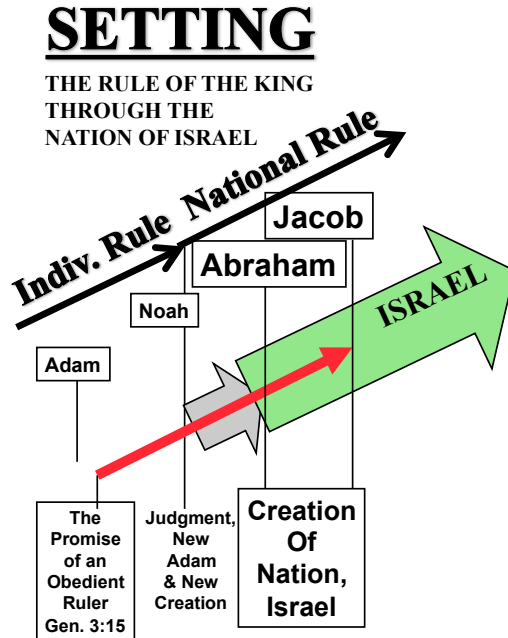


## CHAPTER 11

### **Creation of the Nation, Israel (Jacob) to Represent God (27—50)**

Jacob (Israel) is delivered to sanctification through the Rejected Ruler Joseph (Jesus)



The National Section (12-50) is set off from the Individual Rule Section (1—11) by the introduction of the Abrahamic Promise in 12:1-3. The rest of the narrative of Genesis will be guided by that promise (as well as Genesis 1:26, 28, and Genesis 3:15). Now every character will be assessed by how they respond to the Nation in Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, because they carry the “Seed” of Genesis 3:15. The story then indicates in microcosm the future of the Nation, Israel and how it is delivered through the Seed that it will bear. NOTE: These individual stories cannot be interpreted on their own (i.e., anthology) as there is not enough information given as required by dramatic plot. Only when one understands the promises (theology) of the Hero Protagonist (1:26, 3:15, 12:1-3) can the stories be understood. Thus response to “the Seed” is the determining factor in all the success/failure of the individuals/groups.

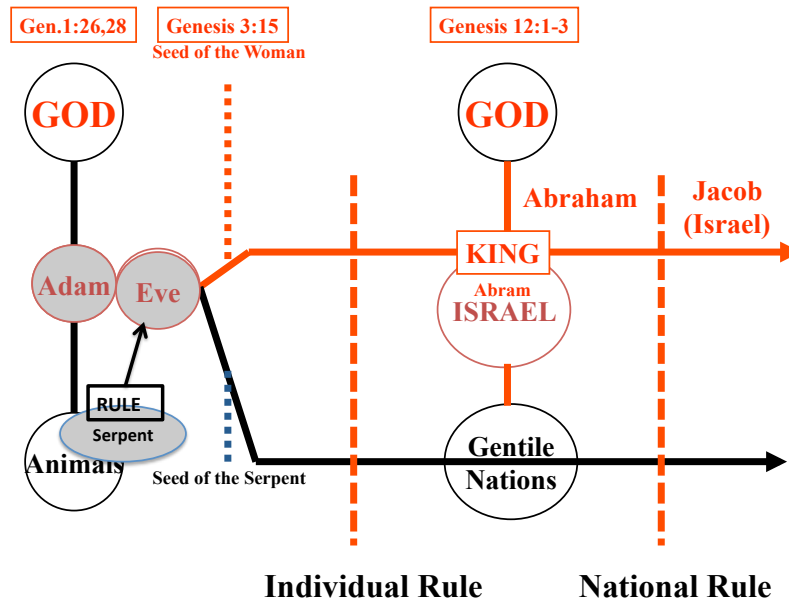
The National Section will demonstrate this future of Israel in two sections, the Abraham Section (12--26) and the Jacob Section (27—50). Both of these patriarchs will find their deliverance (like the nation) in some aspect of the Seed. The Abraham Section will demonstrate that Abraham (like the nation) will not gain sanctification until they give up trying to represent God through their own works, and accept the sacrifice of his

(Abraham's) only begotten Son, represented by Isaac in Genesis 22 as the ultimate Son of Abraham, Jesus.

Now the story moves to the duplicate of Abraham, his grandson, Jacob, the new Abraham, as he receives the promise of Abraham, that of "The Seed." This deceiver receives the promise of the Seed at his birth, it is repeated to him in Genesis 28, yet Jacob, like Abraham, also attempts to receive physical blessing through his own deceptive efforts. Like Abraham he also comes to naught (losing his son) when his favorite son, Joseph, is taken from him, but is ultimately sanctified as he realizes that God had delivered him by means of Joseph according to the promise. While Jacob was rendered hopeless in obtaining the promise, God had moved Joseph, who was rejected, to rise up and deliver the father and brothers. Like the father's favorite son, Joseph, God's favorite Son, Jesus, would deliver the nation after being rejected. Thus Joseph represents the ultimate Ruler, Jesus, and the future of Israel, all a fulfillment of Genesis 1:26, 3:15, 12:1-3.

Of course, this can only be seen when viewed through the narrative glasses of Genesis 3:15. Without that, Joseph becomes a simple, but unique example of suffering and victory, but with no ultimate meaning. In other words, Joseph is an event in the narrative and cannot be interpreted by apart from the rest of the narrative. There simply is not enough information. Without the philosophy of the Hero, God, in Genesis 3:15, one cannot know what is going on. And without seeing the promise of deliverance in Genesis 12:1-3, one would not know why these brothers obtained a unique deliverance over another nation. Without that, Joseph is only an illustration in history as how God delivered someone to victory who was rejected. (Note that this type of meaning is not an eternal truth to be applied to anyone as not everyone will be delivered in this life to rule over those who have rejected him.) With Genesis 3:15, Joseph is an imagery of the ultimate Messiah who will be rejected, yet raised up by God to deliver His brothers, Israel, into the kingdom.

It is not infrequent for sermons and books to embrace a "dream big" philosophy based on the story of Joseph. Let me state this clearly. There is no "dream big" message in the Bible (unless it is dream big about one's future in the kingdom with Jesus). The story of Joseph is the story of how God revealed to Joseph in the dream that he would illustrate the Messianic deliverance for his generation. This pictures Jesus, who also had revelation that He was the ultimate Messiah for Israel, told His brothers (Judah) and was subsequently rejected and raised to deliver them (yet to come).



**Jacob Chosen as the Father of the Nation, the Bearer of “The Seed”**

The transfer with regard to the Seed from Abraham to Jacob is through Isaac. Before Jacob was born, God announced that he would rule over Esau. In other words before Jacob had done anything to deserve it, God pronounced that he would be the one through whom would come the ultimate Ruler, even though Esau was the eldest (25:19-26).

The point of this story is that it was God’s choice of Jacob that made Jacob the bearer of the Seed of the Woman. Yet it was also announced that Jacob was the ‘supplanter’, a schemer who will attempt to fulfill what God had already stated, that Jacob would be the one through whom would come the national and individual Seed.

God had revealed His will, but instead of regarding God’s promise they (Rebekah and Jacob) attempted to manipulate it for their own glory and physical benefit. Rebekah, the one who heard the promise, would not trust God but would encourage Jacob to deceive. Isaac, though he knew it as well, would attempt to change God’s promise, and would try to insure the promise still stayed with Esau (according to human desires simply because he liked the food Esau provided for him). And Esau, while he sold it because of his lack of perception of its value (“the Seed of the Woman”), would later attempt to retain it.

### **The Conflict to Receive the Seed and its Blessing**

- **Jacob:** Jacob recognizes the value of “The Seed” and purchases the birthright from Esau. To insure that he receives it, he deceives his father into fulfilling the prophecy and gets the blessing instead of Esau. But note that there are two things going on here. God has promised Jacob the Seed and He would insure that Jacob received it. Jacob, on the other hand, spent his time pursuing it for his own benefit and by his own manipulative means. However, not to be missed is that Jacob values The Seed and Esau does not.
- **Esau:** Esau was a man who rejected the value of the inheritance of the Seed, which was blasphemy (“despised”). He sold it to Jacob for stew. Esau later tried to get the blessing but could not obtain it since it had been given to Jacob.

### **The Purchase of the Birthright**

This is a deal made between Jacob and Esau. Esau despised it, which means he treated it, the Seed of Christ, as common. This was blasphemy, a presumptuous sin worthy of death. Esau performed just as the prophecy at Jacob’s birth related, as did Jacob. Esau did not appreciate the value of the Seed while Jacob did. In addition, Jacob was the supplanter, just as prophesied, and thus would try to gain it to glorify himself in the physical fame and riches.

### **The Blessing of Isaac**

The earlier birthright purchase was a deal between Jacob and Esau (25:21-34). Yet the next section (27:1-41) is Isaac, who knew the promise of God to Jacob, yet still tried to oppose it in concert with Esau. Rebekah, who also knew the prophecy, joined with the manipulator, Jacob, to implement it through deceit. The Seed is given, thus, to Jacob by the father. But it was by God’s design that Jacob received it and once Isaac realizes this he sides with Jacob and Rebekah against Esau (27:42-46).

### **New Testament:**

Both Romans 9 and Hebrews 11 refer to Esau in the same context.

<sup>10</sup> And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived *twins* by one man, our father Isaac; <sup>11</sup> for though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God’s purpose according to *His* choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, <sup>12</sup> it was said to her, “THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER.” <sup>13</sup> Just as it is written, “JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED.” (Romans 9:10-13)

In Romans 9, Paul is pointing out that God had chosen Jacob while Esau was rejected. Paul's point in Romans 9 was that God had chosen (recall the Hero Protagonist is determining the story) and each of the brothers had then confirmed the choice by their belief in the Seed or rejection of the Seed in Jesus. This then is the difference between Israelites and believers in Romans 9. There is the nation Israel, who, like Esau, had rejected Christ, considering Him of no value. Then there was the remnant of Israelites who were true Israelites because their genealogical characteristics were united by faith in the Christ.

<sup>15</sup> See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; <sup>16</sup> that *there be* no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a *single* meal. <sup>17</sup> For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears. (Hebrews 12:15-17)

Hebrews is saying the same thing as Romans. The author is pointing out that Israelites (those who have “come short of the grace of God” (the grace through Christ)) should not be in the assembly of believers since they, like the “root of bitterness,” would lead believers astray. He urges them to eliminate any “immoral and godless” like Esau. The author of Hebrews states that Esau represents the one (actually like an unbelieving Israelite) who rejects Christ, treating Him as unneeded and common. Thus Israelites, who are like Esau, are the ones who reject Christ and are not true Israelites.

### **Jacob (Israel) attempts to bring forth the (physical) blessing in his own deceit (27—36)**

Having received the birthright and the blessing of the father, Isaac, Jacob goes on the run to escape the vengeance of Esau as well as find himself a bride from the family of his uncle Laban. Rebekah and Isaac send Jacob on his way as they now agree that Jacob was the one sovereignly chosen to be the bearer of the Nation and the all-important Seed. Esau, as the godless man, is a great trouble to Jacob and Rebekah, as he intermarried with Canaanites, something Isaac had instructed Jacob not to do.<sup>1</sup>

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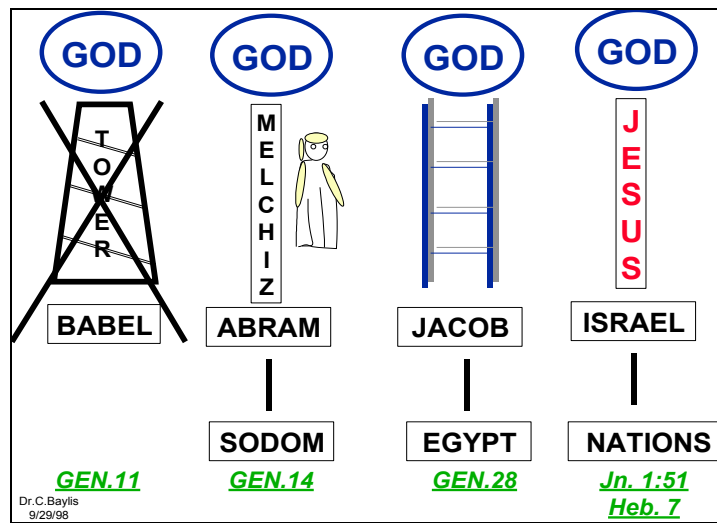
<sup>1</sup> The point of not marrying the Canaanites was that they were the people that occupied the land. Should Isaac have married a Canaanite, they would have gotten the inheritance of the land, something they already thought they had. Thus God would not be giving the land to a unique people, but it would be given(?) to a people who already had it and that would be come nothing.

Now it is important to note what Jacob sought. He was not seeking the Messiah, the Promise, through his own efforts. He was seeking personal fame, personal wealth, through the promise.

In other words, it is not different than what Christians seek to do today. While they acknowledge the Promise of “eternal life” in Christ, they seek to bring themselves earthly fame and riches thinking wrongly that God wants this for them.

**God repeats the Abrahamic Promise to Jacob: Jacob’s Ladder (28).**

As Jacob is running from Esau he falls asleep. In his dream God reiterates His promise to Abraham, but now to Jacob. This shows the continuation of the national and individual seed. As Jacob sleeps, a ladder is placed from God down to him (Jacob as Israel). Thus it is through the ladder (provided by God), that Israel will be blessed and through Israel that the nations will be blessed.



**The Tower of Babel as a Contrast to the Ladder.** The promise to Abraham was a contrast to the Babel’s self-attempts to reach God in Genesis 11. There a tower had been constructed to bridge the gap between the nation-city of Babel and God. It would be from that realm that Babel (Babylon) would propose that they would rule the world on behalf of their god(s).

**Melchizedek as the Priest (Mediator) between God and Israel.** Yet God destroyed Babel’s ability to complete it and dispersed them throughout the world. In Genesis 12, God then promised to make Abraham a nation and demonstrate that He

would provide the Priest, Melchizedek, to mediate between God and Israel in Genesis 14. The “Seed of the Woman” would be the King over Israel, ruling over the world from the domain of the City of Jerusalem, while a future “Melchizedek” would be the Priest. While Genesis 3:15 unified the two in one Man (the sacrificed Ruler), Psalm 110 will pronounce this clearly, that the Son (Psalm 2:7) would be the Melchizedekian Priest.

**Jacob’s Ladder as the Mediator of Blessing from God to Israel.** Now in Jacob that promise is repeated. Jacob’s dream (revelation) describes God in heaven and Jacob (Israel) lying on earth. Jacob sees a ladder whose top reaches God (different from Babel’s which did not). This ladder had angels ascending and descending thus bringing blessing to Jacob (Israel) and taking Jacob’s (Israel’s) praise back to God.

God is at the top as the provider of blessing to Israel. The ladder of Jacob is similar to Melchizedek, which was the Mediator between God and Israel to provide blessing. In Psalm 110 the ultimate Davidic King is declared to also be this Priest (cf. Psalm 110:1, 4). Thus, it will be seen from the Old Testament that One will arrive who is “The Seed” (the Davidic King) and the Priest (Melchizedek or the Ladder). This One will provide mediation of blessing to Israel who will bless the nation.

### **New Testament: John 1:51**

In John 1:51, Jesus approached Nathaniel and he recognized Jesus as the Christ.

<sup>49</sup> Nathanael answered Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel." <sup>50</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these." <sup>51</sup> And He said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." (John 1:49-51)

Nathaniel’s exclamation that Jesus was the “Son of God” and the “King of Israel” are both centered in Psalm 2:2, 6, 7. This is, of course, regarding the “Seed of the Woman” who would ultimately be the King of Israel.

It is then that Jesus says you will see “greater” things than this. He then refers to the “ladder” of Jacob with the angels ascending and descending. This indicates that He is more than the King of Israel, but the High Priest who will mediate between Israel and God. It is Jesus, as Jacob’s Ladder that will bring the required blessing from God to Israel in order to establish their relationship with God, so as to establish their kingdom on earth. The ascending angels take the prayers and praises from Israel to God.

As narrative frequently does, the next story will illustrate the point of Jesus’ lesson (philosophy). Jesus attends a wedding and changes water into wine. This reference to Isaiah 62 indicates that Jesus is the One who will enable the blessing of the kingdom (new wine, Israel as “married”) and thus illustrates in a sign (Old Testament

prophecy where Jesus does a symbolic part to show ability to fulfill) that He is this Mediator of Blessing, Jacob's Ladder.

### **The Election of the Covenant Mothers (12 tribes and “the Seed”)**

**Leah bears Judah who carries “The Seed”.** Jacob now moves to Laban's house and the choice of Rachel as his preferred wife, but Leah is the one whom he must marry first. She is the one, who though not his preferred one, bears Judah, the bearer of the Seed. She is the one with whom Jacob is buried in the Cave of Machpelah (Genesis 49:29-32).

**Rachel bears Joseph and Benjamin.** Rachel bears Joseph and Benjamin the favorite son(s) of the father. It will be this title as the favorite son of the father that will have Joseph as the one who represents the rejected Christ, the favorite (and only) Son of the Father, to come in the narrative of Genesis 37—50.

**The Sovereignty of God to Bless Jacob (deceiver) over Laban** The intent of the chapters is to demonstrate God's providential control of bringing forth these 12 sons as the nation. However, while God is bringing forth the promise, Jacob continues his efforts to benefit through deceit. There is a continued comparison between Jacob and Laban going on. Laban is the one who is able to out-deceive Jacob (showing superior human ability), yet God gives Jacob victory over Laban despite his inadequacy before Laban.

Jacob is a great deceiver as has been demonstrated in the past, when in concert with his mother he deceived his father for the blessing and on his own he took advantage of a hungry and weak man theologically to purchase the birthright from Esau. Yet, now he encounters one who is his match and, as it is immediately seen, outdoes Jacob. While Jacob had tricked his father into blessing the younger instead of the elder, Laban had tricked Jacob into taking the elder (daughter) instead of Jacob's desire, which was the younger (daughter).

Probably one of the best illustrations of God's sovereignty is demonstrated through a story that, as literary emphases go, is ridiculous if not seen through the glasses of God's blessing of the Seed.

In 30:25—31:15, Jacob and Laban decide that their sheep will be separated on the basis of being spotted or black. So Jacob, scheming, places spotted rods in front of the strong ones while they were mating (a ridiculous concept, yet Jacob apparently thought it would work) and, sure enough, they brought forth strong and spotted offspring. These strong sheep who were spotted belonged to Jacob and the weak went to Laban. Jacob's seemingly ridiculous deal, which outwardly should have profited Laban, ended up with Jacob overwhelmingly surpassing



Laban. The point was, most certainly not that spotted rods in front of a pregnant mother will affect her children (any farmer will tell you it doesn't work), but that God was blessing Jacob in spite of, and in fact by means of, his manipulative process. Laban must have surely felt that he could not beat Jacob even though he was clearly superior in the ability to deceive.

**The Sons of Jacob: Treachery of Simeon and Levi with respect to the Promise (34).** In Genesis 34, God continues with the implementation, not only of the physical seed of the 12 sons (the Nation, Israel), but with regard to their obedient representation of God in the promise of The Seed.

Jacob's deceit is clearly passed on to his images (imitators) as Simeon and Levi deceive, by using the covenant sign of circumcision to avenge the rape of their sister. However, the sign of circumcision was a sign for Israel, not for the nations, and Israel was the mediator of blessing (although vengeance was in order when within God's timing). Thus these two, Simeon and Levi will treat the covenant as unholy (common) by their human wisdom (cf. 49:5-7 for Jacob's assessment of this deed).

**The Sons of Jacob: Reuben commits incest with a covenant mother (35).** Note that individually Simeon and Levi (sons number 2 and 3) have despised the covenant, and Reuben (the eldest, son number 1) has slept with a covenant mother (35:22). Thus the emphasis of the seed inheritance moves down the line to Judah because of the blasphemy (remember that blasphemy is treating what is holy as common) of the first three sons of Jacob.

**Summary: Jacob and the 12 sons are physically complete but not obedient to the covenant**

One must question why the book does not end at Genesis 36, for if Abraham is to have seed, that of a nation of 12 tribes, then the 12 sons are now fully represented and thus complete. Yet it is not physical representation that is needed. It is a regard for God and the promise of the Seed of the Woman to deliver them, which they are to give to the Gentiles. Reuben committed incest with a covenant mother. Simeon and Levi treated the covenant sign of circumcision as common, using it as a trick for vengeance.

Thus the story must continue for the sons must come to completion, that is, they need to regard the covenant promise to Abraham through trust in the Seed. That has not happened and must happen for Israel to be the nation who is able to bless the Gentiles with the message of that promise (and ultimately for the One to come through them).

It is important to say that again. Israel is the nation that was meant to carry the message of Messiah to the nations. But the 12 sons had rejected it and were, in fact,

blasphemous toward the covenant. So the Abrahamic Covenant cannot be complete until Israel comes to realize their Messiah.

Note that this microcosm will be played out throughout the Old and New Testament. The Old Testament is about Israel. The reason it is about Israel is that God is seeking to have His National representative receive His message of deliverance so that they can give it to the nations. But they reject and the story of most of the Bible is the rejection of Israel to carry the message. Ultimately in the Gospels, Jesus will carry the message for Israel to the nations until they receive it in the Tribulation period.

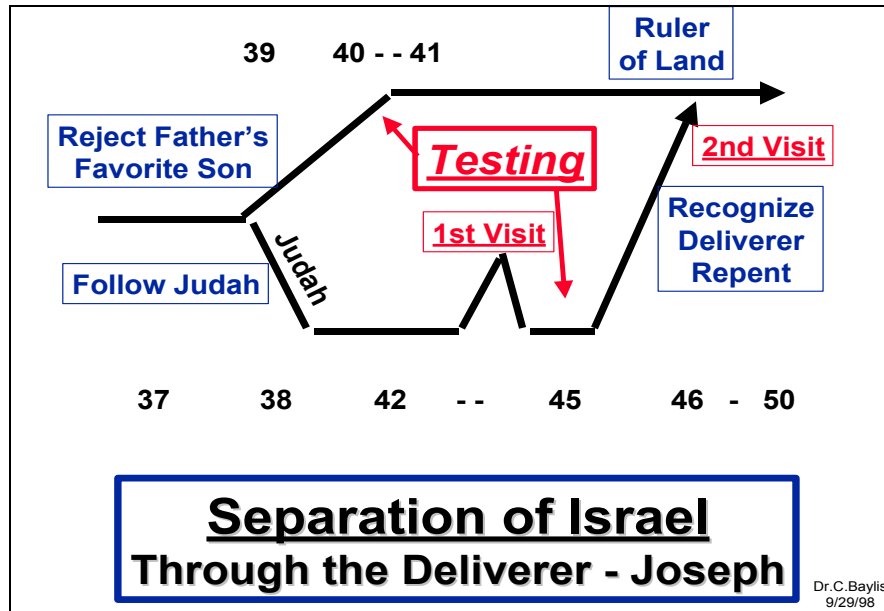
### **Jacob and the 11 sons are delivered through the rejected one, Joseph (37—50)**

In terms of the story, God has played it out in Genesis 12—50 and there has been no resolution. The sons have rejected God and thus the story cannot end. It is clearly seen that Genesis 37—50 provides the resolution (partial) to the story of God's desire to have Himself represented through the nation Israel.

Thus the story continues in Genesis 37--50 for God must bring the 12 sons to repentance by turning to the promise of the Seed of the Woman to deliver them. Thus they will reject their Messiah represented in Joseph (he was prophesied to be their ruler), yet God will raise him up to return and deliver them. They will repent of their treatment of Joseph and will, through Joseph, be delivered from famine.

### **New Testament**

The story of Joseph parallels (prophesies) Israel in the first century, as it is in disobedience when God sends their Deliverer, Jesus. Israel rejects Him in the Gospels, killing Him to eliminate His ability to rule over them. Yet God raised Him up (to bless the Gentiles apart from the nation) and He will return to deliver them into the kingdom upon their repentance.



### The choice of Joseph by God and his obedience in testing (37—41)

Joseph is chosen as the deliverer (the Messiah, Genesis 3:15) to bring about the deliverance of the father and the 11 sons (the nation, Genesis 12:1-3). Joseph will, without variance, be faithful to the revelation (the dream) from God and will be obedient in spite of his rejection by the brothers and his judgment under Gentile rule (prison). All the characters must be seen in their part in light of the covenant in Genesis 3:15 and Genesis 12:1-3. As such, they represent their part as a microcosm of the Nation, Israel and their obedient Messiah.

Note: It is in the Joseph story that the Abrahamic Promise (12:1-3), the Individual Promise of Rule (1:26,28) come together in a relationship with Genesis 3:15 (the rule of the Deliverer). For Joseph illustrates the unjust judgment of the Ruler (through God's choice) and then through obedience in testing (Potiphar's wife), he is raised to deliver the nation in 11 brothers, just as Genesis 3:15 and 12:1-3 stated. In addition, this deliverer will bless the Gentiles (Egypt) apart from the contribution of the brothers (Israel), just as Jesus would do during this age (Israel's rejection, but Jesus' going to the Gentiles).

### **God's Choice of Deliverer and of the 12 sons in Joseph's dream**

The Dream - God's choice of Joseph as the deliverer<sup>2</sup>. The father had chosen Joseph as his favorite son. Joseph had also been chosen by God as the one who would be the deliverer as revealed in the dream. The brothers and the father reject Joseph then as they reject God's choice of the favorite son (37).

The father's favorite son, elected by God, was demonstrated in a dream that revealed that all the sons must submit to the father's favorite son for their deliverance. Note here that the dream is in alignment with the Abrahamic Covenant and Genesis 3:15 and simply reveals that it is Joseph through whom the nation will be delivered for that generation (representing the Genesis 3:15 Messiah). (The sun, moon and stars, created to rule the day and night, were to carry the light, the knowledge of the presence of God). Thus Joseph's dream showed that the 12 sons would only come to their mediatorial function when they bowed down to Joseph as ruler, representing in microcosm the future nation.)

### **Joseph faithfully relates the revelation to his brothers**

As Jesus will reveal Himself as the Deliverer of Israel to the nation, Joseph faithfully reveals his dream to the brothers and the father that their future deliverance will be through Him.

### **The Brothers and the Father (Israel) reject Joseph's dream.**

The brothers accuse Joseph of elevating himself and reject him<sup>3</sup>. The father relates the seeming problem of the greater (the father) bowing to the lesser (one's son).

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<sup>2</sup> A note must be stated here regarding a contemporary, all too frequent interpretation and sermonizing that uses Joseph's dream as a lesson that one should "have a dream." Or that they should "pursue their dream." And then they use Joseph's perseverance and final success as a pattern for how to be successful, that is, persevere in your dream and you will be successful. This is, in short, the opposite of what the Scripture teaches and is a fleshly motivated, success gospel, shared with the pagan talk shows. The dream is Genesis 3:15 and 12:1-3 and states that Joseph will be the Messiah for his generation (a partial representative of the ultimate Messiah). The only dream a believer should have in this case is to identify with the revelation and that revelation is that Jesus is the Christ who will return and resurrect a believer into the kingdom. Other dreams apart from revelation are just that, apart from God's revelation and human wisdom. In short, God never tells the reader to pursue his dreams of earthly success which are self-centered glory. He does tell the believer to suffer humiliation and defeat for the sake of Christ (Philippians 1:29).

<sup>3</sup> Note that frequently this is interpreted in contemporary society to be inappropriate and criticize Joseph for being self-centered. This is clearly brought to the text by the interpreter's own perception. However, this is absolutely not the case. Joseph was relating truth to his brothers that had been given to him by God. And in fact, it was true since it exactly what came to pass. Had the father and the brothers recognized Joseph as the ruler at that time they all would

Thus, as Israel does to Jesus, the brothers refuse to grant that one of their own could end up being above them so that they had to bow to a brother, and a younger one at that.

### **New Testament: John 8:13-14**

Here Jesus, like Joseph, declares the revelation about Himself as the Deliverer of Israel sent from God. Israel, like the brothers, declares Him to be self-elevating and a liar. Jesus, of course, will be proven true, while they will be proven to be rejecting the Truth.

<sup>13</sup> So the Pharisees said to Him, "You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not true." <sup>14</sup> Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. (John 8:13-14)

### **Rejection of the Father's Favorite Son**

It is very important to note that the character of the brothers (Israel) is being demonstrated here as the reader follows their lack of concern to follow the father's (Jacob's) desires. They reject Joseph as their father's choice as the favorite son. This shows that they are self-centered, particularly with respect to following the desires of the father (recall that images are to represent the desires of their father). This indicates that a future Israel will reject God's (the Father's) desire of Jesus as the Son.

Later, their repentant heart will be demonstrated in their treatment of Benjamin, who is the replacement for Joseph as the favorite son. They, in fact, treat Benjamin well and protect him so as to please their father and his choice of Benjamin. All of this indicates a repentant care for the father to implement his desires above their own.

### **Jacob, as still reliant in his own efforts, rejects the revelation of Joseph**

While Joseph is the choice of the father, Jacob did not think Joseph would be his deliverer. Yet he must ultimately find his deliverance in Joseph. Very similar to

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have been better off. Joseph here represents Christ who had the same accusation leveled at Him, but He was also telling the truth; He was the One to deliver them. These interpreters not only do not see the Messianic importance of this text in the context of Genesis, but fail to see that in God's choice of Christ He will be seen (by those of human wisdom) as being egotistic when He declares Himself to be the Son. Thus, these interpreters justify the brothers and share their view, something that is clearly contrary as they join with the antagonists driven by Satan.

Abraham, Jacob must give up on his physical attempts to bring about the physical benefits of the promise and must ultimately bow to Joseph, acknowledging that only God could bring about his deliverance after Joseph was removed from him. But even bigger than finding the results that he sought through Joseph, he finds that Joseph was his means of a relationship with God, and that was of ultimate importance.

### **The Brother's Unjustly Judge Joseph by putting him in the pit**

The pit demonstrates Joseph's unjust judgment by the brothers. This is a parallel to Genesis 3:15 where the deliverer will undergo an unjust judgment by the serpent and his followers. Here the brothers are using human wisdom to put an end to Joseph. Joseph will be traded to Egypt where this Gentile (Satanic) power will rule over him (i.e., death), yet God will protect him and raise him up.

This is similar to the Pharisees in the Gospels, who will try to put an end to Jesus' kingdom by executing Him.

### **The Obedience of Joseph (39) Contrasted with Judah (38)**

Note: The interpretation of Judah (and Joseph) in chapter 38 (and 39) must be seen in the light of Genesis 3:15 (The Seed) and Genesis 2:24 ("one flesh"). Otherwise there is no "message" to the story of Judah and Tamar (38). All the characters, if seen under the normal light of common sense morality, are bad (no good character to emulate). The point is that the story of Judah and Tamar is only one event in the story of Genesis (and the Bible). It cannot be interpreted on its own, since it does not have enough information. The philosophy of the Hero, God, back in Genesis 1—3 is where the meaning to Tamar and Judah will be found. Recall that one must always read a narrative through the desires of the Hero Protagonist.

The chapters are clearly to be contrasted as at the end of Genesis 37 (verse 36), Joseph is on his way to Egypt in bondage. Genesis 39:1 picks up immediately following and continues the story as Joseph finds himself in Potiphar's house. In other words, one could pull out chapter 38 and the reader would not be able to tell, thus indicating a literary "insert" for the sake of contrast.

#### The last verse of Genesis 37

<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, the Midianites sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer, the captain of the bodyguard. (Genesis 37:36)

#### The first verse of Genesis 39 (following chapter 38)

Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the bodyguard, bought him from the Ishmaelites, who had taken him down there. (Genesis 39:1)

Thus one can see that chapter 38 is an intended insertion literarily so to force the reader to contrast the two, Judah in chapter 38 and Joseph in 39. Now the typical contrast that is made by interpreters is that these are contrasts in morality. Judah sleeps with a prostitute (simply to satisfy his lust) and Joseph refuses sleeping with royalty (which might have led to his elevation). While that is the case, there is much, much, more.

### **Tamar and Judah (38): Judah as a contrast to Tamar and Joseph in Trusting God**

The difficulty of interpreting the Tamar story as a separate morality tale is clearly seen. In fact it is this story that best demonstrates that Genesis is dramatic plot and that no scene or event can be interpreted without the whole story. When one examines Tamar and Judah on their own reader morality, there is no good character. Yet Judah proclaims (rightly) at the end of the story that Tamar is more righteous than he.

The story is a mix of immorality if viewed from one's own moral assessment. Judah marries a Canaanite (we have already seen that he should not be cohabiting with them). She bears three sons. The first son is killed by God (with no explicit reason given), yet clearly God disapproves of something. So Judah sends her brother-in-law, Onan, to sleep with her to give her children (which normally would be considered incest). Then Judah rejects giving her his third son, Shelah, lest he might die as well. She then, realizing that she will not get this brother-in-law (morality question again?) dresses as a prostitute to deceive her father-in-law into impregnating her (again a question of incest). He, being immoral, seeks out a prostitute and ends up impregnating his own daughter-in-law, Tamar (which normally would be incest). When he finds out that she is pregnant by someone other than his sons (for whom he had told her to wait), he wants to execute her for adultery (meaning he felt that she could not marry outside of the family). When he finds out that he is the father, he removes the sentence of death and pronounces that she is the righteous one, not he. Thus the difficulty is increased when the mouth of Judah pronounces the conclusion calling Tamar more righteous than he (38:26), and the reader recognizes this paradox over how any of these deeds could be righteous (i.e., godly).

On the surface, then it is impossible to pronounce any character in the story as good since they are all apparently evil . . . unless one has more information . . . that of the rest of the story.

It is very difficult to understand this without recognizing the nature of the Biblical story in Genesis and God's promise of His Son in the Seed. And of course, as has been shown, it is the Seed of Genesis 3:15 that God blesses.

As in John 3:35-36, the Father honors the Seed of His Son, Jesus Christ.

<sup>35</sup> "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. <sup>36</sup> "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (John 3:35-36)

Of course, the issue with Tamar is the "Seed." Only by the end of the story when Tamar bears Perez and one realizes that this is the Seed that leads to David that leads to Christ, can the reader understand Tamar's unalterable pursuit of this "Seed." (As a Canaanite, her background would have allowed her to get seed from almost anywhere if she had followed that theology). But she was well aware theologically of Judah's obligation to give his sons to Tamar. Since Genesis 2:24 made her one flesh with Er (and his inheritance of the Seed), Judah was obligated to insure she had that inheritance and so provided his second son to her on Er's death. His refusal to send in Shelah, the third son, was a rejection of Genesis 2:24 and his obligation to give her his inheritance. Tamar then, knowing she had the right to the Seed, through deceit obtained the precious Seed. While she was clearly deceitful, as with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the blessing of the Seed is the promise of God and thus overwhelms her devious actions to get it. Thus she is honored throughout the text, as well as in Ruth 4 and Matthew 1, following her deed.

### **Joseph and Potiphar's Wife (39): Joseph as contrasted with Judah in trusting God.**

There is a similar difficulty in the story of Joseph. While Joseph is clearly moral and the reader sees that as clearly "good," the difficulty is the nature of the temptation presented to Joseph. While Hollywood would paint Potiphar's wife as a beautiful young temptress, a description of her is nary to be found in the text. Knowing that the narrator gives the reader all the information needed to interpret, the silence of any mention of her beauty is loud, especially in light of the fact that the text mentions how handsome Joseph was, and how much she lusted for him. Potiphar's wife clearly had a "human wisdom" lustful temptation. But Joseph's temptation was not her beauty, but the question of how to get "seed," or in other words, how to obtain the "dream" that God had given him, where he would rule over his brothers. When seen in contrast with the other fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, their choice was to lie, deceive, compromise, etc., to obtain the promise. Would Joseph follow the pattern of his fathers? Thus Joseph's temptation was not physical allure, but how to get the dream for himself. For a Hebrew slave to reject the invitation of royalty would mean certain death. His death would mean that he would not obtain the dream. By human wisdom, to enter the bedroom of Potiphar's wife would likely elevate him and allow him to see the light of another day and thus be alive to bear children, and perhaps obtain the dream. Joseph chooses to obey God, and face certain death, and leave the fulfillment of the promise in the dream to God.

Thus the differences between Joseph and Judah are clear. Judah is a man of self-centered desires, who denies Tamar the promised Seed, even though she has the right. He wants the promise of the Seed, but is unwilling to trust God to give it to him. Joseph,



faced with losing the promised seed with the threat of death, leaves it to the God who has promised.

### **Judah and Tamar: The Story**

**The Setting:** Judah brings forth seed by marrying a Canaanite and bears three sons (38:1-5):

Judah begins his search to provide seed according to the promise. He does this by marrying a Canaanite<sup>4</sup> (a subtle hint as to Judah's lack of spirituality as she likely worshipped another god). She bears three sons, Er, Onan and Shelah.

Judah, in a continuing attempt to have seed, provides a wife for his eldest, Er. Her name is Tamar and she is likely a Canaanite like her mother-in-law, Bath-shua<sup>5</sup>. Judah's children are clearly imitators of Judah and his Canaanite wife for they are wicked in God's sight and the first two are struck. The first one is struck for a presumptuous<sup>6</sup> sin against the Lord and the second for failing to perform his function as a Levir,<sup>7</sup> but most of all because he treated the Seed of the Christ as common. Theologically the text is referring to the seed of the Messiah, which will bring them life from God. However, these men are disregarding it, and treating it as common, so one can understand why Onan was struck.

Judah's response to this is to delay the sending of Shelah to Tamar for he fears that the same thing may happen to him. Since Shelah at that time is still a young lad Judah justifies his fear by implementing a delay,<sup>8</sup> a delay he intends to be permanent.

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<sup>4</sup> Both Isaac (Gen. 24:3) and Jacob had been instructed not to marry Canaanites (28:1). Esau did and was very much condemned by his mother, Rebekah (27:46).

<sup>5</sup> 1 Chronicles 2:3.

<sup>6</sup> The sin with the "high hand," or the "presumptuous" sin is defined in Numbers 14. It is a sin that was not covered by the covenant and required death without mercy. There was no sacrifice for this sin since it was directly against God done in a spirit of rebellion. It typically was taking something holy and treating it as common. Thus taking the Name of the Lord in vain was a presumptuous sin. Treatment of the "Seed" as common was also presumptuous, which Onan clearly did. Er did something similar and was struck for his common treatment of the Seed. It is the same sin as Esau when he "despised" his birthright.

<sup>7</sup> Onan not only disobeys God, but rebels against his father's instruction. To bring up seed to his deceased brother would lessen his own inheritance. This is similar to the "nearer kinsman" in Ruth 4.

<sup>8</sup> Apparently Judah recognized that Shelah was no more covenantally responsible than his other sons, and thus realized that he would likely lose him. Of course, with Judah's lack of

**The Conflict:** God's Desire of 2:24 and 3:15 are thwarted by Judah

God was clearly bringing forth The Seed through Judah. However, because Er, the eldest son had the Seed within him and he died, Tamar had the right to the Seed by Genesis 2:24. Now Judah was thwarting God's delivering Seed through Tamar. Note that God is honoring His promise of "one flesh" which is now to Tamar. God will insure that Tamar gets the Seed.<sup>9</sup>

**The Rising Action:** Tamar seeks the Seed through Judah

Tamar realizes that she may be eliminated by Judah as the bearer of the Seed, and thus takes desperate measures to trick Judah into providing the Seed (38:12-23). She removes her widow's clothes (which demonstrated her rights in Israel as a widow) and put on prostitute's clothes and lured Judah into her tent to obtain his seed.

Judah reveals his unrighteousness in not complying with the rightful (Genesis 2:24) provision of the seed (Shelah) to Tamar. He gives his seed to a harlot, yet condemns her for conception outside the family.

**Resolution:** God provides the Seed through Tamar

In a successful continuation of the promise of The Seed, Tamar gives birth to the seed, Perez (38:27-30). Later in the Book of Ruth and in Matthew 1, Tamar will be held in honor for valuing the Seed, as it becomes its fullness in Jesus.

### **The Deliverer Through Obedience by Election of God, Joseph (Jesus) (39)**

The story returns now to Joseph, having diverted for a moment to contrast the natural leader, Judah, and his failures as a covenant faithful potential leader. Joseph, now raised up to a position of honor due to the Lord's direct blessing of Potiphar's house on behalf of Joseph, is found in a precarious position.

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covenantal sensitivity it is possible that he had no idea as to why God was striking them (and perhaps thought it Tamar's fault).

<sup>9</sup> This is the same point as in the Book of Ruth. She also has the right to the Seed (through Elimilech and Mahlon). Thus, God brings her back to Bethlehem to marry the one who has the Seed, Boaz (after the nearer kinsman rejects).

Joseph had the dream of himself being one of the twelve tribes, but also being the Seed of the Woman ruler for his generation with his brothers. The question is, contrasted with Judah, will Joseph honor The Seed and allow God to provide it. Or, like Judah, will he have to try to find human wisdom ways to provide The Seed.

Now when Potiphar's wife confronts Joseph and requests that he lie with her, he is faced with a huge problem. It is not the problem of whether to commit immorality or not (even though that certainly is a part). It is how to get the seed of the tribe he will bear and how to get the dream to come true so he can rule his brothers.

- Choice #1: Joseph tries to preserve himself. As a Hebrew slave he was worth very little. If he refused Potiphar's wife she could have him killed. If she cried "rape" then he most certainly would be killed. Thus if he wanted to preserve himself, the expedient choice would be to lay with her. In addition, Joseph could find himself benefitted and prospering greatly by a relationship with Potiphar's wife. She could assist him in all kinds of pleasant and profitable ways.
- Choice #2: Recognize that God must provide the promise (the dream) and not him. Thus, even though he might be threatened with death, it was God's job to bring the dream to pass, not his. His job was to be obedient to God. Thus, even though facing certain death, he honored his authority Potiphar and his God, and fled.

Note that the reward that Joseph received for honoring Potiphar and not taking from him was imprisonment, but amazingly God protects Joseph from death.

**Setting:** God blesses Potiphar through Joseph and Joseph is recognized and raised up to the highest position of responsibility (39:1-6). Potiphar's wife confronts Joseph. She, like the serpent, determines to deceive Joseph into committing adultery with her. But Joseph argues on behalf of God (39:6-10).

**The Conflict (Testing):** Joseph is confronted, flees, and is accused by Potiphar's wife. Potiphar hears the testimony and confines him to jail. Joseph waits to be elevated and continues subjection (39:21—40:23).

#### New Testament:

Satan, who is imaged by the Pharisees, confronts Jesus. Like Joseph, though greater, Jesus is constantly tempted to go the expedient way to preserve His life, but refuses. Jesus has the promise of God and will be deterred by nothing, not even death.

**The Rising Action:** But there is no immediate deliverance by God to Joseph's obedience, but there is deliverance in that God is with him during the prison sentence. There is delay, during which time Joseph continues in subjection to the will of God.

Joseph, the revealer of the Jewish God, interprets the dreams of the baker and cupbearer. The cupbearer and baker are introduced into the narrative as minor characters. As such they return to the Pharaoh to have their fates come to pass as Joseph interpreted. Joseph requests that the cupbearer remember him, but he forgets it because in God's timing, events are not ready. Had Joseph been restored immediately he would not have been on the spot when Pharaoh needed him in crisis.

**The Resolution:** The Elevation of the Deliverer: Joseph's elevation to leadership of the land (41).

Finally in God's time, and in God's circumstances, Joseph rises to the top to deliver Gentiles apart from his own human abilities or wisdom. Note that Joseph blesses the Gentiles apart from his brothers (the nation), who were to bless the Gentiles.

At the exact time of Pharaoh's dream when Pharaoh was approaching a great difficulty of famine, the cupbearer's memory is jogged regarding Joseph now that the Pharaoh was in need of an interpreter. It would be at that time that God had planned for Joseph to be remembered so that he would be raised up in Egypt at the proper time.

**The Nation Delivered through recognizing the Rejected One who becomes Ruler**  
(42—50).

**The First Appearance before Joseph:** On their first appearance before Joseph as ruler, they do not recognize him (42).

- They fail to identify Joseph as their deliverer.
- Reuben (the eldest) is rejected by the father in his attempt to place his own life for the father's favorite son (in Benjamin).
- The brothers repent of their deed toward Joseph, knowing their judgment has come upon them for their misdeed (42:21-34).
- Joseph responds with weeping as he sees his brothers regret their action toward him.

**Second Return to Joseph:** In fulfillment of the dream the brothers bow to Joseph

- Judah replaces Reuben as leader by the father, as Judah places his life as surety for the favorite son (in Benjamin).

- The brother's bow to Joseph as in the original dream given by God.
- The brother's show their changed heart in that they are not jealous of Benjamin's extra portions (Benjamin is now the favorite son of the father) and Judah places himself as a substitute for Benjamin showing their repentance. They truly love their father and Benjamin.
- The father, Jacob, bows to Joseph in fulfillment of the original dream.

**The revelation of Joseph:** Joseph reveals himself to them as their brother (whom they rejected) and their deliverer.

**The death of Jacob:** Jacob requests his bones be removed from Egypt and he blesses his son in anticipation of the fulfillment of the promise.

**Jacob's Understanding:** Jacob blesses Joseph's sons. He now recognizes that God's reversal of himself and Esau was providence (48)

**Blessing of Nation:** All receive blessings of the covenant as covenanted sons (49).

- Reuben is removed from priority for his incestuous relationship with Jacob's covenant wife.
- Simeon and Levi are diminished due to their using the covenant sign of circumcision as violence and not reconciliation.
- Judah is raised to be the leader as the king line is in his seed.

**Delay of Promise:** Joseph buries Jacob in Canaan at the same place as Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Rebekah, Leah (50).

Joseph, the man of faithful obedience, states to his brothers that the Abrahamic Promise of land will be fulfilled. Joseph makes them promise to carry his bones from Egypt (indicates Joseph's assurance of the promise). Thus he gives orders for his bones to be brought back with them. Moses fulfills this when they leave the land of Egypt (Ex. 13:19) and it is finished in Joshua 24:32.

Joseph is buried in Shechem, where years before he had sought his brothers shepherding their sheep.

## **Jacob**

As the story was left in the last chapter, Jacob was dying and had reaffirmed the promise given to him and his grandfather Abraham regarding Israel and the Seed promise. Israel would return to the Land of Canaan and there set up the kingdom of God and from them the Messiah would emerge to rule and judge the nation.

<sup>21</sup> Then Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers. (Genesis 48:21)

<sup>29</sup> Then he charged them and said to them, "I am about to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, <sup>30</sup> in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought along with the field from Ephron the Hittite for a burial site. <sup>31</sup> "There they buried Abraham and his wife Sarah, there they buried Isaac and his wife Rebekah, and there I buried Leah-- <sup>32</sup> the field and the cave that is in it, purchased from the sons of Heth." <sup>33</sup> When Jacob finished charging his sons, he drew his feet into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people. (Genesis 49:29-33)

These references to the Cave of Machpelah are references to the purchase of this property by Abraham for the burial of himself and his wife as well as Leah. This purchase was an indication of their confidence in the promise of God that He would deliver the land.

Then the Messianic expectation of Jacob was confirmed as he bowed to Joseph from his bed and thus confirmed that he should have listened to the revelation of God through the dream of Joseph.

<sup>29</sup> When the time for Israel to die drew near, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "Please, if I have found favor in your sight, place now your hand under my thigh and deal with me in kindness and faithfulness. Please do not bury me in Egypt, <sup>30</sup> but when I lie down with my fathers, you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place." And he said, "I will do as you have said." <sup>31</sup> He said, "Swear to me." So he swore to him. Then Israel bowed at the head of the bed. (Genesis 47:29-31)

Note that the translators of the text did not understand this issue of Jacob's recognition of the Messianic promise in Joseph and his bowing to Joseph. They typically translate the "bowing" as "worshipping" thus explaining what he did as a worshipping of God, not bowing to Joseph. This is also the case in Hebrews where they again translate "bowing down" as "worshipping" so as to deflect the point of the bowing to God instead of Joseph since they do not understand that he represented Messiah and bowing to Joseph was bowing to God's provision of the deliverer.

### **New Testament: Hebrews 11:21**

The Book of Hebrews confirms that Jacob recognized the promise of Messiah through the dream of Joseph as he bowed to Joseph.

<sup>21</sup> By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and bowed down, *leaning* on the top of his staff. (Hebrews 11:21)

### **Joseph and the Burial of His Bones Reconfirms Joseph's Expectation of the Promise**

The promise is affirmed as well by Joseph as he dies and insists that they carry his body back with them and bury him in the Land of Canaan as well. This demonstrates that Joseph is confident in the promise of God in Genesis 13 and 15 regarding the land and the people.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob." <sup>25</sup> Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here." <sup>26</sup> So Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt. (Genesis 50:24-26)

The bones of Joseph are kept in a coffin in Egypt for 400 years and then taken with the nation to Canaan until they finally bury them when Joshua completes his conquering of the land.

<sup>32</sup> Now they buried the bones of Joseph, which the sons of Israel brought up from Egypt, at Shechem, in the piece of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of money; and they became the inheritance of Joseph's sons. (Joshua 24:32)

### **New Testament: Hebrews 11:22**

The Book of Hebrews confirms that Joseph's instructions concerning the burial of his bones was made according to the promise in Genesis 13, 15.

<sup>22</sup> By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones. (Hebrews 11:22)

### **The 12 Sons of Jacob (Israel)**

The sons of Jacob have now begun to multiply from the 70 people that came to Egypt, as they are secure in the Land of Goshen under the rule of the Pharaoh through Joseph, their brother. Most importantly they have repented to Joseph, admitting that God had directed their deliverance and thus would insure their future in the Kingdom in the Land of Canaan. They are now ready to represent God since they now have experienced

that deliverance. Yet, the reader wonders whether their children would be any better than they have been.

### **The Messianic Promise**

The hope of the Deliverer is in the Seed of Judah. Joseph is dead and they are headed into Egypt for 400 years according to Genesis 13 and 15 before they can return to the Land of Canaan, the Land of Promise. Yet they need the Seed to appear and deliver them to a relationship with God.