

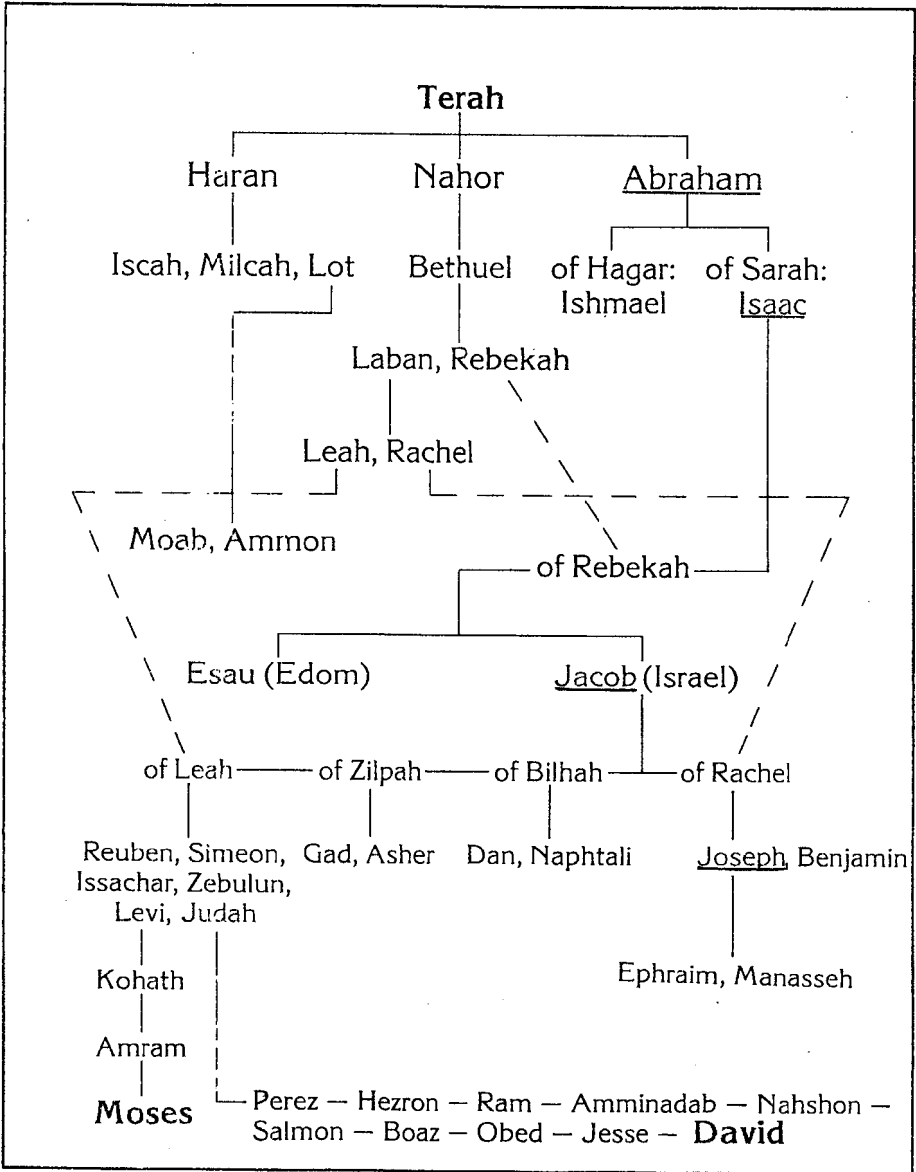
# THE PATRIARCHS

Abraham to Joseph  
Genesis 12-50

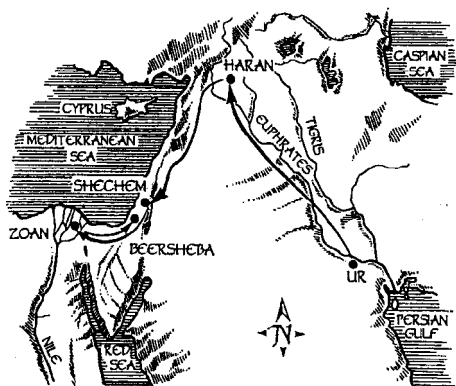
**A series of six Bible Studies**

by  
Roger Green

# THE FAMILY TREE



# THE PATRIARCHS



Abraham goes to Canaan (12:1-9)

## Abraham to Joseph Genesis 12-50



God makes a contract with Abraham  
(15:1-21)



Jacob wrestles a heavenly messenger (32:22-32)



Abraham prepares to sacrifice his  
son, Isaac (22:1-19)



Sarah laughs at the promise of  
a son (18:1-2)

## A series of 6 Bible Studies



Joseph's brothers sell him into  
slavery (37:12-28)



Joseph interprets Pharaoh's  
dream (41:1-40)

Joseph interprets Pharaoh's  
dream (41:1-40)



Joseph reveals his identity to his  
brothers (46:1-15)

Sarah laughs at the promise of  
a son (18:1-2)

# Genesis - Chapters 12-50

*Studies written by Roger Green*

	<i>Introduction</i>	3
<i>Study 1</i>	<i>Abraham - 'The Father Of Us All' (Gen. 12-15)</i>	4
<i>Study 2</i>	<i>Abraham - 'God You Must Be Joking!' (Gen. 16-22)</i>	6
<i>Study 3</i>	<i>Isaac - 'A Great Inheritance' (Gen. 23-26)</i>	8
<i>Study 4</i>	<i>Jacob- 'Wrestling With God' (Gen. 27-36)</i>	10
<i>Study 5</i>	<i>Joseph - 'In The Palm Of God's Hand' (Gen. 37-4 1)</i>	12
<i>Study 6</i>	<i>Joseph - 'The Insight of Hindsight' (Gen. 42-50)</i>	14
<i>Appendix 1 God's Sovereign Choice (For Q4. in Study 3)</i>		16
<i>Prayer Points</i>	<i>Inside back</i>	
<i>cover</i>		

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## Note

*In keeping to six studies it has been necessary to focus in on particular passages. It is therefore strongly recommended that you read the entire section listed above for each study. This will enable you to fill in the gaps in the narrative and to gain the maximum benefit from studying this part of God's word together. If you put in the time to do this, not only will you benefit, but so will the other members of your group.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

*The story of Genesis 12-50 is the story of one family From Abraham to his great-grandson Joseph we follow the intrigue of this family through the generations. Along the way we find stories, of faith and failure, trust and trickery, but throughout it all we see the sovereignty of God. God's hand is detected not only in the supernatural appearances, visions, and awe-inspiring wonders, but also in the seemingly detached decisions of humanity. God weaves these decisions neatly into his overall plan for humanity.*

*The fulfilment of God's promises made to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3) depended on a continuous line of direct descendants from him. This makes the intrigue in Abraham's family anything but trivial. Each of the dramas surrounding Abraham & Sarah, Ishmael & Isaac, Jacob & Esau, Rachael & Leah, and Joseph and his brothers, centres on a question:*

*"Can the Lord make sure there will always be an heir, and therefore that the promises will one day lead to the great nation?"*

*The patriarchal narratives show us how the promises first made to Abraham were passed on, and how the chosen people, eventually called out of Egypt and gathered at Mt. Sinai, first got into Egypt.*

*As we follow this family's story let's not forget that this story is also our story. For the line of Abraham & the promises that were made to him find their ultimate fulfilment in Jesus Christ and, as the Apostle Paul wrote:*

***"If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed,  
and heirs according to the promise."***

***Galations 3:29***

## **Study 1     ABRAHAM- The Father Of Us All**

### **Warm-Up**

1.    *A time when I have felt insecure was .....?*  
      *or*  
      *I often feel insecure when .....?*

### **Bible Study**

1.    *(Read Genesis 11:1-9 & Genesis 12:1-4) In Gen.11:1 you have a people on the move and in Gen. 12:1 you find a man on the move. Contrast their motives and actions. Where were they looking for security? (Look up Hebrews 11:8-10).*

2.    *Martin Luther once wrote about the promises made in Genesis 12:1-3, "Indeed the whole Bible depends upon this oath of God!" What are the promises that God makes to Abraham in Gen. 12:1-3? Look up Gen. 15:4-7, 18-21, Gen. 17: 1-8 & Gen. 18:17-19. What else do we learn about the promises God makes to Abraham from these verses?*

3.    *A covenant is a solemn bond between two parties. In ancient times two parties would sometimes make a covenant by cutting animals in half and walking between them. The idea was brutally simple "If you or I don't live up to our side of the covenant, may we end up like one of these carcasses!" Genesis 15:9-21 is an example of this covenant-making ritual, but what is so significant about this covenant?*

4.    *Read Joshua 24:2-3 and Genesis 12:10-20. How do these two passages show Abraham to be 'an exhibit' of God's grace?*

5.    *(i) In what ways was Abraham 'a model of faith' for us? Read Gen. 15:1-6 & Galations 3:6-9,29 & Romans 4:1-3,16.*

*(ii) 'We are not called to have a great faith in God, but to have faith in a great God'. Was this true of Abraham?*

## **Discussion**

*1. Return to Question 1. Can the contrast between Abram and Babel be compared with the contrast between those who are Christian and those who are not in our day? Discuss.*

*2. Do you at times struggle to feel secure in God? Why or why not? As a group think up some practical ideas that will help when we struggle with feelings of insecurity.*

*3. God's promises to Abraham find their ultimate fulfilment in Jesus (2 Cor. 1:20) who is the son of Abraham (Matt. 1:1). For Jesus is calling out a new people for himself (John 15:16), guaranteeing our inheritance (Gal.3:29) and it is through him that blessing will come to all nations (Rev. 7:9-10)*

*What are some of the promises that God has given to those who believe in Christ e.g. 1 Peter 1:3-5 Romans 10:9-11, John 10:28-29, 1 John 1:8-9. You may like to use these promises as part of your prayer time.*

## **Study 2     *ABRAHAM - 'God You Must Be Joking!'***

### **Warm-Up**

*1.    What are some of the benefits of going away together on a house-party? Share any memorable moments or experiences from previous house-parties that you have been on.*

### **Bible Study**

*1.    (Read Genesis 18:1 -15 &Genesis 21:1-6) How did Abraham& Sarah react to the news that they were to have a son? Why?  
(Gen 17:17)*

*2.    What does Gen. 18:14 & 21:1-2 teach us about the nature of God?*

*3.    Thinking back to the promises that God had made to Abraham, why was the birth of Isaac so significant?*

*4.    Read Genesis 22:1-18. God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son. How did Abraham respond to God's command? How do you think Abraham felt when God told him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice?*

5. *Why do you think God asked Abraham to perform such a sacrifice?*

6. *'Faith does not demand explanations; faith rests on promises'. Is Abraham a good example of this ? What does Abraham's faith teach us about trusting God? Consider Hebrews 11:1 1-12,17-19. James 2:20-24 in your answer.*

### ***Discussion***

1. *Our faith is not really tested until God asks us to bear what seems unbearable, do what seems unreasonable, and expect what seems impossible'. Do you agree?*

*Share some times with the group when your faith in God has been tested.*

2. *Think of something that has been difficult for you to willingly release to God. What made / makes it difficult?*

## **Study 3     ISAAC - 'A Great Inheritance'**

### **Warm-Up**

1.    *What is one thing, good or bad, you inherited from your parents?*

### **Bible Study                    (Read Genesis 25:19-34)**

1.    *What did Isaac inherit from Abraham? Look up Gen. 13:2 & 25:5 and Gen.] 7:21 & 26:2-5.*

2.    *Isaac & Rebekah had prayed & waited for 20 years before Esau & Jacob were born. Abraham and Sarah had to wait 25 years for Isaac to be born; Jacob had to labour 14 years to obtain his two wives and Joseph had to wait over 20 years to be reconciled to his brothers. What do you think God was teaching through these 'delays'? (Hint: Psalm 31:14-15a)*

3.    *What did God reveal to Rebekah about the babies jostling within her? (v23)*

4. Just as God had chosen Isaac the second-born, and not Ishmael the firstborn, so he chose Jacob the second-born, and not Esau the firstborn. That the younger should rule the elder was contrary to human tradition, but the sovereign God made the choice. God chose one and not the other. What does Romans 9:6-15 tell us about God's sovereign choice?

(Note: for help with this question there is an additional note on page 16)

5. We see in Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob & Esau that God works out his purposes despite the sinfulness & flawed nature of people. But divine sovereignty doesn't destroy human responsibility. We are not puppets or robots; neither was Esau. Read Hebrews 12:16-17. In what way is Esau to be a warning to us?

### **Discussion**

1. Go back to Q2. Can you think of any examples in your life when God's timing has been different from yours?

2. It has been said of Esau when he struck a deal with Jacob (v29-34) 'that he sold his future for the present'. In what ways are you tempted to live for the 'here and now' and forget your future inheritance?

3. Isaac was a pretty ordinary character and yet he received a great inheritance and great blessing from God. Read Ephesians 1:3-14 what are the spiritual blessings and inheritance that is ours through Christ? You might like to thank God in your prayer time for the 'spiritual blessings' that he gives to ordinary people like you and me.

## **Study 4**

# **JACOB - 'Wrestling With God'**

*Jacob was a fighter. He wrestled with Esau in the womb and lost. We saw last week how he wrestled with Esau and tricked him into giving up his birthright. In this study we will see how Jacob wrestles with his father Isaac, and tricks him into giving him the blessing that belonged to the oldest son, Esau. We also see how he wrestles with his Uncle Laban for Rachael's hand in marriage. Finally we will see Jacob as he wrestles with God!*

## **Bible Study & Discussion**

1. "Oh what a tangled web we weave, when first we practise to deceive".  
(Read Genesis 27:1-40)

(i) Briefly outline Rebekah & Jacob's plan of deception.

(ii) How is their deception showing a lack of faith in God? What had God promised would happen? (Hint: Gen. 25:3)

2. What two reasons were there for Jacob going to stay with his uncle Laban in Haran? (Ch27:42-28:2)

3. It is an inescapable law of life that we eventually reap what we sow (Gal.6:7-8). How is Genesis 29:15-30 an example of this?

4. After working for Laban for a total of 20 years Jacob, following God's instructions (31:3), decides to return home. Jacob takes off with his family, his livestock and wealth. Laban pursues them, and after some tense moments, they make a covenant together allowing Jacob and his family to continue on with Laban's blessing. News now reaches Jacob that Esau is coming out to meet him with 400 hundred men! In Chapter 32:6-21 Jacob prays and he also comes up with two plans to try and handle the impending arrival of Esau.

*(i) What were his two plans? Is this an example of smart initiative or a lack of faith on Jacob's part?*

*(ii) What happened when they met? Gen. 33:1-4*

*5. Read 32:22-32. Jacob would now learn who it was that he had been wrestling with. It was not just Esau, Isaac and Laban that Jacob had been wrestling with - it was God! He had never understood God's love for him. He had heard of God's promise to bless him but he couldn't believe there were no strings attached. He doubted that God had the power to fulfill his promise so he spent his life grasping it and fighting those in his way. Jacob's finest hour would now come at Peniel.*

*(i) What 3 things did the man do/say to Jacob?*

*v25*

*v27*

*v28*

*(ii) God had to wound Jacob to bless him. Can you think of examples when God has had to 'wound', humble or slow you down so that you would listen to him?*

*(iii) In v26 Jacob clings onto God and says 'I will not let you go until you bless me'. Jacob has finally learnt dependence; no longer wrestling with God by cunning & scheming but by faith & prayer. Can you identify with the lesson that God was teaching Jacob? Explain.*

*(to) Jacob's name means 'grasper, surplanter, deceiver' (25:26 & 27:36). Israel means 'he strives with God'. What was the significance of Jacob's new name?*

*6. In v31 as a new day is dawning Jacob leaves, a new man, carrying the mark of his encounter with God. In Jacob we have seen the mystery of God's election and the wonder of God's perseverance. Jacob shows us what we all are by nature and a glimmer of what we will be by grace.*

*Share with the group how God is at work in your life at the moment.*

## **Study 5.            *JOSEPH -In The Palm Of God's Hand'***

### **Warm-Up**

1.    *When Joseph was seventeen years of age he was thrown into an empty well by his brothers. What is one of your most vivid memories of when you were seventeen?*

### **Bible Study & Discussion**

1.    *Read Genesis 37:1-36. Why do you think we are told in verse 2 that this is the account of Jacob when Joseph seems to be the one on centre stage from chapter 37 till the end of the book? (Hint: Gen. 35:10-12 & Gen. 28:13-15).*

2.    *This is not the first time a slaughtered goat (v31) had been used in an act of deception. What similarities and differences are there to Jacob's deception in Gen. 27?*

3.    *Identify some of the sinful feelings, attitudes and actions that culminated in Jacob's grief.*

4.    *Think about a time, past or present, when you were jealous of someone else or envious of what someone else had. What changed about you during that time?*

5. *Read Genesis 39:1-23. Why did Joseph refuse to sleep with Potiphar's wife?*

6. *What does this passage reveal about Joseph's character?*

7. *Think of a situation that tested your integrity. How did you deal with it?*

*Or*

*Think of a temptation you struggle with. How are you dealing with it?*

8. *Joseph's life seems to be like a roller coaster. From being the favoured son of Jacob, to being abandoned and sold by his brothers. From being Potiphar's No. 1 man to being falsely accused and thrown into prison where he stayed for over two years. In both the highs and lows God was always with him. (Note Gen. 39:2,21&23 & Acts 7:9-10).*

*This is also God's promise to us as his people.*

(i) *Share a time in your life when you have either been very conscious of God's presence in your life or alternatively a time when it felt as though God was very distant or had even abandoned you.*

(ii) *Is it harder to remember and acknowledge that God is with us in the good times or the hard times?*

*You might like to read Psalm 46 as part of your prayer time together.*

## **Study 6.      *JOSEPH - 'The Insight Of Hindsight'***

### **Warm-Up**

1.    *Can you think of a time when you were caught by surprise? Share it with the group.*

### **Bible Study & Discussion**

1.    *Last week we left Joseph seemingly forgotten in prison in a foreign country. In Chapter 41 we follow Joseph on his roller coaster ride. God enables him to interpret Pharaoh's dream and as a result he climbs to the dizzy heights of becoming, with the exception of Pharaoh, the most important man in all of Egypt. Read Gen. 41:50-52. What do the names Joseph chose for his two sons tell us about him?*

2.    *Joseph may have been ready to forget his family but God had other ideas. In the years of famine who should turn up looking for grain but Joseph's brothers. Read Gen. 42:1-6. How does this connect to Joseph's dreams back in chapter 37? What does it tell us about God?*

3.    *The brothers return to Egypt a second time in Chapter 43 and still Joseph keeps his identity hidden from them. Finally in Chapter 45 Joseph reveals himself. Read Gen. 45:1-28. Describe the emotional responses of Joseph, the brothers & Jacob as the truth is revealed.*

4.    *Do you think Joseph's response to his brothers was surprising? Explain.*

5. *I'm sure when Joseph was sold by his brothers or sent to prison by Potiphar he would have been questioning God. With the benefit of hindsight what conclusions has Joseph come to about his situation and about God? Refer to Gen. 45:4-8 & 50:18-21.*

7. *After over 20 years of believing his son was dead, Jacob would have been desperate to be reunited with Joseph but in Gen. 46:2-4 we are told that he was afraid of leaving Canaan and going to Egypt. What was the basis of his fear?*

8. *God had promised Jacob "that kings will come from your body" (Gen 35:11). As Jacob blesses his sons he prophesies over Judah images of a lion and images of royalty. (Gen. 49:8-10). Judah would become the kingly line. Ultimately who was to descend from Judah? (Refer Matthew 1:1-16 & Revelation 5:1-5).*

8. *Read Hebrews 11:22. Of all the qualities Joseph could have been commended for (e.g. his integrity, his readiness to forgive etc.) why do you think the writer to the Hebrews wrote this about him and why is it significant?*

9. (i) *Is Romans 8:28 true of Joseph's life? Is it true of your life? Can you think of an example in your life when, although you may not have seen it at the time, you were later able to look back and see the guiding hand of God at work?*

(ii) *How do you make sense of situations where we are left bewildered and struggling to see the goodness of God?*

## **(Additional Notes for Question 4 in Study 3)**

### **God's Sovereign Choice**

#### **The context of Romans 9.**

*Paul is talking about how Israel as a nation has not believed in Christ. Individual Jews and the Gentiles have embraced Christ but as a nation Israel has not. The question being addressed is this . . . 'Why have some believed and not others?' Is it because the word of God has failed? Is it because it is outside of God's control?*

**In verses 6-9** *Paul gives the answer. Not all the physical descendants of Abraham are the real Israel. It is not the natural children of Abraham that are God's children but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring (as we saw in Study 1).*

**In verses 10-13** *Paul gives the example of Esau and Jacob as an example of his sovereign choice.*

**In verses 14-18** *Paul answers the question that most of us will ask ... 'Is that fair?'*

**In verses 19-21** *Paul answers another question that goes something like this . . . . 'If God is choosing then it is not our fault, so how can he blame us when we are just puppets in his hands?'*

#### **General Comment**

*That God has the sovereign right to choose as he pleases, nobody can successfully dispute. His thoughts are far above our thoughts and his ways 'past finding out' (Roms. 11:33-36). In fact, Paul made it clear that God's choice of Jacob was an act of pure grace and wasn't based on any merit in Jacob (Roms. 9:10-12). Those who are troubled by Malachi 1:2-3 ("I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau") must see 'love' and 'hate' as relative terms (as in Luke 14:26). Neither Jacob nor Esau deserve God's grace any more than we deserve it today (Eph. 2:8-9). That God chose scheming Jacob is as much a mystery as that he chose murderous Saul of Tarsus. The doctrine of election, as it is known, is woven throughout the pages of Scripture. (In addition to Roms. 9 you might want to look up Matt. 11:25-27, Acts 13:48, Eph. 1:3-14 as some other examples). What this doctrine tells us is:*

*I. That on our own we can't turn to God; it is only the Spirit of God that can unfreeze a frozen heart.*

*II. The amazing thing is not that God should save some but that he should save any at all. at such great cost to himself.*

*III. While the Bible clearly teaches God's sovereign choice it also clearly teaches that a person who rejects the gospel has only themselves to blame. (e.g. John 5:39-40, Matt.23:37). The Bible never says that a person who rejects the gospel does so because God did not choose him or her; the rejection of the gospel is always ascribed to human refusal to believe. We need to respond, to make a decision, we need to commit ourselves to Christ and follow him.*

## *PRAYER POINTS*