

Genesis

CHAPTERS 24 - 50
A STUDY GUIDE

Genesis

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A STUDY GUIDE

AUTHORED BY RIVERVIEW CHURCH

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OF JESUS WHO GROW, SERVE, AND GO.



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 A 13 WEEK PLAN TO READ A LITTLE SCRIPTURE EACH DAY
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For a PDF download of this study guide as well as audio and video
from the corresponding weekend messages, head over to:

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INTRODUCTION

Weekend Services and Life Groups are the core of our ministry at Riverview Church. When we produced the first volume of this Genesis Study Guide (covering Genesis 1-23), it was in the hope of more closely knitting these two together. We were blown away by the success of this little experiment. As of press date, the first volume was purchased or accessed over 24,000 times! This second volume (covering Genesis 24-50) retains the central elements of the first, with minor tweaks suggested by our pastors, Life Group leaders, and other users of the guide.

We produced this study guide primarily as a resources for our Life Groups, to be used alongside our weekend service messages (which can be downloaded for free at RIVCHURCH.COM/GENESIS). Our hope is that Life Group leaders will be able to use these materials to more effectively lead discussions and that members will be able to come to those discussions more prepared. While this material can be used for individual study, we believe it will be most helpful when discussed with other people.

Some may think this material is over their heads and others may believe it isn't deep enough, and that's OK. Your group can cover as much or as little of the content as is helpful and there's lots of extra material included for those who want more study. Ultimately, our prayer is that this study guide will help you develop a framework for how to work through a passage of Scripture and ask the all important questions:

WHAT DID THIS PASSAGE MEAN TO THE ORIGINAL AUDIENCE?

WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE MEAN (IN A UNIVERSAL SENSE)?

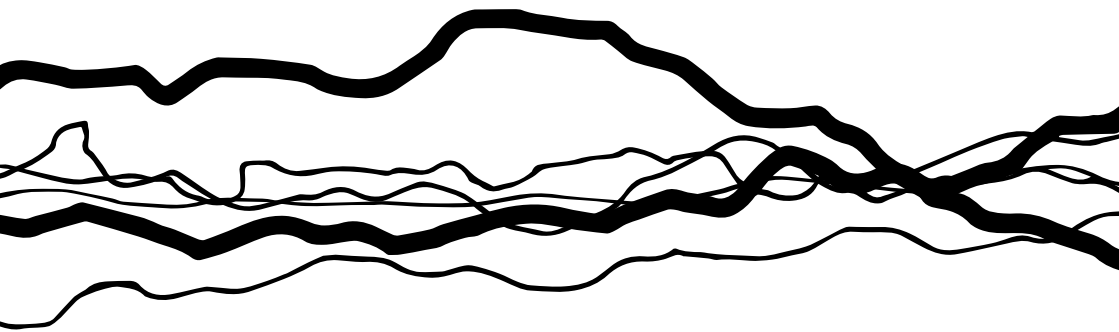
HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE APPLY TO MY LIFE RIGHT NOW?

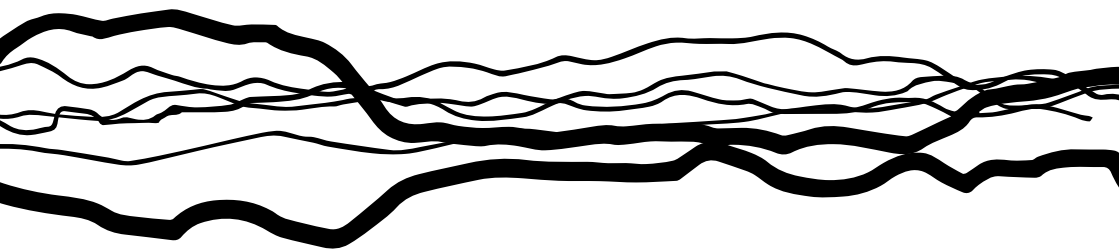
Many thanks to JOSH MICHELS, whose very first project for Riverview was to beat impossible deadlines with the first Genesis book and who led the charge on this second one. His leadership kept everyone from having to pull all nighters this time around. MELISSA KRANZO not only wrote much of the content, but served as the General Editor, making sure the voice of the material was clear and “Rivesque.” Along with her, JUSTIN DETMERS and TONY PYLE wrote a lot and JAMES GRANGER helped me with minor editing. Thanks also goes out to RYAN FREITAS, who helped Josh Michels with coordinating the whole project. This was truly a group effort.

I sincerely hope that this volume enhances your study of the second half of the book of Genesis and helps you grow in your understanding of God’s sovereignty over the affairs of the world. We will see how humans (like us) continually make a mess of things and God continually shows he is working that mess toward a sovereign plan that culminates in the person and work of Jesus.

PASTOR NOEL HEIKKINEN


RIVERVIEW CHURCH





Genesis

A HUMAN MESS



Genesis

ESAU VS. JACOB
24 - 25

STARTING OUT

Is there anything from this week's message that stood out to you or that you have questions about?

Many times in our lives, God is working in ways we don't understand. Are there any moments you can look back on and see how God was working? How did God bring change in your life?

Have you ever chosen something physically satisfying in the moment over something spiritually satisfying in the long-term? How did you feel about your choice?

BACKGROUND YOU SHOULD KNOW

Years into enjoying fatherhood and watching his son grow up, Abraham was told by God to sacrifice Isaac on Mt. Moriah. Abraham trusted God and took Isaac up on the mountain, ready to obey what God had told him to do. Moments before Abraham completed the task, an angel of the Lord stopped him and commended him for trusting God. We see how Abraham's actions reflect a deeper trust and faith in God than earlier in his spiritual life.

The narrative of Abraham's life moved forward and Sarah, his wife, died at the age of 127. Abraham and Ephron, a Hittite, negotiated a price for a choice field that Abraham could buy to honor and bury his wife.

A QUICK SUMMARY

Abraham was “old and well advanced in years,” and was eager to find a wife for his son Isaac. He made an oath with his servant to find a wife for Isaac from the land of his relatives. The servant left and traveled to the city of Nahor in Mesopotamia. There, the servant prayed to God for success in finding a wife for Isaac. The servant's strong faith in God can be seen by his prayer for God's guidance in the choosing of a wife for Isaac.

Right after praying, a young woman named Rebekah approached the servant. The servant had a little talk with her and realized she was the one God had chosen for Isaac. The servant then asked to stay at her dad's house to explain why he had come. The servant spoke with Laban (Rebekah's brother) and Bethuel (her dad) about God's choosing of Rebekah as Isaac's wife. Laban and Bethuel agreed to send Rebekah to Isaac with the servant, and Rebekah traveled back to Isaac and married him.

Abraham died when he was 175-years-old and was buried with Sarah. (Here story shifts to Isaac and his family line.) Isaac prayed to the Lord for Rebekah to conceive because she was barren. The Lord granted his prayer and they had twin boys, Esau and Jacob. From the moment they were conceived, the boys fought and struggled with each other, foreshadowing a lifelong division between the two. Esau grew up as a skillful hunter and Jacob as a quiet guy who stayed inside.

Chapter 25 ends with Jacob cooking stew and Esau, exhausted from a long day, asking for some. Jacob made a deal to give Esau some stew in exchange for Esau's firstborn birthright. Esau, who was extremely hungry,

HELPS

On page 106 there's a map that shows the servant's journey.

swore to Jacob and sold his birthright, which showed his contempt for his position as the firstborn son.

INSIGHTS

GOD'S PROVIDENCE

God's providence is defined simply as "God's intervention in the world." In chapter 24, we see the servant appointed by Abraham fully trusting that God will bring success to his efforts. It's important to notice that the servant actively participates in the process and does not just expect God to do everything. God's providence, paired with human faithfulness, brought about a wife for Isaac. In our lives, when we obey God's word and continue to trust him, we see how he works in our lives and brings about everything for our good (Romans 8:28).

SPIRITUAL PROVISIONS VS. PHYSICAL APPETITES

Esau's decision for instant gratification is most likely familiar to us. How often do we give into a strong desire in the moment rather than trust God to provide for us? In Esau's mind, the most important thing was for his physical needs to be met. This caused him to make a stupid decision to give up his birthright, an increased blessing that went to the firstborn son of a family in this culture. More often than we would care to admit, we are like Esau. We too often trade spiritual provision from God to satisfy our physical appetites.

ESAU VS. JACOB

Chapter 25 marks the beginning of 12 chapters of enmity and strife between Esau and Jacob. Their struggle in the womb (Gen. 25:22) foreshadows a lifelong rivalry between the two brothers. This dissension between brothers is a recurring theme in Genesis (e.g. Cain and Abel), and is a reminder of the effect of sin on humanity. The divine revelation that "the older shall serve the

younger" (Gen. 25:23) gives the reader a glimpse into what to expect in the next chapters of the Genesis narrative.

OTHER SCRIPTURE

- Genesis 4:1-16
- Psalm 139:10
- Proverbs 3:5-6
- Romans 8:28
- 1 Corinthians 10:13
- Hebrews 11:20
- Hebrews 12:16

CONVERSATION

In Genesis 24, the servant trusts God to provide a wife for Isaac, and God is faithful. Where in your life right now do you see yourself like the servant (trusting God and being obedient in your faith)? Where in your life are you having trouble in this area?

Abraham's earthly life comes to an end in Chapter 25. Take some time to look back at his life (Gen. 12-25). Where did Abraham fail and where did he succeed? How did we see him grow in his faith throughout his life? How can we be encouraged by Abraham and his relationship with God?

Esau gave up his birthright for something far less valuable. We do this often in our spiritual lives as well. Where do you find yourself giving in to “physical appetites” rather than praying for “spiritual provision?” Why are we so prone to do this?

It's easy to get bogged down thinking about how we continue to struggle with sin or that we aren't making enough of an effort in pursuing God. Thankfully, because of the Gospel, we are “in Christ,” and God sees us as “sons and daughters” rather than outsiders. Take a few minutes to pray with your Life Group and thank God for the Gospel and that because of Jesus, we are “holy, blameless and above reproach” (Colossians 1:22).

YOUR NOTES



Genesis

THE STOLEN BLESSING

26 - 28:9

STARTING OUT

Is there anything from this week's message that stood out to you or that you have questions about?

Think about your parents and how you grew up. Are there any similarities between you and your parents in how you live? Or, if you're a parent, how you raise your kids? If so, are those positive or negative similarities?

We all have difficult times at different points in our lives. What do you do when hardships strike in your life? How do these times affect your relationship with God?

BACKGROUND YOU SHOULD KNOW

Sarah and Abraham have both died, and the story now focuses on their son, Isaac. A servant of Abraham traveled to Nahor to find Isaac a wife from his own relatives. God chose Rebekah, and she traveled back to where Isaac lived and became his wife.

Rebekah was barren, so Isaac prayed for her to conceive, and God gave them twin boys, Esau and Jacob. Esau, the older brother, was a man of the land, while Jacob was quiet and liked to stay inside. Since their conception, we see a struggle between the brothers, foreshadowing a lifelong division between the two of them and their families. Chapter 25 ended with Esau, in a fit of physical hunger, giving up his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew, showing Esau's scorn of God's grace (Hebrews 12:16).

A QUICK SUMMARY

The chapter starts with God appearing to Isaac and reaffirming to him the blessings he promised Abraham. At the time, there was a famine in the land, and Isaac went to Gerar to see Abimelech, the king of the Philistines. When the men of Gerar asked Isaac about his wife, Isaac lied and told them she was his sister. (Like father, like son; Isaac committed the same sin that Abraham committed twice in his life, showing a lack of trust in God.) Abimelech called him out, and warned his people not to touch Isaac or his wife. Isaac grew crops in the land that year and became very rich. Abimelech pushed Isaac away from the land for fear that Isaac was becoming too powerful.

HELPS

On page 110 there's a map that shows Isaac's travel.

Isaac left, but Abimelech soon found him in the valley of Gerar and made a covenant with him. The covenant was that Isaac would not in any way harm Abimelech or his people because Abimelech had done nothing but good to them. They made the covenant and parted ways.

The story fasts forward to Isaac in his old age, on the verge of giving his blessing to Esau. At the urging of his mother Rachel, Jacob snuck in, dressed like Esau, and stole the blessing meant for his older brother. Esau arrived with a meal for his dad, only to be told that the blessing had already been given to Jacob. Esau despised Jacob for his trickery, and Jacob fled to Laban, his uncle who lived in Haran.



INSIGHTS

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

We see in this passage Isaac committing the same sin that Abraham had committed twice in his life. They both lied to protect their own skin, and both put their wives in danger by lying about their marriage. They also both sinned right after God reassured them of the blessings he would give them! Thankfully, as we see throughout Genesis, God shows constant grace to both Abraham and Isaac because of His goodness, not theirs.

BLESSING

Documents from Nuzi in central Mesopotamia show that a father's oral blessing had the force of a will, and would stand up in court. Isaac's blessing was important. The blessing that Isaac pronounced incorporated elements of the original Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 27:29). It's clear that for Isaac, the most important thing he had to hand down to his son was his relationship with God.¹

GOD WORKS THROUGH THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE MIXED

The story of Rebekah and Jacob's deception of Isaac and the resentful response of Esau has a lot of intriguing angles. Through it all we see God working out his purposes that "the older shall serve the younger" (Gen. 25:23). Isaac is deceived and blessed Jacob with a variation of Abrahamic promises (Gen. 27:27-29). God providentially uses all kinds of human actions – good, bad and mixed – to carry out his promised purposes.

The biggest display of God working through the mixed actions of so many people to bring about his promised purposes is the Cross of Christ. Jesus is wrongly condemned and killed. Yet Peter explains: "there were gathered together against your holy servant

Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place" (Acts 4:27-28. See also Acts 2:23). All that takes place in our world is under the wise and fatherly hand of God.²

ESAU CHEATED TWICE?

Esau was very angry with his younger brother and exclaimed that Jacob had cheated him two times (Gen. 27:36). Although Jacob did lie and deceive his father to get the blessing, Esau, earlier in his life, traded his birthright by his own choice. It's easy to cast blame on others while being blind to our own sinfulness. Proverbs 28:13 says this about honesty toward our own sinfulness: "Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find mercy."

OTHER SCRIPTURE

- Proverbs 28:13
- Malachi 1:2-3
- Romans 9:6-13
- Ephesians 1:11
- Hebrews 11:20

CONVERSATION

Like Abraham, Isaac sinned with lies and deception. Often, sinful tendencies and actions continue on through generations of families. How and why does this happen? How can we make sure that we are fighting against sin while also being transparent and repentant to those closest to us?



It's easy to look at our lives and think about all the times we have doubted or acted out of unbelief rather than faith. Take time to share moments in your lives when you have trusted God in moments of uncertainty. Be encouraged in knowing that faithfulness is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22)!

When Esau was tricked by his brother Jacob, he immediately wanted vengeance. He lost sight of bringing joy to his father and wanted to kill his brother. Have you ever been in a situation like Esau? How do you typically react when you are sinned against by someone close to you?

When Jesus was on the Cross, he had every right to be upset at those who put him up there. He was falsely accused, beaten, spit upon, and mocked. Instead of lashing out with vengeance, he called out to his heavenly father, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Take some time to thank Jesus for taking our sin on Himself and paying the penalty for our sin.

YOUR NOTES



Genesis

JACOB'S LADDER
28:10 - 30:24

STARTING OUT

Is there anything from this week's message that stood out to you or that you have questions about?

What does culture say is necessary in order for you to have value?

List some reasons as to why people become envious or jealous of one another.

BACKGROUND YOU SHOULD KNOW

Isaac traveled to the land of Abimelech, the king of the Philistines. He deceived Abimelech and his people in telling them that Rebekah was his sister, not his wife, to save himself. (Does this sound familiar?) After this, Abimelech warned all his people not to touch Isaac or Rebekah. Isaac stayed in the land and the Lord blessed him greatly there. Abimelech then asked Isaac to leave because he was afraid Isaac was becoming too powerful.

The story then moved forward to Isaac much later in his life. Jacob, with the help of his mother Rachel, deceived his father Isaac and received a

blessing meant for Esau, his older brother. Esau wanted vengeance on his brother Jacob, so Jacob fled to Haran.

A QUICK SUMMARY

Jacob left Beersheba and traveled toward Haran to see his Uncle Laban. On the way, he rested and had a dream. In this dream, he saw a ladder going up to heaven, with angels going up and down on it. In the dream, God reassured Jacob of the blessings he had promised to Abraham, and Jacob woke up saying, "How awesome is this place!" (Gen. 28:17)

HELPS

On page 112 there's a map that shows this journey.

Jacob continued on his journey and met a woman named Rachel, the daughter of Laban. Jacob fell in love with Rachel and made a deal to work seven years for Laban if he could marry her. The seven years seemed like only a few days to Jacob because of his love for Rachel. On the night of his wedding, Laban tricked Jacob and instead gave him Leah, Rachel's older sister, (as it was customary for the older sister to marry first). Jacob, once the deceiver, was now on the receiving end. After talking it over with Laban, it was decided that for seven more years of service, Rachel could be Jacob's wife as well. So Jacob married Rachel and stayed working for Laban another seven years.

Jacob began having children with Rachel and Leah. There was a lot of tension and frustration between Jacob, Rachel, and Leah because Leah was able to have children but Rachel was barren. (Because Leah was hated by Jacob, God opened her womb and made Rachel, the favored wife, barren). Similar to Abraham and Hagar (Gen. 16), Rachel gave Jacob her servant girl Bilhah to have children for her. Eventually, God granted Rachel the ability to conceive, and between Leah, Rachel, and two of their servants, Jacob's 12 sons (the eventual tribes of Israel) were born.

INSIGHTS

JACOB'S LADDER

On Jacob's way to Paddan-aram, the Lord appeared to him at



Bethel. God revealed himself to Jacob as the God of Abraham and of Isaac (Gen. 28:13). Jacob saw a ladder with angels going up and down it (Gen. 28:12). With this divine link between heaven and earth, God committed himself to keep his promise to Jacob, and to be present with him during his journey (Gen. 28:12-15). Jacob called the name of the place Bethel, saying "This is...the house [or temple] of God," and "this is the gate of heaven" (Gen. 28:17,19). He set up the stone on which he had slept as a sacred stone (Gen. 28:18).

Centuries later, at the height of human history, we read of Jesus Christ telling Nathanael, "Truly, Truly I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man" (John 1:51). Here the angels go from heaven to earth, not on a ladder but on Jesus himself – Jesus, in other words, is the ladder. In him, sinners on earth are restored to God in heaven. Jesus is the final "Bethel," or house of God, the true end-time temple. In Him, like in the temple of old, mankind is restored to God. In Him, unclean sinners are made clean. Reflecting on this grace, our hearts are moved with fresh worship of the Lord of mercy who undertook to draw near to us sinners in our weakness and filth (Luke 19:10, Romans 5:8).¹

JACOB DECEIVED

After working hard to marry Rachel, the woman he loved, Jacob is deceived by Laban. Now, Jacob is on the other side, experiencing the hurt and brokenness of being swindled. Jacob's response is commendable. Laban's terms were another seven years for his daughter Rachel, and the text simply says, "Jacob did so" (Gen. 29:27). We see how God is forming Jacob, like he did Abraham, into a man of faith.

LEAH AND RACHEL'S IDENTITY

God told humanity to "be fruitful and multiply." We see Leah and

Rachel in a unique relationship with Jacob; both finding their identity in their ability to have children. Rachel is barren for a long time, and Leah's children are not accomplishing what she wants, which is Jacob's affection. When we put our identity in what we can do rather than who we are in Christ, we will always feel unworthy.

GOD CHOOSES LEAH

To Israel these narratives were more than interesting little stories. The rivalry that appears here explains much of the tribal rivalry that followed. But Genesis is clear: God chose the despised mother, Leah, and exalted her by making her the first mother. The kingly tribe of Judah and the priestly tribe of Levi trace back to her, in spite of Jacob's love for Rachel and her son Joseph.²

HELPS

On page 104 there's a genealogy that shows how these two sisters fit into the whole family.

OTHER SCRIPTURE

- Deuteronomy 31:6
- Hebrews 4:4
- Revelation 5:5
- John 1:51

CONVERSATION

Jacob encounters Jesus on his journey to Paddan-aram. What does this show about God's faithfulness? How can we be encouraged by God's interaction with Jacob at Bethel?



Rachel and Leah both found their value and worth in their ability to have children. A struggle for many people is finding our identity in things other than God. Our families, abilities, and careers are all good things, but it's dangerous when they become the reality by which we see our value and worth. What is your identity in? Take some time to read Ephesians 1 and be reminded of who you are "In Christ."

In Genesis 30:1, it says that "Rachel envied her sister." Because of Rachel's inability to conceive, she was jealous of her sister and it created a lot of hostility in their relationship. What negative effects can jealousy and envy have on one's spiritual life?

Jesus, in his interaction with Nathanael in John 1:51, shows us that he truly is the Son of God. His reference to this account in Genesis shows us that he will be a greater way of access to God than the heavenly ladder on which the angels traveled between God and Jacob, and wherever Jesus is, that place will become the "New Bethel" where God is revealed.³ Take time to pray together and read these Scriptures about who Jesus is in the book of John.

- John 6:35,48,51
- John 8:12, 9:5
- John 10:7, 9
- John 10:11,14
- John 11:25
- John 14:6
- John 15:1

YOUR NOTES



Genesis

LABAN
30:25 - 31:55

STARTING OUT

Is there anything from this week's message that stood out to you or that you have questions about?

Why is it difficult to be fully honest; why do we deceive people?

What effect does deception have on relationships?

BACKGROUND YOU SHOULD KNOW

Laban was an Aramean, the son of Bethuel, grandson of Nahor (Abraham's brother), brother of Rebekah. (See Genealogy on p. 104.)

Jacob previously went to Haran, where he struggled with his uncle Laban. Though generous, Laban was deceitful and self-interested; this was demonstrated in how he took advantage of Jacob's love for Rachel, making him work 14 years for his bride.

God's promise was being realized as Jacob fathered many sons and a daughter with his wives and concubines; these descendants would go on to form the twelve tribes of Israel.



Though Laban acknowledged God, he also mixed in worship of other "gods" (Gen. 31:19, 30) and had marriage practices foreign to Jacob.

When making treaties and covenants, it was common to use large memorial stones or piles of rocks for the sake of remembrance between parties.

A QUICK SUMMARY

HELPS

On page 114
there's a map
that shows
Jacob's travel.

Jacob prepared to leave his scheming uncle Laban, but Laban was reluctant to release such a productive worker. Jacob suggested his only wages for his service would be the rare odd-colored sheep, cattle, and goats from Laban's flocks; this seemed like a good deal for Laban. To preserve his wealth and deny Jacob, Laban separated the regular colored animals from the odd ones, letting Jacob care for the regular animals. Yet, Jacob took it upon himself to breed a large population of odd-colored animals and made himself wealthy. Jacob was later told by God that it was not his scheming, but God's working, that resulted in blessing (Gen. 31:10-12).

Jacob decided to return to Canaan for two reasons. First, because of animosity with Laban's sons and Laban's dangerous mood. Second, God told Jacob to return to the land of promise (Gen. 31: 3). Jacob then gathered his family and fled for his homeland without Laban's knowledge. Upon hearing of Jacob's leaving, Laban pursued them with an armed force, though God had told him in a dream that he should not speak to or harm Jacob. Because he respected part of the warning from God, Laban did not harm Jacob, yet did not remain silent, particularly because his "household gods" (idols) had been stolen by someone within Jacob's family.

Jacob foolishly told Laban that he could search the camp and if the idols were found on anyone, that person would pay with his or her life. Jacob didn't know that his wife Rachel was the one who took the idols. Drawing

from her father's own playbook, Rachel used dishonesty to hide the idols from Laban. Jacob's response to Laban after his unsuccessful search was indignant and angry. All his pent up frustration and resentment after twenty years of hard service was released. In response, Laban meekly suggested a treaty. The covenant that ensued contained overtones of mistrust; when Laban said, "The Lord watch between you and me...", he was essentially saying, "God will keep tabs when I cannot see what you are doing."

INSIGHTS

COMPROMISED WORSHIP

Genesis 30:25-31:55 described the religious situation in Laban's household. Though Laban sometimes worshiped the God of Jacob (Gen. 31:53), this worship of the true God was contaminated with the idolatry of his "household gods" (Hebrew, "*teraphim*" means figurines of deities). There was also an interesting connection between what Laban worshipped and how he treated people and what he thought about the institution of marriage.

GRACE ALONE BRINGS PEACE

After Jacob fled for Canaan, Laban angrily pursued him. Only God's intervention (in a dream) brought a peaceful end to the struggle. Thus, God ultimately brought about peace and protection for Jacob out of His grace, not because people were clever or good. This proof of divine protection should help God's people to live by faith.

GOD'S AGENDA WINS

Despite the glaring imperfections within God's people and opposition from the outside, God's promises won out over idols and idolaters. Though people are often faithless, God remains faithful (2 Timothy 2:13).



LEGACY OF FAMILIAL SIN

Sin has painful consequences because people reap what they sow. Throughout this passage, we repeatedly see dysfunctional people deceiving each other; Laban deceived Jacob and Jacob and Rachel deceived Laban. Apples often fall close to the tree.

OTHER SCRIPTURE

- Matthew 5:9
- Galatians 6:7-8
- Colossians 3:9-10
- 2 Timothy 2:13

CONVERSATION

Can you think of examples, whether in the Bible or from your life, of God being faithful in light of people being unreliable?

In what ways do Christians in our culture struggle with compromised worship? How does idolatry (e.g. money, sex, consumerism, etc.) contaminate our worship of God?

Laban, Jacob, and Rachel were all intentionally deceptive at some point because they were afraid of negative circumstances. How do you think they would have interacted if they had a healthy fear of God instead of man?

The sins we see in Genesis 30:25-31:55 (idolatry, deceit, vengeance, greed, and the fear of man) are common to all people at all times. How is the Gospel (God saves sinners by grace through faith via Jesus) **good news** to those of us who struggle with the same issues that Laban, Jacob, and Rachel struggled with? Further, how should we respond to others when we see them struggling? (See Galatians 6:1-2.)

YOUR NOTES



Genesis

LIMP WITH THE LORD
32 - 33

STARTING OUT

Is there anything from this week's message that stood out to you or that you have questions about?

Think of profound moments in your life; what events have caused the greatest changes in shaping who you are today?

BACKGROUND YOU SHOULD KNOW

We previously learned about the struggles and deception between Jacob and his uncle Laban and the journey that Jacob and his family made from Haran to Canaan.

Jacob had formerly deceived his father Isaac to get the birthright (an ancient custom of gaining an extra portion of a father's wealth) that belonged to his older twin brother Esau; Jacob understandably had serious strife with his estranged brother.

THE ANCIENT BIRTHRIGHT CUSTOM SECURED FOUR THINGS FOR JACOB:

1. A superior family rank (Genesis 49:3)



2. A double portion of the inheritance (Deuteronomy 21:17)
3. The priestly role in the family (Numbers 8:17–19)
4. The promise of the Seed (Jesus would come through his descendants) in which all nations of the earth were to be blessed. (Genesis 22:18)

A QUICK SUMMARY

HELPS Jacob's humbling encounter with God completely changed his life. The turnaround began with crisis – a confrontation with his estranged and powerful brother Esau who Jacob suspected was bent on revenge over Jacob taking his birthright (Gen. 32:1–21). Since Jacob was afraid, he thought he might appease Esau with gifts and prayed for God's intervention. As night fell, Jacob sent his family away so that if Esau found him, his family wouldn't die too. But, in solitude, Jesus came and "wrestled with him until daybreak" (Gen. 32:1–21), breaking Jacob's pride by breaking his hip. Now Jacob could only cling to Him and plead for grace, saying, "I will not let you go unless you bless me!" (Gen. 32:26)

The Lord asked Jacob, "What is your name?" (Gen. 32: 27) The question confronted Jacob's identity because he had pretended to be Esau (Gen. 27:19). God then gave him a new name, "Israel," indicating a new direction in his life. (From here on, scripture goes back and forth between saying Jacob and Israel. For clarity's sake, we're going to stick to using Jacob in this study guide.) Jacob understood that when he encountered God, God could have easily defeated him. Graciously, Jacob was not only spared, but he was also blessed. Though Jacob had been broken by God, his limp empowered him to rely on God; he was now able to meet Esau with God's help.

While Jacob, now Israel, was mindful that the sins of his past were catching up to him, God was gracious. When Jacob met Esau, instead of vengeance, Jacob was met with reconciliation. After the warm meeting and exchange of generous gifts from Jacob, Esau departed peacefully. In

On page 116
there's a map
that shows
Jacob's travel.

response to God's grace, Jacob built an altar to the Lord, demonstrating that he understood his need for a Savior and finally acknowledged the Lord as his God. Up to this point, Jacob referred to the Lord as, "the God of my father Isaac," never once calling Him, "the Lord my God." But now, Jacob named the altar, "El-Elohe-Israel," meaning, "God, the God of Israel," his new name.

INSIGHTS

CHANGING NAMES

A name change often signifies something of great importance. God said Jacob's name (meaning "he deceives"), "shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed." (Gen. 32:28) Israel means "struggles or strives with God" or "God strives." Because God was in the equation, striving with God would help Israel prevail over enemies.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Divine appearances in the Old Testament are called "theophanies" (which means "appearance of God") or "Christophanies" (which means "appearance of Christ").

KNOWING THYSELF

While wrestling, the Lord asked Jacob, "What is your name?" (Gen. 32: 27) The question confronted Jacob's identity because he was deceptive and even formerly pretended to be Esau (Gen. 27:19). Jacob was exposed for who he really was by Jesus. Contrary to popular opinion, knowing God comes before knowing oneself.

OTHER SCRIPTURE

- Hosea 12:3-4
- 2 Corinthians 12:7



- Judges 6:22
- Psalm 27:3

CONVERSATION

We can't truly know ourselves without God as our point of reference. Discuss scenarios where people think wrongly about themselves because they aren't thinking rightly about God. For example, consider things like overly high/low self-esteem, eating disorders, sexual promiscuity, and so on.

How should the reality that God has a perfect and intimate knowledge of everything impact our ability to be honest and open?

Instead of Jacob getting what he deserved for his sins, he was met with gracious reconciliation with his brother Esau. How does this event foreshadow the Gospel?

The great preacher Martyn Lloyd-Jones was once asked, "What does a person look like who has truly met God?" Alluding to Genesis 32, he replied, "He walks with a limp." After encountering the living Christ, Jacob was forever crippled—both physically and in regard to his ego. He could no longer strut around arrogantly as he had done before. His pride turned to lowliness (Gen. 33:3). His greed turned to generosity (Gen. 33:10–11). And his self-reliance had turned into worship (Gen. 33:20). Professing believers must ask: "Have these things happened to me? Have my habits changed? Have I met the Lord?"

YOUR NOTES



Genesis

DINAH'S DOWNFALL
34 - 36

STARTING OUT

Is there anything from this week's message that stood out to you or that you have questions about?

Why is it difficult to forgive?

When wronged, are you more inclined to trust God and make peace or trust yourself and get even?

BACKGROUND YOU SHOULD KNOW

Last week, we learned that Jacob was confronted with Jesus in a wrestling match that left him humbled but ready to face a potentially dangerous encounter with his estranged brother Esau. After a surprisingly gracious reconciliation with Esau, Jacob (with his name now changed to Israel), began to truly worship God.

In the ancient Middle East, a woman who was sexually assaulted (as Dinah was in Genesis 34) would often no longer be able to have a valid marriage.



A QUICK SUMMARY

HELPS God directed Jacob to go to Bethel. Yet, in partial obedience, Jacob settled at Shechem, putting his family in a location God didn't want them. Tragically, Jacob's daughter Dinah was raped by the prince of the land, Shechem. Hamor, Shechem's father, tried to diplomatically brush the incident under the rug, offering land and intermarriage with the native Canaanites. God's people were surrounded by immoral pagans who, through intermarriage, could have assimilated them.

On page 118
there's a map
that shows
where Jacob
is moving his
family.

As Jacob seemed passive, his sons plotted revenge against Shechem. Masking their intent, Jacob's sons convinced the men of Shechem that if they were circumcised, Jacob's family would peacefully unite with them and permit the marriage of Shechem and Dinah. After the men of Shechem were sore and vulnerable from being circumcised, Simeon and Levi brutally killed them all, plundering the town and taking the women and children captive.

Genesis 35 records Jacob's return to Bethel at God's command. Yet before obediently worshipping God, Jacob first did away with all the idols within his family. At Bethel, God reaffirmed Jacob of His gracious promise; God again told him his name was Israel and promised him land and that nations and kings would come from him. Chapter 35 also records the birth of Benjamin and the deaths of Rachael (while giving birth to Benjamin) and Isaac. Genesis 36 is an account of Esau's descendants, which became a mighty nation (Edomites) that would unfortunately oppose the people of God for centuries to come.

INSIGHTS

PARTIAL OBEDIENCE

Though God had originally directed Jacob to go to Bethel, in partial obedience he settled at Shechem. Partial obedience is still disobedience.

SIN HAS CONSEQUENCES

The future of Simeon and Levi can be understood in light of their sin in Genesis 34. Jacob cursed them while blessing his other sons (Gen. 49:5–7) and these violent brothers eventually died by the sword they lived by. Neither Simeon nor Levi continued to exist as a separate tribe in the councils of Israel. Simeon was absorbed into Judah, and Levi was assigned a different (priestly) role. Sin has consequences.

SPIRITUAL DISCONNECT

Matthew Henry, a writer and minister in the 17th century, once remarked that “grace does not run in the blood,” meaning salvation and sanctification aren’t passed along to family members genetically. Though Jacob had a profoundly life-changing spiritual experience (Gen. 32), it didn’t transform his sons, who vengefully deceived and murdered.

PROSPERITY THEOLOGY

After Jacob obeyed God by worshipping Him at Bethel and hearing directly from Him, his family suffered the loss of people they dearly loved. Great spiritual experiences are not necessarily security against life’s sorrows and trials.

OTHER SCRIPTURE

- Matthew 6:14
- Romans 12:19
- James 1:20-25
- Galatians 6:7-9



CONVERSATION

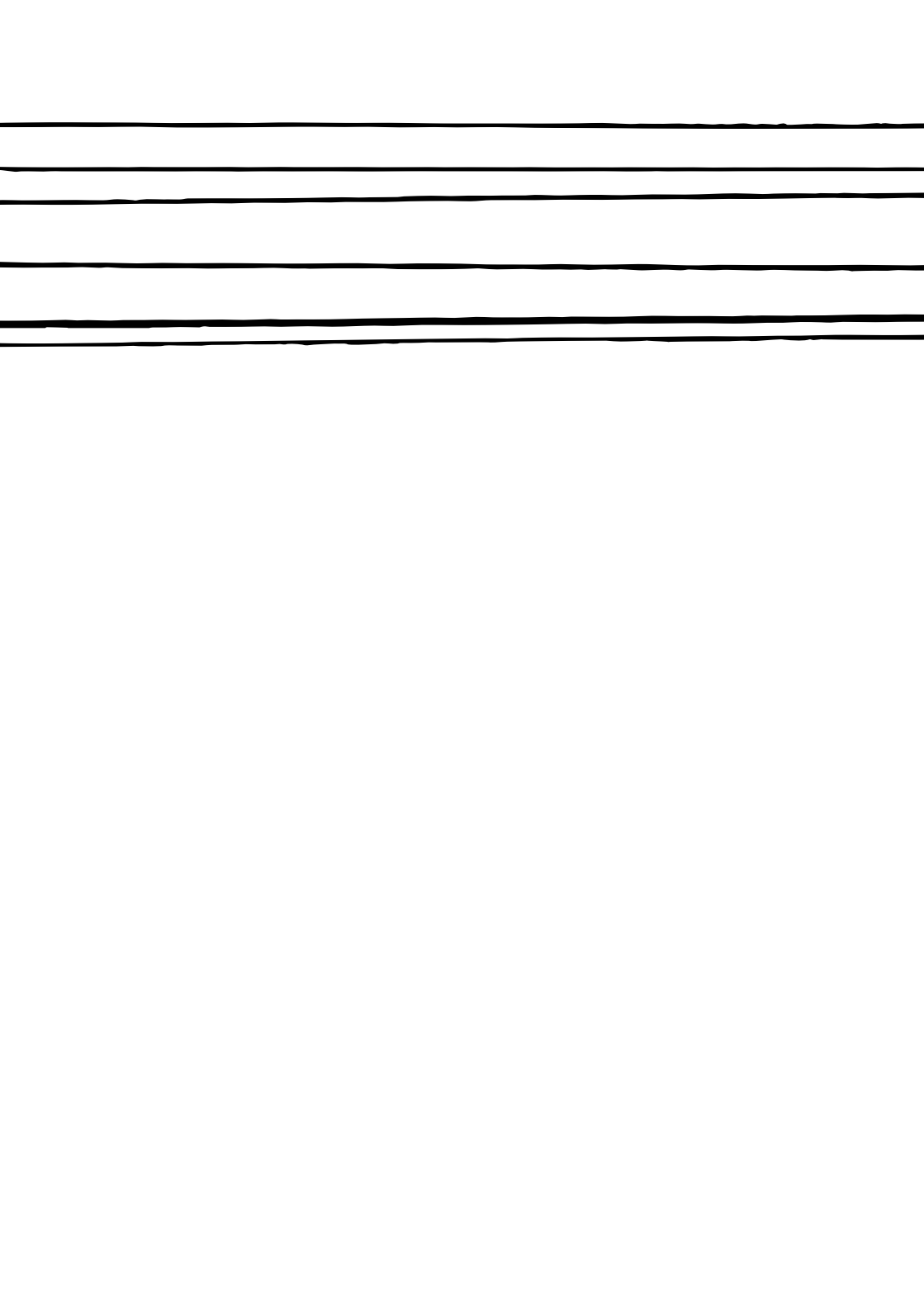
To be fully dedicated to God, Jacob did away with the idols around him. Consider things like the acceptance of others, food, sexuality, money, hobbies, success at work or school, and family. If idolatry is basically turning to something other than God for ultimate meaning, joy, and security, what idols are in the way of your full dedication to Christ?

As Simeon and Levi took vengeance on the men of Shechem, they dealt with the evil done to their sister unrighteously. (See James 1:20-25) While being proactive in seeking justice is good, are there injustices that you're unrighteously taking into your own hands? If so, what does that say about your faith in God's goodness and ultimate control?

How can God's consistent grace toward needy sinners in the Old Testament give Christians encouragement in the ups and downs of trying to follow Jesus today?

By the end of Genesis 35, Jacob returned to Canaan despite many obstacles and difficult circumstances; this was proof God was reliable in His provision and promise. Have you had seasons of life that you've gone through where you experienced God's faithfulness and provision despite how things might have initially appeared?

YOUR NOTES



Genesis

A SOVEREIGN PLAN



Genesis

INTO THE PIT

37

STARTING OUT

Is there anything from this week's message that stood out to you or that you have questions about?

In the story of Joseph, we see favoritism causing problems from the get-go. What is happening to both Joseph and his family due to favoritism? In your life, have you experienced favoritism – whether on the receiving or giving end? What were the results?

BACKGROUND YOU SHOULD KNOW

THE COAT OF MANY COLORS

The coat given to Joseph by his father was more than just a fancy outfit. Clothing in this time was highly symbolic, and this coat clearly represented that Joseph would be the one to receive Jacob's inheritance – something typically given to the first-born.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DREAMS

Dreams in this time were understood to be revelations from God. Certain symbols were also universally understood – such as that the sun and moon stood for the father and mother. So when Joseph reported these dreams, it's clear to his family what God is saying.

FAMILY HIERARCHY

The family hierarchy was taken very seriously. Reuben, as the eldest, would have been held responsible by his father for anything that may have happened to his brothers, specifically Joseph.

A QUICK SUMMARY

Jacob lived in Canaan, and had a 17-year-old son, Joseph, who was his favorite out of his 12 boys. Joseph and his half-brothers were shepherds, and Joseph kept his dad in the loop about the not-so-good things his brothers were doing. Jacob had made Joseph a special robe that showed his favoritism. Joseph's brothers hated him because of all this. Joseph also had two different dreams that showed his family bowing down to him – in one they were binding grain and his brothers' bunches came around his and bowed, and in another the sun, moon, and eleven stars were bowing to him. Even Jacob scolded him a little at the idea of everyone put in a position under him, but Jacob still kept the dream in the back of his mind – his brothers just hated him more.

HELPS

On page 120 there's a map that shows where Joseph searches for his brothers, followed by his being taken to Egypt.

One day Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers in another town. Joseph found they were even farther away than they were supposed to be, and went to find them there. When his brothers saw Joseph coming, they saw their chance to get rid of him and planned to kill him. Reuben, the oldest brother, convinced them to instead throw him in a pit (in his mind, he'd rescue him later). While Joseph was in the pit, they saw an opportunity to get rid of him with a little more of a clearer conscience and even make some money – sell him to approaching traveling traders, the Ishmaelites. When Reuben went back to the pit to rescue him but saw he was gone, he panicked; Reuben knew he'd be held responsible. So the brothers killed a goat and spread its blood on Joseph's coat in order to stage his death and explain why Joseph hadn't come home. Jacob was devastated with the loss of his favorite son. Meanwhile, the people who had bought Joseph sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, Pharaoh's captain of the guard.



INSIGHTS

PARALLELS BETWEEN JOSEPH & JESUS:

Here we begin the story of Joseph. As we start to dive in, it's interesting to consider how Joseph's story parallels and foreshadows that of Jesus.

- Loved by their Father
- Hated, rejected, and abused by their brothers
- Sent out by their father to their brothers
- Stripped of their clothes
- Sold for the price of a slave
- Those close to them mourned when they found out he was lost, thinking him gone forever, but in reality he wasn't
- Started their "ministry" at the age of 30
- Tempted and successfully resisted
- Both condemned alongside two sinners - one restored (cupbearer, repent on cross) and one condemned (baker, mocker on cross)
- Acted in mercy and forgiveness, despite their "brothers" hearts and past actions toward them
- After a time of suffering, are restored to a place of glory, in order to bring "bread" to others and save lives (Joseph literally, Jesus spiritually)

IDENTIFY WITH THE BROTHERS

As we consider the parallels starting in Chapter 37, we as people should identify with the brothers, not so much Joseph – and so, the beauty of Joseph's treatment and his saving of his brothers,

despite their actions and treatment of him, remind us of the beauty of the gospel and God's mercy in saving us.

REFLECTION OF THE FATHER

The first two verses of the chapter start out with Jacob, and introduce the story as "the generations of Jacob," even though what follows is a story about Joseph. Though the story's main character is Joseph, the entire story is a reflection of his father. Similarly, Jesus' story was a reflection of His Father; our life story is meant to be a reflection of the Father as well.

OTHER SCRIPTURE

- Matthew 3:17
- Luke 20:13-18
- Matthew 27: 27-31
- Philippians 2:1-18

CONVERSATION

What are your thoughts on the different people in the narrative so far?
What's your overall take on Jacob, Joseph, and his brothers?

Joseph shared his dreams with his family – why do you think he did this?

The brothers cover their sin with yet another sin – a lie to their father. Have you ever covered your sins with a lie? How do we see the downward spiral of sin working in their lives? In our lives?



Joseph's path was fully in the control of God. It's easy for us to see this, since we know the end of the story, but Joseph couldn't see the end, just as we can't see the end of our own story. Is anything happening in your life where you feel out of control? How can you trust that God is in the driver's seat? How can you be used by Him in what you're dealing with right now?

As we think about the parallels between Joseph and Jesus and think about how we fit into the story, we probably identify with the brothers way more than Joseph.

A FEW QUESTIONS TO START US THINKING ABOUT THIS:

The brothers weren't doing what they were supposed to; when Joseph told their dad, they hated him for it. When we sin and it's exposed, how do we handle this and the people involved in outing us?

The brothers saw that Joseph was getting what they thought they "deserved" from their father, and were bitter. When life isn't fair, and we feel that someone else is getting what we "deserve," how do we respond?

The brothers saw through Joseph's dreams that God was going to elevate Joseph, not them, and didn't like what they saw. When God isn't working in the way that we expect or want Him to, how do we respond?

The brothers saw Joseph coming toward them and let their frustration, hatred, and bitterness control their actions. When Jesus comes toward us, what is our reaction? Do we let anything get in the way of receiving Him – maybe an attitude of entitlement, or wanting to be “the King” of our own lives in our own way, or wanting someone or something else instead of Him?

Joseph, the loved son, was sent by his father to his brothers; when he found out they were farther than they were supposed to be, he stayed true to the mission of his father and traveled even farther to go find them. God the Father sent his own loved Son, Jesus, to seek us out and find us, even though we have wandered far away from him. No matter how much we've mistreated others or God, Jesus was sent to us – to live, to die on our behalf, and to rise again. What does this mean for you?

YOUR NOTES



Genesis

BREAKING OUT

38

STARTING OUT

Is there anything from this week's message that stood out to you or that you have questions about?

Why do you think Judah left his family to start a life somewhere else?

When we run away - from a hard situation, family, or God – Why do we do this? What are the results?

BACKGROUND YOU SHOULD KNOW

INTERRUPTION IN THE STORY OF JOSEPH

Genesis 38 is often skipped over within the story of Joseph because, at first glance, it may seem irrelevant. The chapter before is all about Joseph and how he was sold into slavery. The chapter after picks up where Chapter 37 left off, with Joseph starting his life as a slave in Egypt. So Chapter 38 seems to almost rudely interrupt the flow of thought. But if we look closer, we see there is a reason for its placement here.

Bible.org explains: "This chapter is absolutely essential to the development of the argument of the book. It occurs by design, fitting



beautifully into the context. While Chapter 37 has explained how Joseph (and so the entire nation of Israel) wound up in Egypt rather than Canaan, Chapter 38 tells us why this Egyptian sojourn was necessary. Chapter 38 provides a backdrop against which the purity of Joseph in Chapter 39 stands out the more plainly. Chapters 39 and following describe the price that Joseph had to pay for the sins of his brothers. Chapter 38 suggests some of the consequences of the sin of Joseph's sale that Judah suffered."¹

MARRYING A SISTER-IN-LAW (LEVIRATE MARRIAGE)

Levirate marriage (explained in Deuteronomy 25) was a common law of the time. The law said that if a married man died childless, his brother must stand in as a substitution and provide a child for the widow who would be considered the son of the deceased husband. To not do this was considered a grave offense and resulted in public humiliation. The law served very practical purposes: ensuring the ongoing of the family name, providing for the widow, and keeping land and other inheritances within the family.²

STAFF, SIGNET, AND CORD

The seal, cord, and staff each had unique characteristics that were specific to the owner. The seal was used in making contracts – very similar to the way we use our signature or a PIN today. It had the unique design of its owner carved in it, and each contract needed an impression of the owner's seal. The same went for the staff. Possessing the staff, signet, and cord gave Tamar proof of Judah as the father of her child. She was basically walking around with his driver's license, Social Security card, and credit card.

A QUICK SUMMARY

Around the time Joseph was sold, Judah left his brothers to go live and work near a friend of his named Hirah. There he met and married a Canaanite woman and they had three sons: Er, Onan, and Shelah.

Judah found a wife for his oldest son Er, named Tamar. But Er was such a bad guy that God put him to death. So Judah told his next oldest, Onan, to take Tamar as his wife in order to give her children. Onan knew their child wouldn't legally be his, so whenever they slept together "he would waste the semen on the ground, so as not to give offspring to his brother" (Gen. 38:9). His motivation for doing this was wicked and God put him to death for it. Tamar was a now widow again; Judah told her to go back to her own family until his youngest son, Shelah, was old enough to marry her.

Judah's own wife died, and after he got over mourning her, he and his friend Hirah traveled to Timnah to have his sheep sheared. Tamar disguised herself in a veil and went to where she knew Judah would be heading – Shelah, Judah's youngest son, was old enough to be married now but Judah hadn't done anything leading to their union, so she knew he wasn't staying true to his word. Judah saw her, assumed she was a prostitute, and slept with her. She negotiated to keep his signet, cord, and staff as collateral until he was able to send her payment, and as a result of their meeting she got pregnant. When Judah sent the payment, she had already gone back home so there was no one to receive it. Judah asked around for the "cult prostitute" but no one knew what he was talking about; he let it drop so he wouldn't get a bad rep.

Three months later Judah found out Tamar was pregnant – obviously because of immorality because she wasn't married – and Judah commanded her to be burned. She pulled out her collateral – the staff, signet, and cord – and asked him to identify them, because they identified the father. Judah admitted they were his and that he was in the wrong for not giving her his youngest son in the first place.

The pregnancy turned out to be twin boys. During labor, the hand of one of the boys came out and the midwife tied a red thread on it so they could know which one was born first. But he put his hand back in and the other brother ended up coming out first. The midwife was extremely surprised that he "broke out" first and he was named Perez (meaning breaking out). The second was named Zerah (meaning scarlet).



INSIGHTS

BIRTH CONTROL

People sometimes use this passage to attempt to prove that birth control isn't Biblical, but what is the main point of this passage? This passage serves as an example of how important it is to read Scripture in its full context. Onan was not called evil for practicing birth control, but rather for his motivation and the context in which he did so. Onan not only had a legal obligation to provide Tamar with kids, but even more, giving her a son was the only way that Tamar would receive any kind of inheritance or be taken care of by someone. By withholding a son from Tamar, Onan was depriving his late brother of an heir, Tamar of a provider, and also keeping the inheritance to himself. He was thinking of himself at the expense of others. This passage is not about birth control; it is about greed and selfishness at the expense of others.

THE LINE OF JESUS

The last paragraph of the chapter shows the birth of Judah and Tamar's twins. Since the twin that was first to come out of the womb was given the rights of the firstborn, some kind of identifying mark was put on the first baby out. When one of Tamar's boys put his hand out during labor, a scarlet thread was tied to it, assuming that he would be the firstborn. However, the other boy ended up being born first. He was named Perez, while the next son, the one with the scarlet thread, was named Zerah. As later genealogies will prove, this firstborn son, Perez, was the son of Judah who would carry on the messianic line until the time of David, and ultimately, of Jesus (Ruth 4:12; Matthew 1:3).

GOD OF GRACE

Out of Judah's line (Perez, the firstborn of Tamar) came the Jews, and ultimately Jesus. Considering this story, no Jew could proudly look at their ancestry. Instead, they had to admit that whatever good had come to Israel was only because of grace. Deuteronomy 7 explains, "It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt." The God of Israel is one of grace alone. Our God is the same God, one of grace alone. He did not choose us based on our ancestors, our roots, or our deeds. He chose us because he loves us, and for nothing but his glory.

GOD'S PROVIDENCE

Judah didn't realize at the time that God's promises were being fulfilled through his immoral actions. Joseph didn't know that his sale into slavery was going to end up eventually saving his brothers and father. There will be many times in a Christian's life when it looks like everything is falling apart at the seams. Tragedy, disputes, divisions, and heartache will happen as long as we are in our mortal bodies. We, too, must trust that in these hard times there is a God who works providentially in our lives. This is the promise we have from Romans 8:28: "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

OTHER SCRIPTURE

- Leviticus 20:14; 21:9
- Deuteronomy 7:6-11



- Deuteronomy 25:5–10
- Ruth 4:12
- Matthew 1:3
- Acts 5:1–11
- Romans 3:21–31
- Romans 8:28:
- Ephesians 2:8–9
- I Corinthians 11:30

CONVERSATION

Judah left his family to marry a Canaanite, which went directly against what his parents, and ultimately God, wanted for his people. Judah knew this but did it anyway. How did things work out for Judah?

Even though we claim faith in God, we can easily separate ourselves from our faith in everyday matters, similar to how Judah married a Canaanite. When we go directly against what we know God wants for us, how do things work out for us?

Why do you think the spilling of semen was wicked in God's eyes? Have you ever heard this passage used in an argument against birth control? What are your thoughts on this?

Er and Onan were both wicked in God's sight and because of this God "put them to death." This also happened in the New Testament with Ananias and Sapphira and others (Acts 5, 1 Corinthians 11:30). What do you make of this?

How do you think Judah felt after two of his sons were "put to death" by God. Can you understand why Judah would have withheld Shelah from Tamar after these events?

We see both Onan and Judah withholding out of fear. Onan withheld his seed, possibly out of fear that he would have a son that wouldn't be considered his and lose his inheritance. Judah also withheld giving a son to Tamar (his third son), out of fear that God would kill his last son like he had the first two. In what ways does fear stop us from what God has called us to? Is there anything you are holding onto right now out of fear?

The usual punishment for promiscuity in the Law of Moses was stoning (Deuteronomy 22:20-24). In cases of unusual wickedness, there was punishment by burning (Leviticus 20:14; 21:9). Why do you think Judah demanded such a harsh consequence for Tamar? Do we ever attempt to cover up our own sinfulness in excessively harsh responses to the sins of others?



After reading this story, no Jew could look at their ancestry with any feelings of smugness or pride. Instead, they'd have to admit that whatever good had come to Israel was the result of grace alone. Do you ever feel that your background, history, or actions make God love you more or less? How can we be assured that God's grace – Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection – make our own history or where we come from irrelevant? (Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 3:21-31)

God used a line of sinful people to bring Jesus into the world to die and save us from our sins. He is still using us, a line of sinful people, to bring the good news of Jesus to others who don't know him. How can you be sure that even though you aren't worthy, God can still work through you to accomplish his plan? What are some ways that you can be bringing Jesus to others around you?

YOUR NOTES

Genesis

PHOTIPHAR'S WIFE

39

STARTING OUT

Is there anything from this week's message that stood out to you or that you have questions about?

This chapter begins with Joseph as a slave, and ends with Joseph as a prisoner, yet through it all "the Lord was with him." When you've gone through times of suffering in your life, have you been aware that "the Lord was with you?"

BACKGROUND YOU SHOULD KNOW

REDEMPTIVE PLAN

Two chapters earlier, God's redemptive plan through Joseph started to unfold – the plan that would save the line of Israel from physical death, and the rest of us from spiritual death (through the line of Israel, in Jesus). Chapter 39 continues with God's plan miraculously unfolding.

SLAVE STATUS

The kind of slavery Joseph was in is not the same type of forced slavery we are familiar with in American history – these slaves were more like servants in a home, not oppressed field workers. Slaves could be the



captives of war, subjects of debt to be worked off, born into slavery, or voluntary servants. In the Ancient Near East, some slaves were able to own other slaves and even conduct business.¹

PENALTY FOR ATTEMPTED RAPE

The punishment for this kind of betrayal is usually death, especially if the rape was committed against a free woman by a servant. Mercifully, Joseph was only put into prison. This seems to be a white-collar prison where people go temporarily to wait for their sentence, as we see him alongside the king's prisoners. It's not explained why Potiphar didn't execute Joseph immediately or if he had plans to sentence him later, but what we do know is that God mercifully protected Joseph in this situation.²

A QUICK SUMMARY

Genesis 39 picks up where Genesis 37 left off. After Joseph had been taken by the Ishmaelites to Egypt, he was sold to Potiphar, a high-ranking officer of Pharaoh. God was with Joseph and caused things to go very well for him. When Potiphar realized God was giving Joseph success, he put Joseph in charge of his house. God made everything in Potiphar's house go very, very well, and Joseph became the big boss, with Potiphar trusting all the details of his home entirely to Joseph.

Joseph was very good looking, and after a while Potiphar's wife noticed him. When she pursued him, he denied her, explaining that he had been given everything by Potiphar, except for one thing – her. There was no way he could sin against God like that. She was persistent, trying to get him for herself, but he wouldn't sleep with or even spend time with her. One day she aggressively approached him when no one was around and tried to seduce him, but he ran away, leaving behind the clothes that she had grabbed on to. She called out to the men in her house and accused Joseph of trying to rape her, using his clothes as evidence. When Potiphar came home, she told him the same story. Potiphar was furious and put

Joseph in prison. But God was with Joseph there, too. The prison warden favored Joseph and ended up putting him in charge of the prisoners. The warden dubbed Joseph the boss and God was with Joseph, causing everything he was involved in to go well.

INSIGHTS

“THE LORD WAS WITH JOSEPH”

This phrase appears four times in this chapter. The first two times are while Joseph is working as a slave. The second two times are when he's in prison. Neither of these situations are ideal or what Joseph would have chosen for himself; in fact, both probably involved very high levels of suffering for Joseph, but the Lord was still with him. God was with Joseph, comforting him on an individual level, and at the same time his blessing on Joseph was making His own name known in Egypt. God is still with us and in control even when we are suffering.

ALL HONOR TO GOD - IN THE GOOD & THE BAD

Joseph gives all honor to God - he is open and vocal about the source of his success. We'll see him continue to do this in the next chapter too. He gives God the glory, then God elevates him, and God is glorified even more. And in times when he is not being elevated, but instead is deep in a pit, he still gives God the glory.

GOD'S TIMELINE VS. OUR OWN

Joseph rose to the top, but it took a while to happen. Joseph was 17 years old when he was sold into slavery. He was 30 when Pharaoh promoted him and had been in prison for at least two years before that. So, he was in Potiphar's house for 11 years. We read through this timeline in the span of a couple chapters and may not stop to think about how long this really was for Joseph. 13 years is a long time. Many think advancement from God comes quickly. Sometimes it can, but not normally. Normally, God allows good things to develop slowly.



FLEE TEMPTATION

When Joseph was tempted, he didn't stick around trying to prove he could resist Potiphar's wife. He "fled and ran outside." This is a literal example of "fleeing sexual immorality" (1 Corinthians 6:18). There are times when we will be amidst sin and God can use us to be a good influence to those around us, but there are other times – when sin and temptation are actively pursuing us - that we simply have to drop everything and **run**.

GOD'S REDEPTIVE PLAN

Even in the midst of this horror, God did not depart from Joseph. In some ways the story will get worse - and when it does, God is still with Joseph. God is working not only for Joseph himself, but also for the larger purposes of God's redemptive plan.

- If Joseph's brothers never sold him to the Midianites, then Joseph would never have gone to Egypt.
- If Joseph had never gone to Egypt, then he would never have been sold to Potiphar.
- If he was never sold to Potiphar, then Potiphar's wife would never have falsely accused him of rape.
- If Potiphar's wife had never falsely accused him of rape, then he wouldn't have been put in prison.
- If he hadn't been put in prison, then he would never have met the baker and cupbearer of Pharaoh.
- If he had never met the baker and cupbearer of Pharaoh, he would never have interpreted their dreams.
- If he hadn't interpreted their dreams, he wouldn't have been asked to interpret Pharaoh's dreams.
- If he hadn't interpreted Pharaoh's dreams, he wouldn't have been made prime minister.

- If he wasn't made prime minister, he wouldn't have been able to wisely prepare for the severe famine coming to the region.
- If he hadn't wisely prepared for the severe famine coming to the region, then his family back in Canaan would have died from the famine.
- If his family back in Canaan had died from the famine, the Messiah couldn't come forth from a dead family.
- If the Messiah hadn't come forth, then Jesus never came.
- If Jesus never came, you are dead in your sins and without hope in this world.

OTHER SCRIPTURE

- Genesis 37
- Proverbs 5
- 1 Corinthians 6:18

CONVERSATION

Joseph was ***taken***. Joseph was ***purchased***. He was in situations out of his control and not of his own choice. Where have you been placed right now, either as a result of your own choices or as the result of outside circumstances out of your control? How can God use you where you are right now?

What do you think this means exactly – “the Lord was with Joseph”? How can we know the Lord is with us?



It's been said; "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men." But not for Joseph. How do you think he resisted this temptation, especially considering his elevated position?

We can resist sin, but sometimes it persistently pursues us. When sin attacks, what are ways we can "leave our coat and run?" Is there any sin pursuing you right now? How can you run?

When Joseph refuses Potiphar's wife, it's because he knows and loves God. He specifically explains to her that he couldn't give in to her because he'd be "sinning against God." He would have been sinning against Potiphar, and even her, in complying, but ultimately, God is the one he was concerned with sinning against. What is usually our motivation for not sinning? Is it others, or God?

Because Joseph knew and loved God, he didn't want to do anything against Him. Obedience is easier when we truly understand who God is.

Nineteenth century author Charles Spurgeon once wrote: "When I regarded God as a tyrant, I thought sin a trifle; but when I knew him to be my father, then I mourned that I could ever have kicked against him. When I thought that God was hard, I found it easy to sin; but when I found God so kind, so good, so overflowing with compassion, I smote upon my breast to think that I could ever have rebelled against one who loved me so, and sought my good."

Do you view God more as a "tyrant" or as a loving "father?" Do you think your view of Him affects your obedience to Him?

In this chapter, we see God is with Joseph and so makes him prosper, but we also see God allowing personal tragedy. "Prosperity Gospel" is an idea that has seeped into our Christian culture – it teaches that true faith and generosity will always end up making a Christian prosperous, both financially and physically. How does this chapter speak to that? Is God more interested in our comfort or his glory?

Joseph is a picture of Christ. Joseph, on a much smaller scale than Jesus, suffers for the glory of God. His story foreshadows the ultimate story, the story that God is using all the other stories to point to – the suffering of Jesus, and how through Jesus' suffering he glorified God and redeemed us. How does reading Joseph's story affect your understanding of what Jesus did for you? How does understanding what Jesus did for you affect your response to Him?

YOUR NOTES



Genesis

PHARAOH'S DREAMS

40 - 41:45

STARTING OUT

Is there anything from this week's message that stood out to you or that you have questions about?

In these two chapters, Joseph is at the lowest of the low, then within a day rises to the highest of heights. If you would have known Joseph in prison and someone had told you the next day he would be the highest ranking official in the entire country, it would have seemed impossible. Have you ever seen or experienced anything "impossible" or improbable that glorified God?

BACKGROUND YOU SHOULD KNOW

SIGNIFICANCE OF DREAMS

Dreams in this time were considered revelation from God, and we see God using dreams and visions ("waking dreams") several times in the Bible to communicate with people. Dreams were used to reveal and continue His plan.

CUPBEARER & BAKER

These were both extremely prominent positions. The cupbearer would



have been overseer of the royal vineyards and cellars; probably with hundreds of people under him. The baker, or cook, was the director of all the food made for the royal table. Both officers, especially the cupbearer, were people of great rank and importance. Because of the confidential nature of their employment, and also their special access to the king, they were generally the highest nobles or princes of the blood.

PHARAOH'S BIRTHDAY

This was a holiday season, celebrated in the court with a ton of hoopla and honored by a free pardon to prisoners. As it turned out, the pardon was assigned to the cupbearer and baker, as Joseph had predicted.¹

A QUICK SUMMARY

After Joseph had been in prison a while, Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker offended Pharaoh and were put in the prison where Joseph was, and Joseph looked after them. Both the cupbearer and baker had dreams that Joseph was able to interpret. The cupbearer's dream showed that he would be restored in three days, but the baker's showed that he would be executed in three days. Joseph asked the cupbearer to mention him to Pharaoh when he got out because he was innocent. Three days later, both of Joseph's predictions came true, but the cupbearer forgot all about him once he was restored to his position.

Two years went by and then Pharaoh had two dreams that not he, nor any of the experts, were able to interpret. In one, seven plump, good-looking cows were eaten by seven thin, ugly cows. In the other, seven good ears of grain were eaten by seven bad ears of grain. The cupbearer remembered how Joseph had interpreted his dream correctly and told Pharaoh about him, so Pharaoh brought Joseph in. Joseph, crediting God with his ability, told Pharaoh that both dreams meant the same thing – God was going to bring seven years of plenty to Egypt, followed by seven years of famine, and it would happen soon. He then advised Pharaoh with a plan for how the government could store up the food and be prepared.

Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of the new plan, as well as over everything in the country. Joseph was dubbed second in command to Pharaoh and publicly recognized as so. Pharaoh renamed him with the Egyptian name Zaphenath-paneah, and gave him an Egyptian wife named Asenath.

INSIGHTS

DREAMS & VISIONS TODAY

With the completion of the Bible, God does not have to use dreams and visions like He did before (though God can communicate with us however He chooses). God has now given us His Word and unfolded His plans for us in the Bible. When we have a decision to make, our first stop should always be the Bible, not a dream.

GOD'S TIMING

Joseph really wanted to get out of prison – we see this in Genesis 40:14-15 when the only thing Joseph asks for is to be mentioned to Pharaoh so that his case can be heard. Joseph recognized his chance for freedom in the moment and reaches out for it, but the cupbearer simply forgets Joseph. It's a heartbreaking part of the story, to see Joseph's only chance for freedom gone because someone "forgot." But, it also simply wasn't God's timing. It must have been an extremely sad time for Joseph, but had he been delivered then, God's plan wouldn't have been able to be accomplished through Him.

JOSEPH FORESHADOWING JESUS

It's debated how far one can read into the comparison of Joseph and Jesus throughout the end of Genesis. Definitely the comparison breaks down at some point, as Joseph was simply a lesser pre-picture of Christ, foreshadowing something much bigger and better to come. But it is still interesting to consider the similarities and helpful if they point us to understanding the Gospel through Jesus.

**IN CHAPTERS 40-41, WE SEE:**

- Joseph was condemned alongside two sinners: one redeemed, once condemned. Christ was also condemned alongside two sinners while on the cross: one redeemed, one condemned. (Some scholars associate the cupbearer (wine), and the baker (bread) with the elements of communion, and also the three-day period before they are called out with the three days before the resurrection of Jesus.)
- Both were brought to glory in their kingdom after their suffering, in order to bring life to others.
- Joseph was given all authority and power by the king – to be in charge of giving food to the people and save lives. Christ has been given all authority and power by the King – to bring us “the bread of Life”, giving us Himself, the spiritual food we need for our lives to be saved.

HUMAN NATURE VS. GOD'S NATURE

In Luke 23:42, while Jesus is being condemned next to two sinners, the sinner who is about to be restored asks Jesus to remember him when he enters His kingdom (in direct contrast to Joseph's story, where Joseph is the one asking the sinner to remember him). The cupbearer followed human nature and after three days promptly forgot about Joseph altogether. His own cause had been served and he was no longer concerned with little old Joseph. Jesus, however, assures the sinner that he will not only be remembered, but tells him “today you will be with me in paradise.” When Jesus was brought into His kingdom, he did not forget about us after three days. He was brought back in order to restore all of us alongside him. He is constantly interceding for us. What a direct (and awesome) contrast to human nature.

USING OUR GIFTS FOR GOD

Because of his ability to dream, Joseph is thrown into the first pit; and by his ability to interpret dreams, he's drawn out of another pit. Using our God-given gifts is not about personal gain; it's about the glory of God. When we are using our God-given gifts, it may bring disapproval from others or cause us personal suffering, but if we continue to live for Jesus and be used by God, exercising the gifts he's given us when the opportunities come, God will be using us to bring others to Christ.

OTHER SCRIPTURE

- Matthew 23:11
- Luke 23: 32-43
- John 6: 35-40
- Acts 1:7
- Romans 8: 28-39

CONVERSATION

In the beginning of Chapter 40, we see the captain of the guard (Potiphar) assigning Joseph to attend to the cupbearer and the baker, two high ranking officials waiting their sentence. Despite the fact that Joseph supposedly tried to rape his wife, Potiphar is still overseeing Joseph and even giving him responsibility. What do you think of this?

In his conversations with the cupbearer and baker, Joseph was communicating God's truth; in one case it was very positive, in the other very negative. Joseph didn't try to sugarcoat things or give the baker a false interpretation to make him feel better, he just told him what God had said. How do you feel about communicating God's truth (now revealed to



us in the Bible) to others – whether it's what they want to hear, or don't want to hear?

Genesis 40:23 is such a low point in the story. Have you ever been forgotten by someone, or thought you were forgotten by God? What was that like for you?

Joseph was a slave, and then a prisoner, for a total of about 13 years. He didn't have God's Word written down to go to; nor did he have a Christian community. What do you think got him through? What gets you through?

When the dreams that Joseph interprets for others come true, this must have been confirmation for his own dreams, which were yet to come true. Maybe this helped give him some hope. Maybe the dreams from his youth were always in the back of his mind. Are there any promises or truths from Scripture that you personally hold onto that help get you through – whether it's something you think about every day or during specific hard times?

In the beginning of this narrative, Joseph was brought "out of the pit" to be sold into slavery (Genesis 37:28). This time he is taken "out of the pit" to be restored. This is such a beautiful contrast – it so clearly shows how God takes the bad and uses it for good. Have you experienced anything where God has taken the bad and used it for good?

Joseph's humble attitude and recognition of God as the source of everything he does is such an example to us. Are there people in your life whose attitude or recognition of God as the source have been an example to you?

Joseph was vocal and open about God's role in his life, even with those who didn't share his point of view. Pharaoh was not a believer in the God of Israel, but this doesn't stop Joseph from proclaiming the God of Israel as the source of his ability. When we talk with people, whether believers or unbelievers, how often do we credit God openly?

For Joseph to instruct Pharaoh on what to do (and it seems he went from interpreting to instructing without permission) it must have taken some guts. It seems crazy that a Hebrew slave, and even more, an inmate, is assuming the role of advisor to Pharaoh here! God can use the low to minister to and help the wise. When God is in us, he can use us, no matter who or where we are, to minister to others. Do you feel confident that God can use you right where you are?

When Jesus was brought into His kingdom, he did not forget about us after three days. He was brought back in order to restore all of us alongside him. He is constantly interceding for us. Read Romans 8: 28-39 and discuss how Christ died, then was raised, and is now at the right hand of God interceding for us. How does this result in our freedom and eternal life?



YOUR NOTES

Genesis

JOSEPH'S AUTHORITY
41:46 - 45:28

STARTING OUT

Is there anything from this week's message that stood out to you or that you have questions about?

Joseph's dreams are coming true (literally). Have you ever waited for a very long time for something? What was it like when it became a reality?

Jacob is given back his son – something he never thought was possible. Has anything ever happened to you that you never thought possible? What was this like?

BACKGROUND YOU SHOULD KNOW

GRAIN PROVISION

The people were probably used to Pharaoh taking 10% of the grain in Egypt as a tax. Essentially, Joseph doubled the taxes over the next seven years (Genesis 41:34 mentions one-fifth, or 20%).

SEGREGATION

Egypt was a very racist culture at the time. They believed Egyptians came from the gods, and everyone else came from lesser origins. There was



no social mixing with non-Egyptians. Even with all his status and power, the Egyptians didn't eat with him – Joseph ate at his own table. This segregation also plays into why they settle in Goshen in the next few chapters.

RECOGNIZING JOSEPH

When Joseph left his brothers he was a teen, but his brothers were grown men. Joseph was now grown, spoke Egyptian, was dressed in his official robes, and it wasn't even in the realm of possibility for them that he'd be in such a position. As for Joseph, he knew what they all looked like as men and there were ten of them together in the clothing he would recognize them in. When Joseph does reveal his identity, some say they believed him after showing them that he was circumcised ("made himself known to them") – proof that he was of their tribe.¹

12 TRIBES OF ISRAEL

There is a difference between the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve sons of Israel. "Israel" is the name that God gave Jacob. His twelve sons are Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin. When the tribes inherited the Promised Land, Levi's descendants did not receive a territory for themselves. Instead, they became priests and had several cities scattered throughout all of Israel. Joseph did not receive a tribe either – Jacob had adopted Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, essentially giving Joseph a double portion for his faithfulness in saving the family from famine (Genesis 47:11-12). This makes the tribes as listed in Joshua: Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh. Adding to the confusion, the tribe of Ephraim is sometimes referred to as the tribe of Joseph.²

A QUICK SUMMARY

CHAPTER 41

Joseph was 30 years old when he started managing things in Egypt, and he had two sons during the prosperous time in Egypt – Manasseh and Ephraim. When the famine hit the land, Joseph started selling the food he had saved to the people; who came from all over, even beyond Egypt, to buy from him.

CHAPTER 42

Jacob heard there was grain for sale in Egypt, so he sent his sons (all except Benjamin, his youngest and favorite) down to buy some. Joseph recognized his brothers but they didn't recognize him. When he saw them he instantly remembered the dreams from his youth. He accused the brothers of being spies so that Simeon had to stay in prison until they could bring back their youngest brother, Benjamin, as proof that they were who they said they were. The brothers were convinced this tragedy was their punishment for what they had done to Joseph, and as they discussed it Joseph heard them and was moved to tears. He sent the rest of them home with grain but had their money put back into their bags; when they got home and realized their money was still there they were even more afraid. They explained what had happened to Jacob, and Reuben swore that he'd be fully responsible for Benjamin if they went back, but Jacob refused to let his youngest go.

CHAPTER 43

Jacob's family ran out of food again, and Jacob had no other choice but to send Benjamin back. He sent his sons back to Egypt with gifts under the responsibility of Judah. The brothers were invited to lunch at Joseph's house where they were assured they had nothing to be afraid of. When Joseph saw Benjamin, he was again moved to tears. The brothers, to their amazement, were seated in their birth order, with Benjamin served five times as much food. They feasted and drank and had a great time.



CHAPTER 44

Joseph sent them away again, but this time put his silver cup in Benjamin's bag so that Benjamin was accused and forced to return to Egypt. The brothers all went back with him, and Judah begged Joseph to take him instead of Benjamin, explaining how their father would be destroyed if they were to go back without the youngest.

CHAPTER 45

After hearing Judah's explanation, Joseph couldn't handle it anymore – he finally told his brothers who he was. He was kind and assured them that God was in control of everything. He asked them to forget about the past and not feel guilty, because God had used it for good. Pharaoh heard about the situation and happily encouraged Joseph's entire extended family to come live in Egypt. When the brothers went back home and told Jacob everything, he was in shock. He finally absorbed the good news, and said he'd go to Egypt.

INSIGHTS

FORGETFULNESS & FRUITFULNESS

With his Egyptian wife, Joseph had Manasseh, whose name means "forgetfulness." He named him this because God had helped him forget all the pain of his past. He named his second son Ephraim, which means "fruitfulness," because God made Joseph fruitful in Egypt. We can't be **fruitful** until we are also **forgetful**. Forgetting in this sense doesn't mean something is wiped from our memory – it means we don't hold onto bitterness or anger about something in the past. In his book *The Great Divorce*, C.S. Lewis describes Hell as a place where no one forgets anything, remembering every slight, every cruel exchange of words, every wrong ever done to them, and everybody is utterly unforgiving. But in heaven, all these things are put away because all things have become new. Joseph did not forget the faith of his fathers even though he rose to great glory in Egypt and had an Egyptian wife. As a sign of this, his children were given Hebrew names not Egyptian names.

JESUS FORESHADOWED

In these chapters, we see more foreshadowing of Jesus in Joseph:

- Both provide “bread of life” to the world. Joseph literally; Jesus spiritually.
- Both show an attitude of submission to a greater plan and understand their suffering had a purpose, which was to preserve the lives of others. (“And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God.” Genesis 45:7)

TESTING THE BROTHERS

Joseph’s heart toward his brothers was always full of love and his actions in testing them were meant to carry out a specific goal: to learn the hearts of his brothers and bring them all together with him. There were times when the brothers suffered because of Joseph’s testing, but ultimately it was for their good and to achieve a higher purpose.

HEART CHANGE

Outward actions are evidence of true heart change. Over the course of 20 years, the brothers had significantly changed, and Joseph saw this as they were tested in different ways.

- Before, when their favored brother (Joseph) was taken into slavery, they didn’t think twice. Now, when their favored brother (Benjamin) is taken into slavery, they stand by his side and go back to the city with him.
- Before, the brothers didn’t think about their father’s feelings in losing a son; now, they are very concerned for their dad’s well-being.
- Judah was the one who suggested selling Joseph into slavery; now he is willing to give his own life in place of Benjamin. This



sacrificial love is the ultimate evidence of heart change.

SALVATION PRINCIPLES

This story sheds light on some major Biblical principles regarding salvation:

WE ALONE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR INDIVIDUAL SINS.

When the brothers offer themselves as slaves alongside Benjamin, Joseph replies: "Far be it from me that I should do so! Only the man in whose hand the cup was found shall be my servant. But as for you, go up in peace to your father." Only Benjamin was to be held responsible. We are each responsible for our own sins, and as Romans 6:23 tells us, the wages of sin is death. This is the penalty we are responsible to pay.

WE ARE THOROUGHLY SINFUL AND GUILTY AS CHARGED.

While we may be innocent of one particular sin, we can never claim innocence because before God we're guilty of so many other things. When the brothers were accused of stealing Joseph's cup, true, they didn't commit this particular crime, but they still couldn't stand before Joseph and claim innocence – they knew in their hearts that they were guilty before God for so many other things. They had been found out by God, and deserved whatever penalty He would bring.

WE ARE SAVED BY THE INTERCESSION OF ANOTHER.

Judah stepped up and offered himself as a substitution for Benjamin – just as one day one of his descendants would do. Jesus, a descendant directly from the line of Judah, stepped in as the only acceptable substitution for our sins.³

OTHER SCRIPTURE

- Genesis 35:23-26; Exodus 1:1-4; 1 Chronicles 2:1-2 (12 Tribes of Israel)
- Matthew 12:46-50
- John 6:35
- Romans 6:23
- Romans 8:28-29
- Hebrews 2:10-18

CONVERSATION

Throughout Genesis, we've seen God taking people to hard places in order to accomplish his plan. God may take us places we don't want to go in order to make us who he wants us to be. Discuss how this could be true for you.

Joseph's two sons were given names of significance, showing that God had caused Joseph to **forget** the past and become **fruitful** in his life. (See Forgetfulness and Fruitfulness in Insights above). Forgetting in this sense doesn't mean we erase a memory; it means we don't hold onto bitterness or anger in spite of it. When we don't forgive, we are much less useful to God. Can you think about anything you've been able, with God's help, to forget? Or is there anything that you need to ask God to help you forget?

God works in all things – even sinful things. Romans 8:28 tells us “all things work together for good for those who love God.” There is so much sin going on in these chapters, but God works his plan throughout it.



Famine is not a good thing, but God used it to bring his people to Egypt. Racism is not a good thing, but God put His people into a racist culture where they were kept separate for Him and better able to flourish. God can and does use the evil actions of men to further His good plan. This never excuses evil, but it means God's wisdom and goodness are greater than evil. What do you think about this?

What a moment it must have been for Joseph to finally see his dream come true and his brothers all bowing in front of him! Can you think of a time where you saw God answering prayers or saw clearly how He was working? What was that like?

The brothers had a very heavy conscience. They thought the mess they were in was because of their past sins against Joseph. Their guilt was obviously eating them up inside – anytime something bad happened, they assumed it was God punishing them for the past. Have you ever felt this way? If something bad happens to you, do you (consciously or subconsciously) believe that you are “getting what you deserve?” Read Romans 8:1-8 and discuss how things work for the believer who has Jesus.

When hearts are changed, actions are evidence. Over the course of 20 years, the brothers had significantly changed, and Joseph sees this evidence as they are tested in different ways. (See Heart Change in Insights.) These were men who killed, raped, sold a brother into slavery, and didn't care about their own father...but in 20 years God did an amazing work. No one is beyond hope. Is there anyone that you feel is unreachable for God? How can you be praying for or ministering to them?

When Joseph told his brothers who he was, the first thing he told them was, "Don't be mad at yourself for what you did to me. God used it - it's all good." Now *that's* forgiveness. And these are the same words that Jesus has said to you. Is there anyone that has sinned against you that you could be saying these words to?

Read through the interactions of Joseph with his brothers in these chapters again, only this time, imagine yourself in place of the brothers, and Jesus in the place of Joseph. This story is a picture of Jesus' character to us. What does the relationship between Joseph and his brothers tell us about how Christ deals with us?

YOUR NOTES



Genesis

THE FAMILY REUNITED

46-47

STARTING OUT

Is there anything from this week's message that stood out to you or that you have questions about?

In these two chapters, we see the ultimate family reunion. Can you relate to any of what's going on here? What are your family reunions like?

BACKGROUND YOU SHOULD KNOW

JACOB/ISRAEL

Israel is the new name God gives Jacob in Genesis (32:28-29 and 35:10). The names Jacob and Israel are used interchangeably through the end of Genesis. Jacob's descendants came to be called the Israelites, and eventually formed the tribes of Israel and the kingdom of Israel.

BEERSHEBA

Beersheba was on the southern border of Israel, right before Egypt. It was also a sacred place to Jacob's family; his father and grandfather (Isaac and Abraham) also had encounters with God there.



LEAVING CANAAN WAS A BIG DEAL

Canaan was the Promised Land, the land God promised to give the Israelites (Genesis 12). God had told Jacob's grandfather in Genesis 15 that his people leave it for a while and go through 400 years of exile and slavery before coming back. Jacob would have probably known about this prophecy, so would have known what he was leading his people (eventually) into. There was also a more recent time when his dad, Isaac, had been told by God **not** to go to Egypt. As much as he wanted to see Joseph again, these things may have made Jacob unsure of God's will in the situation. By calling on God here, he is making sure that what he's doing is in line with what God wants. God reassured Jacob that Egypt is the right way to go.

EXILE & RETURN TO THE PROMISED LAND

God's promise in Genesis 46:3-4 to Jacob came true. The Israelites did become a great nation and Jacob's descendants eventually returned to Canaan. The book of Exodus tells the story of Israel's exile and slavery in Egypt for 400 years (also fulfilling God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 15) and the book of Joshua tells of how the Israelites came back and conquered the Promised Land.

SHEPHERDS IN GOSHEN

Shepherds were looked down on as the lowest class in Egypt. Egypt in this day was very prejudiced in both race and class, so living separately would have been best for Jacob and his people. Living in Goshen kept the Hebrews isolated and insulated from the culture and religion of Egypt – a good thing in keeping God's people true to Him.

JACOB BLESSING PHARAOH

When Jacob walked into Pharaoh's court, the first thing Pharaoh asked was, "How old **are** you?" Jacob's age impressed Pharaoh because the life-span in Egypt was much less than Jacob's age. His age, and also probably because he was the father of such a God-filled man as Joseph,

gave him respect from the court and made it acceptable for him, a mere shepherd, to bless Pharaoh, a man of power and influence.

A QUICK SUMMARY

CHAPTER 46

Jacob headed down to Egypt and was assured by God through a vision that Egypt was where he should be. There were around 70 family members from Jacob's sons to his grandchildren who came into Egypt with Jacob. Joseph and his father had a very emotional reunion. Joseph told his family to ask Pharaoh for land in Goshen so that they could peacefully live in Egypt as shepherds.

CHAPTER 47

Pharaoh allowed Joseph's family to live in Goshen and also offered them job opportunities within his own fields. Jacob, 130 years old at the time, came to see Pharaoh and blessed him. Joseph provided well for his brothers and extended family. Meanwhile, everyone in Egypt was running out of money but still needed food, so they gave their livestock to Joseph in exchange for grain. When their livestock had run out, they sold their land and even themselves as slaves to Pharaoh in return for grain (except for the priests, who were already directly provided for by Pharaoh). Joseph gave seed to people so they could grow their own crops and continue to feed themselves; 1/5 of what they grew would be given as a tax to Pharaoh. The people were thankful he saved their lives. Jacob and his family did well in Egypt for the 17 years he lived there. When it was time for him to die, Jacob had Joseph promise to bury him back home, and after Joseph gave him his word, he worshipped God.

INSIGHTS

THE IMPORTANCE OF GENEALOGY

Genesis 46:8-27 consists of a long list of names of people we know nothing about. It's not even useful if you're looking for names for your baby, unless you want something like Muppim,



Huppim, or Ard. God thought it was important to include it in Scripture though, so there's got to be a reason why. We need to remember that to the first readers of this book, these names meant something. This is a list of every tribe (and every major family group within that tribe) that later formed the nation Israel. Every Hebrew knew his family ancestry. The division of labor, the organization of the army, and the parceling of the land were all based on the tribes. Even the coming of the Messiah was through the particular tribe of Judah. God's way of working is to call individuals to Himself, just as He called Abraham. Through those individuals, He calls families, and through those families, nations are called to obedience to the Savior.

There is a corporate flavor, a sense of continuity between the generations. God is moving from the individual to the family to the nation in His working. This list of boring names reminded Moses' readers of their identity as God's people in fulfilling His purposes. This list would also remind them that the working out of God's purposes takes time, but it is absolutely certain. When Abraham was 75, God told him that He would make of him a great nation. Abraham was 100 before Isaac was born. Isaac was 60 before Jacob and Esau were born. It took 50 or 60 years for Jacob to have 12 sons and one daughter. Now Jacob was 130, and the "great nation," after 215 years, was only 70 descendants of Abraham. That's not a quick start. But in the 400 or so years from Jacob to Moses, the number mushroomed from 70 to over two million! ¹

RESPECTING AUTHORITY

Joseph said in Genesis 41:36, "I will go up, and tell Pharaoh..." It was out of respect that Joseph told Pharaoh about his family's arrival. Joseph is an amazing example of someone who could live in the extremes of both success and hardship. As elevated as he was at this point, he didn't forget he was still under the authority of someone. As much as he loved his family and wanted

to provide for them, he had to make sure that he had the approval and blessing of his boss. Again, we see Joseph foreshadowing Christ in this attitude of submission. This interaction gives us a picture of the interaction that happens between God the Father (Pharaoh) and Jesus (Joseph).

ISRAELITE SEPARATION

One of the biggest dangers to the covenant promises of God was intermarriage between the Hebrews and the Egyptians. Why? Because intermarriage would inevitably lead to spiritual compromise and worship of the Egyptians' false gods. If God had allowed the Israelites to remain in Canaan, they would have intermarried with the Canaanites and become ethically, morally, and spiritually corrupt (as seen in the example of Dinah and Judah). So God places them in one of the most racist societies on earth at that time, to protect them from spiritual adultery and also providing the time and opportunity for them to multiply into the millions.¹

FAITH IN GOD'S FUTURE

Why was it such a big deal for Jacob that he's buried in Canaan? Being buried in the Promised Land was a sign of faith that he believed God would bring his people back, and communicated to the next generation that living in Egypt was only temporary. Essentially it was saying, "I'm sure that our family will all be back together in Canaan like God said...so I'm going back there to wait for you. See you soon."

OTHER SCRIPTURE

- Genesis 15:13-14
- The book of Exodus
- The book of Joshua



- Luke 9:23-27
- Hebrews 11:21

CONVERSATION

On the way to Egypt, Jacob stops and offers sacrifices to God. He's keeping God in the loop as he goes on his journey, and is asking for guidance and confirmation. When you have decided to go in a certain direction, are you involving God in the process by stopping to ask Him if this is where you should go?

Jacob is 130 years old as he leaves for Egypt. He's **way** past retirement. This is not the time people normally make radical changes in their lives. But Jacob is about to take a huge step of faith. In order to do this he has to:

LEAVE EVERYTHING FAMILIAR & THE SECURITY OF HIS WORLDLY COMFORTS

Often, following God's plan includes stepping out in faith and taking a risk. If God calls you to another location or another job, will you go where He leads despite the risks to your personal comfort and security?

BELIEVE HE STILL HAS A MISSION FROM GOD

At his age, a lot of Christians would have long since turned their ministry over to the next generation. But Jacob is taking giant steps of faith. Are you willing to keep serving and fulfilling God's plan for your life, no matter where you are in life?

BE WILLING TO OBEY GOD'S WORD NO MATTER THE COST

Is your love of God causing you to deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow Him (Luke 9:23-27)?

A possible blind spot for American Christians is our individualistic approach to the Christian life. Of course, we all need an individual relationship with God. But many have made Christianity so personal that we have lost the sense of belonging to the church as God's covenant people, His extended family, just as Israel was His people. Because we don't know church history, we don't have a sense of continuity with those who have gone before us. We join and leave a church according to our personal likes and dislikes. So many people attend a church for years yet hardly know the others who attend. This lack of belonging makes us vulnerable to the enemy. God wants us to be in community. Are you? If so, how involved are you in relationship with God's people?

Jacob's dysfunctional family is now coming back together in a much healthier way. There is always hope for a family. It doesn't matter what has happened in the past; God can still reconcile and restore your family. Don't give up hope. Hang tight in your family and marriage and see what God will do. What specifically could you be praying for in your own family? How can your life group be praying alongside you?

Many people don't give much thought to the impact they may have on earth after they're gone. Jacob's demand to be buried in Canaan would show later generations that he expected God's future was in Canaan, not in Egypt. Have you ever thought about how you could, even after your death, be affecting later generations?

Chapter 47 ends with Israel worshipping God after Joseph has promised to bury him in Egypt. Israel is full of worship as his life is coming to an end; Israel is worshipping God for all that he's done in his life, how



he's been used, and how he will continue to be used through future generations. Our lives have the same purpose as Israel's: to be used by God to fulfill His plan and bring others to Jesus. It's an incredible and overwhelming experience to be used by God for something way bigger than ourselves. When you look at your life, are you filled with worship to see how God is using you to bring others to Jesus?

YOUR NOTES

Genesis

THE END OF AN ERA

44-50

STARTING OUT

Is there anything from this week's message that stood out to you or that you have questions about?

In these chapters we see the final days of two historical men – Jacob, now called Israel, and Joseph. Have you ever talked with an elderly person who was at the very end of their life, or been with someone while they were passing away? What were the last things they wanted to say or the things they held most important at that point?

BACKGROUND YOU SHOULD KNOW

FIRSTBORN BLESSING/INHERITANCE

The right of the firstborn was forfeited by Reuben the second he slept with his dad's wife (Genesis 35). Firstborns were normally given a "double portion" of the inheritance; this "double portion" was instead given to Joseph through the adoption of his two sons. Joseph is the firstborn of Rachel, who was originally intended by Jacob to be his first and only wife (Genesis 29). Joseph had also just saved his entire family, even after he had been treated horribly by them. Because of all this, he was given the rights of the firstborn.

When Jacob adopts Joseph’s two sons, they are taking the place of Joseph in the inheritance. But in doing so, Joseph is getting a double portion of the inheritance. Joseph is basically being replaced by Ephraim and Manasseh in the will, but that’s much more beneficial to him since he now gets twice the amount.

TWELVE SONS VS. TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL

There is a difference between the twelve *tribes* of Israel and the twelve *sons* of Israel. When the tribes inherited the Promised Land, Levi’s descendants didn’t receive a territory for themselves. Instead, they became priests and had several cities that were scattered throughout the rest of the territories. Joseph didn’t receive a tribe either—instead his two adopted sons did.¹

SONS:	TRIBES:
Reuben	Reuben
Simeon	Simeon
Levi	Judah
Judah	Issachar
Issachar	Zebulun
Zebulun	Dan
Dan	Naphtali
Naphtali	Gad
Gad	Asher
Asher	Benjamin
Joseph	Ephraim (son of Joseph)
Benjamin	Manasseh (son of Joseph)
	(Levi had no territorial allotment, except for some cities located within the territories of the other tribes.)

BURIAL ENTOURAGE

Joseph went up to Canaan to bury his father, which was about a three-hundred-mile journey. The funeral entourage included a lot of Egyptian nobility and military, which must have made quite the scene. Pharaoh may have sent Egyptians with them out of respect for Jacob, or so people could be there to support their much-loved Joseph, or because Pharaoh wanted to make sure Joseph actually came back – or a combination of these. The place they stopped to mourn, Atad, was right on the border between Egypt and Canaan.²

MODERN DAY JEWS

Learning the history of the Tribes of Israel can give us a better understanding of what “his descendants will become a group of nations” means. Ephraim eventually became one of the two main “houses” of Israel. The “first house” of Israel was the House of Ephraim (which was all the tribes of Israel in the north – 10 tribes, missing just Judah and Benjamin) and the “second house” was the House of Judah (the tribes of Judah and Benjamin). Ephraim (the North) was conquered by the Assyrians and its tribes were all scattered; the people assimilated into the Gentile culture. Judah (the South) was conquered too but they were mostly allowed to stay living together in groups so kept their culture and ethnic identity; these are the modern day Jews that we know today. Some people believe that all Gentiles actually have some type of genetic tie to the House of Ephraim; either way, Ephraim assimilated into the Gentile peoples.

JOSEPH'S BURIAL

Joseph made his sons swear that they would bring him back to Canaan and bury him there, just like his father had. As discussed in the last chapter regarding Jacob, being buried in the Promised Land was a sign of faith that he believed God would bring his people back, and communicated to the next generation that living in Egypt was only temporary. Joseph wanted to forever rest in his true “home.”

HELPS

On page 122 there's a map that shows this journey.

A QUICK SUMMARY

CHAPTER 48

Joseph brought his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, to see Israel when Israel was on his deathbed. Israel adopted Manasseh and Ephraim as his own and gave each of them an equal part of his inheritance. He blessed them, but gave the younger (Ephraim) the blessing of the firstborn and prophesied that Ephraim would actually be greater and become "a multitude of nations."

CHAPTER 49

Jacob called all of his sons together and blessed each of them with the following prophetic blessings:

REUBEN

He was the firstborn, but had slept with one of his dad's concubines so was disqualified from his firstborn rights. Because of this, he would be considered insignificant.

SIMEON & LEVI

The two were lumped together and disregarded by Israel because of the murdering and plundering they had done together. They were both "cursed" and would become scattered and dispersed through Israel.

JUDAH

His tribe was given high importance. He would be a ruler and from his tribe would come the Messiah, who all the nations would honor.

ZEBULUN

His people would settle by the sea.

ISSACHAR

He was compared to a strong donkey and his people were predicted to become slaves.

DAN

He would have his own tribe and govern them, and was predicted to be a troublemaker.

(Israel took a quick pause here to prayerfully call out to God, then continued...)

GAD

He would be attacked, but would fight back.

ASHER

He would be blessed and his tribe's land would be extremely fertile and luxurious.

NAPHTALI

He was like a newly freed doe with beautiful offspring; his people would start out quickly and then spread out.

JOSEPH

He was fruitful. He was attacked in every way possible and yet, because of God, he had stood strong and would be blessed like crazy.

BENJAMIN

His tribe would be fierce and violent.

After blessing his sons, Jacob instructed them to bury him back in Canaan in the same place his grandfather, Abraham, and dad, Isaac, were buried. Right after he finished talking with his sons, he laid back in his bed and died.

CHAPTER 50

Joseph openly cried over his dad's body, then had the Egyptians embalm him. After a mourning period of 70 days, Joseph went to Pharaoh and asked permission to bring his father back to Canaan so he could bury him, as he had told his father he would. Pharaoh agreed and sent along a very official procession to travel with them. When the huge caravan got to the border of Canaan, they stopped and mourned loudly for seven days, which made quite the impression on the Canaanites. After they buried Jacob in Canaan, Joseph, his brothers, and everyone that had traveled with them went back to Egypt.

INSIGHTS

YOUNGER VS. OLDER

This seems to be a consistent theme throughout the book of Genesis – the unlikely swap of the older for the younger, with the younger getting the rights normally given only to the firstborn. We saw in this in Jacob and Esau, Rachel and Leah, Joseph and his brothers, and now Ephraim and Manasseh. This could also be seen as a foreshadowing of the Old and New Covenants – the Old Covenant (the Law of Moses) came first, but the New Covenant (Jesus) stands in for the old.

BLESSINGS/PROPHECY

When Jacob called his sons to him, there was way more going on than just a man's last words to his sons – these were prophetic blessings given under the influence of the Holy Spirit to his sons and their future generations. Like all prophecy, it applies immediately to the things at hand, but also means much more,

having a double/deeper meaning that applies to events in the future as well.

Scholars have different ideas about how to exactly translate some of these prophecies; the Hebrew wording can be interpreted in different ways and some things may even apply to events that haven't even happened yet. But a lot of this **has** been fulfilled – a reading of other Old Testament books like Joshua, Judges, and Ezekiel show how a lot of this came to pass.

ORDER OF BLESSING

In blessing his sons, Jacob first addressed the sons of Leah, putting Zebulun before Issachar. Then the sons of his maids follow, of whom Naphtali is the one mentioned last. Both sons of Zilpah, Leah's maid, are given a place between the two sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maid. Finally, we have Joseph and Benjamin: the two sons of Rachel, the wife Jacob loved more than Leah and for whom he served his father-in-law Laban another seven years.

This order agrees with the rules of the birthright as they were given by Moses later on (Deuteronomy 21:15-17). The son of the loved wife could not be favored at the expense of the firstborn, who was the son of the unloved. The fact that Reuben forfeited his birthright was entirely his own fault. He had gone up to his father's bed and committed adultery with Bilhah, his father's concubine and therefore was deprived of his privileges (Gen. 35:22; 49:3-4; 1 Chronicles 5:1-2). Simeon and Levi were also passed over because of their inexcusable violence against the inhabitants of Shechem. So the firstborn birthright position went to Judah, the fourth son of Leah. The wealth linked with it, however (the firstborn was given a double part of the inheritance) went to Joseph, the first son of Rachel, the loved one. What we see is both Judah and Joseph given a prominent place in Jacob's blessings: Judah receiving the position of a ruler and Joseph given more wealth.

It is also remarkable that (unlike Ishmael in the story of Abraham) the sons of Jacob's concubines do not take a separate or inferior place, but are blessed together with the other sons of Jacob. Jacob's twelve sons give us a complete picture of God's earthly people, all blessed together regardless. In Scripture, the number twelve is always connected with God's rule over all His people.³

TRUE FORGIVENESS

On the way back from Canaan, the brothers started to think about the fact that their dad couldn't be a buffer between themselves and Joseph anymore. They started to worry that Joseph would now take his chance to repay them for the wrongs they had done in the past. They simply didn't understand the fullness of Joseph's forgiveness. Joseph was heartbroken when he realized their consciences were still full of guilt. He assured them he wasn't bitter at all and that they didn't have a thing to worry about. This was exactly what he had told them in the beginning, but the truth hadn't hit home yet.

When we are first offered forgiveness by Christ, sometimes the fact that Jesus forgives us is heard, yet we don't fully live in this truth. We may think his forgiveness is somewhat conditional. But, as we grow in our relationship with Him and continue to read God's Word, we are told over and over again that we are unconditionally forgiven, making it possible to finally have the right kind of relationship with Him – a relationship free of fear and based on love.

OTHER SCRIPTURE

- Genesis 34
- 1 Chronicles 5:1-2
- Joshua 13:14

- Joshua 21:1-45
- Matthew 5:17-20
- Matthew 5:43-48
- Romans 11
- Hebrews 11:21-22
- Revelation 7:4-8

CONVERSATION

What an awesome moment when Jacob saw his grandsons and was taking in God's unexpected blessing. Have you ever had a point in your life where you stopped, looked around, and realized that God had blessed you in ways you never expected or never dreamed possible? What was this moment for you?

Man's ways are not God's ways. When Jacob blessed Joseph's sons in reverse order, it upset Joseph, but Jacob (inspired by God) knew what he was doing. We look at things on this earth and think they need to be a certain way because that's how it's normally done or because it "just makes sense." But God sees things differently and counter-culturally. He often works out his plan in ways that go directly against our logic. Are you led more by your logic or by your trust in God and his ways?

When the brothers got back to Egypt after burying Jacob, they were afraid Joseph was now going to take revenge on them for the past. They didn't understand his unconditional forgiveness. He kindly explained to them why they didn't need to worry, giving three different reasons why. He said:

1. "AM I IN THE PLACE OF GOD?"

It wasn't his place to deal with past sin; only God had that right.

2. "YOU MEANT EVIL AGAINST ME, BUT GOD MEANT IT FOR GOOD, TO BRING IT ABOUT THAT MANY PEOPLE SHOULD BE KEPT ALIVE, AS THEY ARE TODAY."

Joseph saw that God was working through everything that had happened. Joseph didn't look back on things and focus on how they had made him suffer, but instead focused on how God's plan was accomplished through him.

3. "SO DO NOT FEAR; I WILL PROVIDE FOR YOU AND YOUR LITTLE ONES."


Joseph not only promised to not take revenge, but went further and acted in love toward them. He didn't just hold himself back from hurting them; he actually reached out in order to love and provide for them.

JOSEPH'S EXAMPLE OF FORGIVENESS POSES THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Am I taking the place of God in not forgiving others? Is there anyone that I'm trying to punish on my own instead of leaving the justice to God?

When I look at my past, am I focusing on how I suffered, or on how God's plan is being accomplished through me?

Am I acting out in love toward those who have hurt me?



This is the final chapter in our study of Genesis. Thinking back over the past year, what has stood out to you or impacted you the most from this book? Has looking at the "genesis," or the "beginnings" of where your faith comes from changed you in any way?

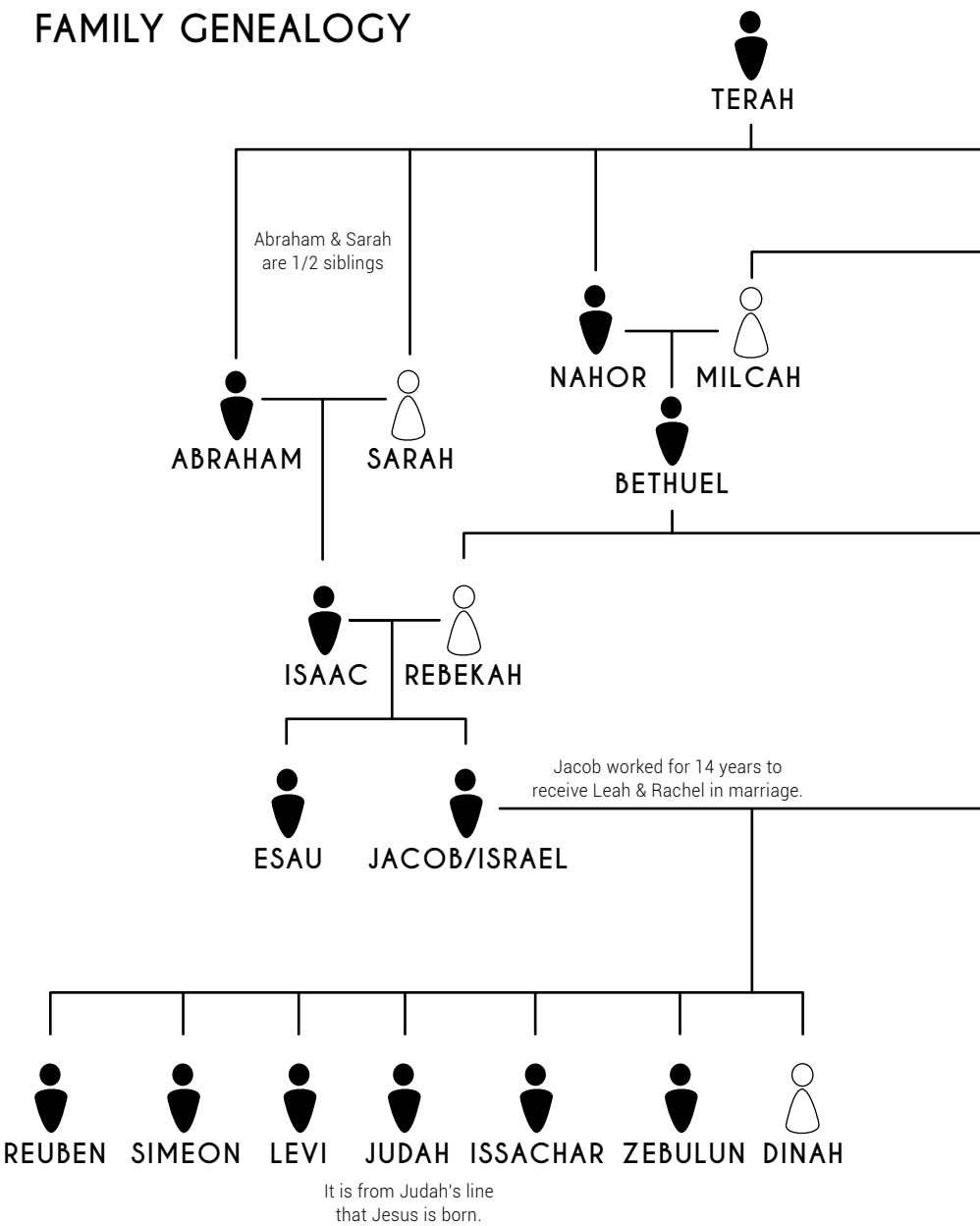
Seeing the Old Testament as a whole book and not just as individual stories helps us to see God's bigger plan and His character. What aspects of God's character stand out to you after reading Genesis?

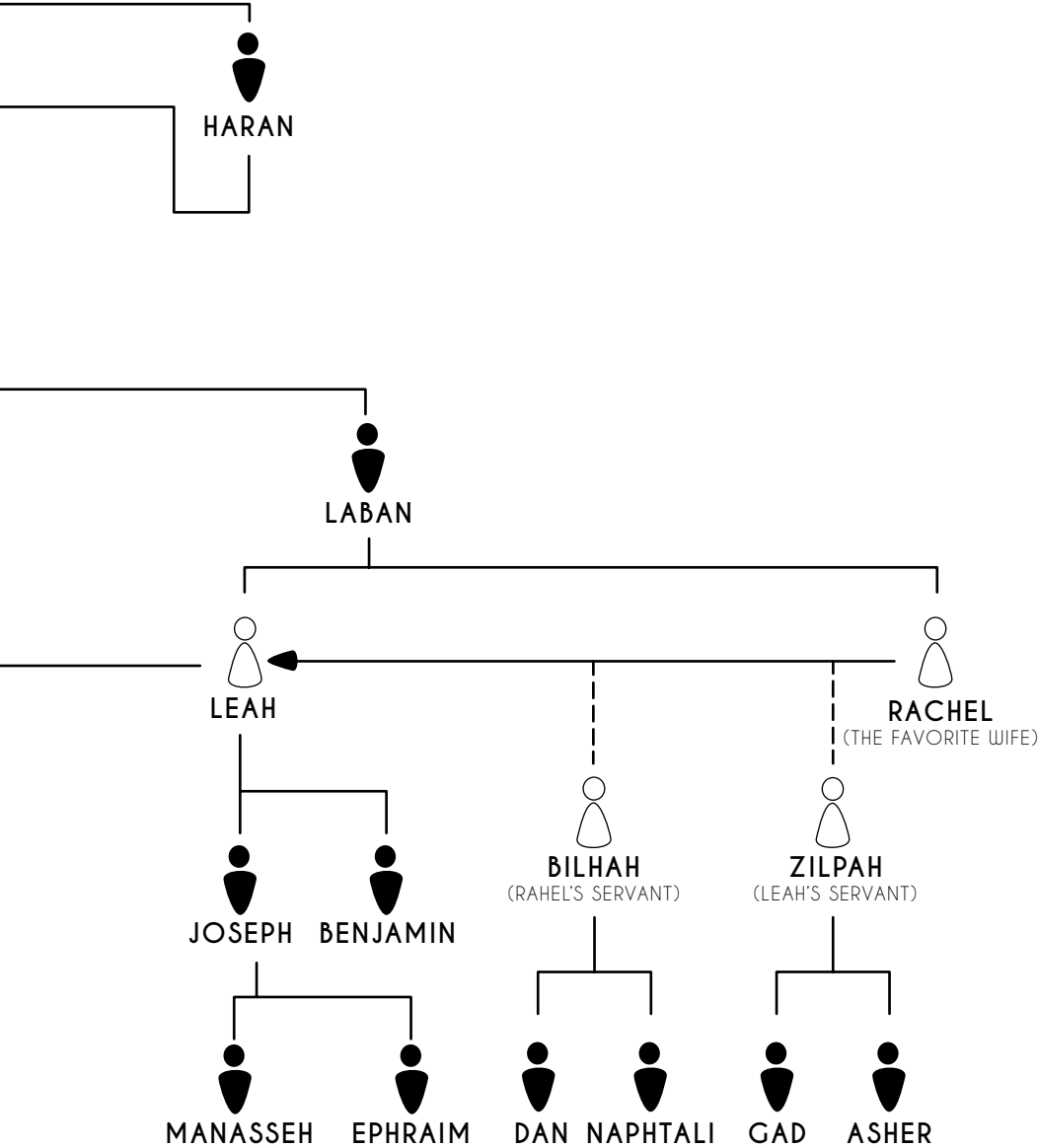
Jesus told us he had come not to abolish the Old Testament, but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17-20). This means that, whether we are Jews or Gentiles, the history we have read over the last fifty chapters in Genesis is our own spiritual history. Genesis teaches us about our need for salvation and about a future savior that will come through the line of Abraham. This savior has come in the form of Jesus, who died in our place so that we could be accepted by the God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob. A belief in Jesus grafts us into the people that God started working through way back in Genesis (Romans 11). And we now get to be a part of God's story. How has believing in Jesus' sacrifice for you and living as part of God's story changed you? What does it mean to you to be a part of His story?

YOUR NOTES



FAMILY GENEALOGY





TWELVES

There are a lot of twelves going on in this story. Here's how they all line up:

SONS OF ISRAEL	TRIBES OF ISRAEL
REUBEN	REUBEN
SIMEON	SIMEON
LEVI	(Levi had no territorial allotment, except for some cities located within the territories of the other tribes.)
JUDAH	JUDAH
ISSACHAR	ISSACHAR
ZEBULUN	ZEBULUN
DAN	DAN
NAPHTALI	NAPHTALI
GAD	GAD
ASHER	ASHER
JOSEPH	EPHRAIM (son of Joseph) MANASSEH (son of Joseph)
BENJAMIN	BENJAMIN

BLESSINGS OF ISRAEL

REUBEN was the firstborn, but had slept with one of his dad's concubines so was disqualified from his firstborn rights. Because of this, he would be considered insignificant.

SIMEON & LEVI were lumped together and disregarded by Israel because of the murdering and plundering they had done together. They were both "cursed" and would become scattered and dispersed through Israel.

JUDAH was given high importance. He would be a ruler and from his tribe would come the Messiah, who all the nations would honor.

ISSACHAR was compared to a strong donkey and his people were predicted to become slaves.

ZEBULUN'S people would settle by the sea.

DAN would have his own tribe and govern them, and was predicted to be a troublemaker.

NAPHTALI was like a newly freed doe with beautiful offspring; his people would start out quickly and then spread out.

GAD would be attacked, but would fight back.

ASHER would be blessed and his tribe's land would be extremely fertile and luxurious.

JOSEPH was fruitful. He was attacked in every way possible and yet, because of God, he had stood strong and would be blessed like crazy.

BENJAMIN'S tribe would be fierce and violent.

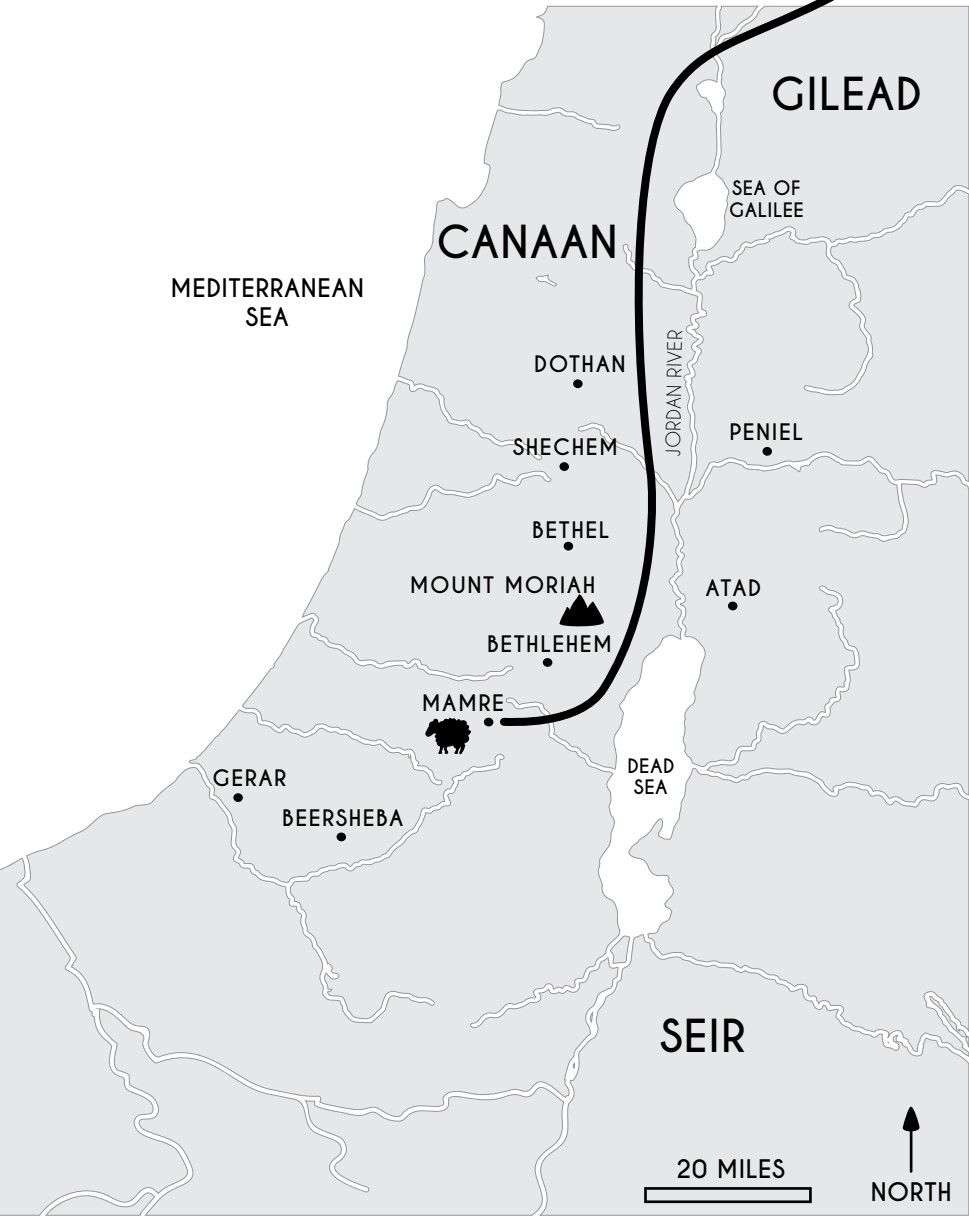
A FEW THINGS TO NOTE WHEN STUDYING THESE MAPS:

- Canaan is also known as the Promised Land.
- Mamre is also known as Hebron, which is where Abraham is at the start of Genesis 24.
- Haran is the land of Abraham's father.
- The distance from Mamre to Haran is about the same as Lansing, MI to Des Moines, IA (the land of Steve Sommerlot's youth).

ESAU VS. JACOB**GENESIS 24 - 25****MAMRE TO HARAN**

When his sons are of marrying age, Abraham sends his servant to Haran, which is the city of Nahor, Abraham's brother, to find a wife for Isaac.





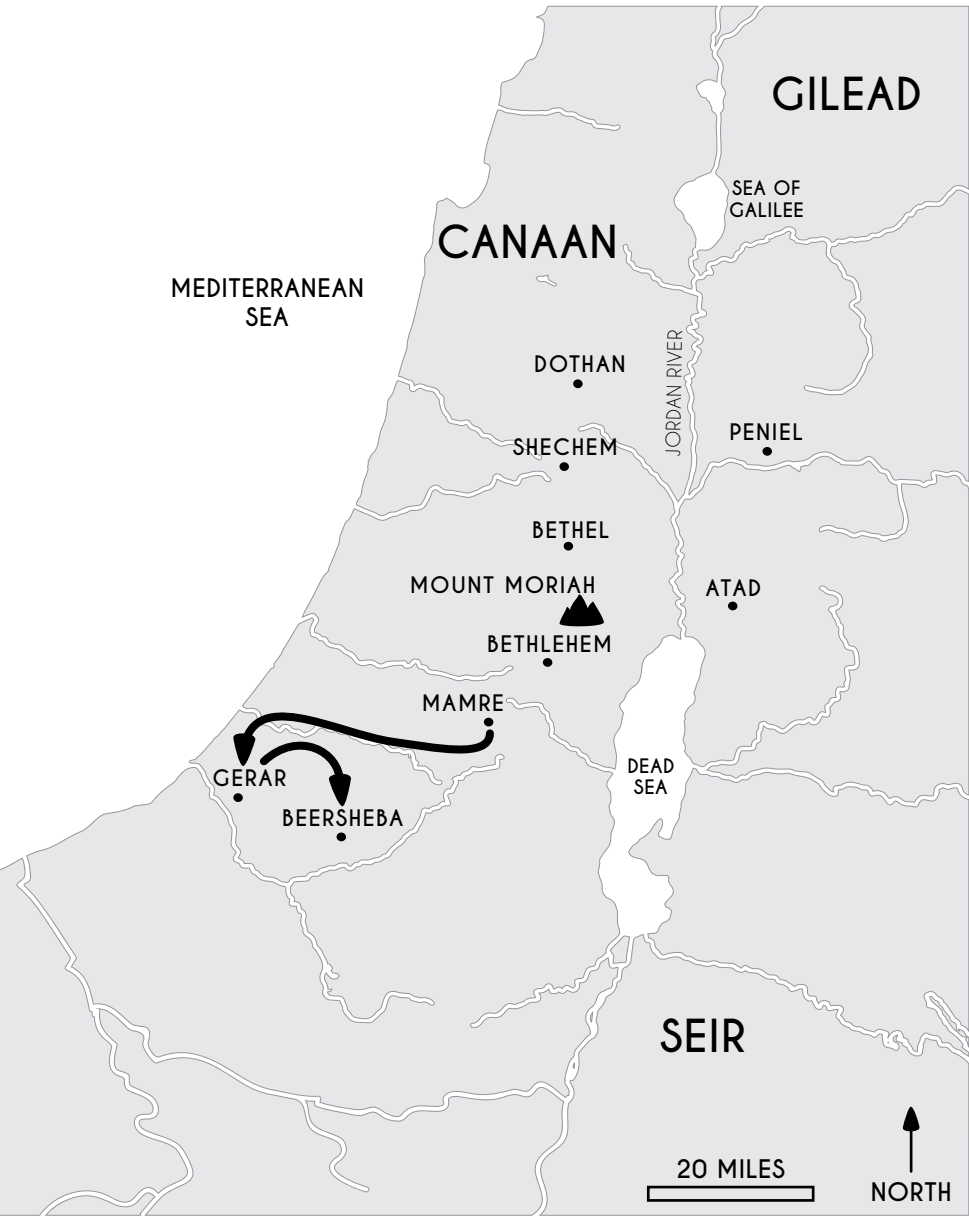
THE STOLEN BLESSING

GENESIS 26 - 28:9

MAMRE TO GERAR TO BEERSHEBA

Isaac goes to Gerar because of famine in Mamre, then moves to Beersheba due to quarrels with the locals regarding some wells and his huge agricultural success.





JACOB'S LADDER

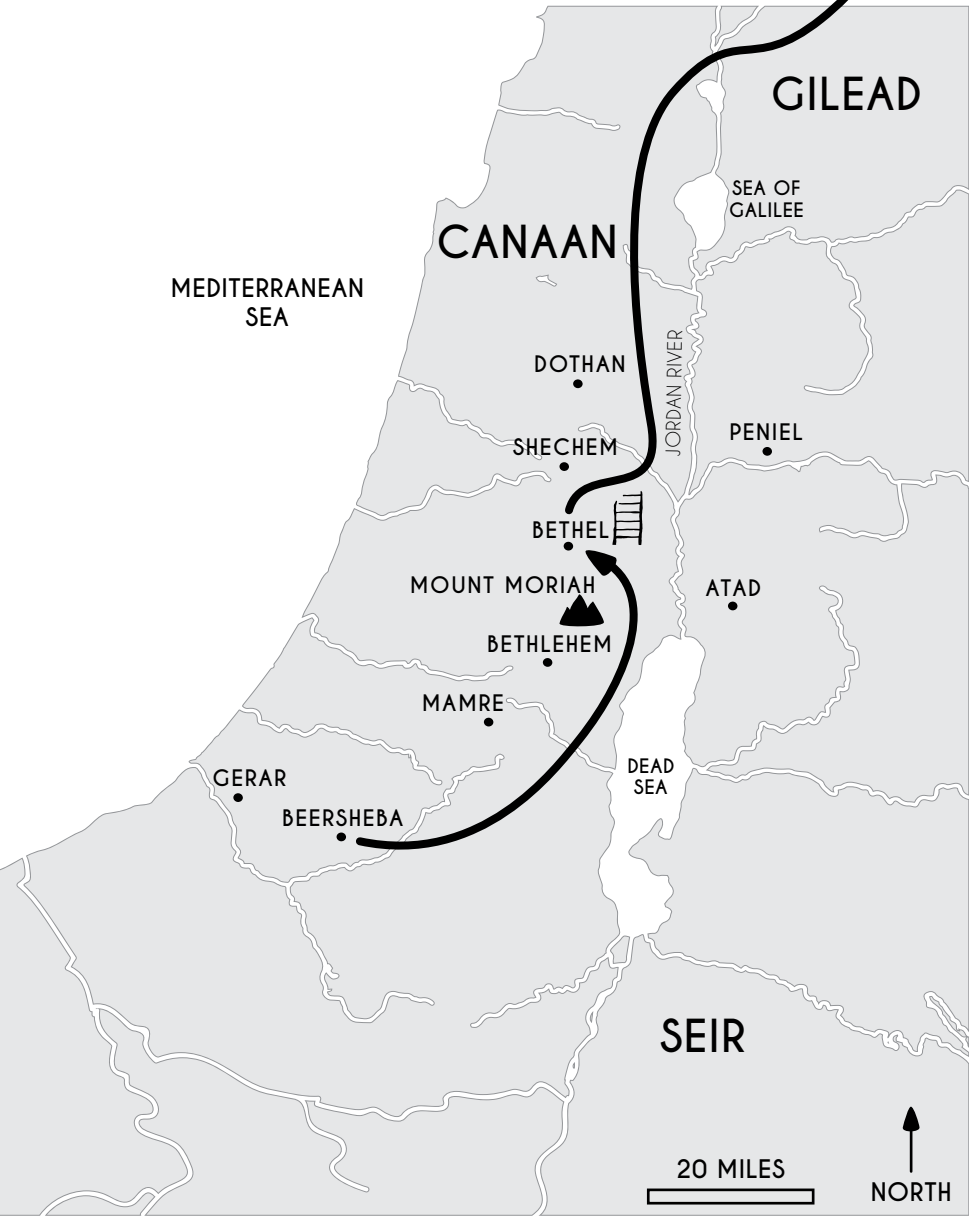
GENESIS 28:10 - 30:24

BEERSHEBA TO BETHEL TO HARAN

Jacob is on his way to Haran to see his uncle Laban and find a wife, when he has a dream of a ladder coming down to earth with angels going up and down. It is here that God reassures Jacob of his promised blessing to Abraham.

Jacob continues on to Haran and ends up working 20 years for his deceiving uncle.





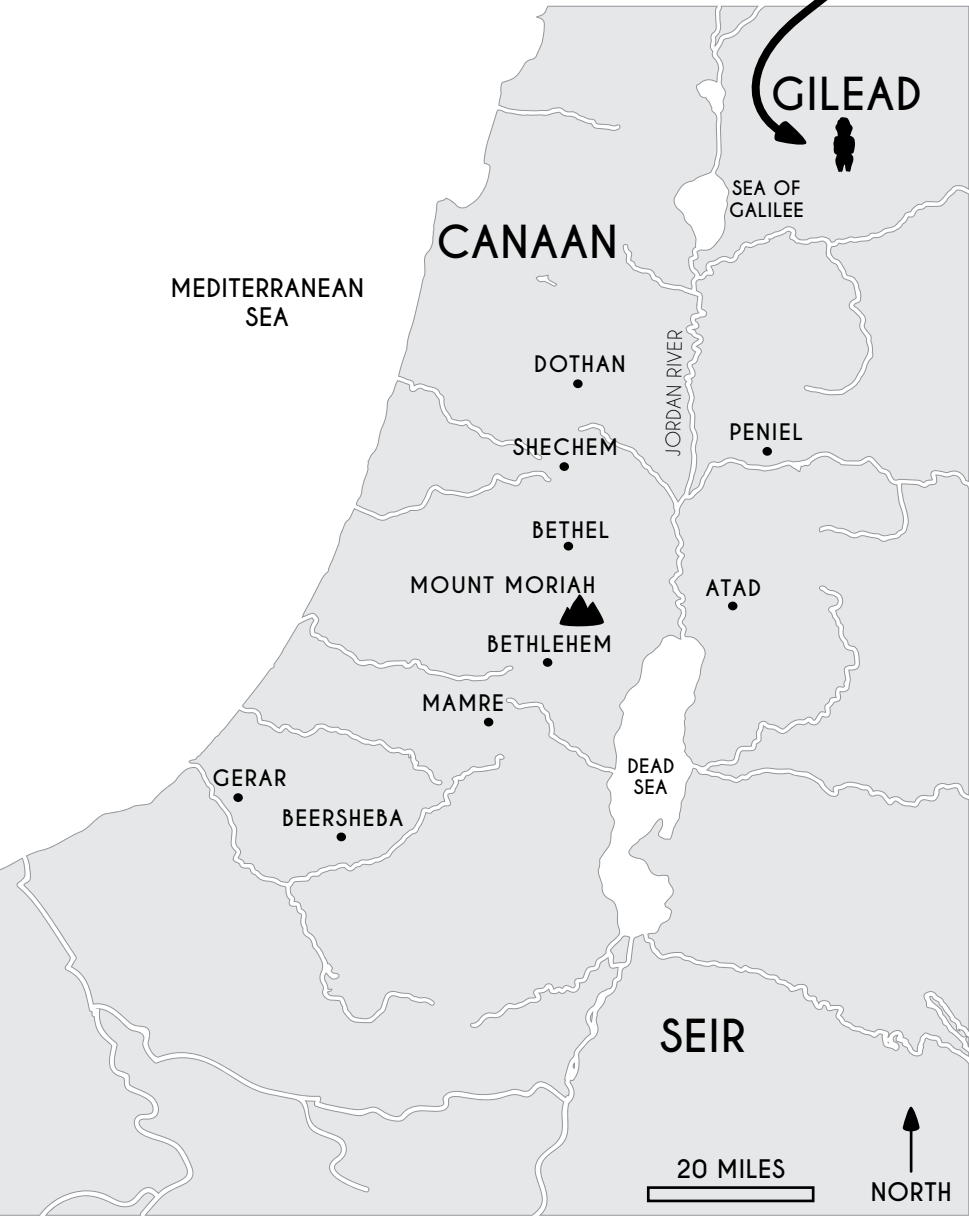
LABAN

GENESIS 30:25 - 31:55

HARAN TO GILEAD

Jacob takes his family and sneaks away from his uncle (and twice father-in-law) Laban into the region of Gilead. He's making his way back to the land of his father, Mamre.





LIMP WITH THE LORD

GENESIS 32 - 33

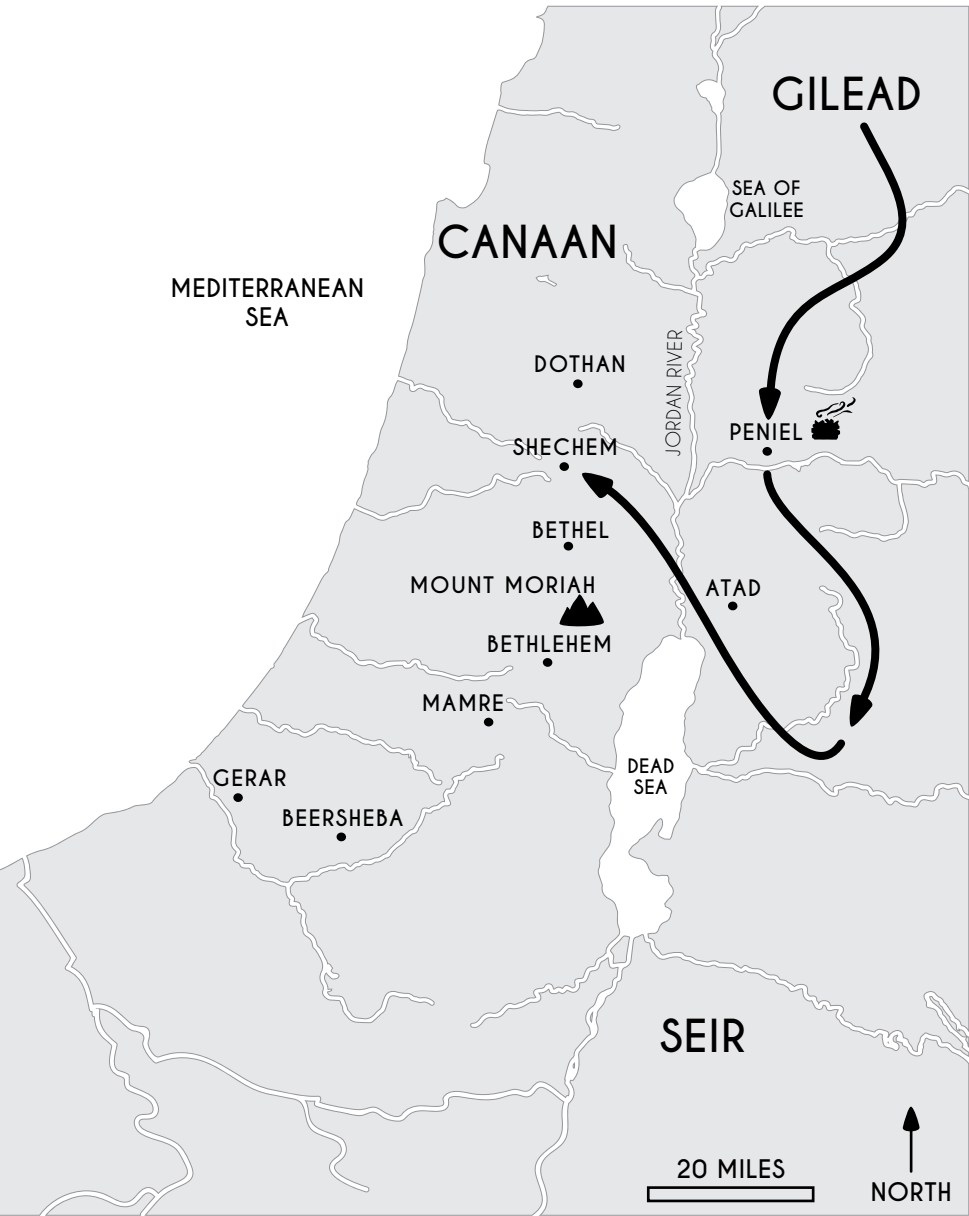
GILEAD (TO PENIEL) TOWARDS SEIR TO SHECHEM

Jacob and his family are heading towards his brother Esau who lives in Seir. He's expecting revenge, but receives love from his brother.

It is at Peniel that Jacob wrestles with God and receives the new name Israel. (From here on, Jacob walks with a limp, due to his wrestling match with the Lord.) As Jacob builds an altar, we see him refocusing his life on the Lord's plan.

Jacob then settles in Shechem.





DINAH'S DOWNFALL

GENESIS 34 - 36

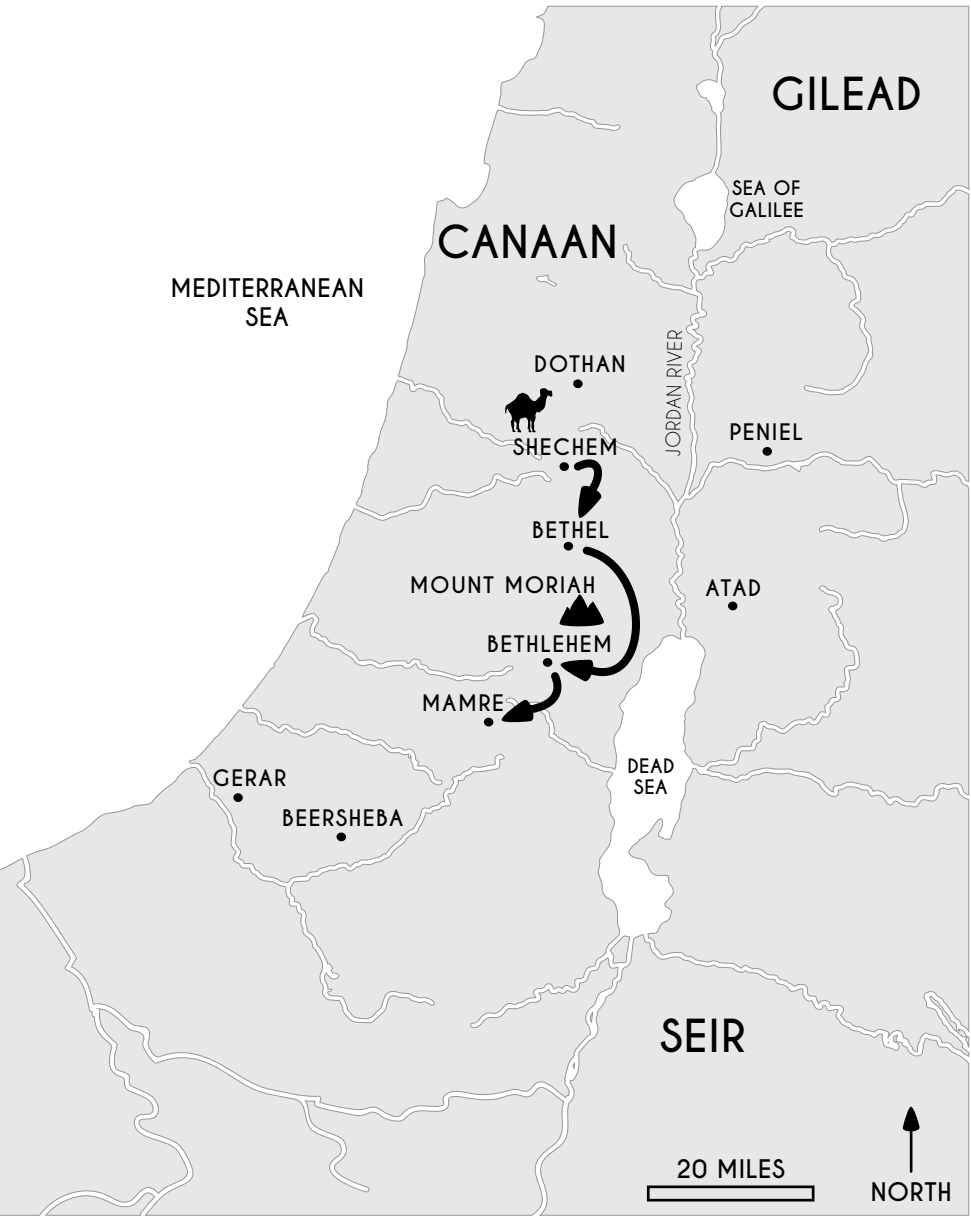
SHECHEM TO BETHEL TO BETHLEHEM TO MAMRE

It is in the land of Shechem where Jacob's daughter Dinah is raped by the prince of the land, and her brothers seek revenge on the men of the city.

God commands Jacob to go to Bethel. Jacob obeys, but first purges his family of any idols they possess.

Following his time there, Jacob heads back to his father in Mamre. During their journey, Rachel dies in Bethlehem while giving birth to Benjamin.





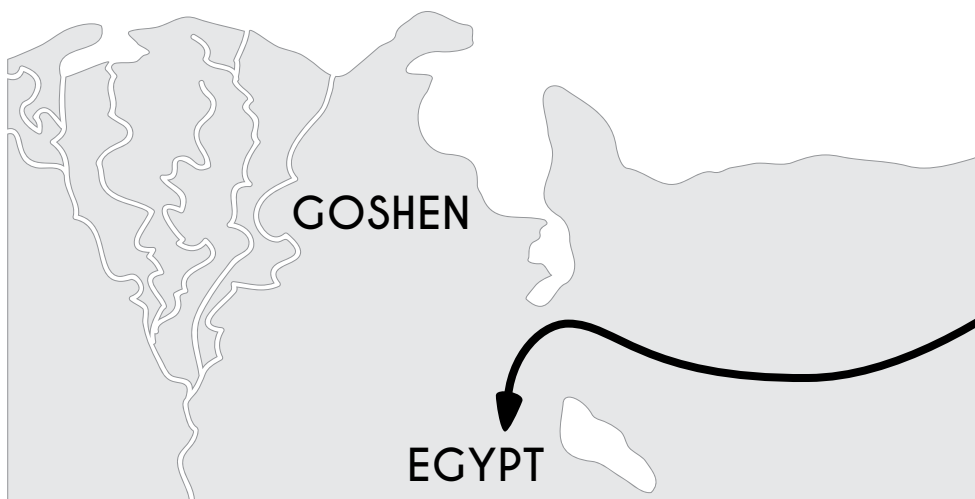
INTO THE PIT

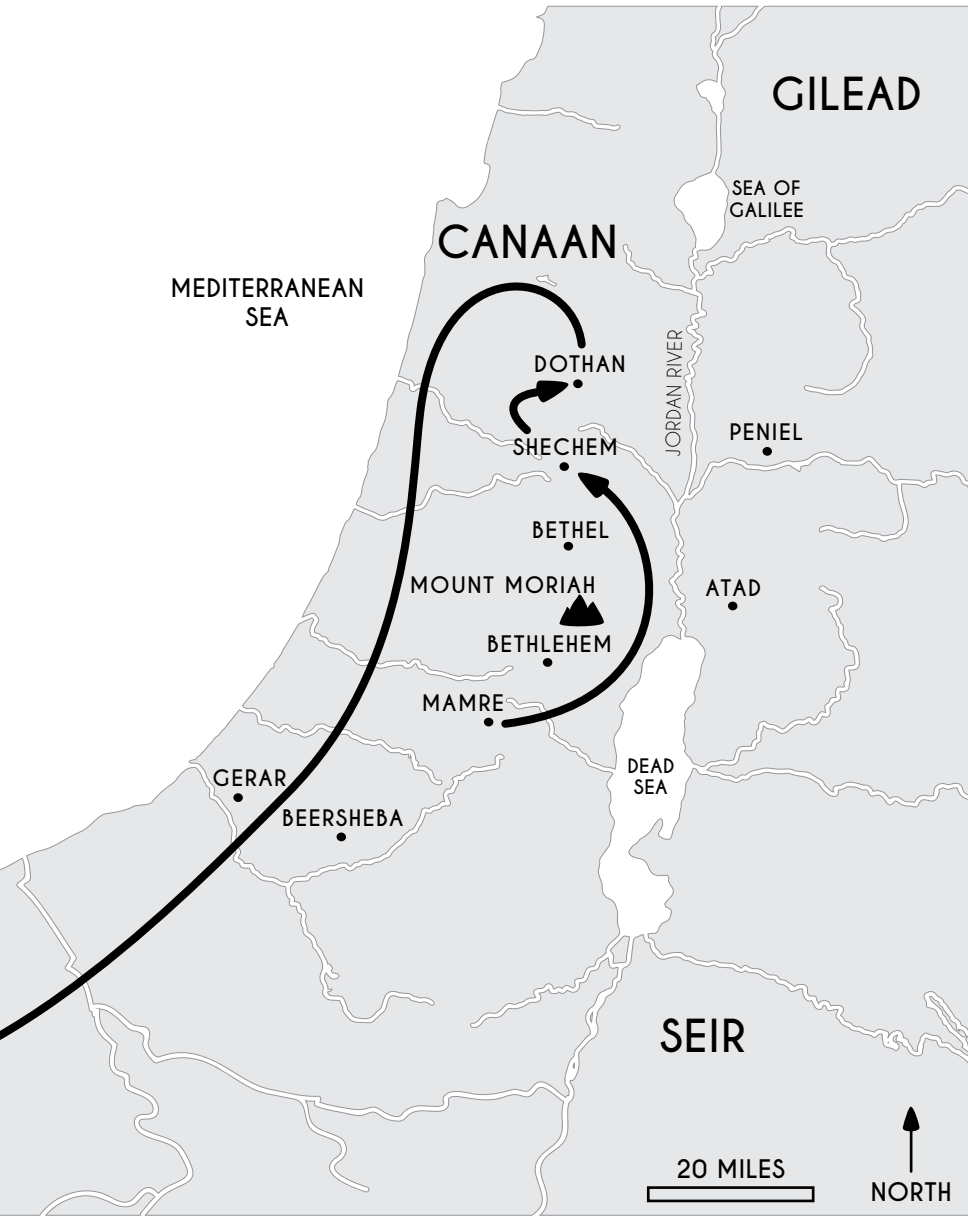
GENESIS 37

MAMRE TO SHECHEM TO DOTHAN TO EGYPT

Joseph, Jacob's favorite son, is sent to check on his brothers who are shepherding in Shechem. He is told they moved on to Dothan.

In Dothan, Joseph's resentful brothers throw him into a pit to get rid of him, but decide they'd rather make some money off of him. They sell Joseph to some Midianites, who then sell him to some Ishmaelites, who finally take him to Egypt.





THE END OF AN ERA

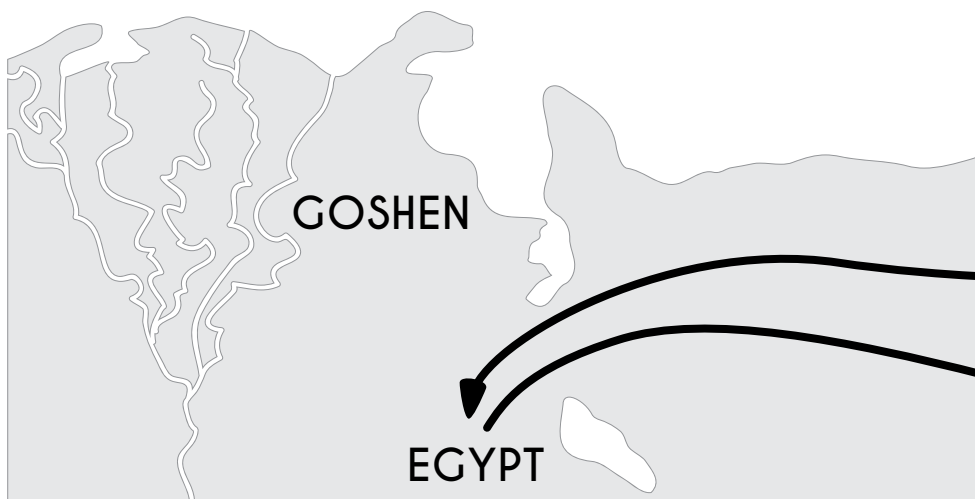
GENESIS 48 - 50

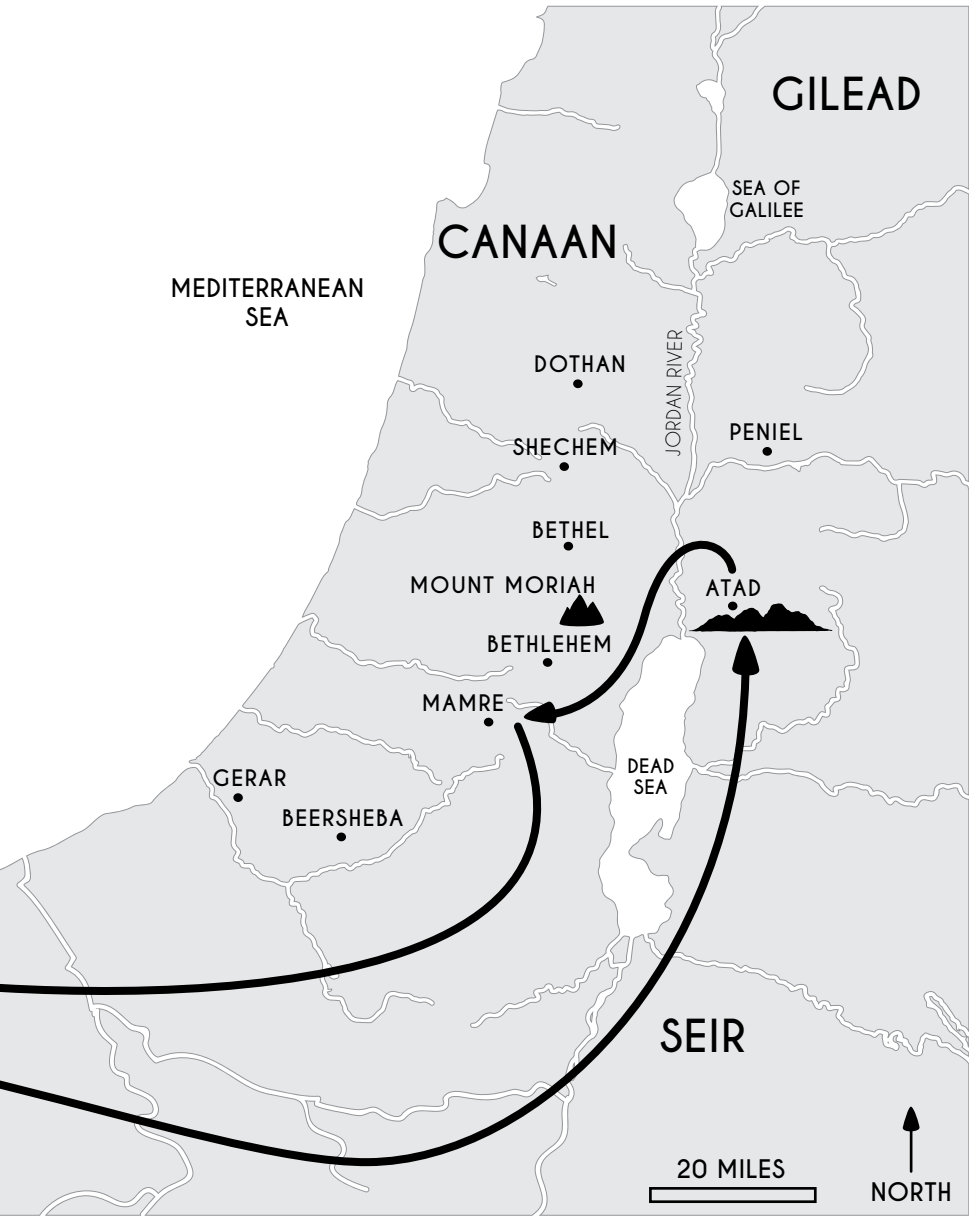
EGYPT TO ATAD TO THE CAVE OF MACHPELAH TO EGYPT

Joseph spends 22 years in Egypt before his family comes seeking aid during the famine. When Jacob dies, Joseph, along with his brothers and an Egyptian burial entourage, take their father to be buried in the Cave of Machpelah, just east of Mamre. Abraham and Sarah are also buried in this same cave (Gen. 23, 29). (They spend 70 days in mourning near Atad.)

Jacob wanted to be buried in the Promised Land as a sign of his faith that his family would one day return to the land God had promised them.

Joseph lives the rest of his life in Egypt, where he is then buried.







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Check out these links and books for some more in depth study of topics relating to Genesis. Some of these are referred to specifically in this study guide, and others are added as good sources for your continued personal study.

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THE END OF AN ERA

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2. Brown, David, Fausset, A. R., Jamieson, Robert. "Genesis 40" *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*. Public Domain, 1871.

3. Bouter, Hugo. "A Summary Of Jacob's Last Words To His Sons" **BibleCentre.org**. N.p., 28 October 2006. Web. <http://www.biblecentre.org/commentaries/hb_01_genesis_49.htm>

READING PLAN

It's all about the text. If you'd like to spend a little time in the Word each day, here's a plan that you can follow as we go through our series. We've only scheduled reading on the weekdays so you can take the weekends to catch up or reread a passage from that week.

WEEK 1 - ESAU VS. JACOB

Day 1 Genesis 24:12-28, Luke 1
 Day 2 Genesis 24:29-51, Luke 2
 Day 3 Genesis 24:52-67, Luke 3
 Day 4 Genesis 25:1-16, Luke 4
 Day 5 Genesis 25:17-34, Luke 5

WEEK 4 - LABAN

Day 1 Genesis 30:25-36, Luke 16
 Day 2 Genesis 30:37-31:16, Luke 17
 Day 3 Genesis 31:17-32, Luke 18
 Day 4 Genesis 31:33-42, Luke 19
 Day 5 Genesis 31:43-55, Luke 20

WEEK 2 - THE STOLEN BLESSING

Day 1 Genesis 26:1-16, Luke 6
 Day 2 Genesis 26:17-36, Luke 7
 Day 3 Genesis 27:1-25, Luke 8
 Day 4 Genesis 27:26-46, Luke 9
 Day 5 Genesis 28:1-9, Luke 10

WEEK 5 - LIMP WITH THE LORD

Day 1 Genesis 32:1-12, Luke 21
 Day 2 Genesis 32:13-21, Luke 22
 Day 3 Genesis 32:22-32, Luke 23
 Day 4 Genesis 33:1-11, Luke 24
 Day 5 Genesis 33:12-20, Acts 1

WEEK 3 - JACOB'S LADDER

Day 1 Genesis 28:10-22, Luke 11
 Day 2 Genesis 28:1-14, Luke 12
 Day 3 Genesis 28:15-30, Luke 13
 Day 4 Genesis 28:31-29:13, Luke 14
 Day 5 Genesis 29:14-24, Luke 15

WEEK 6 - DINAH'S DOWNFALL

Day 1 Genesis 34:1-31, Acts 2
 Day 2 Genesis 35:1-15, Acts 3
 Day 3 Genesis 35:16-29, Acts 4
 Day 4 Genesis 36:1-19, Acts 5
 Day 5 Genesis 36:20-43, Acts 6

WEEK 7 - INTO THE PIT

Day 1 Genesis 37:1-36, Acts 7
Day 2 Genesis 37:1-8, Acts 8
Day 3 Genesis 37:9-17, Acts 9
Day 4 Genesis 37:18-28, Acts 10
Day 5 Genesis 37:29-36, Acts 11

WEEK 8 - BREAKING OUT

Day 1 Genesis 38:1-30, Acts 12
Day 2 Genesis 38:1-11, Acts 13
Day 3 Genesis 38:12-19, Acts 14
Day 4 Genesis 38:20-30, Acts 15
Day 5 Genesis 38:1-30, Acts 16

WEEK 9 - POTIPHAR'S WIFE

Day 1 Genesis 39:1-23, Acts 17
Day 2 Genesis 39:1-6, Acts 18
Day 3 Genesis 39:7-10, Acts 19
Day 4 Genesis 39:11-23, Acts 20
Day 5 Genesis 39:1-23, Acts 21

WEEK 10 - PHARAOH'S DREAMS

Day 1 Genesis 40:1-15, Acts 22
Day 2 Genesis 40:16-23, Acts 23
Day 3 Genesis 41:1-13, Acts 24
Day 4 Genesis 41:14-36, Acts 25
Day 5 Genesis 41:37-45, Acts 26

WEEK 11 - JOSEPH'S AUTHORITY

Day 1 Genesis 41:46-42:5, Acts 27
Day 2 Genesis 42:1-38, Acts 28
Day 3 Genesis 43:1-34,
II Corinthians 1
Day 4 Genesis 44:1-34,
II Corinthians 2
Day 5 Genesis 45:1-28,
II Corinthians 3

WEEK 12 - THE FAMILY REUNITED

Day 1 Genesis 46:1-25,
II Corinthians 4
Day 2 Genesis 46:26-34,
II Corinthians 5
Day 3 Genesis 47:1-12,
II Corinthians 6
Day 4 Genesis 47:13-22,
II Corinthians 7
Day 5 Genesis 47:23-31,
II Corinthians 8

WEEK 13 - THE END OF AN ERA

Day 1 Genesis 48:1-16,

II Corinthians 9

Day 2 Genesis 48:17-22,

II Corinthians 10

Day 3 Genesis 49:1-28,

II Corinthians 11

Day 4 Genesis 49:29-50:9,

II Corinthians 12

Day 5 Genesis 50:10-26,

II Corinthians 13

For a PDF download of this study guide as well as audio and video
from the corresponding weekend messages, head over to:

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