

THE SHORT BIBLE

A CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF
THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

Condensed, Organized, and Explained by

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JACOB RETURNS TO CANAAN

FAMILY CRISES AND A MOVE TO EGYPT

As Jacob's extended family traveled toward Canaan, Jacob sent messengers ahead to Esau to announce his return. He described his wealth, which he was willing to share with Esau, and said the two of them should get along. The brothers had not parted on good terms, and when Esau learned that Jacob was coming back, he led a small army to meet the caravan. Jacob was alarmed at Esau's reaction and divided his herds into parts so that if Esau took some of the animals, he could keep the rest. Jacob also sent a portion of his livestock ahead as gifts to appease Esau. The gifts were very significant to reflect his wealth—220 sheep, 220 goats, 50 camels, 50 cattle, and 30 donkeys (most of the animals were females)—to reflect his wealth. The animals were sent ahead in separate droves to keep the animals apart. Then at night, Jacob and his family crossed the Jabbok River.

That night a stranger came and wrestled with Jacob. The match went on for many hours, and neither prevailed. At one point, Jacob's thigh socket was dislocated at the hip, but he continued wrestling. As the dawn neared, the stranger wanted to stop, but Jacob wouldn't let go until the stranger blessed him. The man asked Jacob to say his

name. When hearing “Jacob,” the stranger said, “Your name will no longer be Jacob but Israel, for you have fought with God and men and have prevailed.” And Jacob walked with a limp for the rest of his life.

In the morning, Esau and his men finally reached Jacob and his family. Jacob stood out in front of the group, followed by all the maids and children, then Leah and her children, and then Rachel and Joseph at the rear. Jacob bowed down many times as Esau approached, showing his humility and deference to Esau. But to Jacob’s surprise, Esau embraced him instead of fighting, and they wept together. Esau asked who all the people were, and Jacob explained that they were all parts of his family. All the family members then came forward and bowed down to Esau. Jacob explained that the animals he had sent ahead were gifts and that he had been blessed with great riches. Even though Esau said he was wealthy himself and didn’t need any of it, Jacob insisted, so Esau accepted the gifts. Esau wanted to help Jacob and his family on their journey, but Jacob wanted to travel at his own pace, saying his animals were weary from the long trek and needed to move slowly. So Esau returned south to Edom and Jacob continued west to Succoth and Shechem.

When the family was living outside of Shechem, Dinah went into the city to meet with its women. Hamor was the leader in the region, and his son Shechem (named after the city) was captivated by Dinah when he saw her. Shechem met her and then raped her. Later, he told his father that he wanted to marry her and asked his father to talk to Jacob about arranging their marriage. Hamor told Jacob that if Dinah would marry his son, he would give Jacob a very large bridal gift, and the two families would join and share all their wealth of the region together.

Somehow Jacob learned about the rape and told his sons, which infuriated them. Two of them plotted to get revenge. They told Hamor that if all the males in the city were circumcised, they would let Shechem have Dinah as his wife. Shechem and Hamor convinced all the men to be circumcised. The men of the city saw an opportunity to marry women in Jacob’s extended family and gain from their wealth. Being circumcised was a small price to pay for these benefits.

A few days after the marriage, the brothers came into the city

at night and killed Hamor, Shechem, and all the men in the city. They also looted the city and took away all its riches, the wives and children, and all the animals. Jacob found out about these crimes and was very upset. He said that their actions would set the entire region against them, and he wouldn't be able to defend himself. But the sons said they had to do it to save the honor of Dinah and their family.

God then told Jacob to move his family much further south to Bethel to be safe. Jacob made his entire household throw away any form of a foreign god and change their clothes and appearance. Jacob buried all the foreign objects, their original clothes, and their jewelry outside of Shechem. As they traveled to Bethel, the people along the way were afraid of them because of what had happened in Shechem, and nobody bothered them. Later, as they moved further south toward Ephrath (Bethlehem), Rachel died while giving birth to another son, Benjamin.

To summarize, these are the names of Jacob's 12 sons and one daughter (the children of Israel).

- From Leah: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Dinah
- From Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin
- From Bilhah: Dan and Naphtali
- From Zilpah: Gad and Asher.

JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS

Jacob loved Joseph the best of all his sons. When Joseph became a young man, Jacob gave him a full-length coat with many colors. When Joseph worked with his older brothers in the fields, he would report to Jacob the bad things the brothers did. His brothers grew to hate Joseph and picked on him. Joseph later had several dreams in which he held a superior position to the brothers. In one dream, the brothers' bundles of grain bowed down to his bundle. In another dream, 11 stars bowed down to him. When he told his brothers about the dreams, they hated him even more. Having a God-given gift of interpreting dreams got him in more trouble!

During one season, Jacob sent all his sons except Joseph far

away to have his animals graze in better pastures. Later, Jacob sent Joseph to check on them. When the brothers saw him coming, they devised a plot to get rid of him. Their first idea was to kill him and throw him into a deep pit. Reuben said they should throw him into a pit in the wilderness but not kill him or shed any of his blood. When Joseph arrived, the brothers tore off his colored coat and put him into a deep waterless pit all by himself.

That evening, a caravan of Ishmaelite traders was passing by on their way to Egypt. The brothers decided to make some money and get rid of Joseph at the same time by selling him to these traders. They pulled Joseph out of the pit and sold him to the traders, who took him to Egypt. But Reuben wasn't aware of this deal and went to the pit, only to find it empty. Not knowing what happened to Joseph, Reuben panicked and became very depressed. The brothers came up with an idea to explain Joseph's disappearance. They took the colored coat, covered it with animal blood, and brought it to Jacob, who then believed Joseph had been killed by a wild animal. Jacob was so distraught that he wore mourning clothes and wept constantly for weeks. Nobody was able to comfort him.

When the traders got to Egypt, they sold Joseph to Potiphar, the leader of the bodyguards for the king (Pharaoh). Joseph was smart and wise and became such a success that Potiphar put him in charge of everything in his household. Joseph was also very young and handsome, and Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him many times. But Joseph resisted each attempt. One day when only Joseph and the wife were home, the wife tried to embrace him passionately, but Joseph ran out of the house. To get revenge, the wife told Potiphar that Joseph had tried to rape her but ran away when she screamed. Potiphar then threw Joseph into the king's prison.

But even in prison, Joseph excelled and became the supervisor of all the prisoners. Two men who were in prison with him had been in charge of preparing the king's food and drinks. These men had disturbing dreams but didn't know what they meant. Joseph interpreted them, and the events he predicted came true a few days later (Pharaoh released the two from prison and honored the cupbearer but hanged the baker). Joseph had told the men about his kidnapping when they were in prison together and that he had done nothing wrong to deserve being in prison. He asked them to

speak up for him when they got out. But the cupbearer forgot about Joseph after he returned to work for Pharaoh.

Many months later, Pharaoh had disturbing dreams that he could not understand, and nobody could interpret them. The cupbearer then remembered Joseph's ability to interpret dreams. Pharaoh called for Joseph to explain the meaning of the dreams. Joseph said he was merely a spokesman for his God, who was the true interpreter.

Pharaoh told Joseph his dreams, who then interpreted their symbolism. The dreams predicted that very soon, there would be seven years of very good harvests, but they would be followed by seven years of a severe famine due to dry winds. Joseph then suggested that Pharaoh hire somebody wise to implement a plan that set up a system of food reserves during the years of abundance so that stored food could provide food to last through the years of famine. Pharaoh liked this plan very much and saw that Joseph had God-given wisdom. Pharaoh put Joseph, who was 30 years old at the time, in charge of the entire Egyptian kingdom; only Pharaoh outranked him. Joseph implemented the plan to store food for the coming famine during the seven years of abundance. While this was all happening, Joseph started a family with his Egyptian wife and had two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

FAMINE BRINGS ISRAELITES TO EGYPT

The famine affected the entire region, including Canaan, and grain for bread was the only thing that would grow. People came from everywhere to Egypt to get food, and Jacob sent 10 of his sons to Egypt to get grain while Benjamin, Rachel's other son, stayed behind. When the brothers arrived, they went to Joseph to buy grain because he was in charge of all food distribution in Egypt. But Joseph's brothers didn't recognize him because he disguised himself when he saw them coming and because they all thought he was dead.

Joseph started questioning them harshly, accusing them of being spies who wanted information about Egypt. When he interrogated them about their family, they said their father and

one brother still lived in Canaan. The brothers consulted privately among themselves, saying they were now paying a price for their sin of treating Joseph badly and selling him. The brothers didn't realize that Joseph could understand what they were saying, and he had to leave the room to cry. When Joseph returned, he was gracious and sold them grain to take back to Canaan, and he gave them supplies for their journey. But he kept Simeon behind in prison until all the brothers, including Benjamin, could return together. When they stopped to feed their donkeys during the journey home, the brothers found all the money they used to pay for the grain in their donkeys' feed bags.

When the brothers arrived home and told Jacob what happened in Egypt and how they found their money in the donkey sacks, Jacob was very troubled. He didn't want Benjamin to return with them to Egypt—he didn't want to risk losing Rachel's other son. When all their grain was gone, Jacob asked his other sons to go to Egypt to buy more grain. But they reminded him that they could only get grain if Benjamin came with them. So Jacob let Benjamin go but gave them many gifts and double the money so they could pay for the first purchase of grain again.

When they all appeared before Joseph, they explained how they found the money from their first purchase and brought money to pay for it and for another purchase of grain. Joseph ordered them all to come to his house, which made them very afraid—they thought Joseph would hurt them or turn them into slaves. When they got to the house, Joseph told them that he still had their money from their first trip, so God must have blessed them and provided the money in the donkey sacks. The brothers reported that their father was still alive, and they introduced Benjamin as the youngest brother. Joseph was so overcome with emotion when he saw Benjamin that again he had to leave the room to hide his emotions. After composing himself, Joseph returned and gave them all an amazing amount of food (Benjamin got much more than the others). Simeon had been released from prison and was there, and all of them were amazed that they were being treated so well.

Joseph then played a trick on the brothers. He had his main servant fill all their sacks with food and put their money at the top of the sacks, just like the first time. But the servant also buried

Joseph's silver cup in Benjamin's sack. After the brothers left town, Joseph sent the servant to catch them and accused them of stealing the cup. They denied taking anything that wasn't rightfully theirs. They all agreed that if anybody was found to have taken something dishonestly, the person would become Joseph's slave. Then the servant found the cup in Benjamin's sack.

All the brothers were distraught and returned immediately to see Joseph. He confirmed that only the man who had the cup would be his slave. Then Judah asked to speak to Joseph privately. He told Joseph about how they had told their father what initially happened in Egypt on their first trip, and that their father didn't want the youngest son to return with them to Egypt—he had already lost one son from his favorite wife and didn't want to lose the other. But Jacob had agreed to let them take Benjamin along because it was a condition for them to buy more grain. Judah explained that if the youngest son couldn't return with them, their father would certainly die. Judah also had sworn an oath that he would bring back Benjamin and would take all the blame and consequences if Benjamin didn't return. Judah then offered himself to be the slave in place of Benjamin.

At that point, Joseph couldn't contain himself any longer. He had everybody in the house leave, except for the 11 brothers. He cried so loud that all the neighbors could hear him. He then told his brothers his true identity, but they didn't understand him. He had them come closer and he talked to them quietly:

I'm your brother Joseph. You sold me to men going to Egypt. Don't be grieved or angry with yourselves; it was God who sent me before you in order to preserve your life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five years when there won't be any plowing or harvesting. God sent me before you to preserve you as a remnant on earth and keep you alive. It was not you who sent me here, but God, who made me like a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Go quickly and say to our father, "Your son Joseph said, 'God has made me lord of everything in Egypt, so come here quickly. You shall live in the land of Goshen, and you shall be

near me—you and your children and your children’s children and all your animals—all you have. I will provide for you because the famine will last another five years. You and your household will be impoverished if you don’t come.’ You can see with your own eyes that it is me speaking. Tell my father everything you have seen here in Egypt. Hurry and bring him down here.

Then Joseph embraced and wept with his brothers, first with Benjamin and then with the others.

Pharaoh was pleased to hear that Joseph’s brothers had come to Egypt. He invited Jacob and all of the extended family to move to Egypt where life was good and where they all would live on the best land. He gave them many wagons to move everybody and their things to Egypt. The brothers returned home and told Jacob all about the trip and how Joseph was alive and a ruler in Egypt. Then Jacob and his entire family moved to Egypt, bringing along all their livestock and possessions. God spoke to Jacob in a dream, saying, “I am the God of your father; don’t be afraid to go to Egypt because I will make you into a great nation there. I will be with you in Egypt and will bring you up again.”

Joseph rode to Goshen in his chariot to meet Jacob and the rest of the family when they arrived. He explained to them that Egyptians didn’t like shepherds, which is what his family had been for generations. Nevertheless, they were to be honest about their occupation. That way, they would get the best land and prosper. Pharaoh then gave them the best land, in the delta of the Nile River, and also had them take care of his livestock. Joseph then provided all the families with food based on the number of their children.