

**1. "ONE LITTLE BITE
WON'T HURT ANYTHING"**
BY SETH

**2. SINGING IN THE
RAIN?! BY BY NOAH**

3. TESTING! TESTING!
BY ABRAHAM

4. AN ONLY CHILD
BY ISAAC

5. THE TRICKSTER
BY JACOB

6. GOD MEANT IT FOR GOOD
BY JOSEPH

**7. WHEN COUNTING TO 10 DOESN'T
WORK**
BY MOSES

8. THE JUDGES
BY SAMUEL, GIDEON, DEBORAH, SAMSON

9. IF I COULD DO IT AGAIN BY SOLOMON



**OLD TESTAMENT
PEOPLE**

From Adam to Malachi

By Jerry Schmoyer Copyright © 1998

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10. THE GREAT UNCOVERUP BY DAVID

11. WISE BUT STUPID BY SOLOMON

12. WHEN YOU'D RATHER BE DEAD
BY ELIJAH

**13. WOULD A GOD OF LOVE JUDGE
SIN?**
BY ISAIAH

14. DARE TO BE A DANIEL BY DANIEL

15. HAND ME ANOTHER BRICK BY
NEHEMIAH

1. “ONE LITTLE BITE WON’T HURT ANYTHING”

By Seth

What was the worst day in your life? What do you think was the worst day in the world? Hitler gaining power? Pearl Harbor? The Inquisition’s start? The crucifixion? The worst day ever was the day Eve ate the forbidden fruit and Adam followed. THAT was the worst day ever! It changed my life and it changed yours, too.

You see, my name is Seth. I was born about 4526 BC when my father, Adam, was 130 years old. He lived to be 930 years old. Yes, Adam was my father and Eve my mother. I had lots of younger brothers and sisters, but its the older two you know about: Cain and Able (Gen 4:25 - 5:5). My name, Seth, means ‘substitute.’ I was Abel’s substitute. I never met him on earth. When I was born he was dead and Cain was far gone. It was a tragedy my parents never forgot.

Cain was very good at agriculture. He had that first-born determination and independence that drove him to want to be the best in all he did. He was religious, but didn’t have a personal relationship with God. With him, it was all external show, going through the motions. He would be very quick to get angry when he didn’t get his own way. I heard he was jealous of his younger brother, always wanting to prove he was better than Able.

Able was a shepherd, aware of the awful price of innocent blood being shed to cover sin. He knew it was just a picture of what God Himself would do for man one day in the future. He loved God and tried to follow Him in all he did.

One day, I was told, Cain’s jealous anger got the best of him and he took it out on Abel. Still, God was merciful to him and didn’t take his life in return. He did send him away to start his own civilization, not wanting him to continue to negatively influence those who were following God.

My parents were very hurt by this. They felt like a failure. They lost their first two sons at once. What a start for mankind! Perhaps if you knew a little about them it would help you understand all this better.



My father Adam, was a fine, outstanding man and a good father and husband. He was created by God as a full-grown, mature adult man. God then breathed His own image into him. But in order to understand Adam’s world we need to go back even further, back to the very beginning.

In eternity past only God existed (John 1:1). It was then He planned creation and salvation. He then created the world in its original form (Gen 1:1; Job 38; Exek 28:13). Before man or life was created, or the world formed into its current shape, Satan rebelled and was cast out of heaven for his pride (Isa 14:12-17; Ezek 28:11-17; Lk 10:18). As a result he was cast out of heaven, lost his holiness, and corrupted God’s original creation. One third of the angels followed him (now called demons).

It was then that God formed things into the world as we see it today. He did it in 6 24-hour days (Ex 20:8-11). He didn’t use evolution to do it. Nor did the creation days line up with the geological ages. He did a pure, independent work or creation. The main appeal in evolution is that it gives man an excuse to reject God and escape responsibility to Him. If there is a God then man is responsible to know and obey Him and man doesn’t want that. People are as proud as rebellious as Satan.

NEED FOR LIFE	“FORMLESS”	“EMPTY”
LIGHT:	1. Light made	4. Lights appear
WATER, AIR:	2. Water, air	5. Fish, birds
LAND:	3. Land, plants	6. Animals, man

Anyway, back to my story. My mother, Eve, was created to ‘fill up the empty spaces’ in my father. She was a fine wife and mother, but had to forgive herself for leading her husband to sin. He never blamed her but took full responsibility for it himself. Too often my mother is only remembered for her role in bringing in sin, but she was a loving woman who taught we about God. She told me often about that day, the worst day that ever happened. She wanted me to learn from it so I wouldn’t repeat it. Maybe there are some things you can learn, too.

Mother taught me that sin is always present. Satan hit them right away. They had no chance to ‘be fruitful and multiply.’ He’ll hit you as soon and as often as he can, too. God allowed the testing by telling them to not eat from the one tree. It was a way of growing in their faith and trust. Satan, however, used it to tempt them to disobey and sin (James 1:12-16). His method was to get her to doubt God’s word. He questioned if God really told her to not eat from ANY tree. I guess he attacked her alone with this because he thought she could be better misled. He implied God was withholding something good from them. He always knows how to make sin seem attractive, like bait in a trap.

Mother was wrong to listen to Satan’s lies, but she then did something worse, she tried to argue with him. She should have quickly fled (I Cor 10:13). Satan misquoted God when he said God said they couldn’t even “touch” the fruit. He always makes God out to be someone trying to take away man’s ‘fun.’ That’s what he meant when he said that God knew that when they ate they would be like Him, knowing good and evil (Gen 3:4-5). Using trickery and appealing to their pride, Satan got my mother to eat first, then my father. Eve was fooled, tricked into thinking right was wrong and wrong was right. Adam knew that wasn’t so. He willfully sinned, knowing what he was doing (I Tim 2:12-14). The results they suffered were devastating.

Satan was right, they then knew good and evil. They immediately discovered, though, that that

	PHYSICAL	MENTAL	SPIRITUAL
	Flesh Body Sensual man	Eyes Soul Worldly man	Pride Spirit Spiritual man
EVE	Good for food	Pleasing to eye	Gain wisdom
CHRIST	Stones to bread	All you see	Cast self down
US I Jn 2:16	Lust of flesh	Lust of eyes	Pride of life
	Lazy Drink-Drugs Sex Food Greed	Immodesty Greet, covet Steal, cheat Materialism Violence	Impress others Show off \$, clothes,etc Self-sufficiency Gossip
	Achan - Greed Jacob cheat Esau	David - adultery Solomon- women	Balak to Balaam\$ David - census Peter - fear

what he does!

knowledge wasn’t anything good to have! Their fellowship with God was broken. Adam blamed Eve, and she blamed the snake. All three were punished (Genesis 3). What a day it was!

From that day on Satan never stopped trying to get men to sin. Sarah lied, so did Isaac. Abraham acted in fear. Jacob deceived. Balaam and Achan gave in to greed. David lusted and sinned. So it went through the centuries. Watch yourself carefully. Satan’s good at



2. SINGING IN THE RAIN?

By Noah

“Ah, what a day! These old, stiff bones can’t work like they used to! It’s much easier to sit here and write on this old scroll. Let’s see, Methuselah, Lamech and Noah (that’s me). There’s nothing to write about, nothing but our lineage and ages. What boring reading. No one is going to want to read this scroll. Everything here is always so dull!”

“Wait a minute! Wait a minute! I think God is speaking to me. Yes! He wants me to write something. “When men began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. Then the LORD said, ‘My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years.’ The Nephilim were on the earth in those days-- and also afterward-- when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown. The LORD saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. (Genesis 6:1-8)”

“Whewww. I was starting to wonder there! ‘God,’ I said, ‘Are you really going to destroy everyone else?’ ... ‘You have a point there, 1500 years and nothing but sin! But what about me and my family? How will we be spared? You want us to build an ark, what’s that?’ ... ‘A boat, here, on this mountain -- people will laugh! Where will all the water come from?’ ... ‘Rain, what’s that?’ ... From clouds -- what are clouds?’

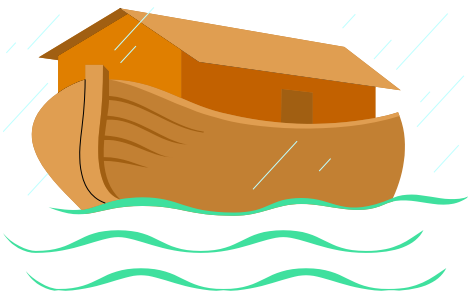
“OK, OK, so we make a little boat, I can handle that. We’ve made boats before. What’s that? It’s not a ‘little’ boat? Well, just what size are we talking about? 520’ long, 45’ wide, 75’ high? But that’ll take 100 years to build!” ... ‘What’s that, you say it’ll take 120 years? I’ll be 600 years old. People will really, really laugh!’

“And they did laugh, and laugh, and laugh. It was really hard building a boat that big by hand. I thought I had patience going into that project, but God really taught it to me then. People would watch and mock. I preached and pleaded every chance I got, but after 120 years I didn’t have a single convert!

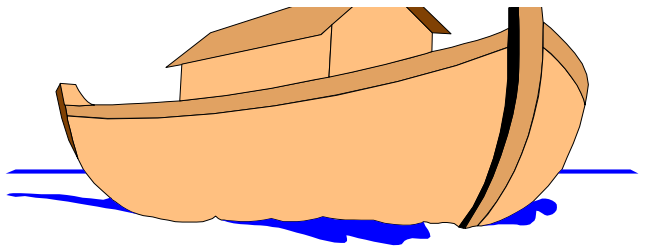
“My wife trusted me, but it was hard for her to see me put so much time into the ark. That meant that much less time to provide for our family needs. That ark cost lots of money, too. Shem, as firstborn, totally supported me and his wife was the kind that would follow her husband anywhere.

She grieved over her lost family, though. Ham was the family rebel, going the opposite direction of his older brother. He had a bad attitude about God and even me. He passed that attitude on to his son Canaan. I hated to see it but couldn’t do anything about it. His wife was critical, gossipy and worldly. She believed in God but didn’t exercise much faith. Japheth, the youngest boy, wasn’t as faithful as Shem, but neither was he as rebellious as Ham. He did have faith, but was busy with his own life. His was unsure but trusted her husband. His friends, too, rejected and mocked her. We

all learned to persevere, patiently work each day.



“When the ark was done God brought in the animals: two of each kind of unclean, 7 of each kind of clean. Then God shut the door and locked it. His presence was inside with us. That was our only source of warmth and light. It rained for 40 days and nights -- and we had never seen anything like rain before!



There was tremendous erosion, earthquakes and volcanoes from the underground upheaval and continents shifted apart and layer of sediment were laid down. The canopy was gone, and for the first time we had ‘climate.’ I couldn’t even imagine the changes going on in nature outside. The water was a mile deep, and was putting pressure on the earth under it for over a year. What a time it was!

“Meanwhile in the ark, however, we were very busy with daily activities: feeding and cleaning up after animals. That took much patience and perseverance for all of us. When you feel like quitting, remember us building that big boat then taking care of all those animals for a year!

“Finally the water receded and, with the water canopy gone, we could see a rainbow for the first time. And clouds -- we never saw anything like that before, either. God promised that He would never again destroy the world by water. But what changes everywhere. I’m sad to admit I lost my self control when I drank fermented grapes and got drunk. Unfortunately I had to learn things the hard way, too.

“I lived another 350 years after the flood and died at age 950. My sons spread out to populate the world. Shem went to what is now the Middle East: Jews and Arabs came from him. Japheth started the European nations. Ham went south and the Canaanites and Africans were his descendants.

“About 100 years after I died a descendant of Shem named Nimrod was born. He was an ungodly rebel, a murderer. He was worshipped as a baby/god in his mother’s arms (the start of Madonna worship). He claimed to die and come back to life. He was truly a picture of the Antichrist to come!

“He built a special chapel on top of one of the large towers they were building everywhere. It wasn’t any higher than the others, but was based on worship of the stars and planets in the sky. God had written his plan of salvation clearly in the stars, but Nimrod perverted that to take the glory away from God. He wanted to unite everyone instead of scattering them as God commanded. He wanted the power and glory for himself, much the same as Satan when he rebelled before the world was created. God’s way of ending this rebellion was to have people speak various languages so they couldn’t communicate. Therefore there was no way they could work and live together. What a unique way to judge man’s rebellion. They didn’t want to patiently obey and serve God, but wanted pleasure and immediate gratification instead.

“ ‘We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.’ (Heb 6:11-12)

“ ‘Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. ... As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.’ (James 1:4; 5:11)

“Well, I guess this scroll isn’t going to be so boring after all! My life certainly wasn’t. I wonder how the rest of the story will turn out? I guess it depends if men persevere and patiently trust God as they live for Him each day or if they try to take matters into their own hands and run their own lives. It’s up to you -- which will it be?”

3. TESTING! TESTING!

By Abraham

Do you like tests? I don't think anyone really does. They are necessary, though. They sharpen our skills and hold us accountable. They strengthen us and cause us to grow in whatever area we are being tested in. One could say life is but a series of tests. I know mine obviously was. Let me tell you about them and I'll bet you can see some close parallels in your own life. God wants to increase our faith muscles, and it takes pressure to make a muscle grow. God only wants to stretch us (like a rubber band), it's Satan who comes along and turns God's opportunity to grow into an opportunity to sin (James 1:12-15).

My name is Abraham, first Abram then changed by God to Abraham. I was born about 4500 years after Adam and about 2200 years before Jesus. My story starts in Genesis 12. The first 11 chapters of Genesis are God's wide-angle lens of history, covering those 4500 years in brief outline form. When the account gets to me it slows down to a crawl and God switches to His close-up lens. It's not that I'm so important, but that God used me to start His chosen nation, the Jews. He could have used Job or Melchizedek, outstanding believers who were also alive at my time. He chose me, the weakest, so He would get all the honor and glory for what He did. I certainly couldn't claim any of it! He wanted a nation to live for Him by faith. He wanted a people to use to reveal Himself to the world, to give the world the Bible and the Savior. He sought to teach me faith to pass on to my descendants. That is what all my tests were about. Some I passed, others I failed. You can keep count if you wish.

1. LEAVE UR (Genesis 11:24 - 12:9) God told me to leave Ur, the most advanced city of its day where the moon was worshipped. I had been there 60 years and it was hard to leave. I passed in that I went, heading to Haran 600 miles away. I failed in that I took my father and nephew, which was against God's orders and which caused me much trouble. I had to wait in Haran 15 years before I could continue until my sick father died. Then I went 400 miles to Palestine. By this time I was 75 years old.



2. FAMINE (Genesis 12:10-20) There was a famine in the land shortly after I arrived, and, instead of staying and trusting God I headed to Egypt (a picture of the world) to find food. I always had a problem with fear. I even said Sarah was my sister to protect my own life. If God wouldn't have saved us from Pharaoh that would have been the end of this new nation God was forming. He was faithful even when I wasn't.

3. WEALTH (Genesis 13:1-4) God had made me very wealthy in Egypt, a temptation to trust in the wealth instead of Him but I was faithful (Psalm 118:8-9; Prov 28:25).



4. CONFLICT WITH LOT (Genesis 13:5-18) Soon there wasn't enough land for Lot and myself so I let him have first choice, even though it was all mine. He chose the best for himself - Sodom.

5. LOT CAPTURED (Genesis 14:1-16) Lot got into all kinds of sin in Sodom. When enemies defeated Sodom, I had to decide if I would risk my life to rescue Lot. I went.

6. POWER & WEALTH (Genesis 14:17-24) Then the king of Sodom tried to give me riches for saving them all, but I knew God wanted me to depend only on Him so I turned them down, with the encouragement and support of Melchizedek (Psalm 40:4).

7. SON PROMISED (Genesis 15:1-21) Even though physically Sarah was way too old, God said I would have an heir (son). It was hard to believe, especially when time passed and nothing happened. I had to learn to trust God totally (Psalm 27:14; 37:5).

8. HAGAR (Genesis 16:1-4) While waiting Sarah came up with a plan that was culturally acceptable. It was for me to have a son by her servant and consider it hers. It seemed like a good way to solve the problem, and Sarah could be quite persuasive! I gave it.

9. ISHMAEL (Genesis 16:5-16) Having a son by Hagar just didn't work out. There was constant jealousy and turmoil in the family. Sarah told me to kick them out -- and unfortunately I did.

10. OBEY (CIRCUMCISION) (Genesis 17:1-27) By now I was 99, and still no son. I was too old to father a child, and Sarah way to old to conceive. Still, God told me to have all of our males circumcised as a sign of faith in His promise of a coming son. He even changed our names. I responded in faith and obeyed Him.



11. SON NEXT YEAR (Genesis 18:1-15) Now God's promises got even more specific. He said we'd have a son within the next year. Sarah was skeptical, but I believed God and not her.

12. INTERCESSION (Genesis 18:16-33) God showed me that Sodom and Gomorrah were going to be judged for their sins. Lot deserved to die, too, but I interceded for him, believing God could spare him in His mercy if He chose. God promised He would.

13. LIE ABOUT SARAH (Genesis 20:1-17) This retest was the same as test # 2, protecting myself by saying Sarah was my sister (so when she was taken to Pharaoh's harem I wouldn't be killed) or trust God by staying out of Egypt in the first place! Again I failed.

14. ISMAEL SENT OUT (Genesis 21:1-21) I didn't fail all my retests, though. When Sarah again wanted Hagar and Ishmael kicked out I went to God, willing to do whatever HE said. He said it was time for them to go and He'd take care of them, which He did. Finally I was able to put God above Sarah's pressure and my own fear and do what was right.

15. ISAAC SACRIFICED (Genesis 22:1-19) My faith in God was really tested when God told me to take Isaac and sacrifice him to God, but I did obey! Praise God for the strength to obey Him!

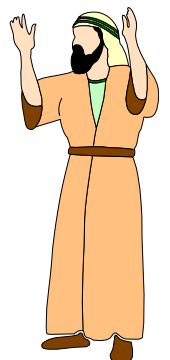
16. SARAH DIES (Genesis 23:1-20) My wife, Sarah, died when she was 127 years old. Life was empty without my mate. For all God had promised me, I didn't even have land to bury her on! I had to trust that God knew best when He took my life's mate. I also had to trust Him to help me be both mother and father to Isaac. God provided, even providing we with another wife, Keturah.

17. ISAAC'S WIFE (Genesis 24:1-9) Trusting God for a wife for Isaac was hard, but I followed His leading and sent Eleazar back to my home area to find a wife who was a believer in God. God provided Rebekah for Isaac.

18. DEATH (Genesis 25:1-11) I lived to be 175. My last test was to trust God when I was facing death, to trust Him with my soul at death and for all eternity. I had faith in Him and died in peace (Isa 26:4; Ps 9:9-10).

19. WHOLE LIFE I guess you could say my whole life was a test. I passed some and failed others. I did pass more than I failed and God was good and merciful to me. He included me as an example of faith in His "Hall of Faith and Fame," Hebrews 11:8-19. The Jews still know me as the "Father of the Faithful."

What about you? If God was keeping score in your life, how is your pass-fail ratio? How is it lately, any improvement? Remember, with HIS help you can do all things (Acts 1:8; Rom 15:13; Eph 3:16).



4. AN ONLY CHILD

As Isaac might have described this time
(Written by Jerry Schmoyer, copyright © 2014)

If you are an only child you'll understand how life was for me, especially if your parents are the age of everyone else's grandparents. My father, Abraham, was 100 years old when I was born. My mother, Sarah, was 90 (Genesis 21:5; 17:17). Truly I was a miracle baby. I will say this: they were very glad to have me. I don't know when a baby was more appreciated. I was special to God as well for He chose my name. 'Isaac' means 'laughter' (Genesis 17:19).

I was circumcised at eight days old, as was the custom. But by the time I was weaned at age two (Genesis 21:8) there were family problems. You see my father had gotten impatient waiting for me to be born so he followed my mother's suggestion that he have a son through her servant Hagar. This was an accepted practice in those days, especially when a wife didn't produce an heir. But by the time I was weaned that boy, Ishmael, had been treating me so cruelly because of his jealousy that my mother demanded he and his mother be sent away (Genesis 21:9-14). I later heard the story about how God had taken care of them. I knew He was taking care of me as well.

My childhood was normal for an only child. I had lots of love and attention. My parents taught me about God and I learned to love and trust Him at an early age. When I was in my middle teens a test came into my life which challenged my faith in God and my father. My father asked me to accompany him on a trip to go worship God (Genesis 22). That wasn't unusual, it happened quite often. What was different was that I noticed as we prepared for the offering that there was no animal to kill and sacrifice. When my father said I was to be the sacrificed I could hardly believe it. I always believed that I was very special in God's plan of making a large nation from my father and I was his only son. My father said he didn't quite understand it either but he felt that God would somehow bring me back to life after he killed me (Hebrews). Naturally the prospect of being put to death by my own father didn't thrill me, but I had been raised to trust and obey him and God as well. So I willingly lay on the altar – my father was too old to force me to do it against my will. As I awaited the knife to come down and end my life something very strange happened. God spoke and told my father he didn't have to kill me because He had provided a substitute, a ram caught in the bushes nearby. What a relief that was for both of us! We both praised God for His provision of a substitute.

I didn't understand it at the time, but later Bible students point out that my surrender and submission to be sacrificed on Mt Moriah as a type of Christ who was also obedient to death (Philippians 2:5-8). My father Abraham was a picture of God the Father who did not spare His own Son but delivered Him up for us all (John 3:16; Romans 8:32). The ram miraculously caught in the thicket and sacrificed instead of me is a picture of Jesus who was offered as a sacrifice in the place of all mankind (Hebrews 10:5-10). My father's assurance that we would go worship and together return (Genesis 22:5) pictures resurrection from death (Hebrews 11:17-19). I didn't understand these things at the time, but it was a great honor for God to use me and my faithfulness for His glory.

The next major event in my life was my marriage to Rebekah about 20 later, soon after my mother died. I was thirty-seven when she died. My father sent a trusted servant to Mesopotamia to seek God's will for a wife for me from among my own kin. I was forty when we married (Genesis 24). She brought me great comfort from the loss of my mother.

Several years later my father Abraham distributed his property, giving me his possessions while his sons by Hagar and Keturah after my mother died were sent away with presents. Ishmael and I buried Abraham in the cave of Machpelah and I moved to Beer-lahai-roi (Genesis 25:5-11).

Rebekah and I wanted to have children but it wasn't until after about twenty years of marriage, in direct answer to prayer, we were given two sons, Jacob and Esau (Genesis 25:21-26). Unfortunately Rebekah and I had grown apart over the years, and we turned to our sons to make up for what was missing in our marriage. I took great delight in Esau because of his manly, outdoor character. Jacob, a quieter type, was drawn closer to Rebekah. Unfortunately the faith of my childhood wasn't as strong in my later years.

That was seen also when a famine hit the land and, instead of trusting God for provision, I took my family out of the Promised Land to find food. I knew God's promises to my father and me, but I did not fully trust in His protection. I followed my fears and moved to Gerar, then called Rebekah my sister, afraid the people might try to kill me if they knew she was my wife. My father had done the same thing – twice. Unfortunately I was following his example. When Abimelech, the Philistine king where we had moved, found out the truth he strongly rebuked me but allowed us to remain in the land (Genesis 26:1-11).

Eventually my flocks and herds grew so large there wasn't room for me and the others living in the land. God was clearly blessing me. I eventually moved back to Beersheba where God again appeared to me and repeated all the blessings of the covenant. What a wonderful blessing from God!

When I was 100 and Esau 40, he married Judith and Basemath, daughters of Canaan, but they brought grief to Rebekah and me (Genesis 26:34-35).

As I got older my eyesight started to fade. Thinking my death would be near I requested Esau to make a special meal I enjoyed so I could eat it and then bless him before I died. I knew God's blessing was not to be bought or sold, and I also knew it was supposed to go to Jacob, but as I said I wasn't living by faith as I had in my youth. Anyway Rebekah found out about it and set up a trick where I would unknowingly bless Jacob instead. This so angered Esau he threatened to kill Jacob as soon as I died. Therefore we sent Jacob to Mesopotamia to get a wife from our family there (Genesis 27:41-28:6).

Many years later, when Jacob returned home with two wives and thirteen children, he found me living at Hebron. It was here I died at the age of 180 and was buried by my sons (Genesis 35:27-29).

My life is an example of someone who starts off strong in their faith when young but then gradually drifts from God. God, in His faithfulness, did give me those years of blindness at the end of my life where I had nothing to do but sit and talk to Him. He used that to bring me back to Him, but how much better it would have been had I never drifted from Him in the first place.

5. THE TRICKSTER

As Jacob might have described this time
(Written by Jerry Schmoyer, copyright © 2014)

Hello! My name is Jacob. I was the answer to my father's prayer (Genesis 25:21) but became the favorite son of my mother (Genesis 25:28). Actually Jacob is my nickname because when my brother was born I was holding onto his heel (Genesis 25:26) as if trying to take hold of what was his and make it mine. I did that after birth with our birthright (Genesis 25:29-34) and my father's blessing (Genesis 27:1-29). Later God changed my name to Israel, though (Genesis 32:28).

Like my grandfather Abraham, I traveled around a lot. I went from Beersheba to Bethel (Genesis 28:10-22), then to Shechem (Genesis 33:18-20), back to Bethel (Genesis 35:6-7) and to Hebron (Genesis 35:27). Also like Abraham, I built altars where I lived as I continued to worship and serve the God of Abraham and Isaac. Eventually I ended up moving to Egypt with my son Joseph. I did there at a very advanced age (Genesis 46-49).

My life was, for the most part, quiet and uneventful. There were some times of great excitement and activity, though, like when I went to Haran in Mesopotamia. I was escaping the wrath of my brother Esau for stealing the blessing my father wanted to give to him. I went to my uncle Laban's home (Genesis 28:10). On the way, at Bethel, I had a dream of a staircase reaching from earth to heaven with angels going up and down on it. God reiterated to me the promises He had given to Abraham, my grandfather, and Isaac, my father.

While in Haran I married sisters: Rachel and Leah. I had four sons from Leah: Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah. Rachel was jealous and wasn't having children so she gave me her servant Bilhah to have children for her. With her I had Dan and Naphtali. Leah then did the same thing, giving me her servant Zilpah, with whom I had Gad and Asher. Then Leah herself had Issachar and Zebulun. Finally Rachel was able to have children and had Joseph and Benjamin. I also had one daughter, Dinah. From these sons came the twelve tribes of Israel. Levi became the priestly tribe so wasn't counted among the tribes. To fill his place the two sons of Joseph, my grandsons, Ephraim and Manassah, each became a tribe. There was no tribe of 'Joseph,' but one from each of his sons.

Returning from my long stay in Haran, at the ford of the River Jabbok, I had another strong encounter with God Himself. I was fearful of my upcoming reunion with Esau (Genesis 32:7). I found myself suddenly engaged in a physical wrestling match with God which mirrored the inner wrestling going on in my soul with Him. For the first time in my life I could not conquer something in my own strength. Submitting to God's greater power, I found the peace I had been seeking. Because of this God changed my name to Israel which means "Prince of God." Jacob called the place Peniel – because he saw God face to face and lived (Genesis 32:30).

The impact of these experiences stayed with me and molded me into the man of God I was becoming. At the end of my life, when I was quite old (Genesis 47:28), I called my twelve sons around my bed to tell them what should befall them in the last days (Genesis 49:1). I talked to them in the order of their birth. My strongest words were spoken to Reuben, the firstborn, whom I admonished because of his sin (Genesis 49:3-4), and Simeon and Levi, whom I cursed for their anger and cruelty (Genesis 49:5-7). My greatest blessing from God was bestowed on Judah, who would be praised by his brothers and whose tribe would be the source of royalty (Genesis 49:8-12).

Following this scene, I died and was embalmed (Genesis 49:33; 50:2). By my own request my body was carried back to the land of Canaan and was buried in the family burial ground in the cave of the field of Machpelah (Genesis 49:29-32; 50:13). Learn from my life the importance of letting God break your self-sufficiency so you learn to depend only on Him. It's hard but very necessary.

6. GOD MEANT IT FOR GOOD

As Joseph might have described this time
(Written by Jerry Schmoyer, copyright © 2014)

Everyone wants to be loved and accepted by the others in their family, but what do you do when one likes you too much and the others not at all? That is not an enviable situation to be in, but one in which I found myself. My name is Joseph. I was the eleventh son of Jacob, but the first of his favorite wife Rachael (Genesis 33:2, 7). Therefore I, too, became his favorite. I was born in Haran while my father was still serving Laban (Genesis 30:22-25).

Because I was Rachael's first child, and because God had gifted me in many special ways, my father liked me more than my brothers. He even gave me special coat to show his favoritism (Genesis 37:2-4). While I enjoyed this special place over my ten older brothers, I knew it wasn't right and I felt badly for them. Their jealousy caused them to dislike me. I guess my reporting their evil conduct to my father caused them to dislike me even more. But what really make them upset was telling them about my dreams which foretold my leadership over them (Genesis 37:5-11).

Because of this my brothers found an opportunity to sell me as a slave to a caravan heading to Egypt. To cover up their deception, my brothers covered up my disappearance by convincing my father that I had been killed by a wild animal. In Egypt I was sold to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, and became a slave.

God was with me and blessed me even in my slavery. I became a very trusted servant and directed all my master's affairs. However when his wife tried to seduce me and I refused, she lied and blamed me for attacking her. To save face my master had to have me put in prison. But even there God blessed me and gave me great wisdom so that soon the head of the prison put its daily affairs into my hands (Genesis 39:1-23).

While in prison I correctly interpreted the dreams of two of my fellow prisoners, but it took two years until I was remembered and brought into the palace to interpret Pharaoh's dreams (Genesis 40). God revealed to me the meaning of the dreams. There would be seven years of plenty when the fields produced great harvests. Following this would be seven years of severe famine and starvation. I advised Pharaoh to store the extra food from the good years to help carry the country through the bad years. Because of my great wisdom and God's blessing, Pharaoh made me head over everyone, second only to him, so I could implement and carry out this ambitions plan. Pharaoh gave me a daughter of an Egyptian priest as my wife. Things turned out exactly as I had said. Each year the famine got worse and worse and people from many nations came and bought food from Pharaoh, as did the Egyptians themselves. As a result Pharaoh became even more rich and powerful. It was during these years that I had two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim (Genesis 41:47-52).

God was behind all this, using this to set up things so Joseph's brothers would need food and be forced to go to Egypt to get it. God used this to humble his brothers, to reunite them with Joseph, and to save the family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God also had to move them from Canaan where they were intermarrying and soon would no longer be a nation set apart to Him. In Egypt they were rejected and had to live alone, intermarrying as God intended, until they became a large, strong nation of two and a half million when Moses led them out of Egypt to freedom.

God used me in a special way for His work, but it was a painful life I lived. I had to remain faithful despite extreme suffering. God used all of it, even the rejection by my brothers, to bring about the good He had planned (Romans 8:28). "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish ... the saving of many lives" (Genesis 50:20). That truth still applies to your lives today.

7. WHEN COUNTING TO 10 DOESN'T WORK

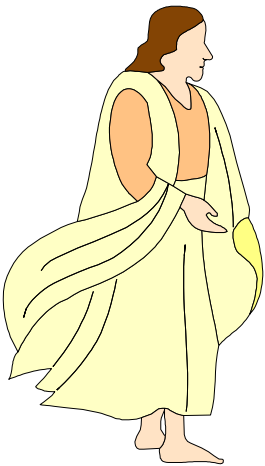
By Moses

"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry" (Eph 4:26) "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice" (Eph 4:31). "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love" (Eph 4:1-2). "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Col 3:12-13). These verses were all written by Paul, a man who lived 1500 years after me. They are in the New Testament. I didn't have them to read in my time, yet I knew the truths they taught. Unfortunately I didn't always follow them, and the results were disastrous.

This is the story of my life. I'm the man you know as MOSES

THE FIRST FORTY YEARS My father, Amran (Ex 6:20; Num. 26:59) and my mother, Jocabed (Ex 6:20; Num. 26:59), were both very godly followers of Jehovah. I had a sister, Miriam, who was 12 when I was born (Ex 2:4) and a brother, Aaron, 3 years older than me (Ex 7:17). I was born in about 1525 (Ex 2:2), in slavery in Egypt.

As you probably already know, my parents hid me for 3 months (Ex 2:2; Acts 7:20; Heb 11:23) but then had to trust my care to God almighty. God provided wonderfully, having me grow up in the Thebes raised by Pharaoh's daughter Hatshepsut (Acts 7:20-22). My mother was with me for the first several years of my life. As an Egyptian prince and heir to the throne, I had the best education possible. I became very skillful in leadership and scholarly skills. I had everything one could ask for - everything but self-control! Some might say I was indulged and spoiled. I saw my mother use her anger to get her what she wanted. During my childhood, when I should have been learning self-control (Lam 3:26-27), I was just learning to do what I wanted instead.



Then came the time when I had to decide: stay with Egypt and become the next Pharaoh or leave it all to go with the Jews, my people of origin (Heb 11:24-26). It was very hard to say "no" to my strong-willed Egyptian mother, who had spent her life grooming me for the priesthood. I also had to turn my back on the woman I loved, and that was extra hard. Unfortunately I did it in my own strength, as I was used to doing everything in life. My anger flared when I saw an Egyptian beating a Jew and I reached with violence (Acts 7:23-29). While God created anger to be a positive motivator to action (Eph 4:26). It is a secondary emotion, a wrong response to a more basic emotion like pain, hurt, frustration or fear. I was frustrated by not getting my own way, so I used anger to try to control the situation. That was sin. As a result I ended up committing murder and fleeing (Acts 7:25-29; Ex 2:15). I was 40 years old and found myself with nothing, away from home, having lost everything -- all because of my anger.



THE SECOND FORTY YEARS When I got to Midian I found some young woman being taken advantage of and abused (Ex 2:15-21). This time my response was righteous indignation, not self-centered anger, and I drove them off and protected the women. This led to God placing me in that family with the oldest daughter, Zipporah, as my wife (Ex 2:21-22). We had two sons (Ex 18:3-4). I spent much time alone in the wilderness, watching sheep. God was using this time to teach me self discipline, to humble me and have me learn patience and contentment. During the times along with God I learned much about Him, and was lead to write

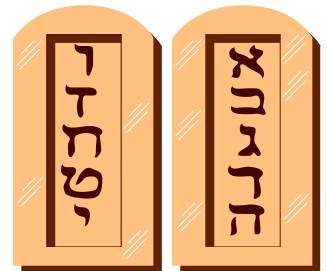
down things that had been passed down from generation to generation. I then wrote what you call the books of Genesis and Job. God was lovingly and patiently working on me.

Eventually the Pharaoh who wanted me dead died and another took his place (Ex 2:23-25). The Jews were groaning in bondage, pleading with God to send them a deliverer. One day called me to be the one to come bring them out of Egypt, but I didn't want to do it. It was too threatening, too risky, and besides I was still angry at the Jews (and, to be honest, a little angry with God, too) (Ex 3:1 - 4:17). I came up with 5 good excuses, objections to God's plan, but finally I gave in when God Himself got angry at me!

God got even angrier when I started back, for I hadn't obeyed Him totally in the matter of circumcising my second son (Ex 4:20-26). I gave in to my wife's anger, and to keep her from being upset with me I hadn't totally obeyed God. I was on the receiving end of anger in this. I had to decide between having God or my wife angry at me, I chose to please God. She had to go along, or I would have died, but then she left with my sons and we were never reconciled. Still, I knew I had to obey God first. At 80 years of age I was headed back to Egypt!

THE THIRD FORTY YEARS God Himself was with me, and he sent my brother Aaron to help me, but Pharaoh certainly didn't cooperate. Soon the Jews were angry with me, too. I was caught right in the middle! God sent a series of 10 plagues, ending with the death of the firstborn of all those who didn't submit to following God, and we were allowed to leave Egypt. God used a trap at the Red Sea to destroy the Egyptians and we were free! You'd think those people would be grateful and glad, but they weren't! You never heard such constant complaining and whining! Nothing was good enough for them!

When we arrived at Mt. Sinai I went up the mountain to get God's law, but when I came down the Jews had built a golden calf to worship Baal with terrible, immoral worship. God was angry at them, and so was I. I prayed for God to have mercy and spare them, and He did. I took my anger out on them, though -- first I broke the tablets God had carved (He gave them to me again, but this time I had to carve them myself). I ground up the idol and poured the powder in water which they had to drink.



Eventually we moved on from there, to Kadesh Barnea, where they were afraid to trust God and enter the land, so we had to wander for the rest of these 40 years. God still was with us and provided, but fellowship was broken by the nation's sin of unbelief. When Korah rebelled God quickly opened the earth to swallow up him and his whole family. Good things were going on during this time, too. I wrote the books of Exodus and Numbers during this time. Still, it was wasted time because Israel was carnal, out of fellowship with God.

Then it happened. Again. The Jews complained about not having enough water. I mean those people always complained about everything! I had had enough and again lost my temper at them (Numbers 20). As a result I wasn't allowed to enter the promised land. God did let me see it, though. I died at 120 years of age, not able to enter God's perfect will for us because of my anger. Watch your anger -- it will keep you from God's perfect will, too.

8. THE JUDGES

SAMUEL's birth was miraculous, for his mother, Hannah, wasn't able to have children until God blessed her with a son (1 Samuel 1:7-20). She consecrated him to God even before he was born (1 Samuel 1:11, 22, 24-28). When he was weaned he was taken to the Tabernacle and left for Eli to raise and train in God's service (1 Samuel 2:11, 18-19). God's blessing was on young Samuel (1 Samuel 2:21; 3:19).

While still a young boy God revealed to him that Eli's family would no longer be ruling as High Priests (1 Samuel 3:1-18). Samuel grew to be a special prophet (1 Samuel 3:20-21; 4:1) and judge of Israel (1 Samuel 7:15-17).

Samuel organized the Tabernacle service (1 Chronicles 9:22; 26:28; 2 Chronicles 35:18). His teaching and admonitions brought repentance to the people (1 Samuel 7:4-6). His intercession and sacrifices led to victory over the Philistines (1 Samuel 7:7-14). However he made his corrupt sons judges in Israel (1 Samuel 8:1-3).

When the people wanted a king like the other nations he protested (1 Samuel 8:4-22) but eventually anointed Saul (1 Samuel 9; 10) and later David (1 Samuel 16) as kings over Israel. He warned Saul about God's coming judgment on him (1 Samuel 13:11-15; 15) and sheltered David when he was escaping from Saul (1 Samuel 19:18). When he died the people grieved his loss (1 Samuel 25:1). He was a great man of integrity and served well as a judge and ruler (1 Samuel 12:1-5; Psalm 99:6; Jeremiah 15:1; Hebrews 11:32).

GIDEON was called to serve God while taking care of his harvest (Judges 6:11, 14). At first quite hesitant (Judges 6:15), he promises to serve the Lord (Judges 6:16). God provides a miracle to confirm his call (Judges 6:21-24).

Gideon then destroys the altar to Baal and builds one to the Lord (Judges 6:25-27). Struggling with obeying God, he puts out a 'fleece' to make sure he knows God's will (Judges 6:36-40). Then he leads a small army against the Midianites and defeats them with God's help (Judges 6:33-35; 7; 8:4-12). As a result Israel wants to make him king but he refuses (Judges 8:22-23). He was known as a man of faith (Hebrews 11:32).

DEBORAH was a prophetess in Israel. People came to her for help in settling matters of disagreement. God led her to send a message to Barak asking him to assemble ten thousand men to fight Sisera (Jabin's general). God assured them of victory. Barak said he would only do it if Deborah accompanied him. Because of his lack of faith, the honor of the victory was given to a woman, Jael. The victory brought rest to Israel for forty years.

SAMSON was a Danite, a son of Manoah, miraculously born to his wife although she was unable to conceive. God set him apart as a Nazirite from before he was born (Judges 13:2-7, 24-25). Instead of trusting God to provide a godly, Jewish wife he wanted a Philistine woman for a wife. On the way to her home he killed a lion with his hands and later touched the dead body gathering honey, thus breaking the part of the Nazirite vow about touching a dead body.

At his marriage feast he asked a riddle, the answer of which his new wife gave to the others there (Judges 14:8-19). To pay the debt he killed thirty Philistines to use their clothing as payment (Judges 14:19). Then he left his new wife (Judges 14:20; 15:1-2). It is highly likely that at a pagan

marriage feast alcohol was served, and if Samson drank any of it he would have broken a second part of his Nazirite vow.

When Samson eventually returned to his wife he found out her father had married her to another man he caught 300 foxes, tied their tails together and set them on fire and scattered them throughout the Philistine fields, doing great damage to their crops. To get back on him they burned the house his wife was in and killed her and her father (Judges 15:3-8).

Samson was known for his great strength (Judges 15:7-14; Hebrews 11:32). He killed a thousand Philistines with just the jawbone of a donkey (Judges 15:13-17). His downfall came when he started spending time with Delilah, a prostitute, who eventually discovered the secret of his strength and use it to have him weakened and taken prisoner (Judges 16:1-20). Having his hair cut for the first time in his life broke the third and final part of his Nazirite vow.

In humbleness he repented and turned back to God, who gave him strength one final time. With it Samson pulled down the Philistine temple he was in and thereby killed thousands of them while losing his own life (Judges 16:21-31; Hebrews 11:32). Samson is a picture of a man with physical strength but no moral strength. Allowing his lusts to control him defeated him and then brought about his premature death.

9. IF I COULD DO IT AGAIN...

By Saul

If only I could to do it over again..... If only, if only My name is Saul, and I wish I could tell you a different story, one with a happy ending. Unfortunately that isn't the case. If I could live my life over, knowing what I know now, that certainly would be the case. But we only get one chance at life

So lets start with the good. I was the first king of Israel (1 Samuel 9:2-31:12; 1 Chronicles 5:10-26:28). I lived in turbulent times. For many years, Israel had consisted of a loose organization of tribes without a single leader. In times of crisis, leaders had arisen; but there was no formal government. Samuel was the leader before me, but he was a spiritual leader, not a king. When the people insisted on having a king, even though God warned them through Samuel that they would regret it, they insisted.

Why was I chosen? Sometimes I wonder that myself. I was exactly what the people wanted, and I suppose that's why God chose me – to show them what would happen when they insisted on their own way. For one thing, I was a large man of attractive appearance, which led to his quick acceptance by the people. In addition, I was from the tribe of Benjamin, situated on the border between Ephraim and Judah. Because of this I appealed to both the northern and southern sections of Israel. Furthermore, I was a capable military leader, as shown by my victories early in my career. One of the most important episodes of my career was his first encounter with the Philistines. It seemed we would be defeated, but Jonathan saved the day and opened the door to our victory.

My first sin was my failure to wait for Samuel at Gilgal (1 Samuel 13:8-9). There I assumed the role of a priest by making a sacrifice to ask for God's blessing. My second sin followed soon afterward. After defeating Moab, Ammon, and Edom, I was told by Samuel to go to war against the Amalekites and to "kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey" (1 Sam 15:3). I carried out his instructions well except that I spared the life of Agag, the king, and saved the best of the animals. Then I lied and told Samuel that I had followed instructions exactly.

God allowed me to remain king, but His Spirit departed from me because I wanted to follow my own will and not God's will. From then on I was bothered by an evil spirit, a demon, that badly tormented me. It was during this time that Samuel anointed David as the next king.

Saul's disobedience in this case showed that he could not be trusted as an instrument of God's will. He desired to assert his own will instead. Although he was allowed to remain king for the rest of his life, the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul. He was troubled by an evil spirit that brought bouts of madness. Meanwhile, Samuel went to Bethlehem to anoint DAVID as the new king.

At first I was friendly to David, but when he started being popular because of his success against Goliath and the Philistines I became jealous and tried to kill him. As time went on I got further and further from God. Finally, after a 40 year reign, I and my sons were killed in battle.

It seemed I had so much promise at the start of my reign, but because I didn't obey God but thought I knew best I lost everything, eventually even my life. I could have done great things for God and for Israel, instead I left the nation in a shambles politically and spiritually. If only I could do it over again I would do it SO differently. Regrets are terrible to live with. Make wise, godly decisions now so you won't have regrets. You only get one chance at life, use it to follow God.

10. THE GREAT UNCOVERUP

By David



Hello! My name is David. Maybe you've heard of me? I'm mentioned over 1,000 times in the Bible, more than anyone else, even Jesus. In fact He's called the "Son of David" 12 times. Pretty special, huh?

I'm remembered for my greatest achievement - Goliath's death when I was full of the Spirit, as well as my greatest failure - Bathsheba's seduction, when I was full of the flesh. I guess one reason so many people like me is because they can identify with me in each case. Listen to my story and learn from it.

BACKGROUND I was the youngest boy in my family, the 8th son. I was a shepherd who killed a bear and lion protecting my sheep. I loved to play the harp and sing songs I wrote. My brothers mocked and rejected me, and my own father forgot about me for awhile when Samuel came to anoint Saul's replacement king over Israel.



GOLIATH I burst on the national scene when I killed Goliath, the 9+ foot giant champion of the Philistines. As a result our army defeated theirs and we regained our freedom. I became very popular, but this made King Saul very jealous of me. My life was in danger because of this.

COVER-UP # 1 From the ages of 17-29 I was running, hiding from Saul's wrath. I should have trusted God as I did with Goliath, but didn't. I took matters into my own hands. I fled during the night in fear, went to Samuel for advice and was promised God's protection. However I was full of fear and panic and I dumped that on Jonathan. I came up with a scheme to protect myself: ask Jonathan to lie to his father about my whereabouts. I told him to tell his father I had gone away to worship, and to let me know his father's response by shooting an arrow. I had fled in panic, then tried to cover up my sin of fear. As the baby of my family, I was pretty good at getting out of the consequences of my sin. I didn't want to admit and confess my sin. It was easier to blame others (as Eve and Adam did). You know, often the cover-up is worse than the sin itself (1 Jn 1:6-10). Joseph's brothers tried to cover up their wrong treatment of him by selling him and lying to their father, they were racked by guilt the rest of their lives and many innocent people were badly hurt.

Anyway, I went to Abimelech, the priest, as I fled Saul. I lied again, pretending to be on a secret mission for Saul. He helped me, and when Saul found out he helped me Saul killed him and 85 other priests! All that happened because of my cover-up of sin.

I fled to the Philistines, our enemies, for protection. I pretended to be insane so I could stay. Instead of trusting God I had sunk low in my attempts to cover up and not have to confess my sin so I could turn to God for His protection and help. When I finally did that God did help. Twice I was able to resist getting revenge on Saul. I didn't do quite so well against Nabal, but Abigail intervened and kept a disaster from coming. God was with me.

COVER-UP # 2 Soon, however, I again fled to the land of the Philistines. God forbid His people to live there, but I was out of His perfect will for my life. All went smoothly at first, it seemed 'doors opened' for me. It wasn't God's blessings, though, but Satan's trap developing. Through a series of deceptions, trickery and half-truths my followers and I got our own city, Ziklag. I was again meeting my own needs in the flesh instead of trusting God to meet them.

Soon thousands of disgruntled Jews had joined me in hiding from Saul, and I didn't have enough food to feed them all. What did I do? I provided for myself instead of trusting God with my needs again. I attacked neighboring tribes, killed them and stole their food. By killing everyone there

was no one to tell who did it. I told the Philistines I was killing Jews and stealing their food, and they thought Jews were attacking their people. Again I was trying to cover up my sin, and again the cover-up was worse than the sin. Again the cover-up resulted in murder.

I almost had to help the Philistines fight the Jews (lying catches up with you) but God bailed us out and the Philistine army sent us home instead. When we got home we found our city Ziklag plundered and burnt. What goes around comes around, but they didn't kill our families. They took them captive. We repented of our sins and God enabled us to win back our loved ones. Meanwhile the Philistines had attacked the Jews, and Saul and his family were killed. The door was open for me to become king.

COVER-UP # 3 God did many wonderful things through me, and I tried to love and serve Him with all my heart, but once again I gave in to my old sin pattern. When not stopped early they become much harder to break later in life.

I was 50 years old, half way through my 40 year reign. I was popular, loved by everyone. I had made Jerusalem my capital and gathered materials to build a beautiful temple to God. I wrote many Psalms and led in worship. I was rich and prosperous. The lands of Israel had increased 10-fold. Israel was at its high peak as a nation. I was successful, a sitting duck for attack. And it came!

One spring I stayed in Jerusalem, enjoying my success, instead of fulfilling my God-given responsibility of leading God's army against our enemies (II Samuel 11). Because of this I was in a position to see a woman bathing, naked. Instead of looking away and moving on, I lusted and took action to have her brought to me. Again I was trying to fill my needs myself, instead of trusting and waiting for God's provision. Again it ended in a cover-up: do whatever is necessary to make it seem like her husband, who was away in my army, made her pregnant and not I. Again it ended in murder for I had him killed. My life and the nation went downhill from here.

As I later looked back on it, I could see that Satan had been setting up this trap for many years. First there was the pattern started in childhood of meeting my own needs my way and then covering up so I wouldn't get in trouble. Also, there was a pattern of lust that started early in my life. I was always lusty, sensual, enjoying things of the flesh -- forbidden as well as legitimate. In my 20's I disobeyed by taking several wives, indulging my sexual lusts. I had dozens of wives and concubines, I didn't need Bathsheba. This continued in my 30's and 40's and culminated with my sin with Bathsheba in my 50's. Satan had been setting up this trap for 30 years, and it worked!

Watch those 'little' lusts and sins. Watch the small cracks that develop in your personality. Watch that lie that says you can meet your own legitimate needs in your way and your timing. Watch that pride that motivates you to cover up your sin instead of admitting and confessing it.

As a result of this sin I lost my testimony to Bathsheba, my friends, my servants, my family, the nation, and even to my enemies (II Sam 12:14). My relationship with God was broken until I humbled myself and confessed it. Consequences from this sin continued throughout my life, and even down to today. My family, and the nation, started a slow decline from this time. Never has Israel achieved the greatness it had right before this sin.

Ask God to search your heart now. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24). Confess whatever He shows you. Don't ever cover up sin. It'll always catch up with you and cause you deep regrets. Learn from me. Don't cover up your sin.



11. WISE BUT STUPID

By Solomon

If I had to describe myself in one phrase it would be “very wise but also very stupid.” You see, I was both. My name is Solomon, which means ‘peaceable.’ When my father David died I became king in his place (1 Kings 1:33-39). He had given me instructions as to how to govern God’s people (1 Kings 2:1-9). I knew it would take great wisdom to lead the people as God wanted so when I was asked what I wanted from God it was wisdom I requested (1 Kings 3:5-15).

Wisdom became very important to me, and God showered it on my (1 Kings 4:29-34). I even wrote a book called Proverbs which contains 917 proverbs conveying some of my wisdom. Only Jesus had greater wisdom than I had (Matthew 12:42) but God will share His wisdom with you if you ask (James 1:5). God enabled me to use wisdom in my duties as king (1 Kings 3:16-28).

My father David had made plans for a temple to God but was not allowed to build it. I was given that privilege (1 Kings 8:10-15). God was pleased, and promised to bless me and my descendants if we lived in obedience to Him (1 Kings 9:1-9).

Not only did God make me the wisest person on earth, He also made me the richest even though I hadn’t asked for riches (1 Kings 10:14-15, 23-29). Because of my great riches and the wonderful kingdom my father David had left to me, I had many opportunities to marry women from other countries. This was a way to seal friendship or treaties with them. Here’s where my stupidity showed itself – I married 700 wives and 300 concubines, women who weren’t followers of Jehovah God, and they led me astray (1 Kings 11:1-6). This was against God’s laws and commands (Deuteronomy 17:14-17). God became very angry because of this (1 Kings 11:9-13, 31).

Another unwise thing I did was to keep raising taxes to finance my extravagant life style. That lead to problems among the people, and eventually to the nation splitting after my death. I did have the privilege of ruling in Jerusalem for 40 years before I died (1 Kings 11:41-43).

So not you can see how I was wise but also stupid. Disobeying God is always stupid, no matter how much wisdom or money you have. I had more of each of them than anyone alive, but they didn’t make up for my failure to stay true to God.

What tempts you to stray from God? Despite His many blessings on you, where do you drift from Him? Don’t be stupid, always do what He says for He knows what He is talking about!

12. WHEN YOU'D RATHER BE DEAD

By Elijah

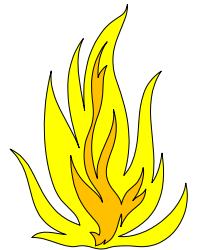
I don't know if you have ever noticed or not, but when an animal falls into water how long it swims before drowning depends on how it accesses its chances of getting out. If the situation is hopeless with no way out an animal will give up right away and drown. If there is a glimmer of a chance of getting out the animal will swim until that chance is attained or gone. If the chance is good, even if it takes a long, long time, the animal will keep on swimming until it is safe. How long an animal stays afloat depends on how much HOPE it has for future relief.

That is true of human beings, too. Everyone needs hope. If things seem hopeless depression results. Eventually only death seems to be a solution and suicide is contemplated. This is Satan's plan to defeat and destroy people. Often it works. I know, it almost worked with me. My name is Elijah.

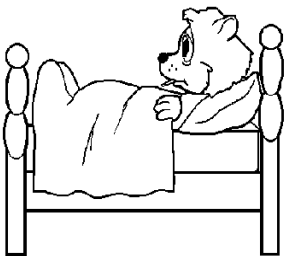
During the times I lived people were self-seeking, greedy and self-centered. People were outwardly religious, but inside had no true relationship with God. As a result many were discouraged, depressed, guilt-ridden, lonely, fearful and feeling hopeless. The times were ripe for Satan to use one of his favorite tools: discouragement/depression. He used them well on me. I wasn't the first one or the only one he's had success with, though.

"Why are you downcast (depressed), O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? ... My soul is downcast (depressed) within me" (Psalm 42:5-6). Depression is universal. It is as old as mankind itself. It hits everyone. No one is immune. Job, the oldest book in the Bible, speaks of Job in depression (Job 7:3-11). Moses got depressed (Num. 11:11-15), so did Jonah (4:3) and Jeremiah (15:10-18). Depression affects all areas of life and being. At its root, depression is self pity. We feel sorry for ourselves, thinking things are too hard and God isn't fair to us. It is a self-imposed pity party! My experience is a perfect example:

I am known as a tremendous man of faith and power. More miracles are associated with my ministry than anyone else in the Old Testament. God ended a long, terrible drought when the people turned back to Him after He used me to defeat the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel (I Kings 18). I responded by running away and asking God to take my life. Why? What caused this? I Kings 19 is an interesting account of depression: its time, trigger, tortures and treatment.



The **TIME** of my depression is quite surprising (v. 2-4). I wasn't depressed when fed by a raven or widow, nor when facing Ahab or the prophets of Baal. It wasn't until after it was over, when I experienced an emotional let-down, that I got depressed. Always watch, after every high point in life the only direction is down. If we go by our emotions we'll let our feelings control, as I did. Always make sure your mind explains reality to your emotions and not the other way around.



What **TRIGGERED** my depression was a single threat of a defeated woman. Queen Jezebel said she'd kill me for what happened. She was powerless, everyone had turned back to God. There was no reason for me to get depressed. The immediate cause of depression seldom is valid. It's just the timing of it more than anything else.

I felt hopeless. Hope, as the Bible uses it, refers to confident assurance (Heb 11:1; Rom 8:24-25). It isn't a wish or want. It is something guaranteed, as good as done, 100% sure. It's like your 'hope' of spring when snow is two feet deep and everything is icy. You know it WILL come sometime. Our confident assurance is in the promises of God. He says He will meet all our needs (Ps 84:11; 23:1-3; Mt 6:33; Phil 4:19; Heb 13:5). He guarantees He will help us through trials (Ps 126:5; 91:4,14-16; Isa 66:13; Rom 8:28; James 1:3; I Cor 10:13). God assures us we have nothing to fear (Ps 118:6; 23:4; Gen 26:24; 15:1; Ex 14:13; Josh 1:9; Isa 41:10; Dt 31:6; Mt 14:27; II Chron 32:7-8). We can count on His guidance (Ps 48:14; Ps 23:1-3; 32:8; Prov 3:5-6; Isa 42:16). We will never be alone (Heb 13:5; Gen 28:15; Rom 8:38-39; Ex 33:14). He promises strength for whatever comes (Phil 4:13; II Cor 12:9; Dt 33:25; Isa 40:29). When my life was threatened I went by my emotions instead of claiming these truths in my mind. I looked at my resources and abilities and saw they were totally insufficient, so I became fearful. I should have looked to God for His resources, but I didn't. Instead I ran and hid.

My **TORTURES** were the same as yours are today (v. 4). I ran away from my friends and responsibilities, I was disgusted with life and prayed for death, I felt all alone, as if no one cared.

The most important part, though, is God's **TREATMENT** for me. Physically I had to eat and sleep (v. 5-7). Our physical being must be healthy in order to overcome depression. Take care of your health! Psychologically God let me talk, get it off my chest (v. 9-10), and God just quietly listened. Spiritual God revealed Himself to me in a still, small voice (v. 11-15), not in a powerful, supernatural way as I wanted. Then God gave me work to do (when depressed stay faithful to your responsibilities) and explained that I wasn't alone. Knowing I wasn't alone is very important.

Still, there was always a **TRACE** left, for victory over depression is never permanent. It can always come back. Final **TRIUMPH** comes only by faith in God and His Word (Rom. 8:28; James 1:2-3; I Cor. 10:13; I Thes. 5:18). Read and memorize this to help. Remember me and learn from me about how to avoid and defeat depression.

I learned my hope is in God, and in Him alone (Isa 39:7; Jer 17:7; Rom 15:13). He never let me down, although I often let Him down. Our hope is in the Lord. John Newton, a one-time slave trader, was converted and became a great preacher. He wrote "Amazing Grace." For 2 years before his death he was so weak that he could hardly stand in his pulpit; someone had to support him as he preached. Shortly before he died he told a friend, "I am like a person going on a journey in a stagecoach, who expects its arrival every hour and is frequently looking out of the window for it -- I am packed and sealed, and ready for the post."

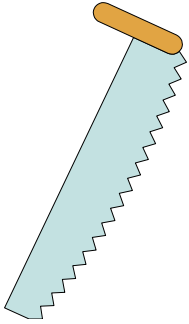
That is our hope, too. God is in total control of everything and everyone. We know (not just wish) that God is in control of everything in this life, and all He does is for our good (Romans 8). We know (not just wish) that when we die we will immediately be with Him in heaven for all eternity (Luke 23:43). Best of all, we know (not just wish) that at any moment the Lord may appear in the clouds to take us to heaven to be with Him. This is our greatest, most blessed hope (assurance). "While we wait for the blessed hope-- the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him" (I Thes 4:13-14). Is that your hope? If your hope is in anything else you will be depressed!



13. WOULD A GOD OF LOVE **JUDGE SIN?**

By Isaiah

Tomorrow I die. It's been decreed, and unless God miraculously intervenes, it will surely happen. I don't mind dying. In fact, I look forward to going to heaven to be with my God. I have so many questions to ask Him, even about things I myself taught and wrote. There are numberless blessings to thank Him for personally. Death has no fear for me.



I'm not looking forward to the means of it, though. I'm to be forced inside a hollow tree and sawn in half (Heb 11:37). To make this worse, it is my own countrymen who are doing this to me. God's people, His chosen people, from Jerusalem, the city of peace, the ones God sent me to teach and warn, they will be doing this thing. A couple of months ago they arrested me. I've been their prisoner every since.

From Adam to Malachi

By Jerry Schmoyer Copyright © 1998

You might be wondering why my fellow Jews, those I have spent my life trying to help, would do this. It's all because God personally revealed Himself to me.

I sort of feel like taking one more trip down memory lane, thinking through my life one more time before it is over. It's a long story, too long for the remaining hours I have left. I can tell you a short version of it, though. I've had some really nice and some very strange things happen in my life. Sometimes I played a harp and sang my messages. Did you know I walked around barefoot and naked for 3 years (Isa 20:2-3)? Let me go back to the beginning.

Have you ever seen God? I have, and it's quite something (Isaiah 6:1-8)! He came and spoke to me personally, visibly! I tell you I'll never forget it! I still don't know why God chose me. I was the 7th child of my father Amoz. My name, Isaiah, means "Jehovah is salvation." He passed his strong faith in God on to me. We were wealthy and important people, and I was given a godly woman to be my wife. From the moment I saw God, though, my whole life was changed. From then on I couldn't forget His greatness and His holiness. That reformed my image of Him. I understood why Moses took off his shoes in His presence, as did Joshua (Ex 3:5; Josh 5:15).

This is what happened: In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" (Isa 6:1-8)

I knew sinful man couldn't stand in His presence (1 Sam 6:20). It's an awful thing, in a good way, to come before the almighty and holy God of the universe. It keeps everything else in proper perspective. If we don't recognize how awesome and holy He is we won't see our sinfulness as it really is. If we don't see how great He is we won't see how small and insignificant we are. We won't realize how much we need His presence, strength, wisdom, support, love and mercy.

Everywhere around me things were falling apart. Our once great nation had split in two. Our once godly nation was now turning from God and to evil pagan practices. The north, Israel, was in its final days. The south, Judah, wasn't much better off. Sexual immorality was rampant. Other gods were put before Jehovah. Rich were oppressing poor. The economy was shaky, taxes were too high. Man had relegated God to a little box, Someone to pay empty tribute to on a few national holidays. They had forgotten that a holy God cannot overlook sin (Prov 1:31; Gal 6:7-8).

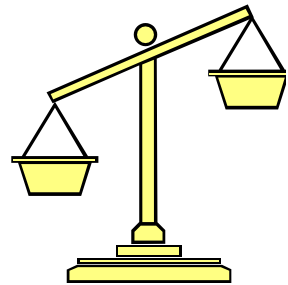
A long series of ungodly kings took things from bad to worse. God sent prophets to warn them to repent and turn back to Him, men like Joel, Hosea and Micah, but nothing changed. God gave me a vision of His greatness and glory to pass on to the people (Isa 5:16; 63; 29:23; 57:15).

Because He is holy, He wants His children to be holy, too (Lev 11:44; 19:2; 20:26; Mt 5:48; 1 Pt 1:15-16). Because He is holy He judges sin (Rev 6:10). Sin brings judgment (Ps 9:15-16; 94:23). I gave these warnings to the people over and over, year after year, but they wouldn't heed them. They missed God's holiness and assumed judgment would never come on them. God was merciful and withhold His judgments for several more generations. This just made it worse, like flood waters held back by a dam until they finally break forth. God is very patient and merciful, but won't withhold His judgment forever. Because He is holy He just cannot.

My message was to proclaim the holiness of God. Without seeing that, how can you really worship god? (Ps 30:4; 48:1; 98:1; 99:5; Rev 15:4). God's holiness will continue forever (Heb 1:8). When we get to heaven we will clearly see it. I will see it in a few hours.

Tomorrow I die. Then I get to see and talk with god again. I'll spend eternity with His holiness. One day you will, too. Then you'll see what I'm talking about when I refer to God as holy. Until you see it for yourself, take it from the testimony of those who have seen Him.

Moses saw God as I did and said "Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you-- majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?" (Exodus 15:11). The psalmist says "He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant forever-- holy and awesome is his name. " (Psalm 111:9). When you see God's holiness your response will be the same as mine, the only possible response anyone who sees God's holiness can have: "Here am I, Lord -- send me!" (Isa 6:8). Is that your response to God's holiness? As Him to reveal Himself to you. Then you, too, will never be the same.



14. DARE TO BE A DANIEL

By Daniel

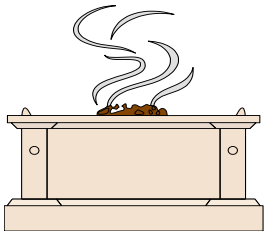
Suppose tonight your country was attacked and defeated, and the victorious enemies took you from your family to their capital to serve them. What would you think? How would you feel? What would you do?

Hypothetical, you say? I certainly hope so! I thought so, too, until it happened to me. I was taken from Jerusalem to Babylon when I was 14 when Judah was defeated (Dan 1:1-2).

INTO CAPTIVITY (14 years old) My name, Daniel, means “God is my judge.” My godly parents brought me up in the faith of the Lord. The northern kingdom, Israel, had long ago fallen to Assyria. Many in south (Judah) thought that would never happen to us. My parents thought differently and prepared me for it. Still, how does one prepare for losing their family, friends, home land -- everything they have? I knew God was sovereign and still in control of all, that’s what I rested my hope on.

KING’S TRAINING PROGRAM (15 years old) I was chosen to be put into a special training program to serve the King of Babylon. It was a great opportunity to live a good life instead of dying young from overwork as a slave. Anyone would have jumped at the chance, and I thanked God for it, but there was a catch. I would have to disobey God’s law and eat non-kosher food. Even though I knew I could be sent out to toil as a slave, I refused to eat. The end does not justify the means. I would be faithful, God would take care of the consequences if He desired.

Praise be to God, He chose to prosper me and honor my stand. Glory to His name!



NEBUCHADNEZZAR’S DREAM (18 years old) Soon another problem presented itself. Nebuchadnezzar, the king, had an awful dream. He wouldn’t tell his advisors what it was for he knew they’d come up with some kind of meaning. He could only know they had supernaturally received an interpretation if they also received the dream itself. Of course, none of them could know the dream, so he decided to kill us all! By His grace He revealed the dream and its meaning to me and I passed it on to the king, making sure God got all the glory for it!

The dream was of a large statue whose gold head stood for Babylon, silver chest for Medo-Persia, bronze thighs for Greece and iron legs for Rome. It was an outline of world history.

IDOL WORSHIP (20 years old) Nebuchadnezzar was so impressed by the dream he decided to make it all apply to him. In his pride he built a golden statue and had everyone worship it. I was gone on assignment, so my friends Hannaniah, Azariah and Mishael had to decide what to do. To refuse to worship meant death. They refused to worship and were to be thrown into a fiery furnace. They knew God was able to deliver them, but they didn’t know if that was His will for them or not. As it turns out it was, and they were protected from the flames. All that happened was that the ropes that bound them were burnt away. Praise God for His sovereign control!

VISION # 1 (53 years old) Many years later God gave me more details about the coming world empires from my day to the end. Instead of a statue God used animals to describe characteristics of the coming kingdoms: lion for Babylon, bear for Media-Persia, leopard for Greece and beast for Rome (Dan 7). God’s sovereign control over history future was clearly revealed (I Chron 29:11). “Our God is in heaven, He does whatever pleases Him” (Psalm 115:3). We can’t understand all about Him and what He does (Isa 55:8), it is all by His sovereign choice (Rev 4:11). He controls the angels, nature, history past, present and future and all mankind.

VISION # 2 (54 years old) Shortly after God gave me many more details about the middle two empires, the ones soon coming (Dan 8). Those were the ones I was most interested in. A ram (Medo-Persia) and goat (Greece) were used in this vision. The focus was more on our enemies, preparing us for what would come. Alexander the Great and Antiochus Epiphanes were prophesied and many details given. God is in control of nations, even each individual in each nation. I was greatly humbled by this, as anyone who thought about God must be humbled.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR HUMBLLED (76 years old) Not everyone was humbled by God’s sovereign control, though. Nebuchadnezzar was very prideful and arrogant, taking credit for great Babylon as if he had

done it without God's help! God warned him (Dan 4:29-34) but he refused to humble himself, so God allowed him to live and act like an animal for 7 years until he turned to God for help and deliverance. God healed and restored him and then he gave all the credit and glory to God!

HANDWRITING ON THE WALL (86 years old) Before too long, though, Belshazzar replaced his father Nebuchadnezzar as king. He, too, was very proud and mocked God. He blasphemed God by using utensils from God's temple in Jerusalem for a pagan orgy. God wrote on the wall that judgment was coming (Dan 5). No one could read it, so I was sent for to interpret it for them. The prophecy was fulfilled that very night when Darius and his Medo-Persian army entered the complacent city and took over Babylon's kingdom.

LION'S DEN (93 years old) Darius was just as proud and self-sufficient as the rulers before him had been, so it was easy to trick him into signing a law that only he could be worshipped. When I refused to worship him and was therefore condemned to death, he realized his pride had tricked him but it was too late. He couldn't save me, but God could. Even among many starving lions I was safe for I was under God's sovereign control as if I'd have been safely sleeping in my own bed. Darius recognized God's total control over everything through this and worshipped him. He wanted everyone in his kingdom to worship my God, too.

VISION # 3 (94 years old) I had been praying to God about the future things He had revealed to me, asking for more details and information. I knew we could leave Babylon after 70 years of captivity (Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10). What then? God told me our future would consist of 70 7-year periods. The first 483 years will be from when we can return to Jerusalem until when the Messiah is rejected (Dan 9). Then after a gap of undetermined time will be one final 7-year period before the Messiah returns to set Himself up on David's throne forever. What a God! "Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord is the Rock eternal" (Isaiah 26:4).



VISION # 4 (95 years old) After 3 weeks of praying and fasting about these things the Lord had been showing me, God gave me one more vision. It turns out the answering angel/messenger was held up by Satan's forces (Dan 10). He gave me more information about the future, especially about the coming Antichrist and the battle of Armageddon.

God is totally in control of everything. "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:37-38).

My message to you is that no matter what happens, trust God. Eli said, "He is the Lord; let Him do what is good in His eyes" (1 Sam 3:18). Job stated, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised" (Job 1:21). Jesus Himself said, "Not my will but Thy will be done." He taught us to pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done." Make that your prayer, too. Rest in God's sovereign control over everything and everyone. No matter what trust in Him. "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights" (Hab 3:17-19).

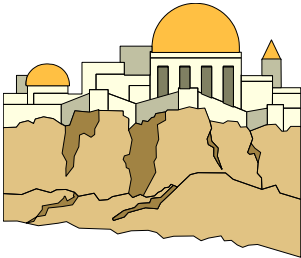


15. HAND ME ANOTHER BRICK

By Nehemiah

My name is Nehemiah. I was a leader of the Jews. Some people think being a leader is hard. It's really quite easy. All you need is inexhaustible patience, unfailing insight, unshakable stability, unbreakable will, decisive judgment, indefatigable physique, irrepressible spirit and unfeigned affection for all people. I didn't have that. But God helped me with it.

If you are a leader, perhaps there's something you can learn from me. If you have a job, a family or a friend, then you are a leader. A leader is someone who knows where he is going and how to get others to follow him. Being a leader is something you ARE, not something you DO. It's a function, not a title conferred by others. That's the way it was for me.



I lived in Babylon after Jerusalem fell to Babylon. My story starts in Babylon, 100 years before I was born. **ZERUBBABLE**, grandson of the 2nd last king of Judah (Jehoiachin), led the first group of Jews back to Jerusalem. Not many wanted to return, though - about 1 of every hundred. Most didn't want to leave the prosperity and good living in Babylon to return to a depressed and ruined country. Of course some, like Daniel (who was in his 60's) were too old to go back.

When Zerubbable led his group of 15,000 back, God provided Haggai and Zechariah to preach while he led work on rebuilding the temple. They didn't get too far, though, before they stopped for 20 years. Then they finished their work.

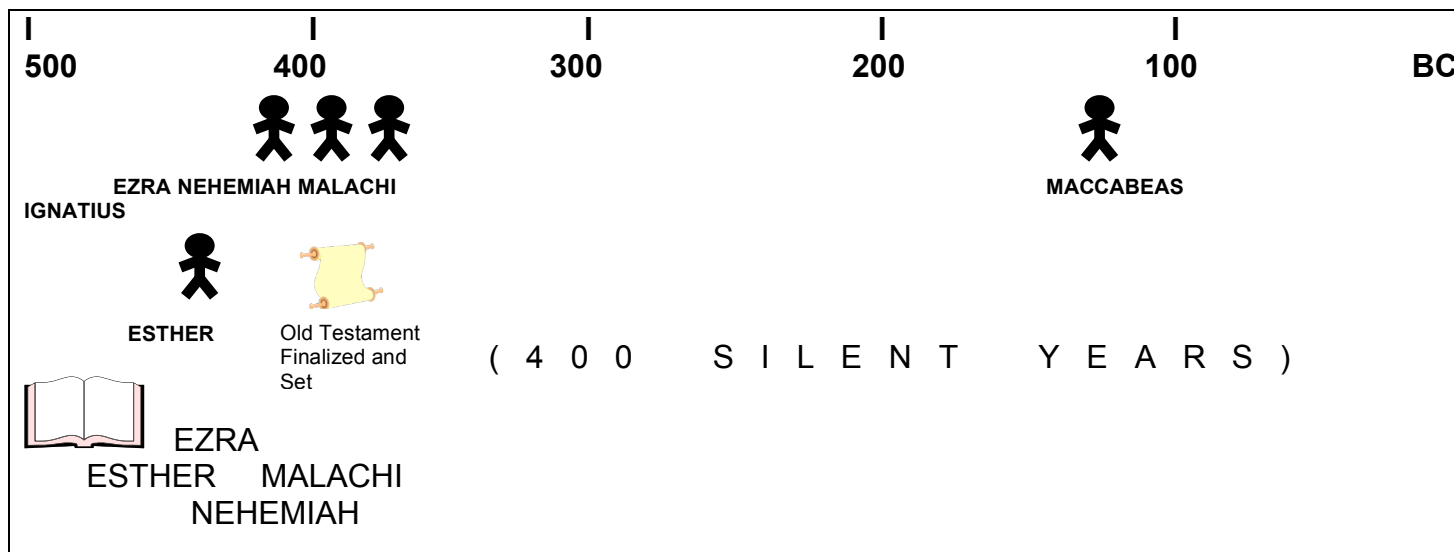
It was during this time that Hadassah, better known to you as **ESTHER**, was used by God to preserve the Jews from annihilation not only in Persia but also in Palestine.

Eight five years after Zerubbable, **EZRA** led another group of people back to Jerusalem. He was a great-grandson of the man who was the high priest when Jerusalem fell. He was the equivalent of the Secretary of State for Jewish affairs. Ezra was a godly scholar who knew the Old Testament by heart. He wrote the books of Ezra, Chronicles and Psalm 119 as well as finishing books such as Deuteronomy and Joshua. Ezra edited the whole Old Testament, changing it over to the square Hebrew script which is still used today. He also started the synagogue system which your church and school systems are built upon. The synagogue system kept the Jews together when they were away from their temple. Ezra also developed the Sanhedrin, 70 top men to govern Jews in and out of the land.

Only 1,500 followed him back. He taught the Bible and persevered in trying to encourage them to follow God. He didn't get much good response, though.



Fifteen years later the spotlight switched to me. **NEHEMIAH**. My story starts in 445 BC. I was born in Babylon. My grandparents had been taken into captivity at the fall. I was a top advisor to the king, Artixerxes. God used me in some very unexpected ways.



A leader is a person who prays. When I heard about the terrible conditions in Jerusalem I prayed for God to send someone to help them -- and wouldn't you know it, He sent me! (Neh 1:1-4) God used me because I spent so much time in prayer with Him.

A leader is a person who prepares. When I finally got to Jerusalem we found everyone there was discouraged and very pessimistic (Neh 2:11-12). It seemed hopeless. I patiently gathered as much firsthand information as I could, prayed about it, talked with some trusted advisors and made some long-range plans. To carry them out I had to detail short-range goals and all that would be necessary to accomplish the needed work (Neh 2:4-8). When the time was right I shared my plans with others, motivating and encouraging them to follow (Neh 2:17-18). I had delegated work so everyone had a specific assignment to carry out. When the enemy was about to attack to stop us we kept working and didn't give in to fear (Neh 4:3-9). I prayed trusting God to protect us, but I also posed a guard. It takes prayer and work to be a good leader: pray as if all depends on God and work as if all depends on me.

A leader is a person who perseveres. Food shortages forced poor people to have to sell their children to the rich so they could have money to feed their other children. Money was lent at a high rate, with 50% inflation. A leader must contend with internal problems, which are often more difficult to handle than attacks from without. I had to take action about these difficulties, so I did. I did what was necessary, even though it wasn't popular. I stood for the right (Neh 5:9-11)

Even when the enemy attacks intensified I didn't let them intimidate me or distract the work. Not even threats of assassination stopped me (Neh 6:1-4). A leader can't be influenced by fear!

A leader is a person who purges. We needed to remove sin and evil from among us. Ezra was still preaching, and God used his words to start a revival. Lives were changed and people started obeying the Bible.

I went back to Babylon for a very short visit and when I returned I found more purging had to be done, for the people had quickly returned to their sinning. Praying, preparing, persevering and purging are ongoing duties of a godly leader. They aren't always enjoyable, but they are certainly necessary! Which of these do you need to work harder at? Set some goals and start today. You don't have any option about being a leader -- you are one. But it is up to you what kind of a leader you are!

