

## SESSION 9

# GOD CHOSE JACOB. GOD SENT JACOB'S SON, JOSEPH, TO EGYPT

God's story tells us about when Abraham died.



GENESIS 25:7-11

<sup>7</sup> Abraham lived for 175 years, <sup>8</sup> and he died at a ripe old age, having lived a long and satisfying life. He breathed his last and joined his ancestors in death. <sup>9</sup> His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite. <sup>10</sup> This was the field Abraham had purchased from the Hittites and where he had buried his wife Sarah. <sup>11</sup> After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac, who settled near Beer-lahai-roi in the Negev.

Isaac was Abraham and Sarah's first son. He was the son that God had promised to them. So when Abraham died, he gave everything that he owned to Isaac. After Abraham died, God took care of Isaac. God said that Isaac was the ancestor of the Promised One who would come later and defeat Satan.

God's story tells us about Isaac's life. Abraham did not want Isaac to marry a woman from Canaan. So Abraham sent Isaac back to his home territory so he could find a wife from among his own people. When Isaac was 40 years old, he married a woman named Rebekah.



GENESIS 25:19,20

<sup>19</sup> This is the account of the family of Isaac, the son of Abraham. <sup>20</sup> When Isaac was forty years old, he married Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan-aram and the sister of Laban the Aramean.

## HIS STORY: THE RESCUE

Isaac's wife Rebekah could not have children. So Isaac prayed<sup>78</sup> to ask the Lord to help her to have children.



GENESIS 25:21-23

<sup>21</sup> Isaac pleaded with the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was unable to have children. The Lord answered Isaac's prayer, and Rebekah became pregnant with twins. <sup>22</sup> But the two children struggled with each other in her womb. So she went to ask the Lord about it. "Why is this happening to me?" she asked.

<sup>23</sup> And the Lord told her, "The sons in your womb will become two nations. From the very beginning, the two nations will be rivals. One nation will be stronger than the other; and your older son will serve your younger son."

Rebekah was worried<sup>79</sup> about what was happening to her. So she asked the Lord what was happening. The Lord said "*The sons in your womb<sup>80</sup> will become two nations.*" He told her that she had two babies inside her. Each child would grow up and have a family that would become a nation. And these two nations would fight against each other. God said that the nation that came from the older child would serve the nation that came from the younger one.

God knew all about the two babies. Only God could know all about them. He knew that they would grow up and have families. He knew that those families would become nations. And he knew that those nations would fight against one another. God knows everything, so he knew all about these two children even before they were born. God can be everywhere at one time. He made everything and he knows everything.

God's story says that Rebekah asked God a question. Rebekah was a woman, but she could go to the Lord and ask him a question. She could go to the Lord because she came in the way that God said to come. She and her husband would have killed animals and let their blood run out. They would have done that to show that they agreed with God. They did it to show that they knew that they deserved death. They knew that only God could save them. God accepted their offerings and so Rebekah had a relationship with God and she could go to God to ask a question.



GENESIS 25:24-28

<sup>24</sup> And when the time came to give birth, Rebekah discovered that she did indeed have twins! <sup>25</sup> The first one was very red at birth and covered with thick hair like a fur coat. So they named him Esau. <sup>26</sup> Then the other twin was born with his hand grasping Esau's heel. So they named him Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when the twins were born.

<sup>27</sup> As the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter. He was an outdoorsman, but Jacob had a quiet temperament, preferring to stay at home. <sup>28</sup> Isaac loved Esau because he enjoyed eating the wild game Esau brought home, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

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78. **prayed** - to pray means to talk to God about something

79. **worried** - thought something bad would happen

80. **womb** - the place in a woman's body where a baby grows before it is born

## SESSION 9: GOD CHOSE JACOB. GOD SENT JACOB'S SON, JOSEPH, TO EGYPT

Rebekah had twin<sup>81</sup> sons, just like God said she would. The boys were different from each other. The first one that was born was named Esau. He was hairy. Esau means 'hairy' in the Hebrew language. Esau grew up to be a very good hunter.<sup>82</sup> He was Isaac's favorite<sup>83</sup> son because Isaac liked to eat meat. The second son who was born was named Jacob. Jacob grew up to become a quiet man who liked to stay at home. Rebekah loved Jacob more than she loved Esau.

Esau was born first. So when Isaac died, Esau should have been given everything that Isaac owned. He should have received all of Isaac's things and he should have taken Isaac's place as the head<sup>84</sup> of the family. That was normal at that time. Esau was the oldest son, but God's story tells us that something else happened.



GENESIS 25:29-34

<sup>29</sup> One day when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau arrived home from the wilderness exhausted and hungry. <sup>30</sup> Esau said to Jacob, "I'm starved! Give me some of that red stew!" (This is how Esau got his other name, Edom, which means "red.")

<sup>31</sup> "All right," Jacob replied, "but trade me your rights as the firstborn son."

<sup>32</sup> "Look, I'm dying of starvation!" said Esau. "What good is my birthright to me now?"

<sup>33</sup> But Jacob said, "First you must swear that your birthright is mine." So Esau swore an oath, thereby selling all his rights as the firstborn to his brother, Jacob.

<sup>34</sup> Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and lentil stew. Esau ate the meal, then got up and left. He showed contempt for his rights as the firstborn.

Esau *arrived home from the wilderness exhausted and hungry*. Exhausted means very, very tired. Esau told Jacob to give him some of the food that Jacob was cooking. It was a red-colored food, probably made of red lentils.<sup>85</sup> Esau was also called 'Edom' which means 'red' in the Hebrew language. Jacob said that Esau could have some of the food if he did something for him first. Jacob asked Esau to give him his *birthright*.<sup>86</sup> Esau *swore an oath, thereby selling all his rights as the firstborn to his brother, Jacob*. That means that Esau made a very strong promise to give his birthright to Jacob if Jacob gave him some food. Then he ate the food Jacob gave to him.

Esau did a very foolish thing. God's story says that Esau *showed contempt for his rights as the firstborn*. To show contempt means to hate something or to think that is not worth anything to you. Esau gave away everything he was going to receive after Isaac died. He did that because he did not believe the things that God had said about his family. He did not believe that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through Isaac's family. He did not think that the Promised One would come through this family. So Esau gave away his birthright for a bowl of food. Later, God's story refers to Esau as "godless."

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81. **twins** - two children born at the same birth

82. **hunter** - someone who goes out to find and kill animals to eat

83. **favorite** - the one that he likes the most

84. **head** - the leader

85. **lentils** - small beans that come from a plant and can be dried and then eaten

86. **birthright** - all the things that would belong to the firstborn son after his father's death; also the blessing that the father would give to the oldest son to say that he would become the head of the family

## HIS STORY: THE RESCUE

Jacob was different from Esau. He did believe what God had said. So he knew that his brother's birthright was a very important thing. God chose Jacob to lead the family. Being the head of the family was a special position. This family was the one that the Promised One would be born into. This Promised One was going to be the one who would defeat Satan. All the nations of the earth would be blessed because of this man who would come. God had a plan for Jacob's family. So God created a way for Jacob to become the head of the family.



GENESIS 27:41-44

<sup>41</sup> From that time on, Esau hated Jacob because their father had given Jacob the blessing. And Esau began to scheme: "I will soon be mourning my father's death. Then I will kill my brother, Jacob."

<sup>42</sup> But Rebekah heard about Esau's plans. So she sent for Jacob and told him, "Listen, Esau is consoling himself by plotting to kill you. <sup>43</sup> So listen carefully, my son. Get ready and flee to my brother, Laban, in Haran. <sup>44</sup> Stay there with him until your brother cools off."

It says that *Esau hated Jacob*. Esau had given away his birthright to Jacob. When Isaac died, he gave Jacob the *blessing* of the firstborn son. Esau wanted to kill Jacob as soon as their father Isaac died. Rebekah heard about Esau's plan to kill Jacob, so she helped Jacob to go away. She told Jacob to go to Haran. Haran is the city where Abraham had lived on his way to Canaan.

Jacob had a dream while he was sleeping outside one night on his way to Haran.



GENESIS 28:10-16

<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, Jacob left Beersheba and traveled toward Haran. <sup>11</sup> At sundown he arrived at a good place to set up camp and stopped there for the night. Jacob found a stone to rest his head against and lay down to sleep. <sup>12</sup> As he slept, he dreamed of a stairway that reached from the earth up to heaven. And he saw the angels of God going up and down the stairway.

<sup>13</sup> At the top of the stairway stood the Lord, and he said, "I am the Lord, the God of your grandfather Abraham, and the God of your father, Isaac. The ground you are lying on belongs to you. I am giving it to you and your descendants. <sup>14</sup> Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth! They will spread out in all directions—to the west and the east, to the north and the south. And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants. <sup>15</sup> What's more, I am with you, and I will protect you wherever you go. One day I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have finished giving you everything I have promised you."

<sup>16</sup> Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I wasn't even aware of it!"

God was speaking to Jacob in the dream. He showed Jacob a set of stairs. The stairs went from earth up to heaven.<sup>87</sup> Angels of God were going up and down them. In his dream, Jacob saw the stairs and

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87. **heaven** - a real place where God's story says that God is

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he heard the Lord saying things about his family. The Lord said that Jacob's family would be huge, and that it would spread out over a large area. The Lord said that all the families of the earth would be blessed through Jacob's family. God was talking about his plan to bring the Promised One who would defeat Satan. This man, who would be sent by God, would be a part of Jacob's family. God was saying the same thing to Jacob that he had said before to Abraham and then to Isaac. God does not ever forget what he plans to do. If God plans to do something, he always does it.

God showed Jacob the stairs that went up to heaven in a dream. God wanted to tell Jacob something about the Promised One who would come through his family. The stairs from earth up to heaven showed that God was going to make a way for people to get to him and to be with him.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they were taken out of the garden of Eden. Every person who has been born since then was born outside of the garden. People then were born into a world of sin and death. People now are born into a world of sin and death. Satan, sin and death are in control.

The people in Jacob's time could only come to God in the way that God had said, which was by killing animals. This was something that they had to keep doing, over and over again. They were separated from God by Satan, sin and death, so they had to keep killing animals. But God wanted to make a way for people to be able to come to him freely. He wanted people to be with him forever. God loves people and he doesn't want them to be separated from him by their sin.

So God told Jacob in the dream that he would make a way for people to come to him that would last forever. They would be able to come freely to be with him. God was showing Jacob that the man who would come through Jacob's family would defeat Satan. This man would make a way for people to freely come to God.

In Genesis Chapters 29 to 35, God's story tells us that Jacob went to northern Mesopotamia. He lived there in the land of his family for 20 years. While he was there, he married two sisters called Leah and Rachel. Jacob and his family went back to Canaan. On the way back, God gave Jacob a new name, Israel.



GENESIS 35:9-12

<sup>9</sup> Now that Jacob had returned from Paddan-aram, God appeared to him again at Bethel. God blessed him, <sup>10</sup> saying, "Your name is Jacob, but you will not be called Jacob any longer. From now on your name will be Israel." So God renamed him Israel.

<sup>11</sup> Then God said, "I am El-Shaddai—'God Almighty.' Be fruitful and multiply. You will become a great nation, even many nations. Kings will be among your descendants! <sup>12</sup> And I will give you the land I once gave to Abraham and Isaac. Yes, I will give it to you and your descendants after you."

Sometimes God's story uses the name Jacob and sometimes it uses the name Israel. Sometimes it uses the name to talk about the individual man, and sometimes it uses the name to refer to his

## HIS STORY: THE RESCUE

whole family. Israel had 12 sons. Israel lived in Canaan with his sons and family. Israel's family grew larger and larger, just like God said it would. One of Israel's sons was called Joseph.



GENESIS 37:3,4

<sup>3</sup> Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other children because Joseph had been born to him in his old age. So one day Jacob had a special gift made for Joseph—a beautiful robe. <sup>4</sup> But his brothers hated Joseph because their father loved him more than the rest of them. They couldn't say a kind word to him.

God's story tells us a lot about Joseph. He was Jacob's favorite son. Joseph's brothers hated him. Joseph listened to God and was very close to him. Later, God's story says that Joseph had great faith in God. God's story tells us all about Joseph's life. You can read the story of his life in Genesis, from Chapter 37 to Chapter 47. For now, we will just go through the main points of the story. You can read the whole story in your Bible later.

### Genesis 37:5-11

Joseph was a shepherd. He had some dreams that his brothers would bow down to him. His brothers hated him because of those dreams. In the dreams, God was showing Joseph that he would become the most powerful person in his family.

### Genesis 37:12-36

Joseph's brothers hated him and wanted to kill him. One day they saw some men from another country passing by and so they sold Joseph to these men to be a slave. These men were on their way to sell things in Egypt. They took Joseph with them to Egypt. When they got there, they sold Joseph to a man called Potiphar. Potiphar worked for the king of Egypt. In Egypt, all the kings were called 'Pharaoh.' Joseph's brothers showed their father his coat covered with goat's blood. They made Jacob think that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal.

### Genesis 39:1-6

Joseph worked for Potiphar. Potiphar was the head of Pharaoh's guards. God said that he was with Joseph and was helping him. God helped Joseph and he was put in charge of Potiphar's house and everything he had.

### Genesis 39:7-20

Potiphar's wife wanted to have sex with Joseph. But Joseph did not listen to her. He did not want to sin against God in that way. Potiphar's wife told her husband that Joseph tried to rape<sup>88</sup> her. Potiphar believed his wife and so Joseph was sent to prison.

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88. rape - to force someone to have sex when they don't want to

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### **Genesis 39:21-23**

The Lord was with Joseph in prison. He was helping Joseph. He showed Joseph that he loved him and would take care of him. Joseph was put in charge of the prison and all of the prisoners.

### **Genesis 40:1-23**

God helped Joseph to tell people the meaning of their dreams. He helped Joseph to tell two men in the prison about their dreams. Both of these men had worked for Pharaoh. Joseph told them what their dreams meant. One of the men was freed from prison and one of the men was killed. This is what Joseph said would happen.

### **Genesis 41:1-13**

Two years later, Pharaoh had two dreams. He was very worried about these dreams and wanted to know what they meant. He asked other men what the dreams meant, but they could not tell him. The man who had been freed from prison told Pharaoh about Joseph. He said that Joseph could tell Pharaoh what his dreams meant.

### **Genesis 41:14-32**

Pharaoh called Joseph to come and help him. Joseph was freed from prison and taken to Pharaoh. Joseph said that it was God who could help Pharaoh to know what his dreams meant. Pharaoh told Joseph his dream. The first dream was of seven very thin cows that ate seven fat cows. The second dream was of seven sick stalks of grain eating seven healthy stalks of grain.

Joseph told Pharaoh that God had helped him to know what the dreams meant. There would be seven good years in Egypt. A lot of food would grow in those years. Then there would be seven bad years. There would be no food growing in those years.

### **Genesis 41:33-36**

Joseph said someone should be put in charge of the food in Egypt. Joseph said that that person could help to save food in the good years and store it. Then that food could be eaten during the bad years.

### **Genesis 41:37-46**

Pharaoh saw that Joseph was very wise and that God was with him. So Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of all the food in Egypt. Pharaoh was the only one higher than Joseph. Joseph was in charge of everyone else in Egypt.



## **HIS STORY: THE RESCUE**

### **Genesis 41:47-57**

There were seven good years and seven bad years, just like God had said. Joseph saved the food from the good years. He had a huge amount of food saved. Then, in the bad years, he gave that food away. The countries around Egypt needed food, too. So people from those countries came to Egypt to buy food. People from the land of Canaan needed food as well.

### **Genesis 42:1-38**

Joseph's father, Jacob, and his brothers lived in Canaan, so they were hungry. Jacob sent ten of his sons to Egypt to buy food. Joseph's brothers came to buy food from Joseph in Egypt. They did not know that he was their brother Joseph. They thought he was just a man from Egypt. But Joseph knew that they were his brothers. Joseph's brothers came and bowed down to him. They bowed down to him just like God said they would in Joseph's dream many years before.

Joseph told his brothers to go back to Canaan to get the other brother they had left there. He also wanted them to get their father and the whole family. Joseph wanted them to be safe in Egypt and to have food.

### **Genesis 43-45**

So Joseph's brothers went back to Canaan. Then they came back to Egypt again with their other brother. After a while, Joseph told them who he was. He told them that he was the brother that they had sold as a slave many years before. They thought he would be angry with them. But Joseph told them that God had planned it all. God was taking care of their family. Pharaoh was happy that Joseph's family had come. He told Joseph to ask his father to come to Egypt. Pharaoh helped them to bring all their people, animals and belongings to Egypt.

### **Genesis 46:1-33**

God spoke to Jacob in a dream. He told Jacob to go to Egypt. God said that he would make Jacob's family into a great nation. So Jacob (also known as Israel) and his large family went to Egypt. They settled there and lived there. They were known as "The Children of Israel." Each one of Jacob's twelve sons was the head of a family that would grow into a tribe.<sup>89</sup> So there were twelve tribes that made up the Children of Israel. Their names are written in Genesis Chapter 46:8-26.

We can see that God was taking care of Jacob's family. God had planned things in Joseph's life in order to take care of his family. Do you remember that God had made a promise to Abraham, Jacob's grandfather? God said that his descendants would go to a foreign land where they would be strangers. This is how God described it earlier in Genesis 15.

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89. tribe - a group of people who share the same language and culture and come from the same ancestors



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<sup>12</sup> As the sun was going down, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a terrifying darkness came down over him. <sup>13</sup> Then the Lord said to Abram, “You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, where they will be oppressed as slaves for 400 years. <sup>14</sup> But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and in the end they will come away with great wealth. <sup>15</sup> (As for you, you will die in peace and be buried at a ripe old age.) <sup>16</sup> After four generations your descendants will return here to this land, for the sins of the Amorites do not yet warrant their destruction.”

God’s plan was happening just like he said it would. Jacob’s family was now living in the foreign land of Egypt. God was making his plan happen through the lives of real people. God’s plan was to bring a man to the world who would defeat Satan. He wanted this man to defeat Satan and create an everlasting<sup>90</sup> way for people to come to God. He said that this man would come through Jacob’s family. God made this plan because he loves people and wants them to know him and love him. He was making sure his plan would happen.

You can read the whole story of Joseph’s life for yourself in Genesis, from Chapter 37 to Chapter 46. As you read it, think about God’s plan. The people then were just ordinary people like you and me. But God was doing things through their lives to make his rescue plan happen.



1. Esau and Jacob were very different kinds of people. How were they different?
2. What was God telling Jacob in the dream about the stairs that he had on his way to Haran?
3. Think about all that happened to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. What does that tell us about God and how he works in the lives of people?

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90. **everlasting** - something that lasts forever



This lesson has been adapted from the book *His Story: The Rescue, The Bible message from Genesis to Christ in easy English* (ISBN: 978-0-9944270-4-5)

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