

Chapter 35 Addendum – From Noah through the Period of the Judges

The Patriarchs

Abraham was the first major patriarch following the great flood of Noah. In about 2091 BC Abraham, at age 75 was called by God to become the father of a great and lasting nation providing he left his homeland in the wealthy city of Ur of the Chaldees and traveled 400 miles southwest to settle in Canaan. Although the area was widely settled at the time, Abraham was promised that his descendents would be given the land.

For Abraham this was a major test of faith. Certainly there was the issue of trusting in the promise of well being over a long, unknown journey to a new land. Moreover, there was the issue of Abraham's potential heir. His wife, the very beautiful **Sarah**, had been barren into her old age—long beyond normal childbearing years. Nevertheless, Abraham obeyed and traveled up around the Fertile Crescent through Haran (where his father died) to the eastern coast of the Mediterranean south into Canaan.

Fascinating Facts:

Ur of the Chaldees was a wealthy city by any culture's standards. Archaeologists have uncovered an enormous library attesting to vast financial strength and educational development. In addition to elaborate ancient palaces, gold, jewelry, artwork and tombs, many large 13-14 room two story villas have been found. Even Babylon during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar did not have such splendor.¹

Despite Abraham's faith in following the Lord's direction at first, when famine struck the area Abraham traveled south to Egypt with his nephew Lot, in search of food. There, rather than risk being attacked for his beautiful wife Sarah, he gave her to the pharaoh as his unmarried sister. Later after this act was discovered by a furious pharaoh who attributed recent plagues to the deception, Abraham was forced to leave. Sent on his way, Abraham returned to Canaan.

There Abraham and his nephew Lot decided to part ways due to the great size of the herds that needed more land to graze. Lot received his choice of area and selected the land closest to the Jordon River (the plains area where Sodom and Gomorrah lay).

Meanwhile, Abraham and Sarah had become discouraged regarding God's promise to provide an heir which caused them to arrange for Sarah's maidservant, Hagar to become the mother of Abraham's child Ishmael (who later became the father of the Arab nations). Time continued to pass and 13 years after Ishmael, when Abraham was 99, God appeared and repeated his promise of land and descendents to Abraham. This time God indicated the boy would be born within the year and should be named Isaac (which means "he laughs"). At this time, God also prescribed the ritual sign that all males be circumcised to mark the covenant between God and Abraham.

During the next year Abraham had occasion to plead with the Lord to save the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, where his nephew Lot lived, from destruction if an "adequate" number of righteous people could be found (Gen 18:23). After several rounds of bargaining, God allowed Lot and the family to escape but destroyed the cities anyway. Later that year, in an incident similar to in Egypt, Abraham moved to Gerar in the Negeb region and introduced Sarah as his sister to the local King Abimelech to save himself from others who might murder him to get to Sarah. Although the king didn't sleep with Sarah, he did have a dream warning him that "Behold, you are a dead man, because of the woman whom you have taken; for she is a man's wife" (Gen 20:3). As in Egypt, Abraham and Sarah were sent away, although this time with possessions and a promise that they could settle nearby wherever they so chose. Hence, despite Abraham's renowned faith, we see him repeatedly showing common human traits of fear to trust in God.

¹ Keller, Werner, *The Bible as History*, New York: Barnes and Nobel books, 1885, p. 40.

The promised miracle child, **Isaac**, was finally born. Shortly afterward, Sarah became very jealous of her maidservant's (Hagar's) child, Ishmael. It reached a point where Sarah demanded that Hagar and the child be cast out. Although at first loathe to do so, eventually Abraham acquiesced because God informed him that it would be through his son Isaac that his descendents would be blessed (Gen 21:12).

Fascinating Facts:

Ishmael became the father of the Arab nations. Isaac became the father of the Jewish people. Both came from Abraham. Yet there was discord at the outset between Sarah and Hagar, the former casting out the latter. The Christian Bible focuses on God's salvation through Jesus who descended from Isaac. The Koran focuses on Ishmael, whom Muhammad descended from. This is the original basis for the animosity between these two warring groups.

Abraham's most dramatic test of faith came when God asked him to sacrifice his "one and only son whom he loved," Isaac. Upon this request, Abraham, Isaac, his servants and a donkey loaded with wood and traveled for three days to the mountains of Moriah. When Isaac asked his father where the sacrificial lamb was, Abraham replied that "God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt offering" (Gen 22:8). Still, not hesitating, Abraham bound his son and placed him on the alter. It wasn't until Abraham's knife was set to complete the sacrifice that the Lord told Abraham to let the boy go, establishing that it was apparent that Abraham "feared God" and did not even withhold his only beloved son from God. Nearby a ram was caught in a thicket and used for the sacrifice. Abraham called the place "The Lord will provide." The near-sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham was a clear demonstration of love of God and faith.

Fascinating Facts:

Scholars often relate the Abraham-Isaac sacrifice episode as a model of the eventual sacrifice of Jesus. Abraham would be a 'type' or representation of God. Isaac would typify the one and only beloved son. The servants would represent the Holy Spirit. We notice that wood was carried up the mountain. Some scholars have even gone so far as to identify the location of this near-sacrifice as the area where Jesus was crucified.

As Abraham aged he arranged with his chief servant to go and find a wife for Isaac from his homeland, not from Canaan. Isaac was not to leave the land where Abraham was sent. The servant was to look for a sign from the future wife—she would offer to water the servant's camel too, when he requested a drink at a local well. Rebekah, a granddaughter of Abraham's brother Nahor fulfilled the prophecy and agreed to return with Abraham's servant and men to Canaan to become Isaac's wife. Shortly after this Abraham died at age 175.

Fascinating Facts:

Stonehenge was built about 2000 BC, the time of Abraham and Isaac.

NOTE: The book of **Job**, in the Bible, is believed to have been written in the land of Mesopotamia sometime around the time of Abraham and Isaac.

Isaac married **Rebekah** at age forty, yet like Isaac's mother, Rebekah was barren. However after twenty years, the couple conceived twins that the Lord had explained would be "two nations" the elder of which would serve the younger (Gen 25:23). The first of the twins, **Esau**, became a skilled hunter while **Jacob** became a herdsman, a quiet, contemplative boy. At one point Esau, when famished, gave up his birthright (the blessing for the firstborn) for a bowl of lentil soup. The birthright was of enormous significance because it included not only the right to inherit the land of Canaan, but also the divine promise to become the patriarch of the subsequent entire nation of Israel.

Like Abraham, Isaac faced the trial of a severe famine causing him to consider moving to Egypt. In a vision, the Lord told him not to go, but to remain in Canaan the land that was

promised to his father and to generations to come. Isaac obeyed the Lord and was blessed with abundance.

As Isaac aged, and when it became time for the birthright blessing to be passed he called Esau to his side for the blessing. With his eyesight failing at the time, Jacob and his mother conceived a plot to fool Isaac into giving the important birthright blessing to Jacob by covering him in animal fleece and preparing the type of meal Isaac would expect from Esau. Isaac, not seeing well, touching the hairy “arms” of Esau and noticing the animal scent of a hunter, thought Jacob was Esau, and proceeded with the blessing. When Esau discovered the deception, he was outraged and threatened to kill Jacob. Upon hearing this, and because they did not want Jacob to marry a Canaanite like Esau, Isaac and Rebekah sent Jacob away to live with her father’s clan and find a wife there.

Jacob journeyed to Haran (where Abraham’s father had died) to live with Rebekah’s brother Laban. During this journey at a place he later named Bethel; Jacob had a dream of a ladder that descended from heaven. Angels were seen ascending and descending with God seated at the top affirming the promise of Abraham to Jacob—that the land of Canaan would be given to his descendants who would become like “the dust of the earth” (Gen 28:13-14). At this point, Jacob vowed to give back to God one tenth of his earnings (a “tithe”) if he were able to return safely to Canaan.

Upon nearing Haran, Jacob encountered Laban’s very beautiful daughter **Rachel**, whom he fell in love with at once. Laban agreed to let Jacob marry Rachel in exchange for seven years of work. After the time had passed the wedding took place with the bride wearing the customary veil throughout the ceremony and even throughout the wedding night itself. The next morning, when the veil was removed, **Leah**, Rachel’s older less attractive sister was in the bride’s place. Outraged, Jacob argued with Laban for Rachel’s hand in marriage. Local custom prevailed, however, which required that the elder sister be married first. As a result, Laban and Jacob agreed to another seven years of hard work to earn the right to marry Rachel.

Fascinating Facts:

The deception of Jacob—substituting Leah for Rachel—played an important part in God’s historical plan. Leah was able to bear children easily whereas Rachel did not conceive for several years. Leah was the mother of Levi, the patriarch of the later priesthood. Even more importantly, she was the mother of Judah who became the patriarch of the line of David and Jesus.

During Jacob’s time in Haran, he fathered eleven of his eventual twelve sons along with some daughters (six through Leah, two through Leah’s maid Zilpah, two through Rachel’s maid Bilhah and Joseph through Rachel). Later in Canaan, Benjamin was born through Rachel, who died during the childbirth.

While traveling back to Canaan, Jacob had an unusual encounter with a stranger at one point when he found himself alone in the darkness. They wrestled for a while and the stranger touched the hollow of Jacob’s thigh and sprained it. Though dominating the struggle, Jacob could not overpower the stranger who ultimately asked Jacob to release him and let him arise. Jacob refused unless the stranger gave him a blessing. The stranger replied by renaming Jacob Israel and indicated to Jacob that Jacob had “struggled with God and men and had overcome.” The name Israel means “struggles with God.”

As his children grew into adolescence, Jacob treated Rachel’s firstborn, **Joseph**, with unabashed favoritism most vividly displayed by the gift of a brightly adorned coat. Joseph’s brothers, jealous and enraged by this condition hatched a plot to murder him when they were out watching the flocks (Gen 37:19-20). Rueben objected to the outright murder and suggest that Joseph be tossed into a cistern to die without water. A while later, when Rueben was away, the other brothers noticed a caravan traveling to Egypt and decided, instead to sell Joseph to them as a slave. The brothers then covered Joseph’s colored coat in goat’s blood and brought it to Jacob claiming that Joseph had been killed by wild animals.

Upon reaching Egypt, Joseph quickly gained the respect of his new owner Potiphar, the captain of the royal guards. Potiphar’s wife soon began trying to seduce Joseph who rejected her. Eventually Joseph’s rejection took its toll and she misled Potiphar into thinking all the sexual

advances were by Joseph—who was thrown into prison as a result. In prison, Joseph gained a reputation for interpreting dreams. This eventually led to his release and an assumption of power when he correctly informed the pharaoh of a forthcoming period of agricultural abundance that would be followed by a period of famine. Joseph recommended storing grain during the abundant times. As a result of this, he was made governor of the land and was in charge of all administration of the wealth of grain.

Meanwhile in Canaan the famine was causing great suffering. Hence, Jacob sent ten of his sons (all except Benjamin) to Egypt to purchase grain. Joseph upon seeing his brothers, who did not recognize him, pretended in turn not to recognize them. Joseph then orchestrated a series of events ranging from a charge of espionage, to throwing the brothers into prison, to retaining Simeon when they returned, to secretly placing bags of silver into grain that was purchased—all in order to eventually have the brothers return with Benjamin and Jacob.

Eventually, when the family was reunited in Egypt, Joseph made himself known. Joseph's family was presented to the Pharaoh and they were invited to settle in the area of Goshen. While in Egypt, Joseph fathered two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

Important Information:

The "12" tribes of Israel are represented by the sons of Jacob: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher. However God directed (to Jacob) that Joseph's sons, Manasseh and Ephraim would each be designated "tribes" of Israel equal to Jacob's other sons (Gen 48:3-6), and are indicated in listings in place of Joseph—effectively leading to 13 tribes, not 12. A primary reason for the tribal system is for inheritance of property. One of the 13 tribes, the Levites, was later designated as the tribe of the priesthood that would not be permitted to own land. So there were still only 12 property owning tribes of Israel.

Memorize This:

The line of key patriarchs was: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph. This was the foundation leading up to 400 years of slavery in Egypt which Moses later led the Hebrews away from in the Exodus.

Fascinating Facts:

Key events in the patriarch era are –
2670 BC - The first Egyptian pyramid was built
2091 BC – The call of Abraham
2000 BC – Stonehenge is build as a monument and astronomical observatory
2000 BC – Indo-European tribes develop a light spoked wheel
1895 BC – Isaac is born
1835 BC – Jacob and Esau are born
1744 BC – Joseph is born to Jacob and Rachel (Jacob is 91)
1728 - 1686 BC – In Babylon, the laws of Hammurabi are established
1700 BC – Minoan palaces are rebuilt after earthquake (including Knossos)
1450 BC – Mycenaean Greeks destroy Knossos palace and defeat Minoans

The Exodus and Conquering of Canaan

After Joseph, various leaders of Egypt eventually changed the role of the Hebrews from welcome occupants to slaves. In order for God's promise of Abraham's heirs to inherit the Promised Land, the vast number of Hebrews would need to be delivered from Egyptian bondage. God selected **Moses** to lead this exodus.

Born of a Hebrew, the pharaoh was concerned with the vast population growth of the Hebrews. In one attempt to control it, he ordered all infant males to be killed. Moses escaped this fate when his mother placed him in a basket placed among the reeds along the Nile, where he was retrieved by the pharaoh's daughter who took him to her household. As a result, Moses grew up among Egyptian royalty and was most likely highly educated to their way of life.

Despite his royal stature, Moses did not forget his origin as a Hebrew. When he was about 40 years old, he witnessed a beating of a Hebrew slave, causing him to murder the perpetrator and bury him in the sand. The next day, as it became obvious that his crime had been discovered, Moses fled to the land of Midian since the Pharaoh had determined to punish Moses with death.

Eventually, after the Pharaoh's death, God manifested himself to Moses in a burning bush and explained himself as the "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." God commanded that Moses approach the Egyptian pharaoh to liberate the Hebrews from slavery. Although Moses resisted at first, he eventually relented and approached the Pharaoh with his older brother, **Aaron**, acting as his spokesperson.

The Lord provided Moses with several miraculous demonstrations to help persuade the Pharaoh to let the Hebrews go. These included plagues of blood, frogs, flies, livestock, hail, locusts and darkness. Several times the Pharaoh indicated compliance with Moses' request only to later recant. Eventually, Moses promised a plague of death to the firstborn child of everyone not protected by the Lord.

The evening of the Passover, the Israelites sacrificed a lamb and placed some of its blood on the top and sides of the door frame as the Lord had instructed Moses. This identified the protected households that the angel of death "passed over." The next day, amongst great "wailing" of the Egyptians, the Israelites were urged to leave with haste. The exodus from Egypt had begun.

Soon after the departure, the Pharaoh ordered his army to pursue the Hebrews in an attempt to bring the slaves back. When cornered at the edge of the Red Sea, Moses called upon the Lord who separated the waters so the Hebrews could pass through. When safely on the other side, the great walls of water were allowed to close, drowning the trailing Egyptian army.

For the next forty years, the people of Israel were led about in the wilderness by God, using a cloud by day and fire by night. During this time God revealed himself in many important ways.

First, God offered the Israelites provisions of food including manna (bread) and later even meat when the people complained. To teach the Israelites faith, God provided only enough manna for the day, except for the day before the Sabbath when a two day portion was provided in order to keep the Sabbath holy precluding the need for collection of manna. God also provided protection and even promised protection from the diseases of the Egyptians if the Israelites followed his decrees (Ex 15:26).

Second, God provided law to the Israelites. The nation of Israel, which was a theocracy, was to be governed by God. The law was therefore both religious law and governmental law. Moses received the essential basis for this law in the form of the Ten Commandments at the top of Mount Sinai. On the mountain, God forewarned Moses that the people had already turned away and were worshiping idols. When God threatened to wipe the nation out, Moses reminded God of his promises to the patriarchs and the land and God forgave the people. When he came down the mountain, Moses furiously reprimanded his people then returned for another set of commandments after he broke the first set in anger. Moses continued to be instructed by God and eventually providing the thorough "Law" to them, which is currently recorded in the Torah (the first five books of the Bible).

Third, God instructed Israel on worship practices including the construction of a tabernacle and a very Holy Ark of the Covenant that was to be placed inside the most holy place. Tabernacle and the Ark's construction instructions included amazing detail that helped focus the new nation on the perfection of God and holiness. Specifications were also given regarding the need and method of sacrifice to restore one's relationship with God. The tribe of Levi was designated to become the priesthood in charge of the Tabernacle, the Ark and organizing all worship related practices.

During the forty years in the wilderness Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, known as the Torah: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Since Moses was in direct communication with God at the time, these books were immediately considered inspired by God, and therefore canonical.

Memorize This:

The first five books of the Bible – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, are called the Torah. They were written by Moses about 1450 BC and were considered inspired by God (i.e. canonical) immediately.

The period of wandering in the wilderness was filled with experiences in which the Israelites discovered the nature of God including his holiness and his judgment, yet his love in caring for his chosen people throughout this period. The time might have been shortened had the Hebrews not been afraid of fighting the local residents at the outset when the spies reported the strength of the enemy. Only **Caleb** and **Joshua** wanted to proceed—demonstrating their firm faith in the Lord. As a result, only they were eventually permitted to enter the Promised Land (Num 14:6-9). Even Moses was forbidden to enter the Land due to his failure to follow a simple instruction dictated by God who told Moses to *speak* to a rock to provide water, yet Moses *struck* the rock, apparently not trusting God (Num 20:12).

When it was time for the Israelites to prepare to enter the Promised Land, Moses sent messengers to Edom requesting passage to the other side of the Jordan River.

Fascinating Facts:

The Edomites were considered “brothers” of the Israelites because they descended from Esau whereas the Israelites descended from Jacob—both sons of Isaac.

The Edomites refused passage which caused the Israelites to march around the area south towards Moab, where they defeated the king of the Amorites and Bashan. They then camped on the plains of Moab across from the city of Jericho where Moses died just prior to crossing. **Joshua** was placed in charge of the Hebrew nation.

In an action reminiscent of the Red Sea, the River Jordan was parted allowing the Israelites to cross in preparation to attack the city of Jericho. Although Jericho was considered impregnable, the word of the parting of the Red Sea and defeat of the Egyptian army had spread and the Jericho residents were afraid of Israel and her God (Josh 2:10). In an unusual attack guided by God involving marching around the city blowing trumpets and shouting on the seventh day--just as prophesied, the walls fell away and the strong city was easily taken.

Following the fall of Jericho, the land was gradually conquered under the general blessing and direction of the Lord. Joshua was the last of the “formal” succession of leader and was later replaced by a series of judges over the period from 1375 BC to 1050 BC.

Under the direction of Joshua, the Promised Land was divided according to each tribe and the ensuing conquest of the land proceeded rapidly and effectively (1406-1375 BC). Joshua’s leadership involved first attacking and securing the center of the land with subsequent victories in the south and the north. Throughout this time, Joshua maintained a close relationship with the Lord who blessed him in battle—even to the extent of providing hail to decimate one enemy and allowing for extra daylight in another instance in battle. Joshua’s leadership was outstanding at a time God used him to conquer the land. A total of thirty one kings were defeated and Canaan was secured as far north as Hazor (north of the sea of Galilee) to beyond the Negev and the Dead Sea to Mount Halak in the south. The books of Joshua and Judges were written during this period.

Leadership faltered after Joshua. There was no king, or central divinely appointed ruler. As a result, Israel began to fall into a state of apostasy and the Bible indicates that “in those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.” Nevertheless, God allowed important “judges” to rise up at key points during this period to keep the new nation intact.

Fascinating Facts:

The Hebrew word for judges comes from a verb root that can also mean “decide, rule or govern.” This somewhat misleadingly caused the English translation to be “Judges” to identify the people used by God to lead the people during this period. However, many

such people would be considered “warrior judges” and might better be identified as “deliverers.”²

Fascinating Facts:

The Minoans and Mycenaean's (from Crete and Greece) were great sea faring cultures that dominated the Mediterranean and Aegean seas at the time of Joshua.

Key judges were **Othniel** (1367-1327 BC) who delivered the Israelites from the king of Aram who the Lord had allowed to control them for eight years due to Israel's apostasy.

A second time, Israel “did evil in the eyes of the Lord” and Eglon the king of Moab was permitted to control them (1309-1229 BC). The judge **Ehud** tricked his way into a visit with Eglon and killed him. Likewise during this period, the judge **Shamgar** killed six hundred Philistines “saving Israel” (Judges 4:31).

Yet a third time Israel became evil and was given over to Jabin, a king of Canaan who ruled in Hazar (1209-1169 BC). This time the Judges **Deborah and Barak** rose up and defeated the enemy.

The judge **Gideon** (1162-1122 BC) rose up during the next time of apostasy when the Israelites faced the Midianites. Gideon followed the Lord's direction precisely which involved taking his clan, the smallest around, then reducing it even further to only 300 men to go out and ‘save’ Israel against Midian. A midnight attack used torches inside empty pottery jars that were broken to create the impression of a much larger army and through the Midianites into a panic. The victory indicated God's love and provision for his people.

During the next period when the nation Israel fell into evil, God allowed the Ammonites and Philistines to oppress them on the Gilead side of the Jordan. When the Ammonites crossed the Jordan into Judah, God called upon the judge **Jephthah** to rise up and lead the nation to victory.

In the sixth period of apostasy, **Sampson** (1075-1055) who was given an incredible gift of strength was the judge selected to lead the nation of Israel during the time of the Philistines who were ruling over part of Israel. Sampson lost his divinely appointed strength by succumbing to a prostitute's request, then was captured, had his eyes gouged out, and was used as a public display by the enemy. In a final call to God, his strength was returned for one final act in which he toppled a temple of the pagan god, Dagon, killing all the Philistine rulers within.

In summary, the period of establishing the new Promised Land can be broken down into three parts: (1) The exodus from Egypt when the new nation was being instructed in a new relationship with God, that was to succeed those being taught, (2) the actual conquering of the land itself under the direction of Joshua, and (3) the early maintenance of the land during a period of relative chaos in the period of the Judges.

² Huber, Robert V., Senior Editor, *Who's Who in the Bible*, (Pleasantville, NY:Readers Digest), 1994, p. 123.