

HEARING THE WORD



NIGEL BARGE

Life of Joseph
Genesis 37-50 Work Book

Hearing the Word Life of Joseph Genesis 37-59

Work Book

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Nigel Barge, March 2018

Scripture Quotations taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION
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Resources

The *New Bible Dictionary* 3rd edition, published by Inter Varsity Press.

The *New Bible Commentary* 21st century edition, IVP

A one-volume commentary on every book of the Bible,

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:

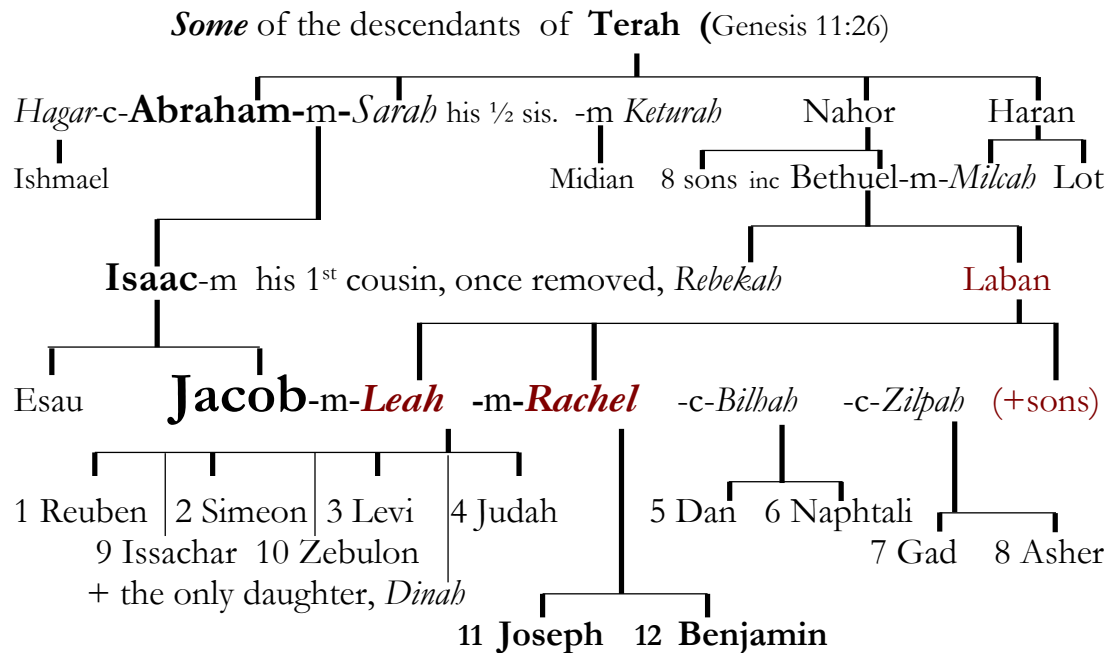
1. *Cheating*

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).

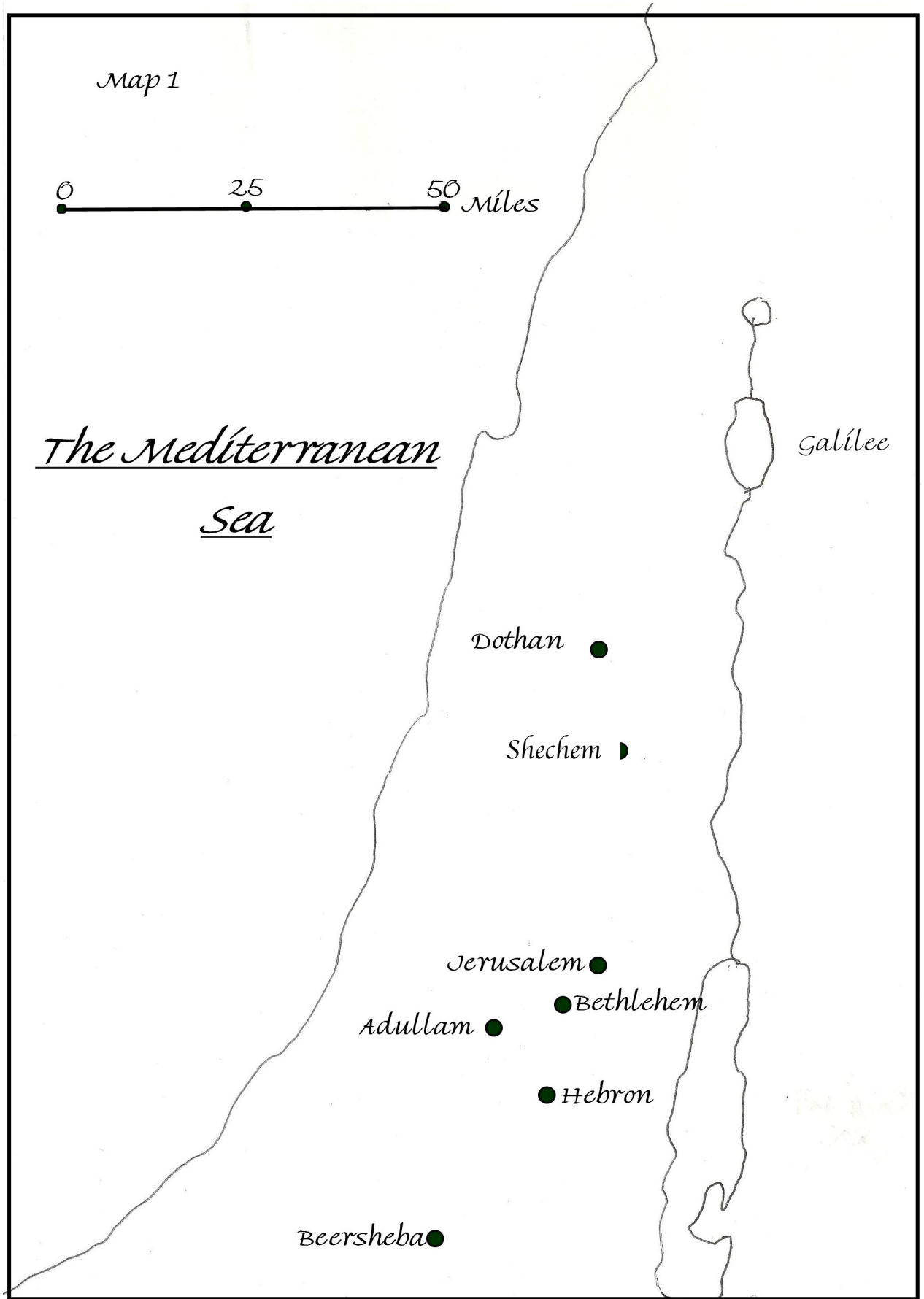
Joseph's name means 'May he add' *ie* add another son for Rachel. This was prophetic, though not through Rachel. Joseph *pointed* to the Messiah but it would be *through* his brother Judah that the line of the Messiah was given.

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:

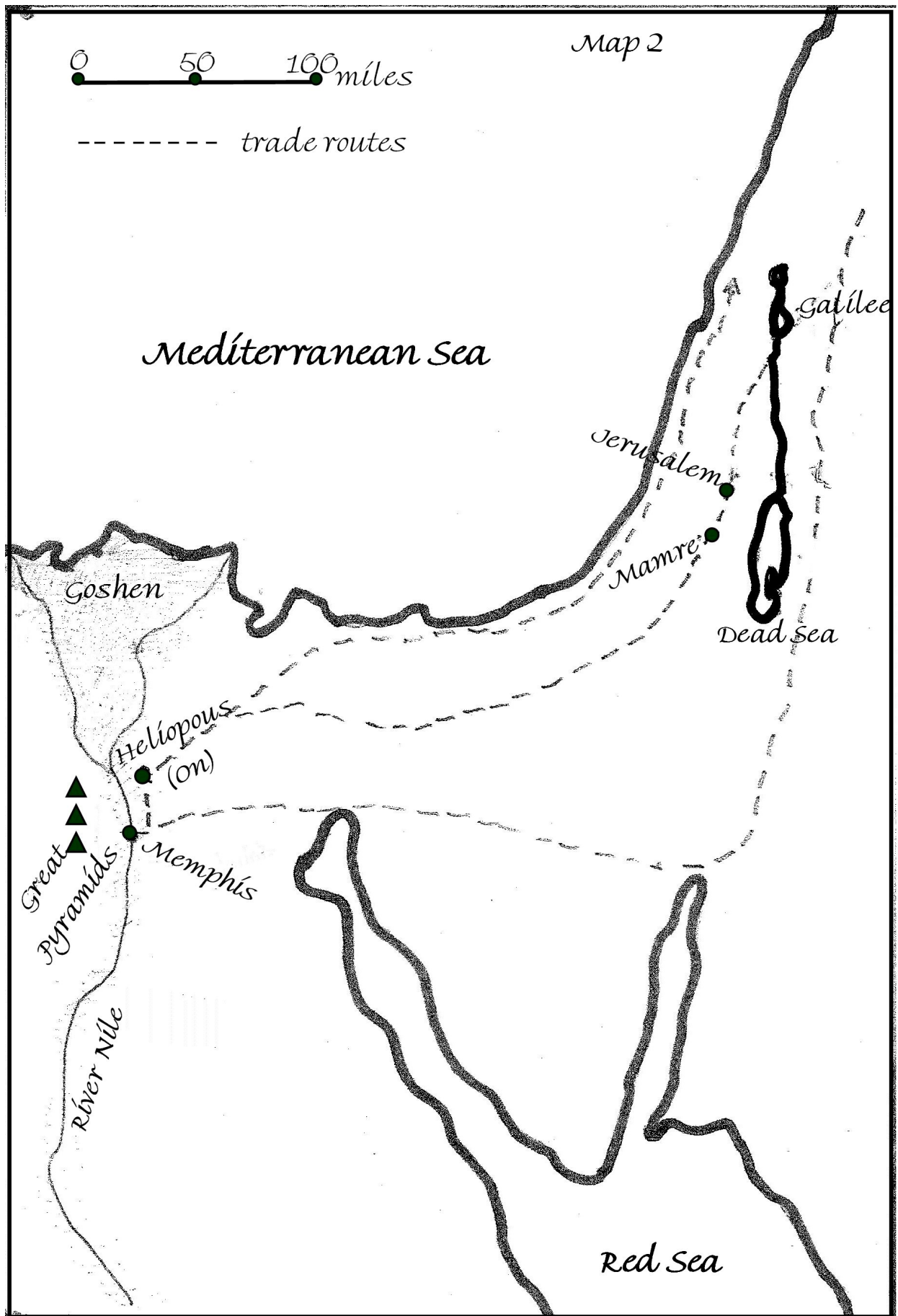
- Ch 37** v3 Favoured son of father *cf* Matthew 3:17
 4,5,8b, 23 Rejected / hated by family... *cf* John 1:11
 18 ... who plotted to kill him *cf* John 11:53
 28 Joseph to Egypt to protect/prepare saviour *cf* Matt 2:13-15
 36 Ended up as slave *cf* Philippians 2:7
- Ch 38** 29 Perez firstborn - in line of Jesus *cf* Matthew 1:3, Luke 3:33
- Ch 39** v3 God gave success in everything. *cf* Luke 2:52; Mark 7:37
 20 Falsely accused and convicted *cf* Matthew 27:23,24; John 19:6
- Ch 40** 1 Cup bearer and baker – bread and wine *cf* Luke 22:19, 20
 8 'none but God...tell me...' - *cf* John 10:30
 15 No basis for charge against him *cf* Luke 23:4
 20 3rd day – resurrection (for the wine steward) *cf* Luke 24:7
 22 Chief baker hanged/impaled on a pole *cf* Deut. 21:22-3, Gal 3:13
- Ch 41** 1 Two full years passed, *ie* at very start of 3rd *cf* Luke 24:1
 14 Shaved and changed - *cf* Phil 2:8
 40 Only with respect to the throne *cf* Ephesians 1:10
 41 In charge of whole land of Egypt *cf* Matthew 28:18
 43 Raised and given authority *cf* Philippians 2:10; Matthew 28:18
 44 Zaphenath-Paneah ('the god speaks and he lives') *cf* Jn1:1,14; Heb1:2
 46 Ministry started aged 30 *cf* Luke 3:23
 56 Bread of life to starving *cf* John 6:35
 Universal famine – help only through Joseph *cf* John 14:6
- Ch 43** 13-14 Father sent his 'only' son so all might live *cf* John 3:16
 11,26 Offerings ineffective, 'son' accepted *cf* Galatians 3:24
- Ch 44** 33 'Innocent' brother takes the blame *cf* Hebrews 2:17; 4:15
- Ch 45** 3,4 Rejected Joseph forgave his brothers *cf* John 1:11-12
 5,11 No condemnation, all provided for *cf* Romans 8:1,32
- Ch 47** 25 People bought for a price become master's slaves 1 Cor 6:20; Rom 6:18,22
- Ch 49** 9-12 Judah the 'lion' will rule an everlasting, fruitful Kingdom *cf* Rev 5:5; Is 9:6
- Ch 50** 20 God intended one man to suffer for the many *cf* Acts 2:23ff

Maps:

Canaan, and routes to Egypt



Note: Hebron (p9) = Mamre (p10)



Note: Heliopolis.

Study 1

Genesis 37:1-36

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 2nd 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 nd 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</i> chart, 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?

What surprises or confuses you?

2) The Context

What other parts of the Bible – surrounding passage, individual book, whole Bible, or Bible story – might help you understand this passage?

LEARN

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

- 2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?
- 3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

LISTEN

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

- 1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?
 - a) His nature and character?
 - b) His grace?
 - c) Jesus and His salvation?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

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>Timnah</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 *cf* Jacob and Esau 25:22-26.

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

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Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

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.
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</i> = <i>hesed</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 |

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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 |

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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><u>God</u> 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. |

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

Bible Connections

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

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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

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

Bible Connections

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

Study 9

Genesis 44:1-34

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

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Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Study 10

Genesis 45:1-28

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>	<i>lit</i> ‘heart froze’
27	<i>revived</i>	<i>lit</i> 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

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‘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).
v 12 mentions two grandchildren of Jacob: Hezron (who is in the lineage of Jesus – Matt 1:3) and Hamul.
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 |

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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

- 29 *chariot* *cf* root of word = 'seat', ie sign of importance?
appeared usually describes an appearance of God.
- 34 *shepherds detestable to Egyptians* probably the perennial antipathy of the town-dweller towards the nomad.

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

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Study 13

Genesis 47:13-31

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', *ie* 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 |

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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 cf 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>Luṣ</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.

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

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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 | where Abraham bought a field as a place to bury his |
| & 50:13 | wife, Sarah, Genesis 23:17-20 |

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What surprises or confuses you?

2) The Context

What other parts of the Bible – surrounding passage, individual book, whole Bible, or Bible story – might help you understand this passage?

LEARN

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

- 2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?
- 3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

LISTEN

- 1) What is the lesson or the main point?
- 2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? v.

LIVE

- 1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?
 - a) His nature and character?
 - b) His grace?
 - c) Jesus and His salvation?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Believe God plans things for your good

Background information

After their father's death, the 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* the I is emphatic
21 *Makir* 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);
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

What questions does the passage raise?

What surprises or confuses you?

2) The Context

What other parts of the Bible – surrounding passage, individual book, whole Bible, or Bible story – might help you understand this passage?

LEARN

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

- 2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?
- 3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

LISTEN

- 1) What is the lesson or the main point?
- 2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? v.

LIVE

- 1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?
 - a) His nature and character?
 - b) His grace?
 - c) Jesus and His salvation?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

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!”

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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.

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