

# HEARING THE WORD



NIGEL BARGE

**Life of Joseph**  
**Genesis 37-50 Leader's Guide**

# Hearing the Word   Life of Joseph   Genesis 37-59

## Leader's Guide

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*Nigel Barge, March 2018*

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## Resources

The *New Bible Dictionary* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, published by Inter Varsity Press.  
The *New Bible Commentary* 21<sup>st</sup> century edition, IVP  
A one-volume commentary on every book of the Bible,

[www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org)

(The Workbooks for this series are printed in two Parts, 1 and 2:  
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# Hearing the Word: A Tool for Bible reading



## **LOOK** – What does it *say*?

- 1) The Text
  - a) What questions does it raise -  
*Who, What, When, Where, Why, How?*
  - b) What surprises you?
- 2) The Context?
  - a) the surrounding text
  - b) the Book of the Bible
  - c) the whole Bible
  - d) the place in the Bible Story



## **LEARN** – What does it *mean*?

- 1) What type of writing is it?
- 2) Answer the questions
- 3) Summarise the passage



## **LISTEN** – What is the *message*?

- 1) Which is the main point?
- 2) Which is the key verse?



## **LIVE** – How should we *respond*?

- 1) What does it show about God,  
(Father, Son, Holy Spirit) :
  - a) His nature and character?
  - b) His grace\*
  - c) Jesus / his salvation\*\*
- 2) What should I do?

\* God's undeserved generosity is evident throughout the Bible, and it is perfectly expressed in Jesus.

\*\* The Bible, from 'the fall' onwards, describes God's plan of salvation through his Son. Thus, *all* the Scriptures speak in some way of Jesus (Luke 24:27).

## READING NARRATIVE

In seeking to hear the Word of God throughout the Bible, we need to allow for the *type of literature* of each part. Genesis is *narrative* (story), the most common type. To approach narrative correctly, observe these principles:

### 1 In General: It is *God's story*

The whole Bible recounts the story of God's dealings with humankind. After creation and the fall in Genesis, the rest describes how God works out his unfolding plan of salvation for humanity in Jesus. The OT prepares for the arrival, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The NT recounts these and looks forwards to His return at the end of time. Therefore:

**a)** Every part relates to **Jesus**, the Messiah (Luke 24:27; John 5:39).

It is *all* about **him**. So as we read, we should be asking – ‘what does this show about Jesus; what is He doing?’

**b)** Everything is relevant.

*All Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. (2 Tim 3:16)*. In a film every scene plays some part in the overall story. Often we see things in the early stages that make no sense until later. The Bible is the same. So as we read Bible narrative, knowing how it ends, we should be asking ‘what relevance has *this* part of the story to the *main* story?’

**c)** The Scriptures are complete

The Word of God is sufficient. It is its own interpreter. We are not meant to speculate about Scripture beyond that which is written.

**d)** God is in total control.

*Say among the nations “The LORD reigns.” The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity. (Ps 96:10)*

Within this context the Lord assures his people that “*all things work together for good for those who love him and are called according to his purpose ... nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus*” (Romans 8:28,39)

### 2 In particular: ‘Follow the camera angle’

A film director focuses the viewer's attention on particular shots to tell 'his story'. In the same way each narrator in the Bible is selective about what to tell us. They leave out much general detail, only giving us what is relevant to what they are trying to convey.

As we read, we should therefore be asking the question, 'Why is he telling me this and in this particular way?'

### 3 Warts and all

Human beings often get things wrong. The Bible narrative faithfully records errors, even by people who are elsewhere commended. For instance, Moses murdered someone, King David committed adultery, and Peter, who was praised for realising Jesus was the Christ, was minutes later roundly scolded

when he tried to stop Jesus being the Christ through suffering! (Exodus 2:12; 2 Samuel 11; Matthew 16:16-23)

So we can't treat every thought or action in a narrative as something to copy, just because 'it's in the Bible'. We must ask the Holy Spirit to use the rest of Scripture to discern good examples to follow, and bad ones to avoid.

## THE PROMISE

**Abraham** had set out with his family from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. However, when they reached Haran, they settled there (Gen. 11:31). God told him *Leave your country and your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you.* (12:1,2). When he reached the site of the great tree of Mamre at Shechem in Canaan, (though the Canaanites were in the land) the Lord appeared to him and said, *To your offspring I will give this land.* (12:7) So, he built an altar there.

Later, the Lord said to deeply sleeping Abraham, *Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and they will be enslaved and ill-treated 400 years.... In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.* (15:13,16)

The promise of a land and descendants was repeated to his son **Isaac**, *...to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father, Abraham* (26:3b).

Later it was repeated to Isaac's son **Jacob**. *I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you the land on which you are lying.* (28:13)

## THE TIMING

While Abraham and Isaac each had two sons, Jacob has twelve. His concerns:

**Enemies:** Two of his sons had massacred local Shechemites. He feared his family would be 'a stench' to the Canaanites - *We are few in number and if they join forces against me, I and my household will be destroyed.*" (34:30)

**Intermarrying:** His sons began to marry Canaanite women. (28:1ff; 38:2) How was the Lord going to create His distinctive nation away from the temptations and pressures in Canaan?... **ENTER JOSEPH....!**

## JOSEPH'S FAMILY BACKGROUND

Joseph family's history was *dysfunctional!* We are told of at least six flaws:

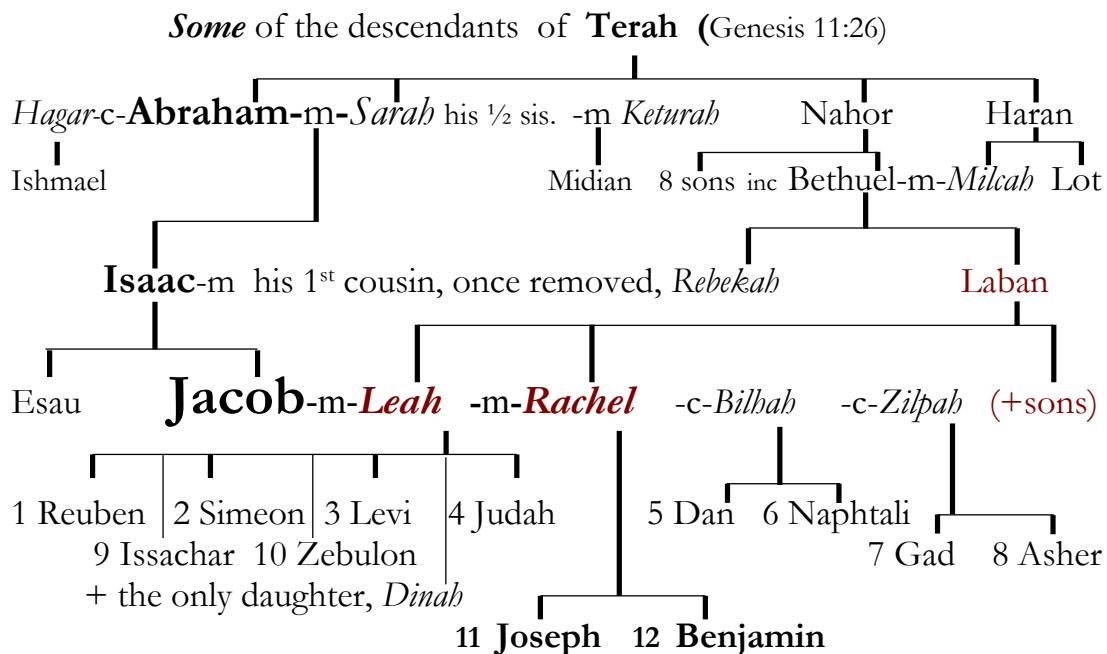
1. *Cheating*

Jacob's name means 'deceiver'. With the help of his mother, Rebekah, he tricked his elder brother Esau out of his rights as first-born, and later fled for his life (25:27-34). While staying with his uncle, Laban, he was himself tricked into marrying *both* of Laban's daughters – first Leah, then a week later, Rachel,

the only woman he ever loved (Gen 29:20, 32). They were his second cousins, once removed (great-grandson/great, great granddaughters of Terah).

## 2. Rivalry and favouritism

There was jealousy between the sisters. Jacob loved Rachel, but it was Leah who first bore him children. This led to them giving Jacob their maidservants (Bilhah and Zilpah) to have children on their behalf. There were ten children born to Leah and the servants, before finally, God gave Rachel a child, Joseph (29:31 - 30:24; 35:16 – 19)



(Key: 1-12 = Order of birth of Jacob's sons; *m* = marries, *c* = concubine or maid, *italics* = female)

## 3. Broken relationships

Laban's sons thought Jacob had gained his wealth at their father's expense, so Jacob again fled in fear of his life, back to Canaan (31:1ff). Jacob distrusted his brother Esau's welcome on his return and went to settle in Shechem. (33:18).

## 4 Brutality

A native of Shechem fell in love with Dinah, Jacob's daughter, and slept with her, intending to marry her. Two of her full brothers, Leah's sons Simeon and Levi, deceived the Shechemites into being circumcised to set this right, but three days later, murdered them and plundered the city (Genesis 34:1-31).

## 5 Immorality

Reuben, Joseph's eldest brother, slept with Bilhah, his stepmother (35:22).

## 6 Bereavement

Jacob's beloved wife Rachel, Joseph's mother, fell pregnant again, but died giving birth to the twelfth of Jacob's sons – Benjamin (35:16-18). The ten allowed Jacob to think Joseph had been killed by a wild beast, which nearly broke his heart. That made him hugely reluctant to risk losing Benjamin too.

## JOSEPH AND JESUS

The whole Bible speaks of Jesus (Luke 24:27). See p1 paragraph 1(a).

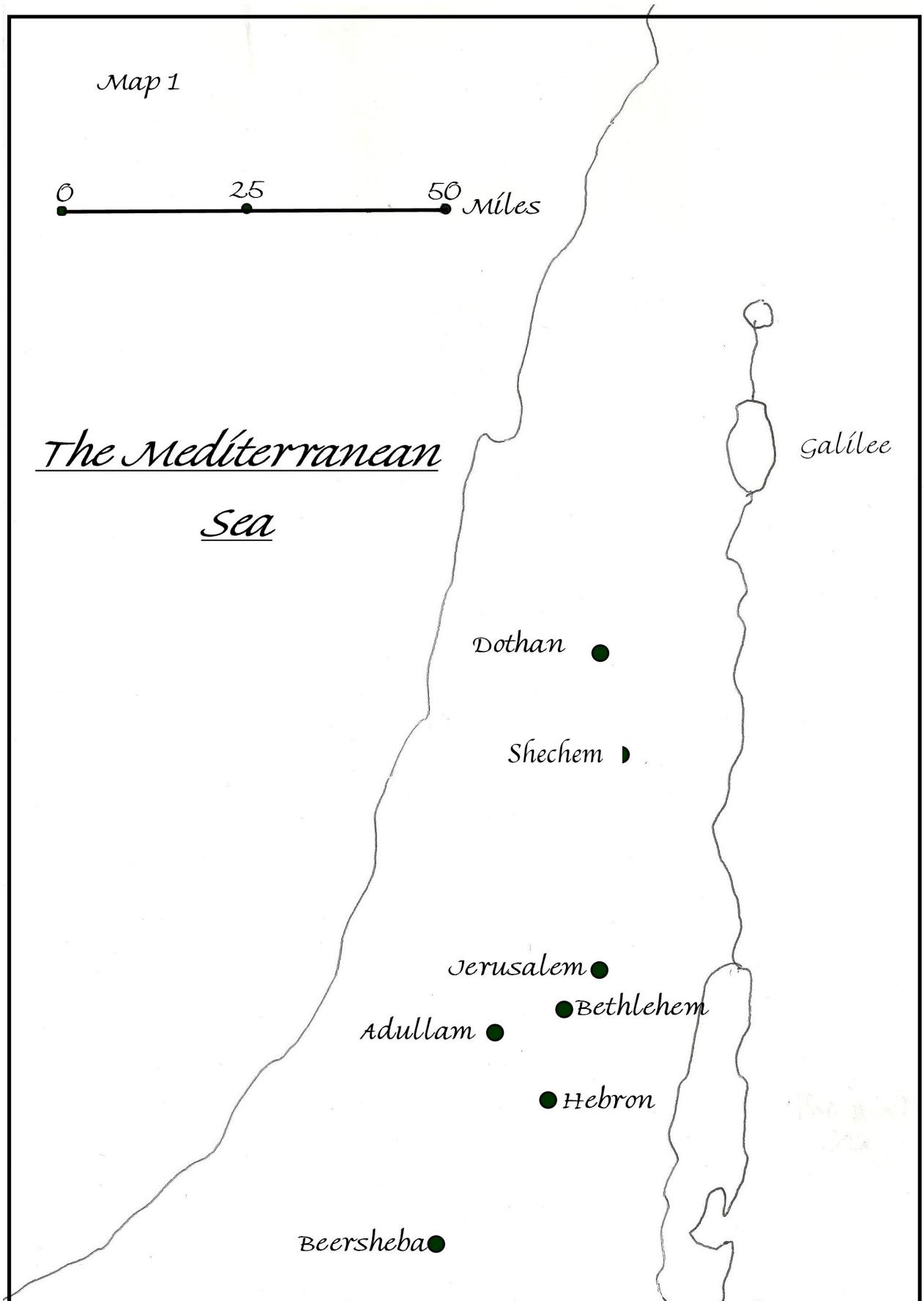
Joseph's name means 'May he add' *ie* add another son for Rachel. This was prophetic, though not through Rachel. Joseph *pointed* to the Messiah but it would be *through* his brother Judah that the line of the Messiah was given.

Once we view the story of Joseph in this light, we can see many parallels to the life of Jesus. Joseph is a 'type', a foreshadowing of Jesus and different aspects in his story 'echo' this. Here are some ways we can see it:

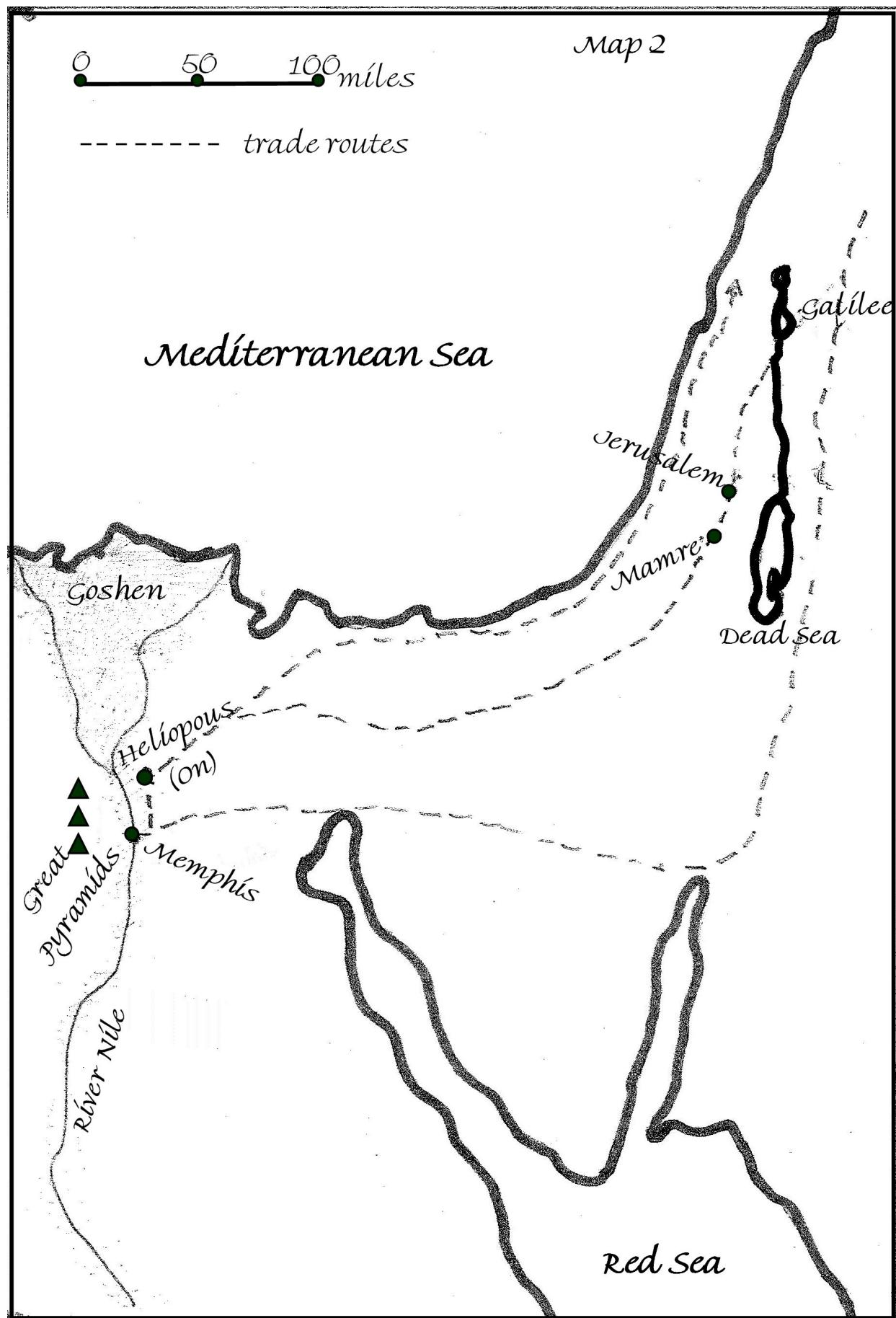
|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Ch 37</b> v3 Favoured son of father   | <i>cf</i> Matthew 3:17                    |
| 4,5,8b, 23 Rejected / hated by family...   | <i>cf</i> John 1:11                       |
| 18 ... who plotted to kill him   | <i>cf</i> John 11:53                      |
| 28 Joseph to Egypt to protect/prepare saviour                                    | <i>cf</i> Matt 2:13-15                    |
| 36 Ended up as slave   | <i>cf</i> Philippians 2:7                 |
| <b>Ch 38</b> 29 Perez firstborn - in line of Jesus                               | <i>cf</i> Matthew 1:3, Luke 3:33          |
| <b>Ch 39</b> v3 God gave success in everything.                                  | <i>cf</i> Luke 2:52; Mark 7:37            |
| 20 Falsely accused and convicted   | <i>cf</i> Matthew 27:23,24; John 19:6     |
| <b>Ch 40</b> 1 Cup bearer and baker – bread and wine                             | <i>cf</i> Luke 22:19, 20                  |
| 8 'none but God...tell me...' -  | <i>cf</i> John 10:30                      |
| 15 No basis for charge against him   | <i>cf</i> Luke 23:4                       |
| 20 3 <sup>rd</sup> day – resurrection (for the wine steward)                     | <i>cf</i> Luke 24:7                       |
| 22 Chief baker hanged/impaled on a pole  | <i>cf</i> Deut. 21:22-3, Gal 3:13         |
| <b>Ch 41</b> 1 Two full years passed, <i>ie</i> at very start of 3 <sup>rd</sup> | <i>cf</i> Luke 24:1                       |
| 14 Shaved and changed -  | <i>cf</i> Phil 2:8                        |
| 40 Only with respect to the throne   | <i>cf</i> Ephesians 1:10                  |
| 41 In charge of whole land of Egypt  | <i>cf</i> Matthew 28:18                   |
| 43 Raised and given authority  | <i>cf</i> Philippians 2:10; Matthew 28:18 |
| 44 Zaphenath-Paneah ('the god speaks and he lives')                              | <i>cf</i> Jn 1:1,14; Heb 1:2              |
| 46 Ministry started aged 30  | <i>cf</i> Luke 3:23                       |
| 56 Bread of life to starving   | <i>cf</i> John 6:35                       |
| Universal famine – help only through Joseph                                      | <i>cf</i> John 14:6                       |
| <b>Ch 43</b> 13-14 Father sent his 'only' son so all might live                  | <i>cf</i> John 3:16                       |
| 11,26 Offerings ineffective, 'son' accepted                                      | <i>cf</i> Galatians 3:24                  |
| <b>Ch 44</b> 33 'Innocent' brother takes the blame                               | <i>cf</i> Hebrews 2:17; 4:15              |
| <b>Ch 45</b> 3,4 Rejected Joseph forgave his brothers                            | <i>cf</i> John 1:11-12                    |
| 5,11 No condemnation, all provided for   | <i>cf</i> Romans 8:1,32                   |
| <b>Ch 47</b> 25 People bought for a price become master's slaves                 | 1 Cor 6:20; Rom 6:18,22                   |
| <b>Ch 49</b> 9-12 Judah the 'lion' will rule an everlasting, fruitful Kingdom    | <i>cf</i> Rev 5:5; Is 9:6                 |
| <b>Ch 50</b> 20 God intended one man to suffer for the many                      | <i>cf</i> Acts 2:23ff                     |

# Maps:

# Canaan, and routes to Egypt



Note: Hebron (p9) = Mamre (p10)



Note: Heliopolis.

## Let God reveal to you His perfect Saviour

## Background information

Genesis 15:13-16 tells us the family God had chosen to favour will come under foreign domination until Canaan is ripe for possession (*see also* 17:8). The train of events that took Israel into Egypt is set in motion in this chapter by the rivalries of the twelve brothers, under the hand of God.

Jacob and his family are living in *Hebron*, aka *Mamre* (Genesis 13:18; 35:27) as had his father Isaac, and for a time, his grandfather Abraham.

Ishmaelites (v25) and Midianites (v28) were nomads, both descended from Abraham, by Sarah's servant, Hagar and his 2<sup>nd</sup> wife Keturah respectively. (Genesis 16:1-3,15; 25:1) Here the terms are used interchangeably as if 'Ishmaelite' included *all* of Jacob's nomadic cousins.

## Word List

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| 1 <i>Canaan</i>            | the land of the Syro-Palestinian coastland at the Eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea, esp. Phoenicia proper. Can cover the hinterland as well (10:15-19).   |
| 2 <i>Joseph</i>            | ' <i>may he add</i> ' 1st son of Jacob's favourite wife, Rachel (30:24) who, alas, died giving birth to her 2 <sup>nd</sup> son, Benjamin, (35:18).   |
|                            | <i>Bilhah, Zilpah</i> maidservants by whom Jacob had four of his 12 sons.   |
| 3 <i>Israel</i>            | ' <i>he struggles with God</i> ' name God gave to Jacob ( 32:28)  |
|                            | <i>richly ornamented robe</i> meaning uncertain – possibly multi-coloured; <i>or</i> long robe with sleeves; <i>or</i> ceremonial robe with ornaments. It was ostentatious, unsuited for manual work. |
| 12 <i>Shechem</i>          | town where Abraham first built an altar in Canaan (12:6f), where Jacob's sons had slaughtered and pillaged (34:30)  |
| 14 <i>Valley of Hebron</i> | where Abraham settled/built an altar in Canaan (13:18).   |
| 17 <i>Dothan</i>           | 32km N of Shechem, in a fertile plain.  |
| 20 <i>cisterns</i>         | Storage tanks to collect rainwater. Rectangular ones <i>ie</i> man-made, have been found near today's town, about 3m deep.  |
| 21 <i>Reuben</i>           | Jacob's eldest son, by first wife, Leah <i>see chart</i> , p3   |
| 25 <i>Gilead</i>           | Part of land east of River Jordan. Famous for balm & dates  |
| 26 <i>Judah</i>            | Jacob's fourth son, by Leah   |
| 36 <i>Pharaoh</i>          | The ruler of Egypt.   |

## Bible Connections

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 2 <i>speak up or keep quiet?</i>  | <i>cf</i> 1 Samuel 2:22-25; Psalm 105:19; Eccles. 3:7    |
| 8 <i>disbelieving brothers</i>    | <i>see also</i> John 7:5                                 |
| 13 <i>Joseph's obedience</i>      | <i>see also</i> Gen 22:7,11; Isaiah 6:8; Philippians 2:8 |
| 18 <i>plotting against Joseph</i> | <i>cf</i> Matthew 12:14; 26:4; 27:1                      |

# LOOK

## 1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 2 *What is the significance of 17 years old?*  
*What is the significance of these four brothers?*  
*Why was Joseph bringing a report?*
- 3 *Why is Jacob called 'Israel' here?*  
*Why did he love Joseph more than Benjamin who was born later?*  
*What was special about being born in his old age?*
- 4 *What does 'could not speak a kind word to him' show?*
- 5 *Why did Joseph dream this?*
- 6 *Why did he say 'listen'?*
- 8 *How did the brothers know the dream's interpretation?*
- 10 *Why was his 'mother' included – she was dead?*
- 11 *Why did Jacob keep the matter in mind?*
- 12 *Where had they gone from?*  
*What is the significance of Shechem?*
- 14 *Where is Hebron?*
- 16 *Why is asking for directions included in the story?*
- 17 *Where is Dothan?*
- 18 *How were they able to agree on the plot so quickly?*
- 20 *How big was the place – to have 'many cisterns'?*  
*Why did they mention his dreams?*
- 21 *Why did Reuben want to save Joseph?*
- 23 *Why did they strip him?*
- 25 *Why 'as they sat down to eat their meal'?*
- 26 *What was their prime motive for not killing him?*
- 27 *What was the significance of 20 shekels of silver?*
- 30 *Where could he have turned?*
- 32 *Why did they simply show him the robe?*
- 35 *'Refuse to be comforted', 'in mourning go down to grave' - meaning?*
- 36 *What is the contrast with 'meanwhile' at end of this part of story?*

What surprises or confuses you?

*Joseph did nothing wrong, but was hated by his brothers (5, 8b)*

## 2) The Context

a) individual book

- 3 Jacob loved Rachel, Leah was not loved (NIV) hated (KJV) (29:31)  
cf 'Jacob I loved, Esau I have hated' (Malachi 1:2,3; Romans 9:13)
- 5 Dreams - chief cupbearer (40:5) chief baker (40:16) Pharaoh (41:1)
- 8 Rule over us? – bow down (42:6b), bow twice (43:26,28); throw themselves at his feet (50:18).
- 10 Joseph's mother, Rachel, had died, 35:19. – Much later, Jacob would be buried alongside his first wife, Leah (49:29-31).
- 12 Shechem - city which Simeon and Levi attacked, killing all men, plundering – made Jacob's name a 'stench' to Canaanites etc. (34:30)
- 14 Bring word cf a report. (37:2)  
Hebron was where Abraham first settled in promised land (13:18).
- 21 Reuben was already disgraced in eyes of Jacob (35:22).
- 27 Ishmaelites – descendants of Abraham's son by Hagar (16:15).

b) whole Bible

- 3 The NT calls the followers of Jesus, 'the Israel of God' (Galatians 6:16)
- 11 Kept the matter in mind (Luke 2:19, 51b)  
Plotted to kill the son (Matthew 21:38)
- 20 Mocked Joseph – tested the Word (Psalm 105:19)  
cf Children of God, heirs of life (Rmns 8:16-18) judge angels (1 Cor 6:3)  
Suppressed the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18)
- 23 He came to his own and his own did not receive him (John 1:11)
- 25 Woe to you ....who drink wine in bowls ....but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph (Amos 6:4,6).
- 28 Twenty shekels of silver – cf 30 pieces of silver (Matthew 26:15).
- 29/34 R & J tore their clothes (see e.g. Joshua 7:6; Mark 14:63).
- 31-35 deceiving Jacob – temptation brought sin (James 1:14-15).
- 35 refusing to be comforted (Jeremiah 31:15; Matthew 2:18).

## LEARN

1) What type of literature is this?

**Narrative**

2) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

2 He was a young man, not still a child.

They were four sons of the servant women.

Because his father had given him authority?

3 Both used interchangeably; 'Israel' was given by God in 32:28

Because he was the first-born of his only true love, Rachel. Because he had waited so long for him.

- 4 Their hostility was plain for all to see.
- 5 God was speaking to him in the dream.
- 6 He believed there was a message from God?
- 8 God gave them the interpretation?
- 10 Jacob was referring to Leah, Joseph's stepmother.
- 11 He thought it might be God speaking.
- 12 The family home was Mamre, also known as Hebron (35:27).  
Shechem is where God spoke to Abraham (12:6,7) and where Jacob and his family set up their altar on his return to Canaan (33:18-20).
- 14 Shechem is 50 miles north of Hebron.
- 16 To show they were not where they were expected/ought to be – near the altar of God?
- 17 Dothan is another 15 miles away, north-west of Shechem.
- 18 Because they had already shared and harboured this intent?
- 20 It was a large meeting place for travellers on a trade route.  
Joseph had got under their skin / sensed God speaking?
- 21 Reuben was eldest and had already caused their father much pain?
- 23 To humiliate him, and to use the clothing later.
- 26 First to make money, then to avoid killing their own 'flesh & blood'.
- 27 Then current price of a slave: 20 shekels of silver = 4 kg, worth a lot.
- 30 He could have turned to God?
- 32 To let him draw his own conclusions and try to avoid telling a lie.
- 35 He thought he would be miserable until he died.
- 36 Jacob thought Joseph was lost to death, but he was lost to Egypt (from Jacob's point of view, that was just as final).

- 3) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

They resented God and his choice of Joseph, and Jacob's choice too.

- 4) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

Joseph was favoured by his father and given a leadership role amongst his brothers. This fed family jealousy; his brothers bitterly resented him. God spoke to the whole family in Joseph's dream, anticipating his intention to exalt Joseph above them all. The brothers ignored God and later plotted to kill Joseph. Instead, to gain money, they sold him to slave traders.

## LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

*The jealous heart of man hates the sovereign choice of the Father.*

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **vv. 4, 8b**

*When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not say a kind word to him....They hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.*

## LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

*2 Christ orders our times despite some outward appearances.*

*4 The Father delights in His son (Jesus)*

*5 He sometimes chooses to reveal His purpose beforehand.*

*15 God directs our paths.*

*25 God's timing is perfect for all things.*

*28 He may use sin (by ourselves or others) to fulfil his purposes.*

b) His grace?

*3 God is Sovereign – He chooses to love undeservedly.*

c) Jesus /his salvation?

*28 Jesus was 'sold to slavery' by us, so God might bless us through Him*

**Now underline the application of the Main Point.**

2) What should I do?

*4 Acknowledge the world will hate Jesus/you because the Father loves us.*

*5,8 Be courageous in sharing the Word of God with others.*

*11 Expect different responses to the Word of God.*

*13 Avoid areas of conflict / previous sin.*

*17 Listen to the Lord's guidance.*

*22 Speak up boldly for what is right.*

*24 Trust in the Lord that he has all my needs covered.*

*32f Recognise allowing an untruth is bearing false witness.*

*35 Reckon on the consequences of your actions.*

**Now underline the application of the Main Point.**

## Study 2

## Genesis 38:1-30

## Judah and Tamar

## Background information

Joseph's three elder brothers had disgraced themselves before their father: Reuben slept with his father's wife (35:22) and Simeon and Levi murdered the Shechemites (ch. 34). The next in line was Judah.

The plot revolves around Tamar's right to be the mother of Judah's heir. What would later be called 'the rule of Levirate marriage' (Deuteronomy 25:5-6) required that if a first-born son died, his wife was to be given to the second son, and so on. Their first child would carry the name of the first-born, so his line did not die out. So, Tamar had no liberty to marry into another family as long as Judah held her under the obligation to wait for his youngest son, Shelah, to reach marriageable age, which he now had.

Sheep-shearing was a festive time (*cf* 1 Samuel 25:4,11,36). There was a Canaanite cult which encouraged fornication as a ritual, supposedly to enhance fertility in the rest of nature, especially at seasons like harvest and sheep-shearing. Judah would have known it was wrong to sleep with the woman, irrespective of her identity.

## Word List

|    |                          |   |
|----|--------------------------|---|
| 1  | <i>went down</i>         | lit ‘turn aside’ usually deviating from loyalty/righteousness   |
|    | <i>Adullam</i>           | S or SW of Jerusalem. Area will be allotted to Judah’s tribe after the conquest of Canaan ( <i>cf</i> 2 Chronicles 11:5,7). |
| 5  | <i>Kezib</i>             | related to Hebrew verb meaning ‘to tell a lie’.   |
| 12 | <i>Timmah</i>            | town on northern boundary of land later given to Judah.   |
| 18 | <i>seal, staff</i>       | distinctive items of a man of substance.  |
| 21 | <i>shrine prostitute</i> | used in ritual prostitution as part of pagan worship.   |
| 26 | <i>righteous</i>         | a blameless state before God brought about by faith(15:6)   |
| 29 | <i>Perez</i>             | name means <i>breaking out</i> . He is reckoned as the first-born.  |
| 30 | <i>Zerah</i>             | name means <i>scarlet</i> or <i>brightness</i> .  |

## Bible Connections

Timing: Events in ch 38 may have taken over 20 yrs. Joseph was aged 17 at start, (37:2); 30 when he became prime minister (41:46); and aged 37 when the 7 years of famine started – **20 years** waiting for his destiny!

Genealogy for Jesus      *see* Matthew 1:1-16 *esp.* v3; Luke 3:23-37 *esp.* v33.

13ff shrine prostitution later expressly forbidden *see* Hosea 4:14.

29-30 twin sons of Jacob and Esau 25:22-26.

Levirite marriage rule quoted to mock belief in resurrection, Luke 20:27-38.

# LOOK

## 1) The Text

- 1 *What 'time'?*
  - Why did he leave his brothers?*
  - Why did he go to Adullam?*
  - Who was Hirah?*
- 2 *What was Judah doing marrying a Canaanite?!*
- 3-5 *Why no narrative between the births?*
- 5 *Where is Kezib?*
- 7 *How can the Lord put him to death?*
- 8 *What was his duty?*
- 9 *Why did he not want to have his brother's children?*
- 11 *Why did he send her to her father's house?*
- 12 *What was 'the long time'?*
  - Why did Judah's wife die?*
  - What was the significance of her death to the story?*
- 13 *How did she know he would approach her for sex?*
- 14 *Where is Timnah?*
  - Why are we told she had seen that Shelah was grown up?*
- 18 *What is the significance of the seal, cord, staff?*
  - Why did she want them?*
- 20 *Why send Hirah the Adullamite?*
- 23 *Whose mockery is he concerned about?*
  - What would they be laughing at?*
- 24 *Why did they assume the pregnancy was because of prostitution?*
  - Why was he so indignant – 'burn to death'?*
- 25 *Why did she delay speaking to Jacob till being led to out to die?*
- 26 *In what way was she more righteous than Judah?*
  - Why did he not sleep with her again?*
- 28 *Why did she tie a scarlet tag round the arm that presented?*
- 29 *Why was he called 'broken out'?*

What surprises or confuses you?

*Why is this chapter 'interjected' in the narrative?*

## 2) The Context

a) surrounding passage

1 *Judah, the leader of the brothers? (37:26)*

b) the book

- 1 Judah, leader, would sacrifice himself in Egypt (43:9; 44:33).
- 2 cf. Esau marries a pagan wife (28:8-9).
- 11 cf Abraham prepared to sacrifice Isaac (22:1-14).
- 26 Abraham believed God & it was credited to him as righteousness (15:6).
- 27 Their Grandfather & great-uncle (Jacob & Esau) were twins (25:22)

c) the whole Bible

- 1 Lion of Judah (Revelation 5:5)  
Running away? (Psalm 139:7-16; Jonah 1:3)
- 1,12 'Bad company corrupts good character' (1 Corinthians 15:33)
- 7 The wages of sin are death (Romans 3:23)  
Put him to death cf (1 Corinthians 11:29,30)
- 11 God sacrificed his son (John 3:16)
- 12 Prophets warn of cult immorality (Jer. 2:20ff; 3:1ff; Ez. 23:37-45; Hosea 2:2-5)
- 18 Trust in the Lord with all your heart...he will make your paths straight (Proverbs 3:5,6)
- 24 Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months (Luke 1:56)  
Take out the speck in your own eye first (Luke 6:41,42).
- 25 Your sin will find you out (Numbers 32:23b).  
'You are the man' (2 Samuel 12:7)
- 26 Admitting sin (2 Samuel 12:13).  
The righteousness of Tamar (Matthew 1:3).

## LEARN

- 1 The 'time' when Joseph 'died' and his father went into mourning.  
He left his brothers because he felt guilty(?)  
Adullam was 15 miles away but apart from his family / He knew folk.  
Hirah was a friend (12) and confidante (20).
- 2 He was rejecting His Father's (and God's) authority
- 3-5 Not the main thrust of this chapter.
- 5 Ezib was a Canaanite town.
- 7 By stopping his breathing.
- 8 His duty was to have a child and give him his brother's name.
- 9 He wanted children for his own inheritance.
- 11 He wanted her out of the way, to avoid doing his duty.
- 12 'A number of years' during which Shelah became an adult (14)  
She died in God's providence.  
Had he gained a reputation for immorality? - cf laughing stock v23

13 She knew by the prompting of God ????

14 It was south of Hebron.  
To show her motivation was to fulfil the Jewish Law?

18 They were symbols of his identity, integrity and power.  
She wanted to identify him but also to expose his lack of integrity

20 He sent Hirah because he felt he had done wrong.

23 He's worried what the Canaanite people around would think of him, one of Abraham's people, taking part in their fertility rite?

24 Prostitution, because she remained Er's wife?  
He was so indignant showing his own guilt.

25 She waited to hear his verdict – a judgment on himself, suggesting repentance of his 'unrighteous' life.

26 She is more righteous since she believed in the God of Abraham?  
Because she was waiting for Shelah to be given to her.

28 She thought this arm was going to belong to the first born.

29 He was called 'broken out' because he forced his way out first.

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?  
*We know with hindsight that Judah carries the line of the Messiah (Matt 1:3). He must be brought to repentance before he re-engages with the story of his people's deliverance from the famine.*

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.  
*Judah rejected his father's household, 'fell in' with Canaanites and married one, by whom he had three children (Er, Onan, Shelah) (1-5). He got a wife, Tamar, for Er but Er was wicked and God put him to death. His brother, Onan, avoided having a son with Tamar, and he died too. Judah, worried about his last son, sent Tamar back to her father meantime, till Shelah was old enough to marry. (6-11)*  
*A long time later, Tamar, hearing Judah was coming to the sheep-shearing, tricked him into sleeping with her and accepted a personal pledge for payment. She became pregnant (12-23). The discovery of this made Judah indignant - until she proved he himself was the father. He then saw that she was more righteous/ faithful than him (24-26). She had twin sons (27-30).*

## LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

*Recognising our unrighteousness is the first sign of repentance*

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 26**

*Judah recognised (his own seal, cord and staff) and said, 'She is more righteous than I, since I would not give her to my son, Shelah.'*

## LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

*I God permits his children to do wrong /go the wrong way.*

*6,10 God deals/will deal with wickedness.*

b) His grace?

*26 He allows repentance after sin.*

c) Jesus and His salvation?

*26 Judah's descendent, Jesus, is the righteous one.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

2) What should I do?

*1 Do not run away to avoid God / difficulties.*

*2 Note: A right thing at the wrong time/situation = the wrong thing.*

*6 Do not seek to avoid your responsibilities before God.*

*11 By God's grace, put Him first.*

*Face up to your challenges under God.*

*Do not rationalise disobeying God.*

*12 Do not think that weakness can justify / earn right to sin.*

*13,14 Beware going outside the boundaries of God's promise.*

*Allow your actions to be guided by the Spirit (cf 26).*

*20 Don't seek others to do your dirty work.*

*24 Look at your own sin before condemning others.*

*25 Be sure your sins will find me out.*

*26 Repent of your unrighteousness.*

*28 Don't presume – wait till the end to determine God's will.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

## Joseph and Potiphar's wife

### Background information

Note the symmetry of the chapter: by the end, verses 19-23 match verses 1-6 point for point, despite the intervening injustice. That perfectly expresses God's quiet control and Joseph's faith, persistence and victory.

### Word List

|                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1 <i>Potiphar</i>                     | <i>lit:</i> He whom Ra (the Sun god) has given.  |
| <i>Pharaoh</i>                        | the Egyptian title for the king.   |
| <i>Official</i>                       | strictly 'eunuch' but became synonym for 'courtier'.   |
| <i>Captain of the guard</i>           | trusted army officer responsible for the king's safety.  |
| <i>Ishmaelites</i>                    | <i>see</i> study 1 and genealogy p3.   |
| 2 <i>LORD</i>                         | English version of YHWH. Used 8 times in this chapter!   |
| 2-3 <i>prospered/gave him success</i> | same word used; achievement rather than status.<br>Same word used of God's Servant in Isaiah 53:10b after he had suffered in place of sinners. |
| 6 <i>handsome</i>                     | same Hebrew word describes his mother in 29:17.  |
| 14 <i>Hebrew</i>                      | scornful use of the term.  |
| 20 <i>put in prison</i>               | Egypt only country in ancient Near East using prisons.   |
| 21 <i>kindness</i>                    | <i>Hebrew = besed</i> a covenant word meaning to act with love and loyalty to help a covenant partner.   |

### Bible Connections

|  |  |
|--|--|
| 2 God is with his people                         | <i>see</i> Psalm 139:8; Matthew 28:20b               |
| 10 Facing constant pressure                      | <i>cf</i> Samson, Judges 14:17; 16:16-17             |
| 11-12 Resisting temptation                       | <i>see</i> Luke 4:1-13; 2 Tim 2:22; James 4:7        |
| 14 Hebrew  | <i>see</i> Genesis 14:13                             |
| 15 Flee from sin                                 | <i>see</i> 1 Corinthians 6:18; 10:14; 1 Timothy 6:11 |
| 21 LORD showed . . . granted him favour in . . . | <i>see</i> Isaiah 55:5                               |

# LOOK

## 1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 2 *What does it mean ‘the Lord was with Joseph’?*  
*How did he prosper?*
- 3 *How did he know who the Lord was?*  
*How did he see the Lord was with Him?*  
*What did ‘success’ mean?*
- 5 *How did the Lord bless Potiphar’s household?*  
*What does ‘put in charge of his household’ mean?*
- 6 *What does ‘did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate’ mean?*
- 9 *What does ‘no one greater in this house than me’ mean?*  
*How would sleeping with Potiphar’s wife be a sin against God?*
- 14 *Why did she call in her servants?*
- 19 *Why did Potiphar burn with anger / believe his wife?*
- 20 *Why did he imprison Joseph –‘cut off his nose to spite his face’?*  
*Why was Joseph not put to death?*  
*Why was he put in with the king’s prisoners?*
- 21 *How was the Lord with him?*
- 23 *What was under Joseph’s care?*

What surprises or confuses you?

- 3,23 *Should we all expect success if we are faithful to God?*
- 9 *Did Joseph know the Lord was with him?*

## 2) The Context

a) surrounding passage

- 4 *Found favour... cf put in charge (37:2,13). But it does not say he was put in charge of the flock.*
- 20 *Put him in prison, cf threw him in the cistern (37:24)*

b) individual book

- 2 *Lord with him (Gen 26:24; 28:15)*
- 3 *Great success because the Lord was with him (1 Sam 18:14)*
- 4 *Found favour in the eyes of God cf Noah (6:8)*

b) whole Bible

- 1 Jesus emptied self and became a slave (*Philippians 2:7*)
- 2 He spoke as one having authority (*Luke 4:32*).  
*'All things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose' (*Romans 8:28*).*
- 3 Lord with Isaac and Jacob (*26:24; 28:15*).  
*... see your good deeds and glorify your father (*Matthew 5:16*).*
- 4 Grew in favour with God and men (*Luke 2:52*).  
*They enjoyed the favour of all people (*Acts 2:47*).  
*Put in charge (*37:2,13; 39:22; 41:44*).**
- 5 All nations will be blessed through you (*12:5*).
- 6 Do not worry about what you will eat and drink (*Matthew 6:25*).
- 7 Jesus was tempted (*Luke 4:1-13*).  
*Jesus tempted in every way as we are yet without sin (*Hebrews 4:15*)*
- 9 Withheld one thing – not eat fruit of tree of good & evil (*2:17*).  
*My food is to do the will of him who sent me (*John 4:34*).  
*Against you only have I sinned (*Psalm 51:4*).  
*Why do you persecute me? (*Acts 9:4*)***
- 12 Flee from sexual immorality (*1 Corinthians 6:18*).
- 14 Blessed are you when they bring false testimony against you (*Matt 5:11*).
- 19 Potiphar's wife cf Eve (*3:6*).
- 20 Joseph said nothing? cf (*Isaiah 53:7*).  
*Consider Jesus who endured opposition from sinful men (*Heb 12:3*).  
*Prison harsh –'feet in shackles, neck in irons' (*Psalm 105:18*) .**

## LEARN

- 1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?
- 2 *It means he was in the centre of God's will.*  
*He prospered in favour with God and men.*
- 3 *He did not know Who was with Joseph but he saw the effect.*  
*He saw the Lord was with Joseph by his peace and his power.*  
*Success meant he did the 'right' thing.*
- 5 *The Lord blessed Potiphar with 'peace and well-being' – 'shalom'.*  
*'Put in charge ...' meant all were answerable to Joseph.*
- 6 *It meant his only task was to choose the food he ate.*
- 9 *It meant he was second in command.*  
*All actions of God's people are primarily for God or against him.*

14 She called in her servants to give her accusation ‘weight’.

19 Out of frustration or disappointment?

20 Potiphar had to be seen to act on his wife’s complaint. He knew Joseph was ‘not guilty’ but couldn’t lose face before all?  
*Guarding the king’s prisoners was part of Potiphar’s duties / He was fond of Joseph / It was part of God’s plan.*

21 The Lord was with him, giving him peace and success.

23 Joseph was running the prison.

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?  
*3,23 If we are faithful to God, we do not necessarily enjoy material success, but a peace with God that will be evident to the world.*  
*9 Yes! He evidently knew importance of right relationship with God*

3) Give an overall ‘picture’ of the passage in a few sentences.  
*Joseph was bought by Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh’s guard (1).*  
*He was evidently blessed (by God) and so was put in total charge of his household (2-6).*  
*Potiphar’s wife tried to seduce him, but he remained true to Potiphar / the Lord (7-12).*  
*Having failed, she accused him of attempted rape (13-19).*  
*Potiphar angrily put him in Pharaoh’s prison where he again was evidently blessed by God and put in total charge of the prison (20-23)*

## LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?  
*All that God’s people do, is done to or for Him.*

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 9c**  
*‘... How could I then do such a wicked thing and sin against God?’*

# LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

*1 God is in charge - He directs the paths of those who trust in Him.*

*2,21 The Lord is with his people – always.*

*3,23 The Lord gives success to his faithful people.*

*5 The Lord blesses situations because his faithful people are among them.*

*9 God views sinful acts towards people are primarily against Him.*

b) His grace?

*5b The blessing of God falls on our house because of Jesus.*

c) Jesus and His salvation?

*7,9 Jesus was tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

2) What should I do?

*4 Expect to find favour in the eyes of (some) people.*

*8 Resist temptation.*

*9 Remember – the way you treat others is as to God*

*12 Flee from temptation.*

*20 Bear lies quietly – God knows what He is doing.*

*22 In faith, do your best in all circumstances.*

*23 Trust God to give success even in undeserved, bad situations like ‘prison’.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

## The cupbearer and the baker

### Background information

The chief cupbearer and the baker were valued officials. Centuries later, for example, during Judah's exile in Babylon, King Artaxerxes' cupbearer, Nehemiah, (Neh. 1:11) was a man of influence and much ability, whom God used to organise the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem against many odds.

By this time Joseph's responsibilities (39:22) included being a servant of other prisoners.

It was a commonly held belief in Egypt that dreams were predictive. Indeed, a body of (non-Biblical) writings had grown up on the art of interpreting them. Joseph's own experience of meaningful dreams (37:5-11) had provided him with an example of interpretation supplied by his brothers and father.

### Word List

|  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 <i>offended</i>                            | Hebrew 'offended against'.  |
| 14 <i>kindness</i>                           | Hebrew <i>hesed</i> - a covenant word. Means to act with love and loyalty to help a covenant partner (cf 39:21) |
| 17 <i>all kinds of baked goods</i>           | A non-Biblical document about food for Pharaoh lists 57 varieties of bread and 38 kinds of cake!                |
| 19 <i>hang you on a tree</i>                 | very unusual – sign of cursing (Deuteronomy 21:23). cf Jesus in NT (Acts 5:30, 10:39; Gal 3:13).                |
| 20 <i>lifted up the heads of</i> <i>i.e.</i> | brought them out of prison into his presence.   |

### Bible Connections

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 8 Interpreting dreams         | <i>see also</i> Daniel chs 2,4            |
| 12,19 three days              | <i>see</i> Jonah 1:17; 1 Corinthians 15:3 |
| 14 waiting patiently for God  | <i>see</i> Psalm 40:1-3                   |
| 23 Man forgets, God remembers | <i>see</i> Isaiah 49:15-16                |

# LOOK

## 1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 1 *What does 'some time later' mean? How long?*  
*Why cup bearer and baker of King of Egypt?*
- 2 *Why 'chief'?*  
*What does 'offended' mean?*
- 3 *Why does it call Potiphar, 'the captain of the guard'?*
- 4 *Why does he assign them to Joseph?*  
*How long is 'some time'?*
- 5 *Why does it restate who the two men were?*  
*Why did they have a dream on the same night?*
- 6 *Why did Joseph come to them next morning?*
- 7 *What if Joseph had not asked...?*  
*Why does it say he was 'in his master's house'?*
- 8 *Who might have interpreted them?*  
*What did he mean that 'interpretations belonged to God'?*  
*Why did he ask them to tell him their dreams?*
- 13 *Why three days?*
- 15 *Why did he make his excuse now (not 39:20)*
- 18 *Why so 'brutal'?*
- 19 *Why impaled on a tree?*
- 20 *Why on Pharaoh's birthday?*
- 23 *Why did the cup bearer forget Joseph?*  
*Why the repetition – 'did not remember' / 'forgot'?*

What surprises or confuses you?

- 14 *Why did Joseph appeal directly to Pharaoh, not the captain of the guard?*

## 2) The Context

- a) surrounding passage
- 4 *Joseph had previously been in charge of a household (39:4)*
- b) individual book
- 8 *dreams – Joseph (37:6&9); Pharaoh (41:1ff)*
- c) whole Bible

- 1 *bread and wine (Lk22:19,20)*
- 9 *Vine – Israel (Is 5:1ff) Jesus (John 15:1ff)*

- 19 Cursed is anyone hung on a tree (Deuteronomy 21:23; Gal. 3:23)
- 20 It was the custom at the feast to release a prisoner (Mark 15:6)
- 21 The ‘king’ acknowledged (Luke 19:38)  
The ‘king’ crucified (Luke 23:38)  
One freed, one crucified (Mark 15:15)
- 23 I will not forget you (Isaiah 49:15b)

## LEARN

11) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

- 1 *It was not immediately after Joseph was imprisoned.*  
*They were his most trusted servants.*
- 2 *‘Chief’ shows that they were at the very top.*  
*They had upset / insulted Pharaoh?*
- 3 *To remind us that it was his prison.*
- 4 *He assigned them to Joseph because they were his most important prisoners and he was the best servant.*  
*Not immediately after their imprisonment*
- 5 *To accentuate their position.*  
*They had a dream on the same night because it was God given.*
- 6 *Joseph came to them next morning to attend to their needs.*
- 7 *Joseph was prompted by God to ask.*  
*Potiphar was still his master.*
- 8 *A court ‘magician’ might have interpreted them?*  
*Since God gave the dreams, God must know the interpretations.*  
*Because he expected God to give him the interpretation of them*
- 13 *three days = God’s miraculous timing?*
- 15 *because now was God’s timing, part of God’s plan (?)*
- 18 *not ‘brutal’, just honest – it was what would happen.*
- 19 *Impaled on a tree = crucified – foreshadows Jesus?*
- 20 *This was when cases were dealt with.*
- 23 *It was not yet Joseph’s time.*  
*To emphasise God was in control.*

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

14 *He appealed to Pharaoh as he was the highest authority.*

3) Give an overall ‘picture’ of the passage in a few sentences.

*Pharaoh’s chief cupbearer and baker offended him and were imprisoned.*  
*The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph (1-4).*

*Each was given a dream by God on the same night. Joseph agreed to interpret them (5-8). The cupbearer's dream of pouring wine from 3 clusters of grapes into the King's cup showed him restored to his position in 3 days. Joseph asked him to tell Pharaoh about his case. (9-15). The baker's dream of 3 baskets of bread being eaten by the birds showed in 3 days he would be 'crucified' (16-19). 3 days later was Pharaoh's birthday. The cupbearer was restored and the baker was killed, as predicted - but the cupbearer forgot Joseph (20-23).*

## **LISTEN**

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

**23 Even though the outlook is bleak and humans forget, God does not forget his people.**

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 23**

*The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph. He forgot him.*

## **LIVE**

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

**4 God unseen directs our paths.**

**8 God rules over all knowledge and revelation.**

**22 God knows / orders the future**

**23 God remembers you when people forget**

b) His grace?

**8 God reveals His purposes through His prophets.**

c) Jesus and His salvation?

**21 The chief cup bearer (the wine) was restored.**

**22 The baker (the bread) was hanged on a tree (crucified)**

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

2) What should I do?

**4 Trust the Lord to assign me to the right people/ place.**

**8 Trust God to reveal Himself to you.**

**13 Be bold in declaring the Word of God.**

**14 Speak / appeal as the Lord directs you.**

**22 Expect the Word of God to come true.**

**23 Trust God is directing your path/timing, even when things look bleak.**

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

## Pharaoh's dreams

### Background information

The River Nile and the cow were both sacred to the Egyptians. The Nile-flood god, *'Hapi'*, was regarded as the bringer of fertility and abundance.

Unlike many natural disasters foretold in the OT, there is no hint that this impending famine is a judgment for wrongdoing. Realistic precautions can be taken to mitigate the seven years of bad harvests.

Joseph assumes the point of God giving Pharaoh these dreams is to trigger such preventative measures. For him, 'interpretation' goes beyond merely stating the meaning of the symbols, so he provides Pharaoh with a rational plan of action.

### Word List

|          |                                |  |
|----------|--------------------------------|--|
| 2        | <i>reeds</i>                   | Reed-grass or papyrus beds.  |
| 6        | <i>east wind</i>               | Almost a technical term for a scorching <i>desert</i> wind, irrespective of actual direction. It can be fatal to crops. In Palestine, it is called the Sirocco, in Egypt, the Khamsin. |
| 8        | <i>magicians</i>               | experts in handling the ritual books of priest-craft and magic.  |
| 14       | <i>quickly brought</i>         | literally, 'run out of the pit'  |
|          | <i>shaved</i>                  | Egyptian etiquette.  |
| 16       | <i>I cannot do it</i>          | 'It's not <i>me</i> .' One word in Hebrew – an explosive answer!   |
|          | <i>God will give.</i>          | The position of these words in the sentence makes them emphatic.   |
| 25,28,32 | <i>what God is about to do</i> | call to action, not resignation to blind fate.   |

### Bible Connections

|       |                        |  |
|-------|------------------------|--|
| 14,40 | From dungeon to palace | <i>cf</i> Philippians 2:8-9; 2 Corinthians 4:17. |
| 15-16 | Interpreting dreams    | <i>see also</i> Daniel chapter 2 and 4.          |
| 32    | God's sovereign will   | <i>see</i> Psalm 33:11, Daniel 4:25; Acts 5:39.  |

# LOOK

## 1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 1 *Why not say ‘in the third year’?*
- 5 *Why did he wake up and then fall asleep again?*
- 7 *Why was his mind troubled?*
- 8 *Who were the wise men / magicians?*
  - Why could they not interpret it?*
  - Why didn’t they make something up?*
- 9 *Why does he describe his forgetting Joseph as a ‘short-coming’?*
- 12 *How did Pharaoh know what a Hebrew was?!*
- 13 *Why so descriptive about the means by which he was killed?*
- 14 *Why does it state ‘shave and change his clothes’?*
- 16 *How did he know that God would give him the meaning of the dream?*
- 17 *Why does it repeat the dream – not simply say, ‘he told him the dream’ (cf 8)?*
- 25/26 *Why does Joseph repeat, ‘the dreams are one and the same’?*
- 26 *Why seven years?*
- 32 *Why two dreams? Isn’t everything ‘firmly decided by God?’*
  - What does he mean by ‘soon’?*
- 33 *Who was wise and discerning? (cf 8) – a presentation of himself?*
  - How was he able to give such a plan?*
- 33 *Why did he offer a solution not asked for?*
- 34 *What was a commissioner?*
  - Why 1/5th of harvest?*
- 37 *Why did Pharaoh / his officials believe Joseph?*
- 38 *Who is ‘them’ that Pharaoh asked?*
- 39 *Why are the words ‘discerning and wise’ repeated (33)?*
- 40 *Why did he put ‘all things’ under Joseph?*

What surprises or confuses you?

- 16 *Why was Joseph SO confident?*

## 2) The Context

- a) surrounding passage
- 9 *The cupbearer ‘reminded’ (40:23).*

13 Restore to position (40:13).  
 ‘Impaled’ (40:22).

16 God gives interpretation (40:8).

40 only with regard to the throne cf with Potiphar (39:6).

b) individual book

14 New clothes, cf coat of many colours (Genesis 37:3).

27 In seven days God made the heavens and the earth (Genesis 2:2).

c) whole Bible

1 two full days cf ‘on the first day of the week (= 3rd day after crucifixion) very early in the morning...’ (Luke 24:1).

8 troubled - cf convict world of sin, righteousness and judgement (John 16:8).  
 Egyptian wise men and magicians (Exodus 6:10-13; 7:11).

9 Shortcomings cf ‘For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...’ Romans 3:23

10 God can use the first person of himself: ‘I am who I am’ (Ex 3:14 )  
 Note, Jews did not use that name, lest they take it ‘in vain’..

12 That ‘Hebrew’ slave you brought us (39:14).

16 ‘Not to us, not to us, but to your name be the glory’ (Psalm 115:1).

19 ‘This night your life will be required of you.’ (Luke 12:20).

33 The children of Issachar .... had understanding of the times (1 Chronicles 12:32).

40 All things under him (Matthew 28:18).  
 Humble – exalted (Matthew 5:5; Phil 2:10f).  
 Second in command cf Mordecai (Esther 10:3).  
 At the right hand of God (Mt 26:64; Mk 16:19; Lk 22:69; Acts 7:55).  
 The Father is greater than I (John 14:28).

## LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

1 ‘Two full years’ because it was only just into the third year?

5 Waking up was to let him remember the first dream, and to show they were two distinct dreams.

7 Because he knew God was speaking but he didn’t understand.

8 They were the court advisers and religious leaders.

Because only God knows the future.

They were too afraid to do so?

- 9 Because he recognised he was wrong (sin?) to forget Joseph
- 12 Pharaoh had heard the term 'Hebrew' through Potiphar?
- 13 The writer is underlining his 'crucifixion'. ??
- 14 To be respectfully dressed before Pharaoh/to show he was becoming 'Egyptian'.
- 16 He knew because he was perfectly in tune with God.
- 17 He repeats it to underline God gave it in two forms (?)
- 26 Seven years indicates God is perfectly in control
- 32 Two dreams to confirm the message. All things are 'firmly decided by God', but 'soon' can have a different meaning in different contexts. Here, 'soon' means within one growing season.
- 33 The 'wise men' had failed Pharaoh. Only Joseph was sufficiently able / wise. So it amounted to a presentation of himself!?  
He was able to give such a plan because God put it into his head.  
He 'offered' a solution as God's instruction (not just an opinion)
- 34 Probably a local governor.  
To allow storage of grain for use in the years of famine.
- 37 They believed because they heard God's voice.
- 38 'Them' refers to Pharaoh's officials.
- 39 The words are repeated (cf 33) to show that Joseph is the answer to his own question!
- 40 The survival of the country depended on it.

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

16 Joseph was this confident because he must have been 'one' with God.

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

At the start of Joseph's third year after the cup-bearer's release, Pharaoh has two separate dreams – 7 fat cows and 7 full ears of corn being eaten by 7 thin cows & 7 thin ears of corn respectively (1-7).

None of Pharaoh's wise men/magicians could understand it. His cup-bearer remembers Joseph interpreting his dream so he was called after changing and shaving (8-14).

When asked, Joseph said he couldn't interpret dreams but the supreme God would. So Pharaoh retold Joseph the dreams in full (15-24)

*Joseph gives the meaning to Pharaoh – 7 years of plenty followed by 7 years of famine – ‘God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do’. The effects will be extreme. Two dreams mean ‘God has firmly decided and will do it soon’. (25-32)*

*So Pharaoh should look for a ‘wise and discerning man’ to put in charge. Appoint local governors to save 20% of the harvest during 7 years of plenty and distribute it in the 7 years of famine (33-36)*

*Pharaoh agreed, looking for one in whom was the spirit of the supreme God. He acknowledged there was no one so ‘discerning/wise’ as Joseph and appointed him in absolute power, subject only to himself (37-40)*

## **LISTEN**

- 1) What is the lesson or the main point?

*God reveals his purposes through a wise and discerning servant.*

- 2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 39**

*‘Since God has made all this known to you, there is no-one so discerning and wise as you..’*

## **LIVE**

- 1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

- a) His nature and character?

*1 God does not hurry!*

*2 God is in perfect (use of ‘7’) control of time and space.*

*9 God prompts people to remember at the right time.*

*16 God alone controls the future.*

*25 God alone may reveal the future to people.*

*28 God does what He wills.*

*39 God equips us in the spiritual realm*

- b) His grace?

*38 God may put His Spirit in one of His creatures*

- c) Jesus and His salvation?

*40 Only in respect of His throne is the Father greater than the Son.*

**Now underline the application of the Main Point.**

2) What should I do?

*14 Be ready to respond to God's call.*

*16/28 Take no credit from other people or God – give Him all the glory.*

*33 God's people can be 'discerning and wise', with His help.*

*Don't push yourself forward: in God's economy you don't have to.*

*37 Hear / believe / receive God's Word.*

*39 Give God **all** the credit in the spiritual realm*

*40 After humbling yourself, in God's time, expect to be exalted with Christ in glory.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

## Joseph in charge of Egypt

### Background information

It was common practice to give Egyptian names to foreigners.

The primary water source for Egypt is the River Nile, fed by rain that falls mainly between 2,000 and 4,000 miles to the south. But for the annual rise, overflowing its banks, bringing new deposits of fresh, fertile mud, Egypt would be as desolate as the deserts on either side. A high flood produced excellent crops in the fertile strip.

Canaan's water supply, on the other hand, comes from different weather systems, with rainfall from the Mediterranean Sea. Their River Jordan is fed by snow on the Lebanon mountains to the north.

The point is, the harvest seldom failed simultaneously in both areas. But remember that scorching 'east wind', *see* Study 5 on p26, note on v6.

### Word List

|    |  |   |
|----|--|---|
| 41 | <i>I hereby</i>                            | lit 'see'. ie this <u>has been</u> done.                              |
| 42 | <i>signet ring</i>                         | carried the king's authority.   |
|    | <i>fine linen</i>                          | Egyptian word for court dress.  |
|    | <i>gold chain</i>                          | or collar, customary mark of royal appreciation.                      |
| 43 | <i>make way</i>                            | Not just 'don't get run over' but lit: 'bow the knee'.                |
| 45 | <i>Zaphenath Paneah</i>                    | may mean 'God has spoken and he lives'                                |
|    | <i>Asenath</i>                             | means ' <i>she belongs or may she belong</i> , to Neith' (a goddess). |
|    | <i>Potiphera</i>                           | means 'He whom Re has given' (Re = sun god).                          |
|    | <i>On</i>                                  | Heliopolis, 'City of the Sun God', centre of sun worship.             |
| 51 | <i>Manasseh</i>                            | sounds like Hebrew for 'forget'.                                      |
| 52 | <i>Ephraim</i>                             | sounds like Hebrew for 'twice faithful'.                              |
| 57 | <i>All the world</i> <i>Heb 'ha erets'</i> | All people are affected, <i>cf</i> the flood (6:6,16)                 |

### Bible Connections

|      |                                      |                          |
|------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 39ff | result of interpreting king's dreams | <i>cf</i> Daniel 2:47-48 |
| 46   | thirty years old                     | <i>see</i> Luke 3:23     |
| 51   | forgetting what is behind            | <i>see</i> Phil 3:13b-14 |
| 52   | being fruitful                       | <i>see</i> John 15:1-3   |
| 55   | do what he tells you                 | <i>cf</i> John 2:5       |

# LOOK

## 1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 41 *What does 'the whole land of Egypt' signify?*
- 42 *Why did he give him his signet ring?*  
*What do the 'fine linen and gold' 'signify'?*
- 43 *Why does he have him ride in a chariot?*  
*Why did the men shout 'make way' / 'bow down'?*
- 44 *What was Pharaoh meaning – 'I am Pharaoh but no one will lift a hand but by you.'?*
- 45 *Why did Moses accept an unbeliever for his wife?*  
*Why daughter of 'Potiphera', priest of On?*  
*What does it mean 'he went throughout the land of Egypt'?*
- 46 *Was age 30 significant when Joseph 'entered the service of Pharaoh'?*
- 47 *Why in the cities?*
- 49 *Why did he start, then stop, keeping measure?*
- 50 *Why were the sons born before the years of famine?*  
*Why does it name his wife and her father again?*
- 51 *How has his son's birth made him forget his father house – why didn't he go home?*
- 52 *How was he 'suffering' – second in charge of Egypt?*
- 54 *Why was there food in all Egypt?*
- 55 *Why did they cry to Pharaoh and not Joseph?*  
*Why did he tell them to do what Joseph tells them to?*
- 56 *Why did he wait till the famine had spread over the whole country?*
- 57 *What does it mean – 'the famine was severe in all the world'?*

What surprises or confuses you?

- 44 *Why did Pharaoh need to give him such total authority?*

## 2) The Context

a) individual book

- 51 *Joseph did not forget his family for ever: Jacob's sons (including Joseph) returned to bury him in Canaan (51:12-14).*
- 57 *All the world – same world as in the flood (Genesis 6:7, 17).*

B( whole Bible

- 41 *The Lord said to my Lord (Ps 110:1; Lk 20:42; Acts 2:34)*

42 *Signet ring (Esther 3:10; 8:2,8,10)*  
*Fine linen – for worship of God (Ex 25:4; 28:5 etc) cf Mordecai (Est 8:15)*  
*Gold chain – Belshazzar’s offer (Dan 5:17)*

43 ‘Bow the knee’ (v unusual) –only other =God in OT (Is 45:23) Jesus in NT (Phil 2:10)

44 *I am Pharaoh (cf Ex 3:14; John 8:58)*  
*All authority in Egypt cf heaven and earth (Matt 28:18)*

45 *Jesus is the Word of God (John 1:1, 14)*

46 *At just the right time (Rmns 5:6)*

52 *Suffering / persecution (John 15:20)*

54 *Just as the Lord said (cf Ex 7:13,22 etc)*

46 *All to confess Jesus is Lord (Phil 2:10)*

55 *Jesus is the bread of life (John 6:35)*

57 *all countries (Cf Ps 67:2)*  
*‘I am the way the truth and the life. No man comes to the father but by me.’ (John 14:6)*

## LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

41 *It signifies the absolute nature of the authority given.*

42 *He gave it to show it was His authority that had been given.*  
*Fine linen was worn by the priests.*  
*The gold chain show the king’s office (?)*

43 *A chariot shows he is head of the army – he not only embodies the law but also its enforcement.*  
*‘Bow down’ meant worship as they did to Pharaoh.*

44 *Pharaoh meant the transmission of power and authority were complete*

45 *This was the decision of Pharaoh.*  
*‘Asenath, daughter of Potiphera, priest of On’ Where once he, Joseph, was in Potiphar’s household, now Potiphera was in his!*  
*It means ALL of the land of Egypt?’*

46 *Joseph was aged 30 when Pharaoh took the initiative to exalt him; Jesus was a similar age starting his public work (Luke 3:23)*

47 *The cities were the centres of population, where most of the food would be needed.*

49 *He started because he was organised. He stopped because there was too much to count.*

50 *The sons were signs of fruitfulness (?)*  
*It underlines that she was in his household.*

51 *His first son's birth confirmed to him that God had called him to Egypt, and to stay there for the time being.*

52 *The 'suffering' was before his exaltation (?), because he was not with his family?*

54 *There was food in all Egypt because Joseph had stored it.*

55 *They cried to Pharaoh as he was the source of authority?*  
*He referred them to Joseph since all authority had been delegated to him.*

56 *He waited, as he wanted everyone to see where the food came from.*

57 *It means the whole human race.*

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?  
*He was given so much power because this was 'war' - a matter of life and death. It was no time for committees.*

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.  
*Joseph was given Pharaoh's authority as a god (41-43). His absolute power was exercised in all Egypt and over all other gods (44, 45).*  
*He was 30 then and he stored immeasurable quantities of grain during the 7 years of plenty. (46-49)*  
*He had two sons during that time and he gave them Hebrew names – Manasseh = 'forgetting' the trouble of his father's household, and Ephraim, because he was 'fruitful' in the land of his suffering (50-52).*  
*After 7 years of abundance came famine in Egypt and all other countries. The people cried to Pharaoh and he referred them to Joseph. When famine was 'universal', Joseph sold grain to the Egyptians and all the countries of the world (41:53-57).*

## LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?  
*Joseph was in total charge of the whole land of Egypt. just as Jesus is of Heaven and Earth.*

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 45**  
*'Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt.'*

## LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

*51 God is no man's debtor.*

*52 God causes his people to be fruitful.*

*54 The Word of God will be fulfilled.*

*56 God may wait till all other avenues are blocked off, before opening his store-house.*

b) His grace?

*57 He made the grain available to all the nations of the earth.*

c) Jesus and His salvation?

*41/45 Jesus is invested with 'all authority'.*

*45 God has spoken in Jesus.*

*46 God sent Jesus 'at just the right time'.*

*55 Jesus is the bread of life.*

*57 Jesus alone is the way.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

2) What should I do?

*42 Every knee shall bow before Jesus.*

*45 Submit to Jesus / Joseph – He is Lord of all*

*51 Keep my eyes on God.*

*55 Cry to God for 'bread'.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

## Joseph's brothers go to Egypt

### Background information

Necessity brings all ten of Joseph's half-brothers to Egypt.

Though *he* recognises *them* instantly (v7,8), *they* do not recognise *him*. He does not identify himself but speaks sternly, acting as if he had grounds to suspect them of wrongdoing, e.g. spying. Even though it is painful to him (v24), he uses the situation to test them, to see if their characters have changed from the time they sold him as a slave.

With superb dramatic irony, the narrator allows Joseph (and us) to hear words they think he does not understand.

### Word List

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| 5 <i>Israel</i>   | God gave Jacob a second name, 'Israel', meaning 'God contended' <i>see</i> Genesis 32:28; 35:10. This name was later used to apply to all his descendants, the 12 tribes of Israel. |
| 6 <i>Governor</i> | A rather strong Hebrew word, emphasising Joseph's complete mastery of the situation.  |
| 22 <i>Reuben</i>  | eldest of Leah's sons.  |
| 24 <i>Simeon</i>  | second eldest of Leah's sons.   |
| 33 <i>trade</i>   | or, move about freely.  |

### Bible Connections

|  |   |
|--|---|
| 2 To Egypt to flee from death                  | <i>see</i> Matthew 2:14                         |
| 17 Three days                                  | <i>see</i> Jonah 1:17; Matthew 27:63            |
| 21 Misery of the sinner                        | <i>see</i> Deut. 28:67; Job 15:20; Psalm 107:17 |
| 22 'Did not I tell you...?'                    | Genesis 37:21-22, 29                            |
| 25 Grace is free                               | <i>see</i> Ephesians 2:8-9                      |
| 28 Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom | <i>see</i> Proverbs 1:7                         |
| Conviction of sin ...                          | <i>see</i> John 16:8-11                         |

# LOOK

## 1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 1 *Why did the brothers just look at each other?*
- 2 *How did Joseph learn?*
- 3 *How far was it to Egypt?*  
*Why did they all go?*
- 4 *What does it show that he had chosen Benjamin as his favourite?*
- 5 *Why is Jacob called Israel here?*  
*Who else went to Egypt to buy grain?*
- 6 *Why did Joseph not delegate – was he watching for his brothers?*
- 7 *Why did he pretend to be a stranger?*  
*Why did he speak to them harshly?*
- 8 *Why did his brother not recognise him*
- 9 *Given that he remembered their dreams, why did he accuse them of being spies?!*
- 17 *Why ‘for 3 days’?*
- 18 *What did they understand by him saying ‘I fear God’?*
- 19 *Why did he change from all brothers to just one would stay in Egypt (cf 16)?*
- 20 *Why should bringing their youngest brother mean that they were not spies?*
- 21 *Why did they associate it with their treatment of Joseph?*
- 22 *Why did he say ‘sin’ against the boy?*  
*Who was their accounting to?*
- 24 *Why did he weep?*  
*Why was Simeon taken?*  
*Why was he bound before their eyes?*
- 25 *Why did he put the silver back in their bags?*
- 28 *Why did their hearts sink/they tremble?*
- 33 *Why should bringing Benjamin show they were honest?*
- 36 *How did he think that they had deprived him of Joseph?*  
*Why did he think that everything was against him?*
- 37 *Why did Reuben offer his two sons? (what did they think?!)*
- 38 *What was he saying - ‘He is the only one I have left’?*

What surprises or confuses you?

*Why didn’t Joseph just reveal himself straightaway?*

## 2) The Context

a) individual book,

- 5 Renamed 'Israel' because he struggled with God yet overcame (Gen 32:28).
- 7 Harshly – cf their treatment of Shechemites (Gen 34:25,26).
- 18 Fear God (20:11).
- 22 Reuben's plot to save Joseph (37:21).
- 36 Blamed (unfairly) that Joe had been eaten by a wild animal (17:33).
- 38 No; in mourning I will go down to the grave to my son (37:35).

b) whole bible,

- 8 He came to His own but His own received Him not (John 1:11).
- 18 3 days (Luke 18:33).
- 22 Against you only have I sinned (Ps 51:4).
- 21 your sin will find you out (Numbers 32:23).
- 36 he who loses his life will gain it (Luke 9:24).

## LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

- 1 Jacob learned from someone other than his sons.  
They looked at each other as they had no answer / initiative.
- 3 Egypt is between 175 and 250 miles from the south of Canaan, depending on where they started and finished.  
All 10 went to maximise the supplies they could carry back.
- 4 It shows that it was because Rachel was his favourite wife.
- 5 Israel 'struggled with God' – he wasn't prepared to just give up and die in Canaan: he sent his sons to Egypt.  
We have no information about others. All who were going to live?
- 6 He did not delegate as he was watching for his brothers (?)
- 7 He pretended to be a stranger so he could find out if their characters had changed.  
He spoke to them harshly so they would not recognise him.
- 8 They didn't recognise him as he looked and sounded Egyptian.
- 9 He remembered that all his family bowed down to him – not just the 10 brothers; so he had a plan to bring them all down to Egypt

17 3 days imprisoned, cf 3 days in the earth – it was then the brothers changed (cf21)

18 They didn't understand Joseph saying, 'I fear God', but that was a clue to his identity.

19 Only one staying gave them a choice as to whether to return.

20 It only corroborated their story (?)  
The issue was life and death for all – famine or execution.

21 They associate it as their consciences had been bad for 20 yrs.

22 They said 'sin' against the boy as it had been an act against God.  
The accounting was to God.

24 He wept at the conviction of sin that was upon them.  
He chose Simeon as prisoner, as Reuben had not conspired against Joseph and he was the next oldest. Or maybe Simeon had been the most cruel in Joseph's youth? cf 34:25  
He was bound before their eyes to underline the options: either imprisonment and possible death in Egypt, or death from famine in Canaan.

25 He put the silver back, as feeding them was an act of grace.

28 They trembled because grace is hard to understand /receive.

33 Bringing Benjamin would verify their story by proving a detail.

36 Jacob blamed them that Joseph had been eaten by a wild animal.  
He thought everything was against him because he had lost 2 sons.

37 Reuben offered his two sons as he was desperate / confident of bringing Benjamin back ?  
Reuben's two sons (in their 20s?) must have been well unimpressed!

38 He means Benjamin, his son by Rachel, is the only one who counts.

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?  
*Joseph must have been following God's will – to give the brothers time to repent.*

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.  
*Jacob sends ten brothers to Egypt to get grain; he keeps Benjamin (1-5).*

*In Egypt they bow before Joseph – he recognises them but they don't recognise him (6-8)*

*Joseph remembers his dreams: 11 brothers bowing down. By accusing them of spying, he elicits that his brother and father are still alive. He threatens to keep 9 and send only one back to verify their story by bringing the alleged brother. He imprisons them all for 3 days (9-17).*

*Joseph then decides to keep only one, sending the other 9 to take food for their families and to get their brother and bring him back. They see this as punishment for what they had done to Joseph, which Reuben reminds them he had warned them was wrong (18-23).*

*Unknown to them, Joseph understood their language. He weeps at their conviction. He binds the eldest 'guilty' brother and sends the others off (24-26)*

*That night, one finds their payment restored to them. This causes them to fear God. (27,28)*

*They return home and tell Jacob what had happened. Only by taking Benjamin back could they release Simeon and trade in Egypt. They find all their silver restored to them. (29-35) Jacob won't let Benjamin go. Reuben offers both his sons as hostages. Jacob still refuses (36-38)*

## **LIS**TEN****

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

*MP God convicts his people of their sin.*

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? *v. 28b*

*KV What is this thing that God has done to us?*

## **LIVE**

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

*2 God prompts us to hear the right things at the right time.*

*18 God is to be feared.*

*22 God reckons sin against others as a sin against himself.*

*24 God weeps (unseen) for his people.*

## 28 God's conviction cannot be avoided.

b) His grace?

*25 We are fed by the grace of God in Jesus.*

*28 We find grace hard to understand / receive.*

c) Jesus and His salvation?

*8 Jesus not recognised*

*30/34 'Jesus is the man who is over all the land'.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

2) What should I do?

*9 Wait on the Lord's timing.*

*11 Be modest / truthful in my self-assessment.*

*21 Expect my sin to be exposed.*

*25 Acknowledge my sin and discern God's grace.*

*28/35 Enjoy the grace of God / resist my sinful suspicion*

*36 Don't be a 'moany-guts' – look on the bright side.*

*38 Don't make rash promises involving others.*

*Do not insult others by indulging yourself.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

*Printed Booklet 2 continues the pagination for Study 8 on p 47*

## The second journey to Egypt

### Background information

Jacob is faced with the stark choice of letting his family starve or allowing his beloved son Benjamin to go to Egypt with his brothers. Simeon's detention in Egypt has lasted under two years (45:6).

Judah willingly takes responsibility for bringing Benjamin back safely.

The gift (v11) was an almost indispensable courtesy in approaching a person of rank (*cf* eg 1 Samuel 16:20; 17:18)

The 'eating by themselves' (v32) was probably cultic: to the Egyptians: eating with foreigners would in their eyes defile the food.

It was customary in the East to send token portions from the chief table to a guest whom the host desired to honour.

### Word List

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 6,11 <i>Israel</i>                | God gave Jacob a second name, 'Israel', meaning 'God contended' <i>see</i> Genesis 32:28; 35:10. This name was later used to apply to all his descendants, the 12 tribes of Israel. |
| 14 <i>God Almighty El Shaddai</i> | the name God used of Himself when he made the covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17:1)  |

### Bible Connections

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 9 willingness to take blame | <i>cf</i> Paul in Philemon 1:18-19                                  |
| 11 resignation              | <i>see</i> Job 13:13-15; John 6:68                                  |
| 14 mercy                    | <i>see</i> Exodus 33:19; 34:6; Deut. 13:17b; Psalm 25:6; Mark 10:47 |
| 29 God be gracious to you   | <i>see</i> Numbers 6:25; Ps 67:1; Isaiah 30:18-19                   |
| 34 Benjamin's portion       | <i>cf</i> 1 Samuel 9:22-24  |

## LOOK

### 1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 2 *Why does Jacob ask them to get 'a little' food?*
- 3 *Why had Judah become spokesman*
- 3,5 *Why the repetition 'you will not see my face again....'*
- 6 *Why is he here called 'Israel'?*
- 8 *Why with 'me' not 'us'?*
- 9 *How would he / could he guarantee Benjamin's safety?*

- 11 Why ‘the best’ products of the land?
- 14 Why does he say, ‘God almighty’?  
Why would God grant them ‘mercy’?  
What does it show that he said, ‘Other brother and Benjamin’?
- 15 Why did they ‘hurry’?
- 16 Why would they eat with him at ‘noon’.
- 18 Why did they fear?
- 19 Who/what was Joseph’s steward?
- 23 Why does he say, ‘the God of your father’?  
How had he received ‘your silver’?
- 24 What did they learn, given water for their feet, fodder for donkeys?
- 28 Why did they call their father ‘his servant’?
- 29 Why did he ask if it was Benjamin – he already knew (16)  
Why did he say, ‘God be gracious to you, my son’?
- 30 Why did he weep in private?
- 32 Why did they serve him by himself – not with the Egyptians?
- 33 Why did Joseph arrange them in order?
- 34 Why did Benjamin get 5 times more? They were all feasting anyway?

What surprises or confuses you?

**HOW ON EARTH did the brothers miss all ‘the signs’?! Namely:**

- 7 Why was the PM interested in their family, father, brother?
- 16 How did he know Benjamin was with them when inviting them to feast?  
Why were poor, starving foreigners treated so lavishly by the PM?
- 23 Why did the Steward say, ‘the God of your father’?  
Why did the steward say he had received their silver as payment? It was still in their sacks when they got home.
- 29 How did PM know a Hebrew blessing: ‘God be gracious to you’ (Nu 6:25)?
- 30 Why was the PM deeply moved seeing Benjamin? and why hurry off?
- 32 Why did they serve the PM separately from the Egyptians?
- 33 How did the Prime Minister know their ages?

## 2) The Context

- a) surrounding passage
- 2 Grain already brought from Egypt (42:26)
- 6 Israel called Jacob in ch 42 (Jacob – he grasps the heel/ he deceives; Israel – He contends)
- 8 Reuben’s offer to go to Egypt (42:37)
- 11 Spices and myrrh (37:25)
- 26 Bowed faces to the ground (42:6)

b) individual book

- 1 *Famine (41:57)*
- 3 *Leah's 3 oldest sons discounted – Simeon and Levi (34:25), Reuben (35:22) - Judah (her 4th son) restored (38:26)*
- 14 *'God Almighty – increase in numbers' (17:1; 28:3; 35:11)*
- 18 *Feared cf killing and looting the Shechemites (34:26-29)*  
    *cf Joseph pleading for his life (42:21 refers to 37:23,24;=)*
- 28 *household bows down to Joseph (37:9)*
- 34 *Joseph was loved more by Jacob ...richly ornamented robe (37:3)*

c) whole Bible

- 9 *He himself bore our sins on the cross (1 Peter 2:24)*
- 14 *Commit your way to the Lord (Psalm 37:5)*
- 16 *Noon – the sun went dark at Jesus' crucifixion (Luke 23:44)*
- 23 *'Peace' (Luke 10:5f; John 20:19f)*  
*Don't fear those who kill the body then can do no more (Luke 12:4)*
- 29 *Aaron's blessing – 'the Lord be gracious to you' (Nu 6:25)*
- 34 *He causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good. (Matt 5:45)*

## LEARN

1) What type of literature is this?

**Narrative**

2) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

- 2 *It showed he did not expect the request to be granted.*
- 3 *Judah was reformed (38:26) and his three older brothers had excluded themselves (34:30; 35:22).*
- 3,5 *It was to emphasise they had no chance without Benjamin.*
- 6 *As sign God is at work through Him as the Father of the Nation.*
- 8 *Judah alone was taking personal responsibility.*
- 9 *He was prompted by God to guarantee his safety?*
- 11 *'The best' products showed Jacob did all he could.*
- 14 *'God Almighty' is associated with increase in numbers – this is part of God's covenant plan to build His nation.*  
*'Mercy' recognised that the brothers had done wrong (?)*  
*It shows that, relatively, he did not care about Simeon.*
- 15 *They 'hurry' because the famine was biting hard.*
- 16 *'Noon' was decision time / heart of the story?*

18 They feared being overrun / exploited (cf Joseph earlier?!)

19 Joseph's steward was his right-hand man.

23 'The God of your father' was God's clue through the steward that He was at work.  
*He had received it through Joseph – debt was paid, not waived.*

24 They were being treated as guests, not merely buyers of grain.

28 It meant their whole household was honouring Joseph

29 To maintain his anonymity.  
*It was a Hebrew blessing!*

30 He did not want them to see his extreme emotion – yet.

32 They knew he was not an Egyptian.

33 It was another sign that God was at work (cf 23,29)

34 It was a test: were they still jealous?

3) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

*They missed the signs because they were not looking to God!*

4) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

*With starvation biting, Jacob reluctantly allows Judah and the brothers to take Benjamin with them (as the Prime Minister had insisted) back down to Egypt. He gives them gifts, blesses them, and resigns himself (1-15).*

*The PM receives them as honoured guests and tells his Steward to have them dine with him at noon. This made them suspicious, so they tell the Steward they had brought back the extra silver they had found in their saddlebags. He assured them this was the work of the 'God of their father', brought Simeon back to them and prepared them to eat with Joseph. (16-25).*

*Joseph returned and received the homage of his family and was deeply moved to see Benjamin. He maintained anonymity but seated them in age order at his table, favouring Benjamin with 5x bigger portions at the feast (26-34).*

## LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

*The weakest of prayers, offered in God's name, is answered*

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 14**

*And may God Almighty grant you mercy before the man, so that he will let your other brother and Benjamin come back with you. As for me, if I am bereaved, I am bereaved.*

## LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

*6 'Israel' - God is at work building the nation/His people.*

14 God is the ultimate source of mercy.

b) His grace?

*23,29 God is willing to act in grace towards people.*

c) Jesus and His salvation?

*8,9 As Judah offered his life for Benjamin, Jesus gave his life for all, and guaranteed, personally, God's plan of salvation.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

2) What should I do?

*2 'A little?' – God is able to do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20)*

*12 Do things the 'right' way, even if folks might not recognise it.*

14 Pray to the Almighty for mercy.

*18c Do not 'fear the worst' .*

*23 Do not be afraid. Recognise sometimes God's actions may be more apparent to those outside the people of God than to you.*

*29 Be aware of the signs that God is at work – Look to him.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

## Trust in the one who takes your blame

### Background information

Joseph continues to test the character of his brothers', involving his steward in his plans.

'Divination' is fundamentally alien to Israel, to whom God revealed his will explicitly (Numbers 23:23). There is no clearly attested evidence for divination by a cup in Egypt at this period.

It is not clear what exactly Joseph was meaning here; perhaps it was to test the brothers further by apparently crediting himself with these powers.

Judah is now the one to take the lead in their conversation with Joseph. The genealogies in Matthew 1 and Luke 3 show Jesus in the line of Judah.

### Word List

|       |                           |   |
|-------|---------------------------|---|
| 5     | <i>divination</i>         | attaching meanings to <i>eg</i> random movements of liquids in a cup, or a kind of crystal gazing |
| 14    | <i>tore their clothes</i> | sign of their distress  |
| 29,31 | <i>grave</i>              | Hebrew <i>Sheol</i>   |

### Bible Connections

|    |                                |  |
|----|--------------------------------|--|
| 2  | the king's cup                 | <i>see</i> Genesis 40:5; Nehemiah 1:11 |
| 5  | God sees and knows it all      | <i>see</i> Psalm 139:2                 |
| 13 | tore their clothes             | <i>see</i> Ezra 9:5; Mark 14:63        |
| 18 | approaching the king uninvited | <i>see</i> Esther 4:16                 |

# LOOK

## 1) The Text

- 2 Why put their silver in all the men's sacks, AND the cup in one?  
What did the steward think of this instruction?!  
How could the steward be sure which sack belonged to the youngest?
- 5 Why put in the cup of divination?
- 7 Why do they call the steward, 'my lord'?
- 9 Why so rash, when they'd found their silver in the sacks last time?  
Why did they say, 'should die'?
- 12 Why did he search 'the oldest to the youngest'?
- 13 Why 'at this'? ie the discovery of the cup, not the returned silver?  
Why did they all tear their clothes?  
Why did they all go back?
- 14 Why 'Judah and his brothers'?
- 15 Why does Joseph tell a lie / deceive them?
- 16 What guilt was uncovered?  
Why does he say they should all stay, then later only himself (33)?
- 17 Why did Joseph say only Benjamin was staying?
- 18 Why should he have been angry with Judah?  
What does 'equal to Pharaoh' mean?
- 20 Why did Judah say his brother (Joseph) was dead!?
- 27 Why wife (singular)?
- 28 Why had Joseph not gone home as soon as he had gained his freedom?
- 33 Why did Judah offer himself?

What surprises or confuses you?

How could Joseph 'lie' over the cup / divination (15)?

## 2) The Context

- a) surrounding passage,
  - 1 steward (43:19,23) not mentioned when money put back first time?  
(42:25)  
As much food as they can carry cf – 'a little food' (43:2)
  - 8 Returned with double the amount of silver (43:15)
  - 12 Oldest to youngest (43:33)
  - 34 Vow to Jacob (43:9)
    - b) individual book,
      - 7 'My Lord' cf Jacob to Esau (33:15)
      - 13 They all tore their clothes; whereas at Joseph's 'demise', only Jacob did (37:34)
      - 14 Fell before Joseph for a third time (cf 42:6; 43:26,28)

- 15 The brothers had deceived Jacob (37:32)
- 16 In Adam all die (1 Cor 15:22)
- 18 Deeply respectful (33:15)
- 19 Asked -father, brother? (42:12,13)
- 20 Born to Jacob in old age but old enough to be the father of many-10 sons! (46:21)
- 27 Rachel wife? Leah was also his wife / first wife – he was buried with her (49:31)
- 32 ‘Bear the blame before you all my life’ (43:9)
- 33 Paid for his sin (37:26)

c) whole Bible

- 5 You perceive my thoughts from afar (Psalm 139:2)
- 13 They all returned cf repented cf the call of Jesus (Mark 1:15)  
God exalted him to his right hand as Leader and Saviour to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:31)  
Do you love me? (John 21:15-17)
- 14 Be sure your sins will find you out (Numbers 32:23)  
Judah takes the lead, as brave as a Lion (Gen 49:9, Rev 5:5)
- 16 If we confess... he is faithful... and will forgive... (1 John 1:8,9)  
Jacob later prophesied Judah will be crowned with kingship (49:10)  
Nothing concealed that will not be made known (Luke 12:2)
- 18 Jesus is equal to the Father (Phil 2:6)
- 32 He ever lives to make intercession for us (Heb 7:25)
- 34 The son of man came to give his life as a ransom for many (Mk 10:45)

## LEARN

- 1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?
  - 2 He put the silver in to contrast his grace against Benjamin’s ‘theft’.  
The Steward obeyed orders, simply trusting Joseph knew what he was doing. He must have seen and noted which sack was Benjamin’s.
  - 5 It was a symbol that God knew their hearts.
  - 7 ‘My lord’ was a term of deference – shows steward was not a servant.
  - 9 They were so rash – a rush of blood?!  
They said ‘die’ – extreme bravado?
  - 10 He didn’t agree. He noted their suggestion, then laid out his terms.
  - 12 ‘The oldest to the youngest’ was the order in which they had been seated at meal.
  - 13 They all tore their clothes in despair at Benjamin’s arrest.  
They all went back as they all felt responsible for Benjamin.
  - 14 ‘Judah and his brothers’ because he was the leader.

15 He didn't tell a lie – he could discern by the gift of God.

16 Their guilt was from selling Joseph and deceiving their father. He offered them all to stay because they were all guilty of something – sale of Joseph, lie to Jacob, stealing of cup. Later, Judah offered only himself in response to Joseph saying just Benjamin (17)

17 To test them further.

18 Because people were unable to approach Pharaoh unless invited. 'Equal to Pharaoh' means in authority / 'semi divine'

20 They presumed Joseph was dead – enslaved, if not literally.

27 Wife (singular) because Rachel was his favoured wife, although he had been tricked into marrying her sister Leah first.

28 Joseph had not gone home because God had not permitted him.

33 Judah offered himself as he had accepted personal responsibility.

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

*It wasn't a lie. With God's help he had understood Pharaoh's dream to mean God would send 7 years each of plenty and famine. He didn't actually say he had used 'divination'.*

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

*Joseph told the Steward to put the brothers' silver back in their sacks, and to put in Benjamin's sack his 'divination cup' as well. (1,2) After going a short way, they were stopped and challenged. They swore on their lives they had not stolen the cup. It was found in Benjamin's sack. They all despaired and returned to the city. (3-13) Joseph challenged them by his 'divination' and they all accepted their guilt. Joseph however let them all go - except Benjamin (14-17). In mitigation, Judah related the story and his father's love for Benjamin, saying Jacob would die if anything happened to him. He had guaranteed his brother's safety; so now he offered himself in place of his brothers. (18-33)*

## LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

*Israel is lost unless one is willing to carry the blame for all.*

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 33**

*Now let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers.*

## LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

*16 God will expose our guilt*

b) His grace?

33 Like Judah, Jesus offered Himself so that all others might go free.

c) Jesus and His salvation?

*18 Jesus is equal to Father (cf Joseph to Pharaoh)*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

2) What should I do?

*2 Do what the Lord commands, even if it makes no sense.*

*9 Do not make rash promises (to God)*

*17 In His discipline, God will take us back in circumstances that differ from when we first sinned.*

*20 Don't gloss over 'minor' (!) details, like 'our brother is dead'.*

*19-32 In a difficult situation, tell others how it came about.*

*33 Rejoice that the Lion of Judah has taken your place*

*34 Think of others – put them first.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

## To the repentant – ‘You are blameless!’

### Background information

The exact location of Goshen is uncertain. It was probably in the Eastern Nile Delta. In 47:6,11 it is equated with ‘the land of Rameses’. It would be near Joseph at the Pharaoh’s court at Memphis. It was a well-favoured region, suited to flocks and herds.

Vv. 16-28 are the turning point, long foretold in Genesis 15:13-16.

### Word List

|    |                              |  |
|----|------------------------------|--|
| 4  | <i>living</i>                | in OT it includes idea of enjoying health & well-being   |
| 8  | <i>Father to Pharaoh</i>     | a recognised title of viziers and high officials   |
| 10 | <i>Goshen</i>                | see above  |
| 19 | <i>carts</i>                 | lit ‘wheeled vehicles’. These belonged to Pharaoh, so more than a mere ‘cart’! ( <i>Think</i> , ‘stretch limousine’?!) |
| 22 | <i>300 shekels of silver</i> | about 3½ kg  |
| 26 | <i>stunned</i>               | lit ‘heart froze’  |
| 27 | <i>revived</i>               | lit lived (see 4 above)  |

### Bible Connections

|    |                                 |   |
|----|---------------------------------|---|
| 3  | terrified at Joseph being alive | <i>cf</i> Luke 24:37                              |
| 5  | God has a good purpose          | <i>see</i> Acts 2:23; Romans 8:28                 |
|    | Remembered sins no more         | <i>see</i> Jeremiah 31:34; Ps 103:12; Isaiah 1:19 |
|    | No condemnation                 | <i>see</i> Romans 8:1                             |
| 7  | Preserving a remnant            | <i>see</i> Isaiah 11:11; Jeremiah 23:3; Rom 11:5  |
| 8  | Not you . . . but God           | <i>cf</i> John 6:27; 15:16                        |
| 19 | Freely given all things         | <i>see</i> Romans 8:32                            |
| 26 | Unbelief at resurrection        | <i>see</i> Luke 24:11                             |

# LOOK

## 1) The Text

- 1 Why was he trying to control himself
- 2 Why separate mention of 'The Egyptians' and 'Pharaoh's household'?
- 3 Why were they 'terrified at his presence'?
- 4 Why 'come close to me'?
- 5 Why did he not want them to be distressed at having sold him?
- 7 What is the 'remnant on the earth'?
- 8 How did God send him there?
- 9 What does he mean by 'Lord of all Egypt'?
- 10 How would Goshen be near Joseph?
- 11 What does destitute mean?
- 12 Why 'and so can my brother'?
- 15 What did they talk about?
- 16 Why were they pleased, if shepherds /Hebrews were detestable to them (43:32)?
- 18 What does 'fat of the land' mean in time of famine?
- 22 Why did Benjamin get '300 shekels of silver and 5 sets of clothes'?
- 23 Why 10 donkeys – there were 11 brothers?
- 24 What might they have quarrelled about?
- 26 Why did Jacob not believe them?
- 26 Why were the carts compelling evidence?
- 27 What does it mean 'the spirit of the father revived'?

What surprises or confuses you?

Joseph seems to be 'over the top' when he says, "Don't be angry with yourselves for sending me here."

## 2) The Context

a) surrounding passage

- 1 Brothers had recognised guilt (42:21) accepted 'spoiling of Benjamin (43:34)
- 3 Is my (your) Father still living? (43:27)
- 5 God sent me before (5) to preserve (7) you, God made me lord (8,9)
- 8 Father to Pharaoh cf equal to Pharaoh (44:18)

b) individual book

- 5 save many lives (50:20)  
God sent me ahead – cf Jacob sending Joseph (37: 13)

*cf sin against God (39:9); interpretation belongs to God (40:8); God will give / has revealed (41:16,25); God has made me forget/fruitful (41:51,52)*

*You meant it for evil – God for good (50:20)*

22 *5 years of famine remained, 5 sets of clothing – 5 times as much at the feast (43:34)*

c) whole Bible

1 *fruit of repentance (Lk 3:8)*

5 *When sin increases – grace abounds. (Romans 5:20)*

*Forgive them they know not what they are doing (Lk 23:34)*

*God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Saviour to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:31)*

7 *Deliverance (Ezra 9:13; Rom 11:26)*

*Jesus came to seek and to save the lost (Lk 19:10)*

*I remember your sins no more /blotted out (Is 43:25; 44:22)*

19 *God provides (Gen 22:13-14)*

*God meets needs through the glory of his riches in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:7; 3:16; Phil 4:1+9)*

26 *Thomas did not believe reports of Jesus' resurrection (John 20:25)*

27 *Saw the evidence / infallible proofs (Acts 1:3)*

## LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

1 *He was waiting for them to show evidence of repentance.*

2 *Presumably 'The Egyptians' meant his attendants, and "Pharaoh's household" (a wider group) must have been nearby.*

3 *They had thought him 'dead' - and now feared his revenge!*

4 *'Presumably they were shrinking away in fear.*

5 *They had repented and been forgiven.*

7 *The 'remnant on the earth' are God's people / Jacob's family.*

8 *God sent him there using the brother's sin.*

9 *He means he himself, under Pharaoh, was in command of all Egypt.*

10 *Presumably Goshen was relatively close to the Palace of Pharaoh.*

11 *They would have nothing to eat or drink and no money to buy it?*

12 *No one knew him better than his own, full brother.*

15 *They talked of everything! To this point they had been struck dumb.*

16 *They had a high regard for Joseph.*

- 18 *Goshen was a fertile, delta region – there was always fresh water.*
- 22 *The extra gifts to Benjamin expressed the special bond with his full brother. It may also have reflected there were still 5 years famine to come. 300 shekels of silver? Extreme generosity!*
- 23 *The 10 donkeys etc were a gift to Jacob. The 11 brothers had their own animals to ride (42:26).*
- 24 *Mutual accusations might arise as they prepared to admit their crime to Jacob cf 42:22.*
- 26 *It seemed too good to be true.*
- 26 *They were Egyptian carts, a gift from Pharaoh*
- 27 *He had a sense of well-being after 22 years' grieving for Joseph.*

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?  
*Joseph saw beyond their crime to God's purposes and had forgiven them totally, as he had seen their repentance (Isaiah 43:25)*

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.  
*Joseph broke down (1-3). He revealed himself, telling them not to be angry with themselves, because 'God sent me here as a deliverer' (4-8).*  
*Go and tell our Father I rule Egypt; he and the family must come and live here where I will provide for them (9-13). He kissed and wept with his brothers (14,15).*  
*Pharaoh invited his brothers and whole family to come at his expense to Egypt (16-20). Joseph sent them on their way again with extra provisions for Benjamin and gifts for Jacob. He warned them not to quarrel (21-24)!*  
*They returned and told Jacob who eventually believed them and resolved to go and see Joseph before he died. (25-28).*

## LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?  
*For the repentant, God has been at work, through, and despite, our sinful thoughts and actions, preparing good for our future.*

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 5**  
*'It was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you'*

## LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

5 God holds the future.

8 God sends us to places we might at first not want to go.

11 God provides for his people to prevent them becoming destitute.

b) His grace?

7 God is determined to preserve his people

20 God provides everything for you - Never mind about your belongings

c) Jesus and His salvation?

7 Jesus is the great deliverer

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

2) What should I do?

2,14 There is a time and a place for expressing emotion!

3 Keep your priorities right – how is my father?

5 Look for God's hand in all circumstances.

8 When sinned against, look to God.

9 Acknowledge God's hand in all your achievements

20 'Travel light' – the possession of the Kingdom is yours!

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

## ‘Boldly go’ in God’s name

### Background information

God reassures Jacob that it is OK to go down to Egypt. His death there with Joseph will be peaceful, not the troubled one he had anticipated (37:35).

The list of Jacob’s family, 66 in total, who set out from Canaan for Egypt is arranged into two groups, depending on the link to Leah or Rachel (v26). (The names for sons of Benjamin appear to contain some grandsons as well, if compared to Numbers 26:38-40; 1 Chronicles 7:6-12; 8:1f. They are presumably included ‘by anticipation’ (cf Hebrews 7:10).

### Word List

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1 <i>Beersheba</i>      | On the very southern edge of Canaan. It means ‘Well of the oath’ – where Abraham called on the Eternal God (21:31-34) and God met and blessed Isaac (26:24f).   |
| 9 <i>Hanoch</i>         | Name better known as Enoch (cf Gen 4:17). Similar to Hebrew verb for ‘initiate’.  |
| 15 <i>Paddan Aram</i>   | NE Mesopotamia, where he went when escaping Esau his brother, to stay with his uncle, Laban (27:41ff; 28:2)   |
| <i>Dinah</i>            | <i>cf</i> root of word = ‘justice’  |
| 17 <i>Serah (sarah)</i> | <i>cf</i> root of word = ‘abundance’  |
| 9-25 <i>Notes –</i>     | Mentions only 6 women (10,15,17-20) cf Jesus (Mt 1:2-7).<br>v 12 mentions two grandchildren of Jacob: Hezron (who is in the lineage of Jesus – Matt 1:3) and Hamul.<br>All the names in Jacob’s family are different! |

### Bible Connections

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1 Leaving old life        | <i>see also</i> Luke 9:23                             |
| 3 Do not be afraid        | <i>see</i> Isaiah 43:1-6; Matthew 6:25ff              |
| 4 God’s plans are good    | <i>see</i> Genesis 15:13ff; Jeremiah 29:11; Rom 11:29 |
| 6 Went to Egypt           | <i>see also</i> Matthew 2:15; Hosea 11:1              |
| 12 Judah’s family history | <i>see</i> Genesis 38                                 |
| 27 Seventy                | <i>see also</i> Genesis 50:3; Daniel 9:2; Luke 10     |

# LOOK

## 1) The Text

- 1 *What is 'all that was his'?*  
*Why Beersheba?*  
*Why did 'he offer sacrifices to the God of his father, Isaac'?*
- 2 *Why did he speak in a vision 'at night'?*  
*Why did he say his name twice?*
- 3 *Why does He identify Himself as 'the God of your father'.*  
*Why might he be afraid to go down to Egypt?*  
*What is He promising in the words, 'Joseph will close your eyes?*
- 4 *Why and how would he be brought back?*
- 5 *Why – 'Jacob...Israel...Jacob'?*
- 6 *Why did he take his possessions too?*
- 7 *Why did it specify sons and daughters, all his offspring?*
- 8 *Why does it specify 'Israel (Jacob and his descendants)'?*
- 10,15,17 *Why is only one wife, daughter & granddaughter listed?*
- 27 *Why 70?*

What surprises or confuses you?

*Why the inclusion of all the names?*

*Why the inclusion of only 2 women - Dinah (15) and Serah (17)*

## 2) The Context

a) surrounding passage

- 1 *'All that was his' cf never mind about belongings (45:20)*
- 5 *Pharaoh's carts (45:19)*
- 6 *Possession cf belongings (45:20)*

b) individual book

- 2 *Doubly named: Abraham, Abraham (22:11)*
- 3 *Do not be afraid (15:1; 21:17; 26:24)*  
*Go down to Egypt cf Abraham went there instead of pressing on (12:10ff); Isaac obeyed call not to go to Egypt (26:2).*
- 4 *Last spoken to through Joseph's dreams, see Genesis 37:10*  
*Last appearance of God (Gen32:22) Next to Moses 400 yrs later in bush(Exodus 3:4)*
- 27 *70 in all cf God chosen people (1 Pet 2:9)*

c) whole Bible

- 2 *Doubly named: Samuel, Samuel (1 Sam 3:10); Saul, Saul (Acts 9:4)*
- 3 *'For I know the plans I have for you ...' (Jeremiah 29:11)*
- 4 *Lo! I am with you to the end of the age (Matt 28:20)*
- 10 *cf Jesus' lineage Matthew 1:1ff – Tamar (3) Rahab (5a) Ruth (5b), Uriah's wife (6), Mary (16)*
- 15 *Dinah - God is just (Deut. 32:4)*
- 17 *Serah - Abundantly more than ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20)*
- 26 *70 others (Luke 10:1) (NIV says 72 with footnote for 70)*

## LEARN

- 1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?
  - 1 *ie. all his 'belongings'.*  
*It was his father Isaac's chief centre.*  
*It stressed that God's promises of a land (Canaan) and many descendants still applied.*
  - 2 *'At night' is quiet – no distractions (?)*  
 Twice – *Emphatic, to get his attention? A defining commission?*
  - 3 *'God of your father' underlines same promise as to him (see 1)*  
*He was afraid to go out of God's will by leaving Canaan.*  
*He promises Jacob's future with Joseph is under God's control.*
  - 4 *His sons would bury him in Canaan (50:12)*
  - 5 *Underlines the person of Jacob and the plan of God*
  - 6 *He took his possessions too as he did not believe Pharaoh (45:20)*
  - 7 *To show **all** came – God's complete rescue of the whole clan.*
  - 8 *To show God's personal engagement with his people.*

*10, 15, 17 Mentioned as names mean justice and abundance of God!*

*27 70 is God's perfect number 7 x human number of completeness 10*

What surprises or confuses you?

*The 4 women – the Canaanite woman (10), Dinah (15), Serah (17) and Asenath (20) - show God's work of grace in this family tree, with 'justice', 'abundance' and 'omnipotence' amongst them.*

- 4) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.  

*Though Jacob is fearful of leaving the promised land, on the edge of Canaan God reassures him and he sets off for Egypt with the seed of a great nation (1-7) Jacob's descendants are grouped in terms of his two wives, Leah and Rachel (8-27).*

# LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

*Walk boldly in God's providence for you*

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 3**

*'Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt for I will make you into a great nation there.'*

# LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

1 *God never changes – his revelation is consistent*

2 *God speaks to his people*

*God knows our name*

3 *God reveals Himself consistently in history*

4 *God journeys with us*

7 *God's purpose is for the family*

10 *God is inclusive – a place for 'outsiders'*

15 *God is just*

17 *God is abundantly gracious*

27 *God is perfectly in control*

15,18,22,26 *God's will (His order) cannot be thwarted.*

b) His grace?

3 *God makes us ....!*

c) Jesus and His salvation?

4 *and lo I am with you to the end of the age (Matt 28:20)*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

2) What should I do?

1 *Seek God before you 'leave home'.*

2 *Be assured – He knows your name*

3 *Respond, personally, to God's call and trust Him.*

5 *Set out in faith / as a response to God's direction.*

6 *Don't worry about your possessions! (cf 45:20)*

27 *Reckon yourself within the family of God.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

## Study 12

## Genesis 46:28 – 47:12

## Enter in to God's rest in Jesus' name

## Background information

The exact location of Goshen is uncertain. It was probably in the Eastern Nile Delta. In 47:6,11 it is equated with 'the land of Rameses'. It would be near Joseph at the Pharaoh's court at Memphis. It was a well-favoured region, suited to flocks and herds.

Joseph advises the family on how to speak with Pharaoh. The interview with Pharaoh is a good model of straightforward, peaceable dealings between a pilgrim people and the temporal power (1 Peter 2:11-17).

## Word List

Ch 46

Ch 47

7,10 *blessed* Imparting favour (5:2; 12:3; 27:23)

11 *district of Rameses* The later name for Goshen current in Moses' day (Exodus 1:11)  
The area from which they left Egypt (Ex 12:37)

12 *number of their children* (*lit.*.. their families.

## Bible Connections

Ch 46

29 Welcome of father      *cf* The prodigal's father, Luke 15:20  
30 Jacob ready to die      *cf* Simeon, Luke 2:25-35

Ch 47

|   |                              |  |
|---|------------------------------|--|
| 7 | Jacob blessed Pharaoh        | <i>see</i> Abraham's offspring to be a blessing to all nations, Genesis 12:2; 26:4; 28:14;<br><i>cf</i> Jesus blessing children Mark 10:16 |
| 9 | Pilgrimage<br>Abraham, Isaac | Very unusual word; here & Ex 6:4; Ps 119:54<br>Lived 175, 180 years respectively (25:7; 35:28)   |

# LOOK

## 1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 28 *Why was Judah sent to Goshen?*
- 29 *Why didn't Joseph go to Canaan to meet Jacob?*  
*Why 'his chariot'?*
- 30 *Why didn't he then – die?!*
- 31 *Why to his father's household and not to his father?*
- 33 *How did he know Pharaoh would ask that?*
- 34 *Why is Goshen suitable for shepherds?*  
*Why are shepherds detestable to Egyptians*

## Ch 47

- 2 *Why five of his brothers?*
- 4 *Why were they so bold to ask for Goshen?*
- 7 *Why did Jacob bring his father in after his 5 brothers?*  
*What did 'blessing' involve?*  
*Why did Jacob bless Pharaoh?*
- 8 *Why did Pharaoh ask him his age?*
- 9 *Why does he describe his life as 'a pilgrimage'.*  
*Why had the years been more difficult than his fathers'?*  
*How long had his fathers' pilgrimage been?*
- 10 *Why did Jacob bless Pharaoh again?*
- 11 *Why in the district of Rameses?*
- 12 *What does 'according to their children' mean?*

What surprises or confuses you?

- 33 *Why would Pharaoh ask their occupation when Joseph had just told him that?*

## 2) The Context

- a) surrounding passage,
- 28 *Judah, the leader and spokesman (43:8; 44:14,16,18)*  
*'You shall live in Goshen' (45:10)*
- 29 *Second in command to Pharaoh's chariot (41:43)*  
*Threw his arms around and wept (45:14)*
- 30 *See Joseph before I die (45:28)*
- 34 *Eating with Hebrews is detestable to Egyptians (43:32)*
- 47:1 *never mind about your belongings (45:20)*

2 5 portions (43:34); 5 years (45:11) 5 sets of clothes (45:22)  
 11 gave them property cf buying Egyptian property (47:19)

b) individual book

**46:34** Detestable (43:32)

**47:4** Fulfilment of God's words to Abraham (15:13)

7 Joseph washed for Pharaoh's presence – Jacob not? (41:14)

c) whole Bible

**46:28** Judah prepares the way (John 14:2)

29 Threw his arms around him and kissed him (Luke 15:20)

30 Blessed are those who have not seen & yet believed (John 20:29)

Ready to die, cf (a different) Simeon (Luke 2:29,30)

31 The Spirit intercedes for us (Romans 8:26,27)

**47:4** Ask and it shall be given to you (Luke 11:9)

Boldly approach the throne cf (Hebrews 4:16)

**7/10** Blessed through you (Genesis 12:3)

Bless the Lord (Ps 103:1,2,20,22(AV, ESV, RSV; Praise in NIV)

12 According to need – cf manna (Exodus 16:16,17)

## LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

**46:28** Judah was sent to Goshen to pave the way.

29 He was called by God to Egypt.

Executives don't have time to walk. Also, it conveyed his status.

30 It was not yet God's time for him to die

31 He was speaking to all 70 of them

34 It is fertile

City dwellers looking down on country 'yokels'?

**47: 2** Five to represent them all.

4 Joseph had already said they would get it.

7 Pharaoh had now said they could go to Goshen.

Blessing conveys God's favour on someone, to bring them wholeness.

Jacob blessed Pharaoh for welcoming his family?

8 He was obviously much older than the Egyptians.

9 God has been leading Jacob through difficult experiences.

He was not yet as old as his father and grandfather had been.

Isaac was 180 years old when he died, and Abraham 175.

10 Jacob blessed Pharaoh on meeting him, and as they parted.

11 Good for their flocks, near to Joseph, but not in a pagan city.

12 Each family got enough food for the size of their household.

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

*He wanted a personal /more detailed response from them? Celebrities appreciate a briefing, to know what to ask visitors.*

3) Give an overall ‘picture’ of the passage in a few sentences.

*Jacob sent Judah ahead to ‘pave the way’ to Goshen. Joseph had an emotional meeting with him there with Jacob saying he was now ready to die (46:28-30)*

*Joseph told the whole family that he would tell Pharaoh that they’d come with their flocks because they were shepherds, then they would be allowed to stay in Goshen (46:31-34)*

*Joseph did this, presenting 5 brothers to Pharaoh who asked them their occupation. They told him ‘Shepherds’ and asked to stay in Goshen.*

*Pharaoh told Joseph of his agreement and willingness to have them look after his own livestock (47:1-7)*

*Joseph then presented Jacob; he blessed Pharaoh, who asked his age. Jacob replied 130 years and again blessed Pharaoh as he left. (8-10)*

*Joseph settled them in Rameses, the best part of the land and Joseph provided the whole tribe with food proportional to the number in each family group. (11,12)*

## LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

*The people of God live a life separate from those they live among, but bring blessing.*

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 7**

*“Then Joseph brought his father Jacob in and presented him before Pharaoh. After Jacob had blessed him....”*

## LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

*46:34 God lives in unapproachable light - we are detestable to Him*

*7 God recognises/ gives us the right to bless Him*

b) His grace?

*46:31 The Spirit intercedes for us with the Father*

*47:5 God graciously provides the best for us*

*God put us in charge of His 'livestock' (Lk 12:44; 19:17)*

c) Jesus and His salvation?

*28 Jesus goes on ahead of us to prepare the way*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

2) What should I do?

*46:28 Follow Jesus' directions*

*30 Believe personally in the resurrection of Jesus.*

*34 Acknowledge that you/your sin is an abomination to God.*

*47: 5 Reckon that we all must answer personally to God.*

*Be responsible for Pharaoh's livestock /God's possessions*

*7 Bless the Lord!*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

## Respond to God's grace in willing service

### Background information.

Joseph provides corn to the people of Egypt for a price, eventually bringing them into serfdom to Pharaoh when they have nothing left to sell but their land and themselves.

Joseph's original proposal (41:34) was to collect as a levy one fifth of all the grain produced *during each of the seven good years*. By selling their own grain back to them in the bad years, he has been able to establish Pharaoh as the owner of all the land in Egypt and to enact a law that a fifth of all future harvests belongs to Pharaoh as well.

In the ancient world, everyone paid their way so long as they had anything to part with – including, in the last resort, their liberty. Later Israelite law accepted the theory, but modified it with the right of redemption (Lev 23:25).

Jacob wanted to be buried with 'his fathers', *i.e.* not in Egypt, or Mesopotamia as his ancestors had been, but in the land promised to Abraham and his seed for ever. The privacy of the thigh and its association with maintaining the family line made the oath particularly solemn and binding (*cf* 24:2).

### Word List

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 13 <i>food</i>                  | <i>lit. Bread</i> cf Manna - bread from heaven (Exodus 16:4) |
| 27 <i>Israel(ites)</i>          | The first time name is used collectively for 'family'.       |
| 30 <i>where they are buried</i> | Machpelah, site bought by Abraham (Genesis 25:9)             |
| 31 <i>staff</i>                 | or bed-head.   |

### Bible Connections

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 19 Selling self to clear debt  | <i>see</i> Deuteronomy 15:12              |
| 29 Kindness and faithfulness   | <i>see</i> Genesis 19:19; 24:27,49; 32:10 |
| 30 'Fathers' buried            | <i>see</i> 25:7-10; 35:27-29              |
| No abiding city                | <i>see</i> Hebrews 11:10; 13:14.          |
| 31 Staff, symbol of pilgrimage | <i>see</i> Hebrews 11:21                  |

# LOOK

## 1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

13 Why 'However'?

Why are Egypt and Canaan mentioned 3 times in 13, 14?

14 If all money was gathered up, how did they pay for anything?

15 What could Canaanites offer if all their money was gone?

17 What did he do with all the livestock?

19 What does 'bondage to Pharaoh' mean?

Why should Pharaoh not want the land to become desolate?

22 Who were the priests?

Why did they receive a regular allotment from Pharaoh?

23 How could they plant a crop during a famine?

Was this in the 5<sup>th</sup> year? (45:6- 2/3yr, 47:13-18 - 4<sup>th</sup> ; 47: 23-5<sup>th</sup> ?) If so why, given 2 more years of famine predicted.

24 Why a fifth of the crop given to Pharaoh?

25 Who is 'our lord'?

Why were they so willing to be 'in bondage'?

27 How did Jacob's family acquire land when all the Egyptians (except the priests) had given theirs up?

29 Why did he call for Joseph – not Reuben or Judah?

Why a hand under a thigh?

Why does he seek the promise of 'kindness and faithfulness'?

31 Why did he want to be buried where his father and grandfather were buried

Why 'Israel'?

Who was Jacob worshipping?

Why 'leaned on staff'?

What surprises or confuses you?

21/25 Why was 'reducing to servitude' a good thing?

## 2) The Context

a) surrounding passage,

12 All Joseph's family were provided with sufficient food (47:12)

b) individual book,

22 *priest – Melchizedek, priest of God most high (14:8)*  
*Joseph's wife's father was Potiphera, priest of On (41:45)*

24 *A fifth given to Pharaoh in times of plenty (41:34)*

29 *Under my thigh (Gen 24:2)*

31 *Staff (32:10, 38:18,25)*

c) whole Bible,

15 *die, cf brought us into the wilderness to starve us (Ex 16:3)*  
*And you who have no money, come, buy, eat (Isaiah 55:1)*

20 *The earth belongs to the Lord (Ps 24:1)*

21 *Every knee will bow at the name of Jesus (Phil 2:10)*

22 *cf Levitical priests living on food offerings (Deut. 18:1)*  
*Kingdom of priests – a holy nation (Ex 19:6; Deut. 18:1))*  
*Jesus the great high priest (Heb 4:14), who knew no sin (2 Cor 5:21),*  
*with whom the father was well pleased (Lk 3:22)*

25 *It is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me (Gal 2:20)*

27 *Increased in number greatly (Gen 1:28; cf Ex 1:6,8,12)*  
*Be fruitful in God (Gal 5:22)*

31 *Swear – (21:22f; 22:15f; 24:3,37 Esau 25:33)*  
*Staff (Ps 23:4)*  
*Take us to be with Him (John 14:3)*

## LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

13 *Joseph provided his father's household with all the food they needed but the rest of the country was running short.*  
*The famine was happening in both at the same time.*

14 *The money was all used up as payments for grain.*

15 *Nothing! After their money was gone the Canaanites stopped asking Egypt for grain. Only the local Egyptians asked.*

17 *Pharaoh must have handed them back to the farmers to look after them on his behalf (?)*

19 *'Becoming his slaves*  
*If the land became desolate, everyone would lose.*

22 *Priests – of the many Egyptian gods (41:25)?*  
*Because they were devoted to him/ Pharaoh relied on them (?)*

23 Even when grain is in short supply, farmers have to plant to have any chance of breaking the stranglehold of famine. They hope the problem (drought? disease?) will be over by harvest time.

If this was in year 5, it was to establish the 20% tax still applied even in poverty conditions.

24 The same proportion as Pharaoh took during the years of plenty – when the farmers would not have missed it!

25 'Our lord' meant Joseph (47:18)

They were grateful to be alive. Probably not eager to be 'in bondage', but had no other option!

27 Back at v11, Joseph **gave** them property; v27 is a summary as story moves on.

29 Jacob called for Joseph – not Reuben or Judah – since he was the one with power to grant his request.

A hand under a thigh was a sign of a solemn vow.

Kindness & faithfulness are how God/his servant deals with man

31 He believed in the promise God gave them.

Here called 'Israel', as he was doing this for His people.

He either 'worshipped' Joseph, ie bowing as a sign of respect, or he was thanking God for his son's promise about his burial.

In his old age/frailty he needed a stick for support/stability.

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

21 /25 The only alternative to servitude was death by starvation.

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

People of Canaan and Egypt were starving to death. In payment for grain, Joseph collected their money, on Pharaoh's behalf. (13,14). When their money was all gone, they paid with their livestock (15-17)

The next year (yr 4 of famine) people offered themselves and their land in exchange for food. They became slaves of Pharaoh, except the priests who were provided with land and food. (22).

In yr 5 Joseph gave them seed on condition that 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the crop was for Pharaoh, 4/5<sup>th</sup> for their families (23,24) This was gratefully received and became law for all but the priests.

The Israelites acquired land in Goshen and prospered (25-27).

Jacob lived on in Egypt for 17 years, dying aged 147. As his death approached, he called on Joseph to swear to show him the kindness and

gratitude of God by burying him with his fathers in Canaan. Joseph agreed. (28-31)

## LISTEN

- 1) What is the lesson or the main point?

*The response to the grace of a saviour is lives offered in willing service.*

- 2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 25**

*“You have saved our lives... may we find favour in the eyes of our lord; we will be in bondage to Pharaoh.”*

## LIVE

- 1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

- a) His nature and character?

*20 God owns the whole earth*

- b) His grace?

*23 God gives us ‘seed’ to plant*

*31 God ‘swears’ through Jesus to ‘take us to be with Him’ when we die.*

- c) Jesus and His salvation?

*23 Jesus, ‘the priest’, is able to own land in his own right.*

*25 Jesus saves our lives.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

*15 Come to Jesus, laying all I have before Him*

*18 Come to Jesus ‘honestly’!*

*19 Recognise my sinful mortality - Give my life to God in total surrender.*

*21 Acknowledge that ‘all Egypt’ will bow the knee to Jesus.*

*25 Our response to Jesus’ grace is to willing give ourselves in ‘bondage’ to Him.*

*27 Enjoy God’s provision – be fruitful.*

*28 Rely on God’s faithfulness and kindness.*

*31 Trust Jesus with my life.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

## Submit to God's choice

### Background information

Prompted by news of Jacob's impending death, Joseph takes his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, from Pharaoh's palace to visit Jacob in Goshen. Before recognising them, Jacob pronounces God's blessing on them, giving them equal status to his sons, their uncles.

Out of Jacob's long career, Hebrews 11:21 selects this blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh as his outstanding act of faith.

By adopting Joseph's sons, Jacob left a lasting mark on the structure of Israel: Ephraim later inherited the headship of the whole twelve, forfeited by Reuben. Cf 49:4. There is a pattern in Genesis of the younger being greater than the older of Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and Reuben.

'The angel of God' or 'of the Lord' is a regular OT expression for God appearing in human form cf 31:11,13; 16:7,9,11,13,14.

v22 is obscure in meaning and allusion.

### Word List

|    |                      |  |
|----|----------------------|--|
| 3  | <i>God Almighty</i>  | Hebrew <i>El Shaddai</i> , the God who is sufficient |
|    | <i>Luz</i>           | Jacob renamed it 'Bethel,' 'house of God' (28:19)    |
| 7  | <i>Paddan</i>        | in NW Mesopotamia                                    |
|    | <i>Rachel</i>        | Jacob's second wife, Joseph's mother                 |
|    | <i>Ephrath</i>       | Bethlehem  |
| 15 | <i>Joseph</i>        | a collective phrase for the two sons                 |
| 16 | <i>Delivered me</i>  | redeemed me  |
| 20 | <i>Your</i>          | Hebrew is singular                                   |
| 21 | <i>I</i>             | The I is emphatic                                    |
|    | <i>You, your</i>     | Hebrew is plural                                     |
| 22 | <i>Ridge of land</i> | or one portion more than your brothers               |

### Bible Connections

- 4 God's promise to Jacob see Genesis 28:10-18
- 5 Reuben's birth-right given to Ephraim see 1 Chronicles 5:1-2
- 6 Adopting Joseph's sons see 1 Chronicles 5:1  
Our adoption see John 1:12; Rom 8:23; 2 Cor 6:18; Gal 4:5-6; 1 Jn 3:1
- 15 God my shepherd see Psalm 23; Isaiah 40:11
- 16 Protection /reclamation by redeemer see Leviticus 25:25,47ff; Job 19:25.
- 20 Ephraim and Manasseh – numerous and very powerful see Josh 17:17.
- 21-22 Being in a foreign land *temporarily* Philippians 3:20; Col 3:1; Heb 12:22.

# LOOK

## 1) The Text

- 1 Why ‘sometime later’? Later than what?  
Why did Joseph take his two sons along to the dying Jacob?
- 2 Why is Jacob also called Israel here?  
What does ‘he rallied’ mean?  
Why did he rally at Joseph’s name?
- 3 Why does he call Him ‘God Almighty’ here?
- 4 Where is ‘this’ land?  
What does he mean by a community of peoples?
- 5 What does Jacob imply by reckoning Ephraim & Manasseh as his?
- 6 What does ‘reckoned under the names of their brothers’ mean? Who are ‘their brothers’?
- 7 Why does he mention Rachel?  
Why does he name the place of her death?
- 8 Why did he ask who his grandchildren were?
- 9 Why did Joseph introduce them as ‘the sons God has given me’?
- 11,14 How did Jacob not know he was going to see Joseph and yet he did know that God put the younger son before the older?
- 12 Why did Joseph bow to the ground?
- 14/15 Why did he put his hands on Joseph’s sons to bless Joseph?
- 16 Who is the ‘angel’?  
What does he mean – ‘called by my name’?
- 19 How did Jacob show that the younger brother would be greater?
- 20 In Whose name?
- 22 When did he take the land from the Amorite?

What surprises or confuses you?

48:1 Why the focus on Joseph and his sons at this point in the story?

## 2) The Context

- a) surrounding passage
- 1,21 The time drew near for Jacob to die (47:29)  
Sons - Manasseh and Ephraim by Asenath (41:50-52)
- b) individual book
- 2 Two sons - cf Esau and Jacob (25:24-26)
- 3 God almighty (17:1)  
Appeared at Luz (28:1-18)
- 7 Rachel, Joseph’s mother (30:22,23)

*Rachel died (35:19)*

8 *Jacob and Family lived in Goshen, Joseph with Pharaoh (46:29)*

9 *As Isaac had blessed Jacob (27:23)*

10 *Eyes were weak and could no longer see cf his father Isaac (27:1)*

12 *Bowed down with faces to ground – cf brothers to Joseph (42:6)*

14 *older serve younger (25:23)*

16 *Jacob and angel (28:13; 31:11f; 32:24ff)*

22 *Promised land yet to be taken from the Amorites (Gen 15:13-16)*

c) whole Bible

13 *God doesn't look at appearances (1 Sam 16:7)*

14 *God chooses and elects (Ephesians 1:4)*

15 *The Lord is my shepherd (Ps 23:1)*

16 *the name that is above every name (Phil 2:9)*  
*Increase greatly (Ex 1:7)*

20 *Ephraim ahead of Manasseh (Rom 9:10f; cf Gen 25:23)*

21 *The promise of a future 'land' (John 14:1ff)*

## LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

- 1 'Later' than 47:29, (when Jacob's time to die 'drew near') an illness prompted Joseph to take urgent action.  
*He was concerned about his /his sons' place in Jacob's line.*
- 2 'Israel', as he was acting as head of the wider family of God.  
*He collected his failing strength for this important occasion.*  
*Joseph was the favourite son / he had work to do for God?*
- 3 *It is the way God revealed himself in the covenant of circumcision*
- 4 'Canaan (v3)  
*Multiple families*
- 5 *Jacob is adopting Joseph's first two sons, born before his arrival in Egypt, as if they were his own, to inherit on a par with Reuben and Simeon. When dividing up Canaan centuries later, there is no tribe called Joseph, but two tribes called Ephraim and Manasseh.*
- 6 'Under the names of their brothers' means Joseph's future children will not be separate tribes under Joseph's name.
- 7 *She was Joseph's mother.*  
*To record exactly where she was buried in Canaan.*

8 With his failing eyesight, Jacob didn't recognise his grandchildren (perhaps they'd grown!)

9 To show they were in the providence/will of God.

11 He knew what would happen because God revealed it to him.

12 Joseph bowed low to acknowledge his father as Patriarch, and in gratitude for including his sons.

14/15 To show they were both given the status of Joseph – sons of Jacob.

16 'The angel' is the messenger of God to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who are collectively known as the Patriarchs(?) See p76 above.  
Because 'reckoned as Jacob's' (v5)

19 By placing his right hand on him.

20 God's name.

22 Meaning of verse is obscure We're told Jacob bought land: Genesis 33:18-20, Joshua 24:32. And 'Jacob's Well:' John 4:5

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?  
*Joseph had to act before Jacob died, if his sons were to be recognised as part of Jacob's family.*

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.  
*As Jacob's death approached, Joseph visited Jacob with his sons Manasseh and Ephraim (1,2). Jacob tells of his commission as a father of God's covenant with his people of many descendants and the land of Canaan (3,4) He pronounced that Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh would be counted as his – a reflection of his love for Joseph's dead mother Rachel who had been buried in Canaan (5-8). Jacob then discovered that Joseph's sons were with him. He embraced them and Joseph acknowledged his father's authority and submitted to it (9-12). Jacob blessed the sons, putting the younger, Ephraim, first despite Joseph's protest (13-20). Jacob, on the verge of death, points Joseph to the promised land (21,22).*

## LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?  
*God initiates and puts His choice to us for his people's good.*

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 19**

*'Nevertheless, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his descendants will become a group of nations.'*

## LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

*3 God is Almighty, sufficient – he can deliver what he chooses*

*11 God is in control of all things in time and space*

*15 God's people walk before him*

*The Lord is my shepherd*

*The Lord delivers us from all harm*

*16 God gives His name to His people.*

*19 God chooses – His way for His peoples good.*

b) His grace?

*4 God makes and keeps his promises.*

*9 God gives children*

c) Jesus and His salvation?

*21 Jesus promised the blessing of God in the 'land of your fathers'*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

2) What should I do?

*1 Seize the day while there is opportunity.*

*3 Stand on the promises of God.*

*9 Acknowledge the grace of God.*

*13 Be prepared to be led by God - not by appearances.*

*18 Be prepared to stand up against loved ones for God's sake.*

*19 Submit to God's choice*

*21 Trust God to fulfil his purposes with future generations.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

# Study 15

# Genesis 49:1-28

## God chooses to bless

### Background information

Jacob's vision for his sons details mainly the settlement of the twelve in their tribal lands. Verse 10 is a glimpse of a more distant consummation: one commentator calls it 'a miniature of the biblical scheme of history.'

It is written in poetic style, so watch for poetic parallelism, where two words or ideas are used to say pretty much the same thing. Often used in Psalms.

The blessings for Judah and Joseph have the most detail. Note how the centrepiece of Joseph's blessing in vv. 24,25 is an array of titles for God.

### Word List

|    |                                     |   |
|----|-------------------------------------|---|
| 4  | <i>turbulent as the waters</i>      | an undisciplined torrent, unstable.                       |
| 5  | <i>swords</i>                       | meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain.                  |
| 6  | <i>Levi</i>                         | sounds like Hebrew for joined/attached                    |
| 8  | <i>Judah</i>                        | sounds like, may derive from Hebrew word, <i>praise</i> . |
| 12 | <i>darker than wine</i>             | or <i>dull from wine</i> .                                |
| 13 | <i>by</i>                           | could mean <i>towards</i> .                               |
| 14 | <i>scrawny</i><br><i>saddlebags</i> | or <i>strong</i> .<br>or <i>campfires</i> .               |
| 16 | <i>Dan</i>                          | Hebrew here means <i>he provides justice</i> .            |
| 19 | <i>Gad</i>                          | can mean <i>attack</i> and <i>band of raiders</i> .       |
| 25 | <i>the Almighty</i>                 | Hebrew <i>El Shaddai</i> . (Gen 17:1)                     |
| 26 | <i>among</i>                        | or <i>the one separated from</i> .                        |

### Bible Connections

- 3 Reuben's honourable defence of Joseph *see* 37:21
- 4 Reuben's sin *see* Genesis 35:22
- 6 Simeon and Levi's revenge for Dinah's defilement *see* Genesis 34  
Tribe of Simeon dispersed amongst Judah *cf* Joshua 19:2-9 ;and amongst the northern tribes, *cf* 2 Chronicles 34:6.
- 7 Tribe of Levi had only cities in areas of other tribes *see* Joshua 21:1-8  
became priestly element *see* Ex 32:26,29; Numbers 18:20,23; 35:2-8
- 7 Judah, lion of the tribes *see* Revelation 5:5  
Allotments to tribes when in Canaan *see* Joshua 15-19
- 14 Until he comes... *see* Ezekiel 21:26f
- 17 Treachery by tribe of Dan *see* Judges 18
- 21 Notable victory by tribe of Naphtali *see* Judges 4-5
- 24 Titles of God *see eg* Psalm 18:2,31; 23:1; 132:2; Isaiah 1:24; 60:16
- 27 Spirit, violence of tribe of Benjamin *cf* Deuteronomy 33:12

# LOOK

## 1) The Text

- 1 *How did he know it would happen?*
- 2 *Why does he say, ‘sons of Jacob, listen to your father Israel’?*
- 3 *When did Reuben ‘excel in honour and power’?*
- 4 *How did sleeping with a concubine defile his father’s bed?*
- 7 *Who is ‘I’?*  
*How was their fury so cruel?*
- 8 *Why should his brothers praise Judah?*  
*Why describe ‘his brothers’ as ‘his father’s sons’?*
- 9 *Why a lion’s cub?*
- 10 *What does the ‘sceptre’ mean?*
- 8-12 *Why so much on Judah?*
- 14,15 *What does ‘a scrawny donkey between two saddle bags’ mean?!*  
*What was the forced labour?*
- 16,17 *When would Dan provide justice?*  
*Whose ‘horses’ heels’ would he bite?*
- 18 *Who is looking for the Lord’s deliverance and from what?*
- 19 *What does ‘be attacked and attack back’ mean?*
- 20 *Why will Asher’s food be rich’*
- 21 *What are the ‘beautiful fawns’?*
- 22 *Why Joseph and not Ephraim and Manasseh?*
- 24,25 *Why does it repeat the description of the Lord, ‘Mighty one of Jacob, the Shepherd, the Rock, your father’s God, the Almighty.’*
- 25b *What do the different blessings mean – of heaven, of the deep, of the breast and the womb, Father’s blessing?*
- 26 *What does it mean prince among brothers?*
- 27 *What is Benjamin’s prey?*
- 28 *In what way are the blessings ‘appropriate’?*

What surprises or confuses you?

- 18 *Why does Jacob break in with “I look for deliverance to you”*
- 22 *Why no mention of Ephraim and Manasseh?*

## 2) The Context

- a) surrounding passage

## 22 Manasseh and Ephraim will be mine (48:5)

- b) individual book
  - 4 slept with Bilhah – father’s concubine (35:22)
  - 5 Simeon and Levi killed Shechemites (34:25)
  - 25 Almighty (48:3)
  - 28 The appropriate blessing – a gift of the sovereign God, unable to be retrieved (27:33-40)
  
- c) whole Bible
  - 8/9 “All authority in Heaven & earth has been given to me” (Mt 28:18)
  - 10 The throne of Judah (David) will last forever (Isaiah 9:7)
  - 11 Colt (Zechariah 9:9; Matt 21:5)  
Wash his garments in wine cf water to wine (John 2:3-10)
  - 12 His teeth whiter than milk (Song of Songs 4:2; 6:6)
  - 18 I waited patiently for the Lord (Ps 40:1)

## LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

- 1 God was revealing it to him
- 2 He may mean, ‘Earthly sons hear what God will do with you as a nation.’ Or may be just Poetic Parallelism: eg vv. 7, 24 see above.
- 3 Reuben tried to rescue Joseph (37:21)? But how did Jacob know?!
- 4 She was Rachel’s maid servant, given to Jacob as a concubine, mother of some of his brothers
- 7 ‘I’ refers to God.  
Simeon & Levi had massacred the whole town of Shechem (ch34)
- 8 Praise Judah for his mighty deeds? Wordplay on name Judah.  
‘Brothers’, father’s sons’ mean the same: poetic parallelism again.
- 9 Cub, lion, lioness in v9 are variant Hebrew terms for lion – king of the beasts?
- 10 Symbol of king’s power and rule
- 8-12 Much about Judah because he is the ancestor of Jesus! (Matt 1:3)
- 14,15 Submitting meekly to forced labour, working hard for material rewards, not aware they’re giving up their liberty ?
- 16,17 He was called to provide justice (wordplay on meaning of ‘Dan’ but the tribe chose violence and treachery instead. (Judges 18). They attacked the unsuspecting people of Laish (Judges 18).

- 18 A heartfelt aside - father's prayer or sudden memory of his own treachery. prompted by the word 'heel' (17, 25:26)
- 19 This verse has 6 words; **four** of them are wordplays on 'the name, 'GAD'. This tribe later made Border raids in TransJordan.
- 20 Will live in fertile plain with trade routes to sea (Deut. 33:24)
- 21 Tribe will breed true and keep its character.
- 22 Ephraim and Manasseh are included under their father, Joseph.
- 24,25 These were the reasons Joseph was able to stay true to God.
- 25b They convey the depth and richness of God's blessing, covering everything.
- 26 One singled out, later used of Nazarites i.e. set apart for God.
- 27 Benjamin's tribe were energetic, aggressive fighters (Judg 19-21).
- 28 They were individual, fitting the character of each one as God had decided.

What surprises or confuses you?

**18** *Saying the word 'heels' in v17 may have reminded him of his own name and his treachery (25:26)*

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

**Jacob**, as father of God's covenant, addresses his sons (1,2). First, the 6 sons of **Leah**: **Reuben**, such promise but defiled (3,4); **Simeon & Levi**, cursed by their anger (5-7); **Judah**, the king in prospect (8-12); **Zebulun** - by the seashore (13) ; **Issachar** - weak but willing (14);

Then, the 4 sons of the two concubines, but not in order of birth:

**Dan** will be just (16,17); [In v 18, Jacob prays for himself? "Help Lord"] **Gad** is a fighter (19); **Asher** will provide food (20) ; **Naphtali** provides beautiful offspring (21).

Then of Rachel: **Joseph** was a target but God is with him and His blessing is on him (22-26) ; **Benjamin** is a predator (27).

These are the blessings imparted by Israel for the future tribes.

## LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

*God is sovereign and gives to His people what He's determined for their good.*

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 28**

*All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them, giving each the blessing appropriate to him.*

## LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

- 1 God knows the future – what ‘will’ happen.*
- 24f God is the Mighty one of Jacob, Shepherd, ‘rock of Israel, your fathers’ God, your Helper, the Almighty.*
- 25b God blesses everywhere at all times - the Heavens, the deep below, the breast & the womb*
- 26 God’s blessing (the blessing of your father, Jacob) lasts forever*
- 28 God determines what is ‘appropriate’*

b) His grace?

*28 God gives the ‘appropriate’ blessing that He chooses.*

c) Jesus and His salvation?

*8/9 All power and authority belong to Jesus.*

*10 The Throne of (Judah–David –) Jesus will last forever.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

2) What should I do?

*2 Gather and listen to what the Lord says*

*3 Do not rely on ability or potential*

*18 Wait on the Lord – His time and His way*

*Look to the Lord to save you*

*27 Don’t assume God’s blessing*

*28 Accept the amazing privilege of God’s ‘appropriate’ blessing on His family.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

## Study 16

Genesis 49:29-50:14

### “Land me safe on Canaan’s side”!

#### Background information

Jacob says he is about to be ‘gathered to his fathers’. This is one of the first uses in the Scriptures of this expression that hints at the belief in the afterlife. cf Abraham (25:8).

Joseph uses the physicians, not the professional embalmers, to embalm his father, perhaps to avoid the magico-religious rites of the latter.

It is like a state funeral for Jacob.

The location of the threshing floor of Atad is unknown. Saying it was ‘near the Jordan’ implies a detour round the east side of the Dead Sea to approach Hebron from the NE instead of the SW. Mention of the Canaanites in v11 indicates the mourning took place on the west side of the Jordan ‘near’ the river (not ‘beyond’ it as in AV, RSV) as they had now crossed into Canaan.

#### Word List

##### ch 49

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 30 <i>Mamre</i>             | At Hebron                                       |
| 31 <i>Abraham</i>           | Jacob’s grandfather                             |
| <i>Isaac</i>                | Jacob’s father                                  |
| <i>Leah</i>                 | Jacob’s first wife                              |
| 32 <i>Hittites</i>          | Sons of Heth, ethnic group that lived in Canaan |
| 33 <i>breathed his last</i> | single Hebrew word, synonym for ‘died’.         |

##### ch 50

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| 3 <i>seventy days</i>  | just short of the 72 days’ mourning due to a Pharaoh. |
| 5 <i>dug</i>           | or <i>bought</i>                                      |
| 9 <i>horsemen</i>      | or <i>charioteers</i>                                 |
| 11 <i>Abel Mizraim</i> | means ‘ <i>mourning of the Egyptians</i> ’            |

#### Bible Connections

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| 49:30 Machpelah<br>& 50:13 | where Abraham bought a field as a place to bury his wife, Sarah, Genesis 23:17-20 |
|----------------------------|---|

# LOOK

## 1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

### ch 49:

29 'Then' – after what?

What was his expectation after death?

What's the distinction between my 'fathers' / my 'people'? O Why did Jacob still assume that he had the cave?

31 Why did he bury Leah there?

33 Why was his death so 'controlled'?

### ch 50:

1 Why was Joseph so effusive?

2 Why did he embalm his father – an Egyptian practice?

3 Why 40 days?

Why mourning for 70 days?

4 Why did Joseph have to ask Pharaoh's permission?

5 Why did he swear on oath?

7 Why did all Pharaoh's officials go with him (but not Pharaoh himself?!)

8 Why does it say they left children and herds?

10 Why the loud and bitter lament, 70 days since his death?

Why did Joseph and company mourn another 7 days?

Why did the Canaanites say 'Egyptians'?

13 Why does it repeat 49:30?

14 Why did they 'all' go back?

What surprises or confuses you?

50:4 Why did Joseph ask for Pharaoh's permission via his court??

3, 10 Why did the Egyptians mourn Jacob 70 days & Joseph only 7?

## 2) The Context

a) surrounding passage,

49:29 dying - for sure! cf 47:29

50:5 "My Father made me swear.." (47:31)

b) individual book,

49:30 the cave of Machpelah (23:8 ff)

31 Leah was Jacob's first wife (29:23)

Death and burial of Rachel (35:19)

*Jacobs loved Rachel /'hated' (KJV) Leah. (29:30,31)*

33 *Abraham was gathered to his people (25:8)*

50:4 *only in respect to the throne will I be greater than you (41:40)*

7 *Jacob blessed Pharaoh (47:7)*

14 *Couldn't stay as had not been given to Jacob yet (15:13)*

c) whole bible

49:29 *God of the living (Lk 20:38)*  
*Jesus alone can give eternal life (Jn 17:2,3; 1 Tim 6:12-16)*

32 *Our place cf (John 14:1)*

50:1,4 *Touching death later made Hebrews unclean (Nu 19:11, 21:11)*

8 *Leaving children and herds etc (Ex 10:9,10)*

14 *I go and prepare a place for you (John 14:3)*  
*You are aliens and strangers in the world (1 Pet 2:11)*

## LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

### ch 49:

29 *After he had given the blessings/prophecies to his 12 sons.*  
*He expected to exist with his late father / grandfather*  
*By 'my fathers' he meant his faithful predecessors.*

30 *The cave had been bought and legally made over to his grandfather (23:10). He assumed he still owned it because he felt God had provided it to his family as part of the promised land.*

31 *Leah was his wife.*

33 *His death was so calm because God was in it. He knew it was God's time for him to die. His illness let him slip quietly away.*

### ch 50:

1 *Joseph was an emotional man! And he'd been through a lot.*

2 *To prevent the body decomposing on the journey to Canaan.*

3 *Embalming needed 40 days. Mourning for a deceased Pharaoh was 72 days, so 70 for Jacob showed very high respect.*

4 *He was subject to him and it would be time away from his job*

5 *It was an undertaking before God.*

7 *Because Joseph was on a par with Pharaoh himself.*  
*It would not be customary for Pharaoh himself to attend.*

8 *To show they were definitely coming back!*

- 10 If Atad is west of R Jordan, they are in the promised land and near Jacob's final resting place.  
 '7' shows Joseph had perfectly kept his commitment to Jacob.  
 Egyptians out-numbered Jacob's family? The locals recognised Egyptian chariots/clothing?
- 13 It repeats 49:30 word for word to underline its importance and show it was exactly the right place.
- 14 Because this was not God's moment to call them to Canaan – and they'd left their children and flocks behind!

- 2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?
  - 4 He was unable to enter Pharaoh's presence in mourning. After the 70 days, he thought it wiser to ask permission indirectly.  
 10/11 On the edge of Canaan, Joseph & the Egyptians' extra 7 day's mourning told the locals they were there to mourn, not attack.
- 3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.  
 Jacob, believing in an afterlife, gave specific instructions to bury him with his father/grandfather in Canaan and then died. (49:29-33)  
 Joseph wept over his father, directed Physicians to embalm him (that took 40 days) and the Egyptians mourned for 70 days. (50:1-3)  
 At the end, he asked Pharaoh, through his court, for permission to bury Jacob in Canaan. Pharaoh agreed. (4-6)  
 All the dignitaries of the court and of Egypt went with them – a vast company. They left their children and animals behind. (7-9)  
 As they approached Canaan, Joseph mourned for his father. The Canaanites thought they were all Egyptian. (10,11)  
 Joseph buried Jacob exactly according to his wishes and they all returned to Egypt. (12-14)

## LISTEN

- 1) What is the lesson or the main point?

Those who die in the Lord are committed to Him / His promise for the life to come.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 50:14**  
'After burying his father, Joseph returned to Egypt together with his brothers and all the others who had gone with him to bury his father.'

## LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

- His nature and character?  
*50:14 God receives His people who die, in their promised land*
- His grace?  
*49:29 God gathers his people*  
*33 Jacob died; his burial depended on Joseph.*
- Jesus and His salvation?  
*50:12 Joseph took Jacob to Canaan/Jesus takes us to heaven.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

2) What should I do?

### ch 49:

- 29 Listen carefully to God's Word
- 31 Submit to God's will – He will have His way cf Leah!
- 33 Acknowledge God's timing in death

### ch 50:

- 1 A stiff upper lip is not necessarily a Godly response to grief!
- 4 When doing God's work, do not assume / presume co-operation.
- 7 Do not try and take short cuts in God's work (9) e.g just the brothers without the military escort.
- 10 Mourning is appropriate as people leave our company and pass over to the promised land.
- 14 Note - All the living need to 'return to Egypt' after burying a loved one in Christ.

Note – A right thing at the wrong time is the wrong thing\*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

## Believe God plans things for your good

### Background information

After their father's death, he way Joseph's brothers' reaction is reported strongly suggests they had *invented* the message in Jacob's name. That, and their arm's-length approach in vv16 and 17, moves Joseph to tears.

Each sentence of Joseph's three-fold reply is the pinnacle of OT & NT faith. 110 years was a life-span generally regarded as ideally desirable in Egypt at this period.

### Word List

|                 |                                    |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| 21 <i>I</i>     | the I is emphatic                  |
| 21 <i>Makir</i> | his son was Gilead (Numbers 26:29) |

### Bible Connections

|  |   |
|--|---|
| 19 Leave to God the righting of wrongs     | <i>see</i> Romans 12:19 (Deut32:35);<br>1 Thess. 5:15; 1 Peter 4:19 |
| 20 God's providence in man's malice        | <i>see</i> Acts 2:23-24; Romans 8:28                                |
| 21 Repay evil with forgiveness & affection | <i>see</i> Luke 6:27ff; Rom 12:17-21                                |
| 25 Joseph's instructions about his bones   | <i>see</i> Exodus 13:19; Heb 11:22                                  |

# LOOK

## 1) The Text

- 15 When did this happen relative to their burial of Joseph - he was present at death?  
Why was Jacob's death a 'trigger'?  
What were 'all the wrongs'?
- 16 Why did they 'send word to Joseph' and not speak to him?
- 17 Why did 'he' speak of 'their sins'?  
Why did 'he' call them 'servants of the God of your father'?  
Why did Joseph weep?
- 18 Why did his brothers come to him and 'throw themselves down and offer themselves as slaves?
- 19 Why did he ask – Am I in place of God?
- 20 Whose responsibility was the selling of Joseph to Egypt?  
What was the reason they shouldn't be afraid?
- 21 Why does he repeat that shouldn't be afraid?  
What would he provide for them and their children?  
What did he reassure them of?  
Why did he speak kindly to them?
- 22 Why does it say Joseph & all his father's family stayed in Egypt?  
Why 110 years?
- 23 Why is Manasseh's son, Makir, mentioned when Ephraim's son isn't?
- 24 How did he know he was about to die?  
When would God come to their aid?
- 25 How could Joseph's brothers make a promise for their great,-great-great- etc grandchildren?  
Why bones?  
Why Joseph's bones?  
Why up to Canaan and not a pyramid?  
Why did they embalm him and place him in a coffin in Egypt?

What surprises or confuses you?

- 20 Why the present tense – saving of many lives? The famine had been over for c 12 years {Jacob to Egypt 2yrs into famine, 5 years left (45:6) in Egypt for 17yrs (47:28)}
- 25 Why would Joseph's bones be taken from Egypt but the rest of the brothers be buried in Egypt?

## 2) The Context

Surrounding text

- 15 'Jacob breathed his last...' (49:33)

- 19 Am I ... God (cf 39:9; 40:8; 41:16,25,28,38, 51,52; 42:18)
- 22 All his father's family (50:14)
- 26 'embalmed Joseph' like Jacob (50:2,3)

Individual book

- 18 Threw themselves before Joseph ... we are your slaves (44:14 - 16)
- 19 Don't be afraid (43:23)
- 20 The saving of many lives (41:56,57; 45:5)
- 21 He provided 'property in the best part of the land' (47:11)

Whole Bible

- 15 God does not pay us back as our sins deserve (Ps 103:10)  
A righteous man ... will not fear bad news, his heart will be steadfast trusting the Lord (Ps 112:6,7)
- 17 Father forgive them for they know not what they do (Lk 23:34)  
Sin is against God (Ps 51:4)  
Servants of God (Lev 25:55; 2 Cor 4:5)  
Jesus wept (John 11:35)
- 19 God – the judge of all the earth (Gen 18:25; Heb 12:23)  
Jesus did not come to judge the world but to save it (John 12:47)  
Neither do I condemn you (John 8:11)
- 20 God the blessed and only sovereign, the king of kings and Lord of Lords .. to him be honour and eternal dominion' (1 Tim 6:15-16)  
'You put him to death...but God raised him from the dead' (Acts 2:23,24)  
'God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting his sins against them' (2 Cor 5:19)  
'Seek and to save the lost' (Luke 19:10)
- 21 Promise at Pentecost - for you and your children (Acts 2:39)
- 22 Joshua died at 110 (Joshua 24:29)  
The complete life – cf Jesus it is finished (John 19:30)
- 23 Makir, father of Gilead (Nu 26:29)
- 24 I waited patiently for the Lord (Ps 40:1)
- 25 God will come to your aid ... carry my bones up (Ex 13:19)  
Joseph's bones buried at Shechem (Josh 24:32)

## LEARN

- 15 This happened on their return from burying Jacob – the brothers were in Goshen, Joseph was with Pharaoh.  
Jacob had been head of the family.  
Jealousy, conspiracy, 'murder', slavery etc!

16 They ‘send word to Joseph’ because he was with Pharaoh.

17 Because their crime was not just against Joseph but against God.  
To distinguish them from the gods of Egypt  
Joseph wept at the pain, fear, misunderstanding in his brothers?

18 To mitigate the inevitable ‘so they thought’; recognising they were completely at his mercy

19 He was saying, ‘God alone is the judge’

20 The responsibility was the brothers’ but God intended it for good, to save many lives.

21 Because they REALLY shouldn’t be afraid!  
He provided property for them and their children ‘in the best part of the land’.  
He reassured them that ‘God intended good’.  
To show them his good intentions.

22 To underline no one was left in Canaan.  
110 years was the ideal in Egypt. He had achieved all God intended.

23 Makir, father of Gilead. The Gileadite clan inhabited the area East of the Jordan 400 years later.

24 He knew he was about to die because his time was finished(!)  
God would come to their aid 400 years later with the Exodus.

25 Because God would do it!  
Bones, because it would be a long time – even with embalming.  
Canaan, not a pyramid, because Joseph’s trust was in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who had promised the land.  
To preserve his body to take to Canaan.

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

20 ‘Saving of many lives’ points forward to Jesus who came ‘to seek and to save the lost’.

25 Joseph led to Egypt – he would also lead to Canaan

3) Give an overall ‘picture’ of the passage in a few sentences.

After Jacob’s death, Joseph’s brothers, fearing retribution, gave him a message - allegedly from his father - asking for forgiveness for his brothers. On receiving it, Joseph wept. His brothers came to him in repentance. (15-17)

Joseph assured them of God’s sovereign control over all this; God’s plan was to save many lives. (19-21)

All Jacob’s family lived in Egypt and Joseph fulfilled God’s task. He died having ensured his bones would be taken back to Canaan (50:26).

## LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

*Even our sin, God uses for good*

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 20**

*You intended it to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.*

## LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

*19 God alone is the judge of all the earth.*

*21 God provides for his people and their children*

*24 God keeps his promises*

*God will surely come to our aid*

*God is committed to Jacob and his descendants.*

b) His grace?

*20 God purposes good for His people in response to ill*

c) Jesus and His salvation?

*20 Jesus is the saviour of many lives*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

2) What should I do?

*15 Do not fear 'bad news'.*

*16 Do not lie.*

*19 Do not fear – God is not vindictive.*

*20 Trust God to purpose good for His people in all circumstance*

*24 Wait patiently – God's timing is not ours.*

*25 Remember: where your heart is, there your home is.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

# Sharing the Word

## Use

***'Hearing the Word'*** can be used alone, with another, or in a group.

## Preparation

Time put in alone beforehand will greatly benefit time spent together.

Work through the stages - LOOK, LEARN, LISTEN, LIVE. \*

Write down your own questions and answers.

(With good preparation and discipline in the time together, the study may be conducted in as little as 45 mins!)

## Format

- a. LOOK - Any questions? (If answer is known or not!)  
Relevant cross references in rest of the Bible?
- b. LEARN - Answers to questions?
- c. LISTEN - Key verse and Main Point?
- d. LIVE - What does it show about God /His grace/ Jesus?  
What should I do

**n.b.** Leave plenty of time for the LIVE section!

By also eating together and a time of prayer, you will have shared something of the life of the early church! (Acts 2:42-47)

## Remember!

As we gather round God's Word -

- a) Listen to the views of others.
- b) Make room for the novice. (They can join in too when you start by listing 'Any questions'.)
- c) Don't let the 'knowledgeable' dominate. Encourage everyone to think for themselves.
- d) Try to include others, especially 'seekers', in your time together.

\* The **process** is explained and practiced in a four-hour course, suitable for all, called '**An Introduction to 'Hearing the Word'**

<https://hearingtheword.org.uk>

## ***“I can read the Bible for myself!”***

To show that the Bible is accessible to all,  
the Rev Nigel Barge, minister of Torrance Parish Church,  
has devised a tool called ‘Hearing the Word’.  
The Manual explains the basic principles of Bible reading,  
teaches them by means of an interactive course,  
and practices them on a single passage, Mark 10:35-45,  
Participants follow in a Workbook: *Hearing the Word - Introduction*,  
which includes the next six passages in Mark,  
so they may follow on for themselves.

As the principles apply equally to all, the course will both  
instruct the novice and refresh the ‘hardened’ Bible student!

Further Study Guides cover various genres of Bible material –  
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