

ABRAHAM

The Abraham Cycle (Gn 11:27-25:18)

I. General Overview – Structure and Theme

A. Structure

1. Chiastic structure
 - a) Genealogical framework (11:10-32)
 - b) Migration from Haran; separation from Nahor ([12:1-3], 12:4-5)
 - c) Building of altars; land promised (12:5b-9 [13:14-18])
 - d) “Wife-sister” episode (12:10-20)
 - e) Border agreement with Lot (13:1-13)
 - f) Sodom episode and rescue of Lot (14:1-24)
 - g) Covenant of sacrifice (15:1-21)
 - h) Expulsion and rescue of Hagar (16:1-16)
 - i) (G) Covenant of Circumcision (17:1-27)
 - j) (F) Sodom episode and rescue of Lot (18:1-19:38)
 - k) (E) Border agreement with Abimelech (21:22-34)
 - l) (D) “Wife-sister” episode (20:1-18)
 - m) (C) Building of altar (22:6); land secured (22:17b; 23:1-20)
 - n) (B) Migration to Haran; reunification with Nahor’s line (24:1-67)
 - o) (A) Genealogical framework ([22:20-24; 25:1-18])

B. Themes:

1. Key themes present in opening scene (journey, infertility, presence of Lot).
2. Relationship of divine will and human responsibility. Blessing and curse
 - a) “History never looks like history when you are living through it. It looks confusing and messy, and always feels uncomfortable.” (Moyer, *Genesis*, 155)
 - b) “There is so much marital conflict and sibling intrigue they almost forfeit the call and fumble the promise. Yet the storyteller refuses to clean up their act. This is the amazing thing about the people of Genesis. The more we talk about them, the more they look like people we know – faces in the mirror.” (Moyer, *Genesis*, 155)
3. Abraham: fear and faith. Kierkegaard: “though Abraham arouses my admiration, he at same time appalls me.” Attracts us because of singular devotion; shocks and repulses us because of it! (Mann, 31).

II. Departure from Mesopotamia (11:27-12:20)

A. Background Helps

1. Issues Abraham faces
 - a) Who will take care of Lot
 - b) What is tie between Abraham and his home (Ur)
 - c) Abraham is married – problem of bringing wife to strange land where husbands killed
 - d) Sarai barren
 - e) Abraham’s relationship to rest of family (especially his father – 12:1). Came to Haran and settled
2. Migration – two stage? Ur > Haran / Haran > Canaan
 - a) Ambiguity: uncompleted journey (father stops at Haran); infertile Sarah; unknown land (Canaan).
 - b) Stop at Haran
 - (1) Ac 7:2ff – first test of Abraham’s faith – God told to go and leave kindred – he left land, but not kindred!
 - (2) Haran much like Ur in customs, culture (Moon god Sin)
3. Geographical helps
 - a) Ur of Chaldeans – S. Mesopotamia = Tell el-Muqayyar.
 - b) Haran – N. Mesopotamia (Gen 24).
 - c) Religious implications – Moon god Sin chief god at both.
4. Chronological dynamics
 - a) Adam – Noah – 10 generations
 - b) Noah – Abraham – 10 generations
5. Socio-cultural dynamics

- a) Mesopotamia – ancient civilization with monumental achievements. However, coupled with religious anxiety – due to lack of confidence in divine pantheon. Migration of Abraham – to start new worldview, life. (Sarna)
 - b) Near Eastern migrations
 - (1) Patriarchs *not* bedouin nomads! Not camel nomads
 - (2) Pastoral nomadism (ass nomads) – move with pasturage – dictated by climate. Not city dwellers, but move between great urban centers.
 - (3) Patriarchal migrations – avoid well inhabited areas.
 - (4) Egypt – famine – always to Egypt. No sooner in land than slide out!
 - c) Nuzi – Wife-sister motif – Nuzi (Hurrian) custom? Method of enhancing legal status?
6. Themes of Genesis 12
- a) Contrast with Gen 11
 - (1) Not scattering, but “move to land I will show you.” Security / place
 - (2) Nameless > name
 - b) Covenant – promise (cf. Gen 15, 17)
 - (1) Land
 - (2) Heir > Descendants: Son as gift of God. Son: anticipated, embraced, released, endowed.
 - c) The Endangered Ancestress – cf. Gen 20, 26
 - d) Interplay: Fear and Faith
 - (1) Fear: with wife; with promise of child (alternate approaches). **Promise jeopardized because ancestress endangered! *Note “curse” effect on foreigners! (Lord blesses in spite of Abraham).
 - (2) Faith: move to Canaan; construct altars; sacrifice son.
- B. Specific Helps
1. 12:1-3
 - a) 12:1-3 – 6 promises, 2 charges
 - (1) Promises – great nation, bless, make name great, bless blessers, curse cursers, all families be blessed
 - (2) Charges – leave country and kindred; “be a blessing.”
 - b) Issue of translation of 12:3b (which stem take precedence – Ni, Hitp)
 - (1) “in you...be blessed” (KJV, ASV) (Ni passive – 12:3; 18:18; 28:14)
 - (a) God chose Abraham to bless the nations by teaching and example. Purpose of blessing and election – not primarily to save elect; mainly to reach rest of humankind.
 - (b) Arguments for passive translation over reflexive
 - (i) LXX – translates Ni expression passively, as does NT (Ac 3:25; Gal 3:8)
 - (ii) Gn 22:18; 26:4 – LXX translates passively (cf. GKC para. 54g, h – argue Hitp sometimes has passive sense)
 - (iii) Scheme of Gen 1-11 – passive best fits scheme.
 - (2) “by you...bless themselves” (RSV) (Hitp reflexive – 22:18; 26:4)
 2. 12:4-9
 - a) Abraham’s route – if followed caravan route – went west to Carchemish; south to Aleppo; on to Damascus; south to Shechem (12:7). 12:6 – emphasize Abraham not a native.
 - b) Point of anchorage – Beer-lahai-roi; Beersheba; Mamre/Hebron (Isaac – Gerar and Beersheba)
 - (1) Journey to center of land – duplicated in Jacob’s journey – Shechem, Bethel, Negeb (33:18; 35:1, 6, 27; 46:1).
 - (2) General route of conquest (Josh 7:2; 8:9, 30).
 - (3) *Abraham’s symbolic conquest of land? (*JBC*)
 - c) 12:4 – Abraham’s response to God’s call in Haran – cf. Heb 11:8ff – sojourned, foreigner. Play on sojourner concept – “making a city” (because feel like never genuinely given real home)
 3. 12:7-9 – altar building
 - a) Altar building – establishing a new cult (“calling on name of Yahweh”) standard way of staking claim to territory in which cult established.
 - b) Gratitude of Abraham (God with whom Abraham dealing can appear at Ur, Haran, Shechem – not bound locally)
 - c) 12:9 – toward Negev (toward Hebron)
 4. 12:10-20: Driven to Egypt. Abraham blessed by God “in spite of himself.” *Interplay of Abraham: one who faithful to divine charge and goes to land, but immediately loses faith in face of difficulties (both real and imagined). **Rather than blessing result, “curse” comes upon Egypt!

- a) Contrast – Pharaoh and Abraham
 - (1) Pharaoh afflicted! (Rabbinic midrash – plague on Pharaoh = impotence).
 - (2) Pharaoh lectures Abraham (about ethics)!
 - (3) Abraham’s charge – read against backdrop of Gen 2 – here “subjection” of wife abused. Test for Abraham’s faith – fails.
 - (4) Striking contrast – Abraham’s prosperity and Pharaoh’s affliction / Israel’s prosperity in Egypt and plagues upon Pharaoh (nature of plagues – cf. Gen 20:17ff)
- b) Foreshadows Exodus – “me they will kill; you they will let live.” (Exod – every male child thrown into Nile; every female allowed to live). *Oppressors and oppressed reversed in this story!
 - (1) Descent into Egypt, involvement with Pharaoh, enrichment in Egypt, plagues, release.
 - (2) Both involve deception (request to celebrate feast in desert).
 - (3) Anticipation of Exodus also in Hagar stories (Gen 16, 21).

III. Abraham and Lot – separation (13)

- A. Background Helps
 1. Blessing
 - a) Blessing requires division of family. Will Abraham lose blessing to Lot’s choice of superior land?! **Lot the one who “headed in the wrong direction!”
 - b) Abraham blessing to Lot (rescues)
 - c) Abraham blessed by Canaanite priest (Melchizedek) from *El Elyon*; Abraham exalts Yahweh to status of *El Elyon*.
- B. Specific Helps
 1. Sin painted like Gen 3, 4 – heart problem
 2. Contrast of Abraham and Lot – God had already promised Abraham the land; lets Lot take 1st choice; can only say if truly believe God going to work things out (Lot could take promised portion and ruin promise).
 - a) Lot lifts eyes and chooses for self; Abraham waits for God to tell lift his eyes and receive land.
 - b) Yahweh gives Abraham land “forever;” Lot’s choice will soon suffer destruction.
 - c) Abraham builds altar near Hebron; Lot pitches tents near Sodom.
 - d) Abraham tent dweller invokes Yahweh by name; Lot city dweller associates with city inhabitants. Separation of Lot from blessing to place under curse.

IV. Abraham and Lot – recovery (14)

- A. Background Helps
 1. Many want to make this legend. Rather – early and historical.
 - a) Literary form – campaign report (common to Assyrian and Babylonian royal annals).
 - b) Author several times has to explain something to readers (2, 3, 7, 8, 17)
 - c) Names of invading kings fit names of people in ancient times. Arioch – common Hurrian name; Chedorlaomer – genuine Elamite name; Tidal – good cuneiform name (Tudhaliya).
 - d) Route of campaign – fits route of King’s Hwy.
 - e) Archaeology – evidence the Elamites ruled Palestine and its surrounding area in first half of 2nd millen BCE.
 - f) Apparently armies of Sodom and Gomorrah fall into bitumen pits nearby.
 - g) Vss 18-20 – Melchizedek calls God *El Elyon* – Canaanite term expect Canaanite priest to use.
- B. Specific Helps
 1. Lot living at Sodom – region under control of Mesopotamian kings (for trading and commercial purposes – caravan route linking Mesop – Egypt).
 2. Return – Abraham meets 2 kings
 - a) Sodom – tries to make deal with Abraham.
 - b) Melchizedek – king of Salem (another city state with S and G?)
 - (1) Salem – Ps 76:2
 - (2) Dialogue – Abraham and Melchizedek – *El Elyon...Yahweh!*
 - (3) Heb 7 – no father / mother; yet in priesthood! No successor, predecessor – in this comparable to Jesus! Hebrews dealing with issue of priest without genealogy; uses familiar example of Melchizedek.
 3. Abraham refuses wealth – learned lesson from Egypt. His wealth comes from Lord!

V. The Covenant Revisited – Divine Commitment (15)

- A. Background Helps
 - 1. The Making of a Covenant
 - a) Form – “royal grant” type. King rewards servant for past loyalty and faithful service. Obligations of suzerain self-imposed, rather than placed on vassal. (Often land grants, with boundaries clearly delineated.)
 - b) Structure – Two parts – vss 1-6, 7-21. Each same structure. (Promise – descendants [15:1-6]; land [15:7-22])
 - c) Ritual – self-cursing. Call upon self same treatment as animals. (For self-imprecation, cf. Jer 34:18-19; Sefire treaties).
 - 2. Focus: Abraham’s commitment to Yahweh; Yahweh’s commitment to Abraham. Note military imagery:
 - a) “Fear not” (elsewhere in OT of Yahweh’s war against Isr enemies)
 - b) Yahweh “shield” (of progeny – Ps 115:9-15).
- B. Specific Helps
 - 1. “Word of Yahweh came to Abram...” – stereotypical prophetic formula (Jer 1:2; Hos 1:1; Mic 1:1).
 - 2. Ties with Gen 14
 - a) God “shield” (*magen*) of Abraham – cf. 14:20 (God “delivered” *miggen* Abraham).
 - b) Wealth / rejected possessions (*rekhus*) – 14:21.
 - c) *Berit* = 14:13 (Abr’s allies = *baalei berit*).
 - 3. V 4 – Ps 89:2-5 – Yahweh’s promise as “firm as heavens” – here Abraham’s seed numerous as stars of heavens.
 - 4. V 6 – reckoned as righteous. Difference between declaring one righteous and reckoning. Reckoning based on faith (opposite of fear).

VI. The Covenant Circumvented / Subverted / Doubted (16)

- A. Background Helps
 - 1. Larger aNE
 - a) Nuzi #67 – gift of concubine
 - b) Hammurapi #146 – slave who been given as concubine cannot be sold as slave.
 - c) Deut 21:14
 - 2. Sarah’s infertility
 - a) Eliezer: Abraham makes own plans (rather than “fear not; shield”).
 - b) Offer of Hagar; ensuing difficulties. When Abraham gives Sarah to Pharaoh, Sarah not say a word. Now she vocal, ferocious, and physical abuse!
 - (1) Her language to Abraham – “the wrong done to me is your fault”
 - (2) Her abuse of Hagar same term used later in Exodus for Egyptian abuse of Hebrew slaves.
 - (3) Ironic twist – in Egypt, Sarah center because of her beauty; here – Hagar eclipses centrality of Sarah!
 - 3. Hagar
 - a) Rabbinic tradition – acquired by Sarah in Egypt.
 - b) Her call to God – “God who *sees* me” (see = rescue – Exod 2:25; Isa 58:3; 59:15; Ps 113:6)
 - 4. Ishmael
 - a) “May God hear”... a “wild ass of a man”
 - b) *Ishmael *not* be child of promise
 - c) Though Ishmael excluded from divine promise, not omitted from divine blessing that accrues to line of Abraham. (“Ishmael” = God hears).
- B. Specific Helps
 - 1. “I will be built up from her” (language of Levirate marriage – Deut 25:5-10).
 - 2. Language of discord – Sarah and Hagar
 - 3. Language of annunciation of birth (formulaic)
 - 4. Similarity of Gen 16:1 / Deut 26:6-7

VII. The sign of the covenant – Human commitment (17)

- A. Background Helps
 - 1. Outline
 - a) Vss 1-8 – promise of numerous progeny
 - b) Vss 9-14 – instructions for circumcision
 - c) Vss 15-21 – repeat promise of son to Sarah

- d) Vss 22-27 – Abraham carries out God’s commands.
- 2. Mark of covenant: circumcision (*in exile a confessional act).
- 3. God reveals self as *El Shaddai* (*the God of Abraham and his desc).
- 4. Name change – name = essence; character
- 5. Parallels with Gen 9 (Noah)
 - a) Eternal covenant
 - b) Sign – rainbow / circumcision
- 6. Equality of male / female – Abraham “father of multitude of nations” (17:4-5); Sarah “mother of nations; kings of peoples shall come from her” (17:16).

B. Specific Helps

- 1. Abraham called to “walk before God and be perfect” – royal language appropriate for one to be “father of kings”
- 2. Circumcision – external symbol of what should have taken place in heart (significance – name change). Circumcision of heart – Jer 4:3-4; 9:25f.
- 3. Turning point
 - a) New name for God (El Shaddai – cf. 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; 49:25; Exod 6:2)
 - b) Abraham name change
 - c) Sarai name change – mother of multitude

VIII. Divine visitors (18-19)

A. Background Helps

- 1. Historical backdrop – Sodom / Gomorrah
 - a) Geography – SE end of Dead Sea? Possibly under Dead Sea now S. of Lisan. Area of asphalt pits; lunar landscape. Significant amount of salt.
 - b) Cataclysm?
 - (1) No volcanoes in region
 - (2) Earthquake! Conflagration – asphalt + petroleum.
 - c) Many suppose gas and petroleum field; lightning field; explosion.
- 2. Hospitality to stranger: most elemental form of human righteousness.
 - a) Abraham – detail (cf. 1 Sam 28:24-25).
 - (1) Foot washing – Gen 19:2; 24:32; 43:24; Jgs 19:21; 2 Sam 11:8; Luke 7:44; John 13; 1 Tim 5:10.
 - b) Differences
 - (1) Abraham nomad serves pastoral meal – cream and curds, choice steer. Abr runs to greet; serves himself. Abraham receives Yahweh.
 - (2) Lot city dweller meets at gate. Lot stands and bows. Lot offers unleavened bread. (Perhaps Abr greater generosity). Lot only receives 2 guests.
- 3. God in narratives
 - a) Universal – Judge of all earth
 - b) Completely lacking in capriciousness
 - c) Tension: Yahweh’s righteousness to listen to Abraham; Yahweh’s righteousness to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.
- 4. Sodom – Sin
 - a) Parallel – Jgs 19:10-30 – hospitality / brutal sexual attack.
 - b) 18:20-21; 19:13 (outrage; outcry). = heinous moral disregard for human rights; cynical insensitivity to suffering of others.
 - c) Cf. Ezek 16:49-50.
 - d) *Analogies with flood sin!
 - e) *Abraham protagonist for Sodom! **Yahweh brought Abraham into his confidence; made him privy to ensuing events)
 - f) *Yahweh gets “more than bargained for.” Abraham demonstrates his acceptance of responsibility by questioning Yahweh about his righteousness and justice! With considerable courage, Abraham lives up to confidence Yahweh placed in him.

B. Specific Helps

- 1. Gen 18:1-15
 - a) Abraham “stands before them” (to serve).
 - b) Laugh – nuance
 - (1) Ridiculing?

- (2) Celebrating?
- 2. Gen 18:16-33
 - a) V 22 – God “standing before” Abraham (*Tiqqune Sopherim*) – 1 of 18 changes. Cf. 18:8.
 - b) While 2 attendants make way to city – Abraham intercedes.
 - c) Contrast – Abraham and Lot
 - (1) Abraham tries everything to keep S and G from destruction
 - (2) Lot tries everything not to leave.
- 3. Gen 19:1-29
 - a) Interplay – Lot “pressed” (*yiptzar*) visitors to stay with him; townspeople “press” (*yiptzeru*) against Lot to break into house.
 - b) Lot in house (door); Abraham in tent. 2 ways of life – no better spiritually. Not *kind* of house, but *kind* of person in house!
- 4. Gen 19:30-38
 - a) Lot’s daughters
 - b) Cf. final scene of flood story – Noah’s son engages in some sexual taboo? (Kselman)
 - c) Lot’s wickedness manifested in his daughters.

IX. Resolutions: Ishmael, Abimelech, and Isaac (20-21)

A. Background Helps

- 1. Gen 20
 - a) Wife-sister deception. Tension: Sarah in king’s harem; promise of descendants jeopardized.
 - b) Differences with Gen 12
 - (1) Divine name (elohim)
 - (2) Abraham prophetic intercession for king
 - (3) Justification of patriarch’s claim of sisterhood
 - c) Contrast – Pharaoh and Abimelech
 - (1) Pharaoh – escorts out of land
 - (2) Abimelech – invites to stay in land
- 2. Gen 21
 - a) Isaac – link between Abraham and Jacob
 - b) Isaac material
 - (1) Birth (21)
 - (2) Sacrifice (22)
 - (3) Marriage (24)
 - (4) Trip to Gerar (26)
 - (5) Blessing of Jacob (27)
 - c) Birth of Isaac resolves heir issue; purchase of cave at Machpelah will resolve land issue.
 - d) Abraham’s life neatly divided
 - (1) 75 years in Ur and Haran
 - (2) 25 years waiting for Isaac
 - (3) 75 years in Canaan after Isaac’s birth.

B. Specific Helps

- 1. Gen 21:1-21
 - a) Laughter – now joy, rather than doubt.
 - b) What is Ishmael doing in v 9?
 - (1) *Metzacheq* (play on Isaac). He “playing” (LXX adds – with her son Isaac). Rather, he “Isaacing” (taking place of her son!).
 - c) Interplay with Gen 22
 - (1) Angel intervenes to prevent death of son
 - (2) Play on “hear the voice” (Abraham – of wife Sarah). Ishmael – “God hears”
 - d) Hagar – the righteous Gentile.
 - e) Echoes of Exodus story – “drive out” (v 10; Exod 6:1; 11:1); “send away” (v 14; Exod 5:1).
 - f) Anger of Sarah – v 10 – labels “that slave woman and her son” (cf. Mesopotamian law – cannot return to slave!)

X. *The Akedah – sacrifice of Isaac (22)

A. Background Helps

- 1. Socio-historical backdrop
 - a) Child sacrifice – 2 Kgs 3:27; Jer 7:31; Ezek 16:20; Exode 13:15; Deut 12:29-31; 18:9-12.

2. Relation – Gen 21 / 22
 - a) Expulsion of Ishmael means death of child that legally Sarah's – due to Abraham's obedience to Sarah.
 - b) Isaac now taken from her by Abraham's obedience to God.
 3. Rabbinic legend – Isaac's blindness caused by tears of his father falling into his eyes!
 4. Transcends killing son; **involves sacrificing promise! This Abraham's future that being recalled. (Abraham: at this point, man without past or present...now being called to sacr future).
 - a) Test: obedience and trust. Is Abraham's trust in God, or simply in what God has promised.
 - b) *Altars: formerly Abraham built altars to manifest his trust; will he now build altar and sacr the promise itself?!
 - c) Ch. 15: God manifs his total commitment to Abraham through sacr; now will Abraham give gift back to God, to show gift is truly God's?
 5. **Renewal of promises
 - a) Test not just to evaluate Abraham's personal trust in God, but to establish the *trustworthiness* of Abraham as one through whom Yahweh's promises are mediated to the world. Abraham more than just father of Isaac; he father of multitudes; father of promises.
 - b) Narrative highlights the singularity of the event (Sarna)
 - c) Yahweh's promises now come to Abraham as a reward for his righteousness. Clearest connection: obedience and promise.
 6. Akedah and call of Abraham (Gen 12 / 22) (Sarna)
 - a) First and last times God speaks to Abraham
 - b) "Go forth...to the land I will show you" // "Go forth...to the land of Moriah...I will point out to you"
 - c) "your land, your homeland, your father's house" // "your son, your only son, one whom you love"
 - d) Haran – Abraham left father forever; Moriah – to lose son forever.
 7. Didactic value of Akedah (Sarna)
 - a) Definition of relationship between God and human – "faithfulness" (*emunah*) manifests fullest expression in action
 - b) Divine verdict – "now I know you fear God" (v 12). Value of act may lie as much in inward intention of doer as in final execution.
 - c) Character of patriarch – progress in Abraham's relationship with God
 - (1) Haran – reward attached.
 - (2) Moriah – no reward; tremendous loss potential.
- B. Specific Helps
1. "God tested Abraham" – only used here in Pentateuch of an individual. (Used elsewhere of God testing Israel – in wilderness).
 2. V 2 – "take your son, your only son, the one you love, Isaac"

XI. Epilogue (23-25)

- A. Background Helps
1. Socio-historical backdrop
 - a) Both Oriental politeness and ANE property law.
 - b) Ephron – sell both cave and field where it located (feudal duties to field, Ephron willing to relinquish)
 2. Ch. 23 devoid of theology? No: purchase of land (**Abraham holds legal title to piece of land of Canaan). At end, all ancestors will be buried in Machpelah cave (in death they heirs and no longer strangers).
 3. Story began with journey Haran > Canaan; ends with journey Canaan > Haran and return. Send servant rather than son so not jeopardize promise by reversal!
 4. Gen 24 – Securing wife for Isaac
 - a) Story told twice – 1st Abraham's instructions; servant's retelling story.
 - b) 8 scenes
 - (1) Abraham's covenant with his senior servant to find wife for Isaac (1-9)
 - (2) Servant request for a sign (10-14)
 - (3) Rebekah's fulfillment of the sign (15-20)
 - (4) Rebekah's statement that she Abraham's kin (21-27)
 - (5) Servant's welcome into the household (28-33)
 - (6) Servant's confirming the sign to the household and request for their consent (34-49)

- (7) Family's sending Rebekah on her way with a blessing (50-61)
 - (8) Marriage (62-67)
 - c) Gen 24 and 21 – Hagar, departing from Abraham, moves away from promise; Rebekah, moves toward the blessed and becomes member of blessed family.
- B. Specific Helps
- 1. The transaction
 - a) 400 shekels seem high. Abraham not bargain (perhaps due to eagerness to make transaction and dignity for Sarah).
 - b) Jeremiah later paid 17 shekels for field (Jer 32:7); Omri paid 6000 shekels for whole city of Samaria (1 Kgs 16:24).
 - 2. Gen 24
 - a) The oath – thigh
 - (1) Euphemism for reproductive organs. Rite not explained – may place one who swears under penalty of sterility if task not carried out.
 - b) The role of the servant – providence (Sarna)
 - c) Introduction of Laban – 24:29.

XII. Homiletic Helps – Abraham Cycle

- A. Smedes – “I can imagine Sarah waking up about four in the morning, hearing bustling noises of Abraham packing. And Sarah says, “What are you doing, Abe?” “Packing.” “What for?” “Well, we’re leaving.” “Where are we going?” “I don’t know.” “Why are we going?” “Because he told me to.” “Who’s he?” “He didn’t tell me.” And then I can imagine Sarah calling her father: “What am I going to do?” Here father says, “I knew you shouldn’t have married this nut.” (Smedes, in *Genesis*, 163).
- B. The Promise to Abraham
- 1. Living with a promise
 - a) Correlation – promise and faith
 - (1) Promise – God’s mode of presence in these narratives
 - (2) Faith – as response is the capacity to embrace that announced future with such passion that the present can be relinquished for the sake of that future.
 - b) Creates “insecurity” – often lacks visible, tangible evidence. Abraham’s faith a venture of risk. Promise involves risk...venture...adventure. Leaving security behind and moving out into unknown.
 - c) Promise often up against “insurmountable” odds. Birth Isaac
 - (1) Broken down old man
 - (2) Barren wife – *Father of multitude is husband of barren wife! Comic disproportion – distance between promise and reality!
 - d) Temptation – in face of “doing the impossible,” often try to help God! (Eliezer, Ishmael). When apparently most hopeless, God does the impossible! God’s heroes unlikeliest of candidates – old men; barren women (Hannah; Zechariah and Elizabeth; Mary; fishermen; tax collectors; hired assassins). Faith often consists of patient waiting! Living between “already” and “not yet.”
- C. Life as Pilgrimage / Journey
- 1. Abraham – an *alien* in a Promised Land
 - 2. Hauerwas, Willimon, *Resident Aliens* (book addressing contemporary church life...)
 - a) (Personal) Bible written for exilic community, congregations / groups of people keenly aware of their absolute lack of any effective mechanism (socially or politically) to change their current socio-political lives.
 - 3. Sermon – *LexThQ* – “Altars along the Way.” As move through life, what are those altars (i.e., “markers”) along the way that we build (positively or negatively) reflective of our relationship with God?
 - 4. Hebrews 11:8-16
 - a) Difficulties with the “promise”
 - b) Pilgrimage – can be “forward” or “backward”
 - 5. Pilgrims to Plymouth Rock
 - a) Pilgrimage (fraught with dangers, fears, adventures)
 - b) Purpose – to *settle*! Confirms our perspective – pilgrimage temporary, for purpose of settlement
- D. Abraham the Pilgrim (Genesis 12-25)
- 1. Backdrop

- a) The “nature of the story” – Abraham clearly “bearer of the blessing of God,” called to share that blessing as he moves throughout land. *Story written in such a way that story not simply “walk down memory lane” (archaic past), but Abraham’s story is “our story!” (Cf. Lord’s Supper “memory”).
- b) Relevance of Abraham narrative
 - (1) All desire security, have our lives “matter” (leave a legacy – something beyond the immediate).
 - (2) Children – major career changes 5 times in life!
 - (3) Abraham – security through “life on the move.” *Pilgrim security!
 - (4) How live in such a way that we “faithful bearers of blessing of God?”
2. Finding security in the life of a pilgrim – the promise / call narratives
 - a) Genesis 12:1-3
 - (1) The call – “go”
 - (2) The promise – land; descendants; name; blessing. *Difficulties with land / descendants – occupied land; barren wife!
 - b) Genesis 15:7-18
 - (1) Absolute divine commitment to the promise (the relationship).
 - (2) Enigmatic passage – God “puts his life on the line” (vulnerability) in commitment to Abraham!
 - c) Genesis 17:9-14
 - (1) Absolute commitment on part of Abraham to covenant.
 - (2) Vulnerability of Abraham in commitment to promise.
3. Life as journey –
 - a) Abraham – man whose life not his own. In world where others chose migration times, routes, and destinations, Abraham directed in journey by God.
 - (1) Call to become alien. *Life* as pilgrimage! Call to leave home and break ancestral ties almost expecting impossible of ancient person. Without protection of kinfolk; rights of citizens.
 - (2) Against worldviews, ideologies that thrive on settled and fixed. Ideologies of settled, security, placement. Message to
 - (a) Inordinate pride that thinks world entrusted solely to us. Man come of age – self-confidence and achievement may breed contempt for religion; suggest not God, but ourselves, that we should trust. Old stories may seem simply pious superstition.
 - (b) Deep despair
 - (3) Abraham narrative – alternative reality
 - (a) World not entrusted to humanity. In inscrutable graciousness, God has retained the amazing gift of life.
 - (b) Good news to despairing – that what world thought impossible become possibility through power of God. Possible by promise of God to be delivered from barren world of oppression, injustice, hopelessness.
 - (c) Good news shattering to pride – assertion that our best laid plans called into question.
 - b) Striking – called to leave family; promise be given family (yet bleak prospects – Nahor’s wife identified by family; Sarai by crisis [barrenness]). Jesus – leave, get 100x in return! God calls hopeless into community; fixed ones into pilgrimage. Speech to barren family, call to abandonment, renunciation, relinquishment.
 - (1) Summons not to law nor discipline, but promise. Such departures from securities only way out of barrenness. Seeming contradiction – to stay in safety is to remain barren; to leave in risk is to have hope.
 - (2) Invitation of Jesus – save life lose; lose life save (Mk 8:35)
 - c) Temptation – become “settlers” and discontinue pilgrimage. Fear – going into unknown; doing what previously never done. Especially terrifying when only have “promise” to go on!
 - (1) Tendency – no longer to see Abraham’s life as paradigm (i.e., journey imagery discontinued [Abraham’s pilgrimage “quit” with Jesus!]). Yet – NT continues to utilize journey imagery (permeates NT).
 - (2) Fear – moving into unknown, esp if mentality – “if it isn’t broken, don’t fix it.” (what if Abraham had said!?) Abraham couldn’t even be “righteous” on his own; only in relationship with God (trust).

- d) Message to Israel – Israel saw story not simply as actual story of beginning, but a call for her to take to road, basic to nature of her life with God of Abraham. Israel saw self as being led on a special road whose plan and goal lay completely in Yahweh’s hand.
 - e) Message to church
 - (1) JC – true Abraham; true Israel. One man who fully knew his life belonged to God
 - (2) Decision ca. Abraham = decision ca. JC. “To have life is to lose.”
 - (3) Paradox – call to relinquish only way out of barrenness. To stay in safety is to remain barren; to leave in risk is to have promise and hope.
 - (4) Brueggemann implications (Heb 11)
 - (a) Text in opposition to one-generational ideology of our culture, which demands everything now.
 - (b) Not simply recital of great names of past. Appeal for fidelity in face of present persecution. Anti-promise mode of human community must be countered and resisted by this more powerful way of living.
 - (c) 1 Cor 4:7-13 – sojourn theme
 - (i) everything we have is gift (v 7)
 - (ii) redemptive behavior can be practiced (v 12)
 - (iii) to do so makes one despised by world (v 13)
 - (5) Life and promise
 - (a) Live for promise – so disengage from present barren way of things
 - (b) Live against promise – hold on grimly to present order of life
 - (6) Summons to pilgrimage – neither law nor discipline, but promise. Narrative knows departure from securities only way out of barrenness. Whole of Abraham narrative premised on seeming contradiction that to stay in safety is to remain barren; to leave security is to gain life. Considerable risk in taking Jesus at his word that you find life when lose it for others (Mark 8:35).
- E. Fear vs. Faith
- 1. Rehearsing the Narrative
 - a) Embracing the promise – manifestations of faith
 - (1) Altar building – claiming location for God
 - (2) Lot – offer of 1st choice of land; takes seemingly inferior location!
 - b) Distancing from the promise – manifestations of fear
 - (1) Sarah in Egypt – wife / sister (note result!)
 - (2) Situation with Hagar / Sarah – children (striving for an heir!) (note result – conflict)
 - 2. Abraham’s life as a life of Faith – life caught in a promise
 - a) “I love the fact that from this story I know that an eternal God will be in conversation with the most broken, mischievous, pragmatic, and self-centred individual. Then, on other occasions, that same individual, inspired by God, can be elevated to heights of heroism.” (E. Rivers, III, *Genesis*, 183.)
 - b) Abraham – fear and faith
 - (1) Faith (life belongs to God). Faith – decision to trust God even in face of evidence that baffling, ambiguous, contradictory. Faith – adventure into dimension which, from standpoint of ordinary reason and experience, may seem absurd?
 - (2) Fear
 - (a) Slides right through and out other end of land. Land develops famine; must leave. No sooner in land that driven from it!
 - (b) Egypt – lies ca. wife. To abandon land unavoidable (external threat); to abandon wife cowardly act constituting internal threat to promise. *Though Sarai damsel in distress, Abraham no knight in shining armor!
 - (c) Descendents
 - (3) Fear and faith
 - (a) Faith more than inner disposition of heart; primarily outward action in a way of life.
 - (b) Faith expressed itself in obedience. Faith = trusting God enough to do what God asks and to live as God expects.
 - (c) Abraham’s faith neither easy nor without anguish.
 - (d) Discontinuity – what is / what is promised. Ambiguity – land of promise becomes land of famine; Abraham’s actions lead (temporarily) to curse rather than blessing. High point: divine charge and its acceptance; quickly plunged into utterly ambiguous

situations in which charge to be worked out! *God brings salvation and judgment into history; man's judgment and salvation determined by attitude he adopts toward this work God intends to do in history.

(4) Arabic – “human” same root as “to forget.” Arabs assume forgetfulness, Jews memory.

F. Abraham the Chosen

1. Backdrop – Tower of Babel (Gen 1-11)

a) People afraid; “settled” in; strive for security

(1) Some equality with God – “make name for ourselves.” Fame.

(a) *Irony – go down in history “nameless”).

(b) Building tower to heavens; God had to “come down” to see construction!

(2) Closeness with each other – something around which could rally; find strength, comfort, surety. Find security, life, future in and by themselves!

(3) People seeking security / future through “fame, stability.”

b) Shattering of plan

(1) Division of humanity – scattering

(2) Wandering, cut adrift

c) First call of God – world into being. 2nd call of God – into history of Abraham and Sarah. Purpose – to fashion alternative community to creation gone awry.

2. Smedes illustration – adoption of children – not “choose” child – took what given! Chose to adopt, did not choose particular children! (More to do with one choosing than one chosen!)

3. The burden of choosing – be a blessing. (We live in world obsessed with receiving blessings!)

G. Abraham the Blessed / Blessor

1. Scandal of OT – God brings blessing to world through this Semite out of Mesopotamia! In contrast to resistant, mistrustful world, Abraham responsive and receptive. Promise to Abraham:

2. Life as blessing – promise and faith as dynamic entities

a) Blessing

(1) Not sentimental wish for happiness; not convenient phrase to close TV show; not signal worship over; not pious way to say “goodbye.”

(2) God's gift of power and vitality; God pouring out all his strength and goodness on us, so that we have freedom and well-being to live and to live abundantly. Blessing = gift of life!

(3) Blessing – Bible = God saying however long it takes and whoever will be my servant, I will bless this people. Character of God initiative for blessing. Christian – cross is the answer to whether character of God benevolent or not. Becomes not only God of the suffering, but suffering God.

b) Abraham – story ca. life and death! Contrast with Gen 1-11

c) Abraham – to live in such a way those coming in contact with him find Lord's blessing

H. The *Akedah*

1. Genesis 22: the Radical epitome of a call to live in pilgrimage with God

a) Drama – making vividly real the reality of life lived as sheer gift by the grace of God!

b) NT equivalent – Matt. “he who save his life will lose it!”

I. Abraham and NT – Hebrews 11

JACOB

The Jacob Cycle (Gn 25:19-36:43)

XIII. The Jacob Cycle (25:19-36:43) - General

- A. Backdrop (Fretheim)
 - 1. Jacob *is* Israel; Jacob *becomes* Israel (this informs and animates stories). I.e., inherited stories and ongoing experiences interwoven into one narrative.
 - 2. Portrayal of Jacob – remarkably realistic and unpretentious – positive and negative; clear and ambiguous; simple and complex. “Take him or leave him. The most astounding thing is that God takes him.” (Fretheim, 86)
- B. Structure – journey: Canaan > Haran > Canaan.
 - 1. Genealogies of Ishmael and Esau bracket narrative (25:12-18; 36:1-43) (keep relationships with non-chosen peoples clearly in view)
 - 2. Center of story – explosion of God language (progenitors of Israel’s tribal groups – 29:31-30:24). Their birth within matrix of Jacob-Laban conflict may mirror essence of later Israelite life – born in midst of conflict; conflict close at hand.
 - 3. 4 appearances of God constitute “pillars” of story and provide key developments (Fretheim)
 - a) Oracle to Rebekah regarding future of twins “wrestling” in her womb (25:23)
 - b) To Jacob at Bethel (departure – 28:10-22)
 - c) Wrestling at Jabbok (32:22-32) (sets Jacob-Esau conflict alongside Jacob-God conflict)
 - d) To Jacob at Bethel (return – 35:9-15)

XIV. Prologue: The elder shall serve the younger (25:19-34)

- A. Background Helps
 - 1. Called the “blessed deception.”
 - a) Jacob
 - (1) 1st with older brother
 - (2) 2nd with old father

- b) Jacob tricked by Laban – Leah
2. Isaac: the “shadow” (transitional figure from Abraham to Jacob). *Isaac “wallflower” to flamboyant Jacob.
3. Geographical points of anchorage – central Palestine (Shechem; Bethel; partially also in E. Jordan).
4. Distinctive thematic focus in contrast to Abraham cycle.
 - a) Brueggemann: The Conflicted Call of God. Call brings conflict: Esau; Laban; God.
 - b) Mann: nature of Jacob’s character. *Unscrupulous. Much of conflict result of Jacob’s own “cussedness.” Constant wrangling and wrestling.
5. Contrast in sons
 - a) Esau: victim; boor; lives at gut level (sell promise for soup!). (Name – *admoni* = ruddy; *se`ar* = hair [perhaps play on Seir]). Becomes “red man” in request for “red stuff” (soup). Compulsive. Word used for “stuff” is word used to stuff animal with food. (Esau as name has nothing to do with wordplay)
 - b) Jacob: sharp mind / little conscience; “heel.” *`aqeb* = heel).
6. Interplay – birthright (*bekorah*) and blessing (*berakah*).
 - a) Blessing = political dominance and more favored habitat.
 - b) Birthright = inheritance rights (double portion?); lineage.
7. Structure (partially concentric): Cycle of stories – Jacob and Esau; Jacob and Laban; Theophanies.
 - a) 25:19-24: Prologue
 - b) 26: Isaac and the Canaanites: Conflict and Covenant
 - c) 27: JACOB AND ESAU: DECEPTION
 - d) 28:10-22: Bethel: Departure
 - e) 29-31: Jacob and Laban: Deception and Reconciliation
 - f) 32:1-2: Mahanaim
 - g) 32-33: JACOB AND ESAU: RECONCILIATION
 - h) 34: Jacob and the Canaanites: Deception and Enmity
 - i) 36: The Edomites.

XV. The Isaac Stories (25:19-26:33)

- A. Background Helps
 1. 5 part mosaic
 - a) Journey to Gerar because of theophany
 - b) Rebekah’s adventure in Gerar
 - c) Isaac’s prosperity and departure
 - d) Dispute over wells
 - e) Treaty of Beersheba
 2. “Like father, like son.”
 3. Sojourner brings natives to near catastrophe; enjoys undeserved welfare.
 4. Reconciliation and restoration of covenant.
- B. Specific Helps
 1. Vss 12-25: dispute over water rights
 - a) Isaac’s success and increasing wealth. (Despoiling the Egyptians).
 - b) Success of Israelite in foreign court (Esther; Daniel)
 2. In contrast to Abraham’s wealth mentioned in 12:16; 20:14-16 mentions Isaac’s prosperity as Lord’s blessing.
 3. Vss 26-33
 - a) State visit (notice officials)
 - b) Yahweh is with you
 - c) Non-aggression pact, sealed with meal.

XVI. Deception (27:1-28:9)

- A. Background Helps
 1. Reveal central trait in Jacob’s character; foreshadow rest of cycle, Saga as whole.
 2. Jacob: combination of deceitfulness and cunning (like mother!).
 3. Esau:
 - a) prologue: gullible fool; here: innocent victim

- b) when hears of father's disapproval of Canaanite (Hittite) wives, marries daughter of Ishmael! Has sold his birthright; lost father's blessing; now marries daughter of one who would share in Abraham's blessing but not in Yahweh's covenant!
- 4. Motif of clothing
 - a) Deception with Jacob of Isaac
 - b) Joseph – deception of Jacob
- 5. Difference in conversation with Jacob / Esau
 - a) Isaac calls Jacob "my son" 7x; "his son" 1x.
 - b) Isaac calls Esau "my son" 1x. Esau twice calls himself "your son."
- 6. Esau / Isaac encounter
 - a) Cry = lament > petition ("bless me")
 - b) Isaac's reply repeats blessing, but in reverse order.
- B. Specific Helps
 - 1. Esau states – "he *outyakhoved* me!"
 - 2. blessing (*berakah*) and birthright (*bekorah*).
 - 3. Bypassing the firstborn
 - a) Reuben > Joseph
 - b) Manasseh > Ephraim
 - 4. Jacob not concerned with morality of action, but whether he get caught (v 12; cf. Jer 2:26)
 - 5. Vss 18-29 – brings Lord in on his deceit!

XVII. Departure (28:1-22)

- A. Background Helps
 - 1. Departure – 28:1-9
 - 2. Bethel – 28:10-22
 - 3. **Bethel story to Jacob what 12:1-3 to Abraham.
 - a) Gains father's blessing without deception.
 - (1) Heads for relatives not to escape brother's wrath, but to search for wife.
 - (2) Prevent marriage with Canaanite (Hittite) like Esau.
 - b) Patrs on threshold of journey: Jacob reversing journey! Going where Abraham forbade Isaac to go. Yet, where he lies is threshold of different order (Bethel: gate of God).
 - (1) Echoes of Tower of Babel? Ziggurat
 - (2) Difference – tower not stairway to heaven for communication, but chasm (Sarna). Stairway only for angels (Sarna).
 - (3) NT – applies to Jesus – John 1:43-51.
 - c) Bethel intersection of divine and human paths. Jacob standing at strange door opening in 3 directions: behind = past of failure and alienation; ahead is future of both hope and uncertainty; over above, and coming down to meet him, is presence of God.
 - d) True key to passage – not visual, but speech of God (13-15)
 - 4. Significance of Jacob as Yahweh's agent and beneficiary (promise bearer)
 - a) Note former qualities of Yahweh's agents (none of unimpeachable character). Statement c. God – those through whom he works (1 Cor 1:26-31)
 - b) Jacob's *vow* at Bethel beginning of his "conversion." Here Jacob not a grasper, but a receiver.
 - 5. Jacob as responding, trusting man
 - a) Finds world of the dream more convincing than old world of fear and guilt.
 - b) In undefended, vulnerable sleep, Jacob finds entry for God's awesome power. Cf. Rom 8:38-39.
 - c) Appearance of God leads Jacob to make deep commitments and overriding decisions.

XVIII. Jacob and Laban (chs. 29-31)

- A. Background Helps
 - 1. Form critically – novella (source criticism difficult).
 - a) Structure – chiasm. Reversal in form mirrors reversal of situation for Laban and Jacob. Framed by kisses (welcome to Jacob; departing to daughters and grandchildren).
 - (1) A – Jacob's arrival in Haran (Laban) (29:1-14)
 - (2) B – contract with Laban (29:15-20)
 - (3) C – Laban's deception of Jacob (29:21-30)

- (4) D – birth of Jacob’s children (29:31-30:24)
- (5) C – Jacob’s trickery of Laban (30:25-43)
- (6) B – Dispute with Laban (31:17-24)
- (7) A – departure from Laban (Haran) (30:43-54)
- 2. New home; new family
 - a) Family unity > disunity (duplicity).
 - b) Conflict – grows out of blessing (wealth / herds).
- 3. Deception: the deceiver deceived! Leah / Rachel.
- 4. **Struggle / conflict: “Israel” emerges out of conflict with Rachel and Leah, just as “Israel” will emerge from the struggle between Jacob and God in c. 32.
- 5. Fertility of Jacob’s family: manif of blessing of Yahweh (6 pairs)
 - a) Leah – 6 sons (Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulon, *Dinah* [excluded through rape – no husband])
 - b) Zilpah – 2 sons (Leah) (Gad, Asher)
 - c) Bilhah – 2 sons (Rachel) (Dan, Naphtali)
 - d) Rachel – 2 sons (Joseph, *Benjamin* [replaces Dinah? – so Blenkinsopp])
- 6. Deception: Jacob now deceives Laban.
 - a) Rachel steals household gods (= legal title to estate?). (Motif similar to “despoiling Egyptians” in Exodus? – Blenkinsopp [compare Jacob outwitting Laban in flock intrigue])
 - b) Change in Laban: initiates treaty; surge of paternal devotion
- B. Specific Helps
 - 1. Jacob at well
 - a) Superhuman strength – galvanized by approach of Rachel.
 - b) Contrast – Jacob the homebody with Jacob of 25:27.
 - c) Jacob the “heel grabber” seizes the opportunity.
 - 2. Arrival in Haran (29:1-14)
 - a) “Is there peace to him” (Jacob of Laban) – soon lost when they pitted against each other.
 - b) You my bone and my flesh
 - 3. Laban’s deception and Jacob’s marriages (29:15-30)
 - a) Wages and work – begins amicably
 - b) Deception
 - (1) “What is this you have done to me?” (cf. Gen 20:9; 26:10)
 - (2) Jacob the deceiver > deceived.
 - (3) Ironic echoes in ensuing rivalry of wives.
 - c) Leah’s weak eyes – cf. Isaac (made Jacob’s deception possible).
 - d) Just as Isaac / Rebekah favoritism created discord, so favoritism of wives creates discord. As Jacob younger son helped by his mother, so Leah helped by her father.
 - e) Irony – “not done in our country” – younger before firstborn.
 - 4. Jacob’s children (29:31-30:24)
 - a) Strife – Leah unloved (Heb – “hated”). Leads to divine compassion and fertility.
 - b) “see” – 29:31; 30:1.
 - c) God remembers – cf. Noah 8:1
 - d) Gen 3 / 29:15-30:24.
 - (1) Man blames wife / Rachel blames Jacob. Jacob – “am I in place of God?”
 - (2) Jacob’s hard years and birth of children remind of curses imposed on first humans (childbearing and land toil)

5. Jacob's trickery of Laban (30:25-43)
 - a) Laban offers to make Jacob generously paid employee; Jacob wants to work for family. Impression left that Laban has right to keep Jacob's family and property should he leave.
 - b) Laban removes sheep (3 days away); Jacob understands breeding habits.
6. Jacob's flight (31:1-54)
 - a) Brothers complaint – "Jacob taken all that belonged to our father" (echoes Esau's complaint).
 - b) Rachel and Leah's reaction to flight – 31:14-15. Some question they realize they've lost any rights in father's house. Laban "sold" them (language of slavery) for work (not silver) and then disposed of monetary equivalent!
 - c) Laban "feels through" Rachel's tent (same word as Isaac feeling Jacob). (*mashash*).
 - d) Why Rachel want to steal?
 - e) 3 reasons motivate departure
 - (1) charges made by Laban's sons
 - (2) Perceptible change in Laban's attitude
 - (3) Statement of Lord (v 13)

XIX. Jacob and Esau (chs. 32-33)

- A. Background Helps
 1. Parallel with Gen 28
 2. New threshold: encounter with Esau (and with *God).
 3. Preparation for meeting with Esau – 2 sides to Jacob
 - a) old Jacob: shrewd, calculating, cautious (cope through manipulation and barter)
 - b) other Jacob (vv 9-12): appeal to Yahweh. If there moment of righteousness in Jacob's life, it here when he acknowledges the blessing he enjoys not one he earned, but gracious gift of Yahweh.
 - c) Irony: plans, prays, plans
 4. "Face to face" with God at Bethel.
 - a) Wrestles divine blessing from God
 - b) Pays heavy price: limp (cripple). Pyhrric victory: disabling injury.
 - c) New name / identity: Israel! (Yet still "Jacob" about him: grasping for blessing).
"Israel:"
 - (1) "God struggles;" "(Jacob) struggles with God"
 - (2) God rules
 - (3) Not that God lost, but that Jacob "hung in there." Beginning of change in character.
 - d) Reversal: God who stood with Jacob all along when undeserving, now stands *in* Jacob's way! Expect God to be antagonist to cheat and protector of penitent. Here God reverse. Struggle with God prepares for meeting with Esau.
 - e) "face" used 5x with reference to Esau. After dream – "seeing your face like seeing face of God."
 5. Meets Esau "face to face."
 - a) 33:10: to see Esau like seeing God!
 - b) Mann: irony; reversal: Esau acts toward Jacob like God; God acts toward him like Esau!!
 - c) Reversal of grasping: Jacob offers not merely present (*minhah*), but also *blessing* (32:13).
 - d) Message – Israel must ponder how it is that blessings are given and at what cost.
 6. Theophanies
 - a) 32:1-2: at "Mahanaim" (so named because God's angels appeared as army)
 - b) 32:22-32: at Peniel (wrestles with El). Partially aetiology
- B. Specific Helps
 1. Questions
 - a) Identity of assailant
 - (1) "man"
 - (2) "angel" (Gen 32:29, 31; Hos 12:4-5)
 - (3) Significantly, never explicitly identified with Yahweh.

- (4) Elsewhere man / angel interchangeably – Gen 18; Jgs 13:22 (cf. Gen 32:31).
In both cases *elohim* asked for his name and vanishes in anonymity.

2. b) Relation – change of name and appeal for blessing
- a) Request for name
- a) Name = control, power
- b) Cf. Decalogue – “take name in vain” (misuse)
3. Jacob’s petitionary prayer
- a) Address to deity; petition; motivation; reasons brought forward to persuade God to grant petition (cf. Pss 31:15; 144:11).
- b) *Hesed / emet* – cf. Abraham – 24:27.
4. Jacob and mysterious adversary (32:24-32)
- a) Gunkel – “worthy of a Rembrandt.” *JBC* – as enigmatic as Mona Lisa!
- b) Hos 12:3-4; WisdSol 10:10-12.
- c) Chief difficulty – identification of adversary.
5. Meeting with Esau (33:1-20)
- a) Jacob – family into 3 groups. (Slave women and their children first; Leah and her children 2nd; Rachel and Joseph last). Kind of triage (JBC).
- b) 7fold obeisance – common in vassals in Amarna letters.

XX. Jacob in Shechem (ch. 34)

- A. Background Helps
1. If earlier stories = movement from contention / hostility > reconciliation; Shechem = antitype. Feigned relationship > strife.
2. Shechemite motivation: beyond Dinah’s beauty; also desire to benefit from Jacob’s wealth.
3. Irony: Jacob’s sons rightly reject Canaanite offer of marriage, but for wrong reasons, and with irresponsible tactics (Mann, 64).
 - a) Goal: revenge (through deception)
 - b) If this way of Jacob’s sons, not bode well for way of Israel (Mann, 64).
- B. Specific Helps
1. Reason for story – chs. 37-50 concern Jacob’s sons; 34 concerns daughter.
2. No peaceful solution; violence begets violence. Violence of Simeon and Levi haunting prelude to brothers’ act of violence against Joseph (recalled in Jacob’s farewell to sons – 49:5-7).
3. Similarities to Amnon’s rape of Tamar (2 Sam 13).

XXI. The Return to Bethel (35:1-15)

- A. Background Helps
1. 3 death reports
 - a) Rebekah’s nurse Deboah
 - b) Rachel in childbirth
 - c) Isaac in peaceful old age
2. Reuben’s violation of Bilhah
 - a) Sex offense + challenge to authority of head of family. Cf. Absalom and father’s harem; Adonijah’s request for Abishag.
 - b) Theme – strife in family
 - c) Reason for Reuben’s loss of rights of firstborn

XXII. Esau-Edom (36:1-37:1)

- A. Background Helps
1. Structurally parallel to Ishmael panel.
2. Main purpose – record territorial separation of brothers.

XXIII. Homiletic Helps – Jacob Cycle

- A. Homiletic Helps
1. With return to Bethel, cycle full circle.
2. Juxtaposition: Jacob’s last son and firstborn (Reuben): anticipates reversal to follow in Joseph story.
3. Jacob at Bethel structurally // to Abraham in c. 22. The one receiving the blessing at Bethel no longer the scoundrel and cheater, but the penitential pilgrim, responding to the call of God (Mann, 65).
- B. Jacob, God, Faith
1. 28:10-22

- a) Linchpin in Jacob narrs – this to Jacob what 12:1-3 to Abr.
 - b) Threshold of journey – Jacob reversing! (Going where Abr forbade Isaac to go!).
Yet threshold of dif order – “Bethel”
 - c) Bethel – intersection of divine human. Jacob standing at strange door opening in 3 directions!
 - (1) behind = failure; alienation
 - (2) ahead = hope; uncertainty
 - (3) above = presence of God (coming to meet him!) (cf. Babel – God came down to see; Sodom and Gomorrah). Here contrast – explicit pledge of divine presence and protection.
 - (4) Brueg: Jacob at “non-place” as “non-person.” (As exile, threatened).
Non-place > crucial place; non-person > person crucial for promise. All result of coming of God!
 - (a) In dream, Jacob given alternative to his life! Whether to let shameful past determine future, or presentation of alternative future from God.
 - (b) Journey for survival can become journey of faith!
 - d) True key to passage –not visual, but speech of God (13-15)
 - (1) presence of God promissory.
 - (2) Vv 13-14 regular; 15 specific to Jacob!
 - (a) I am with you (intent of ladder) (heart of Gospel – Immanuel – God with us!) (Cf. final promise of Christ to church – “I am with you always” [Mt 28:20])
 - (b) I will keep you – 1st promise c. presence; 2nd c. action.
 - (i) Shepherd imagery
 - (ii) Cf. Ps 121 (keep 6x).
 - (iii) Cf. Nu 6:24-6; Ps 91:11-15.
 - (iv) Keeper of Israel guarantees lives of those who are exposed and helpless.
 - (c) Promise of homecoming – cf. 31:13.
 - e) Jacob as Lord’s promise bearer
 - (1) Statement c. God – those through whom he works (1 Cor 1:26-31)
 - (2) Jacob’s vow at Bethel beginning of his “conversion.” Here Jacob not grasper, but receiver!
 - (3) Irony – this still “Jacob” who leaves PL for old world! Bearer of divine blessing also bears scars of alienation!
 - f) Jacob as responding, trusting man
 - (1) Finds world of the dream more convincing than old world of fear and guilt.
 - (2) In undefended, vulnerable sleep, Jacob finds entry for God’s awesome power. Cf. Rom 8:38-39.
 - (3) Jacob’s response (16-22)
 - (a) Attention to place of encounter – worships
 - (b) Attention to promise (cf. promises of Ps 23)
 - (4) Appearance of God leads Jacob to make deep commitments and overriding decisions.
2. 32:22-32
- a) New threshold – encounter with Esau (*and God)
 - b) Preparation for meeting – dual-sided Jacob.
 - (1) Old Jacob – shrewd, calculating, cautious (cope through manipulation and barter)
 - (2) other Jacob – appeal to Lord. If moment of rightn in his life, it here when acknowls blessing he enjoys not one he earned, but gracious gift of Lord.
 - (3) Irony – plans, prays, plans.
 - c) Face to face with God at Jabbok
 - (1) Wrestles divine blessing from God
 - (2) Pays heavy price – limp (cripple). Phyrrie victory – disabling injury.
 - (3) New name; new identity: Israel (yet still “Jacob” about him – grasping for blessing).
 - (a) God struggles / (Jacob) struggles with God

- (b) God rules
- (4) Reversal – God who stood with Jacob all along when undeserving, now stands *in* Jacob’s way! Expect God to be antagonist to cheat and protector of penitent. Here God reverse!
- d) Brueggemann
 - (1) Relation of 2 meetings: with Esau; God
 - (a) Fascination of text – ambiguity.
 - (b) On way to appease brother, must deal with awesome power (wrath) of his God.
 - (c) Jacob must meet both Esau and God, but holds own with both?!
 - (2) What mean to say comes to draw with God?
 - (3) Vss 26-29 – interplay of “bless” and “name.”
 - (4) Buechner: The Magnificent Defeat. (alternately – “The Crippling Victory”)
 - (5) Message – Isr must ponder how it is that blessings are given and at what cost. Interplay of weakness – power (cf. cross). Cf. Mk 10:35-45 (discs and power)
- 3. NT – John 1
 - a) John 1 and OT
 - b) Jesus and Judaism.
- 4. Hestenes (*Genesis*, 311) – “Faith is being willing, able, gutsy, vulnerable, and courageous enough to let go of the safety and security of the swinging bar, in the middle of the air, in order to take the hand of the one who will meet you.”
- 5. “Faith is what you do between the last time you experienced God and the next time you experience God.” (Weems, *Genesis*, 311).
- 6. What does this story demand of us? Brueggemann (*Genesis / Moyers*, 312) – “I think it demands engagement with God’s holiness, which is always troubled by and never resolved with ingredients of submissiveness and assertiveness. In Jacob, you get larger doses of assertiveness than you do submissiveness, but they’re both there.”

JOSEPH

The Joseph Cycle (Gn 37:1-50:26)

XXIV. The Joseph Cycle (37:1-50:26) - General

- A. Backdrop (Fretheim)
 - 1. 37:2 – this “the story of the family of Jacob.” Think in corporate terms – this prepares way for book of Exodus. Provides setting – court of Pharaoh.
 - 2. Sapiential character (see von Rad)
 - a) Thematic – retribution / providence
 - b) Character – Joseph wise administrator and interpreter of dreams.
 - 3. Story – bridge between Canaan and Egypt.
 - 4. “God with Joseph” – 39:2, 3, 5, 21, 23; 40:8; 41:16, 25, 28, 32, 38, 39, 51, 52; 45:4-9; 46:1-4; 48:9, 15, 16, 21; 49:24, 25; 50:18-20.
- B. Structure
 - 1. Begins: conflicted family situation – 2 brothers eliminated from line of promise (chs. 37-38)
 - 2. Ends: resolution of conflict and inclusion of all brothers within orbit of promise (ch. 50).
 - 3. Chs. 39-44 – 2 lines of development
 - a) Egyptian context and Joseph’s rise to power (39-41)
 - b) Family interrelationships (42-44)

XXV. The Dreamer (ch. 37)

- A. Background Helps
 - 1. “The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” (Ezk 18:2)
 - 2. Joseph:
 - a) Object of father’s exclusive devotion
 - b) Aggravates situation!
 - 3. Themes / Motifs:
 - a) Family tension (Joseph’s fate at hand of bros ([forms framework])
 - (1) Conflict / tension between wives now transfers to sons. (“sons” 5x; father – 4x; brothers – 3x).
 - (2) *All implicated in responsibility for crisis in family.
 - (3) “Will the older(s) serve the younger?”
 - b) “Sight” – bros “see” (18, 20, 25) – see Joseph’s favored treatment, “see” play. Cf. Abraham; Isaac; Jacob.
 - c) Jacob used clothing to deceive Isaac; sons use clothing to deceive Jacob. (Slaughtered goat in both cases!)
 - (1) Coat - Joseph begins with patrician’s coat; loses; eventually regains in Egypt (vizier). Coat may signify change in fortunes!
 - d) Descent – “Pit:” with brothers; in Egypt.
 - (1) Cistern
 - (2) Egypt
 - (3) Prison (same word used as cistern in 37).
 - e) Recognition:
 - (1) Bros in Egypt
 - (2) Judah / Tamar
 - f) Buying / selling
 - 4. Socio-political backdrop – relation – family / politics
 - a) Begins with conflict; ends with reconciliation. So not actually “story of guidance” (cf. von Rad; Ruppert). Rather, story of family whose “well-being” is destroyed by bros’ attempt to commit murder and deception of father, but restored by God’s providence. (Similarly Westermann).
 - b) Special character of 37-50: encounter of new peop of Isr with world power (Egypt) and its new, overwhelming possibilities.
 - 5. Egyptian Backdrop
 - a) Ishmaelite / Midianite

- b) Slave supply – in Egypt – from war with other countries. Peaceful slave trafficking well-established.
 - (1) Kg Amen-em-het III (end of 19th cent BCE) – disposes 4 Asiatic slaves (received as gift from brother).
 - (2) Papyrus (ca. 1740 BCE) – inventory of servants of estate. Of 95 names, 37 Semitic. Adults retain Semitic names; children Egyptianized.
- 6. Dreams: backdrop – Revelation of divine will
 - a) Can have “idle” dreams – this why dreams come in pairs!
 - b) Specialized skill to interpret.
- B. Specific Helps
 - 1. Joseph’s dreams (37:5-11)
 - a) Sheaves – grain buying expedition of bros. (Bros will manifest obeisance).
 - b) 2nd dream – nothing from bros; rebuke from father. 1st time father allies himself with other bros, rather than Joseph.
 - 2. Joseph between his father and brothers (37:12-20)
 - a) “see to the welfare (*shalom*) of your bros” – relates to inability of Jacob’s other sons to greet Joseph with shalom (v 4)
 - b) vss 14-17 – wandering about of Joseph during journey
 - 3. Joseph apart from his father and bros (37:21-36)
 - a) Joseph powerless and passive victim (he object of 13 verbs).
 - b) Reuben and Judah spokesmen (one to save; one with alternate plan)
 - c) Throw him into cistern; sit down to eat meal! (later meal will reverse positions of power!)
 - d) Jacob’s comment – will “go down” to Sheol with Joseph (actually will “go down” to Egypt).

XXVI. Judah and Tamar (ch. 38)

- A. Background Helps
 - 1. Interrupts plot. Treats problems arising when member of Jacob’s family marries a Canaanite.
 - 2. Why story here?
 - a) Continues motif of firstborn (Judah’s firstborn wicked, Yahweh kills him; 2nd refuses to fulfill his obligations, Yahweh kills him also). Issue: balking at responsibility in continuation of divine blessing (be fertile and multiply). Even Judah, in not giving 3rd son, guilty.
 - b) In rlt’n to c. 39: Joseph and Potiphar’s wife. Judah’s incontinence foil to Joseph’s integrity.
 - c) 3 plays –
 - (1) Joseph / Judah
 - (2) Tamar / Potiphar’s wife
 - (3) Joseph / Tamar
- B. Specific Helps
 - 1. Judah’s sons and Tamar’s marriages (38:1-11)
 - 2. Tamar “prostitute” (*qdash* – cult prostitute)
 - 3. Tamar’s plan and its discovery (38:12-30)
 - a) 2 acts of perception – Tamar “sees” 3rd son Shelah grown to adulthood; Judah “sees” prostitute by side of road.
 - b) Seal and staff as pledge.
 - c) Birth of twins – Zerah and Perez. (Nu 26:19-22; 1 Chr 2:3-4 – Shelah, Zerah and Perez becomes progenitors of most important clans of Judah. David from Perez).
 - 4. Contacts of Tamar story
 - a) Contacts with Jacob cycle
 - b) Contacts with Joseph narr
 - 5. How fit?
 - a) Judah concludes ch. 37; starts ch. 38
 - b) Judah adultery with daughter-in-law; Joseph resists seduction.

XXVII. Joseph’s rise to power (chs. 39-41)

- A. Background Helps
 - 1. Story within a story.

- a) Joseph's career in Egypt – slave > power second only to Phar
- b) His descent to Egypt precedes / prefigures descent of whole world to Egypt.
2. *Absence of direct divine manifestations, interventions, etc. Yahweh's presence told at 2 critical junctures
 - a) Joseph's intro into Potiphar's house
 - b) In prison, Yahweh with Joseph.
3. Themes
 - a) Blessing (Joseph "successful").
 - b) Responsibility: sense of righteousness (loyalty).
4. Chs 40-41: prison > palace.
 - a) Joseph no longer starry-eyed dreamer; he now *interpreter* of dreams.
 - b) Interps dreams by *Spirit of God.
5. Issue of Identity: who is Joseph?
 - a) Egyptian
 - (1) **Wears signet ring, name (Zaphenath-paneah) of Egypt; married to daughter of Eg prst.
 - (2) Zaphenath-paneah = "the god has spoken and he (the bearer of the name) shall live" (this name not appear until 12th cent BC).
 - (3) Asenath – "she who belongs to Neith" (goddess) (current from 8th cent BC)
 - (4) Married elite of nobility
 - b) Hebrew
 - (1) Naming of son Manasseh: 41:51: "God has made me forget all my hardship, and all my father's house."
 - c) Could foreigner rise to power? (Sarna – yes)
 - (1) Akhenaton – had Semite Yanhamu as Egyptian commissioner for Syria and Palestine
 - (2) Merneptah – had Ben-Ozen (came from place E of Lake Tiberius) – became royal herald / marshal.
 - (3) Brother of Merneptah – given in marriage (by his father Ramses II) to daughter of Syrian sea captain named Ben-Anath.
6. Potiphar
 - a) Name virtually identical with future father-in-law (Potiphera). Deliberately abbreviated to avoid confusion.
 - (1) Name – *Pa-di-pa-re* = "He who Re has given" (*Pa-di* + divine appellation common in Egypt).
 - b) Joseph's position – *mer-per* = comptroller. (Frequent in Egyptian texts).
7. Joseph as interpreter of dreams
 - a) Only other in OT – Daniel (both serve in pagan courts!).
 - b) Butler (cupbearer) and baker
 - (1) Butler – trusted advisor.
 - (2) Baker – Egyptian gastronomy.
8. Joseph's elevation
 - a) Duties, titles, unusual wealth of detail
 - b) Egypt – generous distribution of honors and titles to officials (sometimes up to 12).
 - c) Vizier – in charge of palace; probably = control over personal estates.
 - d) Strange quirk of history – shepherd boy becomes Sec'y of Agriculture (Sarna). (Remember dream of sheaves).
 - e) Motif of blessing – Joseph will dispense blessings during famine.
9. contrast – divine presence and physical reality
 - a) divine presence (vss 2, 3, 21, 23)
 - b) physical reality – slave; prison
10. Parallels chs 37 / 39
 - a) Preferential treatment of youth leads to trouble
 - b) Act of deception involves garment
 - c) Language of visual perception
11. Gen 39 and 42
 - a) Deception, vilification, and false charge by someone in power
 - b) Imprisonment

- B. Specific Helps
1. Picture of Joseph dramatically different from Joseph in ch. 37.
 - a) Joseph unconscious instrument of God's providence
 - b) His behavior – worthy. (Slave and sexual promiscuity perennial feature in slave societies).
 2. Joseph's response
 - a) Violation of confidence placed in him by his master
 - b) Sin against God. Biblical view – adultery sin against God. Not simply social impropriety. Religious offense.
 3. Joseph and Potiphar's wife (39:1-23)
 - a) Motif – “Potiphar bought Joseph...from the *hand* of the Ishmaelites.”
 - b) Garment of Joseph “in her hand.” Later speak of garment “beside her” (when she tells story).
 - c) Prisoners put “into the hand” of Joseph.”
 4. Joseph the interpreter of dreams (40:1-23)
 - a) Joseph's abilities
 - (1) Decodes dreams – competency with future
 - (2) With bros – experiential knowledge of past.
 - b) 2 dreams brought Joseph to Egypt; 2 dreams bring him to this position.
 - c) Interpretation of butler / baker dreams
 - (1) “lift up head” – more usual expression for special treatment = “lift up face” (used to establish parallelism).
 - (2) Joseph's future hangs by slim thread of forgetful butler!
 - (3) Slight hope – Phar can treat Joseph with mercy like does butler (or vice versa)!
 5. Joseph and Pharaoh's dreams (41:1-57)
 - a) 3 stages in descent – cistern; Egypt; prison.
 - b) Bros and Potiphar “throw” into pit.
 - c) Phar's dreams – cf. Joseph's (37)
 - (1) 2 dreams with same point
 - (2) weaker and inferior will dominate stronger
 - d) Failure to interpret dreams – implicit critique of Egyptian religion? (Kselman)
 - e) Change in status – change in prison clothing.
 - f) Attributes success in dream interpretation – God.
 - g) Joseph marries wife given by Phar (like Solomon).
 - (1) Birth and naming of sons summarizes whole Joseph story.
 - (a) Manasseh – “God has made me forget my trouble and the house of my father”
 - (b) Ephraim – “God has made me fruitful in the land of my oppression” (see Exod 1)
 - h) Gen 40-41 and Daniel

XXVIII. Joseph and his brothers (chs. 42-44)

- A. Background Helps
1. Chs. filled with ironic allusions to preceding.
 - a) E.g., “buy / sell...grain / bro.”
 - b) Drm: bros will bow before him (they come to Eg and bow, but at this stage they unaware it him!).
 - c) Joseph “unrecognized” (issue of identity). Later, in seating at banquet, have Egyptians only table, Hebrews, and then Joseph (a man without community)!
 2. Survival: for family to survive, Benjamin must be jeopardized.
 3. Transformation of Judah: makes good on pledge; offers self as slave in place of Benjamin (fulf of Joseph's dream).
- B. Specific Helps
1. Joseph – intention to see if brothers have reformed (Sarna). This function of imprisoning Benjamin.
 2. Royal goblet – for divination purposes (well known in aNE) – only here in OT, in pagan context!

3. Brothers show highest integrity.
4. Joseph's first meeting with his bros (42:1-38)
 - a) Reversal of ch. 37 (even in way people mentioned)
 - b) Bros prostrate before Joseph (v 6)
5. Second trip to Egypt (43:1-34)
 - a) Pairs in story – dreams' fellow prisoners; cistern / dungeon; pair of trips.
 - b) Judah replaces Reuben as spokesman (see Reuben's foolish speech – 42:37 – can kill his 2 sons if not return with Benjamin).
 - c) Joseph "inquired after their peace" (v 27)
 - d) Meal – recalls their earlier callousness. Separate meal for Joseph – reconciliation still future; custom.
6. Final test and Judah's speech (44:1-34)
 - a) Two parts
 - (1) Departure with goblet and discovery
 - (2) Return to Joseph and Judah's speech
 - b) Silver cup – for predicting future (recalls Joseph's dream interp). Recall Rachel's theft of gods. Laban's oath – anyone in party with gods "shall not live."
 - c) Judah's speech – 44:18-34. Changed person from one interested earlier in making profit.
 - (1) Master – servant language
 - (2) Judah replaces jealousy with compassion as speaks of father's preferential love for Joseph, then Benjamin.
 - (3) Recalls even painful use of paternal and filial language by his father only for Rachel's sons.
 - (4) 44:32 – most dramatic. Brother initiating sale into slavery will become slave.

XXIX. Reunion (45:1-47:27)

- A. Background Helps
 1. Joseph looks as if through one way mirror. At this stage, all that been offered is to Egyptian viceroy, not Joseph.
 2. **45:5-7: God sent to preserve life...**on a mission (sent by God).
 3. Jacob leaves PL; will he see it again? With departure, at Beersheba offers sacr (ties with Abraham) and again Abraham promise reaffirmed (with addition of key word): "I will make there of you a great nation."
 4. Prominence of #5
 - a) 300 shekels of silver (price of 10 slaves – Exod 21:32)
 - b) Joseph took 1/5 grain
 - c) Gave Benjamin 5x
 - d) 5 garments
 5. Irony: one who came to Egypt as slave now become independent community with land, while native Egyptians have become landless slaves (47:13-26).
- B. Specific Helps
 1. Recognition and reconciliation (45:1-28)
 - a) 3x – Joseph weeps (42:24; 43:30; 45:2)
 - b) 45:5-8 – theological center of story.
 - c) Narrator uses reversal of language and change meaning of same words
 - (1) Jacob's lamenting response (42:38) to news about imprisoned Simeon "only one remains" recalled with Joseph "remnant" (45:7). God's providence active in turning lament > joy.
 - (2) Invitation to Jacob – "come down to me" (v 9) – Jacob's lament in 37:35 – "I will go down to my son" – Sheol.
 - d) Joseph gives bros new festal garments and money to Benjamin – last appearance of clothing.
 2. Jacob's itinerary and Vision (46:1-7)
 - a) Divine assurance at Beersheba
 - b) Sharp contrast – God's guidance of patriarch by oracle and appearance and hidden divine providence with Joseph.

3. Audiences with Pharaoh (46:31-47:12)
 - a) Joseph instructs family about meeting with Pharaoh
 - b) Pharaoh – “land is before you” (recalls Abraham and Lot – generosity).
 - c) “Jacob blessed Pharaoh” (beginning and end of section).
4. 4 religious truths
 - a) God at work in affairs of nations and individuals to accomplish his purposes (46:3f)
 - b) Even though Joseph in high position, he not ashamed of his past or his family (46:31f)
 - c) When Jacob comes into court, he master of situation (47:7-10)
 - d) Joseph acted in best interests of all the citizens of Egypt

XXX. Blessing of Jacob (47:28-50:26)

- A. Background Helps
 1. Deathbed scene: cf. chs. 24; 27.
 2. **50:15-21
 - a) Bow before Joseph as Joseph
 - b) **Theological intent. **”Evil...good.”
 3. 50:24: first and only time Joseph refers to divine promises. **Oath in c. 22 provides unity to Ancestral Saga (Mann, 77). Oath repeated at critical moments in narr; at transition points (24:7; 26:3; 50:24).
 4. Theological center: 45:1-8; 50:15-21.
 5. Laying on of hands for blessing
 - a) Knees – patriarch officially accepting child into home.
 - b) Cf. NT – laying on of hands – blessing.
 - c) V 16 – causing someone’s name to be called upon another = let these people be considered my own. Cf. NT – Xns those whom God’s name is called (James 2:7 – Grk – “name which is called upon you.”)
- B. Specific Helps
 1. Death of Jacob and Joseph
 - a) Embalming – mummification.
 - b) Lifespan of Joseph – 110. Ideal in Egypt (numerous refs).
 2. Jacob’s blessing of Joseph’s sons (48:1-22)
 - a) Jacob’s blessing – adoption – raises them to status of sons Reuben and Simeon. Another instance of Jacob’s predilection for Rachel.
 - b) “younger shall be greater” (reversal of hands). Clearly recall beginning of Jacob story.
 3. Jacob’s testament (49:1-27)
 - a) Farewell discourse
 - (1) Exhortations, instructions, predictions, blessings to children
 - (2) Cf. Deut 33:6-25.
 4. Final reconciliation with bros (50:15-26)
 - a) Joseph weeps again
 - b) Slave language.
 - c) Joseph adopts Manasseh’s son Machir (as his father had adopted Manasseh and Ephraim).
 - d) Curses from Gen 3 been reversed!
 - (1) Joseph lives with reconciled family in Egypt.
 - (2) Serpent’s words in Gen 3:4-5 (you shall not die! You shall be like gods, knowing good and evil) transformed by wise Joseph in his final theological summary – 50:19-20 – “Am I in the place of God? Though you planned evil against me, God meant it for good, to keep alive a numerous people.”