**Judaism: Theology and Practices through Primary Sources**

**Genesis 17**

1-2When Abram was ninety-nine years old, God showed up and said to him, “I am The Strong God, live entirely before me, live to the hilt! I’ll make a covenant between us and I’ll give you a huge family.”

3-8Overwhelmed, Abram fell flat on his face.

Then God said to him, “This is my covenant with you: You’ll be the father of many nations. Your name will no longer be Abram, but Abraham, meaning that ‘I’m making you the father of many nations.’ I’ll make you a father of fathers—I’ll make nations from you, kings will issue from you. I’m establishing my covenant between me and you, a covenant that includes your descendants, a covenant that goes on and on and on, a covenant that commits me to be your God and the God of your descendants. And I’m giving you and your descendants this land where you’re now just camping, this whole country of Canaan, to own forever. And I’ll be their God.”

9-14God continued to Abraham, “And you: You will honor my covenant, you and your descendants, generation after generation. This is the covenant that you are to honor, the covenant that pulls in all your descendants.

15-16God continued speaking to Abraham, “And Sarai your wife: Don’t call her Sarai any longer; call her Sarah. I’ll bless her—yes! I’ll give you a son by her! Oh, how I’ll bless her! Nations will come from her; kings of nations will come from her.”

17Abraham fell flat on his face. And then he laughed, thinking, “Can a hundred-year-old man father a son? And can Sarah, at ninety years, have a baby?”

18Recovering, Abraham said to God, “Oh, keep Ishmael alive and well before you!”

19But God said, “That’s not what I mean. Your wife, Sarah, will have a baby, a son. Name him Isaac (Laughter). I’ll establish my covenant with him and his descendants, a covenant that lasts forever.

20-21“And Ishmael? Yes, I heard your prayer for him. I’ll also bless him; I’ll make sure he has plenty of children—a huge family. He’ll father twelve princes; I’ll make him a great nation. But I’ll establish my covenant with Isaac whom Sarah will give you about this time next year.”

22God finished speaking with Abraham and left.

23Then Abraham took his son Ishmael and all his servants, whether houseborn or purchased—every male in his household—and circumcised them, cutting off their foreskins that very day, just as God had told him.

**Genesis 22:1-19**

After all this, God tested Abraham. God said, “Abraham!”

“Yes?” answered Abraham. “I’m listening.”

2He said, “Take your dear son Isaac whom you love and go to the land of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I’ll point out to you.”

3-5Abraham got up early in the morning and saddled his donkey. He took two of his young servants and his son Isaac. He had split wood for the burnt offering. He set out for the place God had directed him. On the third day he looked up and saw the place in the distance. Abraham told his two young servants, “Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I are going over there to worship; then we’ll come back to you.”

6Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and gave it to Isaac his son to carry. He carried the flint and the knife. The two of them went off together.

7Isaac said to Abraham his father, “Father?”

“Yes, my son.”

“We have flint and wood, but where’s the sheep for the burnt offering?”

8Abraham said, “Son, God will see to it that there’s a sheep for the burnt offering.” And they kept on walking together.

9-10They arrived at the place to which God had directed him. Abraham built an altar. He laid out the wood. Then he tied up Isaac and laid him on the wood. Abraham reached out and took the knife to kill his son.

11Just then an angel of God called to him out of Heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!”

“Yes, I’m listening.”

12“Don’t lay a hand on that boy! Don’t touch him! Now I know how fearlessly you fear God; you didn’t hesitate to place your son, your dear son, on the altar for me.”

13Abraham looked up. He saw a ram caught by its horns in the thicket. Abraham took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.

14Abraham named that place God-Yireh (God-Sees-to-It). That’s where we get the saying, “On the mountain of God, he sees to it.”

15-18The angel of God spoke from Heaven a second time to Abraham: “I swear—God’s sure word!—because you have gone through with this, and have not refused to give me your son, your dear, dear son, I’ll bless you—oh, how I’ll bless you! And I’ll make sure that your children flourish—like stars in the sky! like sand on the beaches! And your descendants will defeat their enemies. All nations on Earth will find themselves blessed through your descendants because you obeyed me.”

19Then Abraham went back to his young servants. They got things together and returned to Beersheba. Abraham settled down in Beersheba.

**Genesis 49-50**

49 Jacob called his sons and said, “Gather around. I want to tell you what you can expect in the days to come.”

2Come together, listen sons of Jacob,  
    listen to Israel your father.

3-4Reuben, you’re my firstborn,  
        my strength, first proof of my manhood,  
        at the top in honor and at the top in power,  
    But like a bucket of water spilled,  
        you’ll be at the top no more,  
    Because you climbed into your father’s marriage bed,  
        mounting that couch, and you defiled it.

5-6Simeon and Levi are two of a kind,  
        ready to fight at the drop of a hat.  
    I don’t want anything to do with their vendettas,  
        want no part in their bitter feuds;  
    They kill men in fits of temper,  
        slash oxen on a whim.

7A curse on their uncontrolled anger,  
    on their indiscriminate wrath.  
I’ll throw them out with the trash;  
    I’ll shred and scatter them like confetti throughout Israel.

8-12You, Judah, your brothers will praise you:  
        Your fingers on your enemies’ throat,  
        while your brothers honor you.  
    You’re a lion’s cub, Judah,  
        home fresh from the kill, my son.  
    Look at him, crouched like a lion, king of beasts;  
        who dares mess with him?  
    The scepter shall not leave Judah;  
        he’ll keep a firm grip on the command staff  
    Until the ultimate ruler comes  
        and the nations obey him.  
    He’ll tie up his donkey to the grapevine,  
        his purebred prize to a sturdy branch.  
    He will wash his shirt in wine  
        and his cloak in the blood of grapes,  
    His eyes will be darker than wine,  
        his teeth whiter than milk.

13Zebulun settles down on the seashore;  
    he’s a safe harbor for ships,  
    right alongside Sidon.

14-15Issachar is one tough donkey  
        crouching between the corrals;  
    When he saw how good the place was,  
        how pleasant the country,  
    He gave up his freedom  
        and went to work as a slave.

16-17Dan will handle matters of justice for his people;  
        he will hold his own just fine among the tribes of Israel.  
    Dan is only a small snake in the grass,  
        a lethal serpent in ambush by the road  
    When he strikes a horse in the heel,  
        and brings its huge rider crashing down.

18I wait in hope  
    for your salvation, God.

19Gad will be attacked by bandits,  
    but he will trip them up.

20Asher will become famous for rich foods,  
    candies and sweets fit for kings.

21-26Naphtali is a deer running free  
        that gives birth to lovely fawns.  
    Joseph is a wild donkey,  
        a wild donkey by a spring,  
        spirited donkeys on a hill.  
    The archers with malice attacked,  
        shooting their hate-tipped arrows;  
    But he held steady under fire,  
        his bow firm, his arms limber,  
    With the backing of the Champion of Jacob,  
        the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel.  
    The God of your father—may he help you!  
        And may The Strong God—may he give you his blessings,  
    Blessings tumbling out of the skies,  
        blessings bursting up from the Earth—  
        blessings of breasts and womb.  
    May the blessings of your father  
        exceed the blessings of the ancient mountains,  
        surpass the delights of the eternal hills;  
    May they rest on the head of Joseph,  
        on the brow of the one consecrated among his brothers.

27Benjamin is a ravenous wolf;  
    all morning he gorges on his kill,  
    at evening divides up what’s left over.

28All these are the tribes of Israel, the twelve tribes. And this is what their father said to them as he blessed them, blessing each one with his own special farewell blessing.

29-32Then he instructed them: “I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave which is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, the cave in the field of Machpelah facing Mamre in the land of Canaan, the field Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite for a burial plot. Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried there; Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried there; I also buried Leah there. The field and the cave were bought from the Hittites.”

33Jacob finished instructing his sons, pulled his feet into bed, breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.

50 Joseph threw himself on his father, wept over him, and kissed him.

2-3Joseph then instructed the physicians in his employ to embalm his father. The physicians embalmed Israel. The embalming took forty days, the period required for embalming. There was public mourning by the Egyptians for seventy days.

4-5When the period of mourning was completed, Joseph petitioned Pharaoh’s court: “If you have reason to think kindly of me, present Pharaoh with my request: My father made me swear, saying, ‘I am ready to die. Bury me in the grave plot that I prepared for myself in the land of Canaan.’ Please give me leave to go up and bury my father. Then I’ll come back.”

6Pharaoh said, “Certainly. Go and bury your father as he made you promise under oath.”

7-9So Joseph left to bury his father. And all the high-ranking officials from Pharaoh’s court went with him, all the dignitaries of Egypt, joining Joseph’s family—his brothers and his father’s family. Their children and flocks and herds were left in Goshen. Chariots and horsemen accompanied them. It was a huge funeral procession.

10Arriving at the Atad Threshing Floor just across the Jordan River, they stopped for a period of mourning, letting their grief out in loud and lengthy lament. For seven days, Joseph engaged in these funeral rites for his father.

11When the Canaanites who lived in that area saw the grief being poured out at the Atad Threshing Floor, they said, “Look how deeply the Egyptians are mourning.” That is how the site at the Jordan got the name Abel Mizraim (Egyptian Lament).

12-13Jacob’s sons continued to carry out his instructions to the letter. They took him on into Canaan and buried him in the cave in the field of Machpelah facing Mamre, the field that Abraham had bought as a burial plot from Ephron the Hittite.

14-15After burying his father, Joseph went back to Egypt. All his brothers who had come with him to bury his father returned with him. After the funeral, Joseph’s brothers talked among themselves: “What if Joseph is carrying a grudge and decides to pay us back for all the wrong we did him?”

16-17So they sent Joseph a message, “Before his death, your father gave this command: Tell Joseph, ‘Forgive your brothers’ sin—all that wrongdoing. They did treat you very badly.’ Will you do it? Will you forgive the sins of the servants of your father’s God?”

When Joseph received their message, he wept.

18Then the brothers went in person to him, threw themselves on the ground before him and said, “We’ll be your slaves.”

19-21Joseph replied, “Don’t be afraid. Do I act for God? Don’t you see, you planned evil against me but God used those same plans for my good, as you see all around you right now—life for many people. Easy now, you have nothing to fear; I’ll take care of you and your children.” He reassured them, speaking with them heart-to-heart.

22-23Joseph continued to live in Egypt with his father’s family. Joseph lived 110 years. He lived to see Ephraim’s sons into the third generation. The sons of Makir, Manasseh’s son, were also recognized as Joseph’s.

24At the end, Joseph said to his brothers, “I am ready to die. God will most certainly pay you a visit and take you out of this land and back to the land he so solemnly promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

25Then Joseph made the sons of Israel promise under oath, “When God makes his visitation, make sure you take my bones with you as you leave here.”

26Joseph died at the age of 110 years. They embalmed him and placed him in a coffin in Egypt.