

HOW TO REACH THE JEW FOR CHRIST

by

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CHAPTER TWO

THE FOUNDING OF A NATION

It has been the purpose of God to offer salvation to all people everywhere.

Man failed, but God still pursued His purpose. He finally chose a single family to whom He would give His gracious promises in order that eventually the whole world might have the opportunity to receive His grace. This family grew into the nation of Israel. They were separated by God for His purpose, and apart from God and His purposes there is no accounting for the Jewish race. The great statesman, Disraeli (who was a Jewish believer in the Lord Jesus Christ), wrote of the Hebrew nation, "They produced no new order of architecture, in sculpture they did nothing, their religion forbade their making graven images. Their mission was to make known the idea of God as a Being, holy, just and loving."

The study of this people in relation to God's purpose, from their beginnings and until the present day, is the scope of our course.

THE PATRIARCHS

The Jewish people are those who are descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Only the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are called Jews. These progenitors of the Hebrew race, together with Joseph, are called the patriarchs. (The word "patriarch" comes from two Greek words: *patria*—family, and *arkhein*—to rule, and means "*the ruler of a family.*") The main headings in the study of this period are:

- A. The Call of Abram
- B. Jacob Honors God's Covenant
- C. The Rise of Joseph
- D. The Growth of the Twelve Tribes
- E. The Persecution of the Tribes—A Nation is Born

(Note: In this course the words "Jew," "Israelite" and "Hebrew" are used interchangeably. The New Testament usage of these terms is sufficient authority for our use of these words).

A. THE CALL OF ABRAM

Information source: Genesis 12:1-25:10

God called Abraham to leave his idolatrous home in Ur of the Chaldees to go to an unknown land where God would make him the father of a mighty nation.

Abraham obeyed God and traveled to Haran. He stayed at Haran until his father Terah died and then he completed his journey to Canaan. At Shechem, in Canaan, God revealed that this was the Promised Land and that it should belong to him and to his seed after him. Abraham did not settle in any one place, but as he traveled up and down the land he showed his faith in God's promises by erecting altars of worship wherever he went.

God honored Abraham by entering into a sacred, unconditional covenant with him. His faith and devotion brought from God a promise that his posterity should be like the stars of the heaven, and that through him all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Abraham's dealings with Lot, Abimelech and his neighbors show the magnificence of his character.

B. JACOB HONORS GOD'S COVENANT

Information source: Genesis 25:19-36:43

Isaac's secluded life is but a connection between Abraham and Jacob. His steadfastness, patience and faithfulness toward God accord him a high place of honor among the ancestors of the Hebrews. It was through Isaac that God's promises passed to his son, Jacob. Jacob's main characteristic was this: he honored God's covenant, and God honored him. At Padanaram Jacob acquired wealth and influence by hard work and judicious dealings. God gave him a large family. Jacob and his family finally settled near Bethlehem where his sons cared for flocks and cultivated the soil.

C. THE RISE OF JOSEPH

Information source: Genesis 41-47

Joseph was one of the youngest sons of Jacob. Because of this fact it would normally be impossible for him to assume leadership in his family. But Joseph honored God and God was with him. His beautiful character is one of the few upon which there is no stain recorded in the Scriptures. His enemies could not keep him down!

His envious brothers sold him as a slave into Egypt. In Egypt he was falsely accused, cruelly imprisoned; yet all of these adversities, in the providence of God, were but stepping-stones to a position next to Pharaoh. Through his rare wisdom, purity of life and godly character, he became the instrument of God in bringing his father and his brothers (the chosen family) into the land of Egypt. In Egypt the family of God was to grow and be welded into a nation.

Why was it necessary for God to bring the chosen family into the land of Egypt? Secular history tells us of the disgusting conditions of the so-called "Canaanitish" civilization. As the family of Isaac multiplied it would have been virtually impossible to keep out the corrupting influences of the Canaanites. The family would be assimilated into the surrounding nations.

The family had to grow into a nation under more favorable circumstances. Egypt provided these circumstances; the Egyptian civilization was the highest of its day; no finer home could be found than the land of Goshen near the Nile River. Intermarriage was impossible because of the Egyptian regulations concerning foreigners. God brought Joseph to this land. Joseph became so famous that Pharaoh was delighted to welcome Jacob and his children and to give them the best of the land.

D. THE GROWTH OF THE TWELVE TRIBES

Information source: Exodus 1-7

When Jacob and his family went down into Egypt they numbered only seventy people. They were too few to attempt to take possession of the Promised Land. Time and opportunity must be provided for numerical growth. Living happily in a fruitful land for several hundred years, the people flourished. The original seventy grew into a nation of at least two million people. During this time the people were probably instructed in the Egyptian schools, learned new trades and were instructed in self-government. This schooling was an important preparation for their later life in the wilderness and in Canaan.

E. THE PERSECUTION OF THE TRIBES—A NATION IS BORN

Information source: Exodus 8-14, and “A History of the Ancient Egyptians” by J. F. Breasted

After many years of cordial relationship between the Israelites and the Egyptians, a series of unfriendly rulers sat upon Egypt's throne. Greatest among them was Rameses II. This prototype of Hitler had a restless ambition to rule the world. His tremendous plans for the development of Egypt required large numbers of laborers to do the work. Besides this, the Hebrews were growing with dangerous rapidity. Rameses feared them. He instituted cruel measures designed to exterminate the race and at the same time to use these people in his nefarious countrywide concentration camp.

It was a sad night for the children of Israel, but God used that night to bring about His glorious purpose. Contented and happy in Egypt, they would never have left the lowlands of the Nile for the highlands of Canaan. Their common and seemingly endless sorrows welded the tribes into a nation. They longed for deliverance. The people were now united and desired to leave Egypt. They were now in a position where God could use them to carry out His purposes.

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THIS LESSON APPLIED TO JEWISH MISSIONS

I. Many sincere Christians misunderstand the character of Jacob. You will only antagonize your Jewish friends if you call him a cheat or a supplanter. Remember, God was testing man by man's reception of His covenant. Esau despised the covenant; Jacob honored it. If Jacob sinned in this matter, God did not mention it in His Word; those who condemn Jacob are judging him in the light of New Testament standards.

Let us not antagonize the Jews by labeling as sin what God does not specifically show to be sin.

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FOR ADDITIONAL VOLUNTARY STUDY

There is a remarkable parallel between the life of Joseph and the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. How many points of similarity can you find? Set them down on a sheet of paper.

EXAMINATION

1. Who were the patriarchs?
2. How did God honor the faith and character of Abraham?
3. Describe the rise of Joseph. How can you account for his success in the midst of adversities?
4. Why was it necessary for the children of Israel to leave Canaan?
5. Why was it important that they remain in Egypt so long?
6. Outline the main events in the history of Israel from the call of Abraham to the bondage in Egypt.
7. Give two reasons why the Pharaohs oppressed the people of Israel.
8. What was the effect of the oppression on Israel?

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