

# GENESIS 24-50

Genesis is about beginnings, the nature of God and the world and human beings, human sin, and God's mercy. By chapter 24, all these things have been introduced, plus God has given promises to Abraham (and Sarah). These promises are land, descendants, and that he (his descendants) will be a blessing to the nations.

Now the story unfolds with three new generations.

The three patriarchs (Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph) who are the focus of this half of Genesis are far from perfect. Neither are their wives and other children. Yet God chooses to achieve his purposes through people who are both sinful and faithful.

If you are reading this for the first time, my best advice is to just read the stories. Focus on the characters and their relationships with others. If there are customs or references you do not grasp, just read on. Be assured that the customs were common for that time and place. The human dynamics of grief, joy, trickiness and deceit, love, anger, envy, forgiveness and peace-making, competition and loyalty should be fully familiar.

If you have read parts of Genesis or heard the stories of these characters, look for details and side stories about daughters and other characters. Look for ways that the experiences of these people apply to your life now that you are older.

These chapters are important for understanding how God sets up the fulfillment of his saving plan for all humankind through one family. Many people find the stories are most helpful on a more personal level. The ups and downs of life, the ways they trust God, their mistakes and successes

show us about being sinful people returning to God over and over again.

Some questions to help you focus your reading:

- How do faults and good traits help these people do God's will?
- How are these people like me? Not like me? How do they encourage/warn me?
- How do they change and grow over time?
- If God can use them, can he use me?
- How are they examples of forgiving oneself and reconciling with others?

Within each generation there are key people, so you only need to keep track of a few people at one time. This character list will also help.

Isaac – only son of Abraham and Sarah.

Rebekah – wife of Isaac.

Ishmael – son of Abraham with Hagar, Sarah's maid.

Jacob – twin son of Isaac and Rebekah, younger and more cunning, favorite of Rebekah. God gives him a second name: Israel. He becomes the father of twelve sons who are the founding fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Esau – twin son of Isaac and Rebekah, eldest and favorite of Isaac. His descendants are the Edomites.

Laban – brother of Rebekah, father-in-law of Jacob.

Rachel – beautiful, younger daughter of Laban, Jacob's favorite wife.

Leah – older daughter of Laban, Jacob is tricked into marrying her.

Joseph – Jacob's favorite son, first child of Rachel, became second to Pharaoh.

Benjamin – youngest son of Jacob and Rachel.