book giving Muhammad's teachings is called the Koran which is the Arabic word meaning "recitation." Muslims consider the Koran to be the words of Allah himself, spoken to Muhammad by an angel. The Koran contains stories from both the Christian Old Testament and the New, including information about Jesus Christ whom it refers to as the Word of God and a prophet like the Old Testament prophets. Both Jesus and the Old Testament prophets were predecessors of Muhammad who was Allah's (God's) last prophet. There are today about 924,611,500 (1991) Muslims on earth. Their sacred places are Mecca (birthplace), Medina (burial place), and Jerusalem (from where he ascended to Heaven). That arrangement is also the order of importance for them. All must visit Mecca if at all possible during their life time. Probably their ethical teaching which contrasts most with Christianity is their belief in "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." They eat no pork nor drink alcohol if they follow the teachings of their Koran.

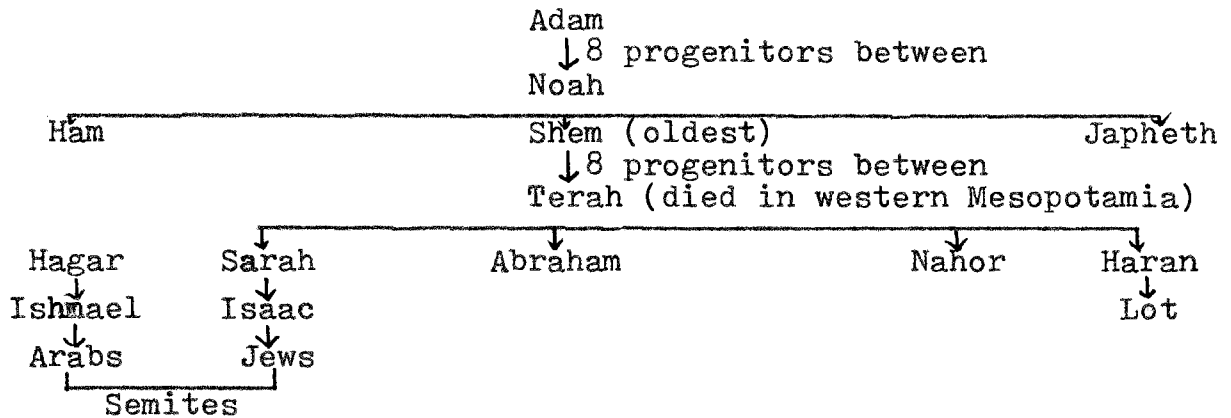
COUPLES CLASS - 8-15-93 (Supplement)
Wendell Alford, Teacher

1992 - 950,726,600
1991 - 424,611,500
25,115,100

Mohammedans occupied Jerusalem from 637 AD until 1917, 1280 yrs, & was in Christian control until 1948 when Jews again took over after c. 2600 years.

cited in Enyc. Brit. 1992 ypk

I. Genealogical context of Abraham
A. Adam through Isaac and Ishmael



B. Some of Abraham's family members

1. Abraham

- a. Ab = father (Chaldaic form is "Abba" meaning "possessed of") (Gen. 14:18-22; Mk 14:36; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6)
- b. Raham = belly, or issue source (of many nations)
- c. Humble before and obedient to the Lord God (Gen. 12:4; 13:4)
- d. Very rich (Gen. 12:16; 13:2)
- e. Aggressive leader of others (Gen. 14:14)
- f. Submissive to and controlled by his wife (Gen. 16:2), a true son of Adam before him (Gen. 3:6), and Isaac after him (Gen. 27:6-17)
- g. Remarried (Keturah) after Sarah died and had six sons (Gen. 25:1-2)

2. Sarah

- a. Sarai = my princess, i.e., Abraham's (Gen. 17:15)
- b. Sarah = princess, i.e., of all
- c. Especially attractive physically (Gen. 12:11)
- d. Self-conscious and jealous (Gen. 16:5-6; 21:9-10)
- e. Barren most of her marriage (Gen. 16:3)
- f. Died at age 127, 28 years before Abraham (Gen. 23:1-2)

3. Isaac (laughter)

- a. Very rich (Gen. 25:5; 26:13-14)
- b. Reverent (Gen. 26:24-25)
- c. Represents Christian believers and their spiritual freedom in Christ (Gal. 4:21-5:1)
- d. Eventually reconciled with Ishmael, or at least both attended Abraham's funeral (Gen. 25:9)

4. Ishmael (whom God hears)

- a. Abraham's oldest son and first to be circumcised (Gen. 17:24-25)
- b. His offspring promised by God to be numerous and he himself to be a wild man and against his kin (Gen. 16:7-13)
- c. To be blessed by God, but the continuing covenant to be through Isaac instead (Gen. 17:19-21)
- d. Mocked Isaac when he was 16 and Isaac was 3 at the feast celebrating Isaac's weaning (Gen. 21:6-9)
- e. Sarah insisted that Abraham send Hagar away with Ishmael. (Gen. 21:10)
- f. Abraham was reluctant to send them away, but did so. (Gen. 21:11)
- g. Abraham promised by God to make a nation of Ishmael (Gen. 21:12-13)
- h. Ishmael had twelve sons. (Gen. 25:12-18)

II. Jacob's family and further division

A. Isaac and Rebekah are united in marriage.

1. Abraham sends Put for a bride for Isaac outside Canaan. (Gen. 24:3-4)
2. Put goes to Mesopotamia for the bride. (Gen. 24:10)
3. Rebekah, Isaac's cousin, offers Put water. (Gen. 24:15)
4. Rebekah agrees to go with Put to become Isaac's wife. (Gen. 24:58)
5. After being barren for 19 years, Rebekah has twins, Esau and Jacob. (Gen. 25:24)

B. Jacob, Esau, and more sibling rivalry

1. Jacob (supplanter)
 - a. Mother's favorite and a domestic (Gen. 25:27-28; 27:6-17)
 - b. A deceiver and liar (Gen. 27:18-29)
 - c. Protected by God from Laban, his uncle, (Gen. 31:3), Esau (Gen. 27:42-45), and the Canaanites (Gen. 35:1)
 - d. Received Isaac's blessing (inheritance) at the expense of Esau through treachery (Gen. 27:28-40)
 - e. Hated Esau, his only sibling (Gen. 27:41)
 - f. Married Rachel, Laban's daughter, from Abraham's household (Gen. 29:28)
 - g. Jacob (Israel = the prince that prevails with God, Gen. 32:28) had twelve sons. (Gen. 35:22)
2. Esau (hairy and red, Gen. 25:25), his offspring settled in Edom
 - a. Father's favorite and a woodsman (Gen. 25:27-28)
 - b. Hated Jacob, his only sibling (Gen. 27:41)
 - c. Despised his own birthright (inheritance) until given to Jacob (Gen. 25:34; 27:38)
 - d. Married Ishmael's daughter, Mahalah (Gen. 28:9)

III. Background of the Palestine crisis (Gen. 17:5-8)

A. The coming of Mohammed (570-632 AD)

1. Established Islam (Allah is God and Mohammed is his prophet), the Muslim (one who surrenders "to God") religion, i.e., one who accepts Islam is a Muslim.
2. The Shari'a (path to the watering place) religious concept based on: Koran, the Sunna (the Way) of the prophet, ijma (universal agreement), and analogical reasoning (progression of faith)
3. Combined religion and government functions

B. Panorama of Muslim history (predominately Arabs)

1. By 661 AD established Damascus as capital in Syria
2. Had captured Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria
3. By mid 1500's the Ottomon Empire (Turkey) controlled Arab lands.
4. In 1700's Ottomon Empire declined as Europeans began to conquer parts of Arab world.
5. After WWI (1914-1918) League of Nations gave Britain and France control over the Arab lands of the old Ottomon Empire.
6. In 1917 Britain began support of Israel in Palestine although population there was almost entirely all Arab Muslims.
7. In 1920's and 1930's Iraq led rebellion against Britain, and Syria clashed with France.
8. In 1945 Arab League was formed by 7 Arab nations.
9. By the 1950's all the Arab nations had gained independence.
10. After WWII United Nations divided Palestine into an Arab state and a Jewish state. Arabs felt insulted since they considered the land theirs.

11. On May 14, 1948 Israel became a nation again after some 2600 years. The Arab nations invaded Israel the next day. Late that year Israel won the conflict and took about one-half of the land promised the new Arab state. The other half was divided between Jordan and Egypt.
12. A second Arab-Israeli conflict happened in October, 1956 when Israel invaded Egypt.
13. In June, 1967 a war between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, and Syria lasted six days. Israel won and occupied the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, Jordan's West Bank, and Syria's Golan Heights.
14. After a surprise attack by Arab forces, Israel later withdrew from Sinai.
15. Since 1948 about 700,000 Palestinian Arabs have become refugees.
16. In 1964 the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was formed with the prime purpose of dissolving Israel as a nation.
17. In 1978 Egypt and Israel reached major agreement whereby the first Arab nation recognized Israel's right to be a sovereign nation.

IV. The current crisis

- A. The rise of petroleum prices in the 1970's
- B. In 1991 there are 924,611,500 Muslims on earth, approximately one of every five people. (Christians number 1,711,897,000)
- C. There are over 1500 mosques in England where in London alone there are 400, up from just 2 in 1970.
- D. In 1989 the first Muslim political party was organized in England with 1.2 million members, making Islam the third largest faith group after the Anglicans and Roman Catholics.
- E. In France there are over 2 million Muslims making Islam the second largest faith group after Roman Catholics.
- F. The biblical promise to Abraham in Gen. 17:8 is still valid. Note especially, "- - - all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; - - -"

WA

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF THE PATRIARCHS, FROM ADAM TO MOSES, 2500 YEARS.

The figures at the end of each line show the date of the birth and death of the corresponding person. This table shows the length of each life; what persons were living at the same time; the rapid decrease of life after the deluge.

By the heavy lines it is easy to see through how few persons the early history of the race came down to the patriarchs after the flood. Methuselah lived with Adam 243 years, and with Noah 600 years, and Noah lived within two years of Abraham.

YEARS FROM THE CREATION.	100	200	300	400	500	600	700	800	900	1000	1100	1200	1300	1400	1500	1600	1700	1800	1900	2000	2100	2200	2300	2400	2500	
Adam.....	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—930	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Seth.....	130	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1042	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Enos.....	235	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1140	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Cainan.....	—	—	325	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1235	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Mahalaleel.....	—	—	395	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1290	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Jared.....	—	—	—	460	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1422	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Enoch.....	—	—	—	—	622	—	—	—	—987	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Methuselah.....	—	—	—	—	—	687	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1656	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Lamech.....	—	—	—	—	—	—	874	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1651	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Noah.....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1056	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Shem.....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1558	—	—	—	—	—	2006	—	—	—	—	
Arphaxad.....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2158	
Salah.....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1658	—	—	—	—	2096	—	—	—	—	
Eber.....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1693	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2126	
Peleg.....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1723	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2187	
Reu.....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1757	—	—	—	1996	—	—	—	—	
Serug.....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1787	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2026	
Nahor.....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1819	—	—	—	—	—	—	2059	
Terah.....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1849	—	—	1997	—	—	—	2083	
Abraham.....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1878	—	—	—	—	—	—	2008	
Isaac.....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2183	
Jacob.....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2108	
Levi.....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2289	
Kohath.....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2168	
Amram.....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2255	
Moses.....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2371	
YEARS BEFORE CHRIST.	4000	3900	3800	3700	3600	3500	3400	3300	3200	3100	3000	2900	2800	2700	2600	2500	2400	2300	2200	2100	2000	1900	1800	1700	1600	1500

Gen. 5

DELUGE A.M. 1656 DELUGE B.C. 2348

CHURCH PROVISIONS FOR SPIRITUAL IMMATURITY

NOW TO MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR EVERYONE TO ATTEND CHURCH NEXT SUNDAY, WE ARE GOING TO HAVE A SPECIAL "NO EXCUSE SUNDAY!" COTS WILL BE PLACED IN THE FOYER FOR THOSE WHO SAY, "SUNDAY IS MY ONLY DAY TO SLEEP." WE WILL HAVE STEEL HELMETS FOR THOSE WHO SAY, "THE ROOF WILL CAVE IN IF I EVER GO TO CHURCH." BLANKETS WILL BE FURNISHED FOR THOSE WHO THINK THE CHURCH IS TOO COLD AND FANS FOR THOSE WHO THINK IT IS TOO HOT. WE WILL HAVE HEARING AIDS FOR THOSE WHO THINK THE MINISTER TALKS TOO SOFTLY AND COTTON FOR THOSE WHO THINK HE TALKS TOO LOUDLY. SCORECARDS WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO LIST ALL THE HYPOCRITES PRESENT. SOME RELATIVES WILL BE IN ATTENDANCE FOR THOSE WHO LIKE TO VISIT ON SUNDAY. THERE WILL BE TV DINNERS FOR THOSE WHO CANNOT GO TO CHURCH AND COOK ALSO. ONE SECTION WILL BE DEVOTED TO TREES AND GRASS FOR THOSE WHO LIKE TO SEE GOD IN NATURE. FINALLY, THE SANCTUARY WILL BE DECORATED WITH BOTH CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS AND EASTER LILIES FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NEVER SEEN THE CHURCH WITHOUT THEM.

ALTHOUGH THIS IS COPIED FROM THE SATURDAY EVENING POST, SEE HEBREWS 10:25.

Dec. 14, 1997

"Sarai Becomes Impatient"
Gen. 16

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. If the chapter we examine today does nothing else for us, it, beyond any doubt, proves to us that Abram, and especially Sarai, were as human as we are today. We sincerely want to believe God with our whole being, but there are times when our fleshly limitations tug and pull at us with almost relentless persuasion. Or, as God's Word relates our constant dilemma at I John 1:8, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." But, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us," I John 1:9-10. Paul also in God's Word admitted that he (as we) believers and trusters in God's promise through faith in God's Son Jesus Christ have a continual challenge to follow God's Spirit and conform to God's perfect will for us, Rom. 7:18-24. Again, God's Word provides release from the clutches of sin for us believers in the concluding verse of Rom. 7, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." The end result of, even those who trust Jesus, is mortal death. All have sinned, but we who believe in Christ will have everlasting, spiritual life. Because Christ was raised to life, even so we have assurance in God's Word that our groaning for perfection will be accomplished as God's Word promises, " - - even we ourselves groan within ourselves, as with birth pains looking forward to the redemption of our bodies. For we are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope, for what a person sees, why would he/she need to hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then we do with patience (eager anticipation) wait for it," Rom. 8:23b-25. God's Holy Spirit represents God to every member of the ecclesia, Rom. 8:26-29, 35-39.

II. Abram did not have the direction and power of God's Holy Spirit who was not sent for believers until after God sent his Son to earth to be sacrificed. When Jesus was sacrificed and returned glorified to the Father God, only then did God send his Spirit in a special way, John 15:26; 16:7-15; Acts 2. I have given this rather lengthy introduction to Gen. 16, because we need to take into account God's long-range plan as given in his Word before we confuse Abram's relation to our Lord with our own relation with the same God. It is true that God had appeared to Abram several times (five) to prove or test Abram's faith in God's promise through Gen. 16, and one can see in Abram a growing maturity in his faith in God's promise through these five appearances. God first appeared to Abram when the latter was still living at his birthplace, Ur in Chaldea. Abram must have been impressed with God's first appearance to him, because he took action (He left his homeland.) as a result. After Abram arrived in the land where God called him, he showed human weakness by leaving that place when a famine threatened his subsistence. The third test for Abram was the riches which he was able to amass during and immediately following the journey to Egypt. Essentially

it was these riches which separated him from Lot whom he loved. (Their stock herds became so large.) Fourth, Abram was given the forces necessary and God's direction and protection (as a shield) to win the war against the kings from the north and rescue his nephew Lot.

III. In Chap. 16 today we come to the fifth test for Abram and Sarai after God had appeared to and promised them an heir, a son, who would assure Abram's greatness through his personal heritage, Gen. 12:1-5; 15:4. As we noted in Chap. 15:3, Abram was apprehensive because God was not quick to fulfill his promise to Abram concerning a promised son as heir. This lack of a sudden fulfillment of that promise slowly became an overwhelming attack upon Abram's faith in God's promise. Evidently he began to wonder if he (Abram) should take the initiative to implement God's plan. Perhaps Sarai was even more concerned about slow response to his (God's) promise than Abram. At that time and place the belief was that if there were no children born to a couple, the fault was with the female spouse. Also, Abram and Sarai grew up among the Chaldeans who lived under a different moral code than Abram's (and ours) Lord wants for his people. Sexual faithfulness to ones spouse was not considered wrong as a human activity. People, who are created in God's image, are no different than the lower animals! I believe that we live today in a society with a growing affinity with the same "lower animal morality!" And so it happened, when Abram was about eighty-five years old and Sarai was about seventy-five, she had lived barren until she was provoked by her own impatience (to wait for God's promise) and to "take matters into her own hands." When Abram and Sarai left Egypt, recall that they left very rich materially. They not only had goods, stock, gold and silver, but they also brought back to Canaan servants of Egyptian nationality. One of these servants, Sarai's personal maid, was apparently young, of child bearing age. Sarai, in her longing for a baby, approached Abram telling him that the Lord was responsible for her being barren after these long ten years in Canaan. The maid's name was Hagar, and Sarai gave her to Abram to be his wife (concubine). As noted above concubines were an acceptable arrangement then and there by people who were not following God's will. I do not believe that such activity was God's will then nor now, because God never changes, Heb. 13:8; Jam. 1:1-7. Mankind changes, but not our Lord. In other words, I do not believe that what Sarai suggested and with which Abram complied was what God wanted. Their worst sin by this action was not the physical act which they committed, but their disbelief in God's promise to Abram. Abram had sexual intercourse with Hagar, and Sarai immediately despised her when Hagar became pregnant with Abram's child. Sarai admitted that what she had done was wrong when Hagar became very arrogant toward Sarai. This spite was insignificant compared with the long-period results of the animosity between the son whom Hagar carried in her womb and his heirs, and the son of God's promise later born to Abram and Sarai and his heirs. Hagar, the Egyptian, ran away from Abram's household under the pressure of the hatred of Sarai. Hagar went far into the wilderness (desert), and near a spring she was approached by an angel of God. Hagar was surprised by being recognized by Abram's

12-14-97

God's angel, but she believed him when he assured her that, if she would return to Abram's home and submit herself to Sarai, God would prosper her and her son whom he named "Ishmael." Her descendants would live in the same area, "in the presence of his brethern," [Abram's offspring] and become innumerable, Gen. 25:12-16. Ishmael "would be a wild man whose hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him," Gen. 16:12. The current world scene with rampant terrorism is being initiated by some present-day followers of Muhammad, (570-632AD) Arab prophet and founder of Islam whose Supreme Being is Allah.

August 22, 1993

"Isaac and Rebekah"
Genesis 17-25

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Abraham first spoke to the Lord about children at Gen. 15:2-4, and the Lord promised he would not only father a son but that that son would multiply innumerable. Even after Abraham had agreed to accept Ishmael (Gen. 17:18) as his inheritor, God again promised him that Sarah would bear him a son. Because of their ages Abraham knew that only a miracle could bring such to happen. The Lord did the miracle and Isaac was born to them, Gen. 21:1-3. Abraham had been living among the Philistines for some time (Gen. 21:34), and during this time he evidently saw these people willing to sacrifice their children to their false gods to indicate their loyalty and devotion to those gods. To see whether Abraham was as devoted to his God, the Lord instructed him to take his only son, Isaac, to Mt. Moriah and offer him as a sacrifice. (Ishmael is not counted as a son for the purpose of inheritance, Gen. 22:2; 25:5.) As Abraham lifted his knife to sacrifice Isaac, God stopped him, telling him that he now knew Abraham's loyalty and faith. The Lord furnished the ram for the sacrifice, Gen. 22:8; John 1:29, 36; Heb. 11:17-19. [Note the similarity of the sacrifice of Isaac and the sacrifice of our Lord. It took Abraham three days to arrive at the place of sacrifice, and for three days Abraham, the father of Isaac, considered him as dead. God the Father of his Son, Jesus, forsook that Son for three days. The big difference, of course, is that God turned his back on his Son for three days to annihilate the sins which separates individuals from God. Those who trust Jesus Christ are not saved from physical death as Isaac was temporarily, but are made spiritually alive eternally. God sealed that promise of eternal life by bringing Jesus back to life after three days, Psa. 22:1; Mk 15:34].

II. Sarah died at age 127 at Hebron (Gen. 23:1-2) when Abraham was 137. (Abraham lived for 38 years after Sarah died.) At Sarah's death Abraham was still living among the Philistines (Canaanites), and Isaac was still single. Abraham was concerned about a spouse for Isaac, for he did not want his heirs to be influenced toward idolatry as he was sure would happen if a Canaanite were brought into the family. To ward off such a possibility, Abraham called his chief overseer, Put, in and made him swear (by placing his hand under Abraham's thigh) that he would ascertain that Isaac would marry a young woman from "back home," a woman from among his own family, Gen. 24:1-4. Put was reluctant to perform such a mission unless Isaac could accompany him back to Mesopotamia. Abraham agreed that, if such a bride could not be found for Isaac, then his vow could be broken. On this basis Put swore to the arrangement.

III. Put took ten camels loaded with appropriate gifts and some servants to help and set out for Nahor in Mesopotamia. As he neared the city, Put put his camels down by a well at about sunset (the cool of the day) when the young maidens would customarily come for water for their households. He was now in the most advantageous place and time to meet a prospective bride for Isaac. In addition to making sure that he had done everything mechanically to assure

the completion of his master's wishes, he prayed. The prayer was a petition to the "Lord God of my master Abraham." He asked God to favor Abraham by letting the right maid permit him (Put) to drink from her draw of water and provide water for his ten camels. When this happened, Put told the Lord that he would consider these acts proof of God's choice of the right maid. While he was still praying, a maid came to the well with a pitcher on her shoulder. She was (probably obvious from her attire) a virgin who had not known a man. She went down into the well, filled her pitcher, and came back up. Put ran over to her as she was leaving the well and ask her for a drink from her pitcher. Not only did she give him a drink, but as he was drinking, she volunteered to bring up water for his camels also. She ran down and up and kept the trough filled until the camels had drunk their fill. As she did this, Put told her nothing of his mission. When she had finished, he asked her who she was. She told him that she was Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel and the granddaughter of Nahor and Milcah. He gave her a nose ring and two bracelets of gold which weighed altogether about 5.25 ounces. At today's value of gold (\$400/oz.), all three pieces would be worth about *\$2336.25. As Put gave her the jewelry, he asked her whether her family could provide him and his entourage food and lodging for the night. Rebekah told him that, yes, her family had straw for the camels and sufficient food and sleeping quarters for him and the servants. Her information made Put know for sure that she was, indeed, the very person (from Abraham's family) whom he had come to find. His response was to bow his head and thank Abraham's God. When Rebekah heard the name Abraham, she knew immediately whom Put must represent and ran and told her brother Laban. Laban saw the jewelry (Rebekah had already adorned herself.), spoke to Put, and invited him into their home. He also unsaddled the camels, fed them, and then washed both Put's feet and his servant's. Food was served, but Put told Laban that he wanted to discuss his mission before he ate. Put told him the entire story and asked whether Rebekah could be taken back with him as a bride for Isaac. By this time Bethuel had joined the conversation. They considered the marriage to be the will of God, but her mother and Laban asked for at least a ten-day delay.

IV. Put wanted to leave the next day, but her family was unwilling unless Rebekah wanted to go and leave right away. When asked she wanted to go. She took her nanny and other servants, and they left after Put had given them an ample dowry along with more silver and gold jewelry and clothing to Rebekah. As they neared the homestead of Abraham, Isaac saw the caravan coming in the distance and went toward them. Rebekah dismounted from her camel as Put told her the man approaching was Isaac. She covered her face with a veil, and Put told Isaac the events of the journey. Isaac then took Rebekah to the tent that had been his Mother's, they were thereafter married, and Abraham was pleased. Isaac had been very lonesome following his Mother's death and found comfort with Rebekah. Abraham at this time remarried a woman named Keturah and she bare him six children in his old age. However, he left his entire inheritance to Isaac, Gen. 25:1-5. Abraham then died at age 175.

*The calculation is based upon 1 shekel=8.9 drams; 1 oz.=16 drams; and therefore, 10.5 shekels=5.84 ozs, and 5.84 ozs.x\$400=\$2336.25.

WA

August 22, 1993

"Isaac and Rebekah"
Genesis 17-25

Isaac & Rebekah

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Abraham first spoke to the Lord about children at Gen. 15:2-4, and the Lord promised he would not only father a son but that that son would multiply innumera**bl**y. Even after Abraham had agreed to accept Ishmael (Gen. 17:18) as his inheritor, God again promised him that Sarah would bear him a son. Because of their ages Abraham knew that only a miracle could bring such to happen. The Lord did the miracle and Isaac was born to them, Gen. 21:1-3. Abraham had been living among the Philistines for some time (Gen. 21:34), and during this time he evidently saw these people willing to sacrifice their children to their false gods to indicate their loyalty and devotion to those gods. To see whether Abraham was as devoted to his God, the Lord instructed him to take his only son, Isaac, to Mt. Moriah and offer him as a sacrifice. (Ishmael is not counted as a son for the purpose of inheritance, Gen. 22:2; 25:5.) As Abraham lifted his knife to sacrifice Isaac, God stopped him, telling him that he now knew Abraham's loyalty and faith. The Lord furnished the ram for the sacrifice, Gen. 22:8; John 1:29, 36; Heb. 11:17-19. [Note the similarity of the sacrifice of Isaac and the sacrifice of our Lord. It took Abraham three days to arrive at the place of sacrifice, and for three days Abraham, the father of Isaac, considered him as dead. God the Father of his Son, Jesus, forsook that Son for three days. The big difference, of course, is that God turned his back on his Son for three days to annihilate the sins which separates individuals from God. Those who trust Jesus Christ are not saved from physical death as Isaac was temporarily, but are made spiritually alive eternally. God sealed that promise of eternal life by bringing Jesus back to life after three days, Psa. 22:1; Mk 15:34].

Gal. 4:28-5:1

90 when Sarah was born

2:40 page 25:20

Isaac's family

II. Sarah died at age 127 at Hebron (Gen. 23:1-2) when Abraham was 137. (Abraham lived for 38 years after Sarah died.) At Sarah's death Abraham was still living among the Philistines (Canaanites), and Isaac was still single. Abraham was concerned about a spouse for Isaac, for he did not want his heirs to be influenced toward idolatry as he was sure would happen if a Canaanite were brought into the family. To ward off such a possibility, Abraham called his chief overseer, Put, in and made him swear (by placing his hand under Abraham's thigh) that he would ascertain that Isaac would marry a young woman from "back home," a woman from among his own family, Gen. 24:1-4. Put was reluctant to perform such a mission unless Isaac could accompany him back to Mesopotamia. Abraham agreed that, if such a bride could not be found for Isaac, then his vow could be broken. On this basis Put swore to the arrangement.

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end

the completion of his master's wishes, he prayed. The prayer was a petition to the "Lord God of my master Abraham." He asked God to favor Abraham by letting the right maid permit him (Put) to drink from her draw of water and provide water for his ten camels. When this happened, Put told the Lord that he would consider these acts proof of God's choice of the right maid. While he was still praying, a maid came to the well with a pitcher on her shoulder. She was (probably obvious from her attire) a virgin who had not known a man. She went down into the well, filled her pitcher, and came back up. Put ran over to her as she was leaving the well and ask her for a drink from her pitcher. Not only did she give him a drink, but as he was drinking, she volunteered to bring up water for his camels also. She ran down and up and kept the trough filled until the camels had drunk their fill. As she did this, Put told her nothing of his mission. When she had finished, he asked her who she was. She told him that she was Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel and the granddaughter of Nahor and Milcah. He gave her a nose ring and two bracelets of gold which weighed altogether about 5.25 ounces. At today's value of gold (\$400/oz.), all three pieces would be worth about *\$2336.25. As Put gave her the jewelry, he asked her whether her family could provide him and his entourage food and lodging for the night. Rebekah told him that, yes, her family had straw for the camels and sufficient food and sleeping quarters for him and the servants. Her information made Put know for sure that she was, indeed, the very person (from Abraham's family) whom he had come to find. His response was to bow his head and thank Abraham's God. When Rebekah heard the name Abraham, she knew immediately whom Put must represent and ran and told her brother Laban. Laban saw the jewelry (Rebekah had already adorned herself.), spoke to Put, and invited him into their home. He also unsaddled the camels, fed them, and then washed both Put's feet and his servant's. Food was served, but Put told Laban that he wanted to discuss his mission before he ate. Put told him the entire story and asked whether Rebekah could be taken back with him as a bride for Isaac. By this time Bethuel had joined the conversation. They considered the marriage to be the will of God, but her mother and Laban asked for at least a ten-day delay.

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Jan. 4, 1998

"God's Covenant With Abram"
Gen. 17

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. In the last verse of Chap. 16 God's Word tells us that Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore his son, Ishmael. Chap. 17 begins by telling us thirteen years later, when Abram was ninety-nine, he and Sarai were still without God's promised child. However, the Lord appeared to Abram and proclaimed himself to be, for the first time in Scripture, El Shaddai, Almighty God. Now Abram was to relate to God as the one and only Creator with all power, limited only by self-limitation, Titus 1:2. He therefore admonishes Abram to walk before him, El Shaddai, and be blameless (believe God's Word without wavering, Matt. 5:48). As Abram walks with God, God will "make a covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly," vs. 2. Abram fell prostrate before the Lord, and God continued his communication, "As for me, my covenant is with thee, and thou shall be a father of a multitude of nations," vs. 4. Then God told him that his name would no longer be "Abram, Exalted (High) Father," but "Abraham, Father of a Multitude, (many nations)," vs. 5.

II. The theme of Chap. 17 is that God Almighty is announcing and emphasizing God's position regarding his own special relationship with Abram due to Abram's faith. The results of this covenant involves promises (an ultimate and solemn arrangement) of God to Abram (now Abraham). The two promises were that Abraham would bear a child with Sarai, and that the geographic portion of the earth's surface belonging to Abraham and his offspring would be that area between "the river of Egypt [Nile], unto the great river Euphrates," as a covenant, making the land-possession part of God's fifth test of Abraham which we noted in our Gen. 16 outline at II. After the waywardness of Abram (and Sarai) in Chap. 16 (resulting in the birth of Ishmael who was half-Egyptian), it appears that God saw how in need of maturing Abram's faith was in believing that God really could bring things to pass which were humanly (naturally) impossible, i.e., to make Sarai's "dead" womb produce an offspring. Evidently, to prove God's ability to perform a miracle, God waited another thirteen years before the promised child was born! God's Word indicates how profoundly God wanted Abraham impressed that he (God) would, in fact, keep his promise concerning an offspring and possession of the land. The word "covenant" in vss. 2,4,7,10,13,19, and 21 reveals that God wanted it understood that he was instigating the covenant of his own initiative which he emphasizes was being made by, the one and only "Almighty God," El Shaddai, vs. 1, John 6:41-44.

III. In order to make sure that Abraham did not forget as long as he lived and his descendants after him that God had made this covenant sure and everlasting, God prescribed a token or sign to bring to mind God's covenant. (My italics-WA) Every male born to him would be circumcised upon attaining eight days of age. Abraham was to begin fulfilling this prescription by circumcising himself, his thirteen-year-old Ishmael, and every male born in his house or who had become a part of his household through purchase,

vss. 10-14. After prescribing this sign of the covenant, God told Abraham that Sarai's name likewise would be changed. No longer would she be named Sarai, "My (Abraham's) Princess" but Sarah, "Princess" to the entire Jewish race, vs. 15. "I will bless her (make her happy) by giving her a son of thy (Abraham's) seed by whom she will become the "mother of nations, kings of people shall be of her," vs. 16. After God again promising Abraham (c. 100 years of age), a son by Sarah (c. 90 years of age), the audacity of God's promise "hit Abraham 'like a ton of bricks.'" We can easily identify with Abraham's humanness when he "fell over laughing" as he thought to himself, in his heart, how can anyone be rational and believe God's promise!? Here I am, a centenarian and my wife with a "dead womb" at age ninety, and God Almighty is still promising us a child. That is preposterous, unnatural! How can such be? (Note John 3:4.) I am reminded, when I read God's Word of Abraham's wonder, of God's Word also at II Pet. 3:3-10. "Know this first, that there shall come in the last days [now, I believe] scoffers (mockers) walking after (according to) their own lusts (unnatural desires), and saying, 'Where is the promise of his coming? for since (for thousands of years) the Old Covenant prophets [and the first believers in Christ began to proclaim God's promise about the lordship of Jesus Christ and his promise to return to establish the kingdom of God on earth], nothing like that has happened. Natural law prevails today just as it has since the world was first created,' - - - but, dear ones, [believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and his promise to return to earth], be not ignorant of this one thing - - - the Lord is not slack concerning his promises - - - but he is long-suffering - - -," and see also Matt. 24:27-31; John 14:1-3; Rev. 4:1; 22:7,12. We believers today feel full of wonder about God's promise to us through his Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and we have faith that God will, in fact, keep his promise to return for us, even if we experience physical death before his coming again, I Cor. 1:9; 15:50-58; I Thes. 4:13-18.

IV. In the elation of God's covenant promise, Abraham remembered his son of thirteen years, Ishmael, and how he had come to love him. He said to God, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" [that you could keep my son Ishmael in mind, not forget him]. God replied, "[My plan is,] Sarah shall indeed bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac (Laughter), and it is through him and his descendants that my covenant with you is to be continued. But as for Ishmael, I have heard your concern for his welfare, and, be assured, he will be blessed with a large posterity; he will be fruitful and multiply exceedingly. In fact, he will father twelve princes (male leaders) who will make him a great nation," vs. 20. That promise was fulfilled exactly as promised and is noted explicitly at Gen. 25:12-15. After assuring Abraham that Ishmael will be cared for, God made the fact very clear that the covenant made with Abraham's descendants would be fulfilled through Isaac, Sarah's and Abraham's son, not through Ishmael, Hagar's and Abraham's son, Gen. 21:12; Rom. 9:7; Heb. 11:18. Before "God went up away from Abraham," he informed the patriarch that Sarah would bear Isaac "the next year," vss. 21-22. Then Abraham, Ishmael, and all the other males of his household were circumcised as God had commanded.

Jan. 11, 1998

"Abraham And God's Messengers"
Gen. 18

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Chaps. 18 and 19 appear to be parenthetical in the narrative of Abraham and Sarah at this point in Genesis. The reason for this treatment of the story, I believe, is to contrast the morals of God's people, Abraham's and Lot's families, with the dreadful, unGodly life styles of the other peoples at the southern end of the Dead Sea, Sodom and Gomorrah. This contrast of values between God's people and those living without regard to God's will is referred to throughout the Old and New Covenants. One can see the disparity at Rom. 1:18-24. In that passage God's Word states in Rom. 1:24 that, "God also gave them up (my italics - WA) to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves." Being "given up by God" is the very worst condition that a human being can have. NonJews for the most part were floundering around in unGodly evil until God sent his Son Jesus Christ to "even the playing field." When Jesus, on the cross, said, "It is finished," God thereafter sent his Holy Spirit and "old things are passed away," II Cor. 5:17; Heb. 8:7-13. " - - There is no difference - - for all have sinned and come short of God's glory," Rom. 3:22-23. Every person who accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is made whole (at one with the Creator God), for, "There is neither Jew nor Greek [all nonJews], there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you [believers] are all one [the same] in Christ Jesus," Gal. 3:28. What love (agape) the Lord God has demonstrated to all mankind who will believe through Jesus, our Lord and Savior!

II. The Lord appeared to Abraham in the form of three persons while Abraham was at home in his tent pitched among the oak trees at Mamre. He sat in the door of the tent where he could escape the heat of the day. As the three representatives of God were approaching in the distance, Abraham ran out to meet them, fearing that they could pass by and not stop. Bowing himself to the ground in respect, Abraham begged them to stop, sit in the shade of a tree and let him wash their feet while they rested. Further, he promised them food to refresh their bodies as they visited with their servant (Abraham). It pleased Abraham exceedingly when they agreed to stop by and accept his hospitality. As is so often the case, Abraham ran inside to his wife Sarah and asked her to prepare quickly "three portions of her best meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth," vs. 6. As Sarah was preparing the bread, Abraham ran out to the cow pen, chose his best young, tender calf, dressed it, prepared it for eating, and placed it, with butter and milk, before his three guests out under the shade tree. They inquired of Abraham about his wife Sarah. Abraham told them that she was in the tent (women were not brazen before strange men in that place at that time). Evidently, the place where they were eating was near the tent, and Sarah was dutifully eavesdropping on the four men's conversation outside the tent. One of the men reiterated God's promise concerning Sarah's forthcoming delivery of a male child. God's Word restates the old age of Abraham and Sarah, and especially the fact that Sarah was long past childbearing age. When Sarah heard "the same old

promise" of God, she "laughed within herself saying, 'At my age shall I enjoy sexual union with my Abraham who is also very old?'" (vs. 12) The Lord (through one of his three messengers, angels) said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, questioning whether she could bear a child at her age? Is there anything too difficult for the Lord? At the appropriate time [in God's own time] I will return, and Sarah shall have a son." By this time Sarah's brazenness had worn away, evidently, and she had joined the group. Nevertheless, she was afraid and denied that she had laughed. The Lord assured her that he was aware that she did, in fact, laugh at the repeat of his promise. The Lord knew of Sarah's skepticism about his promise of a son.

III. The three men made preparation to leave and indicated that they were going from Abraham's place eastward to Sodom. Abraham went with them for a distance to send them on their way and wish them well. As they walked along, the men were discussing where they were going (to Sodom) and their purpose for visiting the people there. The Lord said that they should not keep from Abraham why they were going to Sodom, because Abraham was to become well-known throughout the earth as all nations are to be blessed in and through him. The Lord said that he knew that Abraham would command his people to do righteously and justly, keeping the way of the Lord. The Lord said, "Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down, and see whether, [in practice], they are as immoral as their reputation has become, and, if not, I will know," vs. 20-21. After concluding this stark revelation to Abraham, they went onward toward Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham, as he realized what would happen (because he knew of those cities' awful sinfulness, see Gen. 13:13), ran and caught up with God's angels and asked them a very important question: "Will you destroy the righteous with the wicked?" (vs. 23) I believe that Abraham's question was prompted precisely, because he knew that his nephew Lot lived in the city of Sodom near Gomorrah. To give specificity to his question, Abraham gave a "for instance" in vs. 24. "Suppose there are fifty righteous people within the city [Sodom], will you spare the place for the righteous fifty? Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" The Lord said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes," vs. 26. Thus encouraged, Abraham, who admitted that he was made of dust, grew somewhat bolder in his request of the Lord. The principle which the Lord is giving to Abraham, I believe, is exactly what will happen at the end time when God is unhappy with the overwhelming portion of all humanity. Only the physically alive ecclesia, a rather small minority of the earth's population, will not be destroyed or punished. God's elect, the ecclesia (all believers), will be taken from the earth before the great tribulation, Gen. 19:22; Matt. 24:21-22, I Cor. 15: 51-52; I Thes. 4:13-5:11; Rev. 4:1. In Abraham's fellowship with the Lord, the patriarch asked if forty-five, forty, thirty, twenty, and finally only ten were righteous in Sodom, would the Lord spare the city? The Lord agreed to spare the city if only ten were righteous and went on toward Sodom. Abraham returned home to Mamre believing that the Lord would spare his beloved Lot.

Jan. 18, 1998

"Abraham Tells A Half Truth"
Gen. 20

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. There is considerable disagreement among Bible students exactly as to where Gerar is, or was, located. In vs. 1 God's Word states that Abraham moved from thence, apparently Mamre (place where stood a large grove of huge, old oaks) in Hebron (Gen. 13:18; 14:13; 18:1). Hebron was, and is, about thirty miles south and slightly west of Jerusalem. From Mamre Abraham traveled on southwesterly to Gerar near Egypt's (Mizraim) eastern border at that time. We do not know why Abraham moved from Mamre to Gerar. We can speculate, of course. Did Abraham fear a further devastation of the entire area as God did to the cities (including Sodom and Gomorrah) of the plains around the southern end of the Dead Sea? Did God want Abraham to resolve this sin of claiming Sarah to be only his half sister as he had done before in Egypt at Gen. 12:9-20? Was settling this sin of lying deceit a prerequisite before Isaac could be born? At any rate, Abraham felt a need to move his residence from Mamre to Gerar (south of Kadesh-Barnea) where the patriarch believed that, "Surely the fear of God is not in this place," vs. 11.

II. When Abraham and Sarah reached Gerar to set up housekeeping (probably in a tent), he told around that Sarah was his sister. The ruler of the area, Abimelech, learned of the new residents and was very attracted to Sarah. I believe that this, what was evidently physical attraction (or was it her cooking ability, Gen. 18:6?) is very mysterious since, at this time, Sarah is about ninety years of age! Female attraction is still a major consideration, for even some of our major department stores devote entire floors to cosmetics. Sarah was evidently very attractive since Abraham was still falsely refusing to say he was her husband, but only her brother. He felt guilty about his lie, and his confession in vs. 11 (cited above), that he was not where God's presence was, must have been ample reason in Abraham's thinking to do that which he knew displeased the Lord. Sure enough, Abimelech the king of Gerar, sent and took Sarah to his household. But God intervened by appearing to the king in a dream and disclosed the dire circumstance he was creating. The Lord said to Abimelech, "Behold you are a dead man, for the woman (Sarah) whom you have taken is married to a husband," vs. 3. Abimelech's reply to the Lord indicates a king who honored God's right to influence his life. Further, he relayed to God the truth about the situation. Abimelech told God that both Abraham and Sarah had attested to their relationship as brother and sister, (a half truth). Abimelech confessed to God, "In the integrity of my heart and in innocence have I done this," vs. 5. The Lord then agreed with Abimelech that the king was innocent and had not sinned up to this time concerning Sarah. The Lord said that, indeed, he himself had kept the king from sinning against God, because he had not permitted Abimelech to have her physically.

III. The Lord told Abimelech to restore Sarah to Abraham, "for he is a prophet, he will pray for you, and you shall live. Otherwise, you will die and all your people," vs. 7. Early the next morning after Abimelech's dream, the king gathered his servants

around him and told them of his dream and the implications involved. They were very frightened, because their lives also were threatened. The next action Abimelech took was to summon Abraham and confront him with the truth. You have placed me in a position which you ought not to have done. What have I done that produced such disrespect? What was in your mind? Abraham's excuse was that he thought God was not in control in this place (Gerar), and therefore, his own life was in danger because of Sarah's beauty. "Actually," Abraham told the king, "Sarah is my sister, the daughter of my own father, but not the daughter of my mother, but we are married," vs. 12. Then Abraham subtly implicates God in his reason for lying about Sarah. "As it happened, when God caused me to wander from my father's household [where people did not know my background], I told Sarah to tell everyone that we were only siblings, not married," vs. 13.

IV. After Abraham told Abimelech the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, the king did much as the ruler had in Egypt in Gen. 12:16. Besides restoring Sarah to Abraham, Abimelech gave him sheep, oxen, male and female servants, and a thousand pieces of silver. Further, Abimelech told Sarah that he held nothing against her; she was there among his people with a good reputation and a good wife to Abraham. As God had promised Abimelech, Abraham prayed to God for the king, his wife, and maidservants. God thereafter healed the entire household so that they were able to conceive and bear children. When Sarah had been taken into Abimelech's household, God had sealed the womb of all the females, vss. 17-18.

V. When one examines Chap. 20:16-18 and then notes the first verse of Chap. 21, a relationship with Sarah's barrenness can be sensed. Abraham's humble confession of his lie to the apparently humble King Abimelech appears to have renewed Abraham's spirit. He certainly realized that the fear of God was in Gerar even though he had not erected an altar as he had done, Gen. 12:7; 13:4; 22:9, to sense God's presence. And what is the application for properly relating to God by people in our day, the last years of the twentieth century? First, one's spirit must be reborn from above [by God in heaven] through faith (belief) in God's only Son and Messiah (Savior), Jesus, according to God's Word, John 3:3,14-18; 6:37,44. The function of one's spirit which corresponds to Abraham's humbling himself is known as repenting, or, admitting that one needs, but cannot on his or her own, make oneself pleasing to the Creator God. Only faith in God's own goodness can accomplish that oneness with God's perfect (complete) will. Abraham believed God's promise of a Savior and died physically with that live faith, Lk 10:24; John 8:41-59; Heb. 11:13,39-40. Just as in our day, Abraham was justified by God through exercising personal faith in God's promise, not because he had earned justification by his own merits, Rom. 4:1-8,15-5:1. Second, what about our displeasing God (sinning) after we have eternal spiritual life (oneness with God). Some religious leaders who profess Jesus as Lord hold these later sins against believers for temporary control. I believe God's Word at I John 1:1-4,8-2:2. "If we [believers] confess our sins [directly to the Lord], he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," I John 1:9. Praise God for all his blessings!

I. We should note that in Chap. 18 God's Word at vs. 2 indicates that there were three men involved in the appearance of the Lord to Abraham, Gen. 18:1. In Gen. 18:13 at least one of the three men who were on their way to Sodom is referred to as "the Lord." Likewise in Gen. 18:17,20,22,26,27,30, and 33 the men conferring with Abraham are given as "the Lord." Furthermore, in Gen. 18:20,21, and 26 it is made clear that these three men representing "the Lord" were on their way to judge the inhabitants of Sodom with the possibility of destroying the place, unless they found ten righteous people there. I have gone into this detail to note with you that when the representatives of the Lord arrived in Sodom in Chap. 19, there are only two beings noted, and they are there more explicitly referred to as angels (messengers or representatives of God). I called the three men who visited Abraham "representatives of God" in the outline of Chap. 18 at II, Line 4. I believe that the two angels in Chap. 19 are two of the same three men who visited Abraham in Chap. 18. However, I cannot explain the difference between the three in Chap. 18 and the two in Chap. 19. Perhaps a need for the third angel elsewhere accounts for the difference.

II. I stated in the Chap. 18 outline at I, Lines 6-8, that the contrast of values between God's people (Abraham and Lot) who seek to do God's will and those denying God's influence over their lives is referred to "throughout the Old and New Covenants." Specifically, the evil attitude and actions of the people of Sodom is related directly to the practice of what we refer to today as sodomy, or, intimate sexual activity between people of the same sex, homosexuality. Jesus said that there is only one sin which separates persons from God more surely than that sin which was practiced at Sodom and Gomorrah in Abraham's and Lot's day, and that worse sin is refusing to accept the message that the kingdom of heaven is ready for citizens to enter into it. That kingdom is to have one Lord and King, Jesus, the Messiah (Savior) of the Heavenly Father, Matt. 10:7,14-15; 11:23-24; Mk 6:11-12. I have quoted our Lord first in this regard since his thoughts on homosexuality are the most pertinent to us who are trusting him for eternal life. But to justify my position that the entire Bible uses sodomy (homosexuality) as a sure condition which demonstrates mankind's disregard for God's being the Creator and humanity his creation, I continue. All people who practice homosexuality are described in God's Word as "unclean," which comes from the result of the "lusts of their own hearts (will)." They dishonor their own bodies between themselves. They are those who "change the truth (proper human sexuality) of God for a lie [homosexuality], worship and serve God's creatures [themselves] more than the Creator, i.e., they follow their own wills rather than God's. This homosexual activity is a "vile (repulsive, disgusting, contemptible) affection." The Word is very specific in what constitutes the activity we refer to as homosexuality. It is, "women exchange the natural [as God created and intended that people should perform (Matt. 19:4)] use into that which is against [God's created] nature. And likewise also the males leaving

the natural use of the female, burn in their own lust [intense desire] one [male] toward another male, males with other males practicing that which is shameful [before God] and receiving in themselves [by their own action] that penalty of their error [sin against God] which is due [as declared by God's Word]. These homosexuals do not like to retain God in their knowledge [conscience]. God gives them over to a reprobate [debased] mind to do those things which are not appropriate [according to God's Word, will and pleasure]," Rom. 1:24-28. Many who disregard God's will for them not only practice homosexuality but also many other like evil things as listed in God's Word following the above citation relating to homosexuality at Rom. 1:29-32. We simply do not have time to amplify all Bible references to homosexuality as practiced at Sodom, but here are most of them: Gen. 13:13; 18:20,26,32; 19:5,7,24-25,29; Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Deut. 23:17; 29:23; 32:28-32; Judg. 19:22-23; I Kings 14:24; 15:12 22:46; II Kings 23:7; Isa. 1:9-10; 3:9; 13:19; Jer. 23:14; 49:18; 50:40; Lam. 4:6; Ezek. 16:49-50,53-59; Amos 4:11; Zeph. 2:9; (Matt. 10:15; 11:23-24 - cited above); Mk 6:11; Lk 10:10-12; (Rom. 1:18-32 - partially cited above); 9:29; I Cor. 6:9-11; II Pet. 2:4-9; Jude 7; and Rev. 11:8. I believe that these numerous references in God's Word to the evil nature of homosexuality leaves no doubt as to God's deep hatred of mankind's practice of sexuality contrary to God's creation of people as male and female creatures. God intended that only a male and female be joined together for sexual intimacies as indicated at Matt. 19:4-6. There, in vs. 6, Jesus said, "Wherefore they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together [male and female] let not mankind put asunder [change]."

III. Chap. 19:1-29 gives an explicit account of the evil nature of "the men of the city (Sodom), both young and old from every quarter (section)." These sinful Sodomite citizens demanded of Lot that he turn over to them the two male messengers of God, who were enjoying Lot's hospitality, to satisfy their homosexual lusts, "that we may know [the King James term for "know them carnally"] them," vs. 5. The two men of God were saved only by their own miracle whereby the evil citizens were stricken with blindness so that they were no longer able to see the entrance to Lot's home. The angels told Lot to take his family and leave Sodom immediately, for they had concluded that they should destroy the city. Evidently, Lot could persuade only his wife and two daughters to escape with him. Even then Lot begged not to have to flee to the mountains, but that he go only as far as the nearby town of Zoar. By sunup Lot, his wife and two daughters had reached Zoar, but as God destroyed the cities of the plain, Lot's family fled onward toward the higher land. As Lot's wife hesitated to go forward, she was killed and turned to (was covered with) salt from the Dead Sea. Abraham could see the plain and what had occurred there. Lot took his two daughters up to the mountains where he established a home in a cave. The two daughters, especially the elder, took matters into their own hands as Eve and Sarai did before them. The elder convinced the younger that they would never bear a child unless they had sexual intercourse with the only male available, their father. Lot let himself be a party to the arrangement by becoming drunk with wine two nights in succession during which he impregnated both of his daughters. They each bore a son, the two of whom became the father of the Moabites and Ammonites, enemies of Israel, II Chron. 20. This incest was contrary to God's will, Lev. 18:1,6-7; 20:19.

18 "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of mankind, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which may be known is evident among them; for God hath showed it unto them. 20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and divine nature so that they are without excuse; 21 Because when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful but became futile in their thoughts and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. 23 And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like perishable mankind, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. 24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts [wills], to dishonor their own bodies between themselves. 25 Who exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. So be it. 26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections; for even their women did exchange the natural use for that which is against nature. 27 And likewise also the males leaving the natural use of the female burned in their own lust one toward another; male with male working that which is shameful and receiving in themselves that penalty of their error which was due. 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not appropriate, 29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil mindedness, whisperers, 30 Backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without natural affection, unforgiving, unmerciful; 32 Who knowing the righteous judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but approve of them that do them.

Feb. 1, 1998

"Isaac Born - Ishmael Deported"
Gen. 21

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Three significant episodes occur in this chapter: Isaac's birth, the casting from Abraham's household Hagar and Ishmael, and an agreement (covenant) sworn to by Abraham and Abimelech, king of Gerar. The Lord visited Sarah as he had promised (Gen. 18:14), and she and Abraham were given a son by the Lord. Notice carefully how unusual this birth was; the couple "were given" a son. This birth was unnatural, i.e., contrary to the laws of nature. Only God's miracle could have brought this birth to pass. Just as Jesus' birth by Mary was a unique, one of a kind event, so was Isaac's birth. The one overwhelming difference was that Jesus had no earthly father, but God's Holy Spirit was Jesus' Father (Matt. 1:20; Lk 1:35). I make this comparison because both births were God's special doing and in God's own due time, Gen. 18:14; 21:2; Gal. 4:4. Mary was a virgin, and Abraham and Sarah were both well beyond child bearing ages, Abraham 100 and Sarah 90. Abraham circumcised Isaac on his eighth day as God had commanded him, Gen. 17:9-14, 23-27. In vs. 6 we can see a different reason for why Sarah and Abraham laughed (Gen. 17:17; 18:12) concerning the birth of their only child, a son. People laugh for four principle reasons: in scorn, in pleasure or joy, in nervousness, or in comic response to an idea or event one considers funny or amusing. I believe Sarah and Abraham laughed for the second reason. Just imagine, longing for about eight decades, or so, for a child of your own, and then to experience the hope of your lifetime fulfilled! Even the idea had made them laugh with sheer pleasure and joy. Therefore, in naming the child Isaac, "Laughter," God had in mind "Joy," I believe, Gen. 17:19; 21:3. God was happy also, because his Son Jesus the Christ was to come from the lineage of Isaac, Matt. 1:2; Lk 3:34.

II. Sarah was as astounded by the birth of Isaac as she was by being able to nurse a child at the age of ninety. She said, "Who would have said unto Abraham that Sarah would have nursed a child by Abraham in his old age," vs. 7. Sarah was a good mother, for "the child grew" and was weaned in the normal way. Abraham was so pleased about the whole affair that he gave a gala feast to celebrate the weaning of Isaac. At this time a child would nurse a mother for about three years. No doubt Abraham invited all his friends to rejoice with him and Sarah. But for Sarah all did not go well at the gala, for "Sarah saw the son of Hagar (Ishmael), the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, scoffing or laughing at the three-year-old Isaac," vs. 9. This laughing was to express scorn or disdain for Ishmael's little half brother. Because of this indiscretion of Ishmael, Sarah confronted Abraham immediately. She said, "Cast out this bondwoman [slave] and her son [Ishmael]: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac," vs. 10. This demand of Sarah distressed Abraham, and he "went over her head" to God himself for direction. "And God said unto Abraham, 'Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad [Ishmael was then about fourteen years old, Gen. 16:16; 21:5.], and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto you, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed [pos-

terity] be called," vs. 12. Then God repeated to Abraham the promise he had made at Gen. 17:18-21. Note God's fulfillment of his promise concerning Ishmael at Gen. 25:12-16. Further, God told Abraham that he was blessing Ishmael because he was also Abraham's son, vs. 13. To comply with God's instructions, Abraham arose early the following day, took bread, a skin of water, slung them over Hagar's and Ishmael's shoulders, and sent them away out into the desert of Beersheba. When Hagar and Ishmael had exhausted the water and food, she despaired of their plight. Recall this as Hagar's second such experience, for at Gen. 16:1-8 Sarai, with Abram's permission, had harassed her maid Hagar until she ran away. However, an angel of God told Hagar to return and live by Sarai's demands, and the Lord would, in time, reward her displeasure. Now, here in the desert Hagar is alone, this time with no food and a starving teen-age son. She feared for her son's death and did not want to witness the agony of his dying. She told him to stay under the shade of a shrub and went herself some distance away and wept. Again, God heard her son's cry and addressed Hagar through his angel. He told her not to fear, because God had heard her distress in Ishmael's cry. The angel promised Hagar again that through Ishmael God would make a great nation. At that point God's messenger "opened her eyes," and she saw a well of water nearby where she refilled her skin (container), and gave Ishmael life-saving drink. Hagar reestablished herself in the desert of Paran and reared her son Ishmael to become a skilled hunter (archer), and his mother "took him a wife out of the land of Egypt," her native land.

III. At vs. 22 Abimelech, the king of Gerar, again enters into Abraham's affairs. The king with his military leader spoke to Abraham. He confessed that Abraham represented God, and therefore he asked the patriarch to take an oath in God's name that he (Abraham) would, as he lived in Gerar, deal fairly with the king and his subjects. Abraham called Abimelech's attention to the fact that the local citizens had forcefully taken over a well which Abraham had dug. To seal the agreement Abimelech admitted that he was unaware of his people's infringing upon Abraham's well, and Abraham gave Abimelech seven ewe lambs. They both swore to the covenant (to "coexist" there) and named the place Beersheba which means, "Well of the Oath," or "Well of the Seven" (lambs). Abraham lived there among the Philistines for a long time, planted a grove of palm trees around the well, and "called there upon the Lord, the everlasting God," vss. 33-34. The well became a holy place.

IV. The details above give the historical narrative surrounding the birth of Isaac, Hagar's and Ishmael's expulsion from Abraham's home, and provision for the patriarch's family to provide for themselves in Abimelech's domain, including Hagar and her posterity. The significance of these episodes in the plan of God for the peoples of the earth in the millennia to follow is extremely important. The Lord through Paul (God's Word) relates the relationship of Isaac and Ishmael as much more than a family dispute. In his Roman letter Paul gives God's revelation of that relationship as to what makes individuals right with the Heavenly Father, our Creator. Further, at Rom. 4:13,16-5:2; 7:13-8:1, and Gal. 2:21; 4:21-5:1,16-18, we believers are revealed to be living lives of constant, daily challenges. God's Spirit lives within us (John 14:17; I Cor. 3:16; I John 2:27) and directs our lives, but we must daily depend upon God's grace and not our own ability to keep God's Law. Our Law is Love, Matt. 22:36-40; John 15:12,17; Rom. 13:10.

Feb. 8, 1998

"Abraham's Final Exam"
Gen. 2 2

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Up to this chapter we have come to see Abraham as a man of profound faith in God. When God told him to leave his homeland and family to go to another, Abraham made arrangements to do just that. By this action Abraham passed his first test of faith. However, he did not make this move without some reservation, for his father Terah left Ur in Chaldea and went with Abraham as far as Haran to the north. There Terah died and Abraham took Sarah his wife and Lot his nephew and left Haran to go, "unto a land that I will show you," Gen. 12:1. Abraham was, at his departure from Haran, seventy-five years old and Sarah was sixty-five. Before the three left Haran, God signified the beginning of his covenant with Abraham. God promised, "to make of him a great nation, to bless him and make him a blessing to all families of the earth, to bless those who bless Abraham and curse those who curse Abraham," Gen. 12:2-4. The patriarch's second test of faith in God's watch-care came when his nephew Lot, whom he loved dearly, left him to live to the east in Sodom. A third test of Abraham's reliance upon God was when he had come to love his son Ishmael and was told by God to send him away with his mother Hagar. Abraham so wanted Ishmael to be blessed by God, because this son too was Abraham's. God promised this man of faith that he would, indeed, bless Ishmael over time. God kept his promise, but the Lord told Hagar, Ishmael's mother, that "he [Ishmael] will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall live among all his kin [brothers, Abraham's offspring]," Gen. 16:10-12. These three tests of Abraham's faith were far less traumatic than the fourth and final exam of Abraham's faith in God's promise. I am reminded here of Jesus' final exam for his apostles at Matt. 16:15 when the Lord Jesus asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" They answered that he was (is) God's Messiah (Savior), and Jesus confided that the Heavenly Father had revealed this truth to them, and see also Matt. 14:33.

II. Chap. 22 explains in detail the fourth, final exam by God of Abraham's faith. I believe that in Abraham's life experiences he had witnessed among the peoples living near him at various places, a religious phenomenon which supposedly tested parents' faith in their pagan gods. That phenomenon involved expressing ones ultimate, profound devotion to ones god by sacrificing his or her child or children to that god. (Today's abortion?) God had promised Abraham that through his son Isaac would Abraham's posterity (seed) be called, Gen. 21:12; Gal. 3:16-18, and now in vss. 1-2 the Lord God commanded Abraham to take his only son and sacrifice (kill) him for God. (Note here that Ishmael is not counted for Abraham's posterity according to God's promise at Gen. 17:19,21.) The King James text in vs. 1 uses the word "tempt" and is incorrect, I believe, but should be "test." My belief is based upon God's Word at Jam. 1:13, "Let no man say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted of God,' for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." Mentioning James' letter as a portion of God's Holy Word, reminds me of what could appear to be a conflict between

James' (Jam. 2:21-24) emphasis on actions performed (works) and Paul's emphasis on faith in God's Word at Rom. 4:1-5; 9:30-33. I believe that they are both right, of course. James' question was, "Was not Abraham our father [in the flesh] justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?," Jam. 2:21,22-24. Abraham offered but did not perform the sacrifice; he only agreed to, i.e., he demonstrated his willingness to follow God's command. Furthermore, James' letter was addressed to believing Jews who were being influenced by those (Judaizers) who were trying to mix God's grace through Jesus the Messiah and keeping the Law simultaneously. Some of the new Jewish believers in Christ Jesus were wavering in trusting Jesus completely for eternal life. James was pastor of the Jerusalem congregation and had constant pressure from the Judaizers to make believers feel guilty by trusting God's grace alone in the Christ of God. At times Peter also had trouble, especially in the social implications of God's grace, as noted by Paul in Gal. 2:2-21. James' position is especially interesting since he was Jesus' brother, another of Mary's sons, Gal. 1:18-19. On the other hand, Paul's emphasis at Rom. 4:1-5 stresses the absolute completeness of faith in Jesus' sacrifice for eternal life which faith is equivalent to Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his only son, for his faith was accounted by God as righteousness as is our faith in Jesus, John 3:14-18.

III. To carry out the command of God to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham presented himself to God without reservation, "Behold, here I am," vs. 1. God noted the father's love for his only son and then asked him to travel to Moriah and offer Isaac as a human sacrifice by burning. I believe that Moriah is the site of Solomon's Temple at Jerusalem built many years later. (Followers of Muhammed [offspring of Ishmael, an Arab] believe that Abraham was asked to sacrifice Ishmael, not Isaac.) From Gerar where Abraham lived then, Moriah was about sixty miles as one would have had to go by donkey. The terrain was rocky, dry, hilly and/or mountainous, and Abraham left early one morning. On the third day Moriah appeared off in the distance. Abraham dismounted from his donkey, took the wood for the sacrifice, and told his two servants to wait there while he and Isaac went to Moriah to worship. Isaac took the wood, and Abraham took the fire along with a knife. On their way it occurred to Isaac that his father had forgotten the most important item needed, a lamb to be sacrificed. Abraham said, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." The two of them went together to the place where God had chosen. Abraham built an altar, laid the wood thereon, bound Isaac, and placed him on the wood on the altar. Abraham took the knife and raised his hand to slay his only son Isaac. The Lord's messenger (angel) stayed Abraham's hand and stated that Abraham had passed God's exam for genuine, sincere faith. The patriarch looked and saw a ram caught in the brush nearby which he used for the burnt offering. Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac portrayed God's ultimate Lamb sacrificed for the sins of all who would trust him, the Lord Jesus, God's only Son and the Messiah, John 1:36. God then repeated his covenant with Abraham, vss. 15-18. Abraham then returned to Beer-sheba well pleased with his son, Isaac. God was (is) well pleased with his only Son, Matt. 3:17; 12:18; 17:5; Mk:1:11; Lk 3:22; II Pet. 1:15-18, as are we believers!

Feb. 15, 1998 "Sarah Dies; Abraham Buys Burial Plot" Couples Class
Gen. 23 Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Sarah was ninety years old when her only child Isaac was born. Now we learn in vs. 1 that Sarah died when she was one-hundred and twenty-seven which meant that Isaac would have been thirty-seven when she died. At the time of her death Abraham's household was back in Hebron (Kirjath-arba). The latter name was the city's name before Hebron. The town today is still Hebron, and it is one of the oldest municipalities, which has been continuously inhabited, on earth. Hebron is located nineteen miles southwest of Jerusalem on the road to Beer-sheba. Throughout recorded history the shallow valley around the city has produced choice grapes. The spies returned to Moses with Caleb saying that the men there were giants and the crops were luscious. In fact, the spies brought back a cluster of grapes so large that two men were required to carry it, Numb. 13:22-23. No doubt the fertility of the soil there is the reason Abraham grazed his herds in that area.

II. In outlining Chap. 22 I ended the chapter with vs. 19, because I believe the person who broke the Old Covenant into chapters and verses should have done so. The reason for Gen. 22:20-24 is to update genealogical information about Abraham's family back in Mesopotamia (Ur and Haran). We last noted his family background at Gen. 11:22-32. There we learned that one Terah had three sons, Abram, Nahor, and Haran, and two of them married within the family of Terah. Abram married his half-sister Sarai while Nahor married his brother Haran's daughter, Milcah, Nahor's niece. Milcah and Lot were siblings. At Gen. 22:20-24 we discovered that, in some way, Abraham learned what had happened to his family back in Mesopotamia. Milcah and Nahor had eight children. Their youngest son Bethuel had a daughter named Rebekah, a person who appears in a prominent role beginning in Gen. 24.

III. In Gen. 22:19 Abraham returned to Beer-sheba to live after offering Isaac in sacrifice, and in Gen. 23:2 it is stated that Sarah died in Hebron, "and Abraham came [to Hebron?] to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her." Is it possible that when Sarah died in Hebron, Abraham was living in or visiting Beer-sheba? At any rate, Abraham was in an uneasy situation in that his wife Sarah had died, and he owned no property on which to inter her body. He announced to the owners of nearby property his dilemma. In retrospect, this situation appears strange to us. God had promised Abraham (Gen. 15:18; 17:8) all of this land, and not only to him, but to his seed after him. Even after this covenant, Abraham has nowhere to bury his beloved wife Sarah. So he turns to the sons of Heth who had legal possession of the land there. Now Heth was the great-grandson of Noah through Ham and Canaan (Gen. 10:6,15) The progenitors of Heth were known as Hittites and Canaanites. In recent decades through archaeologists' discoveries, evidence has been found which indicates that the Hittites were an influential people northward even as far as modern Turkey. Their rank among the early empires was roughly equivalent to Egypt and Mesopotamia. The demise of the Hittite Empire was due primarily to moral laxity.

In fact, the Greek goddess Artemis (Roman Diana) worshiped by the Ephesians in Acts 19:23-41 represented a remnant of the religion of the Hittites which the Phoenicians and Canaanites had earlier called Ashtareth and Baal, Judg. 2:11-23; 3:5-7. In retrospect, we can believe that Abraham was reluctant to accept freely the land offered by "the sons of Heth, the Hittites." Remember that Abraham, likewise, had refused to accept the "generosity" of the king of Sodom after rescuing Lot from the north country, Gen. 14:21-24.

IV. In vs.4 Abraham stood by the body of his beloved wife Sarah, and publicly before the sons of Heth said, "I am a stranger and sojourner with you; give [provide] me property as a burying place with you that I may bury my dead out of my sight." The Hittites were very amicable toward Abraham and told him that they considered him to be the prince of God among them, i.e., not their enemy. "None of the Hittites will prohibit your burial of your family," they said. Abraham cordially returned their friendship by bowing before them and spoke communally with them. He asked them to confer with Zohar's son Ephron about a tract of land adjoining a cultivated field. This land included a cave named Machpelah (double or multiple) which means that there were several caves located there. We will learn as we study further in Genesis that Abraham (Gen. 25:9), Isaac, Rebekah, Leah, and Jacob were also buried there (Gen. 49:30-32). In vs. 9 we learn that Abraham told Ephron to figure the worth of the site where the caves were, and he would pay its price to hold it by legal title. Ephron responded by declaring publicly, in the "audience of the men of Heth in the gate of the city [the town council], 'Nay, my Lord, listen, the field give I thee; and the cave that is therein I give it thee; bury your dead,'" vs. 10. But Abraham, again showing deep respect by bowing before the group, told Ephron that he would feel free to use the property only if he paid for it. Ephron understood Abraham's firm position and quoted a price of four hundred shekels of silver (about ten pounds, worth today about \$985.60). Even after the quote, Ephron told Abraham that the land was his free of any charges, but Abraham publicly weighed out the silver and paid Ephron. So the field and caves were deeded to Abraham in the city gate. Abraham then buried Sarah his wife in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre (Hebron) in the land of Canaan. Some interpretation, I believe, is necessary to understand why Abraham did not buy real property on a more permanent basis. It is obvious that he had the means to do so, Gen. 13:2; 20:14; 24:35. The Bible gives no evidence that he actually owned any property by deed other than the field and caves listed here in Chap. 23. Why? God had promised Abraham the total area from the Nile in Egypt eastward to the river Euphrates, Gen. 15:18. Abraham, our spiritual forefather in faith (Gal. 3:6-9), believed God who had promised that this land would be his, but God did not say when. I believe that that land will be Abraham's and his seed in the flesh (the Jews) when Jesus returns for us believers. We will be taken up to the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2), but the Jews, including Abraham, will reign with Jesus' power from Jerusalem a thousand years (Rev. 20:4). We believers will get new bodies fitted for heaven, and the Old Covenant saints will be brought back to life, Ezek. 37:9-14; Matt. 27:45-53; Rom. 11:25-32; I Cor. 15:51-52; Heb. 11:39-40.

Feb. 22, 1998

"A Bride For Isaac"
Gen. 24

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Reading Chap. 23 opens the door into many details of marriage customs and associated values in Abraham's day. We determined in the last chapter that Isaac was about thirty-seven years old when his mother Sarah died. Immediately following her death and burial, Abraham realized that his son Isaac would need a spouse to fulfill the promise that God had made to Abraham to make him the "father of many nations" through Isaac, Gen. 17:19. Now at the beginning of Chap. 24 Abraham is getting old and is living as a sojourner (Gen. 23:4) in a land where none of his own people (descendants of Shem, Noah's son, Gen. 11:10-26) lived. Unless other arrangements were made Isaac would be marrying a local woman, a Canaanite (descendants of Ham, through Canaan, Gen. 10:6). Abraham was determined not to let Isaac marry a Canaanite woman. To implement Abraham's (and I believe God's) determination, he called his eldest (chief) servant to him. This servant "ruled over (managed) all of Abraham's affairs," vs. 2. The servant's position as a corroborator of Abraham's will and purpose was so complete that his name is not given, but he is referred to without exception simply as "the servant" of Abraham. This servant was a firm believer in prayer to "the Lord God of my master Abraham," vs. 12.

II. The Word makes very plain that Abraham trusted his chief servant in his business affairs, but to emphasize the uniqueness and grave importance of the mission to which Abraham was about to send him, the servant was commissioned in a distinct manner. The Bible gives several methods of oath-taking. We saw in Gen. 21:22-24 how Abraham and Abimelech in which the former swore to the latter that Abraham would "swear unto me by God that thou will not deal falsely with me." Sometimes oaths were attested to by the slaying of an animal, dividing it into two parts, and passing between the two pieces, Gen. 15:6-10, 17-18. Paul at Gal. 1:20 swore "before God [concerning] the things I write to you, note especially, I lie not." Jesus taught that oath-taking for trivial religious assertions made those so swearing, fools and blind, Matt. 23:16-22. In the "Lesson on the Mount" Jesus taught his followers to let their word be as a bond (truth or oath), i.e., truthful when standing alone without an oath, Matt. 5:33-37. Abraham wanted his servant to know beyond any shadow of a doubt that finding a bride for Isaac among Abraham's own people was his and God's will, vs. 7. Abraham asked his servant to "take an oath by the Lord, the God of heaven" not to take a wife for Isaac from the daughters of the Canaanites, vs. 3. The servant took the oath while placing his hand under Abraham's thigh. To be sure that he understood the oath correctly, the servant asked what he should do if, when he went to Abraham's people, no woman agreed to the request to come and marry Isaac. In that instance should I take Isaac back to Mesopotamia? Which takes top priority? Abraham was so sure that his desire was also God's that he assured the servant that God would send a messenger to the right woman to implement fully God's plan. Do not even consider Isaac's leaving Palestine. As a last resort, if a woman cannot be found, you are released from your oath to me, but leave Isaac here.

III. Abraham's servant took a safari of ten camels, a complement of supplies including jewelry (good things), and some men as servants to help on the journey. He set out for the city of Nahor in Mesopotamia. When he arrived and while his camels knelt down for water at the well just outside the city, the servant prayed to Abraham's God for success in his mission. He prayed, "Let it happen that I may speak to one of the women who come for water this evening and who will give me water to drink when I ask." While the servant was still praying, Rebekah came to the well with a water pitcher on her shoulder. She went down into the well, filled her pitcher, and the servant ran over to her and asked her for a drink. She immediately took the pitcher from her shoulder and let him drink. Rebekah even offered to bring up water from the well and fill a trough there for the ten camels to drink! The Word gives some facts about Rebekah: she was the daughter of Bethuel, the youngest son of Milcah and Hahor, Abraham's brother. Milcah was also the daughter of Haran, Abraham's other brother. She was a young person of marriageable age (a virgin) and had never had sexual relations with a male. She was very beautiful. Rebekah was, therefore, the daughter of Abraham's brother's son, Bethuel, making Rebekah Isaac's second cousin. Rebekah's father was also Isaac's first cousin. These relationships certainly satisfied Abraham's (and God's) desire that Isaac marry into Abraham's own people! The servant's first act to complete his mission for his master was to give Rebekah a half-ounce gold nose ring and two gold bracelets of two ounces each. Then he asked her about her family and whether her family had room for him to stay. Rebekah answered him courteously that they did have lodging for his entourage. The servant worshiped the Lord God of Abraham and thanked him for leading him to the family of his master. Rebekah ran ahead to her home where her parents and her brother Laban greeted her. The Bible states that Laban noticed the gold jewelry immediately which the servant had given Rebekah, evidently assuming that the servant's master was a man of considerable means. Therefore, Laban made the servant very welcome. The servant's, and the other men with him, feet were washed for courtesy, and food was served to both the guests and the camels. The servant would not even eat until he had outlined his mission for Abraham. Among the information he gave to Laban and Bethuel was that Abraham had been blessed by the Lord greatly. "He has become great, and the Lord has given him flocks, herds, silver, gold, menservants, maidservants, camels, and donkeys. Further, Sarah bore Abraham a son in their old age, and he is their only heir. Abraham has given to his only child Isaac all that he has, vss. 35-36. Abraham will not permit Isaac to marry a Canaanite, but insists that he wed one of his own people." With this information Bethuel, and especially Laban, agreed that Rebekah should return with the servant. However, the next morning when the servant was ready to leave, the mother begged for a few more days (perhaps ten) with Rebekah. The servant lavished upon Rebekah's family gold and silver jewelry and fancy clothing. They decided to leave the departure time up to Rebekah. Rebekah decided upon an immediate departure! Rebekah took her nurse (maid), and they left for Isaac's place. Isaac was outside when they arrived, saw her, loved her, married her, and took her into Sarah's tent.

August 29, 1993

"Jacob, Esau, and Rachel"
Genesis 25 - 37

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. The only child of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, married Rebekah when he was forty years of age. They were married for twenty years without children. Isaac became disturbed because of their childlessness, and pleaded with God for a child. God answered Isaac's prayer with a double blessing by causing Rebekah to bear two boys, twins. As she was pregnant with the two, she sensed that something was different about her pregnancy. She asked the Lord about her condition. He told her that she was to give birth to twins and that the two would be very different with the younger being superior. The older would serve the younger. It is very noteworthy that Rebekah was told this before the birth occurred, before either had performed one deed, Gen. 25:23; Rom. 9:6-16.

II. According to God's promise, Rebekah gave birth to two boys, the first was named Esau which means "hairy." The second was named Jacob meaning "supplanter, "deceitful," or literally, "one who takes the heel." Jacob was so named because in birth he came forth holding the heel of Esau in his hand. As they grew toward manhood Esau became an outdoors person, a skilled hunter. [He could very well have been mistaken for a gorilla-like animal if seen at a distance, because he was completely covered with hairy fur, Gen. 25:25.] He would kill deer in the woods and bring his father, Isaac, fresh meat to eat. Isaac especially liked venison and grew to prefer and love Esau because of the fresh meat he provided, Gen. 25:28. Jacob, on the other hand, worked around the homesite with his mother, Rebekah. He learned to grow vegetables, cook them, and prepare meals, Gen. 25:28-30,34, and his mother grew to prefer and love him. While Esau would camp out in the woods for long periods, Jacob enjoyed the comfort of tents, Gen. 25:27. [In that verse, Jacob is characterized as being "plain." The same word is used in Job 1:1,8 and, I believe refers to Jacob's sense of perspective.] During their younger days Esau had gone out on a long hunt and came home famished, extremely tired, and begged Jacob to prepare for him Esau's favorite stew, a red pottage. Red appears to have been of significance to Esau probably because of his red-haired body. His posterity became known as Edomites, for Edom means "red" in Hebrew. "Edom" is a variable spelling of "Adam." The stew prepared by Jacob contained lentils (evidently red beans), and Jacob complied with Esau's wishes with one proviso, that Jacob would receive his older brother's birthright, inheritance. At that age Esau saw no profit in his birthright and glibly took the pottage (stew) with bread and ate. Thereafter Esau did not even want to discuss his right of having been born first and in line for the inheritance. Isaac evidently knew nothing of the incident or agreement between the two young twins, Gen. 27:35.

III. Isaac in his last years developed very poor eyesight. As he was nearing death, he asked Esau to go hunting and bring him some fresh meat. While he was at the hunt, Rebekah who had overheard Isaac say that he was about to seal Esau's inheritance with a final blessing, planned other arrangements. She told Jacob to kill two

young goats for Isaac and outlined a plan to fool Isaac. Since Jacob was bare skinned and Esau was hairy all over, Isaac would realize the plot immediately. Rebekah dressed Jacob in Esau's clothing, put the goat skins on Jacob's arms and neck, and the younger son approached his blind father for the blessing. The camouflage worked, and Jacob received the blessing of Esau. When Esau learned of the loss, he begged for a change. Isaac could or would not reverse the arrangement, and Esau planned to kill his brother. Rebekah sent Jacob away to her brother Laban at Haran.

IV. Esau married some Canaanite women, Gen. 26:34-35, including a daughter of Ishmael, Gen. 28:8-9; 36:1-3. His marriages saddened both Isaac and Rebekah. Isaac asked Jacob not to marry a Canaanite but go to Mesopotamia for a bride. On his journey there he was required to spend a night in the wilderness at Bethel. As noted above, he was unaccustomed to outdoor living, and as he slept on bare stones that night, he dreamed. In the dream he saw a ladder extending up into heaven with angels going up and down on it with the Lord at the top. The Lord identified himself as Abraham's and Isaac's God, and related again the covenant he had made with Abraham. Jacob agreed that if God would bring him safely home again, he would claim the Lord as his God. Jacob erected a stone monument to note the place and there confirmed his promise to give God a tenth of all his possessions.

V. Jacob travelled on to Haran and came to a well where shepherds were watering their flocks. He asked them if they knew Laban, Nahor's son. They did, and as they talked, Laban's daughter Rachel came to the well to bring her father's sheep. Jacob moved the stone from the well to accommodate Rachel, kissed her, and wept. When he told her who he was, she ran and told her father who then listened to Jacob's story. Jacob stayed a month and worked for Laban, but they had no agreement concerning wages. Laban suggested that Jacob set a wage, and the latter said that he would work seven years if Rachel would be his wife. After the seven years Laban planned a feast to note Rachel's marriage to Jacob. Although the Bible does not state so, from events that followed alcohol must have been served. Jacob waited for his bride in his tent, and Laban brought Rachel's older sister, Leah, to him. Jacob immediately consummated the marriage. By and by when the morning came, Jacob discovered how Laban had tricked him. Jacob confronted Laban, and his new father-in-law simply told him that the custom there was that the older sister married first. Subsequently, Jacob agreed to work yet another seven years for Rachel. As Abraham and Isaac before him, Jacob could sire no children by Rachel at first. Leah had four sons, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, but Rachel remained barren. Jacob was accused by Rachel of her being barren, but the accusation angered Jacob who suggested she blame God. After Sarah's pattern, Rachel gave Jacob her maid, Bildah, to bear a child. Bildah bore Jacob both Dan and Naphtali. Leah became temporarily sterile for a while, and gave Jacob her maid, Zilpah, who bore him Gad and Asher. Then Leah became fertile again and bore Jacob Issachar, Zebulum, and a daughter, Dinah. Finally, Rachel was with child by Jacob and bore Jacob Joseph. She had one other son, Benjamin, whose birth killed Rachael, Gen. 35:16-20. Jacob spent 77 years in Canaan, 20 at Haran, and another 33 years in Canaan, and the last 17 years in Egypt. Abraham lived 175 years, Isaac 180, Jacob 147, and Joseph 110.

W4

August 29, 1993

"Jacob, Esau, and Rachel"
Genesis 25 - 37

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. The only child of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, married Rebekah when he was forty years of age. They were married for twenty years without children. Isaac became disturbed because of their childlessness, and pleaded with God for a child. God answered Isaac's prayer with a double blessing by causing Rebekah to bear two boys, twins. As she was pregnant with the two, she sensed that something was different about her pregnancy. She asked the Lord about her condition. He told her that she was to give birth to twins and that the two would be very different with the younger being superior. The older would serve the younger. It is very noteworthy that Rebekah was told this before the birth occurred, before either had performed one deed, Gen. 25:23; Rom. 9:6-16.

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Red vs. 6-9 "sin of a bright hand"

IV. Esau married some Canaanite women, Gen. 26:34-35, including a daughter of Ishmael, Gen. 28:8-9; 36:1-3. His marriages saddened both Isaac and Rebekah. Isaac asked Jacob not to marry a Canaanite but go to Mesopotamia for a bride. On his journey there he was required to spend a night in the wilderness at Bethel. As noted above, he was unaccustomed to outdoor living, and as he slept on bare stones that night, he dreamed. In the dream he saw a ladder extending up into heaven with angels going up and down on it with the Lord at the top. The Lord identified himself as Abraham's and Isaac's God, and related again the covenant he had made with Abraham. Jacob agreed that if God would bring him safely home again, he would claim the Lord as his God. Jacob erected a stone monument to note the place and there confirmed his promise to give God a tenth of all his possessions.

*John 1:5
Jesus
bridge*

*2 daughters
of Nahor*

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*Rebekah
her son
his mother
travelling*

*Total
of 6
by Leah*

*Gen.
30:14*

*In Gen 32:28
Jacob fought with angel & asked angel to bless
to the end of his journey with*

Mar. 1, 1998

"Abraham Dies, Isaac Fathers Twins"
Gen. 25

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. In Chap. 24 Rebekah and her family were told by the servant of Abraham that Abraham, "has given unto him (Isaac) all that he has," Gen. 24:35-36. But now we are told by God's Word that after this, Abraham took another wife whose name was Keturah. And not only that, but she bore him six children. Notice, however, vs. 5 that Abraham's promise to Isaac is repeated, "and gave all that he had unto Isaac." I believe that Abraham's preference was Isaac, because God had made his son by Sarah to be the one through whom God's covenant was made (Gen. 17:19) and would be fulfilled. Poor Keturah and her children! This arrangement appears to us, in retrospect, to be cruel and arbitrary. This same principle is inherit in what God did for all of humanity when he instituted his New Covenant which rescinded the Old Covenant. The writer of Hebrews deals with this relationship in some detail in Heb. 8:7-13. God did not change but humanity did. God's Word states in that passage that God changed Covenants, "- - because they [all humanity, see Rom. 1:24 concerning the Gentiles, nonJews, and see Rom. 3:21-24; 9:30-33 concerning the Jews] continued not in my Covenant, and I regarded them not - - ." Further, in Heb. 8:13 God's Word concludes, "In that he [God, at Jer. 31:31-35 and repeated here in Heb. 8:7-13 saith, 'A New Covenant,' he hath made the first obsolete. Now that which is becoming obsolete and is growing old is ready to vanish away." In connection with what appears to be arbitrary, note also what Paul (God's Word) reveals in Rom. 9:6-29 about God's sovereignty. In this revelation he lays a premise that not all of Abraham's posterity by fleshly genealogy is the spiritual seed (children of God), but "the children of the promise are counted as the [spiritual] seed." A sure evidence of this truth is noted by Jesus our Lord at John 8:33,41-44,56-59 where he was addressing the Pharisees (John 8:13). Malachi addressed this same question at Mal. 2:10, "Have we not all one Father?" Jesus answered the question in John 8 as noted above. Paul's conclusion of what could be misconstrued by mankind is at Rom. 9:18-26, "Therefore has he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. You will say to me, 'Why does he yet find fault [with anyone]? For who has resisted his will?' Do not say [question] that, O mortal man, who are you to reply against [question] God? Should the thing formed [created] say [be sassy] to the one [the Creator] who created it, 'Why have you made me thus [as you have]?' When a man creates a clay pot, does he not have the power to create one pot beautiful and/or practical and another pot ugly and/or with holes in it? So can God create as he pleases. God's creation is to demonstrate his grace. This grace [in the New Covenant] applies to Jews and nonJews, Gentiles, [in his Son Jesus the Messiah, Savior]." See also Rom. 5:1-2; Gal. 3:23-29. For further information regarding God's selection for spiritual salvation and growing in God's grace see also Matt. 9:10-13; John 6:44; Acts 2:39; Gal. 5:1,5-8; Phili. 2:12-13; II Pet. 3:18.

II. Keturah and her children by Abraham did not receive Abraham's inheritance, but he did give his concubines' sons gifts and sent

them away from Isaac. It would appear from the context and what follows in this chapter that Keturah's and Hagar's children were considered Abraham's offspring through concubines. Abraham lived to be one hundred seventy-five. At that age, after living a good, full life, he was gathered to his people. Ishmael joined Isaac his brother in burying their father Abraham where Sarah was buried, in the cave Machpelah near Hebron. Then listed are the twelve sons of Ishmael and the villages where each ruled. Ishmael died at age one hundred thirty-seven with all his sons by his side. One of his sons was Midian whose land was near Egypt and from where Moses took a wife. These Midianites were the people who sold Joseph to the Egyptians, Gen. 37:36; Exod. 3:1.

III. The remainder of the chapter is given to the family of Isaac, vss. 19-34. No longer can we say that Isaac was Abraham's only son because of his marriage to Keturah, but we can say that Isaac alone is the messianic propagator. At forty years of age Isaac took Rebekah as his wife. She was the daughter of Bethuel and Milcah, the Syrians of Padanaram, and the sister of Laban. As his parents experienced before him, Isaac and Rebekah were unable to bear a child. Isaac made his concern known to God. Then, after twenty years, Rebekah conceived as a result of Isaac's prayer. After her pregnancy was under way for a few months, Rebekah also felt a need to pray, for strange activity was happening in her womb, a struggle was taking place there. Thinking that her pregnancy could be in trouble, she asked the Lord for an explanation. God told her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two types of people will be born to you; one shall be stronger than the other, and the elder shall serve the younger," vss. 22-23. The Lord's answer not only told Rebekah that she was to have twins, but also that they would have different personalities and philosophies. At the time of the twins' births, Isaac and Rebekah were further surprised by the strong difference in their appearances. The first boy was hairy over his entire body with red hair. Apparently there had been a quirk in gene inheritance, but he was the first born, the eldest. Next came another boy clutching the heel of the first. The first born was named Esau "Hairy," and the second was called Jacob, "Supplanter." Isaac was sixty when the twins were born. As they grew Esau became a great, skillful hunter of wild game, but Jacob was more diverse in his aptitudes and abilities. In vs. 28 we see the utter truthfulness of the Bible account when it is stated that Isaac loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob. Such preference of parents for individual children today is considered unfair and inconsiderate. Esau was a sportsman and outdoors person. Jacob helped his mother around the home (tent). One reason Isaac loved Esau was that this son brought home fresh venison for eating, and Isaac liked venison. Jacob, on the other hand, helped his mother Rebekah cook and keep the home area neat and clean. One day Esau's love for hunting kept him out in the woods until he was exhausted, as much from hunger as physical exhaustion. When Esau arrived home Jacob was preparing a stew of red lentils which Esau especially liked. One of the ongoing disputes between the twins was that Esau was older and therefore would become the chief heir to Isaac's inheritance. Also, Isaac would be the priest or spiritual leader of his heirs until his death. Esau could not see himself in this capacity. He had no desire for spiritual concerns. Jacob told Esau that he would give him stew if the latter would renounce his birthright in Jacob's favor. Because Esau despised such responsibilities, he sold his elderly status to Jacob.

Mar. 8, 1998

"God's Covenant And Isaac"
Gen. 2 6

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. One of the biggest problems relating to mankind's physical sustenance in the Palestinian area of the Middle East is and was the potable water supply. At the outset of Chap. 26 the second severe famine in the Genesis account is recorded. Recall that when Abraham first came to the area to which the Lord called him, a famine came upon the land. When this dearth of the water supply happened to Abraham, he took Sarah and Lot and went westward to Egypt. Abraham returned to Bethel from Egypt rich in goods, Gen. 12:16,20; 13:2-3. Isaac's first reaction to this new famine was to approach the king of the Philistines at Gerar. We met the political leader Abimelech first in Chap. 20:2 when he took Sarah into his harem. The term "Abimelech" was the name given to the supreme political leader in that area at that time. Such titles as King, Caesar, Pharaoh, Pope, or President have been and are used to designate such political headships through the years. I do not believe that the Abimelech Abraham dealt with is the same person called "Abimelech" in Chap. 26. The latter leader was very likely the son of Abraham's Abimelech. The succession of this chief ruler is inherent in the meaning of the name itself, "father of the king." The custom of that period and place was that the king had the authority and privilege to select any beautiful woman in his realm for his harem. This royal privilege was extended toward Sarah in Chap. 20, and now, in Chap. 26, the same thing happens to Isaac's wife Rebecah and for the same reason, both were very beautiful women, Gen. 12:14, vs. 7. Sadly, King David later immorally and illegally exercised such a right for a married woman, Urriah the Hittite's wife, Bathsheba.

II. The Lord appeared to Isaac when this terrible second famine occurred in south Palestine to tell Abraham's son two things. Isaac should not, as his father had done, leave Gerar to go over to Egypt, but he was to remain (sojourn) in this land where God would bless him by his (God's) presence. The promise to Abraham would be extended as promised to Abraham's seed, Isaac, Gen. 17:19. This promise was an oath (covenant) of God which would remain in effect through Isaac and beyond. The Lord calls to Isaac's attention that Abraham had, "obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws," vs. 5. This reference to commandments, statutes, and laws can only mean essentially God's will, because the Law, per se, had not been given until Moses' time, some four-hundred and thirty years after God's Covenant with Abraham (Gal. 3:16-18). We should be careful to note that the second thing God promised in his appearance to Isaac was the affirmation of God's oath to Abraham. That promise included, "for unto thee and thy seed, I will give all these countries, and will perform the [entire] oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father, and I will make thy descendants multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give to thy seed all these lands; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," vss. 3-4. Note especially the repeat of the promise of the countries, land. This specific promise of God to Abraham's descendants has been especially treasured by the Jews from then through today. Practically every day's newspaper testifies

to that fact.

III. So Isaac stayed at Gerar. He made the same mistake his father had made in announcing to the area that Rebekah was his sister, not his wife. He did this deliberately, as Abraham had done, to save his own life. Isaac must have lived near Abimelech's place, because one day the king saw Isaac caressing Rebekah. The king called Isaac and asked him why he was lying about his "sister" Rebekah. Abimelech scolded Isaac for his lying and accused him of putting the king in jeopardy of becoming guilty of adultery. The king issued a decree that, "if anyone should touch this man or his wife, he shall surely be put to death," vs. 11. With this marital protection in place, Isaac turned his attention to his farming. The Lord blessed his crop, and the first year his planting produced a hundredfold. Isaac's prosperity gained for him a great reputation. He continued to prosper until the Philistines became jealous. One reason Isaac's crops and herds were so productive was that he had ample water. He had not only much grain, large flocks, great herds, but also a large number of servants. For some unreasonable purpose the people around Gerar under Abimelech's direction had filled with dirt the many wells which Abraham had dug so that no longer was water available. The envy of the local citizens caused Abimelech to tell Isaac, "Go from us, for thou art much mightier than we," vs. 16. Isaac left as requested and went farther down the valley Gerar. Isaac evidently knew where the wells which Abraham had dug were, and redug each one. When the wells were again producing fresh water, Abimelech's herdsmen began to compete with Isaac's herdsmen for the water as they had Abraham's. When the competition grew beyond tolerance for Isaac, he kept moving farther away and digging wells until the people of Gerar bothered him no more. Isaac's moving took him all the way down south to Beer-sheba. During his first night at Beer-sheba the Lord appeared to Isaac to assure him that he should not fear, because the Lord would continue to bless him, "for my servant Abraham's sake." Because the Lord appeared, Isaac built an altar and dug another well there. Soon after the Lord appeared to Isaac, Abimelech surprised him with a visit. Abimelech declared that he wanted to be at peace with Isaac, because "thou art now the blessed of the Lord." They feasted together and Abimelech left Isaac's tent the next morning reconciled with God's chosen Isaac. But Isaac and Rebekah were not so happy about Jacob's twin Esau, because Esau married the daughter of a Hittite.

IV. Some say that Isaac gave little substance to the genealogical chain which produced the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus God's Messiah. All Isaac did was dig water wells! To sustain human physical life water is surpassed only by air as an immediate necessity. God's Holy Spirit is symbolized in the Word as both water and air. That Spirit is the Agent for a human's spiritual rebirth through his/her faith in Jesus Christ and the maintenance of ones spiritual relationship and growth in that grace of God through forgiveness, John 3:6-8; 7:37-39; 10:27-30; 14:22-29; 15:26; 16:13-15; I Pet. 5:10; I John 1:8-2:2. Isaac's wells of water related to mankind's physical well-being, but God's provision of his Spirit through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is eternal life with God, I John 2:28-3:3.

Mar. 15, 1998

"Jacob's Blessing And Flight"
Gen. 27

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. The Bible is replete with episodes of human drama more telling than the most potent of those created today by creators of interpersonal relations in what we call "soap operas." Why, then, are not more people engaged in Bible study rather than "glued to the boob tube?" I believe that the difference is that some people are more interested in enjoying the lurid details of relations between people engaged in "affairs," "alternate life styles," "pro-choice," etc. In movies and television dramas these buffered-from-sin terms are used to shield viewers from what the Bible calls adultery, fornication-homosexuality, and pro-abortion-on-demand (taking human lives), sins against God's will. As Shakespeare put it, "Ay, there's the rub!" (Hamlet, Act III, Scene I) People tend to enjoy what God's Word identifies as sin, mankind's displeasing the Lord, without the climax of retribution by God for humanity's engaging in such activities. Dramatists enjoy David's sinful treatment of Uriah by committing adultery (an "affair") with his wife and then having Uriah killed to "cover up" his sin against God. As a consequence of David's sin, the child born to him and Beer-sheba in their adulterous relationship, died on his seventh day of life, II Sam. 12:14,18. The Bible states explicitly that, "the thing that David did was evil in the sight of the Lord," II Sam. 11:27. David was made painfully aware of his sin by Nathan the prophet, II Sam. 12:7-27. I wonder how pleasurable our present-day dramas would be to us if the displays of the pleasures of the flesh were noted as being the sins they really are, against mankind's God and Creator.

II. I have given the above introduction to the twenty-seventh chapter of Genesis, because one can misunderstand the actions of Rebekah and her favorite son, Jacob. Just because the Bible relates the evil activities of the characters therein, it should not be assumed that such activities are approved by God. Such an incident occurred when Isaac was too old to dig more wells for water, because his sight was gone. His sight was so poor that he could not distinguish objects in his very presence. His sense of smell and feeling, however, were still somewhat sensitive, and his hearing was such that he could, to some degree, distinguish the different timbres of different peoples' voices. In this condition Isaac realized that he would soon die so he called Esau, his elder son, to him and said to him, "Understand now, I am old; I do not know the day of my death, therefore, take your weapons, your quiver and bow, to the woods and bring me some venison. You know that I love the tasty food which is made from the fresh meat you bring from the woods. As I am eating this savory food you supply, I want to bless you with my spirit before I die," vss. 1-4. Apparently, Isaac had forgotten or else could not bring himself to give the blessing associated with passing the lineage of his posterity to the younger son instead of the older. Recall that at Gen. 25:23 the Lord had declared explicitly that the elder of the twins (Esau) should serve the younger (Jacob). God's declaration had been given even before their birth, while they were still in Rebekah's womb! This arrangement defied the general custom of Abraham's time

regarding lineage. We cannot know from the Bible account whether Isaac's consideration of changing God's prescription for blessing the younger was deliberate or simply a geriatric (and therefore excusable) oversight. In any case, Rebekah was the one to whom God had declared that the younger would take precedence in the family blessing. She overheard Isaac request of Esau, fresh meat and his promise to give Esau the blessing. The very best credit which can be given to Rebekah for her subsequent actions, and Jacob's compliance, is that she was following God's will rather than Isaac's error in forgetting God's command. Scripture reveals the correctness of Rebekah's and Jacob's actions. I realize that suggesting the possibility of this position refutes many Bible student's condemnation of the apparent deceit in the mother-son's treatment of Isaac's "error." In further Biblical evidence at Mal. 1:1-5, the Lord's message to Israel in Malachi's time was that God had, in fact, given Jacob's lineage, preference over Esau's. Again, in the New Covenant God's Word states at Rom. 9:6-16 that, while quoting the Malachi passage, God's mercy is noted as the deciding factor. Last week we stressed God's sovereignty and grace in Rom. 9:18-33 concerning God's choices for all mankind.

III. Rebekah told the plan of Isaac to Jacob, her favorite son. Jacob then followed his mother's orders. He went to the domestic flock and picked out a choice kid for a meal for Isaac. He told his mother that Esau was hairy all over, his clothing would smell of the woods, and his voice would expose the plot. Rebekah told Jacob that if her plan failed, she would accept the blame and be cursed herself rather than Jacob. The meal was readied, and Jacob told Isaac that he was Esau, Isaac's first born, and ready for his blessing. Isaac was surprised by how quickly the venison had been killed and prepared. Jacob gave God the credit. Isaac still had doubts and asked "Esau" to come closer so that he could feel the hair on his body. Rebekah had anticipated this possibility and had taken the goat skin and fashioned pieces of it on Jacob's arms and neck. Isaac accepted the evidence with reservation and asked "Esau" again, "Are you really my son Esau?" Jacob replied, "I am," vs. 24. Isaac asked that the meal be brought in, and Jacob brought the "venison" and wine which Rebekah had prepared. Isaac asked Jacob to come kiss his father so that he could bless him. In the nearness Isaac smelled the woody smell of Esau's garments which Rebekah had put on Jacob. Isaac pronounced upon Jacob his full blessing, making him to be the recipient of Isaac's authority over all his forthcoming posterity. Jacob had scarcely left Isaac before Esau arrived home, prepared his freshly slain venison, presented it to Isaac, and asked for his blessing. Isaac asked, "Who are you?!" When Esau told him the truth, Isaac shook emotionally in disbelief and told Esau that he had blessed another. Esau sobbed bitterly and begged his father to bless him still. Isaac realized that Jacob had by trickery secured the only blessing allowed, outlining the fact that Esau would, in fact, be subject to the will of his brother Jacob. Esau hated Jacob from that moment and swore that, after Isaac had died, he would kill Jacob. Rebekah, again, interfered and told Jacob to flee to her brother Laban's home at Haran. Esau would be angry only a few days, and while there, Jacob could make arrangements for his marriage to a family member rather than to a local Hittite girl. Rebekah never saw Jacob again, and her favorite son was entrusted to the wiles of Laban.

Mar. 22, 1998

"God's Covenant With Jacob"
Gen. 28

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. After the Lord initiated a covenant with Abraham At Gen. 12:1-4, the offspring of Abraham remained rather simple until his grandson Jacob came into the picture. In the messianic lineage after Abraham came his son Isaac, and now Jacob is about to have a much larger family than either Abraham or Isaac. Jacob ends up with twelve sons by two wives and two concubines. We should remember a rather complicating factor, however, because while Abraham's offspring are furthering the messianic line with only three sons, Hagar's son Ishmael had had a total of twelve sons. Ishmael's entire family and their offspring began, continued, and still are very hostile to the messianic line, the Jews of our day. The people called "Jews" were not so called until Jacob's son Judah became a prominent personage in Abraham's posterity and the history associated with him (Judah). Judah was the fourth son of Jacob by Leah (Gen. 29:35), Jacob's first wife and sister of Rachel, his second wife. The word "Jew" first appears in the Bible at Esth. 2:5 (about 465 BC) where the title is given to Mordecai, "the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite. Benjamin was, of course, the younger son of Jacob by Rachel. Later the names of the twelve tribes of Israel became primarily the names of the twelve sons of Jacob (Israel). Israel became a nation in its own right when it was freed by God from Egyptian slavery. When they left Egypt and returned to Palestine, the land God had promised them as descendants of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-4), they struggled for centuries. The Jewish peoples were split into two nations after Solomon, David's son, died. The two nations were called Israel to the north and Judah to the south. Israel was extinguished as a nation in about 721 BC and Judah in about 536 BC. Since Judah was the last nation of the Israelites (descendants of Jacob) to exist until AD 1948, the Israelites were called "Jews" based upon the Hebrew word "y'hudi," Aramaic "y'hudai," Greek "joudaios," Latin "judaius," and Assyrian "yaudaia." Today, in the nation of Israel, the term "Jew" is used to include the ethnicity of a person and not necessarily an exclusive reference to ones Jewish religion. Simply put, a Jew is every descendant of Jacob's son Judah (Israel). A believer and practicer of the Jewish religion is one who follows Judaism in one of the three current divisions, Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform, with Reform being the most liberal in practice.

II. As Jacob was preparing to leave his family, Isaac sat down with him to give some final instructions. With the force of commanding, Isaac charged Jacob not to marry one of the Canaanites. Rather than send a servant as his father Abraham had done, Isaac sent Jacob himself to Padanaram (Mesopotamia) where Jacob's grandfather Bethuel lived at Haran. Isaac was very specific about whom his son should marry. He told him to go to his uncle's house (Laban) and marry one of Laban's daughters. Recall that Laban was Rebekah's brother. Isaac prayed that God would bless Jacob to multiply his descendants as God had promised Abraham, including the same land of Palestine where those offspring would own and inhabit. It is interesting that as Isaac instructed Jacob and bid him farewell,

no mention is made of Rebekah. However, Esau was very aware of what was happening. He understood that Isaac did not want Jacob to marry women from among the local citizens. From what appears to be respect for Isaac's wishes, Esau went to his uncle Ishmael's place and married Mahaloth, Ishmael's daughter.

III. Jacob set out from Beer-sheba and went on his way toward Haran. He traveled all day and must have been fearful and anxious about the uncertainty of what was happening to him. As far as we know this experience was his first time away from his parents. He was not as competent in woods-dwelling as his brother Esau. Jacob apparently relied upon his mother Rebekah in his everyday activities. All through the day he thought of the perils awaiting him. Then the sun went down, and darkness surrounded the lonely Jacob. Adding to his physical discomfort was the bed he made for sleep. He piled up a group of stones and lay down to sleep. Under these conditions Jacob had a dream which impressed him traumatically. He dreamed that a large ladder was standing upon the earth whose top reached continually upward to heaven itself. As Jacob observed this awesome spectacle, God's angels (messengers) were climbing up and down the ladder. To make the scene more astounding, the Lord himself stood above the ladder. As Jacob was observing the angels going up and down the ladder, the Lord said to him, "I am the Lord God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac: The land whereon you rest, to you will I give it, and to your descendants who will be as the dust of the earth - - through your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, note carefully, I am with you, and will protect you everywhere you go. and will bring you again into this land: for I will not leave you until I have kept my entire promise to you," vss. 13-15. Jacob awoke from the dream and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not realize it." The Lord's appearance to him filled Jacob with utter awe. He had thought that he was alone, but how awesome to know that God was there with him. And not only that, but God had just promised to be with him wherever he went and protect him! This place which had been Luz, Jacob changed to Bethel, the House of God. Jacob swore an oath that as God's promise was fulfilled in taking care of his needs and bringing him again to his home, he would know that the Lord would indeed be his God. He found a large stone which he set for a pillar to mark where God had appeared to him. Further, Abraham's grandson Jacob, promised to give a tithe to the Lord God of heaven of all his substance. This idea of giving could have been passed along through Isaac, because the practice was begun by Abraham at Gen. 14:20. Not until thousands of years later was the meaning of Jacob's ladder dream fully known. When Jesus was choosing his first apostles, he called Andrew first, then Peter his brother, then Philip who asked Nathanael to come and see Jesus. Nathanael questioned whether anything good could come from Nazareth? Jesus saw Nathanael coming and said, "Behold, an Israelite, indeed, in whom there is no deceit [Jacob]. - - Truthfully, I say to you [Nathanael], 'Hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man,'" John 1:35-51; 14:6; Rev. 4:1. Jesus became God's communication between the Lord God and mankind, John 1:1-2,9-14.

Mar. 29, 1998

"Jacob Toils For Companionship"
Gen. 29

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. After Jacob's profound spiritual experience at Bethel and his vow to God, he continued his journey on eastward toward Haran. Nearing Haran he saw a well in a large field where three herds of sheep lay nearby awaiting water from the well. In the distance Jacob saw a group of men come to the well and take from the well's opening a big stone which protected the water. After watering the three groups of sheep, the men replaced the stone over the well. At about that time Jacob arrived at the well. He asked the men where they lived, and they said that their home was at Haran. Then he asked them whether they knew a fellow by the name of Laban who was the grandson of Nahor. Jacob was pleasantly surprised when they answered in the affirmative. He asked about the welfare of Laban, and the men assured him that he and his family were well. "In fact," they said, "Laban's daughter Rachel is her father's shepherdess and should be bringing animals to this well about this time. Then we should note the forwardness of Jacob (Remember that his name means "Supplanter" or "Deceiver.") when he told (ordered?) these strangers that, since it was early in the day and the cattle would not come to the well until later, they should finish watering the sheep and take them away from the well for grazing. They refused because they were required to wait for all the sheep to come and be watered. While this discussion took place, Rachel came with Laban's sheep for water. Then the brazen Jacob took over the men's task and removed the stone himself and watered her sheep. Even before Jacob spoke to Rachel, he went to her, kissed her, and wept. Then he told her that he was a relative of Laban, Rebekah's son. Rachel ran ahead to Laban's place and told her father what had happened. Laban ran back to meet Jacob, embraced him, kissed him, and listened to his story after they had entered the house.

II. The Scripture leaves no doubt that Jacob had met in Laban a kindred spirit of deceit artistry and a shyster of the first rank. Laban told Jacob that he was glad that they were of the same flesh and blood, therefore Jacob was welcome in his home. Jacob stayed for a month. At this time Laban began to be concerned that Jacob's room and board were such that his sister's son (nephew) should begin to work to earn his keep. One day Laban propositioned Jacob concerning the latter's beginning work and the reasonable wage for such labor. Laban had two daughters, one was Rachel already noted and an older daughter, Leah. Rachel apparently favored Jacob's mother Rebekah, Laban's sister, for Rachel was beautiful and well built, vs. 17. On the other hand, Leah was [delicate or soft, i.e., we would say that she was chunky], well, to Jacob, ugly. For obvious reasons Jacob loved Rachel and told Laban that he would work for his uncle for a total of seven years if she (Rachel) would become his wife. Laban, with tongue in cheek, said, "It is better that I give her to you, rather than to another man. It's a deal, live here with us [and go to work for me]," vs. 19. Jacob began work and worked longingly for Rachel for seven tedious years, although the time passed fast because of Jacob's love for her. Finally, the day came when sweet Rachel should become Jacob's very own wife.

He told Laban, his future father-in-law, "Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her," vs. 21. Laban planned for the occasion very meticulously with his best trickery. He announced to all the people around that he was having a feast (throwing a party) to celebrate the marriage of his kinsman Jacob to his daughter. I believe that, although the Bible does not give details of what happened at the feast, the circumstantial evidence is overwhelming that alcohol was involved. Why do I so presume? Jacob had known Rachel for a full seven years during which he had associated with, loved, and observed her at close range. After the feast Jacob went to his place for sleep, and the crafty Laban, undoubtedly with Leah's collaboration, presented her (Leah) to Jacob for the consummation of the marriage. Already we have noted the contrast of Leah's appearance and physical bearing with Rachel's. So I believe that sobriety was not practiced by Jacob that night, or he would have detected a problem. In fact, Jacob did not realize what a horrible mistake the night had produced until "in the morning." vs. 25. "Mr. Deceit" had been outdone by "Mr. Deceiver," Laban. Since all new brides were given a maid to help with their marital duties, Laban gave one Zilpah to Leah for a handmaid.

III. The next morning, married, Jacob awoke cold sober and disgustingly discovered his new wife to be, not Rachel, but Leah. He confronted Uncle Laban at once who had, no doubt, chuckled through his breakfast! Jacob said, "What have you done to me? Did I not work seven years for Rachel? Why have you deceived me?," vs. 25. Well, the prime deceiver Laban had thought about how he would respond to these questions. He said, in effect, "I am not sure what your customs are back in Beer-sheba, but here in Haran, the younger sister only marries after the older. If you are willing to work another seven years, Rachel will then be your wife also," vss. 26-27. Jacob had no other choice if he wanted an intimate relationship with his beloved Rachel. Without hesitation Jacob began another seven years of service in Laban's household. Although Leah was unloved by Jacob (She bare no child until Jacob had married Rachel.), "the Lord saw that Leah was unloved and opened her womb, but Rachel remained barren," vss. 31-32. Leah conceived and bare a son who delighted her, because she believed that her motherhood by Jacob would cause him to change their relations so that he would then love her. This son Reuben, meaning "See, A Son," was Jacob's first child. Then she became pregnant again and gave birth to another son, Simeon meaning, "Unloved, But Heard," vs. 33. Again Leah gave the Lord credit for her good fortune. She bore two more sons, Levi meaning, "Becoming Attached To," and Judah meaning, "Praise God," for she now had given Jacob four sons, the only children her husband had. After Judah, however, she became barren for some time. Through this period of Jacob's life, I believe he was introduced to the virtue of patience and that Leah learned that one does not have to be physically attractive for God to love and care for anyone. How pertinent for us in this period when the world scene is rapidly approaching the time when the Lord will purge the entire world, and Jesus will come back to rule the earth, Matt. 24:21-30; Lk 21:25-28. In the meantime, we believers are to be expectant and patient, Psa. 37:1-7; Dan.2:44; I Cor. 15:51-52,58; Rev. 11:15.

September 5, 1993

"Joseph"
Genesis 30 - 50

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Rachel was so grieved with her barren state that she wanted either children or death, Gen. 30:1. The first child born to Jacob was Reuben by Leah, Rachel's older sister and Jacob's first wife. Leah's having older children proved to be a disadvantage for Rachel, for Reuben stayed with Jacob in the fields as he worked harvesting wheat. While in the field Reuben gathered and brought to his mother, Leah, mandrakes (an herb which promoted human fertility). Rachel begged Leah for the mandrakes, but the latter scolded Jacob's favorite wife and accused her of taking her husband's affection. Rachel conceded that if Leah ate the mandrakes, Jacob would sleep with her that night. It happened so, and Leah conceived and bore Issachar. Leah gave birth to two other children before God answered Rachel's prayer and "opened her womb" with the birth of Joseph, Gen. 30:14-24. By this time Leah had borne Jacob six sons.

II. Just as soon as Rachel bore Joseph, Jacob asked Laban, his father-in-law, to permit him to leave with his wives, children, and possessions and return to his homeland, Canaan. Laban was reluctant, because he realized that Jacob had been prospered by God as a herdsman. Afterwards, Jacob through trickery claimed a disproportionate number of stock and in Laban's absence left without letting anyone in Laban's household know. After three days Laban learned of the departure, caught Jacob, and accused him of stealing household art works (idols). It was Rachel who had taken them, but Laban never discovered them. As Jacob and his entourage journeyed toward Canaan, his possessions increased by more trickery through his sons, relating to their sister, Dinah. Now Jacob was back in the place where God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and himself. He was also away from the influence of Laban and his family. Rachel and Isaac both died, Rachel while giving birth to Benjamin at Ephrath (Bethlehem), and Isaac at Hebron. Esau and Jacob came together apparently reconciled at their father's funeral, Gen. 35:29.

III. In the new home (Hebron) young Joseph became even more estranged from his older half brothers. They envied him because Jacob showed obvious preference for him including clothing him with better clothing. Joseph was seventeen and had a couple of dreams which he related to his half brothers and father. The dreams made both of Jacob's parents and his eleven brothers subject to the authority of Joseph. Joseph's siblings were especially irritated by his father's giving credibility to the dreams. Joseph's half brothers despised him all the more. Later, Jacob's sons were out herding the sheep at Shechem (34 miles north of Jerusalem) while Joseph stayed at home with Jacob. They had been away from home (Hebron, 20 miles south of Jerusalem) for some time, and Jacob sent Joseph to see how they fared. Joseph had some trouble locating his brothers, because they had moved to Dothan about five miles from Shechem. He was told where the brothers were, found them, and as he approached, the group plotted to kill him. However, Reuben, the oldest, persuaded the others to throw Joseph into an inescapable pit rather than kill him. Reuben secretly intended to rescue Joseph and return him to

his father. They threw him into a dry pit after stripping his special, fancy coat from him. Then they ate while Reuben was away evidently on an errand, took Joseph from the pit, and sold him for twenty coins to a freight caravan of Ishmaelites who were headed for Egypt. When Reuben returned, he was very angry when he thought of how sad Jacob would be. They devised a way to fool Jacob by taking the coat covered with goat blood back home with them. Back home at Hebron, they gave the bloody coat to Jacob telling him that he could be interested since the coat looked somewhat like their brother's. Jacob, of course, knew that the coat was Joseph's and surmised a wild animal had killed him. Jacob grieved sorely about the loss of his favorite son. The Ishmaelites sold Joseph to Potiphar, an officer and captain of the Pharaoh's body guard staff.

IV. Joseph was especially blessed by the Lord and prospered in Potiphar's household where he eventually was given the authority over all of his master's possessions and activities. Even at his young age Joseph's reputation and wise consultations were excellent. His youth and good looks, however, became a liability when Potiphar's wife attempted to seduce him. Joseph bluntly told her that such activity would be contrary to his God's will. The woman demonstrated a daily persistence, and one day she clutched at him pulling his outer garment from him. She kept the coat and used it as proof that Potiphar's "trusted Hebrew overseer" was taking advantage of him in his absence. Joseph was thrown into prison where he remained for about two years. Even there he demonstrated leadership and gained respect. In prison two servants of Pharaoh (a butler and a baker) each dreamed and were curious about what their dreams meant. The butler was to be reinstated after three days and the baker was to be executed. Joseph asked the butler to speak well of him to the Pharaoh. Later, the butler forgot about Joseph until Pharaoh dreamed, and no one could interpret it. At that point, the butler remembered Joseph in prison and told Pharaoh about him. The young Hebrew was called, Pharaoh outlined his dream, and Joseph told him that God wanted him to know what was forthcoming. There was to be a seven-year period when the land would produce abundant food followed by a severe seven-year drought. Pharaoh believed Joseph and placed him in charge of reconciling the fourteen year unevenness. Events proved Joseph correct, and the drought covered all Egypt and up through Canaan where Jacob and his clan lived. Jacob was forced to send ten of his sons to Egypt to beg for grain sales or die of starvation. He kept only Benjamin at home. In Egypt the ten brothers came to Joseph where the latter recognized them, but they did not know Joseph. By now Joseph was second in authority only to the Pharaoh himself. The drought continued and the brothers had to make another procurement visit. At Joseph's insistence, they brought Benjamin this time, and Joseph cleared the area of all others but his family. He then disclosed his identity and wept before them, but they were frightened as they remembered what they had done to Joseph. The word spread and Pharaoh insisted that Joseph send for his entire family and meet their needs. Jacob rejoiced to learn of the safety of Joseph and came to Egypt with all his possessions and household, seventy persons (males) in all, Gen. 46:8-27. Jacob died in Egypt where Joseph had his servants embalm him and return him to Canaan for burial. His posterity remained in Egypt for 430 years and grew to be a vast number [I believe to about two million - WA] by the time of Moses. Joseph died at the age of 110, Gen. 50:22. See Acts 7:6-20 for a synopsis.

Pa. 8:1-9 Man's image of God in dominion over other forms of God's creation.

September 5, 1993

"Joseph"
Genesis 30 - 50

Pr 3:38 Beth, not Cain
Couples Class

Wendell Alford,
Teacher

WA

I. Rachel was so grieved with her barren state that she wanted either children or death, Gen. 30:1. The first child born to Jacob was Reuben by Leah, Rachel's older sister and Jacob's first wife. Leah's having older children proved to be a disadvantage for Rachel, for Reuben stayed with Jacob in the fields as he worked harvesting wheat. While in the field Reuben gathered and brought to his mother, Leah, mandrakes (an herb which promoted human fertility). Rachel begged Leah for the mandrakes, but the latter scolded Jacob's favorite wife and accused her of taking her husband's affection. Rachel conceded that if Leah ate the mandrakes, Jacob would sleep with her that night. It happened so, and Leah conceived and bore Issachar. Leah gave birth to two other children before God answered Rachel's prayer and "opened her womb" with the birth of Joseph, Gen. 30:14-24. By this time Leah had borne Jacob six sons.

Wife
Reuben
Gen 30:18

II. Just as soon as Rachael bore Joseph, Jacob asked Laban, his father-in-law, to permit him to leave with his wives, children, and possessions and return to his homeland, Canaan. Laban was reluctant, because he realized that Jacob had been prospered by God as a herdsman. Afterwards, Jacob through trickery claimed a disproportionate number of stock and in Laban's absence left without letting anyone in Laban's household know. After three days Laban learned of the departure, caught Jacob, and accused him of stealing household art works (idols). It was Rachel who had taken them, but Laban never discovered them. As Jacob and his entourage journeyed toward Canaan, his possessions increased by more trickery through his sons, relating to their sister, Dinah. Now Jacob was back in the place where God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and himself. He was also away from the influence of Laban and his family. Rachel and Isaac both died, Rachel while giving birth to Benjamin at Ephrath (Bethlehem), and Isaac at Hebron. Esau and Jacob came together apparently reconciled at their father's funeral, Gen. 35:29.

7 days

Gen. 34
Labanite
circumcision
&
excuse
Bible
Leah
49:4
35:22
Jacob
stock
Gen 30:33
Wp. 42

Gen. 35:2
4

They had reconciled in Gen. 33

Design
for
pictures
class
He was
a Bible
Gen 37:2

III. In the new home (Hebron) young Joseph became even more estranged from his older half brothers. They envied him because Jacob showed obvious preference for him including clothing him with better clothing. Joseph was seventeen and had a couple of dreams which he related to his half brothers and father. The dreams made both of Jacob's parents and his eleven brothers subject to the authority of Joseph. Joseph's siblings were especially irritated by his father's giving credibility to the dreams. Joseph's half brothers despised him all the more. Later, Jacob's sons were out herding the sheep at Shechem (34 miles north of Jerusalem) while Joseph stayed at home with Jacob. They had been away from home (Hebron, 20 miles south of Jerusalem) for some time, and Jacob sent Joseph to see how they fared. Joseph had some trouble locating his brothers, because they had moved to Dothan about five miles from Shechem. He was told where the brothers were, found them, and as he approached, the group plotted to kill him. However, Reuben, the oldest, persuaded the others to throw Joseph into an inescapable pit rather than kill him. Reuben secretly intended to rescue Joseph and return him to

Shechem
34 miles
north of
Jerusalem

called him "the dreamer"

silver shekels
\$178.00 (silver \$16/oz.)

116

dry well

his father. They threw him into a dry pit after stripping his special, fancy coat from him. Then they ate while Reuben was away evidently on an errand, took Joseph from the pit, and sold him for twenty coins to a freight caravan of Ishmaelites who were headed for Egypt. When Reuben returned, he was very angry when he thought of how sad Jacob would be. They devised a way to fool Jacob by taking the coat covered with goat blood back home with them. Back home at Hebron, they gave the bloody coat to Jacob telling him that he could be interested since the coat looked somewhat like their brother's. Jacob, of course, knew that the coat was Joseph's and surmised a wild animal had killed him. Jacob grieved sorely about the loss of his favorite son. The Ishmaelites sold Joseph to Potiphar, an officer and captain of the Pharaoh's body guard staff.

IV. Joseph was especially blessed by the Lord and prospered in Potiphar's household where he eventually was given the authority over all of his master's possessions and activities. Even at his young age Joseph's reputation and wise consultations were excellent. His youth and good looks, however, became a liability when Potiphar's wife attempted to seduce him. Joseph bluntly told her that such activity would be contrary to his God's will. The woman demonstrated a daily persistence, and one day she clutched at him pulling his outer garment from him. She kept the coat and used it as proof that Potiphar's "trusted Hebrew overseer" was taking advantage of him in his absence. Joseph was thrown into prison where he remained for about two years. Even there he demonstrated leadership and gained respect. In prison two servants of Pharaoh (a butler and a baker) each dreamed and were curious about what their dreams meant. The butler was to be reinstated after three days and the baker was to be executed. Joseph asked the butler to speak well of him to the Pharaoh. Later, the butler forgot about Joseph until Pharaoh dreamed, and no one could interpret it. At that point, the butler remembered Joseph in prison and told Pharaoh about him. The young Hebrew was called, Pharaoh outlined his dream, and Joseph told him that God wanted him to know what was forthcoming. There was to be a seven-year period when the land would produce abundant food followed by a severe seven-year drought. Pharaoh believed Joseph and placed him in charge of reconciling the fourteen year unevenness.

Captain
wine
sewer
Taster

2 Sem.
41:39-44
46

Events proved Joseph correct, and the drought covered all Egypt and up through Canaan where Jacob and his clan lived. Jacob was forced to send ten of his sons to Egypt to beg for grain sales or die of starvation. He kept only Benjamin at home. In Egypt the ten brothers came to Joseph where the latter recognized them, but they did not know Joseph. By now Joseph was second in authority only to the Pharaoh himself. The drought continued and the brothers had to make another procurement visit. At Joseph's insistence, they brought Benjamin this time, and Joseph cleared the area of all others but his family. He then disclosed his identity and wept before them, but they were frightened as they remembered what they had done to Joseph. The word spread and Pharaoh insisted that Joseph send for his entire family and meet their needs. Jacob rejoiced to learn of the safety of Joseph and came to Egypt with all his possessions and household, seventy persons (males) in all, Gen. 46:8-27. Jacob died in Egypt where Joseph had his servants embalm him and return him to Canaan for burial. His posterity remained in Egypt for 430 years and grew to be a vast number [I believe to about two million - WA] by the time of Moses. Joseph died at the age of 110, Gen. 50:22. See Acts 7:6-20 for a synopsis.

2 Sem.
45:3-9
same prod
credit

also
Egypt
Simeon
an
Gen 42:
27

after blessing the 12 sons
Gen. 49:3-28
Joseph vs. 8-12
Joseph vs. 22-26

if time, read

Feb. 11, '22

Apr. 5, 1998

"Jacob's Family Grows"
Gen. 30

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

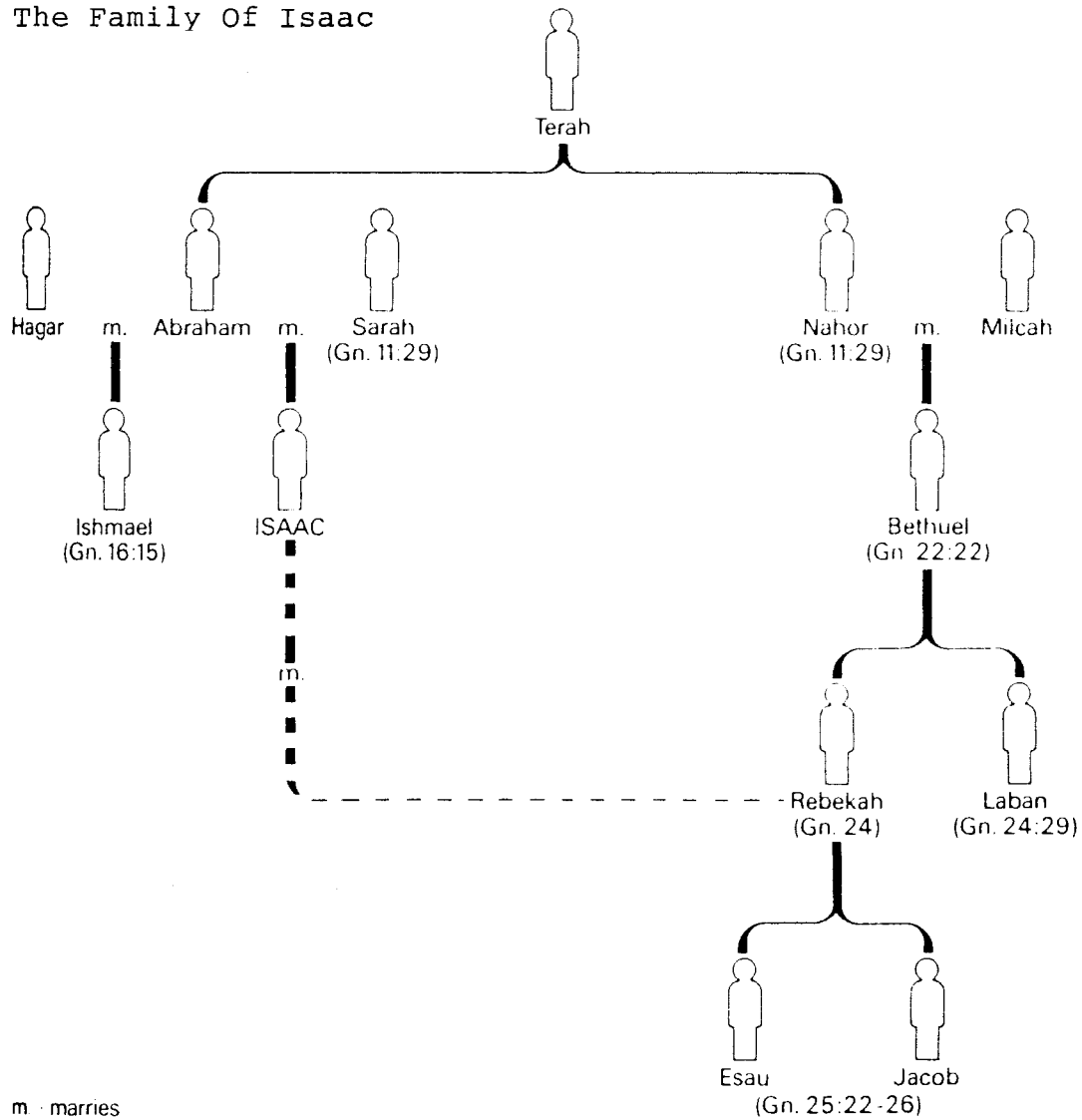
I. We learned in Chap. 29 that, although Jacob was married to both Rachel and Leah, only Leah bore children by Jacob. Rachel was not a gynecologist, but she believed that the reason for her barrenness was Jacob. She said to her husband, "Give me children, or else I will die," vs. 1. This dire sadness of Rachel due to her inability to bear Jacob children reminds me of Jesus' statement regarding women's childbearing at Lk. 11:27-28; 21:23; 23:26-31 and the Word further at Rev. 6:16-17; 9:6 concerning end time sorrows. Leah had four boys by this time, and Rachel felt that her role as a wife was unfulfilled and worthless without any children. She envied her sister Leah. After Rachel confronted Jacob with her misery, she suggested that Jacob do the same thing that Sarah had requested of Abraham, that he have sexual relations with her (Rachel's) maid Bilhah. It appears strange to us today that Rachel was angry with Jacob for his not having given her children. Especially is her anger at Jacob odd since she was asking Bilhah to do what she herself could not perform with the same man. In other words, if Jacob were the missing link in Rachel's not having children, how could Leah be the mother of four children by Jacob? In response to Rachel's blaming him for her barrenness, he told her that this control was God's prerogative to "withhold from her the fruit of the womb," vs. 2. So, Rachel gave to Jacob her maid Bilhah to relate to him as his wife (concubine). Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son, and Rachel named him Dan which means "Judge." She so named him because she said that God had judged her. Immediately following the birth of Dan, Bilhah conceived again and gave birth to a son whom Rachel named Naphtali which means "wrestling," because she (Rachel) was continually wrestling with Leah because of her own childlessness. At this time Leah "had left bearing" and apparently was fearful of Rachel's surpassing her four sons in number. She, therefore, took Zilpah her maid and "gave her to Jacob as a wife" as Rachel had given him Bilhah. Timely Zilpah bore a son for Jacob, and Leah named him Gad which means "Troop" or "Fortune." The significance of that name is not told us. Zilpah then had another son Asher meaning "Blessed" or "Happy," because, Leah said, "The other women would now realize that she was happy and blessed, vs. 13.

II. Before examining vs. 14-18 we should consider what mandrakes were and are. They are so called in the KJV, but in the RV margin they are called "love apples." They were ready for harvest in late spring, May. These plants still grow in southern Palestine where soil moisture is relatively low. They can grow in such arid areas, because they send their roots very deep into the earth. Mandrakes are in the potato family, have a heavy narcotic odor, and a sweetish taste. Especially interesting in this Bible passage is the fact that eating mandrakes was considered by the ancients as an aphrodisiac or fertility food, thus the name "love apples." From this definition it is clear why Rachel would desire mandrakes to eat, for she was still barren. One day at the time when winter wheat was being harvested, Reuben the oldest son of Jacob and Leah, was in the field (probably with Jacob his father). There Reuben

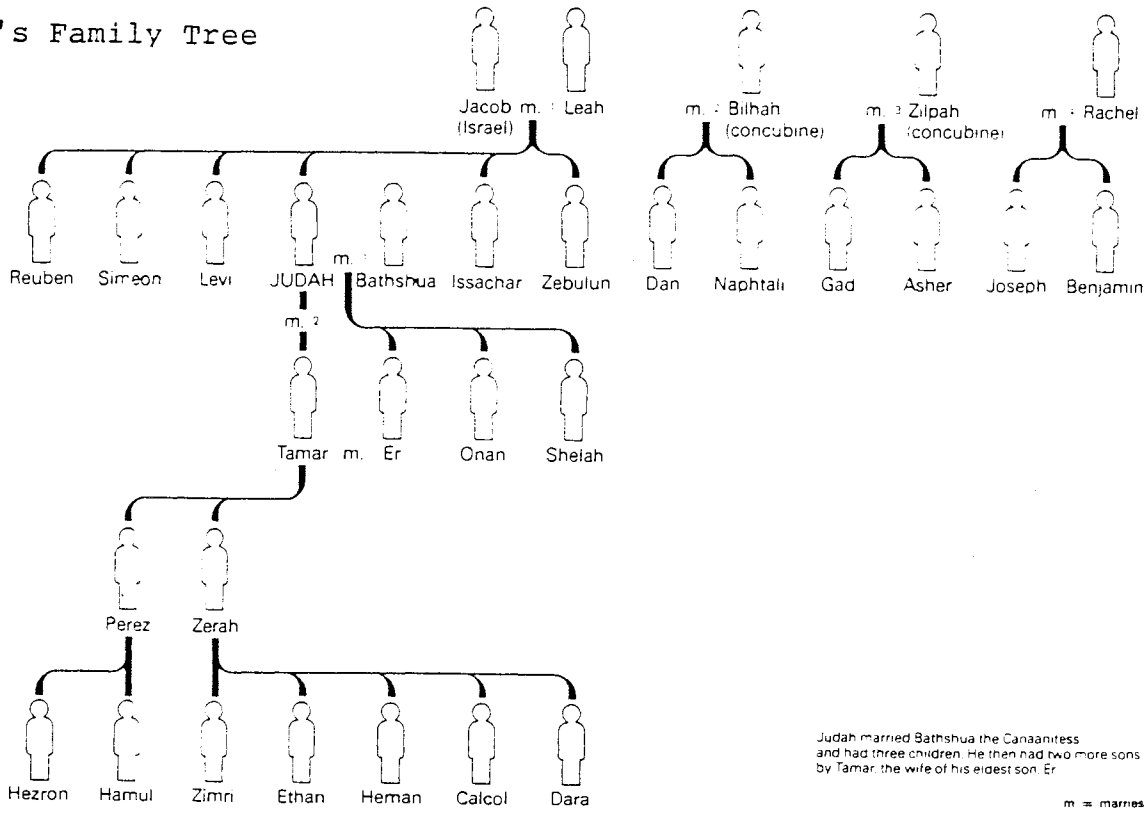
found mandrakes growing and gathered some for his mother Leah. Leah, recall, had not conceived for some time so she was glad to get this relatively rare food (medicine), mandrakes. Knowing human nature, we can assume, I believe, that Leah made known to Rachel (still childless, except through Bilhah her maid) that she had access to some "love apples." Leah enjoyed Rachel's response to the news. Rachel said, "Give me, I pray (beg) you, some of your son's mandrakes," vs. 14. Leah told Rachel, in effect, "Remember, Jacob was my husband first, and you took him (his love and respect) away from me. And now, in the same way, you want to take my son's mandrakes?" Rachel said, "Because of your son's mandrakes, Jacob will no doubt engage you in sexual activity this very night," vs. 15. Rachel's prediction was exactly correct. When Leah saw Jacob coming in from the field that evening, she ran out to meet him and said, "You must sleep with me tonight, for I am due that since your son [Reuben] brought me mandrakes today." Jacob complied with Leah's wishes. What part the mandrakes played in the union we cannot know for sure, but we do know that, "God hearkened unto Leah and she conceived and had a fifth son by Jacob. This son Leah named Issachar meaning "Hire," because, she said, "God has paid me for sharing my husband with my maid," vs. 18. Then she was pregnant again and had Zebulun meaning "Gifts." She said that God had given me good gifts for my husband, and Jacob will honor me because of my part in giving him six sons. Her last child by Jacob was a girl named Dinah meaning "Judgment." No reason is given why she was so named.

III. Finally, God remembered Rachel, "opened her womb," and she had a son whom she named Joseph which means, "He Will Add." Rachel strongly believed that God would give her another son by Jacob. He did, as she was dying, and he was Benjamin, Jacob's last son and son number twelve, Gen. 35:18. When Joseph was born, Jacob told Laban that he wanted to take his family and possessions and return to his native land in Palestine, vs. 25. Laban did not want Jacob to leave him, for he admitted that his presence with him had brought prosperity as only God could give. In fact, Jacob told Laban that when he came to Haran for a wife, Laban had little. Now that Jacob had made Laban prosperous, Jacob was concerned about an estate for his own family in the future. Laban asked, "What shall I give you?" Jacob had calculated a plan and introduced it to Laban by saying, "You will need to pay me nothing." Esau's brother outlined a plan which would divide the herds over a period of time by a biological process. Laban agreed to Jacob's proposition, and went out himself that day and divided the animals according to Jacob's plan. Jacob's sons took Jacob's allotment of the herds some three day's journey from Laban's sheep and goats. By means of Jacob's knowledge of animal husbandry and his continuing to care personally for Laban's herds while his own sons cared for his, he was able to manipulate Laban's flocks with his own. As a result, Laban's herds diminished while Jacob's increased, vss. 40-43. I confess that I do not understand all the intricacies or validities of Jacob's deceit. However, the Bible makes the end results very clear that Jacob prospered exceedingly at the expense of Laban. During the period of Jacob's deception, Laban was apparently unaware of Jacob's skullduggery. Next week, Lord willing, we shall learn, "The rest of the story!"

The Family Of Isaac



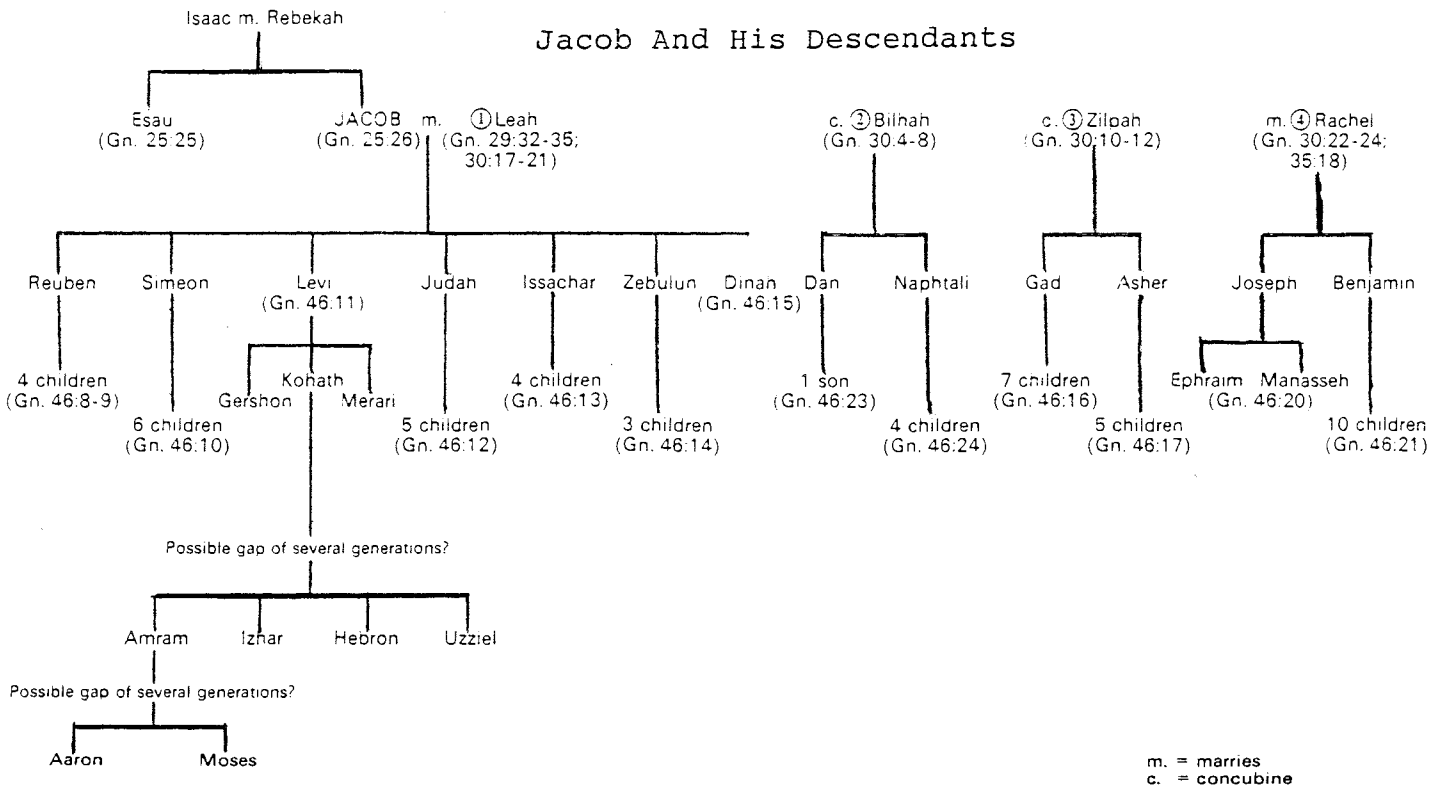
Judah's Family Tree



Judah married Bathshua the Canaanites and had three children. He then had two more sons by Tamar, the wife of his eldest son, Er.

m = marries

Jacob And His Descendants



m. = marries
c. = concubine

Apr. 19, 1998

"Jacob Flees Again"
Gen. 31

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. We recall that when Jacob left Beer-sheba, he was under the threat of his brother Esau because of the birthright problem. Now here in Chap. 31 we learn that Jacob is unhappy with his father-in-law Laban who objected to the unfair management of their animals. Jacob learned of Laban's discontent by the look on Laban's face. At this point in Jacob's service for his uncle, the Lord told Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers (Abraham and Isaac), and I will be with you," vs. 3. Jacob chose a convenient time and asked his two wives, Rachel and Leah, to convene with him in privacy out in the open country with his flock. He knew that for him to leave Laban's household as God had told him, he would need his wives' cooperation. After all, they were Laban's daughters who had never ventured from their childhood home. Jacob told his wives that he had noted a change in Laban's disposition toward him for the worse lately. He told them that he had served their father diligently, because the God of his fathers had been with Jacob. Further, the way he had managed the herds had been in the way in which Laban had agreed. Through this process God had taken the flocks from Laban and had given them to Jacob. God had appeared to Jacob by identifying himself as the same God who had appeared to him back at Bethel. Again, God gave him specific instructions that it was now time for Jacob to return to the land of his birth. Both Rachel and Leah agreed that of their father's estate they would receive nothing, because Laban had, in effect, sold them to Jacob for his hire to Laban and thereby "devoured also our money," vs. 15. His wives told Jacob to follow his God's bidding and that they would go with their husband. One could logically ask why would the God of the universe continue to love, prosper, and care for Jacob who was obviously not Godlike in his attitudes and actions? God had a plan to salvage mankind through the lineage whom he had preordained, I believe. A loving God has to use people who are not worthy of his love, in spite of their weaknesses. God's Word at Eph. 2:4-10 declares that everyone whom God makes right with himself is a person who, through faith in God's grace, is God's workmanship. Certainly Jacob was unworthy of God's love and direction, but every time he turned to God, the Lord accepted him. Jacob was fulfilling God's promise to Abraham and Isaac. God's Word at Eph. 3:14-21 and Phili. 4:4-7 assures us believers in Jesus as God's Christ (Savior) that our relationship with God as his spiritual offspring is beyond human understanding. We are to rejoice in the Lord continually.

II. God's promise to be especially with those in the messianic lineage began at Gen. 3:15 and continued specifically from after the flood as noted at Gen. 6:18 (Isa. 54:7-10). That lineage passed from Noah through his son Shem, through Arphaxad, Lk 3:36. From Noah's son Shem comes the present group of peoples we call Semites, but not all Semites are what we call Jews today, i.e., all Jews are Semites, but not all Semites are Jews. For example, Ishmael's offspring as sons of Abraham are all Semites, but not Jews. They are today's Arabs. Oddly enough the people designated as Hebrews

today are offspring of Shem, but in this order: Noah, Shem, Arpachshad (Arphaxad), Cainan, Shelah, and Eber, Gen. 10:21-24; Lk 3:35-36. The name "Hebrews" came from the fifth in line after Noah, Eber, (Heb., 'ibri). The first person in the Bible called a Hebrew is Abram at Gen. 14:13 where Abram led a confederacy of five kings against the four kings from the north country in order to rescue his nephew Lot. Jonah said of himself, "I am an Hebrew, and I fear Yahweh, the God of heaven," Jon. 1:9. I believe that today the term "Hebrews" is synonymous with the term "Israelites," because both are used to designate the same peoples at Ex. 3:18 and at Ex. 5:1-3 where God speaks to Moses, and Moses repeats God's words to the Pharaoh of Egypt. Also at Acts 6:1; II Cor. 11:22, and at Phil. 3:5 the Hebrews and the Israelites are considered to be the same peoples in the New Covenant of God with all humanity.

III. After Jacob conferred with his two wives, Rachel and Leah, he readied his entire family, his herds, and household goods for travel upon a caravan of camels. Laban was away shearing his sheep, and Rachel was able to enter his quarters and steal Laban's idols to carry with her on the journey. We should emphasize the fact that Rachel had a religious loyalty to idolatry, not to Jacob's God, and was very probably why God wanted Jacob to leave Laban, his people, and the other Syrians. Note in vss. 20,24 the emphasis that Laban was considered a Syrian. I believe that God did not want Jacob's children and family to be reared under this idolatrous influence. With Laban away and the caravan ready, early one morning Jacob fled from Pandanaram with all that he owned, heading back to his father's home at Beer-sheba. After three days a messenger reached Laban at his shearing place and notified him of Jacob's action. By this time Jacob had forded the river and was heading for the mountains of Gilead. It took Laban seven days to overtake Jacob, but on the last night of the pursuit God appeared to Laban in a dream and told him, "Take care that you take no strong position toward Jacob, either good or bad," vs. 24. Laban confronted Jacob and asked him why he had left in a manner of a military coup de'tat. If I had known that you wanted to return to Beer-sheba, I would have given you a going away party and sent you away in happiness! I have the power to hurt you, but your God told me in a dream last night not to be harsh. I have but one problem, why did you steal my gods (idols)? Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them, and said, "You are free to kill whoever took them," vs. 32. Laban went through the tents of Jacob, Leah, and the two maidservants and found nothing. Lastly, he went to Rachel's tent where his daughter was sitting on a piece of furniture (a trunk?) in which she had hidden the idolatrous images. She told her father that she did not feel like arising, for she was experiencing her period. Laban did not locate the gods so Jacob was angry and rebuked Laban for his "false" accusation. Jacob in his anger accused Laban of working him for twenty years during which he had to pay Laban for animals even accidentally killed or lost, had worked without proper rest, and had his pay changed (reduced?) ten times. God had been with Jacob all these years, and Laban knew that to be true. So there at Mt. Gilead they both swore that neither would harm the other thereafter. Laban returned home, and Jacob continued westward toward Beer-sheba.

Apr. 26, 1998

"Jacob Becomes Israel"
Gen. 3 2

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. After Jacob and his father-in-law Laban became reconciled at Gilead by a "Mizpah" experience, they went their separate ways, Jacob westward toward Beer-sheba and Laban eastward back to Haran. A "Mizpah" can best be described by the sentiment felt when a group sings "Blessed Be The Tie That Binds" when separating from one another. It means literally "Watch", i.e., watch over us, each one, as we are absent from one another, Gen. 31:49. In this mood of repentance, as he traveled along, messengers (angels) of God appeared to Jacob. He named the place "Mahanaim" or "Double Camp," because his entourage and God's angels were both camped there, vss.1-2. As Jacob reflected upon what he feared would probably happen to him when he arrived back at the old home place, he had a feeling of dread, because of the animosity of his brother Esau. Remember that twenty years before, at Jacob's departure, Esau had wanted him dead for having "stolen" the birthright from Isaac. The place where Esau now lived had become Edom after Esau's hair color. He was born with red hair all over his body, Gen. 25:25. Edom in Hebrew means "Red," and is also associated by some with the red stew which Jacob served Esau when the latter "conceded" his birthright to the former. The area which his posterity occupied was now known as Edom and they, Edomites. In anticipation of harm from Esau, Jacob sent messengers ahead to him and told them to say, "Your servant Jacob wants you to know, my lord, that he has been with Laban these long years, but now he has many oxen, donkeys, menservants, and maidservants. We have been sent to tell you that he is not in need of anything, but he is returning home and wants to be accepted amicably by you," vss. 4-5. When Jacob's envoys returned to him, they told Jacob that his brother Esau had sent word to the effect that he would be coming to meet him with four hundred men (troops?), vs. 6. Jacob presumed that his deep feeling of fear of meeting Esau was justified. He immediately devised a plan which he believed would save him from his hateful brother. He divided his entire company into two components including all personnel, household goods, and livestock. His plan was to send one company ahead of the other so that when Esau attacked the first group, the second would have time to escape.

II. After devising his plan of safety, Jacob did what any God-fearing person should do fearing for his/her life; he prayed! His prayer was very directly related to his problem as he saw it. He prayed (my paraphrase-WA), "O God of my father Abraham, and of my father Isaac, the Lord who asked me to return to my homeland and kindred and who promised to continue to be with me. I am not worthy of the least of your mercies, because, even though your promise was and is that you would care for me, my action has been as one of unbelief. I am able to devise a plan which does not take genuine trust of you as fact. I am returning across the Jordan with plenty when I had nothing but my staff [twenty years ago]. But deliver me, I beg you, from the hateful actions of my brother Esau, for I am afraid of him for my own safety as well as my twelve children and their mothers. And remember, Lord, you promised to do me good even to making my descendants as the sands of the sea which cannot be

numbered for multitudes," vs. 9-12. After his prayer Jacob spent the night, and, early the next morning, he assembled some things as a gift (bribe?) for Esau. The gift included two hundred female goats, twenty male goats, two hundred ewes, twenty rams, thirty female camels each suckling a colt, forty cows, ten bulls, twenty female donkeys, and ten male donkeys. He instructed three groups of servants to take three groups spaced in tandem of the animals for Esau on ahead. When the first group met Esau, they were to tell him that Jacob was behind them and that these livestock were a gift from his brother who believes that you will accept them. Jacob hopes that you will be kind to him as he returns. That night Jacob took all of his company westward across the River Jordan at the Jabbok Ford, but he himself recrossed the river to meditate upon what his meeting with Esau would be like.

III. Jacob was all alone and could not sleep for the stress brought on by the anxiety. While in this condition, he was confronted with and wrestled by a Person who has through the centuries been mysterious to Bible students. No one denies that Jacob's prayer in this chapter and this wrestling experience constitute the spiritual pinnacle and major change in Jacob's life. He had had a profound promise from God that the Lord would care for him and be with him wherever he went, but this application of that promise was an ultimate test of his spiritual faith in the Lord. His repentance in vs. 10, "I am not worthy - - " is the prayer which all of us believers confess when we accept God's sacrifice of Jesus for our sins against our heavenly Father. Jacob was in this prayer confessing what God's Word declares at Rom. 3:23 and Rom. 5:12. I cite this connection of God's Word from Paul because of my belief of who the mysterious Person was with whom Jacob wrestled. The Person took the initiative in the struggle, and Jacob's strength prevailed against the Man until he could only hold on to him. This "holding on" continued until Jacob's hip joint at his thigh was disjointed by the Man's touch. The Man said, "Let me go, for it is dawn," but Jacob replied, "Not unless you bless me." He asked Jacob, "What is your name?" Jacob answered, "Jacob." The Man replied, "Thy name shall no more be called Jacob [Usurper, Selfish], but Israel [Prince with God], for as a prince you have power with God and with men, and [since you] have prevailed [held on]," vs. 28. When Jacob asked the Man's name, he would not say, but he did bless the new Israel. The Man left, and Jacob called the place Paniel (Face of God), because Jacob knew that he had been in God's immediate presence. He also knew that God had preserved his life. After that experience, Jacob limped because of his displaced hip joint. The Israelites thereafter refrained from eating an animal's tissue from that place. I believe that the Person who wrestled with Jacob was none other than Jehovah God himself, the preincarnate Christ. Hosea speaks of the incident at Hos. 12:2-6. Paul at Rom. 7:1-8:1,11,14-17,31-39 indicates that his life was a continual struggle which only the Lord Jesus Christ could bless and keep whole, but with Jesus wrestling for us believers nothing can separate us from him. Remember also that Jesus told Nathanael that he, Jesus the Son of Man, was "Jacob's Ladder" upon whom the messengers of God would thereafter ascend and descend through the Holy Spirit from God to earth, John 1:51; 14:26.

May 3, 1998

"Israel Meets Esau"
Gen. 33

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Jacob, whom the Lord God had renamed Israel, appears even more humble as he nears his brother's land, Edom. In the twenty years of Jacob's absence from his old home place, Esau had prospered and his posterity had grown along with his influence over the people of the area. Esau's standing appears so because of his ability to muster four hundred men as a force to meet his brother Jacob. We should remember that, just as Jacob was concerned about the current attitude of Esau toward him, Esau also had to be prepared to meet a twin brother who had "tricked" him consistently during their youth. So Esau came prepared to meet Jacob for any emergency, eventuality. As the meeting ensued, we learn that Jacob's experience with God that fateful night back on the east side of the River Jordan made him contrite and without the deceit of his early years. God in the person of, I believe, the preincarnate Christ, took the initiative in wrestling with Jacob and making him Israel, a prince of power with God and with men, Gen. 32:28. As Jacob continued on westward, he kept searching the western horizon for signs of Esau and his "troops," four hundred men. A cloud of dust indicated that they were approaching! Jacob's immediate action was to separate his children into four groups with their mothers, Leah, Rachel, Zilpah, and Bilhah. Striking is the way in which Jacob arranged the family. He placed Zilpah with her children Gad and Asher, who would be the first to meet Esau, at the head of the column. Second in the grouping, he placed Bilhah with her children Dan and Naphtali. Following Bilhah came Leah and her children Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Dinah, the daughter. Lastly came Rachel and Joseph with Jacob following them all. When Jacob had the lineup in an order with his most loved at the rear, Esau approached the family and bowed respectfully seven times although he did not know who they were. When he neared his brother Jacob, he ran toward him, hugged him, dropped his face upon his neck, kissed him, and cried! Releasing Jacob, Esau asked him, "Who are all these people here ahead of you?" Jacob replied, "They are my family whom the Lord has graciously given to your servant." vs. 5. Each of the mothers and their children gathered around Esau and bowed themselves in respect. Esau then asked about all the livestock which had preceded the family. Jacob told him that those are my gift to you to let you know my feeling of warmth toward you, hoping that they would make you feel likewise toward me. Esau informed Jacob that he was well off in goods and did not, in fact, need Jacob's help. However, Jacob begged him to take the herds and thereby signify his friendly acceptance of Jacob his brother. With this urging Esau received the gift from Jacob.

II. Esau further expressed his love of Jacob by offering to go before him and insure the safety of Jacob and his caravan. Jacob told his brother that since some of the children were so young and some of the herd had young, he would have to travel so slowly that such a pace would be impractical for Esau and his large group. Note the respect indicated by Jacob's reply to Esau's offer of help, "Let my lord, I beg you, go ahead on your way, and I will

continue on at a slow pace as is needed by the flock and my family," vs. 14. Esau asked if he could at least leave a few of his men to help, but Jacob again told him that they would not be needed. Jacob thanked Esau who then returned to Seir, the land of the Edomites. Edom lay to the east of the north-to-south Arabah mountain range south of the Dead Sea. Jacob journeyed slowly on to Succoth (Booths) where he apparently stayed for a rest to let his family and animals gain strength to continue. He erected tents for his family and built booths (stalls) for the animals. After a time of respite, he, his family with all of his possessions continued on to the land of Shechem to the city of Shalem. There he ended his long journey from Padanaram and was finally back in Canaan. Shechem was located in central Palestine in the valley between mounts Ebal and Gerizim, thirty-four miles north of Jerusalem and seven miles southwest of the city of Samaria. This valley was very fertile and was watered by many springs coming from the surrounding elevations. There Jacob bought a tract of land for a goodly sum of money from Hamor, the Hivite and father of Shechem. He also set up a permanent tent and erected an altar on his property. The altar he called Elelohe-Israel meaning "[to] God, the God of Israel."

III. In the past several chapters we have noted a change of Jacob's attitude brought about by his spiritual experience with the Lord God. Jacob's whole outlook about the significance of his life as related to God's plan changed dramatically when God wrestled with him on the east of the Jordan at Jabbok Ford in the wee hours of that night. Of interest, I believe, is that this place is at or near the site where John the Immerser immersed our Lord in the Jordan River, Matt. 3:1-17; Mk 1:1-15; Lk 3:20-23; 4:2. Another interesting aspect of Jacob's change of spirit after his "night with God" is this experience in Chap. 33 of reuniting with his brother Esau. While Jacob's extreme politeness could have, in and of itself, been an act of deceitfulness, I believe the change was genuine. Remember, at Gen. 32:10 the former master deceiver confessed to God, "I am not worthy of the least of your mercies, and of all the truth which you [the Lord] have shown unto your servant [Jacob]." (Psa. 51:15-17) Our Lord, in the proverbial conflict between his humanity and his divinity, expressed a somewhat similar sentiment at Matt. 26:38-46. He was alone in the supreme test of his life, because he knew that his physical life was about to be required. There in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus, with his face on the earth he had created, begged God the Father to consider the possibility of dispensing with the humiliating and extremely painful death on a Roman cross. Three times he prayed the same prayer, "O, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." We sinners can only have our own imperfections, in God's sight, blotted out by our heavenly Father's sacrificial offering, Jesus his only begotten Son, Acts 3:19-21; Heb. 10:10,14-25. When we admitted (confessed) our sinful condition and accepted Jesus in faith as the Messiah (Savior) and Lord of our lives, we too believed, and still believe, with Jacob, "I am not worthy of the least of your mercies, and of all the truth which you have shown to me." God so loved the world.

May 10, 1998

"Sexual Immorality And Murder"
Gen. 3 4

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. In Chap. 33 we learned of the area (Shalem) where Jacob chose to make his home upon returning to the Palestine area. At this time Jacob's family was large and somewhat unusual in that he had two wives, two concubines, eleven sons, and one daughter, Dinah. The chief reason, I believe, which God had for Jacob to leave his Uncle Laban was to leave the idolatry of Laban and the people in the Haran area. That disloyalty to the true God of heaven was demonstrated when Jacob's beloved wife Rachel felt the need to take with her the family idol of Laban as she traveled into, for her, a strange land. We see what God was doing in retrospect as we are led by God's Holy Spirit because of our faith in God's Messiah. Our heavenly Father was laying the familial lineage for the coming to earth of his only begotten Son, and, at the same time maintaining the environmental setting for Jacob and his family to maintain a holiness required of his followers. To provide these two requirements presented a continual struggle on the part of God's chosen Messianic lineage. The people who occupied the Shalem area were not concerned with God's will for them, but they did occupy at this time the land which God had promised to Abraham and his descendants, Gen. 12:1-4,7; 15:18. For many years psychologists have discussed the relationship between a person's behavior with his/her inherited (genetic) influences vs environmental influences. In Jacob's case, I believe, both were involved in his personality. We, as believers in God's Christ, know certainly that one's relationship to the Lord can transcend both genetically and environmental factors. In Jacob's life as well as in his father's and grandfather's, Isaac and Abraham, God appeared to them directly and communed with and directed some of their choices in life. We, too, can be directly influenced by God's Holy Spirit to do what God wants us to do and override our own wills as conditioned by genetics or environments. The Spirit that was in our Lord overrode his own human will in the Garden of Gethsemane. We have the same Spirit to inspire and to empower us to act as God wills.

II. But many times the will of God's people can be right, but the flesh is weak, Rom. 7; I John 1:8-2:2. Chap. 34 presents activities which are plainly contrary to what God wants his people to do. Jacob's only daughter, Dinah, was a young person who was apparently gregarious and therefore wanted companionship with young ladies of her own age and interests. Dinah began to associate with the Hivite people, and she was seen and admired by Shechem the son of Hamor, the top political leader of the city. The Hivites were the offspring of one of the sons of Canaan, the son of Ham and grandson of Noah, Gen. 9:18,22-27. Shechem "fed her a line," and then forced himself upon her and "lay with her," vs. 1. We are not told the details of Shechem's "defiling" Dinah, but the language makes his action rape. However, the language also makes it clear that afterwards he loved her and wanted to marry her, vs. 3-4. The Word states that he was "strongly attracted to this young woman." His feeling was so intense that he asked his father Hamor to arrange for the two to be married. However, when Jacob (Israel) learned

that the young man had raped his only daughter, he told his sons of the crime against Dinah. All of the males in the family were grieved and very angry. Jacob had been very discreet about the event ("held his peace until they [his sons] were come"), vs. 5. Shechem's father, Hamor, had learned of the indiscretion (sin) of his son and went out of the village into the country to speak with Jacob. Jacob's sons rallied around and expressed their displeasure with what had happened. Hamor told them, "The soul of my son Shechem longeth for Dinah. I beg you to give her to him for a wife," vs. 8. From the specific of his son's marrying Jacob's daughter, he expanded the proposition to include a general agreement that the children of Israel freely intermarry with the Hivites and become integrated in the culture (trade and ownership of property). The son Shechem also addressed Jacob and his sons asking for their favor. Ask any dowry and gifts, and I will give it, only give me Dinah in marriage. Israel's answer was that because of the rape we cannot agree to such a marriage. The sons said that our relationship to our God requires that all males be circumcised. For our sister to marry an uncircumcised man would create an impossible union. Sensing the strong desire of Shechem for the marriage, I believe, Jacob's sons agreed to the marriage and generally to intermarriage provided that all the Hivites be circumcised. We will become one people only if this arrangement is met immediately, but if not we will leave this area, vs. 17. Shechem agreed to do their bidding and convinced his father, who was the prince of the village, to set in motion universal circumcision at once. As Shechem and Hamor came back to the city and entered the gate, Hamor told the city leaders there, "These men (the Hebrews) are peaceable with us, and we should therefore let them dwell in the land and trade therein. The land hereabout is ample, and we should integrate with them through intermarriage. In this way, in time, their possessions will become ours. For this to happen it is necessary for us to meet one condition: every male among us must be circumcised as they are," vss. 21-23. All males obeyed Hamor and were circumcised immediately.

III. On the third day after the mass circumcision, two of Dinah's full brothers, Simeon and Levi, entered the city and aggressively proceeded to kill every male there with swords (while they were all ill from the circumcision). Their massacre included Hamor and Shechem, and they found Dinah in Shechem's house, took her, and ransacked the entire city. They (I believe that all the sons were involved) took all the women and children and plundered all the houses for booty. Twenty years previously Jacob would probably have complimented his sons, but now he is sorry that the sons have given him such an obnoxious reputation among the people of the area, the Canaanites and Perizzites. Another concern of Jacob's was that these people, who were considerably more numerous, would in unison overpower and kill him and his entire family. The sons' response was, "Should he (Shechem) deal with our sister as a common whore?" God was not pleased with their choices, I believe. Their actions were wrong, but we as believers have a guide when such evil happens to us at Rom. 12:16-21. Jacob had been very deceitful in his early years, and now "the chickens have come home to roost."

May 31, 1998

"Back To Bethel"
Gen. 3 5

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. What happened to Jacob and especially to his family in Chap. 34 was contrary to God's will for them, I believe. The patriarch's experience with God when God changed his name to Israel gave him a sense of sorrow for not doing God's will, but he still needed to grow in God's grace, II Peter 3:17-18. Through Peter God told the early believers (and us) in Jesus as God's Messiah, "- - seeing you know these things [the longsuffering of the Lord] before hand, beware lest you also, being led away with the error of the wicked [for Jacob, the Hivites], fall from your steadfastness; but grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord - -." Jacob was growing in his knowledge of the Lord, but he obviously had a ways to go, or he would not have stopped at Shalem. God did not tell him to go there specifically. He must have gone there by his own choice, and the events of Chap. 34 occurred, rape of his daughter Dinah and the murder of males by his sons. Yes, Jacob still needed to grow in God's graceful instructions. He had been very relieved by his reconciliation with his brother Esau, and now in vs. 1 God instructs Jacob to return to where God first appeared to him as he fled from his brother, to Bethel, Gen. 28:18-22.

II. As Jacob thought of Bethel and God's vision to him there, about the ladder to heaven, he was reminded immediately of Laban and his idolatry. By this time he must have learned, or at least had suspicions, of Rachel's possession of Laban's idols. Jacob had not to this time been exercising his spiritual duty as father and head of the household concerning their loyalty to his own God, the Lord of Abraham and Isaac. (Remember that originally this very reason was why Esau was not eager to receive Isaac's birthright, Gen. 25:32, 34; Mk 8:36-37; Heb. 12:16-17.) With Bethel in mind, "Jacob said to his family and to all who were with him (servants, etc.), 'Put away the strange [foreign] gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments.'" And how were they to purify themselves? By changing their garments? That term needs further explanation. The word for garments literally means "habits." Some religious leaders such as Roman Catholic nuns and their priests so display their special positions in their organizations by the garments or "habits" they wear. Jacob did not have such in mind at all, but rather that their activities (lifestyles) should display what God wanted them to do. Jesus condemned religious leaders who wore garments with broad phylacteries (leather square boxes containing Bible verses) and garments with special enlarged borders to indicate themselves to be especially holy. The Lord said of such "leaders," "whoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled, but he that shall humble himself shall be lifted up," Matt. 23:5,12. Further, God's Word at Jam. 5:2 states that [those who love money, Matt. 6:24; I Tim. 6:10], "Your riches are corrupted [have rotted], and your garments [lifestyles] are moth-eaten." James here uses the word "garments" to mean exactly the same idea Jacob means in Gen. 35:2b, change your attitudes and actions, Eph. 6:12-17; I Thes. 5:8; Rev. 3:4-6; 16:15. This Chap. 35 is very rich in God's message for us trusters in Jesus as our Savior and Lord.

III. Notice carefully what Jacob now tells those for whom he is a spiritual leader, "And let us arise, and go up to Bethel [the house of God]; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress [loneliness and fear], and was with me in the way (everywhere I have gone)," vs. 3. Jacob was not in the situation we believers are in today, Acts 2:16-21. We are led by God's Holy Spirit who is along side each of us wherever and in whatever circumstance we find ourselves. And not only that, but we can confer with other believers for comfort and strength at any time. We have regularly scheduled times and places to assemble together for group study of God's Word and to worship our heavenly Father to praise and glorify him. This mutual study and praise together is encouraging and stimulates our spiritual growth, II Tim. 2:14-19; Heb. 10:19-25. Jacob longed for this feeling and knowledge that God was near him as he did on that first night away from the comfort and security of his parents. Jacob could have been surprised by the compliance of his entire family as they turned over to him all of the foreign gods as well as "the earrings which were on their ears." vs. 4. Jacob took them all and buried them under an oak tree at Shechem. Several times in the Bible earrings implicate idolatry. For example, at Exod. 32:1-10 Aaron, Moses' brother, used the gold earrings from the wives and children (both boys and girls) to make the molten calf which the Israelites worshiped as a false god. The Lord was extremely angry and thought to destroy them, but Moses' pleading saved them from God's wrath, Exod. 32:11-14.

IV. The local people (Canaanites and Perizzites) in the area of Shalem learned of Jacob's family and what they had done to the people at Shechem. Consequently, they feared for their own safety and did not pursue Jacob when he followed God's order to move to Bethel. He took his family, his servants, and all of his possessions to Bethel. There he built an altar and called it "God of the House of God" (Elbethel), vs. 7. Rebekah's nurse died and they buried her and called the place "Weeping," for she was a loyal servant. God appeared again to Jacob, repeated his name change to Israel as well as the covenant he had made before at Bethel, and reminded him that this covenant was between Jacob and God Almighty. The land promised to Abraham and Isaac remained in the covenant. The group journeyed on from Bethel to Ephrath (Bethlehem) which is just south of Jerusalem. Rachel had reached full term with her second and last son of Jacob. In her labor to deliver, she bore Benjamin, but died in the process and was buried there. From Bethlehem they journeyed on to Hebron (Mamre) where Abraham had lived, and where Isaac still lived. (All we know of Rebekah's death is that she was buried where Isaac was later buried, Gen. 39:31.) Jacob was finally back at his old home place! Isaac then died at age one hundred eighty. Esau came to his father's funeral, and he and Jacob buried him at Hebron in the cave of Machpelah near Abraham and Sarah. God's Word in relating the full truth, notes that Jacob learned of the immoral sin committed by his oldest son Reuben who had a sexual relation with Jacob's concubine Bilhah, vs. 22. The immoral seeds, of Laban and the Syrian people with whom Reuben lived as a child, evidently were still planted in Jacob's oldest son.

June 7, 1998

"Esau's Posterity"
Gen. 3 6

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Isaac, the son of Abraham, had only two children, Esau and Jacob. Esau was, therefore, the grandson of the father of the Hebrew faith who "looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God," Heb. 11:10. In this chapter Moses, in the Pentateuch account, gives a rather thorough treatment of Esau's family who became the Edomites. Recall that the name Esau means "hairy" and the name Edom means "red." When Esau, the firstborn of Isaac and Rebekah, was born, he was covered with red hair. His offspring became a nation of people called Edomites. In fact, Esau and Edom became synonymous terms to refer to Esau's people, vss. 1,8,19,43b, and Edom to the land they inhabited. Isaac was very careful in seeing that Jacob did not marry a Canaanite woman, but Esau took wives from Abraham's and his concubine's son, Ishmael, Gen. 28:9, as well as from the Hitites, vss. 2-3. The Hitites (Hivites) were descendants of Noah's son Ham through Canaan and Heth, Gen. 10:1,6,15,17. The Messianic lineage came not from Ham's line but Shem's, Lk 3:33-36. Both Joseph and Jesus' mother Mary were Semites, i.e., descendants of Shem through Abraham. The Bible does not mention explicitly Mary's lineage, but Luke's account of the Gospel very probably traces our Lord's genealogy through his mother. Matthew's account appears, on the other hand, to trace Jesus' lineage through Joseph, but Matthew is very careful to make clear that Mary's son Jesus was the son of Mary as a human, but the direct Son of God, as his Father, Matt. 1:16,18-25, not the son of Joseph.

II. Esau took two wives from among the Hitites, Adah and Ahalibamah, and Bashemath, the daughter of Ishmael. Esau's family was well established in Canaan, but while Jacob was over east at Haran serving Laban for twenty years, he left the area of Jacob's estate (Isaac's home site). He moved all of his wives, children, livestock, and goods which he had gained in Canaan, and resettled in the area of Mount Seir which area became known as Edom. Edom was located immediately south of Moab which was east of the southern portion of the Dead (Salt) Sea. Edom stretched in a north-south direction from the south end of the Dead Sea to the north tip of the Gulf of Aqabah which is east of the Sinai Peninsula as the Gulf of Suez is east of that peninsula. Both of these gulfs come together to form the Red Sea at the southern tip of the Sinai. The Word states that the land to which Esau apparently knew Jacob would return would not be able to support both Esau's and Jacob's livestock. I believe that Esau had some reluctance to trust Jacob after their previous experiences. At least that would be a logical reason for Esau's desire to separate himself from Jacob. Another reason, perhaps, was Esau's concept of organizing the commonweal or political aspect of the Edomites' activities. The evidence indicates that Esau established a loose "government" among the Edomites in which dukes (We would likely identify them as county officers.) led (were chiefs among) the people, vss. 29-30. Later in the chapter these chiefs are referred as kings, vss. 31-39, who reigned or ruled various segments of the people. The geographic areas over which these kings reigned were called cities (villages?). These kings who ruled the

people in Edom were distinctive as compared with the rulership among the people of Jacob (Israel) up to that time, vs. 31. Esau as the "national" leader was able to bring four hundred troops to meet Jacob returning from Haran.

III. My mention of a lingering distrust between Jacob and Esau above is evidenced by the antagonism between their descendants in the centuries that followed. An example of this animosity appears at Numb. 20:14-21 where the Israelites sought passage through Edomite territory on their long journey between Egypt and the land God had promised them, Palestine west of the Jordan. Again, at I Kings 11:14ff Solomon met opposition in Edom, because David had earlier sent his chief general, Joab, "to kill every male in Edom." In Psa. 137:7 the psalmist states that when Babylon was defeating the Israelites to take them as prisoners to Babylon, the Edomites sided with the Babylonians and said of Jerusalem, "Raze it, raze it, even to the foundation of it."

IV. Hundreds of years after these events of Gen. 36, God told Israel through Malachi that the Lord chose Jacob and Israel above Esau and the Edomites. Paul quotes this fact at Rom. 9:6-16 plainly, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." The least shocking interpretation that one can give to this sentence is that God, through the centuries, has given preference to one segment of humanity over another. At Heb. 12:14-17, 22-24 God's Word adds further details about the spiritual attitude and nature of Esau, "Lest there be any [spiritual] fornicator or profane (godless) person, as Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright." At the end of the outline for Chap. 25, I noted the reason why Esau looked on the birthright so cavalierly. Assuming the birthright, was taking upon oneself the spiritual leadership of the father's position upon the father's demise. By tradition this mantle fell upon the first male born in a family. God knew what Esau's spiritual disposition would be even before Isaac's firstborn was delivered and told Rebekah that the older (Esau) would serve the younger (Jacob). This predetermination by God of the final spiritual condition of any person involves what theologians refer to as "election." One's view of spiritual election effects one's view of the nature of God the Creator, because, by theological definition, election is defined as: "The act of choice whereby God picks an individual or group out of a larger company for a purpose or destiny of his (God's) own appointment." In Christianity the purpose noted is for eternal life of an individual or group through faith in God's Son Jesus, God's Messiah (Savior). However, in the Old Covenant the purpose was God's election of the Jews as a nation of God's chosen people, Deut. 7:1-11. Later God provided another Covenant for all of mankind through the sacrifice of his only begotten Son, Jesus of Nazareth, Rom. 11:11-32; Heb. 8:7-13. God's election of an individual or of a group is beyond human comprehension, I believe, and the basis for my position is Rom. 11:33-36. God knows but we do not, Gal. 1:15! So then, God's preordination of one or many was known by God from the beginning of his creation (Eph. 1:4), but he still uses people to tell (witnessing) about Jesus' salvation to his chosen ones (the ecclesia), Rom. 10:1-21, especially vss. 12-15.

June 14. 1998

"Joseph To Center Stage"
Gen. 3 7

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Joseph was born to Jacob and Rachel at Gen. 30:24. This birth was the eleventh son born to Jacob and his twelfth child. It was Joseph's birth which caused Jacob to want to leave service to Laban and began building an estate for his own family. Jacob's son Joseph constituted the culmination of the fruit of Jacob's first love, Rachel, Gen. 29:16-18. Although another son was born to Jacob and Rachel (Benjamin), Joseph became more prominent than he or all the other children of Jacob. In fact, more of the narrative of Genesis is devoted to Joseph than any other personality. Chap. 37 through Chap. 50, fourteen chapters (twenty-eight per cent), involve Joseph and his activities. If one includes the chapter in which Joseph was born (30 plus), then sixty per cent of all fifty chapters cover Joseph's life. Why? One can, I believe, make a legitimate, favorable comparison of Joseph with all personages in the Old Covenant. Moses was great although he was a murderer. David was a great leader, but he engaged in adultery and covered it up with the murder of the husband of the woman with whom he had committed adultery. Search the Scriptures and such scandal or immoral act cannot be assigned to Jacob's favorite son, Joseph. Neither Moses nor Joseph were in the lineage toward the birth of our Lord, God's Messiah (Savior), but they both played major roles in God's development of human history toward that end. We believers can be assured that, although no longer is prominence in God's work dependent upon being in the lineage leading up to the birth of a Savior, our witness to others of God's Savior Jesus is what pleases our heavenly Father, Matt. 3:7; 12:14-21; 17:1-5; Acts 2:36-39. I note the above to emphasize in our study of the rest of Genesis the importance of Joseph in the ongoing history of Israel.

II. Jacob was now home in Hebron where Abraham and Isaac had lived. Both Jacob's father and grandfather were buried in the land God had promised to them, Gen. 15:6,18; 25:9-10; 35:29; 49:30-32. Jacob was not in his permanent (forever) dwelling place, but as his forefathers were sojourners on the earth, so was Jacob, vs. 1; Heb. 11:8-10,39-40. In the daily affairs of Jacob and his family, when Joseph was seventeen years of age, he was out caring for their sheep. This day with Joseph were Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher who were doing things which Joseph knew to be contrary to their father's wishes. Joseph reported their misdeeds to Jacob. Whether Joseph's telling was a routine report of the day's activities or what we would call "tattling" is not made clear. We do know that "Israel loved Joseph more than all his other children, because he was the son of his old age," vs. 3. One could add reasonably, I believe, that Joseph was also the son of Rachel, Jacob's favorite. Precisely because Joseph was Jacob's choice child, he made him a tunic of many colors, a long robe with sleeves. Such robes were normally worn by those of a "higher class," those of royalty or who were very rich. This special apparel furnished Joseph by Jacob indicated especially that this son was loved more than the others. This arrangement further separated the other children from Joseph. The Word states plainly that they all hated Joseph and shunned

him, "could not speak peaceably (civilly) to him," vs. 4. A further cleavage developed when Joseph dreamed a dream and shared its contents with his brothers. In his dream all the brothers were shocking sheaves of grain in a field, and their sheaves stood around Joseph's sheaf and bowed down to his sheaf. They questioned the implications of the dream. Do you really think that you will come to reign or have dominion over us? Yet, in another dream of Joseph's he told Jacob as well as his siblings that even the sun, moon and stars recognized Joseph as a superior to them all. Now Joseph has included his father (sun), mother (moon), and all his brothers (stars) as ones who will become subservient to him. What a seventeen-year-old youngster could make of, even in a dream, the importance of one who wore a "royal" coat! Jacob considered such thinking to be just too much and rebuked his favorite son. However, Jacob did not forget this concept. The Bible uses this same mental set of Jacob (vs. 11) at Dan. 7:28; Lk 2:19,51 in others thinking.

III. Later, after the "preposterous" dreams, the brothers of Joseph were away to feed Jacob's flocks at Shechem. Evidently, such care of the herds took several days, and during this period Jacob decided to send Joseph to see how the other boys were doing. Joseph volunteered when asked by his father and went up the Hebron valley and arrived at Shechem, but the brothers were not there. Joseph was told that the herds had been taken on north to Dothan. Hebron to Dothan is fifty-two miles, quite a distance for a lone teenager. Dothan was located in a pass through which caravans of traders would pass from Gilead on southward to Egypt. While there Joseph found his brothers and was seen by them some distance away. His bright cape made his person obvious even at a great distance. Seeing Joseph away from the protection of his father, they agreed, as he approached, that this would be an opportune time to "dispose" of him. Their first thought was to kill him and tell his father that some wild animal had eaten him. That would give this dreamer exactly what he deserved! Jacob's oldest son, Reuben, suggested that they not kill Joseph (He was their own flesh and blood.), but throw him into a nearby dry well. Reuben had in mind to retrieve him for his father, vss. 21-22. When Joseph reached them, they stripped his tunic from him, threw him in the well, and sat down to eat while Reuben went to check on the herd. As they were eating, a caravan came through the pass on their way to Egypt with spices. Judah said to the others, "There is no profit for us in killing the dreamer. Why don't we sell him to this Ishmaelite caravan from Median (Gilead) for twenty pieces of silver?" When Reuben returned to the group and discovered that Joseph was not in the well, he was very sad. They told Reuben what they had done. They had also killed a kid, spotted proud Joseph's tunic with its blood, and made plans to deliver it back to Jacob with the story they had concocted before. When they arrived back in Hebron, they told Jacob that they had found a garment which appeared to have been someones who had been killed by some wild beast. Of course Jacob recognized the tunic, and wept bitterly and grieved for days, refusing to be comforted. Meanwhile, the Midianites sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer and captain of his bodyguards.

June 21, 1998

"Judah, Jacob's Fourth Son"
Gen. 38

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. We live in a day in human history when many people seek to communicate information about themselves by what has become known as "spinning." News reports in print, radio, television and other media "spin" the news. These "spins" edit ones activities and even attitudes which one wants others to know. Of course, the final information propagated can present an altogether false representation of the true facts concerning a given individual or group. To be believed they contain half or partial truths. Retrospectively, we know the wicked effect which can result from such propaganda as performed by Hitler against the Jews of Germany and Europe. We have learned that millions of Jews were cremated (murdered by gassing and incineration) by the leading dictator of the twentieth century, Adolf the Aryan. Events can now be so skewed that falsehood can become humanly created "truth." With attitudes and events so falsely established, we believers in Jesus the Christ are amazed at the unadorned (without a "spin") truth that appears in Scripture. If we are not alert, we can find ourselves wishing that such information as found in Chap. 38 were left out of the Bible account. Jacob's son Judah is the person from whom the word Jew came. (Recall that we examined this fact at Gen. 28,I.) Judah plays a large part in the history of Jehovah's people the Jews. Our Lord's physical lineage came through Judah and Tamar, Matt. 1:2-3. This fact makes Jesus' sinless life even more revealing about his willingness to satisfy our Father God in every act, intent, and attitude throughout his entire life, from birth of a virgin until his "it is finished" on the Roman cross at Golgotha. Physically our Lord Jesus came through the sinful line of all humanity, for all have sinned and come short of God's glory, except Jesus, God's Savior, Isa. 53:6,9-11; Rom. 3:23; II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15. Yes, we believers could wish that Judah had not lived the sin and shame of this chapter, but God's Word does not put "spin" on Judah's life. We can identify with Judah and know thereby the need for one who can make us and keep us at one with our Creator, Gal. 3:24-29. With our trust in Jesus Christ we are sealed forever with the promise (God's faithful promise) of eternal life, John 3:15,18; Eph. 1:13-14; 2:4-10. Neither is there "spin" in God's promise of eternal life in Jesus Christ!

II. After the sons of Jacob sold his favorite son Joseph to the Ishmaelite traders heading for Egypt, we are given an insight into what at least one of Joseph's brothers was doing back at Hebron. Following is what happened to Judah. Judah left Hebron and went alone down to a town called Adullam. (The cave was at Adullam where David hid from Saul and there formed a legion of four hundred men, I Sam. 22:1-3.) Adullam was about midway between Jerusalem and Lachish. This move for Judah was a permanent move from his father's household. He lived with a man named Hirah, and there met and married a Canaanite girl, Shua's daughter. They moved to the town of Chezib (Chozeba, meaning untrue or false) during the marriage. Judah and his wife had three sons, Er, Onan, and Shelah. When the oldest son Er reached adulthood, Judah arranged for him to marry

a Canaanite girl named Tamar. Shortly thereafter, Er was so wicked the Lord took his life, vs. 7. After Er's death Judah instructed the next son in line, Onan, to marry Tamar and "to raise up seed to thy brother (Er)." Onan objected to fathering a child who would not be considered his own. However, he did feign compliance with Judah's wishes, and the action Onan performed is unique in the Bible. As he had sexual intercourse with Tamar, he did what marriage counselors call "coitus interruptus" meaning that at the end of the intercourse he "spilled it (seminal fluid) on the ground (bed?), lest he should give seed to his brother," vs. 9. Onan's act was "evil in the sight of the Lord, wherefore the Lord slew him also," vs. 10. The act which Onan committed, contrary to Judah's command, was later treated in the Law which the Lord God gave to the Israelites through Moses at Deut. 25:5-10. This same law was used by the Sadducees to "disprove" Jesus' position about resurrection and eternal life at Matt. 22:23-33. Jesus told them that they did not know the Scriptures nor the power of God.

III. Judah told Tamar to remain a widow until Shelah became marriageable and to live again with her parents. She moved back to Adullam with her folks and waited. Judah's wife died, and he mourned through the customary period. Afterwards Judah went to shear his sheep with his friend Hirah up at Timnath, and Tarah learned of his being away from home and where he was. She had a plan of her own, because Shelah was grown without Judah's having taken any action about her widowhood. She took off her widow's garments and dressed in regular clothing with a veil. She went out near the shearing operation where Judah was working, and sat in a open place where she could be easily seen. Custom was that a veil noted that she was a prostitute. Her plan worked when Judah came and propositioned her, and she asked what her time would be worth to him. She was glad that he had not recognized her when he told her that he would send a kid goat for her time. She would not agree unless he gave her some proof in hand. Judah asked her what that would be. She asked him for his signet, his bracelet, and his sheep staff. Surprisingly, he agreed and left the pledge items with her after his lust had been satisfied. Judah dutiful had the kid delivered to her by Hirah, but he could not find her. He asked about, and no one knew of any prostitute in that area. He reported his efforts to Judah, and three months later Judah learned that Tamar had prostituted herself and was thereby pregnant. He instructed his men to bring her to him, and she was to be burned. When approached by Judah's men, she said, "It is true. I am three months pregnant by the owners of these items of pledge." After admitting her misdeed, she produced the signet, the bracelet, and the staff of Judah. Judah was presented the evidence and admitted, "She is more righteous than I." Tamar bore Judah twin sons, Pharez and Zereh. With these two sons Judah now had fathered a total of five sons.

IV. If one reads straight through this section of Genesis (Chaps. 37-40), it appears obvious that the weak moral character of Judah is given to contrast with the integrity and strong moral stability of Joseph, Gen. 37:26-27; 38, with Chap. 39. We noted last week about the strong character and moral stamina of Joseph.

June 28, 1998

"Joseph, Accused and Imprisoned"
Gen. 3 9

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Of Chap. 38 we noted that a possible reason for the sordid story of Judah was given to depict the impeccable moral attitude of Joseph by contrast with Judah. That contrast is further developed in our chapter today. There are theologians who assert that without Satan there would have been no need for Jesus to save the world's humanity. In other words, without evil there would be no righteousness. Contrast is a necessary component of ethics and morality. If there were no darkness, there would be no light? Truth to exist, requires lies or falsehoods? Why was Satan allowed in the Garden of Eden? We are assured in Rev. 20:10 that the Evil One will continue in the world until our Lord Jesus returns to earth for his ecclesia, us. Then Satan will be forever chained (made ineffective or without power to exercise against God's perfect will). Since Adam and Eve, Satan has had power to alter individual human will by tempting the proneness to do that which contradicts God's design for humans. God tests or proves, but Satan tempts people to contradict God. I believe that Satan was originally an angelic being in the immediate abode of God the Father, heaven. For some reason, not noted in the Bible, Satan challenged God's authority (became an adversary of God) and was expelled from heaven like a bolt of lightning and relegated to earth. The process of Satan's power to overcome mankind's wills is still effective, but a contrary result can be inevitable, made sure by faith in the life, death, and resurrection of God's only begotten Son, Jesus his Christ (Messiah, Savior), Gen. 3:1,4-8,15; Job 1:6; 2:1-8; Isa. 53:4-6; Dan. 12:8-10; Lk 10:17-20; John 3:16-18; 14:30; II Cor. 2:11; 11:13-15; Eph. 2:2; I Tim. 3:7; II Tim. 2:24-26; I Pet. 5:8-9; I Cor. 15:20-28; Rev. 12:7-12; 20:1-3,10. Jesus referred to those who did Satan's will but falsely claimed to be doing and revealing God's will as "vipers" aligning them with the original "snake" in the Garden of Eden, Matt. 3:7-9; 10:25; 12:24-28,31-34; John 8:41-47. Satan's supreme and final will is that our Lord Jesus be discredited as God's Savior and Lord, i.e., that people serve Satan rather than Almighty God, the Creator, through exercising belief, faith and trust in Jesus, God's Christ (Savior), Lk 4:5-8.

II. Joseph's life makes clear that God's ongoing will for the inhabitants of earth is sure. In fact, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose," Rom. 8:28. And vs. 29 of Rom. 8 reveals that the end of the earth's creation is that, "For whom he [God] did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." Many times we cannot understand why things are happening in our lives as they are, but in retrospect God's hand can be decidedly seen at work directing our paths. Joseph recognized this fact. When Jacob died his sons feared for what Joseph would do to them. However, Joseph told them that, while their actions in selling him as a slave appeared to be evil, the act was really God's working out in Joseph's life his divine plan for his people, Israel. The Bible reveals no instance in which God appeared directly to Joseph, but his love of God guided him day by day. We too need not fear

that we are not guided by God, even though we have not seen God in a burning bush. If we truly love God, "Love does no harm to his neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law," Rom. 13:10. We believe in Jesus and therefore are led by God's Spirit, John 14:14-16; Lk 11:13.

III. When Joseph was first brought down to Egypt, he was bought by Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's bodyguards. We are not told the price which the Ishmaelites received for Joseph, but the Bible states that, "The Lord was with Joseph and made him successful as he served Potiphar," vs. 2. His master noted that Joseph's Lord was with him through his ability to make sound and wise decisions. Soon Potiphar favored him by making him overseer over the entire household as well as his business everywhere. Joseph's responsibilities were so extensive that his master did not know what possessions he had, save the food he ate daily, vs. 6. As a goodly person Joseph was respected by everyone. Potiphar's wife became very attracted to the young Hebrew, and one day she propositioned him for sexual favors. He refused her advances. He told her that he respected the trust of his master, and, most importantly, such wickedness was "sin against God," vs. 9. Potiphar's wife confronted Joseph on a daily basis, but he consistently refused her invitation to engage in lust. One day, when all the males were not present, she grabbed him physically and begged him to cooperate with her. In Joseph's struggle to flee, she was able to pull his jacket off. She took advantage of having Joseph's jacket by calling the men in, and telling them that, "See, he [Potiphar] has brought in an Hebrew unto us to laugh at us [show us up]. He came in to me to attack me sexually, but I cried out with a loud scream. As this was happening, and I was screaming, he fled in short order but left his jacket in the commotion," vss. 14-15. She craftily kept the jacket until Potiphar came and told him that Joseph had attempted to attack her sexually. "He escaped," she said, "but I was able to scream and keep his jacket in the fury," vss. 17-18. Potiphar had Joseph put into prison. The Lord continued to bless Joseph, for his imprisonment was in a special prison reserved for Pharaoh's prisoners. We will learn, as the story unfolds, that this factor becomes a key to Joseph's further advancement in the political affairs of all of Egypt. His leadership became evident even here in the "king's prison." God's loving kindness (mercy) caused him to be favored by the keeper of the prison, and soon he was charged with assigning the tasks of all the other prisoners and for their keeping. The Bible makes clear that the favored treatment was the result of: "The Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it successful," vs. 23. The same God keeps us believers safe for eternal life, because we trust his only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. In Rom. 8 we have God's promise that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ who died, yes rather, that is risen again, and is at the right hand of God, where he continually makes intercession for us. If God be for us, who can overcome us? In all things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor governments, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

July 5, 1998

"The Dreamer Interprets Dreams"
Gen. 40

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Many Bible scholars have pointed to the many parallels of Joseph's life and circumstances with many of those in the life of our Lord. I find those parallels both interesting and pertinent enough to make them part of our study of this portion of Genesis. Jesus commands that those who trust him should love one another as he loves us, but in doing so he said that the world would hate believers as it hated him. Jesus' relations according to the flesh (the Jews, as Mary's Son) hated Jesus, and he quoted Psa. 35:19; 69:4; 109:3-5, at John 15:18-25, saying, "They hated me without a cause." Joseph's brothers hated him, and, had it not been for Reuben, they would have killed him. No one saved Jesus from being hung on a wooden cross until dead. Jesus was sent from his Father's home in heaven to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 10:6-7). Joseph was sent from his father's home in Canaan down to Egypt to save the nation of Israel, Gen. 50:20. Joseph was sold by his brothers for twenty pieces of silver (Gen. 37:28); Jesus was betrayed by one of his apostles for thirty pieces of silver, Matt. 26:14-15. Joseph was raised from a pit (a dry well, Gen. 37:24) to save his family and people, and Jesus was raised (resurrected) from a grave to save, not only the Jews who will believe, but anyone who will believe, Gal. 3:28-29. Joseph was mimicked and mocked by his brothers with, "Behold, the dreamer is coming," and of Jesus they said, "If he is God's Messiah, let him come down from the cross," Matt. 27:39-44; Mk 15:30-31; Lk 23:34-37. The brothers of Joseph refused to accept him; Jesus' brethren (the Jewish people) refused to accept him as God's Messiah (Savior), John 11-13.12; Acts 2:22-23,36-39. Joseph's coat was spotted with a kid's (young goat's) blood; Jesus' coat was ante for the Roman soldiers' dice game. Joseph was separated from his family for many lost years, but he reappeared as their physical savior; Jesus has left his believers for many years (millenia) but promised to return as their spiritual Savior forever, Dan. 7:13-14; John 14:3; Acts 1:11. Joseph was continually tempted to do contrary to God's will and so was our Lord, Gen. 39:10; Matt. 4:1-11; Heb. 4:14-16. Last Sunday we noted that the jailer favored Joseph while the latter was in jail, and a Roman centurion said of Jesus, "Truly this was the Son of God." Today in Chap. 40 Joseph is grouped with criminals in jail with one condemned and the other saved (physically). Our Lord was crucified between two criminals, one of whom Jesus said, "This very day you will be with me in paradise." The other criminal was condemned when he blasphemed our Lord by saying to him, "If you are God's Messiah, save yourself and us," Lk 23:39. Truly, it is interesting to note and remember these parallels, I believe.

II. There is a strangeness in the thought when, at the end of Chap. 39, we are told that the Lord made everything Joseph did to prosper. After all, Joseph was in prison. Chap. 40 further explains in what ways the young Hebrew advanced. It happened as Joseph's prison time extended on, that Egypt's Pharaoh (king) became unhappy with two of his personal house servants, his butler and baker. The butler served the king as cupbearer and was considered to be an important

person in the king's household. He maintained the wine cellar and other stocks of spirits which were a major element in royal feasts and ceremonies. A king's ability to entertain foreign representatives demonstrated the status of the entire nation. The king's personal security was also an element in the effectiveness of the cupbearer since poison was the terminator of many monarchs. So the butler was more than a valet who opened the entrance of the king's residence and helped him dress. While the butler cared for the supply of food and dispensing of drinks, the baker was what we call today the chief chef of the king's daily meals. The king's food preparation was important in the affairs of the realm. These two officers in the king's court in some way had offended the Pharaoh, their lord, vss. 1-2. What their offenses were we do not know, but we do know that Joseph was unjustly charged. Their quarters were arranged so that the three saw each other constantly. And remember, Joseph had been committed by the keeper of the prison to the watch care of all the prisoners. After the cupbearer and chef had been in the prison for some time, Joseph was able to detect their moods and dispositions.

III. One morning Joseph noted that both the cupbearer and chef felt sad and dejected. Joseph asked them why they felt so badly. They both on the night before had had dreams which disturbed them, because they had no one to interpret the dreams' meanings, vs. 8. At this time and place dreams were included in the magic and sorcery thinking of the people. There were extensive manuals outlining the meanings of dreams and their consequences for the dreamers. The king had a staff of magicians for dream interpretation. Remember Joseph's dreams of the sheaves and heavenly bodies when he was a youngster back at home with Jacob. Also, later in Egypt, magic played a big part in Moses' relation with the magicians of another Pharaoh, Exod. 7:8-13. Joseph told the cupbearer and chef that dream interpretation belong to God. Joseph asked, "Tell me your dreams, I beg of you," vs. 8. The cupbearer told Joseph his dream first. "A large vine was near me which had three branches. On the three branches, as I watched, beautiful blossoms grew and produced ripe grapes. I held the king's cup in my hand, pressed the grapes for juice in the cup, and passed the cup to Pharaoh's hand," vss. 9-11. Joseph interpreted his dream to predict that the three vine branches meant that in three days the cupbearer would be pardoned by Pharaoh and restored to his former position. Joseph solemnly requested that the cupbearer remember him to the king after his restoration, for truthfully this Hebrew has done nothing deserving to be in jail. When the chef heard the good news, he begged Joseph to interpret his dream also. He told Joseph that in his dream he was carrying three baskets of white bread upon his head when birds came and ate the bread in the baskets. Joseph interpreted his dream to predict that in three days Pharaoh would take him from prison, hang him on a tree, and the birds would "eat your flesh from off you," vss. 18-19. Three days later, on Pharaoh's birthday, the king held a feast for all his servants. He restored the cupbearer to his position and hanged the chef just as Joseph had predicted. However, the cupbearer forgot to mention Joseph to the king, but God did not forget Joseph.

July 12, 1998

"The Lord Advances Joseph"
Gen. 4 1

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. At the beginning of this chapter Joseph had been in Pharaoh's prison for a full two years. He had gained the reputation of being a jailbird. We should remember that his incarceration was due to the scheming for lust with Joseph and then the bearing of false witness by Potiphar's wife. Potiphar, to cover up the "scandal" in his own immediate family, placed Joseph in prison. If the king ever heard of the accusation against Joseph, we are not told. In the minutia of Joseph's life the adversity which he experienced could be interpreted as, "Does God really care for Joseph?" In our lives and the world events which we are witnessing, one could assume the same position about whether God really cares for his people, those of us who are trusting his care. The day-to-day details appear to say that God could not be in our, or our nation's, long range planning by God. Peter (God's Word) responds to such thinking by stating, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness, but he [the Lord] is longsuffering toward us [who believe], not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," II Pet. 3:9. The Word's stress here is for believers to be patient as the Lord works toward the culmination of his plan for the ages. Jesus said as he spoke of that culmination, "In your patience possess you your souls," Lk 21:19. Paul (God's Word) at Rom. 8:16-31 encourages us believers to wait patiently for what God has promised those who are trusting him for the salvation of their eternal spirits, also see at Heb. 11:39-40. As we wait, we are to fill our lives with service to and worship of the God who is saving us through Jesus our Lord and Savior. We are not in prison as Joseph was for those two years.

II. Let's see how God continues to work out his plan in Joseph's life. On Joseph's second anniversary of his prison life, with the cupbearer and chef, the king was dreaming one night that he (the king) was standing on the banks of the great Nile River. Out of the river came seven sleek, fat cows. As he watched they left the river's edge onto a meadow nearby. Following these well-fed cows, came another seven cows from the river, but these seven were poor in bodies with their skeletons pushing their skins outward. Their rib cages were evident along with their hip bones. In this dream Pharaoh saw the sleek cows turn on the lean cattle and eat them! (Dreams do not have to be logical!) The king was bothered by the dream, but he was not able to convene his magicians and wise men. The very next night he dreamed another dream which also baffled him. In this dream a healthy stalk of corn grew up and had seven ears of plump, full corn attached. Immediately following on this stalk seven thin, stringy, blighted ears grew up along side the plump ears and consumed the plump ones. The next morning, after the second mysterious dream, Pharaoh was so disturbed by these apparently contradictory dreams that he gathered from all of Egypt his wise men and magicians to consult with them about the meaning of the two dreams. The king found no help from the gathered dream interpreters. At this meeting was Pharaoh's cupbearer who had been

in prison with Joseph two years earlier. The cupbearer saw the dilemma the king and his magicians were in, and confessed to the king that he had been remiss in not mentioning to him the fact that while he was in prison, there was also there a young Hebrew who had successfully interpreted two dreams of his and the chief chef's. Both dreams came true just as interpreted by the young prisoner.

III. Pharaoh sent for Joseph quickly and told him the dreams. Note that Joseph refused to take credit for his dream interpretation ability, vs. 16. "It is not me, but God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace [understanding]." In detail Pharaoh related to Joseph the two dreams concerning the cows and corn and added that his official dream interpreters were unable to clarify the dream's meanings. Joseph told Pharaoh that, "God has shown what he [God] is about to do," vss. 25,28. What God has told you in the two dreams is that beginning now and for seven years, weather conditions will be just right for bumper crops throughout Egypt and the area. However, following this bountiful period, will come seven years of grievous crop production. In fact, during the last seven-year period, the crops will fail because of a severe famine so that people will die from hunger if nothing is done. God had repeated the two dreams two nights in succession in order to emphasize that necessary action was called for immediately, vs. 32. There is no time to waste, and the king must take action at once! Joseph then outlined a plan which Pharaoh should follow to save his kingdom: The king should locate a man who is wise and practical (discerning) and set him over the whole of Egypt. This person should have an organization of overseers under him to implement their chief's directions. During the beginning seven years of plenty, the surplus grain produced should be gathered and stored in the centers of population (cities) where it will be available during the coming seven years of dearth. Many times those who suggest sweeping changes are asked to chair a committee or head the operations suggested. The king selected Joseph to be the one who would accomplish the goals of the outline which he had suggested. Pharaoh was very sincere in his choice of Joseph as the one who should do the king's business during this period. Note especially the basis for the king's choosing Joseph, "Forasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is none as discreet and wise as you are," vs. 39. (My emphasis - WA) Pharaoh told Joseph to realize the gravity of his assignment, "I have set you over all the land of Egypt," and, "By your word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than you," vss. 40-41. To insure Joseph's authority the king put his own signet ring on Joseph's finger, dressed him in royal regalia, made him to ride in a royal chariot immediately behind the king, and required all citizens to bow in Joseph's presence. Pharaoh said, "Without your permission no person shall do anything in all of Egypt," vs. 44. He was given the daughter of the priest of On for a bride. All of this dictatorial power, while Joseph was only thirty years of age! Joseph's wife bore him two sons, Manasseh (Making Forgetful) and Ephraim (Fruitfulness). When the seven years of dearth came, the condition was not only in Egypt but throughout the entire Middle East so that all countries of the region were forced to come to Egypt to God's director of grain for food, vss. 57-58.

July 19, 1998

"Joseph Receives Visitors"
Gen. 42

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Back in Canaan the famine was as devastating or worse than in Egypt where Joseph was in control of Egypt's ample food supply, Gen. 41:55. Jacob heard of the plenty in Egypt and discussed his plight with his sons. That God was in control of the weather is an undisputed fact. Egyptian agriculture at that time was dependent, as it is today, upon the snow melt in southern Africa which flooded the areas along the banks of the Nile in the spring and early summer. This arrangement normally created a natural irrigation of the rich land on which for centuries the humus (sediment) and black soil had created fertile crop lands. Rainfall in Egypt is very light with about one inch in a normal year. Apparently the seven lean years which Joseph had predicted were caused by a lack of snow melt in lower Africa and, of course, the lack of rain would have practically stopped the land's production of crops. In the land of Canaan where the advantage of the Nile was not present, the lack of rain reduced crop production drastically. The last thoughts in Chap. 41:54,57 make clear that the famine was over the entire area surrounding the east end of the Mediterranean Sea, i.e., all nations around Egypt. Recall that a trade route existed between the Iran-Iraq area and Egypt through Palestine. Camel caravans carried food, fiber, etc., and it was to one of these caravans on its way to Egypt that Jacob's sons sold Joseph their brother as a slave. Joseph was seventeen when that transaction happened, and now he is about thirty-seven-plus years of age. I would guess about forty, and he had changed significantly since he last saw his family. He now is married, has two sons whom he gave names which indicated what had happened in his life. The first son was Manasseh which means "forgetfulness," because God had enabled him to forget, "all my toil and all my father's house." The second son was Ephraim meaning "fruitful" as God had "caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction [Egypt]." Remember, too, that Joseph had adopted the Egyptian language, kept his face shaved, married a Gentile, and adopted Egyptian customs in all ways except the worship and trust of the God of his forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

II. When Jacob learned that life supporting food was available down in Egypt, he instructed his sons to go there to buy grain so that, "we may live and not die," vs. 2. Jacob sent only ten of the eleven sons, because he was fearful that something untoward could happen to them. Therefore, he kept Benjamin whom he loved especially since he was the only son left by his favorite wife Rachel, now dead. He thought that Joseph, his other son by Rachel, had been slain by a wild beast near Dothan. What Jacob did not know about Joseph was to be the physical salvation of himself, his family, and the entire nation of Israel! Among the great group of Canaanites who came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph were Reuben and his nine younger brothers. When they arrived at the capital, they approached Joseph and bowed their heads to the earth in his exalted presence. (Remember the dream in which the other sheaves [his brothers] bowed before Joseph's sheaf.) Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not know who he was. He spoke to them

harshly, further promoting the distance between them and himself. He asked them where they were from, and they said that they were from Canaan and needed to buy Joseph's lifesaving grain. Joseph accused them of being spies who had come to Egypt to discover how weak his nation was from the drought, vs. 9,12. They denied Joseph's accusation by giving him some details of their family situation back home. "Your servants are of twelve brothers of a man in the land of Canaan, and the youngest is home with our father and one is no more," vs. 13. Joseph's reply was that they had not convinced him of their innocence as spies. To prove that they were not spies they must return to Canaan and bring back to Joseph the brother whom they had left with their father. To give them time to think over his proposition, he placed the ten brothers in jail for three days. Joseph said that he was giving them a chance to redeem themselves, "For I fear God," vs. 18. If you will do as I say, you will be saved rather than condemned as spies from Canaan against Egypt. One of you brothers I will keep here in prison, and the other nine are free to return to Canaan with grain for your family. You are to return to me with the brother not now with you. Only then "shall your words be verified, and you shall not die, and they did so," vs. 20.

III. The ten brothers discussed again their long held guilt about what they had done to Joseph back at Dothan. Reuben reminded the others how he had not wanted to "do away with" Jacob's favorite son, Joseph. Joseph was overhearing their conversation about him, but they did not know that Joseph could understand their Hebrew. He was speaking to them in Egyptian through an interpreter. Hearing Reuben's position, that his (Joseph's) blood was upon them, saddened Joseph, for they were concerned about what could happen to Benjamin. Joseph at this time excused himself and went aside and wept, because he was emotionally overcome by the love he still felt for his brothers although he was unable to express himself in their presence under the circumstances. Upon Joseph's return he told them that he was holding Simeon in prison until they returned with Benjamin. Joseph then ordered his grain dispensers to pack full their sacks with grain, and also to place the money given for the grain with the grain. On their return journey to Canaan one of them opened his sack to feed the donkeys and discovered his money. When he told the others of his find, they were scared, because they wondered what "God is doing to us." vs. 28. When they reached home and Jacob, they told him, "The man, who is lord of the country, spoke harshly to us and took us as spies against his country," vs. 30. And, even though we assured him that we were not spies, he kept Simeon in jail as a guaranty until we return with Benjamin. As the brothers opened their bags of grain, they all found their money packed in each bag with the grain. This find frightened not only the sons further, but Jacob also. Jacob recalled how his sons had saddened him, because Joseph was gone, Simeon is in jail in Egypt, and now they want to take Benjamin away to Egypt. All is going against Jacob's welfare. Reuben promised Jacob that if he did not return Benjamin, Jacob could slay his (Reuben's) own two sons. The chapter concludes with Jacob's refusing to permit Benjamin to be taken from him. But God's plan shall be fulfilled, Rom. 8:14-39; Phili. 1:6.

July 26, 1998

"Joseph With Benjamin Again"
Gen. 43

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. When we left Jacob at the end of Chap. 42, he solemnly declared that his favorite son Benjamin was not to be taken to Egypt as "that man" there had demanded. "That man" was Joseph, but Jacob nor his other eleven sons were aware of Joseph's identity as the one in charge of dispensing Egypt's grain surplus. Simeon had been kept in prison in Egypt for security to insure the other brothers' return with Benjamin. One could wonder about why Joseph was so intent upon having Benjamin brought to him in Egypt. The reason is, I believe, because Benjamin was Joseph's only brother by his mother Rachel. He had eleven brothers: of Leah (Jacob's first wife), Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun; of Zilpah (Leah's handmaid), Gad and Asher; of Bilhah (Rachel's handmaid), Dan and Naphtali; but of Rachel (the second but favorite wife), Benjamin and himself. Joseph's loving bond with Benjamin was special and unique, and Joseph longed to see him. This fact is obvious from the extreme care Joseph had taken to see that Benjamin would be brought to him. Further, he knew how long the drought would last and that Jacob could not feed his family back in Canaan throughout the drought period. Sure enough, when the supply of grain had been consumed which they had brought on their first journey, Jacob's stubborn position about Benjamin's going to Egypt changed. At first Jacob simply told his sons to return to Egypt for another supply of grain. "Go again, buy us a little food," he said, vs. 2. But Judah told his father, "The man" did solemnly warn us saying, 'You shall not see my face, except your brother [Benjamin] be with you.' Unless you permit Benjamin to accompany us as we go to Egypt, we will not go," vss. 4-5. Jacob then accused his sons of being wicked toward him for having told "the man" about the brother left in Canaan on their first trip. Judah said that "the man" was very specific in his questioning about their father and about another son. Judah then promised Jacob that if Benjamin were permitted to go this time, he (Judah) would bear the blame forever, a most solemn oath. Remember that all our lives are in danger now, including our children also. Let us go that we may live and not die.

II. Jacob relented when he realized that all of their very lives were in jeopardy from hunger. Only he insisted that the brothers take with them gifts for "the man," balm, honey, spices, myrr, pistachio nuts, and almonds. Canaan's chief lack of food was of the staff of life, grain (bread). Also they were to return with the regular price for the grain as well as the money that had been found in their sacks on the first trip. Lastly, they were to beg "the man" in the name of God Almighty for mercy lest their father be bereaved unto death. No doubt his sons had told Jacob that "the man" had confessed to them that he feared God, Gen. 42:18. This confession gave Jacob at least a faint hope that "the man" would be merciful to him. The brothers left with the presents, the double money, and Benjamin, and then stood before Joseph, "the man." When Joseph saw his brother Benjamin with the group (at a distance), he immediately said to his head housekeeper, "Bring these men to my home and butcher fresh meat for lunch. Make everything ready,

for these fellows will be having lunch with me today," vs. 16. As the servant was accompanying the brothers to Joseph's home, they were very frightened, because they did not understand why "the man" would want to visit with them in his own home. After all, this man was second only to the Pharaoh himself! Did he want to question them personally about the money found in their bags on their first trip? Their fear caused them to speak with the steward just before they entered Joseph's mansion. "The first time we came to buy grain, we found the money we had paid in with the grain later. This time we are returning that money. This finding was and still is a mystery to us," vs. 20-22. The steward answered, "You fellows should not be afraid, because the God of your father brought about what happened to you. In fact, I had your money," vs. 23. The steward's information still left them mystified. Evidently, however, Joseph had witnessed to the steward about the God of Jacob whom he also believed and worshiped. The steward then brought Simeon out to join them, and they all together entered the mansion where they found water to wash their feet. The servants then provided food for their donkeys. The brothers had learned that "the man" would be there at noon so they had time to prepare the gifts for him. Joseph came just at lunch time, and they presented to him their gifts after bowing low in his presence. The lord of the mansion asked them how they were getting along and how their father was. They told Joseph that Jacob was, indeed, alive and well. When Joseph had expressed his thoughts about their welfare, they not only bowed, but prostrated themselves upon the floor. Then Joseph looked directly at Benjamin, the son of his own mother, and asked, "Is this the other son you mentioned to me?" Joseph said to Benjamin, "May God be gracious to you, my son." This interchange was overpowering emotionally for Joseph. He quickly excused himself, went to his bedroom, and sobbed with joy. After weeping, he composed himself, washed his face, and joined the brothers in the dining hall. He then told the servants to serve lunch. The arrangement for eating contained the subterfuge which Joseph was perpetuating: all of the Egyptians ate together, the Hebrew brothers were separated from them. And most strangely, Joseph ate with neither group. Further, Joseph's placement had arranged the brothers in the order of their ages, with Reuben first and Benjamin last, all in chronological order. The brothers were amazed at these placements, but they ate, drank and were merry with "the man."

III. At the beginning of our examination of Chap. 40, we noted a number of parallels of Joseph's life and circumstance with Jesus, our Lord. I am reminded of another here in Chap. 43. At Zech. 12:10 the prophet prophesies that one day the Jews as a nation will recognize Jesus whom they crucified (John 19:6,34; Acts 2:14-24,36-39). At that time Jesus will say, "Those [wounds in his hands] with which I was wounded in the house of my friends," Zech. 13:6. Joseph's brothers delivered him for slavery, and so was Jesus (John 1:10-11) delivered to die mortally. Both Joseph and Jesus were later revealed to their brothers as one whom they did not recognize. So will Jesus, "That Man," one day be recognized by his brothers (the Jewish nation) as God's Messiah (Savior), Rom. 9:1-5; 11:22-32; Rev. 7:1-8.

Aug. 2, 1998

"Joseph Tests His Brothers"
Gen. 44

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Joseph's concern about the loyalty of his ten half brothers toward, not only himself but especially toward Benjamin and his father, was not settled in his mind. Also, they could be less than sincere about their part in selling Joseph himself. In the last verse of Chap. 43 Joseph tested their love for Benjamin by having the servants serve him five times more food than was served to either of the others. That difference was significant since these men had been eating sparsely, and now they were partaking sumptuously of the best food available in rich, bountiful Egypt. This bounty was directly related to Joseph and his love for God and God's blessings to him, Gen. 41:39-40. But Joseph had even more testing of the ten brothers as he prepared their departure for Canaan. He commanded his steward to, "fill their sacks with as much grain as they can carry, and pack the money they have paid for the grain again in with the grain. In addition to the money, pack my own silver cup in the sack of the youngest [Benjamin]," vss. 1-2. Joseph's command was implemented exactly as given. At the crack of dawn the eleven brothers left for Canaan from Joseph's mansion with all the grain their donkeys could manage. Just as they were outside the city limit, they were overtaken by a contingent of Joseph's men led by his chief servant, the steward. The steward's greeting was not congenial, "Why have you repaid my master's kindness with your evil action? You have taken my master's favorite drinking vessel, the one from which he drinks as he meditates upon his plans for the future. My master is especially aggravated by your having done such an evil thing!" Their answer was, "Far be it from us that God would permit your master's servants to do such as you accuse. Recall that we proved our honesty by bringing back from Canaan the money which, for some reason, we found with the grain after our first trip for food. Such honesty proves that we would not take your master's favorite silver cup. Furthermore, whosoever has the cup in his bag, let him be put to death, and the others of us will be made slaves for your master," vss. 7-9. The steward replied, "It will not be done as you suggest, but whoever has the cup in his bag will become my master's slave, but the others will be considered blameless, innocent," vs. 10. On the spot and immediately, all of the sacks were opened. The steward opened every bag slowly, and meticulously, beginning with Reuben on down the brothers by age. No cup was found through the first ten bags, but when the last son's (Benjamin's) sack was opened, the early sun's rays gleamed from Joseph's bright silver cup. All of the other brother's eyes became fixed upon, first, Benjamin, and then, upon the steward. The brothers tore their garments in remorse and reloaded their donkeys. They were taken back to Joseph's mansion where he was waiting for them. All eleven brothers fell prostrate upon the floor before "that man," and Joseph said to them, "It is not understandable that you would believe that you could be excused from such evil as stealing my silver cup. Don't you know that I have insight (am astute) about such things as you have done?" Judah was the spokesman for the eleven brothers and said, "We are speechless about what recompense would be appropriate to our lord,

but one thing is sure, we are all guilty for this evil against our lord. We are all my lord's servants along with the one who had the cup in his sack." Here Judah is making a bid for corporate guilt rather than singling out their kid brother as guilty alone. This position (corporate) illustrated for Joseph that the ten brothers were not only protecting Benjamin but that they were taking into account the wishes of their father, Jacob. They had told Joseph before why Benjamin was not allowed by their father to make the first journey, Jacob feared for his hurt or life.

II. Joseph refused to accept the corporate plea for what appeared to be Benjamin's sin. Rather, Joseph said, "God forbid that I should follow your suggestion, but the man in whose hand the cup was found, he shall be my slave. As for you others, you can go in peace back to your father," vs. 17. Judah was unwilling to accept Joseph's decision and approached the king's supreme commander. Judah begged Joseph to hear what he had to say, "speak a word in my lord's ears," vs. 18. "Please don't be angry with us, for we are aware that you speak with the authority of the Pharaoh (king). When we were here before, you inquired about our family, about whether we had a father or another brother back in Canaan. We told you the truth by informing you that our father was back home with our young brother. One of our father's sons died, leaving only one other son of the dead son's mother. Benjamin is the son whom our father loves above everyone else in the world, for his mother has died. You asked us to bring the youngest son to see you, and we made known that to separate permanently this youngest son from our father would surely kill him. Benjamin is here only because you insisted that he be present, before you would permit us to buy food to save the lives of our families. Before we left home our father told us, 'Benjamin was the only son left of his mother, because the other son was torn to pieces by wild beasts. I have not seen him since. If you take the only other son of my dead son's mother, I will surely die.'" Judah continues, "Our father's life depends upon the return of Benjamin, because his life is bound up in the lad's life, (vss. 30-31). I, Judah your servant, am surety for the lad's return to Canaan and to our father, for I have taken a solemn oath: If I bring him not back to you [Jacob], then I will bear the blame for ever. In view of this oath, my lord, let me, your servant, remain with you as your slave instead of the lad. Let him return with his brothers for the sake of our father." This long, compassionate discourse by Judah delivered before Joseph, the chief authority in Egypt, is one of the most touching pleas of all times.

III. Judah's plea reminds me of some significant discourses in the New Covenant: Peter's message to those assembled in Jerusalem at Pentecost after Jesus' ascension (Acts 2:14-41), and Peter's revelation of God's Gospel being also for the Gentiles at Acts 10:34-48; 15:6-11; Stephen's message to Jewish religious leaders at Acts 7:2-60; Paul's testimony concerning his own miraculous acceptance of Jesus as God's long promised Messiah, Savior and Lord (Acts 22:1-23); and the greatest plea of all the ages was Jesus' conversation (prayer) with God the Father for himself, his apostles, and those who believe in and trust him, John 17:1-26.

Aug. 9, 1998

"Joseph Identifies Himself"
Gen. 45

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. At the end of Chap. 44 we see the summary given by Judah, "For how shall I go up to my father then, and the lad [Benjamin] not be with me? Doubtless, I will see evil come on my father." Judah's relating the past events and then making of a final request of Joseph for leniency, because of Benjamin and his father, caused Joseph's emotions to overflow. He began to weep and ordered the steward and the other servants to leave the room. Finally, Joseph stood alone, in private, with his eleven brothers. He sobbed so audibly that those he had sent away could hear his groanings. "That man" said plainly, "I am Joseph; is my father really well?" This revelation of who Joseph was caused a profound fright and terror to come upon the eleven. No doubt Joseph spoke to them in Hebrew for the first time without the aid of an interpreter. This change of the language further heightened the eleven's fear and dread. Was Joseph crying because of what he felt he must do now to recompense them for all the evil that had befallen him? Their fear was expressed by drawing away from Joseph. Joseph said, "I beg you to come near to me." They followed his bidding by gathering near him, and Joseph repeated, "I am Joseph your brother whom you sold into Egypt. Don't be in sorrow or angry with yourselves because of your previous actions that brought me here, for God did send me [to Egypt] ahead of you to preserve [your] lives. The famine has been under way for only two years, but there will be yet five more years. During that five years, crops will not grow and produce grain. God sent me here to govern and thereby preserve our posterity by a great deliverance. Really, it was not your doing that brought me here, but God it was who has made me a father [political creator] of all of Pharaoh's national policies, supervising his affairs for the entire nation. I want you to go quickly to our father and tell him that his son Joseph has been made by God the lord of all of Egypt. Tell him to come to see me without delay. He should bring the entire family, and I will have a place for all of you over in Goshen. Also, bring all of your possessions including your herds, etc. I will provide for all of you since, during the next five years, you could be reduced to utter poverty. Don't forget that your eyes have seen and your ears have heard firsthand from Joseph himself, including my brother Benjamin, that I am, in fact, Joseph, the son whom God has blessed. Tell my father of all my success [glory] in Egypt." He wants his father to know of his accomplishments and notoriety which they had personally witnessed. Joseph repeated his desire that they hurry and bring their father, their families, and all their possessions down to Egypt so that he could care for them. He then kissed his kid brother Benjamin and cried for joy "upon his neck" as well as the other ten. His expressions of love for them satisfied his brothers that he was sincere and intended them no harm, and they talked together for a long time.

II. The news of Joseph's brothers' coming, soon ran through the rumor mill so that even the Pharaoh learned of the news. Joseph's pleasure from their visit pleased the Pharaoh and not only because of Joseph's value to the nation, but also because this Pharaoh

was very probably a Hyksos descendant. Joseph had at this time been in Egypt for about twenty-two years. He was seventeen when he was sold to Potiphar as a slave, thirty when he was taken to stand before the king to interpret the two dreams which had taken nine years (seven prosperous and two of drought) to fulfill, to the time of the brothers' second visit to Egypt. Truly, Joseph had been of outstanding, excellent service to Egypt and its king. I noted above what many historians today believe, that the Pharaohs over Egypt during this period were from among the Hyksos. The name Hyksos, or "Shepherd Kings," was given to the earliest invaders of Egypt, and were noted by the Hebrew historian Josephus as a race associated with the Israelites (Apion, 1,14). These Shepherd Kings ruled Egypt for five hundred and eleven years but were then driven out by the kings of Thebias (Thebes). The name "Hyksos is a combination of the two words, "Hyc," meaning "a king", and, "Sos," meaning "a shepherd" according to Josephus. Encyclopaedia Britannica quotes Josephus as its source of information for its article on Hyksos which also refers to the Hyksos as "the name of the earliest invaders of Egypt." Assuming this information to be factual, and I believe it is, makes more understandable the Pharaoh in Joseph's day as being kind to Joseph and his family. I believe that this arrangement of God's plan for creating the nation of Israel (Jacob), by Jacob's immediate family, to be a major part of God's plan to bring his Son and Messiah, Jesus, to the world for both the Jews and us Gentiles. This long range plan of God expands our knowledge of his great love for us, in that we can see the tremendous price God paid for our eternal life through our faith and trust in his Son Jesus, our Savior and Lord.

III. The king's favorable reaction to Joseph's family's coming to join Joseph in Egypt was given immediate and effective implementation when Pharaoh commanded Joseph, "to tell his brothers to load their donkeys with food and return to Canaan. Further, return to Egypt with your father, your brothers and their families, all of their possessions, and I will see that they are provided with the best that rich Egypt can furnish (the fat of the land)," vs. 18. Further, the king commanded Joseph to send large Egyptian wagons sufficient to transport Jacob and all his children and their families. You need not bring foodstuffs, for all of Egypt's supplies are at your disposal. Joseph then gave all his brothers a changing of clothes and food for the journey, but to Benjamin he gave five changes of clothing and three hundred pieces of silver. Additionally, he sent his father twenty donkeys loaded with a variety of food. When they reached Canaan and their father, Jacob could not believe their message, but when he saw the Egyptian, large wagons (chariot size carts), which Joseph had sent, he believed. Jacob declared, "I am so pleased that my son Joseph is alive; I will go see him before I die." The fact that God's Word gives assurance that God has not nor will ever forget the Israelites should reinforce our faith in his promise to us Gentiles, and to all who will believe concerning our eternal life through faith in Jesus, John 3:16-18; 14:1-3,6-7,26-28; Rom. 11:1-7,11-32; II Cor. 1:18-22; Eph. 1:13-14; Rev. 7:1-4. With God's faithful promise to us, we are free to love and serve him with all our beings, Mk 12:29-31.

Aug. 23, 1998

"Jacob Moves To Egypt"
Gen. 4 6

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. When Jacob was given first hand information about his favorite son Joseph's being alive after some twenty-two years, he at first refused to believe the story, "his heart fainted, for he believed them not." After seeing the huge wagons which Pharaoh himself had sent with supplies, then "the spirit of Jacob revived." One of the weapons of war which made Egypt one of the leading military forces in the east Mediterranean Sea area in this era was the chariot for rapid changing of troops and armaments. The large wheeled carts were also used for distributing food and fiber products over long distances during peace time. These vehicles were concrete evidence to Jacob that Egypt's authority had been exercised on his behalf. Israel (Jacob) agreed to go down to Egypt to visit with Joseph, "before I die." Very probably the patriarch did not have in mind making a permanent move, but rather, that he would go down to Egypt to visit with Joseph and return to his home in Canaan at Hebron. Jacob remembered that both his father and grandfather, Isaac and Abraham, had had trouble down in Egypt. At Gen. 26:2 the Lord appeared to Isaac and specifically told him not to go to Egypt as Abraham his father had done. Later at Beersheba Isaac met the Lord who promised him not to fear, for he, the Lord, would continue to be with him and protect him, Gen. 26:23-25. As Jacob went to Egypt at Joseph's request, he felt uneasy about making a trip to Egypt even though he wanted desperately to see his long lost favorite son Joseph. Now he was on his way with all his earthly possessions along with all his sons and their families and their possessions. Just to be sure that he was doing God's bidding, he stopped at Beersheba, about thirty miles from Hebron, to worship God (offered sacrifices), as Isaac his father had done years before as noted above. There "the God of his father Isaac spoke unto Israel and said, 'Jacob, Jacob - - I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt, for I will there make of you a great nation, ' vs. 1-4. Jacob now had the assurance of God for his going. His going down to Egypt was in direct contrast with what God had told his father Isaac. Obviously the different circumstances called for a different directive from God. In retrospect we can see the difference: Isaac had only two sons, one who had little desire to pursue spiritual goals, Esau. The other, Jacob, however, had twelve sons who were willing to serve God and who could people a new nation. After Jacob had received the clearance from the God he believed to be beyond reproach, he "rose up from Beerssheba [and] the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, their little ones, and their wives in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry them," vs.5. In the promise made by God to Jacob is a detail that thrilled him: "I will go down with you into Egypt; and I will surely bring you up again although you will be with Joseph when you die," vs. 4.

II. We noted above that Jacob's offspring were to become the geneological basis for a large nation down in Egypt, the nation of Israel. A good part of this chapter (vss. 7-27) is given to establish the human spring from which flowed the great host of Israelis, between

two and three million souls about four hundred and thirty years later than the time of Chap. 46, Exod. 12:40; Gal. 3:15-17. In this section are listed all the sons of Jacob arranged by his two wives and two concubines, Leah, Zilpah, Rachel, and Bilhah with their sons under each of the four. Vs. 27 gives the total count of Jacob and his offspring as seventy who constituted the embryo of Hebrews who grew into the entire nation of Israel over the next four hundred and thirty years. A detailed examination of vss. 7-27 gives the following facts taken into account for the seventy to be justified: Judah's sons Er and Onan died in Canaan and his two grandsons (sons of Pharez) were included with Jacob and Leah to make the thirty-three, vs. 15; Jacob's sons by Zilpah are given as sixteen which excludes a daughter named Serah, vs. 18; Joseph and his two sons were already in Egypt but are included in the fourteen offspring of Jacob and Rachel, vs. 22; Bilhah's children and grandchildren are counted as seven, vs. 25. One should note that Jacob's daughter by Leah, Dinah, is not given in this listing in Chap. 46; see Gen. 30:21. The sixty-six count noted in vs. 26 does not include Joseph, his wife and two sons which are included in the seventy count in vs. 27. This laborious account of all these people should not be considered unimportant, because God had promised Jacob that he would make of him a great nation in Egypt, vs. 3. Every aspect of this process is miraculous as we shall see in our study of the remainder of Genesis and the Book of Exodus. Why should Moses have given this genealogical accounting in Chap. 46? One reason is that it shows God's servant Jacob and how he had progressed spiritually from a fleshly disposition living in Haran, to a belief in his own strength in Canaan, and finally, with a firm faith in God's will now in Egypt. Most of our lives in our day climb Jacob's spiritual ladder as we grow in God's grace, Eph. 4:12-32; II Pet. 3:17-18. The second reason for this detailed genealogical account is that from these seventy people will come the most important person in all of human history, Jesus, God's Son and Savior of the world, Matt. 1:1-3; Lk 3:33-34.

III. Evidently Judah had become the spokesman for the tribe of Jacob. Remember it was he who spoke for the eleven brothers to Joseph to save Benjamin from Egyptian slavery, or so Judah thought. Judah even volunteered self-servitude so that Benjamin could be sent back to his father. When this host of Jews reached Egypt, Jacob sent Judah to Joseph to tell him that they were in the area of Goshen and to learn exactly where Joseph wanted them to locate. Joseph dropped everything he was doing (affairs of state), had his chariot readied, and went up to Goshen. Joseph presented himself to Israel, his father. The two embraced for the first time in twenty-two years, and what a meeting it was! Joseph fell on Jacob's neck and shed tears of joy, "a good while," vs. 29. Israel said to his favorite son Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face, and you are alive," vs. 30. Joseph said to his family that he would go and inform Pharaoh of their arrival to be with Joseph. He wanted to be sure that Pharaoh understood their trade to be shepherds and that they had brought their flocks with them. Goshen was an area where shepherding would be excellent, the best in Egypt. Egyptians considered shepherds to be loathsome people, vs. 34.

Jacob's Seventy in Goshen - Gen. 46 Supplement - 8-23-98

Jacob

Reuben

Hanoch

Phallu

Simeon

Jemuel

Jamin

Zohar

Levi

Gershon

Kohath

Judah

Er, died in Canaan, not counted

Onan, died in Canaan, not counted

Shelah

Zarah

Issachar

Tola

Phuvah

Zebulun

Sered

Jamleel

*LEAH - 33 PERSONS

Gad

Ziphion

Haggai

Eri

Asher

Jimnah

Ishuah

Serah. sister, not counted

*ZILPAH - 16 PERSONS

Joseph

Manasseh and Ephraim (already in Egypt but counted)

Benjamin

Belah

Becher

Naaman

Rosh

Ard

*RACHEL - 14 PERSONS, Rachel not counted - died in Canaan

Dan

Hushim

Naphtali

Jahzeel

Jazer

*BILHAH - 7 PERSONS, Bilhah not counted - died in Canaan

[33 + 16 + 14 + 7 = 70 PERSONS, Gen. 46:27]

Wendell Alford,

Teacher

Hezron

Carmi

Ohad

Jachin

Shaul

Merari

Pharez, sons: Heron, Hamul

Job

Shimron

Elon

Shumi

Ezbon

Arodi

Areli

Isui

Beriah, sons: Heber, Malchiel

Ashbel

Gera

Ehi

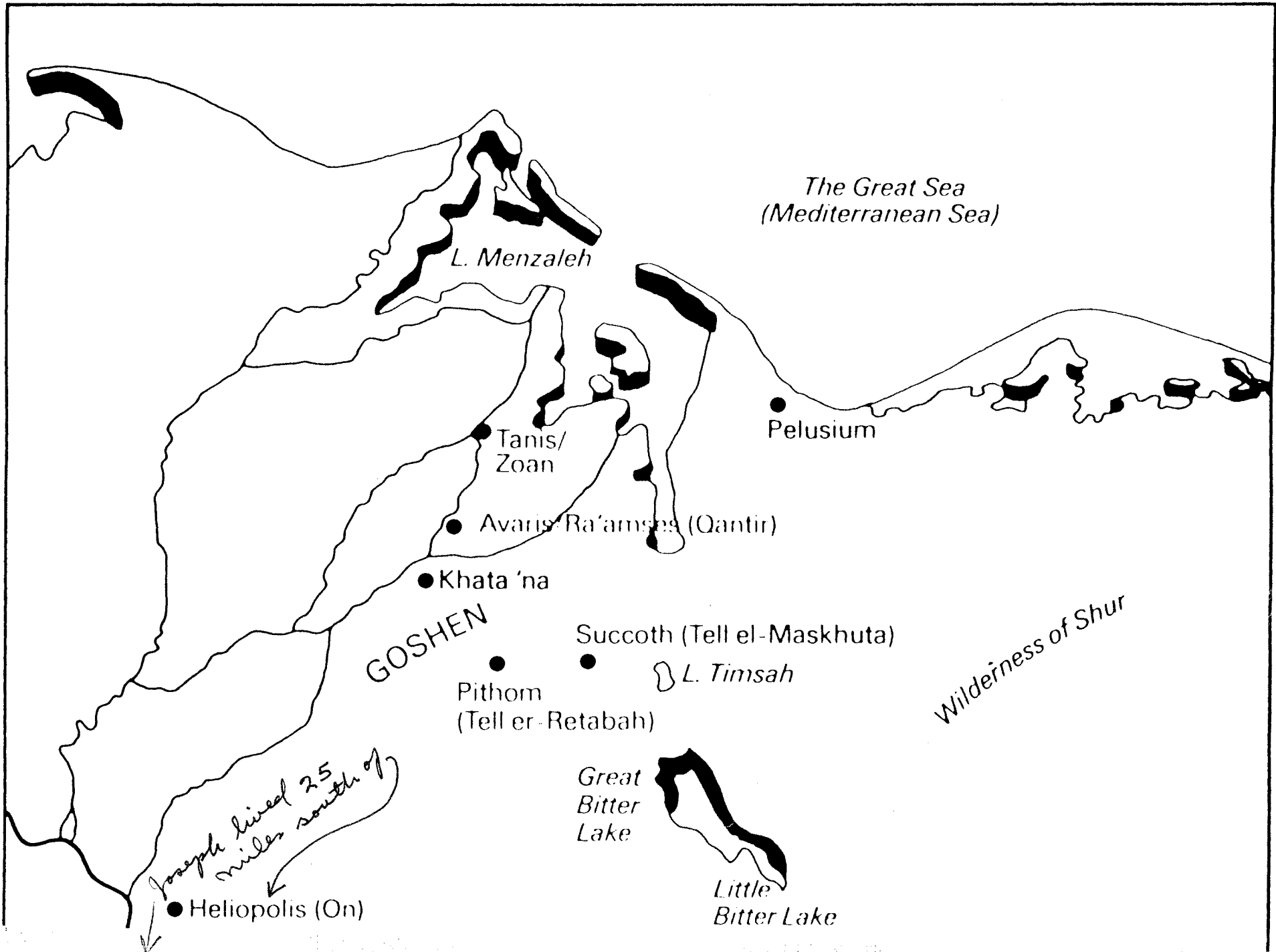
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Gum

Shillem

GOSHEN



Aug. 30, 1998

"Jacob's Family In Goshen"
Gen. 47

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Can you imagine what poor Jacob was experiencing as he was being uprooted from his homeland in Canaan and moved to a strange land in Egypt? The big prize and consolation for him in the move was that he was to join his best loved person on earth, Joseph, whom he had not seen for over two decades and had thought was dead! That son was the first born of Rachel his dearly beloved who had been dead for years. Jacob had learned that, not only was Joseph alive, his favorite son had become a prime political figure in the rich nation of Egypt, the nation with ample foodstuffs during a deep drought being felt in the entire area. No less excited about the move was that son Joseph. We have learned that he had wept from the joy of seeing his brothers again after their long separation, but in the second encounter with them and his brother Benjamin, his sobbing was so audible throughout his huge mansion that the neighbors knew. And now his father Jacob was coming to live in Egypt where Joseph could care for his whole family, a total of seventy persons including himself, his father and his brothers' family members. Joseph had promptly joined the group of Israelites as soon as they had reached Goshen in northeast Egypt. After joining his family, Joseph's next priority was to have them meet the king of Egypt and settle the assignment of their location in Goshen.

II. The Scripture does not state that Joseph had Pharaoh's permission for Jacob and the group from Canaan to live in Goshen before Joseph invited them down, Gen. 45:10. At Gen. 46:34 Joseph had instructed Jacob and the others to tell Pharaoh that their occupation related to herding flocks of animals such as cattle, sheep and goats, i.e., livestock. This prompting would encourage Pharaoh to agree to the Goshen area, an area where fewer Egyptians lived, for "every shepherd is loathsome unto the Egyptians." Fewer Egyptians lived in Goshen, because that area was the delta of the Nile where annual flooding was expected. Plant growth there maintained perpetual pasture lands for animal production. It is evident, seen in retrospect, that God was planning that in Goshen he would rear the nation of Israel in a rather secluded section of Egypt, separated from the major population areas of the nation. The Israelites remained in the Goshen area during the hundreds of years they grew and sojourned in Egypt.

III. Joseph chose a time which he considered appropriate to tell Pharaoh that his father Jacob and his entire family was up in Goshen. He told the king, "My father and my brothers along with their flocks, herds and all their possessions are come from Canaan to Goshen," vs. 1. For this meeting Joseph took only five of his brothers and Jacob his father. First, he introduced the brothers to Pharaoh, and, in the conversation, the young men were asked their abilities in supporting themselves and their families. They respectfully informed Pharaoh that they, as their forefathers had been, were shepherds of livestock. Remember at Chap. 46:34 Joseph had told his brothers to emphasize this fact to Pharaoh, "that we may dwell in the land of Goshen." Joseph was very intelligent and had calcula-

ted this arrangement would permit his people to have the advantage of the most appropriate land in Egypt for livestock farming. In addition, the Israelites would be somewhat isolated from the main population centers of the Egyptians. Most Egyptians were, in a sense at this time, a subjugated people to the ruling class, the Hyksos Pharaohs (Semites) whom we discussed at Chap. 45,II. Before Moses' day these Shepherd Kings were overcome by a ruling class, from the long-term Egyptians who were not Semites, but Hamites, Exod. 1:8. After introducing the five brothers to the king, Joseph brought in and introduced his father Jacob. The king's first question to Jacob concerned his age. Note that Jacob's answer was self-deprecating, "The days of my sojourning has been one hundred and thirty years. My life has been shorter and less noteworthy than my forefathers," vs. 9. What a change in the disposition of Jacob, the Supplanter or Deceitful One, who took his brother Esau by the heel, even during birth! He who had by deceit become rich at the expense of his father-in-law Laban over in Haran! He who had been and was the father of twelve sons! Jacob had obviously become a humble servant of his and his forefathers' God, the Creator. This concept of his being subservient to the God of Heaven made Jacob feel that he should bless the Pharaoh who had been so gracious to his favorite son Joseph, Gen. 22:16-17; Heb. 6:13-20. So, Jacob blessed Pharaoh as he was leaving the king's palace. Since Joseph had already placed his families in Goshen, the Pharaoh agreed that Joseph could give his people possession of the land in Egypt in the Goshen area. This portion of land was known as "the land of Rameses," and it was from here that the Israelites began the Exodus back to the land of Canaan hundreds of years later, Exod. 1:11. By this time in the drought of seven years, food became extremely scarce in both Egypt and Canaan. Joseph gave special attention to his family in Goshen and saw that they received all they needed.

IV. In vss. 14-22 we learn the events which occurred the remaining three or four years of the seven-year drought. The surplus grain which Joseph had stored in the population centers (cities) over all Egypt during the seven productive years became the only source of life sustaining food availing in both Egypt and Canaan, vs. 14. For a long while everyone continued to pay for the grain from the government storage bins. People's money was depleted before the drought ended, and the citizens began exchanging their other assets (livestock, land, etc.) at Joseph's instructions. The final exchange for food from the people to the government was the land itself. In this transaction the Pharaoh became the owner of all the land of Egypt. The citizens were moved in from the rural areas to the cities. The only exceptions to the land repossession was for the Israelites and the priests. Near the end of the seventh year of the drought, Joseph, knowing that the land would produce grain the following year, gave seed for planting the next year. Joseph issued an edict that thereafter in Egypt all farmers would pay to the government one-fifth of all crops produced, except from the land of the priests. The chapter ends with Israel asking Joseph to swear that when he (Jacob) died, he would be taken back to Canaan for burial. Joseph promised to do so, but why was this so important to Jacob? We shall see next Lord's Day.

Sept. 6, 1998

"Jacob's Last Illness"
Gen. 4 8

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Jacob is now one hundred forty-seven years of age, and, at the end of Chap. 47, he called his son Joseph to his bedside and made him swear by a solemn oath that he would not be buried in Egypt but back in Canaan. Joseph swore that he would follow Jacob's wishes. Why would Jacob be so convinced that his burial place should be back in the area where his forefathers were buried? We, as believers in Jesus Christ, need not be concerned about where our bodies are buried. Jesus, our Lord, has promised us that the very day our spirits depart our temporary, fleshly bodies, our beings (spirits, personalities), will go to be with the Lord, Lk 23:43. Further, God's promise in his Word is that our spirits will be brought back by Jesus to earth and clothed upon with new bodies, I Thes. 4:13-18. Jesus spoke of that time in Matt. 24:36-44 (Mk 13:32-37; Lk 21:34-36), and Paul outlines this event in God's Word to us at I Cor. 15:49-58. I believe that when Jesus comes for all believers, those "asleep (physically dead) in Jesus," I Thes. 4:15a-17, will be taken to the New Jerusalem, Rev. 4:1; 19:7-10; 21:2-5. But only those Jews who have accepted Jesus as God's Messiah (Savior), e.g., Paul, Peter, etc., after Jesus was resurrected from physical death, those "asleep in Jesus," are right with God according to the New Covenant. However, the Old Covenant persons who died with faith in God's promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will receive the promise made first to Abraham as a result of his faith in God's promise, Gen. 12:1-4; 15:18. This promise to the Jews concerned earthly affairs which, I believe, will be fulfilled when Jesus returns to receive his bride, the ecclesia, Heb. 1~~1~~:39-40. God's kingdom will be set up at that time and will be further tested for one thousand years, Rev. 20:3,5, before the new earth, Rev. 21:1, continues on beyond the events recorded in the Scriptures. All of the Jews with faith in God's promise to Abraham and his posterity who lived and died physically on earth before Jesus said on the cross, "It is finished," John 19:30, will be citizens of the new earthly Kingdom of Heaven, Heaven on earth. How can this be? The answer is given in Ezek. 37:9-14 in which, note the clause in Ezek. 37:14, "and I shall place you in your own land." Which land belongs to Israel? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel) promised all three, Gen. 15:18; 22:18; 26:3-5; 35:10-12, the land "from the river of Egypt (Nile) unto the great river, the river Euphrates," Gen. 15:18, cited above. This land, I believe, will be the headquarters from which the Jews will rule the world from Jerusalem under the Spirit of the Lord Jesus during the thousand years following Jesus' return to earth, Isa. 2:1-5. Jacob wanted to be near headquarters when he is resurrected! While the Jewish nation's hope is on a purged earth, our (believers in Jesus Christ) hope is the New Jerusalem (Heaven) and Jesus' Presence. Jacob's desire to be buried in Canaan emphasized his ardent faith in God's promise.

II. Joseph stayed very busy with the affairs of state, but he maintained a consistent vigilance regarding the welfare of his father Jacob and his family up in the land of Rameses, Goshen. One of Joseph's officers, perhaps, or one of his brothers reported to

Joseph that Jacob was terminally ill. Joseph's reaction was to take his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, who were over seventeen years old at this time, to see Jacob. When they arrived, Jacob garnered his failing strength, sat on the side of his bed, and began an autobiographical resume of his experiences with God. He told how God Almighty had appeared to him at Luz back in Canaan, where the Lord had addressed him from the top of a ladder which reached from earth to heaven. Messengers (angels) of God used the ladder to move between earth and heaven, Gen. 28:12-19; John 1:50-51. Jacob repeated the threefold promise of God to him there: to bless Jacob, to multiply his descendants into a vast multitude, and finally, to "give this land Canaan to those descendants for an everlasting possession," vss. 3-4. Jacob acknowledged before Joseph that the two sons would be inheriting land later along with each of his other sons. This equality was especially important as the tribes occupied land while establishing Israel as a nation later in Canaan, and ignored the fact that their mother was Asenath, an Egyptian and daughter of an Egyptian priest, On, Gen. 41:51.

III. Jacob's relating his life story now notes the death of his beloved wife Rachel. She died in his presence as the family traveled from Haran in Mesopotamia back to Hebron, Isaac's home. Her death occurred just after God had appeared again to Jacob. God repeated his name change from Jacob (Supplanter) to Israel (God Strives, relating to Jacob's wrestling with God's messenger at Gen. 32:31; 35:9-13. The first appearance of the Lord to Jacob at Luz (Bethlehem) left him crippled at his hip for life. Rachel then died on this journey just before they reached Ephrath (Bethlehem) while giving birth to Benjamin, her second child. With blurred eyes (due to his old age) Jacob asked Joseph, "Who are these two with you?" Joseph replied, "They are my sons whom God has given to me here," and Jacob asked him to bring them closer for a better view. With Manasseh (older) and Ephraim at his arms length, he embraced and kissed each lovingly. Jacob was to bless them as he placed his hands upon their heads according to custom. Joseph had brought them up to Jacob so that Jacob's right hand would rest upon Manasseh, the older, but evidently Jacob deliberately crossed his hands and placed his right hand upon Ephraim, the younger. The right hand passed the superior blessing, also according to custom. Before he blessed the sons Jacob said, "I never expected to see you (Joseph) again, and, not only have I seen you and how God has blessed you, but here God has permitted me to see your two sons." Joseph protested to Jacob that he was about to give his younger the prime blessing, but Jacob said, "I know it, my son, I know it, [Old age is not the problem!], both shall be great, but the younger shall be greater," vs. 19. Jacob assured Joseph that when the land in Canaan is divided between the tribes, those under Manasseh and Ephraim will be greater than either of the other sons. Jacob said, "I have given to you (Joseph) one portion more than your brothers which I took from the Amorite with my sword and bow," Gen. 34:25-31; vs. 22. The place in Canaan referred to by Jacob here is at Sychar on the West Bank of the Jordan River today, and still in dispute between Israel and the Palestinians. Note also John 4:1-6,25-26 where Jesus talked with the Samaritan women.

I. We left Jacob at the end of Chap. 48 on his deathbed where he blessed Joseph's two sons and assured Joseph that they were to be an integral part of Jacob's inheritance back in Canaan. All of today's chapter finds Jacob's last moments at that deathbed. After making sure that Joseph and his two sons were accounted for in the future of his family, Jacob called all of his sons to his bedside, "that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days," vs. 1. The phrase, "in the last days" is very significant as Jacob is looking ahead, prophetically, for thousands of years. Later Moses viewed the nation of Israel as made up of the twelve tribes of Israel which Jacob emphasized in Gen. 49. Moses' reference to the tribes in his last days is given in Deut. 33 just before his death, and he relates the nation of Israel as divided but still recipients of the Lord's promise at Deut. 34:4, "This is the land which I swore unto Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it unto your descendants (seed).'" (A detailed description of the tribes' geographic boundaries can be located at Josh. 13-21.) But Jacob's prophecy continues on through the Old Covenant, the New Covenant, and to the last book in the Bible at Rom. 11:25-28; Rev. 7:3-8.

II. Jacob, I believe, mustered his strength for one last testimony to his assembled twelve sons after he had blessed the two sons of Jacob. To formalize his last remarks he raised himself to his feet and put part of his weight upon his staff (Heb. 11:21). He regularly used a walking cane which had been his habit since wrestling with God's angel as a young man on his way to Haran from Hebron at Gen. 32:25, 31-32. Leaning upon his staff, Jacob began with his oldest son Reuben telling what each tribe should expect for his descendants in the years to follow. Although Reuben was his firstborn, the beginning of Jacob's issue and the first expression of his dignity and power, Reuben is as "unstable as water." Because of Reuben's lack of self-control, he demonstrated his weakness when he "went up to his father's bed, defiling it" with Jacob's concubine, Bilhah, Gen. 35:22. "- - you will not excel," Jacob told Reuben. Simeon and Levi were brothers of the same mother, Leah, but they had shown examples of violence when they, in vengeance, murdered Hamor and Shechem after Shechem had raped their sister Dinah, Gen. 34:1,2,25-26. Levi's tribe will be divided and not given land of their own, but scattered throughout Israel as the priests of the nation. Jacob's prophecy concerning Judah is particularly noteworthy since, in retrospect, we know that from Judah's line came the great King David from whom, according to the flesh, came Mary the mother of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah, Matt. 1:1-2,16. Jesus asked the Pharisees on an occasion whose son the Messiah would be when he comes, Matt. 22:41-46. They answered, "The son of David," and Jesus quoted Psa. 110:1 where David said, "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.'" That prophecy is being fulfilled today and has been in progress since Jesus ascended back to the Father in Acts 1:9-11. Peter at Acts 2:25-35 noted that David, in the lineage of Judah, was the progenitor

of Jesus, "according to the flesh." Jacob could state prophetically at Gen. 49:10, that "the scepter (rule)" shall not depart from Judah until Shiloh come. Truly Jesus was from the seed of a woman (Gen. 3:15) whose seed (Jesus, the Messiah - Savior) would eventually destroy the offspring of Satan. Shiloh means "tranquility," and Jacob is prophesying that the world will know lasting peace only when God's Messiah puts down all of Satan's influence on the earth, Rev. 20:10; 21:1-5. Jesus is coming back to earth to reign, and this will happen only after the earth has been purged of Satanic influence as given in the Revelation of God through John on the Island of Patmos. Shiloh shall come to gather his people to himself, vs. 10; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11. Jacob knew of this and associated the final result of God's actions to come through his son Judah. Through vs. 12 Jacob has already explained the future of the posterity of his oldest son Reuben, then Simeon's and Levi's descendents of the sons who have been rash and hot tempered. Lastly, he has predicted the glorious future of the offspring of Judah who will include Shiloh which is the period of lasting peace under the lordship of our Lord.

III. In vss. 13 through 28 the patriarch Jacob continues prophesying the future of his other eight sons. Zebulun is to dwell near the sea (Mediterranean) and extend eastward to Sidon. Issachar is to be the working backbone of the nation Israel. The two tribes Zebulun and Issachar will become in the northern area the workers and producers of income (through fees for passage). Dan will be the tribe which will act as the stealthy spies to lead the Israelites in rebellions. The main force which formed the glue holding the various tribes together was their common loyalty to the one true God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the subsequent hatred of false gods, idolatry. The Asher and Naphtali tribes are to be noted for their production of choice food and communication skills. Joseph would continue to be a strong witness to God's direction to the Israelites as he had been as a youngster newly transported from Canaan to Egypt. Ephraim and Manasseh in Jacob's prophesy here are the two sons of Joseph and who are to represent Joseph later in the land of Canaan as tribes of Israel. These two tribes were people of strong political positions. At the time the kingdom divided into two nations, Israel and Judah, these two tribes were the leaders of Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Only David's strong military leadership could bring the two components back together. But after David's son Solomon reigned, the two nations again divided. Israel ceased being a nation in 975 BC whereas Judah remained a nation until 536 BC, about one hundred and thirty-five years later. When Jesus was here the first time, the central area of Palestine was known as Samaria with Galilee to the north and Judea to the south. Jesus witnessed to the Samaritans as noted at John 4:3-43. In vss. 27-28 Jacob relates Benjamin's tribe in the nation of Israel and blesses all twelve sons. After blessing them all, Jacob announced that he is about to die and be "gathered to his people." "Bury me with my fathers," Jacob told them, Gen. 23:16-20. His spirit was "gathered to his people," and we shall see what happened to his body next week in the final chapter, Chap. 50.

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"Joseph Buries Jacob And Dies"
Gen. 5 0

Couples Class
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I. At the end of Chap. 49 Jacob died and joined his forefathers (was gathered to his people). When he died (physically) his spirit went where Abraham and Isaac were, but his body is dealt with in the chapter we examine today. When Joseph saw that his father Jacob had expired, he fell upon his face and kissed him. Joseph ordered the Egyptian morticians (physicians) to embalm his father. This process required forty days, but the custom of the Egyptians was to mourn the death of a notable one for seventy days. Jacob was mourned for the full seventy days. We should at this point, I believe, examine some aspects of Egyptian history and the why and methods of human preparation when one dies. Most historians relegate the early history of Egypt into thirty-one dynasties from antiquity (prehistoric) through the thirty-first dynasty which ended in 332 BC during the pinnacle of power of the Persian Empire and the capture of Egypt by Alexander the Great for the Greeks in 331 BC. Persia and Greece constituted the second and third empires (beasts) of Daniel's prophecy at Dan. 7:5-6. I believe that Joseph was in Egypt during the sixteenth dynasty (about 1800 BC), because that period was when the Hyksos ruled. Remember that they were from Arabia and known as Shepherd Kings as we noted in our study at Gen. 45,II. Most Egyptians were Hamites while the ruling Shepherd Kings were Semites. By Moses' time, about four hundred years later, the Hamitic Egyptians had overcome the Shepherd Kings and reinstalled dynasties of native Hamites as rulers.

II. Joseph had become an avid believer in his father's God, Jehovah, during his first seventeen years before he was sold into slavery into Egypt. Egyptians were worshipers of idols and practiced polytheism, not the one, true God, but Joseph's faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob never wavered. The Egyptians believed that after death a person would live again within the same body occupied during mortal life. We believers in Jesus, God's Son and Savior, believe that when we return with Jesus, we will experience a resurrection but will occupy a new, supernatural body, I Cor. 15:51-58; II Cor. 5:1-8; I Thes. 4:14. The Egyptians' belief caused them to attempt to save their mortal bodies as near as possible in their physical state after death as they had been while alive. The result involved embalming and/or mummification. This process involved removing the viscera (internal organs) and filling the empty torso with substances to preserve the corpse as near as possible to its state before death occurred. In addition to placing preservatives internally, the entire body was submerged in a solution of salt or natron (sodium carbonate) for some time. The whole process took from forty to seventy days. Embalming in our day consists of removing the arterial contents (blood) and replacing it with gallons of formaldehyde as a preservative, glycerol to counteract dehydration, and borax to keep the blood liquid before removal. [My information on mummification and embalming was taken from the Encyclopaedia Britannica.] Some understanding is necessary to realize how Jacob's body was transported from Goshen in Egypt all the way back to Hebron in Canaan at donkey speed. Such a move would

have been impractical without the excellent Egyptian expertise in the preparation of corpses. Joseph's body was also mummified later by the Egyptians, vs. 25-26; Exod. 13:19.

III. When the days of mourning Jacob's death was completed, Joseph notified the Pharaoh of his sworn promise to return Jacob's body to Canaan for interment. When Pharaoh learned of Joseph's oath to his father, Joseph told the monarch that he would return to Egypt when the burial was finished. Pharaoh agreed that Joseph should keep the oath made to Jacob. This burial procession must have been one of, if not the, longest and largest funeral procession in all of human history. Joseph left Egypt to return to the area of his birth for the first time after about three decades in Egypt. As he went, all the staff of Pharaoh from all over Egypt were with Joseph and his family. The only members of Jacob's family which were not in the entourage were the little children. The livestock herds of Jacob's family were not taken, i.e., Pharaoh sent the necessary foodstuff for the trip. "A very great company" of chariots and horsemen were included in the procession. The distance of the journey was approximately six hundred miles, one way, if I have calculated the route taken correctly. The Bible does not indicate precisely, but Verses 10-13 state that the great host went to Atad "beyond the Jordan." Therefore, they went south of the Dead Sea to the east side of the Jordan and across that river to Hebron. They buried mummified Jacob with Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, and Leah in the cave which Abraham had bought as a burial plot, Gen. 23:13-20; 49:29-32; vs. 13. After the burial Joseph and all the group returned to Egypt. Without Jacob Joseph's brothers feared that Joseph would finally take retribution against them for their earlier mistreatment in Joseph's youth. Joseph wept when they confronted him with that proposition, and said, "Fear not, I am not God. - - you thought evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as has happened, to save many people alive," vss. 18-20. Joseph took care of all of Jacob's family and lived to see his (Joseph's) own great-great-grandchildren, vs. 23. Joseph died at age one hundred ten, was embalmed, and put in a coffin in Egypt.

IV. The chief highlights of our study of the first book of God's Word, Genesis, include for me, the following: Almighty God is the Creator of mankind and all that mankind knows and knows about. Mankind was a creature and a part of God's creation whom God first created in his own image, i.e., with a potential to be quickened (made spiritually alive, at one with God) by God as his Holy Spirit, an eternal being in God's likeness. On the seventh day (the last segment of creation-time, God's rest day), God breathed into one of his male creatures (made in God's image earlier) a living (spiritual) being, Gen. 1:26-27; 2:7. From the male human God made for the man a soul (spiritual)-mate. In God's likeness (eternal) the man and woman were permitted by God to choose right (that which pleases God and maintains oneness with him, spiritual life), or, wrong (that which displeases God and separates one from God, makes one spiritually dead). Both made the latter choice, and God immediately promised a plan of redemption potential for that broken fellowship, Gen. 3:15; Matt. 1:18-25; John 3:5-21; 4:24-26; 5:22-24.