

Who are the Nephilim?

Genesis 6:

Nephilim is derived from the original Hebrew word naphal, which means fallen. The context points to spiritually fallen ones. The Septuagint, an ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament, further associates Nephilim with the Greek word for giant. This descriptor goes hand in hand with the Nephilim we see in the book of Numbers (Numbers 13:32-33). To understand who the Nephilim were, we must first identify their parents. The following theories agree that the “daughters of men” were human women. But each theory differs when it comes to the “sons of God.” With the Fallen Angel Theory- Proponents of this theory believe the sons of God were fallen angels who bred with human females to produce a hybrid race of superhumans called Nephilim. They base this belief on the fact the Bible only uses this specific phrase “sons of God” in [Genesis 6](#) and when describing angels ([Job 1:6](#); [Job 2:1](#); [Job 38:7](#)). They also cite [1 Peter 3:18-22](#) as strong scriptural confirmation that the spirits in prison from Noah’s day are indeed the same fallen angels in the [Genesis 6](#) account. They further maintain that similar passages in 2 Peter and Jude clear up any controversy about the difference in terms. They are known to be wicked, incredibly strong due to genetic hybrid traits, and are one of the largest reasons for the Great flood, to rid Earth of them.

One thing is certain. Nephilim did exist. Scripture confirms that these beings were distinctly different from other humans and posed such a threat to humanity that God chose to eliminate the Nephilim from the population at all costs—first through the flood, then again in Canaan. The question is, do the Nephilim still roam the earth?

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Why is this important?

Melchizedek is a mysterious king-priest from **Genesis 14** who blesses Abraham, serving as a significant biblical foreshadowing (or "type") of Jesus Christ, especially regarding Jesus's dual roles as King and eternal Priest, a concept expanded in the Book of Hebrews. He was King of Salem (likely Jerusalem before it became modern Jerusalem under King David) and Priest of the Most High God, receiving a tithe from Abraham, signifying his superior spiritual status before Israel's priesthood existed.

Here we see Melchizedek bringing wine and bread and sharing it with Abram, a foreshadowing of modern day communion, shown again by Jesus at the Last Supper before He was crucified. In this meeting, Melchizedek not only breaks bread with Abram, but gives him a blessing. We see Abram respond by honoring the blessing from the Lord through Melchizedek's words by giving him one tenth of his wealth. Many believe this is the first tithe, a show of faith to give back to God what He has gifted us with. Many have twisted modern tithing and used it to get wealthy when in fact, it was designed to show our gratitude for how God has protected us. We can tithe now with money, actions, our talents or time, Abram didn't belong to a church but he gave back to God and we can do the same in our community and life.

Another important story about tithing is told by Jesus in the book of Mark or Luke. The story of the woman and the coins, known as the "Widow's Mite," is a biblical account (Mark 12:41-44, Luke 21:1-4) where Jesus observed people giving to the temple treasury; while the rich gave large sums from their surplus, a poor widow gave two small copper coins (mites), all she had, leading Jesus to declare she gave more because she sacrificed her entire livelihood, teaching a lesson on sacrificial giving and true generosity, not just the amount. This shows us that giving from the heart is more important to God than giving money because it's expected.

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Why did Abraham almost sacrifice his son?

This story has bothered many people and made them question why a loving God would ask such a bizarre task of someone. But it's a foreshadowing like many stories in the Bible, so let's discuss it.

The near-sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham ([Genesis 22](#)) is a profound biblical story symbolizing ultimate faith, obedience, and trust in God, even when it seems contradictory to His promises, and serves as a powerful foreshadowing of God's ultimate sacrifice of His own Son, Jesus, for humanity's salvation. It demonstrated Abraham's willingness to surrender his most precious possession (his heir) to God, proving his love for God was greater than for Isaac, and ultimately showed that God desires mercy and obedience, not human sacrifice. The culture surrounding Abram was riddled with human sacrifice to appease their gods, here we see how God stops the sacrifice to show Abram this is NOT His will as a form of worship.

Key Meanings & Themes:

- **Test of Faith:** God's command was a severe test to reveal the depth of Abraham's devotion, showing the world that Abraham feared God above all else.
- **Obedience & Trust:** Abraham's willingness to proceed demonstrated his absolute trust in God, believing God could even raise Isaac from the dead if necessary, fulfilling His promises through him.
- **God's Provision:** The story ends with God providing a ram as a substitute, teaching that God provides for His people and doesn't desire human sacrifice, a common practice of pagan gods.
- **Foreshadowing Jesus:**
 - God's instruction to offer his "only son" (Isaac) mirrors God offering His only Son, Jesus.
 - The location (Mount Moriah) is traditionally where the Temple was built and where Jesus was crucified.
 - God's provision of the ram for Isaac parallels God's provision of Jesus as the ultimate sacrifice for sin, bringing eternal life.
- **Righteousness:** Abraham's faith was "credited to him as righteousness," establishing him as the father of all who believe, showing faith is active trust, not just belief. Today believers are known as "the children of Abraham" or "Israelites". Israelites biblically is not the same as people born in modern day established Israel. It means part of the spiritual family of God.

In essence, the story reveals God's demand for total commitment and His ultimate plan of salvation through sacrifice, all while demonstrating His faithfulness and provision.

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Why was Esau rejected by God and not Jacob?

Genesis 25

God did not "hate" Esau in the human emotional sense, but rather rejected him from the lineage of Abraham's promised covenant because of his actions and character. Esau famously sold his birthright for a bowl of stew, which demonstrated a disregard for its spiritual and material value, showing a preference for immediate gratification over long-term spiritual blessings.

Despising his birthright:

Esau's primary offense was "despising his birthright," which included not only a double portion of the family estate but also the spiritual promise of God's blessing to Abraham's descendants. This was seen as a rejection of God's plan and promises.

Prioritizing the physical:

He valued a bowl of soup over a priceless inheritance and spiritual blessing, showing a carnal and short-sighted focus on physical desires rather than eternal values.

Foreknowledge of his character:

According to the Bible, God's rejection was also based on His foreknowledge of Esau's future choices. He knew Esau would eventually have a character that was less aligned with His will.

Meaning of "hate":

The Bible uses the terms "love" and "hate" in the context of God's choice of one nation (Israel, descended from Jacob) over another (Edom, descended from Esau). It was a choice of destiny and role in God's plan, not an expression of human emotion.

Esau's later life:

Even after the birthright was sold, Esau was still blessed and prospered. However, his later choices, such as marrying non-believers, further demonstrated a pattern of spiritual compromise that put his lineage outside the promised covenant.

In the Bible, Esau primarily represents the carnal or natural man, who prioritizes worldly and immediate gratification over spiritual blessings. He is used as an example of someone who despises spiritual things, symbolized by his selling his birthright for a single meal. Historically and symbolically, Esau also represents the nation of Edom, an ancient adversary of Israel.

Esau's symbolism:

Esau is seen as representing the "flesh" or the natural man who is self-sufficient and focused on material, worldly things. His story is a cautionary tale about the consequences of prioritizing physical desires over spiritual and eternal ones.

A rejection of God's promise:

By selling his birthright, Esau is interpreted as a person who despises God's covenant and the spiritual inheritance promised to his descendants. The biblical text notes that he was so hungry that he "despised his birthright".

Historical and national representation:

Esau is the ancestor of the Edomites, and his story is used to explain the long-standing conflict between the nations of Israel and Edom. For some interpretations, this symbolism extends even further, with Edom representing other empires or groups that opposed Israel.

An example of spiritual warning:

The New Testament uses Esau's story as a direct warning to believers to hold on to what is truly valuable and not be overcome by the desires of the flesh. Hebrews 12:15-17 specifically uses Esau as an example of a "godless" person who will face future judgment for his choices.

Esau's story can also be used as an example of why we need to learn to trust God and be patient, even when we feel as if we are not going to make it on our own. Esau thought if he didn't get soup, he would die and his own brother deceived him and offered him soup in exchange for his claim to the family throne. It shows us that not all "blessings from friends or family" are really that, sometimes they are standing in the way of what God has for us. Esau could have asked the Lord for help, but he went to a brother who tricked him and threw everything promised to him away over a meal. Even if others are offering to help us, ask yourself "is this the help GOD wants me to have or is it a quick fix that could cost me more in the longrun?" The Lord will show you when you are being lied to or presented a false offer of help if you put your trust in HIM and not just in people.

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What's up with all the slavery?

When I was an atheist, one of my biggest arguments about the bible was “well God seems to love slavery, He’s always telling slaves to obey their masters.” Because I didn’t understand the historic context of when the Bible was written, and neither did the people trying to defend it, it often was met with jumbled answers that only made me think I was right. But let’s take a look at what slavery in those days looked like.

One of the first times we see it mentioned is in the Book of Genesis in the story of Moses. The Israelites have multiplied like rabbits and we see the Pharaoh of Egypt declare them slaves. He takes extreme measures to reduce the population and has the newborn male children of the Israelites put to death. Moses is spared by his mother hiding him, adopted into the royal family, and late called by God to free the slaves (Israelites) of Egypt.

This is the first example of forced slavery and it horrifies God so much He saves the people from Egypt and punishes the nation for it’s crimes against the Israelites. Our modern day example would be similar to the Transatlantic Slave trade starting in America around the 1600’s. It was brutal, torturous, and criminal in every sense. Forced slavery is clearly not supported by God and we see this throughout scripture when He saves cultures and individuals over and over again.

The second form of slavery back then was called Indentured Servitude. This practice still exist in many cultures and often gets abused but in the bible we see rules set in place for those who enter indentured servitude: specifically we see rules set in place for the MASTERS as to how to treat people while they are under this practice. They are commanded to be just and fair, to hold no one longer than 7 years to pay off a debt, that they are not to abuse those working under them during that time period. A modern day example of this is the migrant worker exploitation. Migrant farm workers, have faced debt bondage, working under threat to repay recruitment fees for basic necessities or transportation. Is this God’s will? Absolutely not, again we see Him condemning the practice and providing rules about how to exist in society that has cultural aspects like slavery built into it’s function, while still maintaining a Godly treatment of others.

The third is labor slavery, a practice often seen throughout civilizations like ancient Greece and Rome where much of the New Testament was written. We see the writers of the New Testament saying things like “Slaves obey your masters” and it’s easy to think that they must be pro-slavery, but this is not the case. Labor slavery existed heavily in cultures where nations were conquered or the lower class society was indebted to the government and forced to work a job assigned to them. This came with long hours, harsh treatment, but there were sometimes options offered to work off debt, buy your freedom, or be set free and return to the job as a paid employee. This practice was rampant in the cultures where people preached and the message to obey was given as instruction to make the slave or worker righteous meaning that if the master acted wrongly, the Lord would punish them, not putting the slave or workers life at risk to be executed by the government. Again, Jesus and God are opposed to slavery but we see it was such a heavy part of the culture over the 2,000 plus years the Bible takes place that God is helping humans to navigate what sin has created, greed, power, destruction, things that are still very real today even if we call it by a different name. We are not that different from the slaves of ancient days. We think we own, we think we are free, but we work ourselves to the bone to make powerful people rich that don’t care if we live or die. Slavery is’t gone, it was rebranded and packaged into our social structure in a way we could digest it. But make no mistake, God never wanted this for us, evil did this, not Him.

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Why are these laws important?

Biblical laws are important because they reveal God's holy character, expose human sinfulness, provide a moral framework for loving God and neighbor, restrain wickedness in society, and guide believers toward a life of holiness and gratitude for God's grace, ultimately pointing to the need for a Savior, Jesus Christ, for true righteousness. They function as a mirror showing our failures, a tutor leading us to Christ, and a guide for righteous living, reflecting God's nature and desire for humanity's well-being. They also helped shape a framework of hygiene, healthy living, a government type of structure, and rules that they had not had to help maintain order.

Key Reasons for Their Importance:

- **Reveal God's Character:** The laws demonstrate God's perfect holiness, justice, and righteousness, showing humanity His standard for living.
- **Expose Sin:** They act as a mirror, highlighting our inability to perfectly keep God's standard and revealing our need for forgiveness and a Savior.
- **Guide Righteous Living:** They offer principles for loving God (first four commandments) and loving others (last six), forming a foundation for a virtuous life.
- **Restrain Evil:** Laws against murder, theft, and dishonesty help maintain order and protect people in society, serving as a societal restraint.
- **Call to Holiness:** They call believers to be set apart and holy, reflecting God's own nature.
- **Point to Christ:** The Law shows our need for a righteousness beyond our own, which is found through faith in Jesus, fulfilling the Law's purpose.

Different Types of Laws:

- **Moral Laws:** Universal principles (like the Ten Commandments) still applicable today.
- **Ceremonial Laws:** Related to worship and rituals, largely fulfilled in Christ.
- **Judicial Laws:** Civil laws for ancient Israel, specific to their nation.

Ultimately, for believers, the laws are a joyful guide for living in relationship with God and others, flowing from love and gratitude, rather than being a means to earn salvation, which comes through grace.

During the time of Jesus, the religious leaders were more obsessed with the laws than with treating the people they served with grace and mercy. We see Jesus often challenging them to stop teaching that following every rule is more important than being a humble and gracious follower of God. Does that mean the rules don't matter? No, Jesus came to fulfill them because it was almost impossible for us to as humans. But they are important to read and know because they help us reflect on things we might be doing that aren't good for us or are standing in the way of our relationship with God. What might you find in there that is holding you back in life? Ask God to show you as you read them.

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All this over a snake and a some fruit?

Genesis 3

It's not hard for us to read these passages and realize the world is completely messed up from a once perfect creation that we should have been able to enjoy all because of this first big act in the Book of Genesis. We often hear the story told as if Eve is the reason that sin exist today, after all, it was Eve who listened to the serpent (known as the Nacash in Hebrew, meaning Shining or Hissing one, possibly a fallen angel who was later cursed) and ate from the forbidden tree. But the reality is much deeper than that. In fact, it started long before Adam and Eve were even on the scene.

In the book of Ezekiel we see in chapter 28 we read a story of the King of Tyre who is depicted as a king with pride and arrogance and a depiction of Lucifer in the garden of Eden, the very place where Eve ate on that fateful day. The angelic fallen being is described as beautiful, precious, and it describes his defiance and downfall in that very garden. This story, written hundreds of years after the fall gives us history about why the Nacash showed up in that garden at all- to lie and trick humanity as a big middle finger to the heavens where God had a front row seat to watching His precious creation of people start their downward spiral into sin. The serpent (Nacash) gives Eve the idea that if she eats it, she will be just like God and instead of rejecting the idea and sticking to the rules given, she listens instead to the cunning serpent and takes a bite. But where is Adam in all this? Well, when approached, he completely rejects the command given, unlike Eve who was actually tricked, and joins her because he too wants to be like God, even knowing he was told not to touch it. When confronted by God, he even goes as far as to blame her instead of taking responsibility and owning up to his own part in his rebellion.

So we see here, it's not all Eve's fault, it's not all Adam's either, but more so the fault of the very creature who was cast out of Heaven and knew better than any human being that it was not supposed to be touched. The being in the garden that day once served in the very Heaven God exist in today and fully knew what would happen to them both but acted anyways because they don't want us to be close to God at all. This has always been a battle against good and evil, humans are the most precious creation God made to Him, we are his masterpiece, and the fallen hate that. Their own rebellion caused a crossfire and we were taken out in the process. That's why Jesus came later, to give us a chance to come back into the fold and work against the darkness that started on earth that fateful day.

God didn't create sin, He is perfect in all His ways and only produces good- He created Lucifer, God created free will, and those angels who left with Lucifer helped to create all the sin that exist in our world today by using manipulation, deception, trickery, and our own free will against us. This helps us to understand God didn't create the bad things that happen, He created free will and even the angels used it incorrectly. This is why it's so important to know who you are serving and which side you will land on. Because one promises freedom but it comes with listening to God, the other fakes freedom with rebellion, but it's really the chains that will destroy us in the end.

All this over a snake and a some fruit?

Genesis 3

It's not hard for us to read these passages and realize the world is completely messed up from a once perfect creation that we should have been able to enjoy all because of this first big act in the Book of Genesis. We often hear the story told as if Eve is the reason that sin exist today, after all, it was Eve who listened to the serpent (known as the Nacash in Hebrew, meaning Shining or Hissing one, possibly a fallen angel who was later cursed) and ate from the forbidden tree. But the reality is much deeper than that. In fact, it started long before Adam and Eve were even on the scene.

In the book of Ezekiel we see in chapter 28 we read a story of the King of Tyre who is depicted as a king with pride and arrogance and a depiction of Lucifer in the garden of Eden, the very place where Eve ate on that fateful day. The angelic fallen being is described as beautiful, precious, and it describes his defiance and downfall in that very garden. This story, written hundreds of years after the fall gives us history about why the Nacash showed up in that garden at all- to lie and trick humanity as a big middle finger to the heavens where God had a front row seat to watching His precious creation of people start their downward spiral into sin. The serpent (Nacash) gives Eve the idea that if she eats it, she will be just like God and instead of rejecting the idea and sticking to the rules given, she listens instead to the cunning serpent and takes a bite. But where is Adam in all this? Well, when approached, he completely rejects the command given, unlike Eve who was actually tricked, and joins her because he too wants to be like God, even knowing he was told not to touch it. When confronted by God, he even goes as far as to blame her instead of taking responsibility and owning up to his own part in his rebellion.

So we see here, it's not all Eve's fault, it's not all Adam's either, but more so the fault of the very creature who was cast out of Heaven and knew better than any human being that it was not supposed to be touched. The being in the garden that day once served in the very Heaven God exist in today and fully knew what would happen to them both but acted anyways because they don't want us to be close to God at all. This has always been a battle against good and evil, humans are the most precious creation God made to Him, we are his masterpiece, and the fallen hate that. Their own rebellion caused a crossfire and we were taken out in the process. That's why Jesus came later, to give us a chance to come back into the fold and work against the darkness that started on earth that fateful day.

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Jacob the Deceiver, who is he? Genesis 25

Here among many stories of mankind's struggles with getting on the right track, we are introduced to perhaps one of the biggest manipulators in the journey yet, Jacob. His literal name "Jacob" or Yaakov if we go the Hebrew route, literally means "he who sets his heel down" or "he who hides his intentions. And by all means, Jacob lives up to his name sake. Right at the start of the story, his own birth, we see Jacob comes out into the world holding on to his twin brother's heel, trying to be first in line. Later, we find that he tricks Esau who in a moment of his own weakness trades his claim to the family stake for a bowl of soup (Gen. 25:27-34). Could you imagine throwing away your inheritance over some soup? Was Esau wrong for not taking what should have been his to manage seriously? Sure, but to have your own brother use you in one of your lowest moments? That's just Jacob getting warmed up for what becomes a wild story about him trying everything but being honest to get ahead. And it's not just Jacob, but his own mother is in on it too, pitting her own children against each other. From dressing Jacob up and tricking their dying father to claim a blessing (Gen 27) to even claiming she's sending Jacob off to find a wife (Gen. 27) when the truth is all the lies have finally caught up to them and Esau is ready to snap on his barely younger twin.

You would think that would all be enough for Jacob to learn a lesson or two and chill. However, his deceit follows him and he himself finds he's on the losing end when the father of the woman he loves tricks Jacob into marrying the older sister instead of the one he's been working off seven years of indentured servitude to be with (Gen. 29) adding another 7 years of labor before he can finally marry Rachel, the woman he truly loves.

Some where in the midst of all this chaos, the Lord sends a messenger to him, there's a wrestling match, and Jacob won't back down until the early hours of the morning eventually leading to a popped out hip that never heals and walking away with a new name, Israel (meaning: He who wrestles with God). That's a pretty odd name to give the person who has not only proven he's willing to throw integrity out the window to get what he wants, especially given the meaning if the name: He who wrestles with God. It's almost as if this radical encounter didn't immediately fix Jacob's constant mess ups or make him so joyfully happy that he swore off lying ever again. It might seem like a strange name, but if we really take the time to think about the new meaning, don't we all have a bit of that in us? Finding Jesus, getting saved, heck, even when I was just coming back to the very IDEA of maybe God being real, I can say wrestling with God became one of my strong suits. I wanted everything to stay the same, I just wanted to know it all right then. I wasn't really sure that learning about Christ was for me if it meant letting go of the things I was comfortable in, like partying, my independence, my smoking, my swearing, my crude jokes, my attitude: not because they were beneficial to me, but because they were my little dark secrets that I didn't realize were actually harmful to those around me. It wasn't actually a secret at all. Much like Jacob, the issues I didn't want to address were leaking out into my family, my friends, causing relational stress and distance between me and others. Even after Jacob gets a new name, he still keeps messing up, his unwillingness to surrender his behaviors of manipulation cause division within his children as we later see in the story of Joseph. Even his reunion with Esau later in life reeks of veiled lies and trying to figure out what Esau's move is before confronting his brother and apologizing for everything he's done to him (Gen.32).

But what can we take from this? That a perfect God, one who has NEVER made mistakes, who has NEVER lied or manipulated, who is always righteous- that He can choose even the most broken of us to do great things thru. Jacob becomes Israel, Israel becomes a people, through them comes a mighty kingdom, through that kingdom comes Jesus, who again chooses the least likely people to make changes that alter history. He chose Jacob, even with all his garbage, imagine how great your redemption story will be if you let Him choose you too.

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Jacob and Esau- all is forgiven-ish? Genesis 32

In this chapter, we read the somewhat confusing story of Jacob and Esau, brother's reunited after decades of being apart, lies, manipulation, and games played that sent them on total different paths in life. In verse four we read "Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him (Jacob), threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him. And then they both wept." (translations might vary)

So it seems all is well, all is forgiven, and now they load up their camels and kids, have a bonfire, and ride off into the wind together like a fairy tale.

Actually no, that's not what happens.

Esau is confused about why a bunch of animals came ahead first. After getting acquainted with Jacob's family, he asks his brother "And what were all the flocks and herds I met as I came?" (verse 8) Here we see Jacob being Jacob, trying to send a gift ahead, to gauge whether or not it was going to go well or come to a violent end. He then goes on to keep offering them and Esau isn't interested, while Jacob insist they are a gift for finding favor in his brother's eyes once more. Jacob refuses to drop it and eventually Esau agrees. Esau then goes on to invite his brother to come with him in his journey, only for Jacob to pull his already famous "switcharoo" and say "yeah, yeah, sure, well, you see, my kids are young, my animals have babies, why not go ahead and I'll catch up?" and instead of doing so, he dips out once again and heads in a totally opposite direction (verse 17). Not exactly the definition of a true reconciliation.

It might seem as if this story is here to show a beautiful moment between two brothers, but really it illustrates how even with forgiveness, reconciling isn't always possible. Esau is the one who chooses to forgive and move forward, Jacob holds on to his old ways and goes a different direction. So who wins this round?

Both. Esau forgives, he moves on, Jacob is forgiven but veers left. Because forgiving others isn't about making everything go back to perfect or the way it once was, it's about letting go of our anger, not holding it over someone's head. Esau wins because he lets go of his past hurts towards Jacob, but Jacob wins too because he's free from the fear of retaliation.

This story can show us that even if we forgive someone who hurt us so deeply, family, friend, or acquaintance, it might not mean that we are supposed to move forward with that person. We are human, we carry scars and fears, but we were created by a God who forgives us completely, who won't turn and run the other way when we reconcile ourselves to Him. Unlike Jacob, we don't have to make up excuses to turn away from Him, we do it plenty on our own with our behaviors. But like Esau, He will forgive us and invite us to walk with Him, throw His arms around us and welcome us home, each time.

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Joseph: the Brother they hated Genesis 37

Ever had an annoying sibling or family member? Well, if not, look no further than Joseph to understand how someone might get SO under your skin, you have a mental collapse and freak out and sell them into slavery. It's probably best that's not a option for those of us who grew up in a family where favoritism was rampant. But unfortunately for Joseph, that's exactly what happened.

His father's favorite son, made ever so clear by Jacob's (Israel) constant doting on him, not making him take a share in the hard labor of the land, the making of an elaborate coat, Joseph being the family tattletale, sharing his gift of dreams letting his brother's know they would one day serve him, it seems like it all became a little too much for his older siblings to have to hear over breakfast until one day it all comes to a head. Here in Genesis, we see how Joseph being the most loved kid drives a wedge between him and his siblings, his brother's finally plotting against him, throwing him in a well, selling him as a slave to merchants, and taking his beloved coat, dipping it in blood, and taking it back to their father Jacob to tell him Joseph is dead, all to cover their own tracks.

So what exactly went wrong? Well, it starts with Joseph's special treatment by his own father. Verse three tells us Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other children, a bold proclamation considering he is the youngest of 12 kids. Right from the beginning the chapter lets us know the brothers didn't have one good thing to say about Jacob's special baby boy. Later we read Joseph goes on to share his dreams about himself being put in a position of rulership over his brothers and as anyone might have guessed, they took offense to it. Instead of picking up on the social cues, Joseph can't keep it to himself when it happens again and the wedge between them grows even more until one day they see him coming and decide to take matters into their own hands, jumping him, selling him, and tricking their own father.

They probably thought they had seen the last of Joseph but in reality, his story is only beginning. Because as it turns out, as we read on, we find that Joseph was actually right, he would later be in leadership over the very same family that mocked his dreams about it. So where did Joseph go wrong? He lacked tact. We see that by the fact that he even shares is dream with his own father who scolds his golden child but also wonders what the dreams mean. Instead of picking up how everyone was feeling around him, he keeps oversharing until eventually they turn on him. See, Joseph wasn't wrong about his visions, but like any teen he didn't know when to share and when to keep quiet about something personal and sacred. Does it mean he should have been sold off? Absolutely not, but here we see how God protects him from his brothers who want him dead by having one speak out, we later see how Joseph's journey takes a wild ride, and how God comes though on what he promised the teenage Joseph long ago. Joseph goes through trial after trial, but never stops believing that what God showed him would happen will come true, keeping him a lot more humble along the upcoming journey.

Little did his brothers know they would soon be coming face to face with the boy they tried to kill. But this time, he would know when to stay silent and when to reveal, a true testament to him overcoming and staying faithful to God, despite how confused he must have felt about how God was going to get him out of this mess.

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Joseph in Prison: A lesson in patience

In **Genesis 39** we read how Joseph's slavery eventually lands him in Potiphar's home, an Egyptian officer and captain of the guard to Pharaoh. This worked out incredibly well for the boy who had been betrayed by his own family, sold out of jealousy, and Joseph quickly establishes himself as determined and blessed, leading Potiphar to not only make him a personal assistant, but even in charge of everything Potiphar owned. No slight task for Joseph who took his position seriously and in turn, Joseph wants for nothing. The bible tells us that not only is Joseph resourceful, but also handsome and because of this he catches the eye of the last person he wants to mess around with, Potiphar's wife. She nags him daily, asking him to sleep with her and he does his best to avoid her at all cost, even trying to reason with her about how wrong it would be to do to her own husband (verses 8-9) until one fateful day, she corners him, grabs him, and he flees, leaving behind his cloak. Angry at the rejection, instead of taking it gracefully, she uses the left behind cloak to create panic, claiming that Joseph tried to rape her and turning her husband against Joseph. In a rage, Potiphar sends Joseph to prison, no trial, no chance to explain himself because at the end of the day he is only just a slave to them.

But here we see something new take hold, sure prison was no vacation, but Joseph is protected by God, given a chance to befriend the warden, taking charge over the prisoners, even using the gifts that the Lord has given him to help interpret the dreams of Pharaoh's prisoners, never once giving the credit to himself, but to God who gave him the gift. One of the men even promises to let Pharaoh know about Joseph's case when he's free. Time goes by and the cup bearer forgets, until one day, Pharaoh needs a dream interpreted. Only then does the cup bearer remember the slave who helped him when he himself was in prison. Joseph is brought before Pharaoh, God gives him the ability and Joseph interprets the dream and Pharaoh is so impressed, he gives Joseph one of the highest ranks, second in command to only Pharaoh himself. Talk about an overnight change!

But why? Why all the need for suffering if God's plan for Joseph was always to put him in a seat of honor? While Joseph might have made some childish mistakes not keeping his mouth shut as a kid, was it really necessary for him to go up, down, up, down, over and over again? Well, we can't say why God allowed Joseph to sit time and time again, but we can look at the crazy symbolism this story mirrors of what happened the day Jesus was crucified.

Much like Joseph sat in jail with two men, one who would be saved, one who was destined for suffering, so did Jesus. He hung on a cross in between two men: one who would believe in Jesus and get a person promise from Him that they would be reunited in heaven, another on Jesus's other side who would scoff and be destined for suffering. See culturally, Egyptians believed you needed to whole body to be reunited in an afterlife. When Joseph tells the baker his body will be eaten by birds, it's not the death that scares him, but the thought that he won't enter an afterlife. This story is not only historical, but here we see a foreshadowing of what is to come: a man condemned for crimes he didn't commit, between two criminals with two different outcomes, who in his suffering comes out more victorious than anyone could have imagined.

It might seem weird to think of this as a lesson in patience, but when we experience suffering, we have to put our "why me's" aside and trust that there is a plan out there for us so much bigger than we could even see with our own eyes. That maybe the tough things we go through are not just for us, but further down the line, much like Joseph, will lead to the saving of many lives.

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Jacob's last moments: The 12 Blessings of the 12 tribes and their meaning for each son Genesis 29

In Genesis 49, Jacob calls together his 12 sons and blesses them before his death. He calls each son by name and speaks of their pasts as well as their futures. I thought it would be an interesting study to take each of these sons of Jacob and analyze their blessings, attempting to apply what is said of them by their father to our own lives.

Reuben

Reuben was Jacob's firstborn son, born to his wife Leah. Leah had been forced on Jacob, and in Genesis 29:31, it specifically states that she was not loved by him. Because of this, God showed mercy to her by giving her a son, whom she named Reuben and said "It is because the LORD has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now." (Genesis 29:32). My online Bible [comments](#) that "*Reuben* sounds like the Hebrew for *he has seen my misery*; the name means see, a son." Later in the text, it mentions that Reuben slept with Jacob's concubine, Bilhah, and Israel (Jacob) heard about it (Genesis 35). This extremely short verse appears as almost an afterthought in Genesis 35, but it ends up playing a huge role in the story as a whole. In chapter 49, when Jacob blesses Reuben he says "Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, the first sign of my strength, excelling in honor, excelling in power. Turbulent as the waters, you will no longer excel, for you went up onto your father's bed, onto my couch and defiled it." This was Reuben's blessing in its entirety – so basically, one act of indiscretion (however large it may be) lost Reuben all of his inheritance. Later, in 1 Chronicles 5:1-2, it states that even though Reuben was the firstborn, because of his sin the firstborn rights were given to Joseph. Reuben could no longer even be listed first in the genealogical order. The lesson I take from this is the seriousness with which God sees sin. It's not just some simple act of indiscretion that can be overlooked whenever we sin – because of His righteousness and holiness, justice must be served when we sin. Unfortunately for Reuben, the concept of grace was still foreign, and he had to live with the consequence.

Simeon & Levi

Simeon and Levi are Reuben's younger brothers, born to Leah. When Simeon was born, Leah said "Because the LORD heard that I am not loved, he gave me this one too," and my commentary says that "*Simeon* probably means *one who hears*." When Levi was born Leah said "Now at last my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons," and my commentary states that "*Levi* sounds like and may be derived from the Hebrew for *attached*." Unfortunately for Leah, none of these 3 sons brought Jacob any closer to becoming attached to her, and Jacob didn't particularly become attached to any of these sons either. Reuben, of course, was because he defiled his father's marriage bed, but for Simeon and Levi, it was because of the revenge they enacted on the Shechemites when their ruler raped Dinah, Jacob's daughter. Simeon and Levi, with the help of the rest of their brothers, attacked the Shechemites and killed every last male (Genesis 34). Because of this, Jacob said "You have brought trouble on me by making me a stench to the Canaanites and Perizzites, the people living in this land. We are few in number, and if they join forces against me and attack me, I and my household will be destroyed." (v. 30). Later, during the blessing, Jacob says of them "Simeon and Levi are brothers—their swords are weapons of violence. Let me not enter their council, let me not join their assembly, for they have killed men in their anger and hamstringed oxen as they pleased. Cursed be their anger, so fierce, and their fury, so cruel! I will scatter them in Jacob and disperse them in Israel." This is an interesting statement, because Jacob does not curse the sons for their actions, but he curses their anger. Let's face it – at least part of us thinks that it's awesome that Simeon and Levi were passionate enough to serve justice to the Shechemites, regardless of how ruthless they were. I think Jacob may have felt this way too – so, as [Matthew Henry](#) puts it, "Jacob does not curse their persons, but their lusts." An interesting side note – Jacob states in their blessing/curse that he will scatter/disperse them. In Henry's [commentary](#), he mentions that this sounds like a curse, but that it in fact becomes a blessing for Levi, who's descendants were spread throughout the tribes of Israel to serve as priests.

Judah

When Judah was born to Leah she said "This time I will praise the LORD," and the name *Judah* sounds like the Hebrew word for *praise* (Genesis 29:35). Judah's blessing is one of the longest, but Judah's descendants also play the largest role in the history of the nation of Israel. It is Judah's descendants who become the rulers of all the tribes of Israel, foretold in the blessing – "Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you... the scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his" (Genesis 49:8,10). Jacob also foretells of the coming of one of Jacob's descendants who will be greater than all others – "The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, *until he comes to whom it belongs* and the obedience of the nations is his." (v. 10, emphasis added). My commentary says that this part – "to whom it belongs" – means "Or *until Shiloh comes*; or *until he comes to whom tribute belongs*" meaning when one comes who is greater than all others. Jacob also says that Judah will "tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch" – Christ calls himself "the true vine" in John 15:1, and later Jacob calls Joseph "a fruitful vine," (Genesis 49:22) and Joseph is seen by many as a figure who foreshadows the being of Christ.

Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, & Naphtali

Each of these sons of Jacob receives a foretelling of what their descendants will be like or live through.

- Zebulun is told he will leave by the sea and become a haven for ships. An interesting side note – one [commentary](#) I read said that when Joshua assigned the allotments of land to the tribes of Israel, Zebulun received the region of Galilee along the shore of Lake Tiberias, reaching to the Mediterranean Sea. Zebulun was also an important "haven" in another respect (other than just for ships) – after fleeing King Herod, upon returning from Egypt, Joseph and Mary, with their child Jesus, took refuge in Galilee, the land allotted to Zebulun.
- Issachar is told that he will enjoy his new land, perhaps to the point that he would live there as a slave rather than fight for it.
- Dan is told that his tribe will provide justice for the people of Israel. The name Dan means "judge" or "he who vindicates," but there is no history linking the person of Dan to this prophecy. Samson, the future judge of Israel, does come from this tribe, though (Judges 13).
- Gad is told that he "will be attacked by a band of raiders, but he will attack them at their heels." (Genesis 49:19). It's interesting to note that "Gad was one of the tribes who chose to stay on the east side of the Jordan in Gilead (along with the Reubenites, see [Numbers 32](#)), rather than cross the Jordan and be with the other tribes within the promised land. Because of this, they were isolated from the other tribes, and thus, were subject to attacks by border raiders" (see [Judges 10:8](#), [Judges 11:4](#), [1 Chronicles 5:18](#), and [Jeremiah 49:1](#)).
- Asher is told that his "food will be rich; he will provide delicacies fit for a king." (Genesis 49:20). The tribe of Asher is later allotted an area that was prosperous and known for its wheat, olive oil, milk, and butter (all delicacies at that time).
- Naphtali is called "a doe set free that bears beautiful fawns." Some believe that this is a prophecy of the fact that a later prophetess and judge – Deborah – came from the tribe of Naphtali (see [Judges 4](#)). The latter portion of Jacob's blessing – "... that bears beautiful fawns" – is translated "he giveth goodly words," which some believe to be a prophecy of the song of Deborah in [Judges 5](#).

Joseph

Jacob has already blessed Joseph and his 2 sons at an earlier time (see [Genesis 48](#)), so in this blessing Jacob refers mainly to Joseph's past of perseverance and staying strong through adversity. Joseph was a blessing to all those around him – to the Egyptians and to all those around Egypt – "Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine near a spring, whose branches climb over a wall." Joseph was imprisoned and persecuted, but he stayed strong – "with bitterness archers attacked him; they shot at him with hostility. But his bow remained steady, his strong arms stayed limber." It was because of God that Joseph was able to succeed – "... because of the hand of the Mighty One of Jacob, because of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel, because of your father's God, who helps you, because of the Almighty, who blesses you..."

Benjamin

Benjamin is told that he "is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he devours the prey, in the evening he divides the plunder." It is thought that this prophetically refers to the tribe of Benjamin's fierceness and courage. Historically, this is very accurate. For fierceness, note that Ehud, a judge of Israel mentioned in [Judges 3](#), was a Benjamite. Under the guise of paying tribute, he got close to the king of Moab and plunged a sword into his fat belly. "Even the handle sank in after the blade, which came out his back. Ehud did not pull the sword out, and the fat closed in over it." (v. 22). Great story!!! Also, the apostle Paul was a Benjamite, and he is remembered for how he fiercely persecuted the church before his conversion (see [Acts 9](#)). For courage, note that Mordecai and Esther were Benjamites, and few stories in the Bible tell of more courage than that of these two characters (see the [book of Esther](#))