

BIBLICALLY PARENTING THE MATURING CHILD
Part II: Overcoming Trans-generation Cause-Effect Dysfunctional Behavior Patterns
(Abraham to Joseph)

I. Introduction

- A. When children bear emotional and mental scars from the wrongs done to them by their parents, they can fail to overcome those scars and so adopt **reactionary** and **equally problem** thinking and behavior!
- B. This cause-effect cycle of dysfunction can be broken by God's grace as is evident in God's work to intercept a multi-generational dysfunctional pattern in the descendants of Abraham and Sarah (as follows):

II. Overcoming Trans-generation Cause-Effect Dysfunctional Behavior Patterns, Abraham to Joseph.

- A. The trans-generation problem of favoring one sibling above another with unedifying effects marked the lives of Abraham's family from his generation down to the fourth generation in Joseph (as follows):
 - 1. Abraham failed to rely on God to give him a son through his wife Sarah; instead, he and Sarah "helped God out" by taking Sarah's maid, Hagar, and giving her to Abraham to produce Ishmael, Gen. 16:1-4a.
 - 2. This plan badly backfired: it led to strife between Sarah and Hagar (Gen. 16:4b-16), and later to bad feelings from Hagar's older but disinherited and bitter son, Ishmael toward Sarah's younger son, Isaac, Gen. 21:5-11. In the end, the family became deeply divided, for Isaac was chosen to be the son through whom God would fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant, and Hagar and Ishmael were sent away, 21:12-20.
 - 3. When Isaac fathered sons, he favored the older son, Esau at the expense of Jacob possibly from having learned to accept such a practice from what had occurred in his father's home; his wife, Rachel sought to take up the slack, favoring the younger Jacob who was more to her natural liking, Genesis 25:25-28.
 - 4. This led to Jacob's taking Esau's birthright and blessing, leading to a family split, Gen. 25:29-34; 27.
 - 5. When Jacob married and had sons, he copied his father's unwise practice of favoritism, choosing to spoil his youngest son, Joseph possibly because he wanted to compensate for having missed the love of Isaac his father in his own childhood; this led to great havoc: the spoiled and hence relationally unwise Joseph inflamed his brothers' jealousy by telling them his dreams that predicted he would rule them, so they sold him into slavery. Jacob suffered deep grief over Joseph's presumed death, Genesis 37.
- B. God intervened to salvage this fourth generation and keep the Abrahamic Covenant on track (as follows):
 - 1. In the Genesis 12:1-3 Abrahamic Covenant, God promised to bless the world through Abraham's seed. This promise came before Abraham had hurt his family relationships and influenced later generations to be grieved as he tried to "help God out" versus follow His lead in producing Ishmael via Hagar!
 - 2. Thus, God worked through trials to retrain and reunite the divided fourth generation from Abraham:
 - a. The **Lord gave** Joseph his **dreams** of future rule that, together with Jacob's favoritism of Joseph and the spoiled Joseph's unwise sharing of the dreams with his family, inflamed his brothers to sell him into Egypt, Gen. 37. When Joseph was taken into slavery, **God** arranged for him first to stay in Potiphar's house to learn about managing crops on a local farm and then later enter the government prison to learn how to relate to court officials he met there, Genesis 39. The trials Joseph faced in it all prepared him for his future rule, and taught him how to keep his mouth shut and so not aggravate others as he had his brothers in telling his dreams to them, cf. Genesis 40:1-22; 40:23-41:1a!
 - b. The **Lord** also arranged for Joseph to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh's butler and baker so he could later be sought to interpret Pharaoh's dream and gain his promotion, Gen. 40:1-22; 41:1-8, 9-14.
 - c. Finally, **God** gave Pharaoh a dream on the future famine and what was needed to handle it, and led Joseph to interpret it so he would be raised to rule and lead Egypt to handle the famine, ch. 41.
 - d. When Joseph's brothers later had to go to Egypt, the only place they could buy food in view of Joseph's wise handling of Egypt's grain, they came into contact with Joseph; by using his power wisely, Joseph was used **of God** to reunite the family for **God's** glory, Gen. 42-50. (esp. 45:1-15)

Lesson: *God kept Abraham's dysfunctional descendants in the fourth generation from self-destruction and saved the Abrahamic Covenant by arranging trials to arise that would train and mature them all.*

Application: *To defeat trans-generation cause-effect dysfunctional behaviors, we should (a) look to GOD to arrange for all involved to face life-changing experiences that (b) TRAIN folk to REVERSE ERRANT dysfunctional thinking and behavior by GOD'S overseeing guidance and power.*