

Questions:

1. Have you ever read the Bible just for the narrative? Why or why not?
2. Listening to the narrative we have gotten through so far, has it helped your understanding of the Bible yet?
3. Do you see Jesus (or things pointing to Jesus) in the story we covered this week?
4. What do you think about the Old Testament sacrifices as spending time with God? What do you think about them **NOT** forgiving intentional sin, and how does it make you appreciate Jesus' sacrifice more?
5. How do you deal with "difficult" passages in the Bible? For the conquest, does the Nephilim being the targeted help? It is OK to struggle with passages in the Bible, ask questions, pray, and seek other believers to talk about these things with.

Recap:

- God's name is Yahweh, which means HE IS.
- Yahweh created everything.
- Correction: It was the 4th day that Genesis 1:16 "16 God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars." I said 5th day last week, sorry!
- Yahweh lived with the first humans, Adam and Eve, in a garden.
- Adam and Eve rebelled against God at the suggestion of an angelic being who was rebelling against God.
- When they rebelled sin was brought into the world. With sin it brought death, destruction, chaos, sickness, and pain.
- Mankind could no longer live with Yahweh so they were sent out of the Garden.
- Mankind continued to rebel.
- Angels continued to rebel, they took the form of men and had kids with humans that were called Nephilim/Giants.
- God flooded the earth to start over with the family of Noah.
- Mankind still did not obey God so God decided He would make a people for Himself.
- God made a covenant with a man named Abraham and his wife Sarah. Abraham's decedents (called Israelites), through supernatural intervention by God, became a numerous people who lived in Egypt.
- The Egyptians became afraid of the Israelites and enslaved them.
- Yahweh raised up two men named Moses and Aaron to lead Israel out of Egypt.
- When the king of Egypt refused to let God's people go Yahweh put 10 plagues on Egypt.
- These plagues were targeted at the gods of Egypt and the religious system of Egypt.
- Eventually Israel left Egypt and made a Covenant with God in the Sinai Desert (the place between Israel and Egypt on the map).
- The purpose of this covenant: Leviticus 26:11–12 "11 I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. 12 And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.
- God gave Moses instruction for a tent/tabernacle that Israel would build so God could physically dwell with Israel.
- God also would set up priests, feasts, and sacrifices:

The Priests

Someone would need to tend Yahweh's house, keep the incense and lights burning, and keep the bread and wine on the table. They would need to prepare the meals that the people of Israel came to present to Yahweh. They would also need to protect people from entering places they were not allowed. The tribe of Levi was chosen to be the priests of Israel, and Aaron, the brother of Moses, was chosen to be the High Priest. The High Priest alone could enter the Most Holy Place only once a year on a special feast/holiday.

Israel made the Tabernacle, and the presence of God, the Glory of Yahweh, came into the tent and dwelled there.

The Feasts

Yahweh set up six feasts; these holidays were days when Israel would remember who they were, who Yahweh was, and what He had done for them.

Passover, or Pesach, takes place in the spring and remembers when Yahweh passed over all the houses that had blood on their doorposts in Egypt and how He led them out of their slavery. (April 22nd - 30th, 2024)

Firstfruits, or Reshit Katzir, was a celebration that Yahweh provided for the Israelites; he caused their crops to grow. This takes place on the Sabbath after Passover. (May 2nd, 2024? Firstfruits isn't listed on modern Jewish Calendars)

Pentecost, or Shavu'ot, took place 50 days after Passover. It marked the summer harvest and was another celebration of the Lord's provision. (June 11th - 13th, 2024)

Day of Trumpets, or Yom Teru'ah, occurs in the Fall and marks the end of the harvest season. As with the previous feasts, this is a celebration of Yahweh's provision. It also started the preparation for the next Feast. (October 2nd - 4th 2024)

Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur, served as a reset for the Tabernacle. On the day of atonement, the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies and offer a sacrifice for the unintentional sins of the people; this was like a reset switch for the Tabernacle. It reset everything back to its original state. Over time, things happened, people made mistakes, and the Tabernacle had to be reset for God to continue to dwell with His people. (October 11th - 12th, 2024)

Tabernacles, or Sukkot, also called Booths or Tents, was a feast to remember that Yahweh dwelled in a tent with the Israelites, who also dwelled in a tent. It served as a day of celebration that Yahweh was present with His people. (October 16th - 23rd, 2024)

The purpose of these feasts was to serve as a reminder of who Yahweh was, six days every year to remind Israel that they were Yahweh's people.

The Sacrificial System

There are five different kinds of offerings the Israelites could bring to Yahweh.

The burnt offering or fellowship offering is an offering brought to spend time with God.

The grain offering or remembrance offering was to thank God for His covenant with Israel.

The peace offering or thanksgiving offering was to tell the Lord, "I am at peace; it is well with me, thank you!"

The sin offering or decontamination offering was for removing ritual "uncleanness." This wasn't about intentional sin or breaking of God's law. It was about accidentally or unintentionally becoming unclean. Being unclean also happened due to "just living." As life goes on, things like touching bodily fluids could make someone unclean. Another example of unclean is a fly landing in the anointing oil used in the Tabernacle. God's Tabernacle was a "sacred space." It was the place where God dwelled. A definition of "unclean" is "unfit for sacred space - the space that is set apart for God." God cannot mix with anything that is not perfect. Therefore, to decontaminate that which is unclean, you would bring a sin offering. This would make you ritually clean, so spend time in the Tabernacle with God. However, you could not go further into the Tabernacle than to the altar where these sacrifices were offered.

The guilt offering or reparation offering covered several things:

Accidental misuse or destruction of tabernacle property. If you were at the Tabernacle and accidentally broke something, you would need to help repair whatever was broken and offer a guilt offering.

Unknowing breaking of the Lord's commandments. There are a lot of laws, and keeping them all straight would be a challenge for anyone. If you didn't know something would make you unclean, it wasn't held against you, but you would have to make the guilt offering.

Realizing that you have unknowingly cheated someone in a business deal. Perhaps you were selling a sheep, and you asked for \$100 only to find out the going rate for sheep is \$20. You would be responsible for returning some of the money and would be required to offer a guilt offering.

Notice that intentional or known sin is not mentioned. Often, we can think of the sacrificial system as a "Jesus before Jesus." This is not the case. In the sacrificial system, no offerings for forgiveness of known sins exist. I know I cannot steal; if I steal, I am guilty, and there is no sacrifice to bring forgiveness. Only Yahweh could forgive intentional sin. This is why Jesus' New Covenant is so much better than the Old Covenant system. Setting aside all the nuance of the rules and sacrifices, only Jesus can forgive us of our intentional sin. The sin, which we know or should have known, was wrong, but we did it anyway.

The writer of the Book of Hebrews shows us this in his letter:

Hebrews 9:7 (ESV)

7 but into the second [room - the Most Holy Place] only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people.

The Godhead (Trinity)

Israel did not wander alone; Yahweh, as the Angel of Yahweh, led Israel from place to place. When He rested, Israel would rest; When He traveled, Israel traveled.

No one could see Yahweh fully; Yahweh knew that anyone who saw Him would die. While He was on His throne in heaven, He would often visit mankind in the form of a man. It was as if there were two Yahwehs who were one. He is too big for us to comprehend fully, but that didn't stop Him from reaching out to His people through the generations. Often, He would appear as the "angel of Yahweh." While we think of an angel as a being who serves Yahweh, the Hebrew angel simply means "messenger." This angel of Yahweh is Yahweh Himself, the Word of Yahweh.

Judaism firmly held a belief in a Godhead. They believed as we do today in Christianity, in one Yahweh represented in multiple persons. In 100 AD, the elders removed this belief from their doctrine because of the rise of Christianity. Today, we call this "the Trinity," but its roots are not found in the New Testament; they are found all the back in Genesis and Exodus.

The earliest clear example of the Godhead is Genesis 19:24.

Genesis 19:24 LEB

24 Yahweh rained down from heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Yahweh.

Here, the Bible records Yahweh on earth calling down fire on Sodom and Gomorrah from Yahweh in heaven as a judgment against the city's wickedness.

In Ezekiel 8:1-3 we have all three members of the Trinity in action simultaneously.

Ezekiel 8:1-3 (LEB)

1 And then in the sixth year, in the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month, I was sitting in my house, and the elders of Judah were sitting before me. And the hand of the Lord Yahweh fell on me there, 2 and I saw, and look! A figure like the appearance of a man; from the appearance of his waist and below was fire, and from his waist and upward was like the appearance of brightness, like the outward appearance of amber. 3 And he sent out the form of a hand, and he took me by a lock of hair of my head, and the Spirit lifted me between earth and heaven...

Giants in Canaan

After the Israelites made the Covenant with Yahweh, they set out to occupy Canaan as promised to their ancestors, going all the way back to Abraham. Moses sent 12 spies, one from each of the tribes of Israel except for Levi (remember that Joseph's tribe now counts as two, Ephraim and Manasseh).

The spies spent forty days in Canaan and returned to report their findings. They found a lush land that would provide for all of their needs. However, there was a perceived problem:

Numbers 13:33 ESV

33 And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak [Anakim], who come from the Nephilim), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them."

These Nephilim, also called Rephaim and Anakim (sorry about the big Hebrew words), were giants; the last time we heard about the Nephilim was at the flood when the fallen sons of God and women gave birth to mixed offspring:

Genesis 6:1–4 LEB

1 And it happened that, when humankind began to multiply on the face of the ground, daughters were born to them. 2 Then the sons of God saw the daughters of humankind, that they were beautiful. And they took for themselves wives from all that they chose. 3 And Yahweh said, “My Spirit shall not abide with humankind forever in that he is also flesh. And his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.” 4 The Nephilim were upon the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God went into the daughters of humankind, and they bore children to them. These were the mighty warriors that were from ancient times, men of renown.

The people were afraid, but two spies, Joshua and Caleb, tried to rally the Israelites. Yahweh had brought them this far; he had defeated the gods of Egypt and provided food miraculously every day. He would defeat these giants! But Israel rebelled; they argued that they should go back to Egypt; “slavery in Egypt would be better than fighting these Nephilim,” they said to Moses.

The Wilderness Wandering

As a result, Yahweh became very upset. He proclaimed that none of the current generation would enter the promised land. For forty years, the Israelites would wander in the wilderness. These next forty years were about raising the next generation to trust Yahweh when He brings them into the promised land. Yahweh would lead Israel to the east of Canaan. There, they would fight two Rephaim/Nephilim/Anakim (again, sorry for the big Hebrew words) kings and defeat them. Yahweh showed the people that He would have defeated their enemies and revealed to the next generation what He would do for them when it was time to enter Canaan.

One of these kings was named Og, and the other Sihon. We are given some more details about Og, the king of Bashan:

Deuteronomy 3:11 ESV

11 (For only Og the king of Bashan was left of the remnant of the Rephaim. Behold, his bed was a bed of iron. Is it not in Rabbah of the Ammonites? Nine cubits was its length, and four cubits its breadth, according to the common cubit.)

A cubit is 18-21 inches (depending on which archaeologist you ask), making Og’s bed 13.5 feet long and 6 feet wide at its smallest. This doesn’t mean he was 13 feet tall. Still, considering the average male Israelite height is believed to be five foot five inches, there is a massive height difference here, even if Og was only 7 feet tall (in the range Goliath was believed to be).

Joshua Becomes Israel's Leader

After 40 years, the generation that left Egypt had passed away, and Moses would make his assistant Joshua the leader of Israel. This was the same Joshua who spied in the land of Canaan and tried to get Israel to enter even though the giants were there.

Yahweh would tell Joshua to cross into the land. When Israel got to the other side of Joshua, they went to a city called Jericho, where Joshua would come face-to-face with the Angel of Yahweh with a drawn sword in His hand. Yahweh would tell Joshua to take off his sandals like Moses at the burning bush. Joshua took off his sandals and worshipped before Yahweh.

Joshua 5:14–15 (ESV)

14 ...Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?" 15 And the commander of the LORD's army said to Joshua, "Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

Israel's First Battle in Canaan

Israel would enter this promised land and face its first battle at Jericho's Fortress. Jericho was a small military settlement enclosed by a tall wall. The method of warfare by the Israelites, however, was unusual. Yahweh told Joshua to take the army and march around Jericho for six days. On the seventh, the priests will take seven trumpets and the Ark of the Covenant that was in the Most Holy Place and march around Jericho seven times. After the seventh march, they would blow the trumpets. Joshua did as God commanded, and Jericho crumbled to the ground at the trumpet blast on the seventh day. Yahweh had won Israel's first battle.

Holy War

The conquest of Canaan took place over the next seven years. However, "Holy War" or "herem" occurred in several locations. God commanded Israel, in some instances, to drive out the people they were at war with. In other locations, God would tell them to "herem" or devote everything and everyone to destruction. This is hard for us to understand. Why would God command such a thing? When we look at every city that God commanded "herem" at we see that every one of these cities was a city that contained the Nephilim (Rephaim/Anakim; remembering the word Rephaim will be important when we get to the New Testament).

At some point, the same problem that had happened before the flood happened again. Some of the "sons of God" lusted after the daughters of man and had children with them. The writer tells us this happened "after" the flood in Genesis 6:4.

Genesis 6:4 ESV

4 The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown.

God is not in the business of making “herem”/destruction because He felt like it or wanted to at all. There was a major problem. These Nephilim were living in the land and doing awful things. The Bible doesn’t tell us directly, but many Jewish and pagan writings attest to the things the Nephilim would do; none of them are pleasant. These sources tell us that Nephilim led people to “kill each other more effectively.” They taught sorceries/magic and engaged in heinous ritual acts that involved child sacrifice and sexual acts. Remember these are external sources to the Bible, but it is clear that it must have been bad. They were the target of God’s “herem” commands.

God so targeted these Nephilim as judgment that God would not allow Israel to attack the Edomites (descendants of Jacob’s brother, Esau) and the Ammonites (who lived in Canaan) because they had already taken care of their Nephilim (Rephaim) problem (Deuteronomy 2:19–22).

While it may be hard for us to understand fully, God was not targeting humans in the conquest. He was targeting the Nephilim. It would be a future King named David who would remove every remaining Nephilim from Canaan, but that’s a story we will discuss later.

Israel Occupies the Land

After seven long years, Israel had conquered the land, well, most of it. Israel began settling in their allotted land in Canaan, now called Israel. The tribe of Dan had the most trouble with their occupation. The Philistines lived in the land Dan was supposed to take. It would be in Philistia that the last of the Nephilim would live until the time of King David. Efforts to take the land failed for the tribe of Dan.

Instead, the tribe of Dan journeyed from location to location before finally settling in the land of Bashan in the far north of Israel. Things would begin to become normalized for Israel. Life began to happen. Kids were born, and farms were planted. Joshua urged the children of Israel to follow Yahweh always.

Unfortunately, his warning was not obeyed. After Joshua died, Israel still wished to defeat the remaining Canaanites in the land, so they asked Yahweh. Yahweh fought with Israel for some time, and Israel defeated many of its enemies. However, after some time, Israel gave up their conquest. Instead, they made peace with the residents of the land and even started worshipping their gods. Yahweh Himself would appear before some of the leaders of Israel:

Judges 2:1–4 ESV

1 Now, the angel of the Lord went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, “I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. I said, ‘I will never break my covenant with you, 2 and you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall break down their altars.’ But you have not obeyed my voice. What is this you have done? 3 So now I say, I will not drive them out before you, but they shall become thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you.” 4 As soon as the angel of the Lord spoke these words to all the people of Israel, the people lifted up their voices and wept.