



Summary of Genesis

Introduction

Genesis is a book of origins. It starts with the creation of all things by God, with humankind his crowning glory. However, these first humans soon disobeyed God causing sin and death to enter into the world. This became so bad that God decided it was time to destroy everything on the land and in the air. However, one man remained righteous, so God preserved Noah and his family in an Ark, along with all the kinds of animals while the rest of the living creatures, including humans, perished in the great flood.

From Noah's three sons and their wives, the nations of the world came forth. However, they had the imputed sinful nature of Adam and Eve. Therefore, God chose a nation for himself that would come from the body of Abraham and Sarah.

The rest of Genesis tells of the calling of Abraham from his home to lands that would one day be given to the Hebrew nation. God also promised that all nations would be blessed through Abraham. He had a son Isaac, who also had sons Esau and Jacob. Esau would become the father of the Arabic nations, from whom the Islamic faith would come. Jacob would have twelve sons, the Patriarchs of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, through whom the world would receive salvation in Jesus the Christ of God.

The story concludes when one of Jacob's sons Joseph is sold into Egyptian slavery, where he is raised up by God to save the region from the effects of a devastating famine. It saw Jacob's family settle in Egypt under the protection of Pharaoh, where they would grow into a great nation as described in the Book of Exodus.

Chapter One

This chapter, written as a poem, provides the reader with an insight as to how and why God created an entire universe out of nothing, and why it is that humankind is the predominant living creature in terms of their spirituality, the characteristics of

reason, morality, language, a capacity for relationships governed by love and commitment, and creativity in all forms of art, that exists anywhere in the Cosmos as far as current scientific knowledge and understanding can tell.

The creation account spans six days separated by the phrase: ‘there was evening and there was morning’. Some believe these to be six literal days while others believe them to be various time periods to reflect God’s process of creation. This structure provides cadence to the poem and also provides the structure that still governs how humankind measure time.

The poem provides little in the way of scientific evidence for the creation account although the sequence of events is an extremely good match for that of current scientific understanding of the universe and life on the planet earth. Quite remarkable since it was written down at least 3250 years ago and was probably spoken of for much longer prior to that!

Chapter Two

The chapter concludes the first creation account with God taking his Sabbath rest following his work. This is followed by a fuller account focusing on the creation of the first man, his placement in the Garden of Eden, and a search for a helper that results in the creation of the first woman. It is then announced that the union between man and woman is intended to be the most important of all human relationships.

Chapter Three

The serpent twists the words God had spoken and lures the woman into a deadly trap. She takes the fruit from the forbidden tree and gives it to her husband to eat as well. Both are then enlightened to their sinful act by being ashamed of their nakedness.

God then rebukes the serpent for his part in the plot, indicating that there will always be enmity between his offspring and God’s people. The woman, for her part, will bear children in pain and will feel subjected to her husband. However, it is the man who bears ultimate responsibility for he was the one instructed by God not to eat of the fruit of the tree. He not only failed in his duty but tried to blame both the woman and God for his actions rather than asking for God’s forgiveness.

In an act of love God sacrificed at least one of his animals in order to provide clothing for the man and the woman and then banished them from the garden so they would not eat of the tree of life and thereby have eternal life in their sinful state. The garden was guarded by cherubim to prevent the man from returning to the garden until after redemption.

Chapter Four

The chapter has two main story lines. The first tells of Adam and Eve producing their first two sons, which resulted in the first account of murder in the bible and it is a sad tale of fratricide, where Cain kills his righteous sibling Abel. The sole reason for this event is that God favoured the offering given by Abel above that of Cain's and the latter became jealous and angry. God does not allow Abel's death to go un-avenged but does not take Cain's physical life. Instead, his punishment is to spend the rest of his days separate from God and wandering through the land with his own descendants.

The second part of the chapter provides an account of the descendants of Cain. The first generations seemed honourable enough, dwelling it seems in a city, keeping livestock, producing useful tools and musical instruments. However, in the fifth generation Lamech is introduced, who is reported as moving away from monogamy and, much worse, boasting that he had killed a man for no good reason. The effects of the original sin were starting surface already.

Yet there was hope for Adam and Eve had another son Seth, who would produce a line of descendants who were far more honourable and the chapter concludes with the comment that the people had started to call upon God.

Chapter Five

This chapter provides the genealogies from Adam to Noah providing the age of each patriarch when he fathered his first son and the age at which he died. Three generations stand out: Seth is listed as a son in his father Adam's likeness, who in turn was created in the likeness of God; Enoch who walked with God and was taken by him without seeing death; and Lamech, whose lifespan contrasts the lifestyle of his namesake in the line of Cain.

The chapter concludes by naming the three sons of Noah from whom the future generations of humankind would descend following the cataclysmic flood.

Chapter Six

The first part of the chapter describes how humankind degenerated to the point where God actually regretted creating them in the first place. He decided that it was time to wipe out all people, along with all other land animals and creatures that fly, in order to eradicate evil from the earth. However, one man, Noah, found favour in God's sight; thus there was hope for the world.

God gives Noah specific instructions with regard to the design of the ark and that he will provide two of each kind of animal and bird to fill it. Noah for his part is to ensure sufficient food for his family and the livestock.

Chapter Seven

This chapter covers detail of the entry into the ark, the deluge of rain and the breaking forth of the waters from beneath the surface of the earth and the five month duration of the flood. However, it would be several more months before dry land would appear and that is detailed in Chapter Eight.

Chapter Eight

This chapter tells the story of how the flood waters started to recede, where the ark came to rest in the mountains and the tests that Noah performed to ensure that the surface of the earth was habitable for them. When it was God instructed him and his family, along with all the living creatures, to disembark and once again start to populate the earth.

Noah builds an altar in praise of God's gracious saving acts, with offerings that God found pleasing. So God made a covenant with Noah never again to destroy his creation in the way that he had just had to do.

Chapter Nine

God blessed Noah and his sons and, through them, all of humankind that would descend from them. He also reaffirmed his covenant with them and pledged that never again would the world be devastated by a great flood. However, the world was still tainted by sin and creation was forever changed. Humans were now permitted to eat the flesh of all other animals, who would come to fear them because of this. God also indicated that, because humans were created in his own image, he required retribution from people and animals for any human blood that would be shed.

Yet peace did not last long on this recovering earth. Noah grew grapes, made some wine and got drunk. He slept naked in his tent and his son Ham saw him and reported this to his two brothers. For this his descendants were destined to become subservient to the descendants of the other two brothers.

Noah lived for a further three hundred and fifty years after the flood and died at the age of nine hundred and fifty years old.

Chapter Ten

This Chapter lists the descendents of Japheth, Ham and Shem, the sons of Noah, and provides an indication of the lands to which they migrated.

Chapter Eleven

This chapter is the transition from Primeval to Patriarchal history. It commences with the well known account of the attempts by the population of Babel or Babylon to build a tower that would reach the heavens. When God saw their intent he

thwarted their efforts by confusing their language, thus producing multiple language types that exist in the world from the former common language that mankind had previously shared. Because of this confusion the people scattered even wider across the earth.

There follows a more detailed account of the descendants of Noah's son Shem, showing that it was through this line that the Hebrew nation would be born from one patriarch Abram, who would later become known as Abraham.

The chapter concludes with an account of the initial calling of Abram's family from their home in Ur of the Chaldeans, with details of who travelled as far as the city of Haran.

Chapter Twelve

Following their sojourn in Haran, God called Abram to travel on to the land of Canaan. He travelled with his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot and their servants. God blessed Abram and promised to produce a great nation through him. On arriving in the land, Abram built an altar in honour of the Lord and then continued to journey throughout the land.

Because of a severe famine in the land of Canaan, Abram continued on into Egypt. However, because of Sarai's beauty, he feared the reception that he would get for he believed that she would be desired by Pharaoh, and would be killed so Pharaoh could have her. So Abram instructed Sarai to say she was his sister, in itself true, rather than his wife. The Egyptians reported Sarai's beauty to Pharaoh who, believing she was unmarried, took her for himself. But God brought affliction upon Pharaoh for this. Realising the reason for this, Pharaoh confronted Abram, returned Sarai to him and instructed him to leave Egypt.

Chapter Thirteen

The whole community of Abraham and Lot continue to wander through the land, heading back from the Negeb towards Bethel. Their flocks and herds had become so vast that the available grazing land was insufficient for them all, causing strife between the herdsmen of the two men.

To alleviate this, Abram gives Lot the choice of where he would wish to settle with his livestock, who chose the fertile plains of the River Jordan. Abram then settled in the land of Canaan. God then instructs Abram to view all the land around him and promises to make it the possession of the great nation of which Abram would be the patriarch.

Chapter Fourteen

After separating from Abram and settling in Sodom, Lot is taken captive by an alliance of four kings who invade the Jordan Valley and defeat a local

confederation of five kings. When Abram learns of his nephew's abduction from Sodom, he marshals a small force and, after pursuing the invaders northward, successfully recovers Lot and a large quantity of plunder. Abram's subsequent encounter with the kings of Sodom and Salem provides an interesting insight into his future aspirations in light of God's promises. Although Abram can compete militarily against powerful kings, he rejects the use of power to achieve God's purpose.

Thus he does not use force to take control of the land of Canaan. This section falls into three parts: vv.1-12 record the events leading up to Lot's abduction; vv.13-16 record Lot's rescue by Abram; and vv.17-24, record Abram's meeting with the kings of Sodom and Salem.

Chapter Fifteen

God appears in a vision to Abram, promising protection and reward. Abram shows that he has concerns for the promise because he does not have a child of his own from whom his descendants will come. God reassures Abram of the promises that he will be the patriarch of a great nation and establishes a covenant with Abram that it will be as he has promised.

Chapter Sixteen

This chapter deals with the birth of Abram's first son but he is not conceived by Abram's wife Sarai. Rather than trusting in the promises of God and being patient for him to act, Sarai persuades Abram to take matters into their own hands by having a child through the servant girl Hagar. The consequences of their actions cause a lot of distress within the family.

Chapter Seventeen

The story now moves forward by more than a decade, recounting another appearance by God to Abram in order to establish a further covenant. This covenant is not just with Abraham, the new name given to him by God, but also with his promised descendants throughout all ages. The sign of the covenant would be male circumcision.

Sarai is also given a new name by God; she will now be known as Sarah. The promise was that she would now bear Abraham a son, through whom the promise would come. However, God also promised to bless Ishmael and his descendants. In order to ratify the covenant, Abraham and all the male members of his household were circumcised as ordained by the Lord.

Chapter Eighteen

Abraham receives strangers into his camp and offers remarkable hospitality, serving them personally with food and drink. These guests turn out to be the Lord

and two of his angels who are on their way to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in order to deal with the gross sin of the people there.

While dining, the Lord reveals to Abraham that Sarah will bear him a son in about one year's time. Although she was inside the tent, Sarah overheard this claim and laughed silently at the idea that such an old woman could bear a child. Yet her laughter was known by the Lord and he comments upon it.

Following the meal, the Lord and his servants set off. Abraham accompanies the Lord and remarkably bargains for the lives of any righteous people that the Lord may encounter in Sodom. The bargaining started with the pardoning of all people if just fifty righteous could be found and continued until agreement was reached in the case of only ten righteous persons being found in the city.

Chapter Nineteen

Following the events recorded in Chapter Eighteen, this chapter underscores the reason for Sodom's destruction. The men of Sodom are contrasted with Lot, who seeks to protect the two visitors from being sexually molested. Lot's hospitality toward the two men parallels that of Abraham.

The two angels facilitate the escape of Lot and his family from the city. However, Lot's wife disobeyed the instruction not to look back and she turned into a pillar of salt for doing so.

Lot and his two daughters eventually settled alone in the hill country. The daughters feared their isolation would leave them without husbands and childless, so they got their father drunk and each slept with him. These incestuous relationships led to the formation of two tribes from the resulting sons: the Moabites and the Ammonites. Both these tribes will feature significantly as adversaries to the Israeli nation.

Chapter Twenty

This story makes strange reading for many people, yet it reveals the grace and mercy of God in many ways. Abraham had travelled south into the Negeb and was staying in the town of Gerar. As he had done when he had first visited Egypt he instructed Sarah to say that she was his sister. This of course was true, she was his half-sister, but there was also clear deception in not revealing her as his wife. The reasoning Abraham gave was that the region was not one that followed God and he feared for his life, knowing that the local king Abimelech would desire her for himself.

Believing Sarah to be unmarried then Abimelech did indeed desire Sarah and took her into his care but did not sleep with her. God visited Abimelech in a vision and told him that he had sinned in taking a married woman and that the consequences for his actions would be dire. Abimelech was told by God that he had prevented

Abimelech from sinning against God and that, if he restored Sarah to Abraham and asked Abraham to pray for him then God would show mercy. Abimelech did this and, despite making his feelings about being tricked known, he rewarded Abraham with livestock, money and returned Sarah to him. He also offered to let Abraham remain anywhere in the land. Abraham prayed for Abimelech and his people. God healed and restored them as a consequence.

Chapter Twenty One

In fulfilment of God's promise, Sarah bears Abraham a son, who is named Isaac. In due course Isaac is confirmed as Abraham's heir, when God instructs Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away. While Isaac takes priority over Ishmael, God does not abandon Hagar and her son.

Although Abimelech had offered Abraham free access to his land, when he travelled out to seal the agreement Abraham informed him of problems he had encountered with Abimelech's herders over a well. Abimelech had not known of this dispute and agreed that Abraham should have sole access to the well. The deal was sealed with a gift from Abraham of seven ewes.

Chapter Twenty Two

The main story of this chapter, Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac to God, is one of the most remarkable in the OT, both from the perspective of the faithfulness of Abraham and its clear links to God's sacrifice of his own Son.

Abraham responds positively to God's command to take Isaac on a three day journey, arriving at the scene of where Christ would be crucified nearly two thousand years later. After tying Isaac and placing him on the altar to become a burnt offering, an angel appears to Abraham and allows him to release Isaac, supplying a ram nearby to sacrifice instead.

The chapter concludes with the genealogy of Abraham's brother Nahor, who had still lived beyond the Euphrates. The importance of this list will become clear later on because it contains Rebekah, the future wife of Isaac.

Chapter Twenty Three

This chapter records the demise of Abraham's beloved wife and how he finally owns a small part of the land promised to his descendants as he negotiates the permanent purchase of a small plot of land from the Hittites. The land included a cave in which Abraham would bury Sarah.

When their own lives came to an end Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Rebekah, and Leah would be laid to rest in this cave.

Chapter Twenty Four

This lengthy chapter tells the story of Abraham's desire that Isaac should have a wife from their own people. He sends his most trusted servant back to his original homeland with the intention that he should bring back the most suitable woman for his son. On arrival in the vicinity of Haran, the servant prays that God will reveal the right woman by her being the first to come to the well drawing water, offering the servant a drink and then also providing water for his camels. Immediately, Rebekah appears and does as the servant had asked in prayer.

Rebekah's brother then joins them, inviting the servant into their home for a meal and shelter. He tells the family of the reason for his journey, offers the customary gifts for such a betrothal and agreement is reached. Rebekah returns with the servant and becomes Isaac's wife.

Chapter Twenty Five

This chapter commences with a brief account of Abraham's second marriage and the fate of his children to this marriage. It then recounts the death of Abraham at 175 years of age. He was buried by his two principle sons, Isaac and Ishmael, in the cave that he had purchased for his beloved Sarah.

This part of patriarchal history is completed with a listing of the twelve sons of Ishmael who are listed as princes and became the heads of various Arabic tribes throughout the neighbouring areas.

The chapter continues by introducing a new section of the history; the story of Isaac with the birth of his twin sons, Esau and Jacob. Esau was the eldest and his father's favourite, but Jacob was the one anointed by God to bear the seed of promise. Trouble lies ahead for these siblings and this chapter recounts how Esau gave up his birthright to his brother for a bowl of stew!

Chapter Twenty Six

God instructs Isaac to dwell in the region of Gerar due to a famine and also informed him that he had inherited the promises that God had made to Abraham. However, because he feared for his personal safety he told the local men that Rebekah was his sister, not his wife. However, Isaac was seen caressing Rebekah and Abimelech realised she was Isaac's wife. Therefore, he chastised Isaac severely for he knew that one of his men might have had sex with Rebekah and brought the wrath of God upon them all.

Isaac planted crops in the land and received a bountiful reward from God for his efforts. His wealth grew due to God's blessing upon him despite the deceit over Rebekah's status. However, Abimelech realised that Isaac was growing too strong for them, so he sent Isaac away into the valley of Gerar, where he dug wells for his livestock just as Abraham had done. The local herders quarrelled over the wells,

causing Isaac to keep moving and digging other wells. Finally, Abimelech came to Isaac to sign a covenant with him at the well of Bee-sheba, promising no further conflict.

The chapter concludes with a brief account of Esau taking Hittite wives, which was a source of grief to his parents, Isaac and Rebekah.

Chapter Twenty Seven

Genesis records in detail two important occasions when patriarchs, nearing death, pronounced special blessings on their sons: Isaac in vv.1-40, and Jacob in 49:1-27. In this present account, Isaac's intention to bless Esau is subverted by Rebekah, who helps Jacob receive the blessing of the firstborn. This event not only builds on the earlier incident when Esau sells his birthright to Jacob (25:29-34), but also develops the divine statement in 25:23 that the elder will serve the younger. Although Rebekah's actions involved deception, the text simply reports what Rebekah did without condoning or commenting on her actions. Nevertheless, the first audience again would see the ways in which God in his sovereignty uses all kinds of actions: good, bad, and mixed, to bring his people to the place in which they find themselves.

Chapter Twenty Eight

This chapter, which continues the account of Jacob's deception of Isaac, focuses on the issue of finding an appropriate wife for Jacob and presupposes some knowledge of the earlier comment in 26:34-35 about Esau's choice of wives. Isaac and Rebekah encourage Jacob to get a wife from among their relatives who are living in northwest Mesopotamia. Their advice to Jacob in turn prompts Esau to take another wife, on this occasion from Ishmael's family.

During the journey Jacob stopped at a place for the night. Sleeping out in the open, he laid his head on a rock and dreamed of a ladder into heaven with angels ascending and descending.

It was here that God promised to Jacob the same as he had to Abraham and Isaac before him. On waking the next morning Jacob acknowledged God's favour and knew that one day he would return safely to the land he was now leaving. He anointed the stone on which he had slept and promised a tithe to God of one tenth of all that he would come to possess.

Chapter Twenty Nine

Jacob arrives at a well near to Haran and questions some of the shepherds as to whether they know his Uncle Laban. They confirm they know him and point out that his daughter Rachel is approaching with Laban's sheep. Jacob greets Rachel, informs her who he is and she fetches her father, who invites Jacob into their home.

Laban offered to employ Jacob for wages but Jacob had fallen in love with Rachel and so he offered to work without pay for seven years if he could marry Rachel at the end of that period. When the seven years were ended Laban provided a wedding feast to celebrate the occasion but he tricked Jacob by bringing him his other daughter Leah. Because she was veiled, Jacob did not realise who it was until after the marriage was consummated.

When Jacob challenged Laban, the latter told him it was the custom for the elder daughter to be married first but if Jacob continued in the marriage celebration for the customary seven days then he could also marry Rachel, providing he agreed to work for Laban for a further seven years.

Jacob agreed to this and when the week was over, he married Rachel aslo, and worked for Laban for a further seven years. Because Jacob loved Rachel and not Leah, and in his compassion the Lord allowed Leah to bear Jacob four sons, while Rachel was barren.

Chapter Thirty

Rachel, in her desperation to have children for her husband Jacob, resorts to giving him her maid Bilhah to have children on her behalf. This is in much the same way as Sarah had given Hagar to Abraham. Bilhah subsequently presented Jacob with two more sons.

Not to be outdone by her sister and because she thought she too had become barren, Leah then gave her maid Zilpah to Jacob and she bore him two additional sons as well. However, she was wrong and subsequently had two more boys and a girl by her husband. Then, by the grace of God and despite her barren state, Rachel became pregnant and had her first son.

Many years had passed as Jacob's family grew in number and he wanted to return to the land of Canaan so he requested that Laban release him from service. However, Laban had prospered greatly through Jacob's skill as a shepherd and offered him any payment if he agreed to stay. The agreement was that Jacob could have any sheep or goats bred from Laban's flock that were marked in some way.

Laban agreed to this but tried to deceive Jacob by first removing all the marked sheep from the flock and putting them under the charge of his sons. Thus it was likely that only unmarked lambs would be born in the flock tended by Jacob.

Jacob had an ingenious plan to make the animals breed and produce marked lambs, although it was almost certainly the Lord's doing that ensured so many of the sheep and goats. Eventually, Jacob was the owner of a vast herd of his own and was very wealthy in his own right, with many servants to help tend his flock and look after his household.

Chapter Thirty One

The relationship between Laban's family and Jacob had deteriorated. Therefore, God instructed Jacob to return to the land of Canaan, so with the agreement of his two wives, he gathered all he possessed and set out while his father-in-law was attending the shearing of his own flock.

However, Jacob's family were not innocent in this matter for Rachel stole her father's household gods and Jacob deceived Laban by not telling him that he intended to leave, taking Laban's daughters and grandchildren with him.

After three days Laban learned of their flight and pursued them, catching up with them after a week. However, God had appeared to Laban in a dream to instruct him to do no harm to Jacob when he caught up with him. After Laban remonstrated with Jacob and announced that his household gods had been stolen, Jacob stated that he was afraid that Laban would have forcibly taken away his wives and children but that none of them had stolen anything. If Laban were to find his gods then the person who had them could be killed for the theft. Laban searched all of Jacob's family but when he came to Rachel she deceived him and he did not search properly to find his possessions.

Jacob then complained to Laban that he had not been treated well despite working for him for twenty years, seven for each wife and six for the flock he had raised. So the two men made a covenant, agreeing that Jacob could leave on the promise that he would always care for his wives and children.

Chapter Thirty Two

Having left Laban behind, Jacob continues his journey back to Canaan and knows that he must encounter his brother Esau. In preparation for their reunion, Jacob sends ahead a messenger to tell of his approach.

When the messenger returns to tell Jacob that Esau is on his way to meet with him, Jacob becomes afraid and arranges for his servants to take three separate gifts of livestock on ahead of him to present to Esau as each group encounters him. Jacob and his family remained behind.

That night Jacob sent his family and their possession across the River Jabbok but he remained on the other side of the river. During the night, Jacob wrestled with a man who did not prevail against him but did dislocate Jacob's hip to end the encounter. However, Jacob would not let the man go until he had received a blessing from him. The man was God and he renamed Jacob to Israel. Thus Jacob renamed the place Peniel, which means 'the face of God.'

Chapter Thirty Three

As the time of the meeting between Jacob and Esau approached, Jacob split his family into four groups of the mothers and their children, with Rachel being the last of these groups. Jacob himself took the lead of the group and when he met with Esau he showed great respect to his elder brother. However, Esau ran to meet Jacob and the two of them cried for joy as they embraced.

Jacob then introduced his family to Esau and was prompted to explain the gifts he had sent on ahead. Esau wished to decline the gifts as he too was wealthy but Jacob asked that they be accepted.

Esau wanted to escort Jacob's group but he declined saying the pace would be too much for the children and the young animals. Jacob agreed to meet with Esau again at Seir. Esau then departed but Jacob travelled to Succoth instead.

When Jacob reached the city of Shechem, he bought a small plot of land on which to settle and he set up an altar to the Lord.

Chapter Thirty Four

Dinah, the daughter of Leah, perhaps through lack of female companionship of her own age, sought out the local women of Shechem. This took her away from the protection of her family and she was raped by the son of Hamor, also called Shechem. However, he asked his father to arrange a marriage with Dinah.

When Jacob heard of the rape he was naturally furious but he took no action until his sons arrived home. Hamor tried to appease their anger by offering a high bride price for the wedding between Dinah and Shechem. In addition, he wanted the family to remain in the region and trade with the locals.

However, the sons of Jacob hatched a deceitful plan, saying that Dinah could not marry a man that was uncircumcised and that all the men of Shechem would need to be circumcised as well to meet their requirements. Hamor agreed to this and persuaded all the men it was in their financial interest to comply and all the men were subsequently circumcised.

On the third day, when the men were at their weakest due to the surgery, Simeon and Levi attacked and killed all the men, taking Dinah back with them to the family. The rest of the sons then went into the city and plundered it, taking all the livestock along with the women and children as slaves. Jacob objected to their behaviour because he feared retribution from the other Canaanites, but the brothers were unrepentant because Dinah had been treated like a whore in their eyes.

Chapter Thirty Five

Following the terrible deeds at Shechem, God instructs Jacob to continue his return journey to Bethel. After instructing his household to abandon their idols, which Jacob buried, they made the journey. On arrival, Jacob built an altar to honour God for his first promise to Jacob all those years before. It was there that God reappeared to Jacob, confirmed that he was now to be called Israel and that all the promises he had made to Abraham and Isaac were now passed on to Jacob.

The family continued their journey in order to Jacob to see his father Isaac. Rachel was pregnant for a second time and gave birth to a son, Benjamin, but she died in childbirth. It was during this time that Jacob's firstborn son Reuben slept with his father's concubine, Bilhah.

Jacob came to Isaac, whose death is then recorded as 180 years. He was buried by his two sons, Esau and Jacob.

Chapter Thirty Six

Largely through genealogy-like lists, this chapter provides a brief description of Esau and his descendants. This information, which concludes the narrator's interest in Esau, precedes the much fuller and more important account of Jacob's descendants. The location of this material resembles 25:12-18, where information about Ishmael's descendants comes before the longer account of Isaac's family. The author of Genesis usually writes about minor characters before concentrating in detail on the main participants of the unique family line. Particular attention is given to the presence of both 'chiefs' and 'kings' among Esau's descendants, who coexist alongside the Horites, the original inhabitants of Seir. Eventually, however, Esau's descendants assume control of Seir, renaming it 'Edom.'

Chapter Thirty Seven

Trouble continued for Jacob's family even though they were now settled in the land of Canaan. Jacob favoured his son Joseph over all the others, causing them to be jealous. To make matters worse, Joseph would recount dreams to his brothers indicating that he would become their master one day.

The brothers were tending the flocks several days journey away from home and Jacob sent Joseph to see how they were doing. The brothers saw this as an opportunity to rid themselves of this source of irritation and decided to kill him. However, the eldest brother Reuben intervened and Joseph was not killed. Instead, the brothers sold him to some Ishmaelites on their way to Egypt and so Joseph became the slave of Potiphar, but the brothers presented Jacob with false evidence of his death.

Chapter Thirty Eight

This sad and perhaps unsavoury tale is of great significance because it records how the tribe with whom the Messiah is associated came into being. Jacob's son Judah is married and has three sons but the eldest is punished by death by God for some unspecified wickedness. Jacob's second son is then required to take his eldest brother's widow for his own wife with the first born son to be legally acknowledged as perpetuating the line of the dead brother. The second son deliberately fails to impregnate his wife and God also punishes him by death.

Jacob should then have given his youngest son to his daughter-in-law Tamar but he does not do so, fearing that he too may die. Instead, he sends Tamar back to her father with the assurance that she will be married to the youngest son at some point in the future, a promise he did not intend to keep.

When Tamar realises what has happened, she dresses as a temple prostitute and Judah, not recognising her, goes to her and she becomes pregnant by her father-in-law. He pledges to pay her, as a prostitute, with a young goat. At her request he gives her his signet, cord and staff in lieu of payment. He then sends a friend to make the payment but he cannot find the prostitute.

When Judah finds out that Tamar is pregnant he becomes enraged at her immorality and demands that she be put to death. When she produces his pledge he realises that she is the one in the right and he was wrong. He then treats her as a father should treat a daughter.

When Tamar gives birth, Zerah puts a hand out and it is tied with a crimson thread to denote him as the first born. However, the hand is withdrawn and it is his brother Perez who would be the actual firstborn son; the one whose line would produce the Messiah.

Chapter Thirty Nine

Despite being in Egyptian slavery, the Lord is with Joseph and he prospers as the overseer of Potiphar's household. However, his master's wife continually attempts to seduce Joseph and his continued refusal infuriated her. Her final attempt led to Joseph fleeing the house but not before lady managed to grab his garment from him. She made accusations to her other staff that Joseph had tried to rape her, an accusation that led to the arrest and imprisonment of Joseph. However, the Lord remained with Joseph and the chief jailer placed all the other prisoners in Joseph's care as he recognised his gifting.

Chapter Forty

Joseph's fellow prisoners include the chief baker and cupbearer of Pharaoh. Both men have dreams that they cannot interpret but, through God, Joseph does so. His interpretation is that the baker will be executed within three days but that the

cupbearer would be restored to his former position at that same time. Both dreams come true. Joseph had asked the cupbearer to remember him when he was released but he did not do so for some considerable time.

Chapter Forty One

This lengthy episode recounts Joseph's dramatic rise in status from being a prisoner in the king's jail to becoming the chief administrator of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh himself. Central to this is Joseph's ability to interpret Pharaoh's dreams, which anticipate seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Later this will play an important part in bringing Joseph's brothers to Egypt. Joseph's God-given administrative ability is immediately recognised by Pharaoh and prompts his promotion. Throughout this chapter, Joseph consistently acknowledges God as the source of his special gifting.

Chapter Forty Two

Jacob sends his ten eldest sons to Egypt to purchase food due to the severity of the famine keeping Benjamin at home. When they arrive they bow down to Joseph as he is the governor of Egypt and responsible for deciding who can buy grain. Joseph recognised his brothers but they did not recognise him. He then accuses them of being spies, which they vehemently deny. Joseph had them imprisoned for three days.

After three days Joseph had them released but he had Simeon bound as a hostage until they return bring Benjamin also to prove they were telling the truth. The brothers believed they were being punished because they had sold Joseph into slavery. Joseph order that their money be put back into the sacks of grain secretly and he let them go.

When they discovered that their money was returned to them they believed this would lead to more trouble and believed it was God who was punishing them. When they told Jacob he grieved for Joseph and Simeon, and feared also for Benjamin if he were taken to Egypt and so he refused to release him despite Reuben's pledge to take care of him.

Chapter Forty Three

The ongoing famine eventually forces Jacob to send his sons back to Egypt with Benjamin. When the brothers return, they are unexpectedly invited to dine at Joseph's house. Taken by surprise, they suspect that this may be a ploy to enslave them because of the money in their sacks. The lavish meal prepares the way for Joseph's disclosure of himself to his brothers, which comes in the next chapter.

Chapter Forty Four

Still disguising his true identity from his brothers, Joseph sends them away after the meal. However, he gives instructions that his personal silver cup should be placed in the sack of Benjamin in order to accuse him of theft. Later, when the cup is found in Benjamin's sack, the brothers are forced to return and face Joseph once more. When Joseph threatens to hold on to Benjamin, Judah pleads passionately in a long speech that he should become Joseph's slave in place of Benjamin. Judah's action reveals how much his character has changed from when he proposed selling Joseph into slavery.

Chapter Forty Five

Moved by Judah's speech, Joseph is unable to restrain his emotions. To the consternation of his shocked brothers, he reveals that he is Joseph. In a long speech he attempts to dissipate their sense of guilt by stressing God's role in sending him to Egypt in order to preserve the lives of his family. With the famine set to continue for another five years, Joseph sends his brothers back to Canaan in order to bring the rest of his family to Egypt.

Chapter Forty Six

Jacob commences his journey to Egypt. At Beer-sheba God appears to Jacob, promising that he will be with Jacob in Egypt, and restating the promises made to Abraham and Isaac that the Hebrews will be a great nation. He makes the further promise that Jacob will see Joseph again before he dies and that he will be buried in Canaan.

The account then goes on to list all the children and grandchildren of Jacob that make the journey into Egypt, lists two grandsons who died in Canaan and two that were born to Joseph in Egypt that he had never met.

As they approached Egypt, Jacob sent Judah to tell Joseph, who immediately set out to be reunited with his father. Joseph then instructs them on what they are to say when he takes them to meet with Pharaoh.

Chapter Forty Seven

Joseph brought five of his brothers to be introduced to Pharaoh and when he enquired of their occupation they confirmed they were shepherds as Joseph had instructed them and that they wished to settle as aliens in Egypt due to the famine. Pharaoh told Joseph that, as they were his family, then they could settle in the land of Goshen. When Jacob came before Pharaoh he blessed him twice. Joseph then settled them in Egypt.

As the famine continued the people spent all their money on food from the central stocks that Joseph had set up. When their money had all gone, he took their

livestock in exchange for food, and finally, when they had nothing else, their land passed to Pharaoh and the people came into servitude in exchange for food. But they did not die. Only the priests were exempt for this and a tax of twenty per cent of all income to Pharaoh became the standard.

After settling in the land for seventeen years, Jacob called his son Joseph to him and made him promise that his body would be taken back to Canaan and buried there with his ancestors.

Chapter Forty Eight

When Jacob became ill, Joseph took his sons Manasseh and Ephraim to their grandfather. Because of the blessing he had received from God, Jacob wanted to bless these two sons of Joseph, giving them the same status of inheritance as his own sons, thus giving Joseph the equivalent of a double-portion normally passed to the firstborn son.

To receive the blessing according to their own birthright Joseph placed Manasseh to receive Jacob's right hand and Ephraim his left, but Jacob crossed his hands so that Ephraim received the blessing from his right hand. When Joseph tried to correct Jacob, his father informed him the reason for doing so is that the descendants of Ephraim would become the greater people.

Chapter Forty Nine

The main part of this chapter contains some remarkable prophecy about how the descendants of Jacob's sons will develop as various tribes and provides a strong indication that the Messiah will come from the line of Judah. It also confirms Joseph and his descendants as a group that will outshine his brothers.

Following his pronouncements to his sons, Jacob provides details of where he is to be buried - in the same cave that contained the remains of Abraham, Isaac, their wives and Jacob's wife Leah. Following this, Jacob died.

Chapter Fifty

Following a period of mourning for his father Jacob, Joseph receives permission to have his body laid to rest in Canaan. The funeral party was impressive and contained many Egyptian dignitaries as well Jacob's family. It was, in essence, a state funeral for the last of the patriarchs. He was buried with Abraham and Isaac in the cave at Machpelah.

Following the death of Jacob, his brothers feared that he would seek retribution against them for selling him into slavery but Joseph notes that, although their intent was for evil, they were fulfilling God's destiny for Joseph.

At the age of 110 years and being a great grandfather, Joseph too dies. He is not buried in Canaan as were his predecessors but it was his request that his remains be taken into the Promised Land at the time God called the Hebrew nation out of Egypt.