

JACOB FORTIN



Free Chapter
Book of Genesis

BIBLE STORIES

From the creator of "The Good Atheist" podcast

Special Introduction

Alright, before you get too excited, I'm going to manage your expectations at the start of your journey into *Bible Stories*. This isn't the full book. It's the free first chapter: Genesis. Because the Bible is actually a huge collection of books and stories, it turns out this sample is surprisingly big, which is why it might deceptively seem like the entire book. I'm already dreading the idea of responding to complaints that might sound a little bit like this:

"I really loved the book, but why was it so short?"

"We waited this long and that's all we got?"

I realize most of you are a reasonable bunch and tend to read

introductions, especially if they have the word 'special' in bold. But I'm not talking to you people. I'm having a fictitious conversation with a person who isn't reading this right now because they skipped to chapter one like a crack addict hitting the pipe, only to blow through it in one sitting. Next thing you know, you've got a bunch of over-excited fans suddenly jonesin' for more.

I'm not looking forward to telling these people the 'good news' that they're going to have to wait until March 2014 before I finish this thing, and that's only if I manage to convince 100 more people that this book is worth buying before it's completed. Without a new infusion of cash to cover my living expenses until my birthday at the end of February, and with the growing pressure to pay overdue bills, the book itself could be another year in the making. I don't want that, and I'm sure you don't want it either.

IT'S 'JAKE-ATHON' TIME

If you're new to this party, the book was ideally supposed to be completed by September of 2013, but due to life axe-kicking me in the face, it's been delayed. With funds exhausted and financial reality casting a dark cloud over the horizon, I've had to throw my hat yet again to the world, smile, and politely ask "please sirs and madams; may I have some more?"

Because I lack the boyish charm of a street urchin, I've decided to let my first chapter speak for me instead. In the end, it will be up to my fans to help me make this book a reality. *Bible Stories* was crafted from your collective imagination; trust me, I had no desire to rewrite the Bible, never mind the formidable challenge of making it funny and memorable. Most of the men who have attempted this met gruesome fates, to say the least.

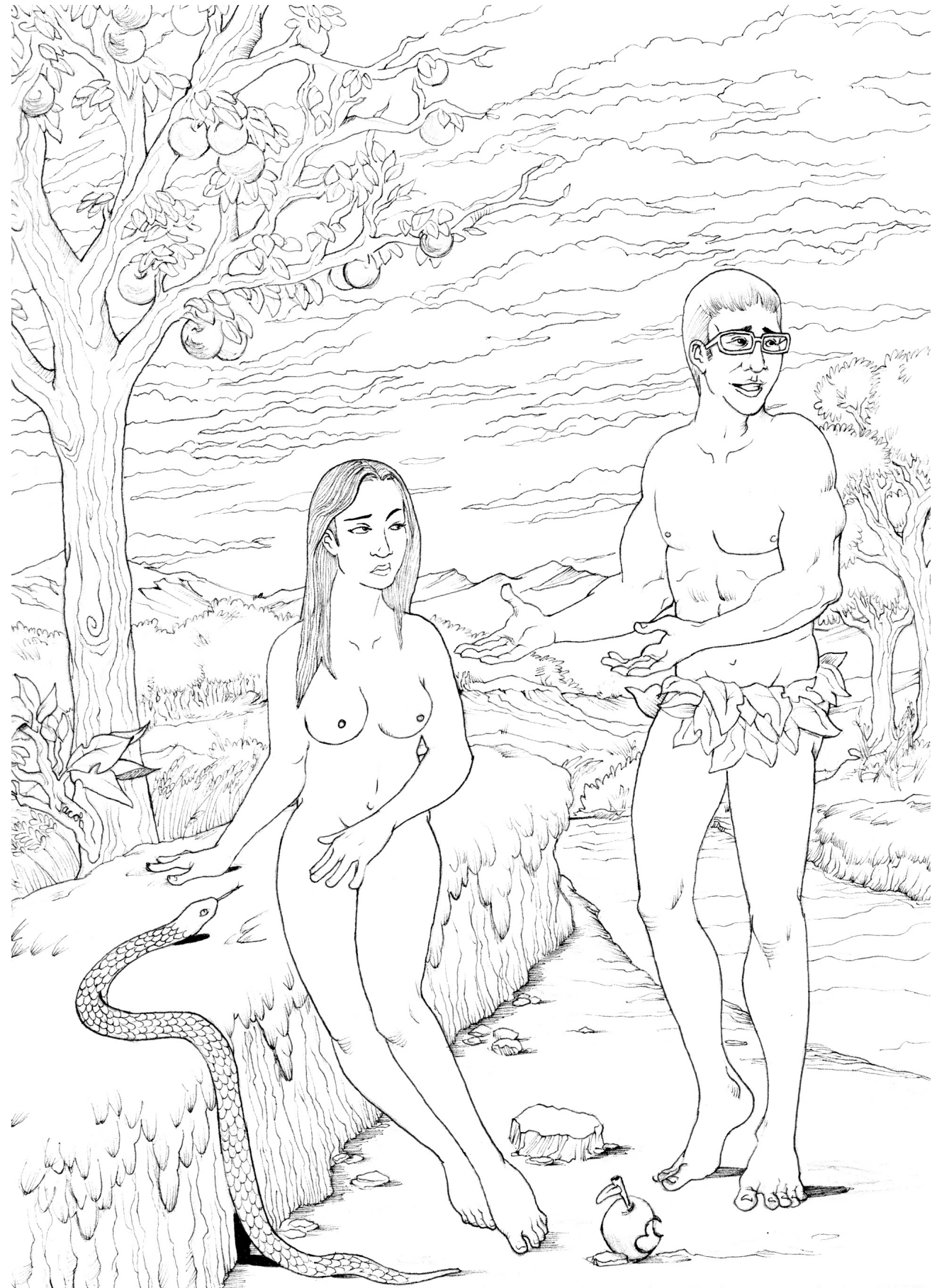
Now it's not enough to just show everyone what a good job you've done in this new economy: you also need to put on a funny hat, dance in front of a camera like a monkey, and pressure people into giving you the big jar of pennies they have in the attic. With that in mind, I'm announcing a live, 12 hour video 'telethon' which will be streaming on **November 23rd, 2013**. It will feature a number of my previous guests who have volunteered to help me extort you out of money. Many of them will also be pimping their latest ventures, which are all books you're going to undoubtably be reading anyways.

The goal is ambitious: selling over 100 e-book and audiobook 'packages' at 30 bucks apiece (for a grand total of \$3000) of a book that still only partially exists. It's my hope, however, that after reading this first chapter, the urge to continue to read will be too strong to resist. Your palms will become sweaty, and your heart will race at the thought of another 12 months elapsing before your next fix. It will be at that moment when your hand will be inexplicably drawn to your wallet.

CHAPTER 1

Genesis

Dated 6th-5th century B.C.E.



Adam and Eve

In the beginning of everything that ever was, God created the heavens and the Earth. A boring, formless mass of liquid cloaked in darkness, the Earth had relatively low property value but tons of potential. The Spirit of God, hovering above it like a comic book villain, said “Let there be light” and the whole place lit up magically without any point of origin. To ensure this bright new creation would forever be different from the black void, the Creator named one of them ‘light’ and the other ‘darkness’. God saw what he had done, and needless to say, was extremely impressed with himself*.

The following day, determined to best his brilliant invention of light, God separated the water in two and he called the upper part ‘sky’; leaving the bottom half unnamed before taking the rest of the evening off.

*I mean, wouldn't you be?

On the third day, he commanded the waters move aside to give some space for something more solid, and chose this moment to give both the land and the seas their familiar names and locations. “Let the land burst forth with all kinds of grass and seed-bearing plants!” he exclaimed. Brilliantly anticipating the need for each seed to produce the same kind of plant that bore it in the first place, he set the laws of heredity in motion before the day was through. Although it was difficult for even God to be certain if he had surpassed himself, he could see that it was all good.

Deciding his new creation required adequate lighting, God set about creating an astonishing variety of distinct light sources that pockmarked the sky. Most were tiny and insignificant, but two of them were special: the first - and most glorious - was the sun. Having spent most of his talents making this shining beauty, God gave it the top spot during the day, leaving the dimmer moon stuck with the night-shift. Taking a look at this new illuminated cosmos, his humble-fabulous congratulated himself yet again on a job amazingly well done, and took it easy for a while.

After a tumultuous fourth day of building an entire universe of stars to properly orient a future creation he had yet to build, God slowed things down a little and put his focus on filling his new world with hoards of birds and fish, commanding them to breed until the entire Earth was overrun with scaly and feathered creatures. With these two species well on their way towards world domination, God put his feet up and

rested.

Saving the best for last, on his final day of creation God decided to design something a little more in his own image, and after continuing to improve on his animal menagerie, he finally built the first humans, both male and female simultaneously. After giving them a nice blessing, he informed this new species that all of the other creatures in his magnificent garden were theirs to do with as they saw fit, and this world was their new playground.

And so with an entire universe now functioning with clockwork efficiency, God decided to take Saturday off to wind down and relax a little.

CREATION: PART DEUX

Creating paradise was no easy task, and God had no desire to spend his free time doing the hard work of tilling the soil or making sure the place didn't fall apart. To rectify this situation, he grabbed a handful of wet dirt and fashioned a clay Pinocchio out of it. After giving it magical CPR, the creation burst to life like a shitty Disney movie. God named him Adam, and to lodge this special new creation, he built a garden on the east side of the globe and filled it with delicious fruit trees. At the center of the garden, God planted two with magical properties: the first was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the second offered the gift of eternal life.

Putting man in charge of running the place despite his inexperience, God told Adam he could enjoy the flesh of any fruit in the garden, save one: the enticingly mysterious tree of the knowledge of good and evil. "If you eat its fruit," he explained, "you'll fucking die*."

Deciding man was best not left alone to his own devices, God formed an endless array of different creatures, both large and small, and showcased them to his new bipedal creation. Adam gave them all names, but none seemed to suit his sexual proclivities. In a stroke of genius, God placed Adam in a deep sleep to stealthily remove one of his ribs, and used it to form a sexier, sleeker version of his finicky creation. When he finally awoke, Adam instantly fell madly in love with this mutated part of himself, and named it 'woman' in his own honor.

Now, of all the creatures God created to service man, the most devious was by far the snake. One day he approached Adam's wife - who was eating quietly by herself and minding her own business - to ask: "Didn't God tell you that you weren't allowed to eat any of the fruits here in the garden?"

"Of course we can eat what we want," she replied. "It's only from the tree in the middle of the garden that we aren't supposed to touch. God says we'll die if we do!"

*This, as God would later learn, is called 'setting someone up for failure'.

“You won’t die, you stupid idiot!” hissed the serpent. “The only reason God doesn’t want you to eat is because he’s afraid you’ll become just like him, and be able to tell the difference between right and wrong, that’s all.”

Possessing no innate wisdom and enticed by the forbidden fruit, Adam’s wife couldn’t resist and took a large bite of it. She hurriedly shared the prize with Adam, and in an instant, both saw their extreme nudity and suddenly understood the principle of body shame. Gathering the most delicate fabric available at the time, - coarse fig leaves - the couple fashioned the world’s first, [and probably worst] pair of underwear.

In the evening, as God was strolling through the garden, Adam and his wife hid themselves among the trees to avoid being seen. “Where are you?” shouted the omniscient creator of the Universe.

“We heard you God, so we hid because we were afraid you’d see us naked,” replied Adam.

“Who told you about the shame of being nude?” God asked. “Did you eat from that tree I specifically told you not to?”

“Yes, but to be fair, she made me do it.” Adam replied courageously as he pointed to his wife.

God turned to her angrily, and bellowed “How could you do such a thing, you twit?”

“It was the snake,” she said. “He tricked me; that’s why I ate it!”

“Because you did this,” Yahweh thundered at his slithery creation, “I’m going to punish you, snake! First, I’ll amputate your limbs so you’re forced to crawl around on your stomach your whole fucking life. Then, of all the animals on this planet, I’ve chosen your species to be cursed with the most twisted and violent sex. Finally, to top it all off, I’ll make it so your own offspring will be constantly trying to kill you.”

God then turned to the woman and said “From now on it’s going to hurt like a bitch anytime you give birth. And while you might feel a burning desire for your husband, he’ll be your master from now on, so shut your mouth and do whatever he tells you to do, no questions asked*.”

“As for you, Adam; for the crime of having listened to your wife and done something wrong without possessing the ability to distinguish it from right, I will now curse the ground and make it a pain in the ass for things to grow. You’ll toil endlessly and have almost nothing to show for it at the end of the day. I’m even going to invent something called ‘thorns’ on some plants so your hand gets all cut up and shit just to annoy you. I made you out of dust, and that’s what you’ll eventually turn back into...jackass.”

*And this charming story, ladies and gentlemen, explains why women get the raw deal when it comes to marital arrangements and are considered property.

It was then a chastised and defeated Adam [finally] gave his wife a name: Eve, the mother of all people. After killing a few of his creatures and fashioning some clothing from their hollowed-out skins, God presented his children with these final parting gifts. Deadly afraid they might disobey him again and eat from the Tree of Life and become gods themselves, Yahweh, like any inexperienced parent trying to discipline their kids, chose the only reasonable course of action: he kicked them out of the house for good. As a positive sign of future relations, God stationed uber-powerful angelic security guards at the east gate, and set up a friendly, flaming sword to forever guard the path to the Tree of Life.

EXILED FROM EDEN

Life was harsh in a new land cursed by a loving God, but Adam and Eve trudged on, and like any young couple in love who barely knew one another, they quickly had a child. Despite the pain of labor, Eve was grateful for her new son Cain, and thanked God for her baby. The couple soon had a second son whom they called Abel. Abel became a shepherd, while Cain labored the land.

When it was time to make the first sacrifices to God, the sweet smell of sinew and burnt blood pleased God more than that of roasted vegetables. This greatly angered Cain, who visibly worked harder for his sacrifice.

“Why are you so angry?” asked God. “If you act cool, then there won’t be a problem, but if you don’t fall in line, you better watch out: sin is out there to destroy you, pal. I should know: I invented it!”

Enraged by jealousy and refusing to listen to God’s advice, Cain invited his brother Abel for a nice walk in the field. When no one was looking*, he grabbed a nearby rock and cracked Abel’s head open like a walnut. Shortly after burying his brother in a shallow grave, Cain was visited by God, who inquired on the whereabouts of Abel.

“I don’t know!” he said, overreacting. “Am I my brother’s keeper, man?”

“Do you think I’m an idiot?” replied God. “I can hear your dead brother’s blood crying out from the ground, you fool! And now, because you’ve committed the first homicide in the short history of mankind, I will banish you from here. From this moment on, you’ll be a vagabond, forever roaming the earth like a bum.”

“Hey man, that’s a bit harsh for a little old fratricide, don’t you think?” Cain said defiantly. “Not only are you banishing me away from your highly localized presence, but you’ve decided to turn me into a hobo. Anyone who sees me is going to try to kill me!”

*Which isn’t really hard when your population is 4.

Pausing for a moment to salvage his poorly thought-out punishment, God finally replied “I’ll make sure no one tries to kill you. If they do, I’ll give them seven times your arbitrary punishment. Your Lord and master, has spoken!” Then, to make sure everyone would know not to fuck with him, God gave Cain a bad-ass scar and sent him on his way.

And so Cain left the Lord’s designated area, and rather than wander around aimlessly forever, he settled with his wife* in the land of Nod. There, he built a city and named it after his first son, Enoch. His family would go on to have a long line of descendants, some of whom became successful inventors and smiths, while others went on to become the world’s first musicians. As for his great-great-great grandson Lamech, not only was he the world’s first polygamist, but he also continued the family tradition of taking a life and promising the Lord’s revenge on anyone who would dare punish him for it.

At the tender age of 130 years old, Adam had another son, whom he called Seth. Though unremarkable in life, Seth would live vicariously through the achievements of his own son, Enosh, who set the precedent of worshiping God.

*Who was Cain’s wife? Some Jewish scholars believe the real reason Cain killed Abel was jealousy over who would get to marry their twin sisters, not over offerings. Generally speaking, all agree she was an extremely close relative.

[The rest of these antediluvian patriarchs are briefly mentioned, if only to register their existence and age. They are in order of appearance: Seth (912), Enosh (905), Cainan (910), Mahalaleel (895), Jared (962), Enoch (who doesn’t technically die, as God teleports him straight to Heaven), Methuselah (969) and finally Lamech (777), not to be confused with the previous murderer of the same name]*

Time marched on, and some of God’s angels began to take notice of all the hot, available females down on Earth. Copulating with them furiously, they soon filled the earth with a race of supergiants, much to God’s great displeasure. While it was true people were sinning less, this was mainly due to the fact the Mighty One had reset the maximum human lifespan at a century rather than a millennium or so; although this had done little to fix the basic problem of everyone being a little shit.

Disappointed with how his first attempt at creation had turned out, God regretted crafting them in the first place. “I’m going to completely wipe them off the face of the Earth,” he said to himself, heartbroken. “And I’ll destroy all the animals and birds who walk on land as well for good measure. I’m sorry I ever bothered making these assholes.”

Noah and the Flood

Of all the people on the Earth, the only one God didn't murderously hate was Noah, son of Lamech. Dismayed by the corruption and violence that had sprung up in his absence, God appeared before Noah to tell him the 'bad news'.

"I've decided to destroy every living creature on the Earth," he began casually, "because it's filled with depravity everywhere, and I refuse to try and salvage this situation. So, I thought the solution would be to wipe them all out and start over with a clean slate. Here's what I want you to do: make a boat out of gopher wood and seal it with pitch, inside and out. Then, construct some decks and a bunch of stalls in the interior. Make it exactly 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high*. Once that's completed, construct a door on one of the sides."

* That's roughly $\frac{3}{4}$ of the size of the Wyoming, the largest wooden schooner ever built. It had a tendency to buckle in heavy seas (taking in water and requiring a pump), and finally sank in 1924. No one survived.

"If you haven't figured it out yet, I'm about to flood the planet and destroy every living creature I worked so hard to make. However, I promise to keep you and your family safe in the boat I want you to build. I went to a lot of trouble crafting some of these animals, so I'm commissioning you to bring a pair of every kind in existence, both male and female, and keep them alive for the duration of the deluge; however long that takes."

"And remember," concluded God, "take a lot of food for your family and all the animals, because I won't tell you precisely how long this whole thing will take, and you wouldn't want to starve, would you?"

And so Noah set to work building a boat in the middle of nowhere just as God had ordered him to. Finally, when Noah had finished doing the impossible, God appeared again. "Alright, it's time for you all to get in the boat. Be sure to take along seven pairs of animals which have been officially sanctioned for sacrifice, and only one pair of the others. Then, be sure to bring seven pairs of every kind of bird, and make sure there are both males and females in the mix. One week from today, I'm going to bring rain for 40 days and 40 nights, and wipe out everything on Earth that ever existed, so get ready, bitches!"

Two by two the menagerie of animals came, domestic and wild, small and large, and all climbed aboard in a realistic, orderly fashion. Not long after Noah finished celebrating his

600th birthday, the water level began to rise, bursting forth from inside the earth and falling from the sky. The rain continued for 40 days and nights, while everything that breathed air and lived on dry land died horribly. Only Noah and his boat full of goods survived.

For 150 days, water covered the entire Earth, but God had not entirely forgotten about Noah and his brood, so he sent winds to blow across the water to recede the flood. The geysers stopped gushing and the rain clouds finally dissipated.

Two and a half months later, the peaks of mountains finally began to appear. After another 40 days, Noah opened up the only window he had on the boat*, and sent out a raven to see if it could find dry land. When it failed, he replaced it with a dove instead, but it too returned shortly after. Waiting another week, he sent the dove out again, which returned with an iconic olive branch in its beak; final proof dry land was returning. It never returned when he released it again a week later, and Noah knew the time had finally come for him to land.

Over a year had gone by when Noah and his family were contacted by God, and when he finally appeared, they were ordered out of the boat. Pair by pair, the animals marched calmly out of the ark, and when it was empty, Noah built an

*Only 250 days straight stuck in a cramped space with a bunch of animals; how bad could it be?

altar and slew the extra birds and other beasts he had squirreled away for this very purpose.

Pleased with the burnt and mutilated corpses offered to him, God made a solemn promise to himself to celebrate the occasion. “I won’t be doing that ever again, even if peoples’ thoughts are all fucked up and evil starting as early as childhood. As long as the Earth remains the way it is, there will be seasons, days, and nights, and probably fewer mass drownings.”

“Go out there and shag like bunnies to repopulate the Earth my child!” said God, blessing Noah. “Also, be aware that animals are going to be scared shitless of you now, since I’ve given you complete power over them. You can use them as food too if you like; just don’t eat anything that still has blood in it. It sickens me. As for cold-blooded murder, it’s totally forbidden now, and this goes for both man and animal. Any creature that murders another must be killed*, no questions asked.”

Then God said to Noah and his sons “I’m making a special contract with you and your descendants - hell, even with the livestock you brought along on your trip. I promise never to try and wipe you out or attempt to destroy the Earth again. As a sign of this eternal ‘I’m not going to arbitrarily drown you all’

* Did anyone ever ask the terrifying simple question that if you kill someone for killing someone else, aren’t you starting a vicious cycle of murder? Not a very well thought out punishment, is it?

bargain, I've invented something called a 'rainbow', and every time you see it, it'll remind you of this terrifying covenant I just made with you."

And so it was that Noah's three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth had all survived the flood with their wives, and they began to repopulate the barren world. Their seed would one day account for all of the scattered people of Earth, who descend from them.

Noah went on to become a farmer, and planted the world's very first vineyard. One day, after getting drunk off his harvest, the old man decided to take a nap, naked as a jaybird. His son Ham noticed his denuded father and alerted his brothers. Shem and Japheth, grabbing a nearby robe, carefully covered him up while making sure not to directly look at his manmeat. When he finally awoke from his drunken coma, Noah learned of what Ham had done, and was furious [and probably hungover]. He cursed Ham and all of his descendants, so that one day, his Canaanite children would be slaves.

Noah lived on for another 350 years after the flood, finally perishing at the ripe old age of 950.

**Countless racist theories have sprung up from this story of paternal abuse, most notably that all dark skinned people are descendants of the 'Curse of Ham', and thus fit to be slaves.*

[The Bible goes into excruciating detail as to the identities of the supposed descendants of these three brothers. Needless to say, we skipped that shit.]

The Tower of Babel

Back in those old, half-remembered times, all the people of the world spoke the same language. As individuals migrated eastward, many settled in Babylonia. There, they began talking about a construction project of epic proportions; a tower which would be a monument to human greatness. They believed that by working together toward a common goal, lasting peace could be achieved. With the premise of mankind no longer scattered all over the world and cooperating together to accomplish amazing wonders, work on the tower began in earnest.

Watching below, God was unhappy with their progress. “If they can accomplish a feat like this in a relatively short period of time,” he told himself, “then there’s nothing they won’t be able to accomplish in short order. This whole business of speaking the same language is making things too easy for them. I’ll give them all different ones; that way, they won’t be able to understand one another and they’ll stop getting along

so well!”

And so humanity was scattered once again, unable to cooperate and afraid of one another; just the way God wanted it.

Abraham (the scam artist)

Time marched on, and Shem did as God commanded; multiplying with vigor. He had many children, all of whom were forced to marry terrifyingly close kin. Over time, one of his distant descendants, Terah, sired a son named Abram whom God took an immediate interest in. Married to his infertile half-sister Sarai, Abram and his family left the city of Ur to settle in the land of Canaan, but gave up halfway and settled instead in the village of Haran. Abram's father died shortly thereafter at the age of 205, and it was then God chose to appear before him for the first time.

"Abram," he began, rather nonchalantly. "I want you to move out of your father's house. I'm going to relocate you in a new land, and there I'll make you the father of a great nation. You'll be a superstar, and everyone will know your name. Anyone who dares to talk shit about you will become cursed themselves. Only your direct descendants are going to matter at all to me."

Still in the prime of his life at 75 years young, Abram did as God ordered, bringing his nephew Lot and his brood along too. They packed their belongings and set off for an uneventful journey to the land of Canaan. After setting up camp near Shechem, Abram was again visited by the Lord.

"Ok, so this is the land I'm going to be giving to you and all your offspring that currently belongs to someone else," he said, pointing all around. To commemorate this ambitious promise, Abram built an altar there, slaughtering some of the local wildlife mercilessly before continuing his journey southward. In the hills between Bethel and Ai, he constructed another altar and eviscerated a living creature on it once again for God's glory.

Unfortunately, the land God had claimed for Abram was experiencing a long drought, so Abram journeyed further south to the land of Egypt to wait it out. Before arriving at the border, the old patriarch turned to his wife with a concerned look on his face.

"You're pretty hot," he observed, "and when the Egyptians see you, they might try to kill me in order to marry you. However, if we tell them you're my sister - which isn't technically a lie - then they'll treat me nicely to try and sleep with you. It's a totally foolproof plan."

Sure enough, when they arrived in Egypt, all the locals could

talk about was how beautiful Sarai was. Word soon spread to the palace officials, who convinced the Pharaoh to take her into his harem*. To compensate Abram for taking his property, the Pharaoh gave him many gifts, including cattle, sheep, slaves of both sexes, and a few camels to boot. But soon after the marriage, God sent a plague on Pharaoh's household to punish him for marrying Sarai. Enraged, he summoned Abram for an explanation.

"What the hell did you do to me?" he fumed. "Why didn't you tell me she was your fucking wife? Why even let me marry her in the first place by telling everyone she was your sister, man? That's just messed up! Here, take your wife/sister or whatever back and get the fuck out of here!"

To ensure their departure, the Pharaoh sent an armed escort to see them out of the country, and Abram and his family continued north into the Negev region. Wealthy with livestock from their Egyptian hosts, the land could not support both his wealth and that of his nephew Lot, and the two fought about it constantly.

"This arguing has got to stop," Abram said after a particularly heated exchange. "We're family for God's sake! Tell you what: choose any section of the land you want, and we'll separate. If you want that area over there, then stay there. If you want to stay here, then I'll be the one who moves. Deal?"

*Which is a really nice word for what basically amounts to a rape-den.

So Lot chose the land east of the Jordan valley and settled near a bustling new metropolis called Sodom. The people there, however, were evil in the eyes of God; they committed outrageous sins against a deity they were completely oblivious to, often with impunity.

With Lot gone, God appeared once more to Abram. "Take a look around," he said. "All of this land - as far as the eye can see in every direction - will be my gift to you. Take a walk around; explore this new possession I'm giving you, and enjoy."

RESCUING LOT

Not long after Lot settled near Sodom, a war broke out between two massive armies. The kings of Babylonia, Ellasar, Elam, and Goiim formed a Coalition of the Willing against the Alliance of the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Shemeber, and Zoar. Mobilizing their forces in the valley of the Dead Sea, the Alliance prepared for battle against the Coalition, but were no match for them. The valley itself was infested with tar pits, and as the armies of Sodom and Gomorrah fled from battle, some of the men slipped and fell in to their deaths. Those who survived escaped into the mountains. It was a complete gong-show.

After their victory, the Coalition 'liberated' the cities of their

burdensome wares, taking what wasn't nailed to the ground; including Lot and his entire family. As luck would have it, a slave managed to escape and track Abram down. Working quickly, Abram mobilized his allies - numbering 318 in total - and together they pursued the Coalition of the Willing until finally catching up with them in the city of Dan. Dividing his men in two groups, Abram's troops attacked in complete darkness from several different directions. Confused, and convinced this was a counter-attack from the Alliance, the massive army fled all the way past Damascus, never to return.

With a surprise victory over the Coalition, Abram was celebrated by the various kings of the Alliance. First the king of Sodom went to meet him, followed by Melchizedek, the king of Salem and a priest of Yahweh. "Blessed be Abram by Yahweh," he said, "the creator of everything we know about. Now let us talk more of Yahweh, and how he helped you defeat your enemies!"

"You can keep all of the spoils," the king of Sodom assured Abram, "I just want my people back."

"I promised the Highest One in the sky that I wouldn't profit from this, otherwise you might one day tell people I became rich off of you. All I want is for you to feed my men and give my allies a share of the wealth; that's it. After that, we're done here." replied Abram.

ABRAM'S DREAM

One night, while Abram was sleeping, God came to visit him in a dream. "Don't be afraid, insignificant one," he said, "I'm going to protect you, and give you many gifts."

"Oh Lord," replied a morose Abram, "what's the point of all these rewards if I have no son? When I die, all of my wealth is probably going to go to one of my useless slaves because you haven't given me any children."

"Look, don't worry about it. I got this shit covered. No slave is going to get rich off of you, man! You're going to have a son soon enough, and he'll be the one inheriting everything I give you," God said reassuringly as he brought him under a canopy of stars. "Look up at the night sky and see if you can guess how many there are. That's how many descendants you'll have; way too many to count*!"

Abram believed him despite any concrete evidence, and this greatly pleased Yahweh, who blessed him for his mindless trust. "I am your Lord and Master who brought you out of Ur to give you this land." he said confidently.

"How can I be sure you'll give me land that clearly belongs to someone else?" asked a suddenly skeptical Abram.

*Luckily, a few intrepid Greeks decided to give it a try instead of assuming it couldn't be done. The answer is 5000, give or take

“Get me a three year old heifer, a three year old female goat, a three year old ram, a turtledove and a young pigeon, and slaughter them for me,” replied God mysteriously. “Then you’ll know.”

Abram fulfilled God’s extremely specific request, and he split them all in half, with the exception of the birds. When vultures inevitably became attracted to his festering pile of meat and bones, he dutifully shooed them away for hours. It was all hugely productive.

That night, Abram had a terrifying nightmare filled with darkness and horror, and became upset by it. “Don’t worry,” God said in an effort to calm him down, “you’re going to live to a ripe old age and die in relative peace. It’s your descendants who will suffer and be strangers in a foreign land, only to be oppressed by slavery for hundreds of years. Luckily, I’ll rescue them from bondage and eventually punish the nation that enslaved them in the first place. I’ll even give them great wealth just to square things off, so it’s all good.”

“When your descendants return, and the Amorite sins have all run their course, they’ll come back to reclaim this entire land; specifically the area bordering Egypt and the Euphrates River. That includes the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and the Jebusites. Not bad, right?”

THE NEW DEAL

Time continued to march on, but Abram and Sarai had yet to have children. Worried they would die without an heir, Sarai presented her slave Hagar to Abram. “Look, I’m tired of waiting for a child, so I want you to fuck her so she can bear me one,” she said. Abram agreed, and had totally consensual sex with his property. But not long after becoming pregnant, Hagar began to treat her old mistress with contempt*.

“This is all your fault,” Sarai said, scolding Abram. “Now that she’s pregnant, she totally hates me! God is going to punish you for doing such an awful thing to me!”

“Look, she’s your servant, Sarai. Do whatever the hell you want with her, I don’t care.” rebuked Abram.

Seizing the opportunity for revenge, Sarai began abusing Hagar; so severely that the poor girl was forced to run away. But the desert was no place for a pregnant slave, and so an angel of God searched for her as she wandered the desert, and when he found her, he said: “Return home and submit to your master, young one. If you do, your descendants will be more numerous than you - an illiterate slave - could count. When you give birth to your son, you shall call him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard your suffering, and that’s a lot as far as he’s concerned.”

*They get raped a few times and think they own the place. What nerve!

“One final word of warning,” he concluded. “Your son is going to be wild and unpredictable. He won’t make friends easily, and odds are he’s going to pick fights with those around him, including his own brothers.”

In due time, Hagar gave birth to a son, and he was called Ishmael. At 86 years of age, the old patriarch was finally a father.

Four years later, God returned to pay Abram a visit. “In order to fulfill your end of the bargain in this covenant I’m making with you, I’m going to lay down a few ground rules,” he began. “First, I want you to cut the foreskin off your penises. Don’t argue with me on this. I want it to be a painful sign of my everlasting covenant with you. I also want this done, if possible, exactly eight days after the child is born. This doesn’t just apply to you, by the way; it also applies to the foreign born slaves you own. This will be a way of knowing who is part of the gang and who isn’t. Who knows; this might even become a trend in the future.”

“Secondly, I want both you and your wife to change your names. Nothing drastic, really. I want you to be called Abraham from now on, and Sarai will be known as Sarah. I’m going to make her the mother of a great nation; even kings will trace their ancestry through her!”

Abraham prostrated himself to the ground dutifully, but despite his god-fearing, could not help but laugh in disbelief. “Look, I don’t want to sound like a dick or something Lord,

but Sarai... I mean Sarah, is ninety years old. How the hell is she going to have a kid? Surely you mean my son Ishmael will enjoy your special blessing, no?”

“Are you deaf? No, I said Sarah would bear you a son. I demand that you call him Isaac, a name which will confirm my deal with him and his offspring. I’ll bless Ishmael too, and he’ll have a ton of descendants as well, [like 12 princes, at least] but I want to be clear my deal is with Isaac, who is going to be born by this time next year. You know what to do.” And with that, God left.

Abraham called all of his male slaves as well as his 13 year old son Ishmael to him, and without the advent of modern anesthesia or antibiotics, cut their foreskin off just as the voice in his head had instructed him to. With everyone finally mutilated, he turned the blade on himself and fulfilled his end of God’s excruciating covenant. He was 99 years old.

Not long after, as Abraham was camping near some oak groves owned by a friend, he noticed a group of men standing nearby. Recognizing one of the men as the creator of the Universe, he bowed deeply to greet them. “My Lord,” he said, “why don’t you stop here and rest for a while? My slaves will get you some water and wash your feet. I’ll even prepare food for you, so please stay!”

Running out to fetch a plump calf from the herd, he summoned one of his slaves and instructed him to butcher it.

When the food was finally prepared, an arrangement of cheese curds and milk was brought along to accompany it, and they feasted under the shade of an oak tree.

“Where is your wife?” they asked him.

“In the tent.”

“In a year’s time,” one of them said, “Sarah is going to give birth to a son.”

Having overheard their conversation, Sarah couldn’t help but burst into laughter. “How could a worn out old hag like me have a child?” she whispered quietly.

“Did your wife just laugh at me?” asked God, furious. “Why did she say ‘how could an old hag like me have a child’? Doesn’t she know that nothing is impossible for a god like me? I just told you that in a year’s time, she’s going to have a son and that’s exactly what’s going to happen, dammit!”

“I didn’t laugh, I swear!” lied a terrified Sarah.

“Don’t fucking lie to me. You did laugh.”

After an awkward silence, the men then got up and began making their way towards the city of Sodom. Abraham politely escorted them partly there, but on the way, God couldn’t help but wonder if he should tell Abraham the true purpose of his

visit. “I did single him out to be blessed,” he told himself, “so I probably should.”

“Listen Abraham, I’ve heard some reports that the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah are morally depraved to the extreme, and I’m on my way not to investigate this myself,” said the All-knowing Lord of the Cosmos. The two other men went ahead, but God stayed behind to talk with Abraham some more.

“Are you going to kill innocent people along with the guilty?” Abraham asked. “What if you find 50 innocent people there. Would you still destroy it?”

“No, I’d spare it if I could find 50 innocent people.” replied God.

“Would you spare them if you found 45 innocent people?” Abraham retorted.

“I’d spare Sodom if I could find 45 innocent people, sure.”

[This goes on for way too long, so we’ll skip ahead]

“Ok” said Abraham, testing God’s patience, “don’t get mad, but I want to speak one more time! Suppose you found ten of them?”

Finally, the Lord acquiesced. “If I can find ten innocent people in the whole of Sodom” he said, “then I’ll spare it, I promise.”

SODOM AND GOMORRAH

That evening, both angels arrived at the town of Sodom. Sitting by the entrance, Lot approached them, greeting them respectfully. “My lords,” he said, “come on over to my home and wash the only part of your body that counts: your feet. You’ll be my guests for the night, and you can wake at whatever time you like tomorrow before leaving!”

“That’s OK,” the angels replied, resisting his invitation, “we were planning on spending the night in the city square.” Refusing to accept no for an answer, Lot was soon able to win them over, and they gave up arguing with him.

As the household prepared for bed, a large group of the locals suddenly surrounded the dwelling. “Where are those two hot guys who came to spend the night at your place, old man? Bring them out so we can give them a proper town greeting,” they demanded.

Stepping outside and shutting the door behind him, Lot tried valiantly to talk sense into them. “Please, my brothers,” he pleaded, “I can’t let you rape these men. Why don’t you take my two unspoiled daughters* and do whatever the hell you want with them. I beg you, leave these men alone: they’re under my protection!”

*You know, the married ones.

“Get the fuck out of our way!” the crowd shouted back. “Who the hell do you think you are? We let you live in our city, and now you’re trying to tell us how to have a good time? Wait until we get our hands on you!”

Just when the tension couldn’t get any higher, the door suddenly burst open, and the two angels pulled Lot back inside; quickly locking the door. Then, using their angel magic, they blinded the men outside so no one could find the doorway. Eventually, those who hadn’t been freaked out by their new handicap gave up their effort and returned home.

“Do you have any relatives in the city?” the angels asked. “Get them the fuck out of here. Now.”

“Hurry, we have to leave this city before God destroys it!” said Lot as he rushed to warn his sons-in-law. They both paused, looked at each other, and laughed hysterically.

By morning, the angels were not messing around, and became insistent that Lot and his brood leave immediately. “Take your wife and two daughters and get the fuck out of here this second, or you’ll be destroyed as well.” With Lot staring at them like a deer caught in the headlights, the angels saw no other alternative than to grab his hand and those of his daughters and rushed them physically out of the city.

“Run for your lives, you morons,” they said, returning to the city. “But whatever you do, don’t look back, or you’ll die.”

“My Lords, you’ve been so kind to me,” said Lot, “but I cannot go to the mountains at my age. I’m older than dirt and I’ll surely die up there! There’s a small village nearby. Why don’t you let me go there instead so I don’t have to live in a cave?”

“Fine. There’s a small town not far away called Zoar. We promise to spare it. Now hurry and get the fuck out of here already!”

As Lot and his family began to flee, they could hear the terrifying sounds of brimstone raining down and shattering the cities to pieces. Unable to contain her curiosity, Lot’s wife looked back to take a peek at the carnage, and was instantly turned into a pillar of salt.

Not long after settling in Zoar, Lot and his remaining family became convinced the villagers there were going to kill them, so they settled in the cave Lot had wanted to avoid in the first place to figure out their next move. One day, the eldest daughter - concerned about the family line - said to her younger sister: “There aren’t any men in this entire area suitable for us to marry, and Dad is starting to get a bit too old for children. I think we should get him drunk and then sleep with him; that way, we can keep the family line going.”

That night, serving him an excessive amount of wine, the younger sister raped her father without his knowledge. The scheme worked so well in fact, that the oldest daughter did the

exact same the following evening. Both became pregnant shortly after; much to Lot’s surprise. When the eldest daughter finally gave birth to a son, she called him Moab, and he would become the ancestor of all Moabites. The younger daughter also had a son, and called him Ben, who would become the ancestor of all Ammonites.

THE GERAR JOB

Abraham continued to roam the land, and he eventually settled in the Negev desert near the town of Gerar. Having learned in Egypt how advantageous it was to subtly lie to outsiders, Abraham lied once more and told the locals Sarah was his sister, not his wife. The king of Gerar - Abimelech - was struck by her beauty and summoned her to his palace to marry her. But one night, as he slept, Abimelech was visited by God in a dream.

“You’re a fucking dead man!” the Lord thundered. “That woman is already married!”

Having yet to sleep with her, a confused Abimelech replied “You’re not going to kill an innocent man are you? Abraham told me she was his sister, so how the hell was I supposed to know?”

“That’s why I didn’t let you touch her,” bellowed God. “Now,

hand her back to her rightful owner, and ask Abraham if he'll pray for you on my behalf. Seriously though, if you don't return her by tomorrow, I'll kill you and your whole fucking family."

The next morning when he awoke, Abimelech summoned his slaves and explained to them what had transpired that night. When they were told of the prediction, everyone was scared shitless, so Abimelech had Abraham brought before him.

"What did you do to us?" he moaned. "What have I done to deserve such shabby treatment? You shouldn't do this kind of thing to people; it's totally fucked up!"

"Look," replied Abraham, "I figured since you're a bunch of godless heathens without any morals you wouldn't hesitate to kill me to marry my hot wife, so I told you she was my sister. Besides, it's technically not a lie; we have the same dad."

Abimelech turned to Sarah, disgusted. "Look, I've given your husband/brother a bunch of sheep, oxen, slaves, and a thousand pieces of silver to compensate for any embarrassment on your part. This should settle any divorce disputes, don't you think?"

Abraham prayed to God, and the curse was lifted. With the prayer complete and everyone happy to be fertile again, Abraham and his wife left the city with even more loot than before, determined to settle elsewhere.

A TEST OF FAITH

Just as God had promised, Sarah became pregnant, and gave birth to a son, whom they called Isaac. Elated, Sarah exclaimed with joy "Anyone who hears about this is going to laugh their asses off! I mean, imagine that: an old lady like me giving birth! It's pretty unbelievable when you think about it." Eight days later, Abraham - always a stickler for God's rules - chopped the foreskin off his infant's penis; just as God had ordered him to.

As time passed and Isaac grew old enough to eat solid food, Abraham held a big celebration to commemorate the late birth of his son. At the party, Sarah noticed Ishmael teasing Isaac, and this enraged her. "I demand you get rid of that bitch Hagar and her son. No way in hell he's getting any of Isaac's inheritance. I won't stand for it!"

Abraham was upset at the thought of abandoning his first-born, but God appeared in a vision to alleviate his fears. "Don't worry about it," he said. "Just do what Sarah says and give Ishmael the boot. It's Isaac I care about anyway. He's the one who is going to have countless descendants, remember? Besides, I'll make sure Ishmael fathers his own nation, too. Abandon him in the desert and I'll take care of everything else."

The next morning, Abraham packed some food and water, which he strapped on Hagar's shoulders, and sent the two packing. Inexperienced and alone, they wandered aimlessly in the desert until they ran out of water. Leaving Ishmael under the cover of a tree, Hagar sat down by herself a distance away not to be overheard praying. "Please God," she begged, bursting into tears. "I don't want to watch my boy slowly die."

God overheard their crying, and called out to them. "What's wrong? Don't be afraid, Hagar, I've heard your boy crying like a little bitch, and I'll won't let you die."

Suddenly, with her eyes opened thanks to a little Yahweh magic, she noticed a well nearby and gave her thirsty son a little water. The two would survive being obediently abandoned by Abraham, and Ishmael would go on to become a great archer. Hagar married him to a beautiful young woman from Egypt, and as time went on, he had countless offspring and fathered many nations.

Not long after banishing his son into the harsh wilderness, Abraham received a visit from the Philistine king, Abimelech. "It's pretty obvious God favors you," he said flatteringly. "Now I want you to swear on the same God that you won't try to fuck me over or trick me anymore, and you'll be loyal to this country and its people. Deal?"

"Alright, I promise," said Abraham.

[There's some petty business about a well dispute, and the subsequent dedication ceremony to name said well that I've just gone ahead and edited out.]

And so, with the contract negotiated and all parties satisfied, they parted ways.

One day, God decided to test just how faithful and obedient Abraham was. "Abraham!" he thundered.

"Yes, Lord, here I am. What can I do for you?"

"I want you to take your only son*, Isaac - whom you love so much - and go to the land of Moriah. There, I want you to construct an altar and sacrifice him to me on one of the mountains I will point out to you. No questions asked."

Abraham said nothing, and the next morning he awoke early to prepare for the trip. Taking two slaves with him as well as his clueless offering, they chopped wood for the altar and took off for the long journey. By the third day of travel, they could see the mountain in the distance, and Abraham instantly knew which one God wanted him to murder his son on.

"Stay here with the donkey," he told his slaves, not wanting them to witness what would transpire. "The boy and I will travel the rest of the way. We'll go make the sacrifice there,

*That he gives a shit about, maybe.

and be right back.”

As Abraham stacked the firewood neatly to form an altar, his son Isaac asked him, “Dad, we have the fire and the wood, but where’s the lamb for the sacrifice?”

“God will provide the lamb, son,” he replied creepily.

With the construction of the altar complete and his constitution up, Abraham tied a confused Isaac up, set him on the altar, and rose his knife in the air, ready to strike. At the last moment, as the resolve to murder his son had finally set in, a booming voice suddenly interrupted him.

“Abraham!” an angel suddenly shouted.

“Yeah,” Abraham answered, “I’m kind of in the middle of something.”

“You can put down the knife,” he said. “I can see that you’re scared of God enough to do whatever the hell he wants you to. You were ready to slaughter your own flesh and blood for the voices in your head, and this greatly pleases the Lord.”

Looking around, Abraham noticed a young ram with its horns trapped in the thorns of a bush, and so he grabbed and slaughtered it in gratitude. When it was finished burning, the angel returned to him. “I’m going to bless the shit out of you, Abraham. You’re going to have millions of descendants: more than

all the stars in the sky or the grains of sand on the seashore. They will destroy and enslave their enemies, all because you were obedient when I called on you.”

And with that, Abraham, his son Isaac and their two slaves headed back home to rest. An awkward silence hung in the air.

Isaac (the victim)

Not long after the ‘incident’ no one was in a hurry to talk about, Sarah became ill and died at the tender age of 127. After properly mourning his wife, a still grieving Abraham left his home to meet with the local Hittite leaders hoping to buy a burial plot to entomb his sister’s bones. Meeting with a man named Ephron, Abraham agreed on the friendly price of 400 pieces of silver for a local cave where he laid her corpse to rest

[although not before an unnecessarily boring sequence of events that I totally skipped]

Fearing his own imminent death, Abraham became increasingly concerned with the possibility of Isaac marrying a filthy foreigner. He summoned his head slave with precise instructions for him to follow. “Promise me you won’t allow my son to marry some wretched local Canaanite women. Instead, I want you to travel to my homeland and find Isaac someone to marry among my relatives.”

“What if I can’t find a woman who is willing to travel back here to be with him? Should I relocate your son if that’s the case?” the slave asked.

“Absolutely not!” replied Abraham. “You’re never to take Isaac from here. God, the master of heaven, has promised to give this land to my offspring, so you have to stay here. Don’t worry; God will send one of his angels ahead of you and take care of everything. And if you still don’t succeed, just come back home and you’ll be released from your obligation.”

After swearing an oath to follow Abraham’s instructions to the letter, his slave set out for the long journey. He packed ten camels with some of Abraham’s best swag, and traveled north to a village not far from the Aram-naharaim region* where Abraham’s brother Nahor lived.

It was late in the evening when Abraham’s slave arrived at the nearby well, and as his camels knelt down to rest, he spotted some ladies drawing water from it. “God,” he whispered to himself, “Can you help me out here? I need to succeed for my Master, who you’re apparently a big fan of. See the women drawing water at the well nearby? I’ll go ask them to alleviate my thirst. If one of them offers to give water to my camel as well, then I’ll know I’ve chosen the right girl for sure!”

*Present day Syria, for the curious.

As Abraham's slave was busy talking to himself, a young woman named Rebekah* arrived carrying a jug of water. Beautiful and unspoiled by the repeated thrusting of a man's erection, Abraham's property ran to her to ask for help soothing his thirst.

"No problem," she said cheerfully, lowering her jug to fill his cup. "I'll draw some water for your camels too. I will bet they're thirsty!"

The enslaved man watched her silently as she carried jug after jug from the well, stopping only when the camels would drink no more. When she had finished, he gave her a nose ring and some shiny crap she doubtlessly appreciated.

"Whose daughter are you?" he asked. "Do you think your father would be able to put us up for the night?"

"My father's name is Bethuel - the son of Nahor and Milcah - and sure, we have plenty of room for guests," she replied.

Unable to contain himself any longer, the slave fell to the ground. "Praise the God of my master, Abraham," he exclaimed. "He's led me straight to his relatives!"

A little weirded out, Rebekah rushed home to tell her family what had transpired. When her brother Laban overheard her

*A name that basically means 'hook-up'

story and saw her jewelry, he rushed out of the house to go greet Abraham's slave. "Don't just stand out in the middle of nowhere! Come with us, we have a room ready for you and a place for your livestock," he said invitingly.

That night, as everyone sat down to eat, Abraham's slave stood up and said "I can't eat this until I've told you why I'm here."

"Go ahead", they said.

"I'm Abraham's servant; one of many for a man who has become rich thanks to the blessing of his god, Yahweh. When his wife Sarah gave birth to a son, she was already quite old, and has recently died. Fearing the same fate, my master is concerned that his son Isaac might marry a filthy foreigner; so to prevent this tragedy, he's sent me here among his family to find him someone a little more familiar. When I asked him what I should do if I couldn't find anyone, he simply replied God would solve my problem for me, and if he didn't, then I would be free from my obligation. But this afternoon, when I came to the spring for water, I made a pact with Yahweh with specific instructions on his selection process, and your daughter Rebekah fulfilled them to the letter! I'm now convinced she's the one I was sent here for."

Laban and his father Bethuel looked at each other. "Well, you're obviously on a mission from God," they replied. "Go ahead and take her with you and marry her off to a man she's

never met. You have our consent*.”

Abraham’s slave knelt down to the floor and thanked God once again for good measure. When he was finished, he presented Rebekah with fancy clothing and some more sparkly metallic crap; making sure to give some to the other women as well to avoid any jealousy among them.

The next morning, he asked for permission to be sent on his way.

“We’d like Rebekah to stay with us for at least ten more days,” her loving family asked. “Then she can go.”

“Look, don’t make this any harder than it has to be, ok? God’s already said yes, and I’ve got to report to my master, pronto.”

“Why don’t we ask Rebekah what she thinks,” they novelly suggested.

“Sure, I’ll go now,” she replied obediently.

And so they said their tearful goodbyes, and sent Rebekah away to marry a man with a terrifyingly similar genetic sequence whom she had never met in a faraway land. Her wet nurse - the woman who had cared for her since childhood - tagged along.

*Which is all that really matters, right?

As Isaac walked surveying his fields, he noticed a caravan and went to greet them. From afar, Rebekah could vaguely make out his form. “Who is that?” she asked.

“That’s my master!” replied the slave excitedly, as he ran ahead to tell Isaac all that had transpired. Rebekah, veiling her face to enhance the anonymity of it all, was brought into his mother’s tent to fulfill her new marital duties. With the help of her supple body, Isaac felt a little respite from his grief, if only for a short time.

Still virile and having yet to shoot blanks, Abraham remarried and had many more sons, none of whom would inherit a shekel of his wealth. Before his death, Abraham gifted Isaac his enslaved whores, and sent them all packing east to claim the promised land. With this final bit of business in order, Abraham passed away at the age of 175, and was buried in Sarah’s tomb.

[There’s a brief mention of Ishmael also dying at the age of 135 just so we can have a little closure. Isn’t that nice?]

Jacob (the liar)

Isaac was 40 years old when he married his cousin, and despite their attempts to have a child, Rebekah's womb remained barren until Isaac began praying fervently for a son. When God finally answered the call, Rebekah became pregnant with twins. As time went on and her pregnancy became increasingly difficult, God appeared to ease her worries.

"The sons in your womb will become the leaders of two great nations that will be at odds with one another, and the older sibling will serve the younger one." he told her.

When the time came and she gave birth, the first child was bright red and covered in hair so thick he had the appearance of being fully clothed. Because he seemed like such a wild man, they named him Esau. Grasping at Esau's heel, another boy quickly followed, but unlike his brother he was fair and smooth. They named him Jacob (meaning leg-puller) to commemorate his strange birth.

As the boys matured, Esau became a great hunter and outdoorsman, while Jacob preferred life indoors. Esau's hunting expeditions were the pride of his father Isaac, but it was Jacob whom his mother Rebekah favored.

One day, as Jacob was preparing some lentil stew, his brother Esau arrived home exhausted from the day's hunt. "I'm starving," he said, "give me some of that delicious smelling stew you just made."

"Sure," replied Jacob with a devilish smile on his face, "I'll give you some, but only in exchange for your birthright."

"I'm fucking dying of starvation here! What good is my birthright if I die of hunger?"

Seizing on the opportunity, Jacob said "Good. Then swear an oath to me right now that you're selling me your birthright for the reasonable price of a hot bowl of stew."

Esau did so, and Jacob filled his bowl and gave him some bread to accompany the meal [*see, he's not a total dick!*]. After he was finished, Esau left, indifferent to the fact his brother had tricked him out of his birthright.

Not long after this incident, God sent a loving famine to strike the land he had promised Isaac, so to avoid starving to death, the old patriarch moved his family to the city of Gerar where the Philistine king, Abimelech, lived.

“Don’t go to Egypt” God insisted. “I want you to stay here. If you do, then I will bless you and give all of this land to your descendants, just like I promised your dad, and they will be more numerous than stars in the sky. I’m doing this because your father always listened to me, even when I told him to kill you. I gotta admit, that really made my day.”

While staying in Gerar, Isaac worried the locals might try to kill him in order to freely marry his wife, and so he began telling everyone in town that Rebekah was his sister*. Not long after his ruse, Abimelech noticed Isaac fondling his wife from his window, and the next day called him out on it.

“What is it with you Jews?” he began. “Your ‘sister’ is obviously your wife. If someone had taken her as a bride and slept with her, they would have been cursed because of you. Why would you lie about something like this?”

“I was afraid someone might kill me to marry my hot wife,” Isaac replied.

Abimelech issued a proclamation stating anyone who touched either Isaac or his wife would be condemned to death to alleviate their irrational fears, and everyone went home happy.

That year, Isaac’s crops flourished, and he became very wealthy as a result. His success soon made the locals unhappy,

*They’re a trusting bunch, this family

however, and out of jealousy they attempted to sabotage his wells by filling them with dirt.

“We want you to leave,” Abimelech finally told him, “you’ve become too rich and powerful to stay here. Get the fuck out of here before we decide to do something drastic.”

Moving to the nearby countryside, Isaac tried to reopen a number of wells that his father had dug - which had since been re-filled by the Philistines after Abraham’s departure - but soon a number of shepherds began squatting and claimed the well for themselves. Isaac and his men dug another, but it too was contested.

Abandoning yet another effort, they dug a third well, but this time, no one showed up to try and claim it, so Isaac named the well ‘Room Enough’ and thanked the Lord for allowing him to finally have a little peace and quiet.

Shortly after moving to Beersheba, Isaac was visited by Abimelech, his advisor Ahuzzath, and his army commander, Phicol. “Why did you come to visit me after kicking me out of your land like a bunch of jealous assholes?” said Isaac, annoyed.

“We can see pretty plainly that God favors you,” they replied, “so we’ve come to try and make a deal with you. If you swear you won’t try to harm us, then we’ll do so as well and there will be peace between us. See, now God is blessing you once again!”

Isaac held a great feast to celebrate, and everyone ate and drank to their hearts' content. The next morning, when everyone had mostly sobered up, they all took an oath of non-aggression and Abimelech and his crew returned home.

That same day, Isaac's slaves came rushing to tell him good news. "We've struck water!" they said excitedly. To commemorate both the well and his new deal with the Philistines, Isaac called it 'the Well of the Oath'.

THE SWITCH

When Esau turned 40, he married a young Hittite woman by the name of Judith, and like any stud, quickly took on a second wife, Basemath. Like most mother/daughter-in-law relationships throughout history, things soon devolved, making life increasingly unpleasant for everyone.

Now blind, an aging Isaac called Esau to him, and asked the skilled hunter to go out with his bow and arrow and bring back some game to eat. Overhearing the conversation, Rebekah realized Isaac was dying, and would soon pass on his legacy to Esau. Acting quickly, she rushed to tell Jacob of her clever ruse.

"I overheard Isaac talking to Esau about blessing him before he dies," she said. "Now, my son, I want you to do exactly

what I tell you: go out and bring me two young goats, and I'll prepare your father's favorite meal. Then, you'll take it to him disguised as Esau, and he'll bless you instead of your brother!"

"But mom, as soon as he touches my arm, he'll know it's me! He'll curse me as soon as he finds out I tried to trick him."

"Stop being such a pussy! Look, I'll make sure the curse falls on me," Rebekah replied. "Now just do what I tell you and go get those fucking goats!"

Like a dutiful son, Jacob did as his mother asked and brought her two young goats. After she had finished slaughtering them and preparing the meat, Rebekah dressed Jacob in Esau's finest clothes, and gave him a pair of gloves to cover his soft, never-seen-a-day's-hard-labor-in-your-life hands, and fashioned a strip of the goat's skin around his neck for good measure.

Arriving in the tent with the dish, Jacob called out to his father.

"Who's there? Is it Jacob or Esau?"

"It's me, Esau," lied Jacob. "I've done as you told me. Here's the wild game, cooked just the way you like it. Now, sit up so you can eat this and give me your blessing."

"How were you able to find it so fast?" asked a curious Isaac.

“God put it in my path!”

I want to make sure you’re really Esau,” said a skeptical Isaac as he touched Jacob’s arm.

“His voice sounds exactly like Jacob’s, but his hands are hairy like Esau’s,” Isaac said to himself.

“Is this really my son Esau?” he asked.

“Of course,” Jacob replied.

“Bring me the meat then.”

Taking the food to his father, Jacob watched as Isaac ate it and washed it down with a glass of wine Jacob had brought. With a full stomach and a slight buzz going, Isaac leaned toward his son and said “Come here and kiss me, son.”

As Jacob leaned in to kiss his father, Isaac could smell his clothing, and was finally convinced from the smell of the open fields that it was indeed his son Esau.

“May God give you plenty of healthy crops and good harvests,” his incantation began. “May many nations become enslaved by your hand, and may you become the master of your brothers. They shall all bow before you, and anyone who curses you will also become cursed themselves!”

Soon after the trick blessing, Esau returned from the hunt and cooked his father’s favorite dish before bringing it to him.

“I’m back, Father,” he said excitedly, “and I have your favorite meal for you. Sit up and eat it so you can give me that blessing of yours.”

“Who the fuck is this?” replied a stunned Isaac.

“It’s me, Esau, dad.”

Isaac began to tremble with rage. “Who the hell served me my last meal, then? I’ve just given away my blessing thinking it was you!”

“Father, you’ve got to bless me too, then!” said a panicked Esau.

“I can’t,” replied Isaac. “It’s too late. Your brother’s claimed it already.”

“No wonder his name means leg-puller,” said Esau bitterly.

“He’s tricked me twice; first by taking my birthright for a lousy bowl of stew, and now by stealing my blessing right from under my nose. Don’t you have anything left for me?”

“I’ve already made Jacob your master and promised him an abundance of grain and wine. What else do I have left to give?” asked Isaac.

“So there’s nothing for me?” pleaded Esau, before breaking down in tears.

“You’ll live off the land and its fruit, and lend your sword to your brother, but there will come a time when you will shake loose from him and be free. At least,” concluded Isaac, “that’s something to look forward to.”

Esau flew into a fit of rage, promising to himself that upon Isaac’s death, he would “kill that son of a bitch!”

It didn’t take long for word of Esau’s plans to get out, and a slave soon reported it to his mother Rebekah. “Esau is going to kill you,” she told Jacob. “So you’re going to need to get the hell out of town for a while. You should flee to your Uncle Laban’s place and stay there until your brother cools off. When he’s not murderously angry at you anymore, then I will send word. Don’t worry, kiddo: I’ve got a plan.”

Rebekah went looking for Isaac, and turned the nagging up to 11. “I’m sick and tired of these horrible local Hittite bitches! I’d rather die than let Jacob marry one of them!” she screeched.

Isaac called Jacob to him, and after blessing him, declared “Your mother’s right, son. I don’t want you to marry any of these Canaanite whores. Instead, you’re to head over to your grandfather Bethuel’s house and try to find a cousin to marry there. May God bless you and may your descendants become a

huge nation. Hopefully one day you’ll own the land we are currently foreigners in, just like God promised my father Abraham.”

And with that, Isaac sent Jacob away. When Esau heard word his brother had gone to find himself a relative to marry, Esau realized how disapproving his father was of the local Canaanite women, and so he took on a new wife - one of Ishmael’s daughters - in an attempt to please his father. Like most similar attempts throughout history, the results were disappointing, to say the least.

FAMILIAR BRIDE

Leaving Beersheba and traveling to Haran, Jacob stopped at sundown and found a place to set up camp. Using the most comfortable looking stone he could find as a pillow, he eventually drifted into sleep, and dreamt of a massive staircase that reached all the way into the clouds above. Angels commuted up and down this busy route with ease. At first he was terrified, but once he summoned the courage to climb it, Jacob saw God himself waiting for him at the top.

“I am the God of your ancestor, Abraham,” he thundered, “and the ground you’re sleeping on belongs to you and your descendants, who will be as numerous as the dust particles on Earth! From east to west, north to south, there won’t a slab of

land that isn't inhabited by your people. And one glorious day - in the far, far distant future - I'll bring peace and security to this land. Until that time, I'll be constantly monitoring your activity, watching every little thing you do until I finish giving you everything I promised your ancestors. ”

Waking up, a disoriented Jacob was overcome with a mix of powerful emotions. “Wow, I can't believe what an awesome place this is; imagine that, an actual gateway to heaven, and not a crazy dream at all!”

The morning soon came, and Jacob converted his stone pillow into a memorial; pouring olive oil on it before naming the place ‘Bethel’ (house of God). “If the Lord protects me on this journey and I get back to my father in one piece,” he vowed, “then it's settled: Yahweh will be my one and only god, and I'll give make sure he gets ten percent of everything I earn from now on.”

Jacob continued to journey east, until he ran into a group of shepherds waiting by a sealed well and he stopped to talk to them.

“Where are you from?” he asked.

“Haran,” they replied.

“Do you know a man named Laban, the son of Nahor?”

“Yes, we sure do. He's rich and prosperous. Look,” they said pointing at their flock, “there is one of his daughters, Rachel, with the sheep.”

Puzzled, Jacob turned to them and asked “Why don't you water your flock so they can get back to grazing? They'll be hungry if you don't.”

“We don't roll off the stone until all the flocks and shepherds are here,” they replied.

As the men conversed, Rachel made her way to the well, and Jacob - struck by the beauty of his first cousin - made his way towards it, removing the stone so Rachel's flock could quench their thirst. Kissing her on the forehead, he began to cry with joy as he told her who he was.

A confused and reasonably creeped out Rachel quickly ran home to tell her father what had transpired. Delighted by the news, Laban left to fetch his nephew and bring him home. A month after Jacob's arrival, Laban came to him hoping to work out an equitable arrangement. “Since we're family, I don't think you should be working for me without pay. How much do you want for your services?” he asked.

Laban had two attractive daughters: Leah the eldest, and the younger Rachel. While it was true Leah had beautiful eyes and a nice ass, it was Rachel who Jacob fell in love with.

“Tell you what, uncle,” he said. “I’ll work for you for seven years, and at the end, you’ll give me your daughter Rachel as a wife.”

“Sure,” replied Laban, enthusiastically. “I’d much rather have her marry a family member than a complete stranger. You got yourself a deal, kiddo!”

And so Jacob worked tirelessly for his uncle for seven years, but so great was his love for his kin that the months seemed to drift away. When it was finally time for them to wed, Jacob approached Laban and said “I’ve fulfilled my end of the bargain. Now it’s time for you to give me my property, old man.”

Laban invited everyone in town to the wedding, but secretly, a devious plan was hatching in his mind. That night, when it was pitch black, he sent his daughter Leah into Jacob’s bed instead of Rachel, and the two slept together. The next morning, when he awoke with the wrong family member in his bed, a furious Jacob stormed into his uncle’s tent.

“What the fuck, man?” he raged. “We had a deal! I work for seven years, and you give me Rachel. Why screw me over now?”

“Look, I can’t marry off my youngest daughter before I’ve offloaded the older one,” replied Laban. “Why don’t you wait until your honeymoon is over, and then I’ll let you marry Rachel as well...just as long as you agree to work for me for an-

other seven years.”

Unable to come up with an alternative plan, Jacob relented, and a week later was rewarded with the lovely Rachel as well. He slept with her almost every night, and this greatly angered Leah. To compensate for her having to hear them have loud, annoying sex all the time, God gifted Leah with extreme fertility. In short order, her womb accommodated four sons in rapid succession: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah. Ecstatic that God had seen her plight of being unloved, Leah often gloated of her good fortune to a increasingly jealous Rachel.

“Give me children or I’ll die!” she said, lashing out at her husband.

Jacob flew into a rage: “What am I, God? He’s the only one who can give you children, so stop harassing me!”

“Ok, fine,” said Rachel, desperately trying to compromise. “Why don’t you have sex with my slave-girl Bilhah then, and she’ll have my children for me.”

A ‘reluctant’ Jacob agreed, and soon Bilhah became pregnant with his son Dan. He was soon followed by his younger brother, Naphtali.

Leah ceased becoming pregnant, and so she stole Rachel’s surrogate-mother idea and offered Jacob her slave-girl, Zilpah, to him. She also became pregnant and gave birth to two

boys: Gad and Asher.

One day, while out harvesting, Reuben found some mandrake roots growing in the fields and brought them to his mother. When Rachel heard about this, she rushed to beg her sister for a piece*.

“It’s not enough that you steal my husband, now you want to take my mandrake root too?” Leah fumed.

“I’ll make you a deal then,” replied Rachel. “I’ll let you sleep with him tonight if you give some of it to me.”

That evening, when Jacob returned home from a hard day of toiling in the fields, Leah came out to greet him. “I paid for you tonight with some mandrake root, so you’re not going anywhere,” she whispered to him seductively. Once more, Leah became pregnant and gave birth to another son, whom they called Issachar. The happy pregnancy was followed by yet another - a boy they named Zebulun - finally ending on a low note with the birth of a baby girl; Dinah.

But God did not entirely forget about Rachel’s deserted womb, and eventually she became pregnant. No longer feeling ashamed of her infertility, a relieved and grateful Rachel named her firstborn Joseph.

*Instead of being an aphrodisiac, mandrake root is actually a hallucinogenic and can produce a ‘semi-hypnotic’ state; not unlike REM sleep.

Shortly after Joseph was born, Jacob began to feel restless, and asked his uncle for permission to leave. “I want to go home,” he said. “Let me take my wives and children and be on my way.”

“You can’t go now!” said a panicked Laban. “I’ve recently learned from casting lots that you’re the reason God has blessed me so much.”

“What is it you want, then?” asked Jacob. “I’ve served you faithfully for 14 years, and during that time, you’ve become wealthy and blessed. But what about me? When do I get to provide for my own family?”

“Do you want me to pay you a wage or something?”

“No, I don’t want any money from you. Just let me remove the animals from your flock that are spotted, or have dark fur. That way, it’ll be easy for you to see whether I’m being honest or not. If you catch any white sheep or unspotted goats in my possession, then you’ll know whether or not I’ve stolen from you.”

“Ok,” Laban said, “that sounds good.”

Not content to see his best worker go, Laban went out to his flock later that day and relocated all of the animals that were spotted to his sons’ care. Aware of his father-in-law’s deception however, Jacob gathered a variety of tree branches from

poplars, almond, and plane trees, and peeled off their bark to make them striped. Planting them near the flock's watering trough, the animals would see them as they came to drink. When they had sex in front of these white streaked branches, their offspring magically emerged from the womb with a multitude of spots and stripes. Jacob ensured only the strongest females were influenced by his magic peeled branches rather than the weak ones, and soon enough, the number of healthy streaked and spotted animals had grown vast, making Jacob very wealthy.

Laban's sons were horrified to say the least, and began to complain how their cousin had robbed their family blind. "All of his wealth comes at the expense of our father!" they exclaimed to anyone who would listen.

As Laban's attitude was quickly souring, Jacob was conveniently contacted by God. "I want you to return to the land I promised your father and grandfather, and I'll join you there," he said.

Jacob mobilized quickly, and called his wives who were tending his flocks to him. "Your father is acting like a real douche-bag, girls, and he's not treating me fairly. Luckily, the God of my ancestors is with me, and hasn't allowed any harm to come to us, even as your father desperately tried to trick me out of my earnings. When we agreed that I would keep the speckled animals, he suddenly changed his mind and only allowed me to keep the striped ones. The joke's on him though: God inter-

fered and we're now wealthy at his expense! Now that same God wants us to return to the land I came from, so pack your bags, ladies: we're leaving."

"Yeah, that's cool with us," they both replied. "There's really nothing for us here. He's sold us already, so we won't be getting any of his inheritance anyway. God gave those riches to you, so as far as we're concerned, do whatever you want."

With the whole family excited by the move, Jacob packed his belongings and set off for the land of Canaan. The caravan departed under the cover of darkness, and as they left, Rachel stole Laban's household idol. Busy toiling in the fields, Laban and his sons failed to notice their departure for three whole days. When he learned of the theft of his wooden deity, Laban gathered all the well armed relatives he could find and set off in hot pursuit.

That night, God appeared to him in a dream to issue a stern warning. "Watch what the hell you say when you talk to my boy, Jacob!" he thundered. The following morning, finally catching up to his son-in-law and camping nearby, a nervous Laban approached Jacob to talk.

"What's up with you sneaking off?" he said, trying hard to contain his anger. "Are my daughters your prisoners or something? Why else would you slip away in total secret? I would have given you a huge farewell party, complete with singers and musicians; the works! You didn't even let me kiss my

daughters or grandchildren goodbye. Honestly, you acted like a total dick.”

“I should destroy you right here, but your patron deity visited me last night and warned me to choose my words carefully. I know you long to return to your childhood home, but why did you have to steal my idol as well?”

“I rushed away because I was scared,” replied Jacob. “I was convinced you’d take your daughters away from me by force. As for your household god, I don’t know who took it, but the one who did should be killed immediately! Search my tents; if you find it, I swear I’ll give it back pronto.”

First, Laban searched Jacob’s tent and then Leah’s, but found nothing. After searching all of Jacob’s sex slaves’ abodes, there was only Rachel’s left to investigate. Having placed the idol inside of her saddle, she sat on it in order to hide the fact that it was in her possession. When he arrived in the tent, she was apologetic.

“You’ll forgive me for not standing up,” she said, “but I’m on my period right now, and it’s a big one.” Freaked out by the thought of her vagina leaking blood, Laban left her tent as rapidly as he could without searching it.

Jacob, now increasingly annoyed at his uncle, could no longer contain himself. “Well, did you find anything? What’s my crime? You hunted me down like I was a common criminal,

ransacked my tents, and what do you have to show for it? Take it out for everyone to see, I dare you!”

“Twenty years I’ve been working for you, caring for your sheep and goats so they’d produce healthy offspring. If any of them were killed by wild animals, I took the financial hit. You made me pay for every animal stolen, whether it was my fault or not. I worked in the blazing hot sun and through shitty, sleepless nights and this is how you repay me?”

“Twenty years man! Fourteen of them just to earn the right to marry your daughters, and another six to earn some kind of wage so I wouldn’t go home broke. In all the years under your employ you actually reduced my pay ten times! In fact, if it wasn’t for the God of my ancestors blessing me, I’d be a penniless hobo. But Yahweh saw how shitty you were and that’s why he appeared to you last night: to vindicate me.”

Laban’s anger seemed to subside, and a resolved old man became apologetic. “You’re right! These are my children and grandchildren for heaven’s sake! Your flock, and everything you have are all mine, but what am I going to do, attack my own family? Come, let’s make a peace treaty, and we’ll pick terms we can both live with like rational human beings.”

Jacob and Laban gathered a number of stones and formed a crude monument, and they sat down and ate beside it together. They named their crappy pile of rocks ‘Witness Pile’, to symbolize their new treaty.

“This rickety structure shall stand as a witness to our agreement,” said Laban. “May the God of your ancestors keep us safe and make sure that we honor our peace accord somehow.”

“Since I won’t be around, I won’t know if you harm any of my daughters or take on any other wives, but your God is going to be watching, so you better live up to your word. May Yahweh punish us if either one of us does harm to the other.”

Both men then swore an oath, and afterwards, Jacob killed an innocent animal to seal the deal. Laban kissed his daughters and grandchildren goodbye, and returned home peacefully.

As Jacob set off with his family towards the land that a voice in his grandfather’s head had promised him, they came upon a group of angels*, and an excited Jacob exclaimed “This is God’s camp!”, naming the place Mahanaim in their honor.

In preparation for his arrival in his old hometown, Jacob sent a messenger ahead of the caravan with a letter for his brother. It read:

“Humble greetings from your servant Jacob! I’ve been living with Uncle Laban these past twenty years, and now I return with my own sheep, donkeys, oxen, goats, and both male and female slaves. I have sent these messengers to inform you of

*And clearly NOT just a bunch of dudes.

my arrival hoping you would give us a friendly greeting.”

When they finally returned, the messengers faces had grown pale: a murderously angry Esau had assembled an army of over four hundred men and was headed their way. Terrified, Jacob split his caravan in two, hoping if his brother attacked, his blood lust might be satiated long enough for the other group to flee.

“Oh God of my ancestors; you instructed me to return to my homeland, promising I would have a hero’s welcome. Now I know I’m a meaningless piece of shit who doesn’t deserve your love, let alone your consideration, but would you kindly rescue me from my fratricidal brother? I’m afraid he’s going to kill me along with my entire family, and though I don’t want to seem like a bother, I’d like to remind you of your promise I would have as many descendants as the sands on the seashore. I can’t really see that happening if my skull is caved in, you know?”

Receiving no audible answer and taking few chances, Jacob prepared a gift he hoped would calm his brother’s rage. He set aside two hundred female and male goats, thirty female camels, forty cows, ten bulls, twenty female donkeys, and ten male ones, and sent some of his messengers with the gift hoping to intercept his angry kin.

“When you run into Esau and he asks you where you are going, you’re to tell him the animals belong to his servant, Ja-

cob, and they are a present for him. Tell him we won't be far behind."

"Hopefully," Jacob thought, "this will calm him down and he won't try and kill me."

With his herdsman gone, Jacob stayed behind and rested for the night. He sent his children, sex slaves, and two wives across the Jabbok River just to be safe. As he was about to lay down for the night, a stranger suddenly appeared, and the two began to wrestle, as perfect strangers are known to do. Realizing after many hours that they were evenly matched, the man stuck Jacob's hip, knocking it out of its socket.

"Let me go before the dawn comes!" he yelled.

"Not until you bless me," replied a breathless Jacob holding on as tightly as he could.

"Fine. What's your name?"

"Jacob"

"Well, it'll no longer be Jacob," said the mystery man, "You'll be known as Israel from now on, because you struggled with both men and God and you won"

"What about your name?" Jacob asked.

"Why do you want to know so badly?" said the stranger, refusing to answer. After repeating some incantation to Jacob, he disappeared from the narrative, never to return. Jacob named the place Peniel (face of god) in honor of having battled his god face-to-face and lived to tell about it*.

Now blessed with a loving hip problem, Jacob limped back to camp. In the distance, he saw Esau and four hundred men racing towards them. Fearing the worst, Jacob arranged his family in columns from least to most important, putting his sex slaves and their bastard offspring in the front, while leaving Rachel and his son Joseph safely in the back. With everyone in proper order, he ran ahead to intercept them, and as he approached Esau, he bowed seven times as a full show of submission. Esau, in tears, ran to Jacob and gave him a big hug.

"Who are all these people?" he asked looking at Jacob's giant brood.

"They are the children God has generously given to me," replied Jacob as his concubines and their children bowed respectfully. They walked by Leah and her children, followed by Rachel and Joseph. All bowed deeply, but tension hung visibly in the air.

"What was up with all the animals you sent on ahead?" asked a curious Esau.

*Not to mention inheriting a permanent new medical condition.

“They are my gift to you, my lord,” said a prostrated Jacob, “to ensure your goodwill and kindness.”

“I’ve got plenty. You can keep ‘em.”

“Please take them. God has been really kind to me and I have more than enough,” insisted Jacob, refusing to take no for an answer. Finally, Esau accepted the gifts, and suggested they all head back home.

“As you can see, brother, some of my children are quite young, as are some of my flock. If we take off tonight, they might not make it all the way. Go on ahead, and we’ll catch up to you when you arrive at the city of Seir.” said Jacob, desperate to avoid having Esau’s armed thugs hanging around.

“Well,” argued Esau, “at least let me leave a few of my men behind for protection!”

“There’s no need for you to be so kind to me brother,” said Jacob. “We’ll be fine.”

Finally giving up, Esau and his men packed their things and headed back to Seir. Jacob, not wishing to encounter his homicidal brother again, took his family to Shechem, and bought a plot of land for the price of a hundred pieces of silver. There, he build a farm and a new home for his family and slaves.

DINAH’S DOWRY

One day, Leah’s daughter Dinah was visiting some friends in town when a local prince, Shechem the Hittite (not to be confused with the town of the same name) took a liking to the beautiful young Jew and raped the crap out of her. Not satisfied with only violating Dinah once, he wished to marry her, and spoke to his father in order to make a deal.

Word soon reached Jacob that his property had been defiled, but because his sons were in the field working, he chose to do nothing until they returned. Shechem’s father, Hamor, arrived at Jacob’s farm to discuss the matter along his son. Just as they began to sit down and talk, Dinah’s brothers arrived, seething with rage at the news of her abuse.

“My son is in love with your daughter,” Hamor commenced. “He longs to be with her, and I would ask you allow the two of them to be married. In exchange, we’ll let your sons marry our daughters, and you can all live among us! The land will be open to you, and you will be free to acquire any property you want.”

“Please be kind,” Shechem begged, “and let me have her as a wife. I’ll give you anything you want, no matter how big the dowry; just let me marry this woman!”

“You can’t be with her, since you aren’t circumcised,” they

said full of mischief, “It would be a disgrace if you married her with your penis intact. Here’s what you’ll need to do: every man in your employ is going to have the skin at the end of their penis forcibly removed, just like us. Otherwise, there can be no deal.”

Hamor and Shechem happily agreed, and wasted no time fulfilling this dicey request. Once the task is accomplished, they met up with the town leaders to convince them to do the same.

“These Jews are our friends,” he began. “Let’s invite them to live here with us in peace, and they can teach us their trade. In exchange, we will give them land and intermarry with their clan. All they ask of us is that we cut the foreskin of our penises with our poorly crafted blades. Who’s with me?*

And so all the men, inspired by his speech, did as their neighbors asked. But three days later, as they were still weak and recovering from their self-inflicted wounds, Levi and Simon entered the town and slaughtered every man they could find, including both Shechem and Hamor. They then rescued their sister Dinah, seizing most of the livestock and a number of new slaves.

When Jacob heard of what they had done, he was furious. “Are you insane? You’ve made us the pariah among the Canaanites and Perizzites. We’re just a tiny family; they’re going

*I know it doesn’t sound inspiring now, but you should have been there...

to wipe us out for sure!”

“What should we have done?” they replied, “Let them treat Dinah like a common whore?”

That night, Jacob was visited by God. “You had better lay low and get the fuck out of town,” he said. “Head to Bethel. There I want you to build a special altar in honor of me. Your Lord and Master has commanded thee!”

The next morning Jacob told his family the news of the apparition and of his new found desire to leave town. He also ordered that everyone destroy and bury their idols before taking off. When they finally set out to build a new home for themselves yet again, the nearby townsfolk were put in a state of near-constant terror by God, and no one retaliated against them.

When they arrived in Bethel, Jacob built the altar he had promised, and God appeared before him when it was finished. “Stop calling yourself Jacob,” he said. “Your name is Israel now, remember? As the great and powerful Almighty creator of the Cosmos, I want to let you in on a unfathomably tiny part of my grand design. First, you are to multiply like crazy, and to fill the whole earth. I want you to become a great nation, for kings will be among your descendants. I will give you the land I promised to both your father and grandfather, although the details are unimportant right now.” And with those final words, he was gone again.

Some time later, while Jacob was away on a business trip, his wife Rachel went into labor, and after a difficult delivery, gave birth to another son she called Ben-oni. Dissatisfied with the crappy job she had done naming him, Jacob called the boy Benjamin instead.

Not long after her delivery, Rachel died. A bereaved Jacob buried her on his way to Bethlehem. To get his mind off the loss, he went camping for a few days. While he was away, he heard rumors that his older son Reuben had slept with one of his concubines, but before he could deal with this little ‘situation’, Jacob received an urgent call back to his ancestral home: his father, Isaac, had died at the ripe old age of 180.

[There’s an attempt made to cover some of Esau’s family history and genealogy, but it’s all pretty pointless and inaccurate. All you need to know is the authors claim the Edomites are ultimately their descendants, which is demonstrably false.]

Joseph (the dreamer)

Every father has a favorite, and it was painfully obvious to everyone around that Joseph held that honor. And because Jacob had him at such an advanced age, the boy was doted on constantly, much to the murderous annoyance of his brothers. One day, Joseph received a particularly infuriatingly gift of a beautiful robe, and all of his brothers fumed with rage at the sight of it.

To make matters worse, he chose to share a particularly vivid dream one morning, failing to appreciate what the imagery might represent to an extremely superstitious group of human beings. “I dreamt we were all out in the field bundling up grain when mine stood up, only to suddenly be worshiped by all of yours!” he said naively.

“What are you saying, genius? That you’re going to rule over us or something?”

When he had another dream, he unwisely continued to share it with his siblings, as well as with his father who was in the room. “Listen to this weird dream,” he began. “The sun, the moon, and eleven stars all bowed before me!”

“What the hell are you talking about?” rebuked Jacob. “Are you suggesting your brothers and I will bow down before you?” While his sons’ anger continued to mount to intolerable levels, Jacob spent the evening pondering in earnest of the significance of this dream, and whether it had a prophetic ring to it.

A few days later, Jacob approached Joseph with a special task for him. “Your brothers are tending the flock in Shechem,” he began, “and they’ve been gone for some time. I need you to go check on them and give me word of their progress.”

When Joseph arrived in Shechem, he was surprised to find his brothers had moved on, and asked a local if he knew where they were.

“I heard your brothers set off for Dothan,” the man said helpfully. So Joseph set off for Dothan to meet up with his brothers, but when they spotted him in the distance, they began talking about the possibility of getting rid of him; permanently.

“Let’s murder this pathetic dreamer and throw his useless carcass into a well,” one of them suggested. “Then we can tell the

old man some bullshit story about a wild beast tearing him to shreds. It's fucking crazy dangerous out there, so I'm sure he'll buy it." Reuben, however, was not thrilled with the idea of casual fratricide.

"Why should we bother getting our hands dirty?" he said, secretly planning to help Joseph escape when the time was right. "Let's just throw him into this pit; that way, we'll let nature do the murdering for us!"

When a smiling Joseph arrived to greet them, they wasted no time beating him savagely. When they were satiated, they removed his beautiful robe before throwing him down into the nearby well. His confused cries for help or explanations were ignored.

In the evening, as the plotters sat down later to eat, they spotted a caravan in the distance.

"I don't think killing Joseph is a good idea. I'm worried it might give us a guilty conscience," remarked Judah, who was beginning to lose his nerve. "Why don't we sell him to these passing Ishmaelites instead?"

With everyone's murderous resolve evaporating, they all quickly agreed, and before a disoriented and injured Joseph could figure out what was happening to him, the brothers had sold the poor lad for a measly 20 pieces of silver*. When Reuben returned later that evening to rescue Joseph, he found to

his great dismay that he had been too late, and tore his clothing in frustration.

The other brothers, in the meantime, had killed a goat and smeared Joseph's coat in its blood. They then took it to Jacob and did their best to look distraught.

"We found this in the field," they said. "Isn't it Joseph's?"

Jacob's face grew pale as he stared, transfixed by the familiar robe "Yes, it's my son Joseph's coat. My God, a wild animal must have attacked him and torn him to pieces!" Ripping his clothes in agony, he quickly changed into a burlap sack and began wailing uncontrollably. Even as his family tried to comfort him, his health and physique began to deteriorate quickly.

"I'm going to mourn until I die," he said, weeping. He had no way of knowing that not far away in Egypt at that very moment, his son Joseph was being sold by his Ishmaelite masters to an Egyptian captain of the guard by the name of Potiphar.

CONTRACEPTION

Life soon moved on, and Jacob's son Judah took on a Canaanite wife, and the two quickly had children. She gave birth to three sons: Er, Onan, and Shelah. When the oldest, Er, grew

*I mean, they didn't even try to bargain or nothing! He was worth at least 35.

up, he was married off to a young woman named Tamar. Unfortunately, Er was a vile sack of shit in the eyes of the Lord, and so one day, God struck him down with extreme prejudice. Because Tamar had failed to produce offspring during her marriage, it fell onto Onan to marry and impregnate her according to the rules set out by the Omnipotent Creator of all things.

Onan, however, had no interest in becoming a father. Every time they had sex, he would pull out and spray his seed all over the ground. God was not a big fan of this surprisingly effective form of birth control, and so he struck down Onan with righteous fury.

With two dead sons and a daughter-in-law in need of a new husband, Judah asked Tamar to return home to mourn and wait until Shelah was old enough to marry her. Secretly, Judah worried his third son might also fall victim to this black widow, so when his youngest son finally came of age, he conveniently forgot to call her back.

After the death of his wife, Judah headed to Timmah with a few friends to supervise the shearing of his flock. When word reached Tamar that her father-in-law had gone sheep-shearing*, she changed out of her widow-wear and slipped instead into a sexy veil. Then, sitting near the entrance of the village, she waited patiently for Judah to walk by.

*Which if you recall tended to get pretty wild...

When he finally noticed her on the side of the road, Judah was convinced the young woman was a prostitute, and having failed to recognize who she was, he solicited Tamar for a variety of depraved sex services.

“How much will you pay me?” she asked.

“What do you want?”

“First, I want your identification seal,” she began, “your rope and walking stick, too.” So Judah, thinking he had gotten himself quite the bargain lay, did as she asked, and after he slept with her, she became pregnant. She returned home the following morning, removed her veil, and once again donned her widow’s outfit.

When Judah asked his friends to help locate his mystery prostitute so he could exchange a goat for the items he had foolishly traded away, they failed to find anyone who matched her description. When the villagers were asked where the town whore lived, they simply replied that no one they knew of was offering such services in their village.

“Well, let her keep all those useless items,” said a resigned Judah. “We tried our best to give her this goat. Hell, we’ll be the laughing stock of this village if we ever come back here, I gather.”

A few months later, word reached Judah that Tamar was preg-

nant, and a furious patriarch demanded she be brought out and stoned to death for adultery. But as they were taking about to exercise their judicial commitment, she presented them the seal, walking stick, and other items she had acquired from her services. “These items belong to the father of my child. Does anyone recognize them?”

Judah certainly did, and suddenly his mood changed. “She’s more in the right than I am,” he said. “I didn’t keep my promise by allowing her to marry my youngest son. I suck.”

Judah would never sleep with her again, but in due time, Tamar gave birth to two twin boys, Perez and Zerah.

GOLDEN BOY

Back in Egypt, Joseph served his master Potiphar loyally, and soon the Egyptian took notice of how well managed his household was. Joseph quickly became the favorite, and was soon in charge of his entire household, becoming responsible for all his various business dealings.

By then Joseph had grown into a handsome young man; a detail that did not escape the attention of Potiphar’s wife, who began to make strong sexual advances toward him.

“Look,” he said, doing his best to let her down gently. “My

master trusts me with his entire household. No one here has more authority than me. He’s given me everything, with the exception of you, of course. How could I ever betray him like that? It would be a sin against God!”

Little did Joseph realize that the more he rejected Potiphar’s wife, the more she wanted him. He tried his best to avoid her, but one day, while he was working in the house alone, she grabbed him by the shirt and demanded he sleep with her. He struggled and escaped her grasp, but as he did so, his shirt fell off.

When she saw the piece of fabric in her hand, she screamed, and soon the men of the palace came running to her aid. “My husband’s Hebrew slave tried to rape me!” she exclaimed. “He ran out, leaving his shirt behind.”

When Potiphar heard of the accusation, he flew into a rage and threw Joseph into the king’s prison; leaving him there to rot. A natural charmer and favored by the bearded one in the sky, the jailer took an instant liking to Joseph, and put him in charge of the other prisoners. Before long, everything was running smoothly.

One day, the Pharaoh’s cupbearer and baker - having randomly angered their master - were thrown in jail. There they remained for a while, and eventually Joseph was assigned to take care of them. One night, after both men had vivid dreams, they awoke with troubled looks on their faces. Con-

cerned, Joseph asked them what was wrong.

“We both had some pretty fucked up dreams, but no one can figure out what they mean!” they said.

“Well,” replied a proud Joseph, “it turns out interpreting dreams is something I’m pretty good at. Tell me what you saw.”

The cup-bearer went first. “In my dream, I saw a vine grow right in front of me. It had three branches that began to bud and then blossom, and soon there was a cluster of grapes. I was suddenly holding the Pharaoh’s wine cup in my hand and I squeezed the juice right into it and gave it to him.”

“That’s easy,” Joseph replied. “The three vines means that in three days, you’ll get your old job back and get out of here. When you do, please be sure to talk to him about my plight when you get out of here. You see, I was kidnapped from my homeland and thrown in jail for no good reason!”

“Sure, no problem...” he said skeptically.

The baker, after hearing such good news from the first interpretation, excitedly began to recount his dream as well. “In my vision, there were three baskets of pastries on my head. On top of them were a number of baked goods for the Pharaoh, but suddenly a bunch of birds came out of nowhere and pecked at them.”

Joseph paused for a while before speaking. “It means in three days, the Pharaoh will cut off your head and impale your body on a pole. As for the birds, they’ll be feasting on your rotten flesh. Sorry.”

Three days later, the Pharaoh held a banquet in celebration of his birthday. Summoning the cupbearer and the baker, he pardoned and absolved the first, but sentenced the second to death, just as Joseph had predicted. But like most people who make fast promises in dire situations, the baker forgot all about poor Joseph and his plight, and went on living his life as though nothing had happened.

Two years passed, and one night, the Pharaoh had a strange dream. Standing on the bank of the Nile River, he spotted seven overweight bovines grazing near along the shore. They were followed by another group of seven cows, but these were emaciated and weak. Suddenly, the skinny, sickly looking bovines ate the healthy looking ones, and it was at this point the Pharaoh woke up, a little weirded out.

He soon fell asleep again, but his second dream was even stranger than the first. He saw seven heads of grain on a single stalk, each one plump and full. Then, quite suddenly, seven more heads appeared on the stalk, but these were shriveled and dry. Then, as before, the thinner ones ate the plump ones, and once again the Pharaoh awoke in shock.

The following morning, as he sat and pondered his disturbing

visions, Pharaoh called for his magicians and wise men to help interpret the dream. All failed to understand its meaning. Finally, his cupbearer spoke up. “I’ve just been reminded of how much of a dick I am,” he began apologetically. “Do you remember a few years ago when you were pissed at the baker and me and you threw us in the palace jail? Well, one night we both had visions, and this young Hebrew slave interpreted them for us, saying that my position would be restored and the baker would be executed. And that’s exactly what happened!”

Curious about this young phenom, Pharaoh sent his servants to fetch Joseph, but not before being cleaned up, given a shave, and adorned with nice clothing.

“I had a dream last night I want you to interpret,” the Pharaoh began. “No one can seem to decipher it, and that’s why I called you here.”

“I don’t have any actual powers,” Joseph confessed, “but why don’t you ask God and he’ll set your mind at ease.”

And so Pharaoh described in detail his dream, including all the strange cannibalistic elements. When he had finished, Joseph unhesitatingly replied “these two dreams mean the same thing, your Highness. In the next seven years, you’re going to experience great prosperity and wealth. But once that’s over, you’ll suffer through a terrible famine which will last another seven years and devastate the land. It’ll be so terrible in fact, that you won’t even remember the good years.”

“And because you had the dream twice, it means that God will make this event happen very soon. My suggestion is you find the wisest man in Egypt and put him in charge of a nationwide program to store food and prepare for the coming drought. Then, if he does his job properly, there should be enough food to make it through the famine without it being too painful.”

The Pharaoh and his advisers were impressed, and when they began to discuss who would be able to fill such a role, it didn’t take long for Pharaoh to nominate the young Jew to the position. “Who could do a better job than Joseph himself? He’s obviously filled with godly powers!”

Turning to Joseph, he said: “since it was your god who revealed the meaning of the dream to you, you are the wisest man in the whole land! I hereby appoint you to direct this project. You will manage my household and organize my people. Only I shall have a rank higher than yours.”

Then the Pharaoh placed a signet ring on Joseph’s finger as a symbol of his authority. He was adorned in all manner of beautiful clothing and golden bling, completing his totally pimped out look. He was also given a shiny new chariot, as well as a young and nubile wife by the name of Asenath. Renamed Zaphenath-paneah, Joseph was only thirty years old when he took on his exciting new appointment.

His first task involved surveying the entire land of Egypt. Just

as he had predicted, the land experienced seven years of bumper crops, and during those key years, Joseph was able to store a portion of all the grain in government buildings throughout the empire. After the seven years were over, they overflowed with grain, more than anyone could count. Shortly before the famine arrived, Joseph and his wife had two sons, whom he named Manasseh and Ephraim.

When the drought finally did come, the crops of surrounding nations also failed. The people, now hungry and desperate, were told by the Pharaoh to begin purchasing grain from Joseph.

Back in his homeland, Jacob heard word that the Egyptians were selling grain, and so he sent ten of his sons (with the exception of Benjamin, whom he refused to let out of his sight) with the task of fetching enough food to last long enough to beat the famine.

When the brothers arrived in Egypt, they met with the governor, who was none other than Joseph himself. However, Joseph's appearance fooled them, and they had no way of knowing he was their own flesh and blood. Joseph, on the other hand, recognized them instantly.

"You are spies, come to see how vulnerable our land has become!" he bellowed.

Terrified, the brothers exclaimed "No, my lord! We have only

come to buy food. We are honest men; not spies! We are twelve brothers, and our father lives in the land of Canaan. Our youngest brother is still back at home. It is only the second youngest who is no longer with us."

"You're spies, I can tell," replied an amused Joseph. "This is how we'll test out your story: I'm going to lock you all up, with the exception of one person, who will go home and fetch this younger sibling for me. Then we'll find out whether or not your story holds any water. If you don't have a younger brother, then I'll know you're a bunch of worthless spies!"

He put them all in prison for three days to let them freak out a little, and finally, on the third day, he said to them "I'm a God-fearing man, and if you do as I say, you'll all return home alive. This will be a test of how honorable you are. You can all leave except one who has to stay behind until you bring back the youngest with you. Then I'll know whether or not you were telling the truth."

"This is all our fault," they said to each other in their own language, not realizing their brother Joseph could understand everything they said. "We brought this on ourselves when we sold off Joseph to those foreigners. He begged and pleaded with us but we didn't listen, and now, this trouble has come upon us."

"Didn't I tell you dumb mother-fuckers not to do this?" fumed Reuben. "But you wouldn't listen, and now we're all going to

die because of you morons.”

Suddenly overwhelmed with emotion, Joseph quickly left the room and began to cry uncontrollably. After what felt like hours, he finally re-emerged, fully composed, and chose Simeon to be left behind. To freak them out even more, he had him bound before their eyes. He then ordered his servants to fill their sacks with grain, and secretly return each brother’s payment on top of the bags. He also secretly hid extra provisions for their return trip.

As the crew hurried home, one of them noticed the sacks contained more than the simple grain. “Look brothers!” he exclaimed, “My money is still here in my sack!” Filled with terror, they did not know what to do. “What is God doing to us?” they wondered.

When they finally opened all of the sacks of grain, they were terrified to find their money had all been refunded. “You’ve deprived me of my children!” Jacob exclaimed. “First Joseph disappears; then Simeon, and now you’re telling me you want to take Benjamin too! Everything is going against me.”

“I’ll take responsibility for Benjamin,” Reuben suddenly said, “and if I fail to bring everyone back, may you kill my two sons in retribution!”

“No, you’re not going to take him down with you. His brother is already dead, and if something were to happen to him, I

think it would send me to an early grave.” And with that, Jacob forbid his children to return to Egypt. The famine, however, would not subside, and when their food began to run out, a reluctant Jacob had little choice but to send them back to buy more.

“That guy wasn’t messing around when he insisted we couldn’t return without bringing Benjamin along,” said a concerned Judah. “We’ll go if you let him come with us.”

“Why did you even tell them you had another brother?” Jacob asked, exasperated. “Why did you have to treat your father so shabbily?”

“They specifically asked us about our family,” they replied, “He wanted to know if we had any other brothers. How the hell were we supposed to know he would demand we bring him along to prove we weren’t spies?”

Judah stepped forward to address Jacob personally. “Send the boy with me, and then we’ll go. Otherwise, we’ll starve to death. I promise to safeguard him personally, and if I don’t bring him back, then you can blame me forever. We could have already come and gone twice if you hadn’t made such a big deal out of this.”

Finally, unable to see any other way, Jacob had to agree to the idea. “Fine, but if you’re going to go, then you’ll need to take some of the best products with you. Take some honey, spices,

and myrrh with you, and also make sure that you bring twice the money you brought last time, just in case it was a mistake.”

“Let’s hope this man has mercy, and releases both Simeon and Benjamin. If they should both be killed, then I’ll just deal with it as best I can.”

And so Jacob’s sons set off for Egypt, and brought Benjamin along with them. When they finally arrived in Egypt and presented themselves to Joseph, he informed them that they would be the Governor’s guests of honor for a mid-day feast. Terrified this would be their last meal and convinced they would be accused of theft and sold as slaves, they approached the house manager, pleading for mercy.

“Sir, on our last trip to buy food, we stopped on our way back to find the money we had used to pay for the supplies had been returned. We’ve brought it back, as well as additional money to buy more food. We just want you to know we had no idea how the money was returned into our bags. Honest.”

“Don’t worry about it,” the manager told them casually, “your god must have put it there. We have your money, so it’s all good.” He then released Simeon and brought them out to greet his brothers.

After a tearful reunion, they were taken to the palace and given water to wash the only part of their body they seemed to

care about: their feet. When they were told the feast would soon begin, they all readied their gifts for Joseph’s arrival. When he finally walked in, they all bowed deeply and humbly presented their various gifts to him.

“How is your dad?” he asked them. “Is he still alive?”

“Yes,” they replied, “he’s alive and well.”

Joseph looked at Benjamin. “Is this the younger brother you told me about? May God always be gracious to you, my boy.” Overcome with emotion, Joseph ran out of the room so no one could see him crying again. After washing off his face and regaining his composure, he returned and commanded for the food to be brought out.

Joseph had seated his brothers, much to their amazement, according to their age. Sitting at a separate table from the Egyptians, who despised them for being different, they were served food from Joseph’s own table. Benjamin received the largest serving - as much as five times more than the others - but he shared his bounty with his siblings, and everyone drank to their hearts’ content.

When the meal was over and the brothers were finally ready to leave, Joseph instructed his manager to fill each of their bags with as much grain as possible, and for their money to be returned. “I also want you to put my nice silver cup in Benjamin’s bag, along with all the grain.”

As they left town, Joseph called out to his manager, and said “chase after them and stop them. Ask them ‘Why have you repaid an act of kindness with unmitigated evil? Why did you steal my master’s cup, which he uses to see into the future? You’ve done something horrible!’”

“What are you talking about?” said the brothers after being confronted by the house manager, who accused them of theft. “What kind of people do you think we are? Didn’t we bring back the money we found in our bags and offered it to you? If you find this cup of yours in any of our bags, then let him die, and the rest of us will become slaves to your master.”

“That won’t be necessary,” replied the manager. “The one who stole it will become the slave and the rest of you can go home.”

When the manager searched their bags, he searched from oldest to youngest, until finally it was Benjamin’s turn. Sure enough, he found the cup, and they all tore their clothing in despair. They hurriedly returned to the city, and collapsed at Joseph’s feet, begging for mercy.

“What the hell were you trying to pull?” he shouted. “Don’t you know I’m the kind of man who would know when someone stole from him?”

Judah stepped forward. “Please my lord, how can we prove our innocence? Surely God is punishing us for our sins. We’ve all returned to become your slaves.”

“No,” Joseph said, “only the man who stole from me shall be my slave. The rest of you go home to your father.”

Judah stepped forward one more time and said, “My lord, please be patient with me for a second. I know you could kill me in an instant just like the Pharaoh, but you must listen. My father is an old man, and this is his youngest son. His brother is dead, and he is the only one left of his mother’s children, and his father loves him dearly. The boy cannot leave his father, or the old man will surely die!”

“When we told our father we needed to return to Egypt with the youngest, he replied he had already lost one of his sons to wild animals, and if any harm came to Benjamin, he would be driven to the grave.”

“My Lord, I cannot go back to my father without the boy. His life is bound to my father, and if he doesn’t see him return with us, I’m convinced it will end him. I took an oath that I would take care of Benjamin, and I would accept blame forever if I failed to return him safely. I beg you, let me stay here as the slave and return the boy to his father with his brothers.”

“Get out all of you!” Joseph commanded to his servants. When they were gone and only Joseph and his brothers remained, he began to cry so loudly the whole palace could hear him.

“It’s me, my brothers!” he exclaimed. “Father is still alive?”

Speechless, all were stunned by the revelation and none could break the silence.

“I’m Joseph, the brother you sold into slavery. Don’t be angry with yourselves; I think all of this was God’s plan for me to save the family. You see, this famine will last another five years, and nothing will grow. But thanks to God, I’ve been given a great deal of responsibility. I was able to prepare for the famine by becoming second in command to the Pharaoh. Now, hurry back home and tell father that God has made me master over the land of Egypt, and for him to come down here right away!”

“We’ll all live in the land of Goshen and you’ll be near me with all your children and grandchildren. I’ll take care of you here, for the famine is far from over. Otherwise, if you stay in Canaan, you’ll become poor. Tell father how honored I am here in Egypt, and tell him about everything you’ve seen, and come back as quickly as you can.”

They all wept with joy, and Joseph embraced his brother Benjamin. When he had finished kissing everyone, the tension between them melted, and they talked about all that had happened since they had sold him to strangers for a pittance. News soon reached the Pharaoh that Joseph had been reunited with his brothers, and this greatly pleased him. “Tell your brothers to pack their animals and to return as quickly as they can. I will assign them the very best territory in the land, and they will grow wealthy from it! I’ll give them wagons to

carry their families back as well.”

To each of his brothers, Joseph gave new clothing - although he gave his favorite sibling Benjamin an extra three hundred pieces of silver. He sent 10 fully loaded donkeys back to Canaan, and when his sons returned home with the news of Joseph’s return, Jacob refused to believe it was true.

Finally, after seeing all the goods and hearing Joseph’s message, Jacob suddenly sprang to life. “My son is alive!” he exclaimed. “I must go and see him before I die.”

That night, Jacob was visited by God in a dream. “Jacob! Jacob!” he bellowed. “Don’t be afraid, insignificant ant. It’s me, the God of your ancestors. Go ahead and travel to Egypt. I’ll make sure you’ll become a powerful nation while you’re there. Although it’s true you won’t make it back here alive, eventually your descendants will come back to the land I’ve promised them. Just don’t concern yourself with any of the details, got it?”

And so Jacob and his entire household, sons, daughters, slaves and all, packed their belongings and made their way to the kingdom of Egypt. Unable to await their arrival any longer, Joseph boarded his chariot and met them halfway in the land of Goshen. When he arrived, he embraced his father, and both wept for what seemed like an eternity.

“I can die a happy man now,” Jacob said, choking back tears,

“because I’ve seen you with my own eyes!”

Joseph turned to his brothers and exclaimed “I’ll tell the Pharaoh about your skills as shepherds and breeders. Surely he’ll let you live here in Goshen instead, since shepherds are generally despised in Egypt.”

When the family was finally introduced to the Pharaoh, he asked them what their occupation was.

“We’re shepherds, my Lord. We’ve come to live in your land since there isn’t anything for our cattle to graze back in our homeland. We humbly ask to live here in Goshen.”

“It’s probably best if you stick around here, then” he observed. “Joseph, give them the best land available, and if any of them have special skills, put them in charge of my breeding programs, too.”

Finally, Joseph brought out his elderly father before the Pharaoh of Egypt.

“How old are you?”

“I’m 130 years old, but that’s nothing compared to how long lived some of my ancestors were!” And with that, Jacob performed his superstitious ritual to bless the Pharaoh, and the two parted ways.

INCOME TAX

Once Joseph had finished giving the proper nepotistic stipend to his family, he set to work continuing to manage the famine crisis in Egypt. By the fifth year, most of the Egyptian citizens had run out of money to buy food, and they came begging to Joseph for a government handout.

“Since your money is all gone,” he said, “why don’t you hand over your livestock in exchange for food instead?” With little choice in the matter, the citizens agreed, and soon, the Pharaoh had every domestic animal in his possession.

The following year, as the drought continued to intensify, the masses returned asking yet again for some form of entitlement program. “We’ll starve to death if you don’t give us food. We have nothing left to trade, except our bodies and the land. So, if you make sure we don’t die, we’ll become the Pharaoh’s slaves.”

Having himself miraculously survived and even thrived under a system of complete ownership of another human being, Joseph saw nothing wrong with the idea of turning every Egyptian citizen into a servant of the state. Only the priests avoided this fate, having already been allotted a designated amount of food.

With their lands now under Joseph’s administrative control,

he decreed that fully one-fifth of all of their produce would belong to the Pharaoh. Happy to be alive and with no way to protest this sudden invention of income tax, the people of Egypt rejoiced.

PASSING THE TORCH

One day, word reached Joseph that his father had taken ill, and so he travelled with his sons Ephraim and Manasseh to see Jacob one last time. When the old patriarch heard of his favorite son's arrival, he summoned all his remaining strength to sit up and greet him.

“When I was a young man,” he began, “Almighty God appeared before me and promised that one day, I would be the father of a great nation. He told me of his plans to dispossess the native Canaanites of their land and to hand it over to us. Now I will adopt your two sons; they will have the same inheritance as Reuben and Simeon will. But know that any other children born to you will only inherit land within the territory of either Ephraim or Manasseh.”

“Are these your sons, then?” he asked, half blind in his advanced age.

“Yes,” replied a proud Joseph, “these are the sons God has given me here in Egypt.”

Jacob placed his hand on the two boys to bless them, but before he could finish, Joseph grew upset when he noticed Jacob putting his right hand on the youngest son.

“You’ve got the wrong order, father!” he exclaimed

“I know what I’m doing, kiddo.” Jacob replied. “Manasseh, you will be the father of a great nation too, but your younger brother will be even greater. His descendants will outnumber all the others!”

When he had completed his ritual and set such high expectations, Jacob called all of his sons together so they could hear his final thoughts.

“Reuben,” he began, “you were first in line for my inheritance, but you had to be a defiant little shit and bang one of my concubines... in my own bed, of all places! It’s your own fault if you’re getting the shaft on this one.”

“Simeon and Levi: both of you are two of a kind: violent and psychopathic, to be exact. May my soul rest far away from you, and may I never be privy to your disgusting plans. I mean for the love of God, these two maniacs murdered men in cold blood and tortured animals for sport. That’s just twisted! As punishment for being psychos, I shall scatter your descendants throughout the nation of Israel*.”

*What could be better than to eventually let their descendants become the priest class?

“Judah, your brothers are going to be impressed by your achievements. You shall defeat your enemies and be like a lion that has finished eating its prey. Who will dare to rouse you? The scepter of power will be yours and your descendants’ until the day someone to whom it belongs will take it from you.”

“Zebulun, you shall take possession of the shores of the sea and build our harbors, and your territory will border with that of Sidon’s.”

“Issachar loves hard labor, and when he visits the countryside, he’ll undoubtedly fall in love with it and submit to the task of plowing the fields.”

“Dan will be a typical leader in these hard times: he’ll exploit his citizens, and be like a venomous snake that bites the heels of a horse so the rider falls off. Hopefully God will see to your salvation, and mine.”

“Gad will get plundered by marauding bands of barbarians, but will eventually get his revenge on them.”

“Asher will produce rich food and other delicacies that will always be in high demand by royalty”

“Naphtali is like a fawn on the loose. The quality of game in his territory will be unbeatable.”

“Joseph is like a fruit tree whose branches reach every corner

of the garden. He is a prince among his brothers and his descendants shall be more blessed than the everlasting mountains.”

“And finally, Benjamin is like a wolf-pack, attacking his enemies at the crack of dawn and dividing the plunder in the evening.”

And with that, the twelve tribes of Israel were blessed. With his final parting words, Jacob asked to be buried next to the remains of his beloved wife Rachel, and then drew his final breath. Joseph threw himself at his feet, weeping uncontrollably.

After the morticians had finished embalming the body, Joseph requested permission to take his father’s body back to Canaan to be buried. Pharaoh agreed and set him off with a number of guards and other officials, along with all his brothers. When the caravan arrived near the Jordan River, they held a grand ceremony there, and when they were finished mourning for seven days, they buried Jacob’s body in the cave his father Abraham had bought from the Hittites.

With their father dead, Joseph’s brothers became increasingly worried that their younger sibling might seek revenge. They sent him a message that read “Before dad died, he wanted us to tell you to forgive your brothers for that shitty thing they did to you. Please forgive us.” When he read it, Joseph broke into tears.

Not long after sending the letter, they visited him and bowed as low as they could before him.

“We’re not worthy, we’re not worthy!” they all exclaimed in unison.

“Don’t be afraid of me,” he said reassuringly. “Am I God now? Who am I to judge you? As far as I’m concerned, God turned that evil deed into something good. He gave me this cushy government job and helped me save countless lives (and enslave quite a few too!). Don’t worry brothers: I’m going to take good care of you and your families.”

Joseph would go on to live a long life, finally perishing at the age of 110, but not before making his sons swear an oath that they would bring his corpse back with them when the time had come for them to return to the land God had promised to help them take by force.