

THE OLD TESTAMENT

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GENESIS

Read Genesis 1:1–19

Note the order of creation. Each day follows carefully upon what happened the day before, according to the divine plan that builds toward the unity and harmony of everything that exists. Creation begins significantly with God's *word*, and the first thing created is *light*. By these we can see and know all of creation.

Reflect: Do I have a real awe and wonder at God's goodness and beauty? Do I give thanks always for the God who always guides everything in the world?

Pray: I ask to find God everywhere in the world around me and pray for deeper reverence for all created things.

Act: I will treat each person I meet and each thing I touch as though it were the direct image of the goodness and love of God.

Six Days of Creation and the Sabbath

1 In the beginning when God created^a the heavens and the earth, ² the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God^b swept over the face of the waters. ³ Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁶ And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." ⁷ So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. ⁸ God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

⁹ And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. ¹¹ Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. ¹² The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give

^a Or when God began to create or In the beginning God created

^b Or while the spirit of God or while a mighty wind

Read Genesis 1:20—2:3

In the second half of the story, God moves from making inanimate objects to making living beings. Humans are special. They are not only good but also blessed with qualities that enable them to share in God's power of creation and oversight of the world.

Reflect: We have been in God's image, an image that consists of what we call intelligence and free will. This means that we must govern our world wisely.

Pray: I pray that I may come to know and love God more deeply as the source of my own hopes and identity. If I am made in God's image, how strong is my prayer relationship with my source?

Act: What would it mean to act as an image of God to all those I meet in my daily routine?

light upon the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶ God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷ God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, ¹⁸ to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

²⁰ And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." ²¹ So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." ²³ And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make humankind^a in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth,^b and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

²⁷ So God created humankind^a in his image, in the image of God he created them;^c male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." ²⁹ God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹ God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. ² And on the seventh day God

^a Heb *adam*

^b Syr: Heb *and over all the earth*

^c Heb *him*

Read Genesis 2:4–25

Note that the second version of the creation story centers on how God prepares a world suited for human happiness and lays out the human role in caring for it.

Reflect: Humans were created as man and woman so that they would need one another, love one another, and be equal to one another. The story tells us that man and woman are of the same flesh and made by God with the same loving care.

Pray: I will pray for a sense of deeper respect for each human being, especially members of the opposite sex, and those who are different or unattractive to me.

Act: How do I live out the command to love and respect all people? And when something is forbidden, do I accept this and obey God's law joyfully?

finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

4 These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

Another Account of the Creation

In the day that the LORD^a God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵ when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; ⁶ but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground—⁷ then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground,^b and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. ⁸ And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹ Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

10 A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches. ¹¹ The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; ¹² and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. ¹³ The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴ The name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”

18 Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.” ¹⁹ So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man^c there was not found a helper as his partner. ²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib

^a Heb YHWH, as in other places where “LORD” is spelled with capital letters (see also Ex 3.14-15 with notes).

^b Or formed a man (Heb adam) of dust from the ground (Heb adamah)

^c Or for Adam

Read Genesis 3:1–13

In this superb story, the authors teach about how enticing sin is. It always looks like a good thing for us to do at the moment, and we allow ourselves to be fooled about what we really know is right and wrong. Sin always reveals its evil side once it has been committed and that is when we experience both guilt and shame.

Reflect: Just how seductive is sin to me? Do I treat it as an enemy, and do I admit how easily I yield to doing what is wrong?

Pray: At moments of temptation I will seek conversation with God. I will pray for strength and courage.

Act: I will try to identify my weak points, those areas in which sin captures me, and then do what I can to strengthen my defenses against sinful urges and desires.

that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
this one shall be called Woman,^a
for out of Man^b this one was taken.”

²⁴ Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

The First Sin and Its Punishment

3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God say, “You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?” ² The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; ³ but God said, “You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.” ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not die; ⁵ for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God,^c knowing good and evil.” ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

⁸ They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” ¹⁰ He said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.” ¹¹ He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” ¹² The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.” ¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent tricked me, and I ate.” ¹⁴ The LORD God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this,
cursed are you among all animals
and among all wild creatures;
upon your belly you shall go,

^a Heb *ishshah*

^b Heb *ish*

^c Or *gods*

Read Genesis 3:14–24

Note that while God punishes sin, he does not do so in an arbitrary fashion. The punishment often is the direct consequence of our evil choices and the directions we have taken. The authors of Genesis see evil as closely connected to our mortality. Evil has become strong enough to bring death into the world. God sends us help, however, just as he clothes Adam and Eve.

Reflect: Do I accept the limits of my strength to master evil? Do I rely on God’s help to endure suffering, disappointment, and failure?

Pray: I will pray that all my efforts may be directed to giving glory to God, making me more thankful for life, and strengthening my hope for eternal life.

Act: How can I order my life to live in peace and patience with my limitations? Do I face the prospect of death without fear? Where do I need to develop deeper trust in God?

and dust you shall eat
all the days of your life.

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel.”

¹⁶ To the woman he said,

“I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children,
yet your desire shall be for your husband,
and he shall rule over you.”

¹⁷ And to the man^a he said,

“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife,
and have eaten of the tree
about which I commanded you,
‘You shall not eat of it,’
cursed is the ground because of you;
in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread
until you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.”

²⁰ The man named his wife Eve,^b because she was the mother of all living. ²¹ And the LORD God made garments of skins for the man^c and for his wife, and clothed them.

²² Then the LORD God said, “See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”—²³ therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.

Cain Murders Abel

4 Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have produced^d a man with the help of the LORD.” ² Next she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a tiller of the ground. ³ In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, ⁴ and Abel for his part brought of the firstlings of his flock, their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, ⁵ but for Cain and his offering he had no re-

^a Or to Adam

^b In Heb Eve resembles the word for living

^c Or for Adam

^d The verb in Heb resembles the word for Cain

Read Genesis 4:1–16

The authors use the ancient conflict between farmers and herders to illustrate the first lesson of sin: it leads to violence and hatred even between brothers! The story also reveals how easily we deny responsibility for our own evil deeds, and yet how God nevertheless always offers us a second chance.

Reflect: How much evil and hatred come from our responses to people who don't act, look, or behave the way we do?

Pray: I will pray that I may be able to erase all jealousy, resentment, and vengeful thoughts from my heart.

Act: In what ways could I actually treat as children of God those whom I clearly do not like, those I resent, or those against whom I may hold a grudge?

Read Genesis 4:17–26

This first list of ancestors is a way of showing that while life goes forward and changes over time, sin marches relentlessly on, affecting every generation.

Reflect: What is notable about our time in the world's history? Where have I come from and what do I contribute to make the world better? What will I leave behind for those who will come after me?

Pray: I will pray for the vision of a world made better by my actions and presence, so that I may leave it better than I found it.

Act: What gifts can I contribute now, and what do I think God is calling me to do in the days ahead?

gard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. ⁶The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? ⁷If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it."

⁸Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let us go out to the field."^a And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and killed him. ⁹Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" ¹⁰And the LORD said, "What have you done? Listen; your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground! ¹¹And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹²When you till the ground, it will no longer yield to you its strength; you will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth." ¹³Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear! ¹⁴Today you have driven me away from the soil, and I shall be hidden from your face; I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and anyone who meets me may kill me." ¹⁵Then the LORD said to him, "Not so!^b Whoever kills Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance." And the LORD put a mark on Cain, so that no one who came upon him would kill him. ¹⁶Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod,^c east of Eden.

Beginnings of Civilization

¹⁷Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch; and he built a city, and named it Enoch after his son Enoch. ¹⁸To Enoch was born Irad; and Irad was the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael the father of Methushael, and Methushael the father of Lamech. ¹⁹Lamech took two wives; the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. ²⁰Adah bore Jabal; he was the ancestor of those who live in tents and have livestock. ²¹His brother's name was Jubal; he was the ancestor of all those who play the lyre and pipe. ²²Zillah bore Tubal-cain, who made all kinds of bronze and iron tools. The sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.

²³Lamech said to his wives:

"Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say:
I have killed a man for wounding me,
a young man for striking me.

²⁴ If Cain is avenged sevenfold,
truly Lamech seventy-sevenfold."

²⁵Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, for she said, "God has appointed^d

^a Sam Gk Syr Compare Vg: MT lacks *Let us go out to the field*
^b Gk Syr Vg: Heb *Therefore*
^c That is *Wandering*
^d The verb in Heb resembles the word for *Seth*

Read Genesis 5

This second list of great ancestors is only a variant of the first list in chapter 4. The mention of the great ages of the humans emphasizes how God continues to guide history through all ages, generation by generation. Noah, above all, is blessed because he is righteous.

Reflect: Do the great ages of these ancestors help me imagine the eternally enduring providence and mercy of God in every age? Does it convince me that he still blesses today?

Pray: I will pray for a steady, day-by-day trust and reliance on God, and awareness of his presence to me throughout my life.

Act: Can I now face my own unsteady and unreliable patterns of behavior and try to make them more consistent and faithful to God's commandments?

for me another child instead of Abel, because Cain killed him.”²⁶ To Seth also a son was born, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to invoke the name of the LORD.

Adam's Descendants to Noah and His Sons

5 This is the list of the descendants of Adam. When God created humankind,^a he made them^b in the likeness of God. ²Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them “Humankind”^a when they were created.

³ When Adam had lived one hundred thirty years, he became the father of a son in his likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth. ⁴ The days of Adam after he became the father of Seth were eight hundred years; and he had other sons and daughters. ⁵ Thus all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred thirty years; and he died.

⁶ When Seth had lived one hundred five years, he became the father of Enosh. ⁷ Seth lived after the birth of Enosh eight hundred seven years, and had other sons and daughters. ⁸ Thus all the days of Seth were nine hundred twelve years; and he died.

⁹ When Enosh had lived ninety years, he became the father of Kenan. ¹⁰ Enosh lived after the birth of Kenan eight hundred fifteen years, and had other sons and daughters. ¹¹ Thus all the days of Enosh were nine hundred five years; and he died.

¹² When Kenan had lived seventy years, he became the father of Mahalalel. ¹³ Kenan lived after the birth of Mahalalel eight hundred and forty years, and had other sons and daughters. ¹⁴ Thus all the days of Kenan were nine hundred and ten years; and he died.

¹⁵ When Mahalalel had lived sixty-five years, he became the father of Jared. ¹⁶ Mahalalel lived after the birth of Jared eight hundred thirty years, and had other sons and daughters. ¹⁷ Thus all the days of Mahalalel were eight hundred ninety-five years; and he died.

¹⁸ When Jared had lived one hundred sixty-two years he became the father of Enoch. ¹⁹ Jared lived after the birth of Enoch eight hundred years, and had other sons and daughters. ²⁰ Thus all the days of Jared were nine hundred sixty-two years; and he died.

²¹ When Enoch had lived sixty-five years, he became the father of Methuselah. ²² Enoch walked with God after the birth of Methuselah three hundred years, and had other sons and daughters. ²³ Thus all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty-five years. ²⁴ Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him.

²⁵ When Methuselah had lived one hundred eighty-

^a Heb *adam*

^b Heb *him*

seven years, he became the father of Lamech. ²⁶ Methuselah lived after the birth of Lamech seven hundred eighty-two years, and had other sons and daughters. ²⁷ Thus all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty-nine years; and he died.

²⁸ When Lamech had lived one hundred eighty-two years, he became the father of a son; ²⁹ he named him Noah, saying, “Out of the ground that the LORD has

cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the toil of our hands.”

³⁰ Lamech lived after the birth of Noah five hundred ninety-five years, and had other sons and daughters. ³¹ Thus all the days of Lamech were seven hundred seventy-seven years; and he died.

³² After Noah was five hundred years old, Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Read Genesis 6:1–13

Evil begets evil. Soon the whole world is perverted by sin. God is deeply hurt by this rejection of his love and plan. Punishment alone may not be enough. He considers beginning anew.

Reflect: What does a story of lust between humans and supernatural beings mean? Do we seek only our own grandeur rather than obeying God? Does this story speak to the modern world?

Pray: I will pray for strength to recognize my desires and control them for the good. To be humble means restraining my lust for the good of others.

Act: How do I exercise control over my strongest wrong desires? In what concrete ways can I exercise self-control and change my behavior?

The Wickedness of Humankind

6 When people began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them, ² the sons of God saw that they were fair; and they took wives for themselves of all that they chose. ³ Then the LORD said, “My spirit shall not abide^a in mortals forever, for they are flesh; their days shall be one hundred twenty years.” ⁴ The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went in to the daughters of humans, who bore children to them. These were the heroes that were of old, warriors of renown.

⁵ The LORD saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. ⁶ And the LORD was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. ⁷ So the LORD said, “I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created—people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.” ⁸ But Noah found favor in the sight of the LORD.

Noah Pleases God

⁹ These are the descendants of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God. ¹⁰ And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

¹¹ Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence. ¹² And God saw that the earth was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its ways upon the earth. ¹³ And God said to Noah, “I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; now I am going to destroy them along with the earth. ¹⁴ Make yourself an ark of cypress^a wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. ¹⁵ This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. ¹⁶ Make a roof^b

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Or window

Read Genesis 6:14—7:5

The ark is described here as it is in the older Babylonian story of Ut-napishtim told in the epic of Gilgamesh. There the gods wish to destroy all humans, but one of the gods secretly saves the hero, his family, and the animal species. Here God purposely saves the just.

Reflect: God shows that his concern is for maintaining the proper order and purpose of creation and sustaining the just person. If we are punished by the results of our evil, the purpose of that punishment is to teach us to turn back to justice.

Pray: How can I conform my actions to God's commandments? By listening for God's voice in my heart to guide me.

Act: I will find more time for personal conversation with God in silent moments throughout the day.

Read Genesis 7:6–24

The description of the great flood also follows the epic of Gilgamesh closely, even to the sending forth of the birds. A sudden flood—based on the experience of desert flash floods that overrun people unexpectedly—is a traditional way of expressing God's anger.

Reflect: The drama of the story climaxes with *only* the just man being saved. The emphasis is on the obedience of Noah who carried out all the commands of the Lord. God acts strongly but obviously has a plan.

Pray: Ask God for an awareness of everything around you and help in knowing how to treat rightly each creature and person so as to always enhance and protect their dignity.

Act: Try to organize your life so that each day you purposely accomplish something for God that will make the world better.

for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above; and put the door of the ark in its side; make it with lower, second, and third decks. ¹⁷For my part, I am going to bring a flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die. ¹⁸But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁹And of every living thing, of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. ²⁰Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground according to its kind, two of every kind shall come in to you, to keep them alive. ²¹Also take with you every kind of food that is eaten, and store it up; and it shall serve as food for you and for them." ²²Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

The Great Flood

7 Then the LORD said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you alone are righteous before me in this generation. ²Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and its mate; and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and its mate; ³and seven pairs of the birds of the air also, male and female, to keep their kind alive on the face of all the earth. ⁴For in seven days I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights; and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground." ⁵And Noah did all that the LORD had commanded him.

6 Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came on the earth. ⁷And Noah with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood. ⁸Of clean animals, and of animals that are not clean, and of birds, and of everything that creeps on the ground, ⁹two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah, as God had commanded Noah. ¹⁰And after seven days the waters of the flood came on the earth.

11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. ¹²The rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights. ¹³On the very same day Noah with his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons entered the ark, ¹⁴they and every wild animal of every kind, and all domestic animals of every kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and

every bird of every kind—every bird, every winged creature. ¹⁵ They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. ¹⁶ And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him; and the LORD shut him in.

¹⁷ The flood continued forty days on the earth; and the waters increased, and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. ¹⁸ The waters swelled and increased greatly on the earth; and the ark floated on the face of the waters. ¹⁹ The waters swelled so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven

were covered; ²⁰ the waters swelled above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep. ²¹ And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, domestic animals, wild animals, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all human beings; ²² everything on dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died. ²³ He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, human beings and animals and creeping things and birds of the air; they were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those that were with him in the ark. ²⁴ And the waters swelled on the earth for one hundred fifty days.

Read Genesis 8

The scene of the flood waters receding is filled with small signs of hope for the future, and God directs the rescue himself. Noah responds with worship and God answers with promise.

Reflect: God forgives the world through saving Noah. God promises to maintain the world of order and predictability no matter what human sin occurs. Through sacrifice, Noah establishes a close bond for humans with God.

Pray: Be filled with hope and confidence that God is present to us and is guarding our world, even when it seems to be overwhelmed by evil.

Act: Adding prayers of praise as our primary way of addressing God is a wonderful goal. We can ask God for anything, but we need first to know and acknowledge his goodness.

The Flood Subsides

8 But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and all the domestic animals that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided; ² the fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained, ³ and the waters gradually receded from the earth. At the end of one hundred fifty days the waters had abated; ⁴ and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. ⁵ The waters continued to abate until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains appeared.

⁶ At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made ⁷ and sent out the raven; and it went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. ⁸ Then he sent out the dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground; ⁹ but the dove found no place to set its foot, and it returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took it and brought it into the ark with him. ¹⁰ He waited another seven days, and again he sent out the dove from the ark; ¹¹ and the dove came back to him in the evening, and there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. ¹² Then he waited another seven days, and sent out the dove; and it did not return to him any more.

¹³ In the six hundred first year, in the first month, on the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and saw that the face of the ground was

drying. ¹⁴In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry. ¹⁵Then God said to Noah, ¹⁶“Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons’ wives with you. ¹⁷Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh—birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—so that they may abound on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.” ¹⁸So Noah went out with his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives. ¹⁹And every animal, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out of the ark by families.

God’s Promise to Noah

²⁰Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. ²¹And when the LORD smelled the pleasing odor, the LORD said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done.

²²As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.”

Read Genesis 9:1–17

The words of God to Adam and Eve in chapter 1 are reiterated here in a world renewed, now repentant of sin and forgiven. The brightly colored rainbow reveals that water is a creation of God and obeys his will.

Reflect: God does not want to punish, but to draw people into close relationship with himself. The authors repeat this point several times for emphasis.

Pray: Here again our prayer should be that we recognize God’s love for us and for the world and that we live accordingly.

Act: This is a beautiful and uplifting story of promise. How will I act so that my life reflects conviction and joy in God’s purposes?

The Covenant with Noah

9 God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. ²The fear and dread of you shall rest on every animal of the earth, and on every bird of the air, on everything that creeps on the ground, and on all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered. ³Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and just as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. ⁴Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. ⁵For your own lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning: from every animal I will require it and from human beings, each one for the blood of another, I will require a reckoning for human life.

⁶Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person’s blood be shed; for in his own image God made humankind.

⁷And you, be fruitful and multiply, abound on the earth and multiply in it.”

⁸Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹“As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, ¹⁰and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark.” ¹¹I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” ¹²God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: ¹³I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

^a Gk: Heb adds *every animal of the earth*

Read Genesis 9:18–29

The story of Noah the farmer and his drunkenness is also borrowed from ancient sources. It is used to explain why Israel and the Canaanites are enemies. Canaan's ideas of sexual propriety are part of the reason.

Reflect: Noah's sons owe their father respect and obedience, but Canaan violates that respect and is cursed. The lesson is that modesty and respect for one's elders are keys for Israel's life.

Pray: Pray for special reverence for those who deserve and need it the most: parents, people with heavy responsibilities, and the weak, especially children.

Act: How would we act differently if we were to consider respect for others a primary value?

¹⁴When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” ¹⁷God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

Noah and His Sons

18 The sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham was the father of Canaan. ¹⁹These three were the sons of Noah; and from these the whole earth was peopled.

20 Noah, a man of the soil, was the first to plant a vineyard. ²¹He drank some of the wine and became drunk, and he lay uncovered in his tent. ²²And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. ²³Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness. ²⁴When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, ²⁵he said,

“Cursed be Canaan;
lowest of slaves shall he be to his brothers.”

²⁶He also said,

“Blessed by the LORD my God be Shem;
and let Canaan be his slave.

²⁷May God make space for^a Japheth,
and let him live in the tents of Shem;
and let Canaan be his slave.”

28 After the flood Noah lived three hundred fifty years. ²⁹All the days of Noah were nine hundred fifty years; and he died.

Nations Descended from Noah

10 These are the descendants of Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth; children were born to them after the flood.

2 The descendants of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. ³The descendants of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. ⁴The descendants of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim.^b ⁵From these the coastland peoples spread. These are the descendants of Japheth^c in their lands, with their own language, by their families, in their nations.

^a Heb *yapht*, a play on *Japheth*

^b Heb *Miss Sam Gk See 1 Chr 1.7: MT Dodanim*

^c Compare verses 20, 31. Heb lacks *These are the descendants of Japheth*

Read Genesis 10

The Bible repeats an ancient list of the seventy nations that make up the world's peoples. Seventy is a symbolic number of completion; here it means that God soon restores the world fully as he originally intended it.

Reflect: The list divides the world into three major groups of people: Japheth is the world of the northern countries and Europe; Ham is generally Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and Mesopotamia; and Shem also has peoples of Mesopotamia and Syria as well as Canaan. All are blessed.

Pray: God created all different races and peoples as part of his plan for fullness and wonder. Can I see the beauty of his vision in the people of today?

Act: The need to erase prejudice or racism is just as critical in our own time as it was in past generations.

6 The descendants of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. ⁷The descendants of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The descendants of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan. ⁸Cush became the father of Nimrod; he was the first on earth to become a mighty warrior. ⁹He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD." ¹⁰The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, and Accad, all of them in the land of Shinar. ¹¹From that land he went into Assyria, and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Calah, and ¹²Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city. ¹³Egypt became the father of Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, ¹⁴Pathrusim, Casluhim, and Caphtorim, from which the Philistines come.^a

¹⁵Canaan became the father of Sidon his firstborn, and Heth, ¹⁶and the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, ¹⁷the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, ¹⁸the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. Afterward the families of the Canaanites spread abroad. ¹⁹And the territory of the Canaanites extended from Sidon, in the direction of Gerar, as far as Gaza, and in the direction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha. ²⁰These are the descendants of Ham, by their families, their languages, their lands, and their nations.

²¹To Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the elder brother of Japheth, children were born. ²²The descendants of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram. ²³The descendants of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash. ²⁴Arpachshad became the father of Shelah; and Shelah became the father of Eber. ²⁵To Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg,^b for in his days the earth was divided, and his brother's name was Joktan. ²⁶Joktan became the father of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, ²⁷Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, ²⁸Obal, Abimael, Sheba, ²⁹Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab; all these were the descendants of Joktan. ³⁰The territory in which they lived extended from Mesha in the direction of Sephar, the hill country of the east. ³¹These are the descendants of Shem, by their families, their languages, their lands, and their nations.

³²These are the families of Noah's sons, according to their genealogies, in their nations; and from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood.

The Tower of Babel

11 Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. ²And as they migrated from the east,^c they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and

^a Cn: Heb Casluhim, from which the Philistines come, and Caphtorim

^b That is *Division*

^c Or *migrated eastward*

Read Genesis 11:1–9

The tower of Babel refers to the great ziggurat of Marduk at Babylon. This story is dramatically told to explain how sin still rules our hearts even after the flood.

Reflect: The temple tower is a symbol of making false gods to replace the true God. How powerful the contrast of God in heaven with the proud plans of earthlings below!

Pray: Humility as a creature before God must be our fundamental stance and requires our constant prayer.

Act: Develop true humility, fostering respect for yourself as a person of honor and respect for all others as well.

Read Genesis 11:10–32

The list of ancestors takes up where Genesis 5 left off. It forms a bridge to a new age. Noah is gone and we are led to the time of Abraham many centuries later.

Reflect: In culture and belief, Abraham was a typical Mesopotamian. The Bible sets the stage for God to call him to a new life.

Pray: Pray to recognize that we are all part of the divine plan and that we contribute to it by living lives of fidelity to God.

Act: How surprised Abraham is going to be to have his life changed. We too must be prepared to meet new challenges and opportunities presented to us by the Lord.

settled there. ³ And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.” And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. ⁴ Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.” ⁵ The LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which mortals had built. ⁶ And the LORD said, “Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. ⁷ Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another’s speech.” ⁸ So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. ⁹ Therefore it was called Babel, because there the LORD confused^a the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

Descendants of Shem

10 These are the descendants of Shem. When Shem was one hundred years old, he became the father of Arpachshad two years after the flood; ¹¹ and Shem lived after the birth of Arpachshad five hundred years, and had other sons and daughters.

12 When Arpachshad had lived thirty-five years, he became the father of Shelah; ¹³ and Arpachshad lived after the birth of Shelah four hundred three years, and had other sons and daughters.

14 When Shelah had lived thirty years, he became the father of Eber; ¹⁵ and Shelah lived after the birth of Eber four hundred three years, and had other sons and daughters.

16 When Eber had lived thirty-four years, he became the father of Peleg; ¹⁷ and Eber lived after the birth of Peleg four hundred thirty years, and had other sons and daughters.

18 When Peleg had lived thirty years, he became the father of Reu; ¹⁹ and Peleg lived after the birth of Reu two hundred nine years, and had other sons and daughters.

20 When Reu had lived thirty-two years, he became the father of Serug; ²¹ and Reu lived after the birth of Serug two hundred seven years, and had other sons and daughters.

22 When Serug had lived thirty years, he became the father of Nahor; ²³ and Serug lived after the birth of Nahor two hundred years, and had other sons and daughters.

^a Heb *balal*, meaning to confuse

24 When Nahor had lived twenty-nine years, he became the father of Terah; ²⁵and Nahor lived after the birth of Terah one hundred nineteen years, and had other sons and daughters.

26 When Terah had lived seventy years, he became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

Descendants of Terah

27 Now these are the descendants of Terah. Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran was the father of Lot. ²⁸Haran died before his father Terah in

the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans. ²⁹Abram and Nahor took wives; the name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah. She was the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and Iscah. ³⁰Now Sarai was barren; she had no child.

31 Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan; but when they came to Haran, they settled there. ³²The days of Terah were two hundred five years; and Terah died in Haran.

Read Genesis 12:1–9

The call of Abraham comes out of the blue and demands great trust. God's promise to make of Abraham a great nation, to make his name great, and to make him a blessing to all the communities of the earth is one of key passages in all of scripture.

Reflect: Abraham showed great trust in God throughout his journey; wherever he went, he offered praise and worship to God.

Pray: Can I imitate the kind of trust that Abraham had in God?

Act: Abraham shared with his wife his trust in God. How can I share with others my trust in God?

The Call of Abram

12 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ²I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."^a

⁴ So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. ⁵ Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan. When they had come to the land of Canaan, ⁶ Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak^b of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. ⁷ Then the LORD appeared to Abram, and said, "To your offspring^c I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. ⁸ From there he moved on to the hill country on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the LORD and invoked the name of the LORD. ⁹ And Abram journeyed on by stages toward the Negeb.

Abram and Sarai in Egypt

¹⁰ Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to reside there as an alien, for the famine was severe in the land. ¹¹ When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I know well that you are a woman beautiful in appearance; ¹² and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife'; then they will kill me, but they will let you live. ¹³ Say

^a Or by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves

^b Or terebinth

^c Heb seed

Read Genesis 12:10–20

Dramatically, Abraham almost loses the promise by letting his wife be taken by Pharaoh.

Reflect: The Bible makes clear that even heroes have clay feet. Clear and immediate fear easily overcomes Abraham's larger faith in God.

Pray: I will pray that I may keep in sight my long range goals above the immediate ones, and spiritual values above material ones.

Act: How do I find ways to remain at peace and confident in God in the midst of pressing problems?

Read Genesis 13

This is Abraham's second test. Will he give the land of promise to Lot out of family loyalty? Thank goodness Lot chose the other side of the Jordan!

Reflect: Our mundane decisions are often made for very good, concrete reasons, but Abraham wasn't integrating God's directives with his immediate needs.

Pray: How important it is to ask for guidance from the Holy Spirit each day and to pray over whether specific decisions are good or bad in light of our beliefs.

Act: Try to state for yourself both your long-range goals of life and the shorter-term plans you cherish.

Note on Genesis 13: The author of the Abraham cycle presents a flawed but faithful hero. Abraham is given the promise in 12:1–3 but often seems heedless of it in decisions, such as letting Lot choose to have the land if he wants it.

you are my sister, so that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared on your account." ¹⁴ When Abram entered Egypt the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. ¹⁵ When the officials of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. ¹⁶ And for her sake he dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female slaves, female donkeys, and camels.

¹⁷ But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. ¹⁸ So Pharaoh called Abram, and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? ¹⁹ Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife, take her, and be gone." ²⁰ And Pharaoh gave his men orders concerning him; and they set him on the way, with his wife and all that he had.

Abram and Lot Separate

13 So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the Negeb.

² Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. ³ He journeyed on by stages from the Negeb as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, ⁴ to the place where he had made an altar at the first; and there Abram called on the name of the LORD. ⁵ Now Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents, ⁶ so that the land could not support both of them living together; for their possessions were so great that they could not live together, ⁷ and there was strife between the herders of Abram's livestock and the herders of Lot's livestock. At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites lived in the land.

⁸ Then Abram said to Lot, "Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herders and my herders; for we are kindred. ⁹ Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left." ¹⁰ Lot looked about him, and saw that the plain of the Jordan was well watered everywhere like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar; this was before the LORD had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. ¹¹ So Lot chose for himself all the plain of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed eastward; thus they separated from each other. ¹² Abram settled in the land of Canaan, ¹³ Now the people of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD.

¹⁴ The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated

from him, “Raise your eyes now, and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; ¹⁵for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring^a forever. ¹⁶I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth; so that if one can count the dust

of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. ¹⁷Rise up, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you.” ¹⁸So Abram moved his tent, and came and settled by the oaks^b of Mamre, which are at Hebron; and there he built an altar to the LORD.

Read Genesis 14

This is a story of national pride that makes use of old legends of great kings of the East to emphasize Abraham’s blessing above even the mighty ones of this world.

Reflect: The climax of the story is that Melchizedek offers bread and wine to Abraham as a more honored guest than himself, even though Melchizedek is priest-king of Jerusalem.

Pray: The story of the faith that our ancestors had in God is intended by the Bible as an inspiration for our prayer—do we imagine their action and seek to imitate it?

Act: Daily (or at least regular) reading of scripture passages and stories of holy men and women is one of the best ways to form our Christian life patterns.

Lot’s Captivity and Rescue

14 In the days of King Amraphel of Shinar, King Arioch of Ellasar, King Chedorlaomer of Elam, and King Tidal of Goiim, ²these kings made war with King Bera of Sodom, King Birsha of Gomorrah, King Shinab of Admah, King Shemeber of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). ³All these joined forces in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Dead Sea).^c ⁴Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled. ⁵In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him came and subdued the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, ⁶and the Horites in the hill country of Seir as far as El-paran on the edge of the wilderness; ⁷then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and subdued all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who lived in Hazazon-tamar. ⁸Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) went out, and they joined battle in the Valley of Siddim ⁹with King Chedorlaomer of Elam, King Tidal of Goiim, King Amraphel of Shinar, and King Arioch of Ellasar, four kings against five. ¹⁰Now the Valley of Siddim was full of bitumen pits; and as the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into them, and the rest fled to the hill country. ¹¹So the enemy took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way; ¹²they also took Lot, the son of Abram’s brother, who lived in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.

¹³Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, who was living by the oaks^b of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and of Aner; these were allies of Abram. ¹⁴When Abram heard that his nephew had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, three hundred eighteen of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. ¹⁵He divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and routed them and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus. ¹⁶Then he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his nephew Lot with his goods, and the women and the people.

^a Heb seed

^b Or terebinths

^c Heb Salt Sea

Abram Blessed by Melchizedek

17 After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).¹⁸ And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High.^a ¹⁹ He blessed him and said,

“Blessed be Abram by God Most High,^a
maker of heaven and earth;

²⁰ and blessed be God Most High,^a
who has delivered your enemies
into your hand!”

And Abram gave him one-tenth of everything.²¹ Then the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself.”²² But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have sworn to the LORD, God Most High,^a maker of heaven and earth,²³ that I would not take a thread or a sandal-thong or anything that is yours, so that you might not say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’²⁴ I will take nothing but what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me—Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre. Let them take their share.”

Read Genesis 15

The promise made by God in chapter 12 is now made into a solemn covenant according to the most ancient rites involving symbolic action and sacrifice.

Reflect: The biblical authors go beyond the historical event by adding here (vv. 13–15) a prediction about the slavery in Egypt to show that the relationship God grants is not just with Abraham but with all his descendants.

Pray: Meditate on the meaning of the covenant in terms of the faith we receive from those who went before us and hand on to those who will come after us.

Act: Am I serious about understanding my faith, explaining it, and being willing to share it with others?

God's Covenant with Abram

15 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, “Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.”² But Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?”^b ³ And Abram said, “You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir.”⁴ But the word of the LORD came to him, “This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir.”⁵ He brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”⁶ And he believed the LORD; and the LORD^c reckoned it to him as righteousness.

⁷ Then he said to him, “I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess.”⁸ But he said, “O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?”⁹ He said to him, “Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.”¹⁰ He brought him all these and cut them in two, laying each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two.¹¹ And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

¹² As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him.¹³ Then the LORD^c said to Abram, “Know this for certain, that your offspring shall be aliens in a land that is not theirs, and shall be slaves there, and they shall be oppressed for four hundred years;¹⁴ but I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions.¹⁵ As for yourself, you shall go to your ancestors in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age.¹⁶ And they shall

^a Heb *El Elyon*

^b Meaning of Heb uncertain

^c Heb *he*

come back here in the fourth generation; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”

17 When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. 18 On that day the LORD made a covenant with

Abram, saying, “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, 19 the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, 20 the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, 21 the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.”

Read Genesis 16

God’s plan does not unfold neatly and as we would like it to. Detours occur. Perhaps Sarah and Abraham were a little too eager to force God’s hand here.

Reflect: Even as we are trying to do God’s will, personal feelings of jealousy and pride can enter in and lead to terrible injustice.

Pray: How do we sort out our personal feelings and hurts and need for recognition in trying to determine what is right? Are we able to pray that God may bless others even if we are forgotten?

Act: Am I able to accept second place and a supportive role—with others getting the credit—so that important work may get done?

The Birth of Ishmael

16 Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian slave-girl whose name was Hagar, ² and Sarai said to Abram, “You see that the LORD has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my slave-girl; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.” And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. ³ So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram’s wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her slave-girl, and gave her to her husband Abram as a wife. ⁴ He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. ⁵ Then Sarai said to Abram, “May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my slave-girl to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the LORD judge between you and me!” ⁶ But Abram said to Sarai, “Your slave-girl is in your power; do to her as you please.” Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she ran away from her.

⁷ The angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. ⁸ And he said, “Hagar, slave-girl of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?” She said, “I am running away from my mistress Sarai.” ⁹ The angel of the LORD said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit to her.” ¹⁰ The angel of the LORD also said to her, “I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude.” ¹¹ And the angel of the LORD said to her,

“Now you have conceived and shall bear a son; you shall call him Ishmael,^a

for the LORD has given heed to your affliction.

¹² He shall be a wild ass of a man, with his hand against everyone,

and everyone’s hand against him;

and he shall live at odds with all his kin.”

¹³ So she named the LORD who spoke to her, “You are El-roi”;^b for she said, “Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?”^c ¹⁴ Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi;^d it lies between Kadesh and Bered.

^a That is *God hears*

^b Perhaps *God of seeing or God who sees*

^c Meaning of Heb uncertain

^d That is *the Well of the Living One who sees me*

15 Hagar bore Abram a son; and Ishmael. ¹⁶ Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him^a Ishmael.

Read Genesis 17:1–14

The words “my covenant” are used several times in this section of the text. Covenants differ significantly from contracts. A covenant is a lifelong relationship, one that involves exclusivity, fidelity, commitment, and permanence. A covenant does not end. It is important to note how covenants and contracts differ.

Reflect: What is your understanding of a covenant? What are some other biblical stories about covenants?

Pray: Come before God in prayer like Abraham and ask yourself: Where is God calling me to go and what is God asking me to do with my life right now?

Act: My life should somehow reflect my acceptance and living of a covenant with God. How willing am I to trust God with the direction of my life? How do I as a person of faith deal with an unknown future?

The Sign of the Covenant

17 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, “I am God Almighty;^b walk before me, and be blameless. ² And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.” ³ Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, ⁴ “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁵ No longer shall your name be Abram,^c but your name shall be Abraham;^d for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁶ I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. ⁷ I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring^e after you. ⁸ And I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding; and I will be their God.”

⁹ God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰ This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹ You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹² Throughout your generations every male among you shall be circumcised when he is eight days old, including the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring. ¹³ Both the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money must be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴ Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”

¹⁵ God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. ¹⁶ I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.” ¹⁷ Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, “Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?” ¹⁸ And Abraham said to God, “O that Ishmael might live in your sight!” ¹⁹ God said, “No, but your wife

^a Heb *Abram*

^b Traditional rendering of Heb *El Shaddai*

^c That is *exalted ancestor*

^d Here taken to mean *ancestor of a multitude*

^e Heb *seed*

Read Genesis 17:15–22

The text centers on the words “blessing” and “laughing” in showing the tension created by hard-to-believe promises.

Reflect: How did Abraham and Sarah experience “blessing” and “laughter” in their lives? What does it mean to bless someone? Why did Abraham laugh?

Pray: God has bestowed blessings upon me. I will pray that I may be like Abraham and Sarah, willing to deal with the unexpected surprises from God in my life.

Act: Others may be seen as blessings from God. Who are the important people God has given to me in my life? How do I deal with the unexpected problems of family life? How is being able to laugh an important part of being a person of faith?

Read Genesis 17:23–27

Circumcision is a visible sign of God’s covenant, a sign that marks a person of faith as being different from others. Signs provide direction, meaning, and purpose.

Reflect: What are the visible signs of how I experience God’s covenant?

Pray: Faith makes a difference in our lives. Pray that your relationships with God and others may grow.

Act: I am part of a group that God has specially chosen to be people of faith. In what ways do I visibly manifest this to others?

Sarah shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac.^a I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.²⁰ As for Ishmael, I have heard you; I will bless him and make him fruitful and exceedingly numerous; he shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.²¹ But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year.”²² And when he had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.

²³ Then Abraham took his son Ishmael and all the slaves born in his house or bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham’s house, and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very day, as God had said to him.²⁴ Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.²⁵ And his son Ishmael was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.²⁶ That very day Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised;²⁷ and all the men of his house, slaves born in the house and those bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.

A Son Promised to Abraham and Sarah

18 The LORD appeared to Abraham^b by the oaks^c of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day.² He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground.³ He said, “My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant.⁴ Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree.⁵ Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.” So they said, “Do as you have said.”⁶ And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, “Make ready quickly three measures^d of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes.”⁷ Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it.⁸ Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

⁹ They said to him, “Where is your wife Sarah?” And he said, “There, in the tent.”¹⁰ Then one said, “I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him.¹¹ Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.¹² So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I have grown old, and my husband is

^a That is *he laughs*

^b Heb *him*

^c Or *terebinths*

^d Heb *seahs*

Read Genesis 18:1–15

This meeting takes place in a tent and reflects the nomadic existence of our ancestors in faith.

Reflect: What does the image of a tent signify? What type of dwelling is it?

Pray: Openness to others is a means of communication. Pray that, like Sarah and Abraham, you may be open to others and to dealing with “unexpected” surprises and signs from God in your life.

Act: Our earthly lives are temporary and nomadic. We often move from place to place and meet different people in the various stages of our lives. Whose paths have my life crossed? Have there been times when, like Abraham and Sarah, I received visitors who were a sign from God and who touched my life in a special way?

old, shall I have pleasure?”¹³ The LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’¹⁴ Is anything too wonderful for the LORD? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son.”¹⁵ But Sarah denied, saying, “I did not laugh”; for she was afraid. He said, “Oh yes, you did laugh.”

Judgment Pronounced on Sodom

16 Then the men set out from there, and they looked toward Sodom; and Abraham went with them to see them on their way.¹⁷ The LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do,¹⁸ seeing that Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?^a 19 No, for I have chosen^b him, that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice; so that the LORD may bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.”²⁰ Then the LORD said, “How great is the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah and how very grave their sin!²¹ I must go down and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me; and if not, I will know.”

22 So the men turned from there, and went toward Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before the LORD,^c 23 Then Abraham came near and said, “Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?²⁴ Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will you then sweep away the place and not forgive it for the fifty righteous who are in it?²⁵ Far be it from you to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?”²⁶ And the LORD said, “If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will forgive the whole place for their sake.”²⁷ Abraham answered, “Let me take it upon myself to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes.²⁸ Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?” And he said, “I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there.”²⁹ Again he spoke to him, “Suppose forty are found there.” He answered, “For the sake of forty I will not do it.”³⁰ Then he said, “Oh do not let the Lord be angry if I speak. Suppose thirty are found there.” He answered, “I will not do it, if I find thirty there.”³¹ He said, “Let me take it upon myself to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there.” He answered, “For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it.”³² Then he said, “Oh do not let the Lord be angry if I speak just once more. Suppose ten are found there.” He answered, “For the sake of ten

^a Or and all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by him

^b Heb known

^c Another ancient tradition reads while the LORD remained standing before Abraham

Read Genesis 18:16–33

Numbers are significant in this passage. Note the progression, with Abraham's bartering with God to increase the scale of mercy.

Reflect: How does this dialogue reflect Abraham's understanding about his relationship with God?

Pray: Prayer is an opportunity to enter into a personal dialogue with God. We need to be like Abraham, to overcome our fear of trying God's patience by asking for specific requests.

Act: Abraham offers an example of both humility and persistence in his prayer. How can I follow his example in my own prayer life?

Read Genesis 19:1–14

Outside circumstances often impact our lives in unwanted ways and require us to take decisive action. "Shutting the door" is a recurring image in this passage.

Reflect: What does "shutting the door" mean?

Pray: I will ask God to help me shut the door to outside, unwanted ways that can lead me astray.

Act: There may be doors that I am being asked to shut in my life. Which ones are they? The angels helped Lot in shutting the door. Are there people who need my help in their attempts to shut certain doors in their lives?

I will not destroy it." ³³ And the LORD went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.

The Depravity of Sodom

19 The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed down with his face to the ground. ² He said, "Please, my lords, turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you can rise early and go on your way." They said, "No; we will spend the night in the square." ³ But he urged them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. ⁴ But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house; ⁵ and they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, so that we may know them." ⁶ Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him, ⁷ and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. ⁸ Look, I have two daughters who have not known a man; let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please; only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof." ⁹ But they replied, "Stand back!" And they said, "This fellow came here as an alien, and he would play the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them." Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near the door to break it down. ¹⁰ But the men inside reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. ¹¹ And they struck with blindness the men who were at the door of the house, both small and great, so that they were unable to find the door.

Sodom and Gomorrah Destroyed

¹² Then the men said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here? Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone you have in the city—bring them out of the place. ¹³ For we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has become great before the LORD, and the LORD has sent us to destroy it." ¹⁴ So Lot went out and said to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, "Up, get out of this place; for the LORD is about to destroy the city." But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting.

¹⁵ When morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Get up, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or else you will be consumed in the punishment of the city." ¹⁶ But he lingered; so the men

Read Genesis 19:15–29

“Do not look back or stop anywhere” is the explicit instruction given in this text. Lot’s wife looked back and she became a pillar of salt.

Reflect: Do you recall any other biblical stories where a person’s failure to follow God’s instruction led to negative consequences? Compare this story with the story of the fall in Genesis 3.

Pray: Living in the past often seems easier than facing an uncertain future. Moving and looking forward are not easy. Consider praying to have the strength not to look back or stop anywhere.

Act: Put yourself in God’s hands and trust him to lead, guide, and direct you as you move ahead in your life.

Read Genesis 19:30–38

Sometimes unusual circumstances result in difficult situations, such as surprising pregnancies in people’s lives. This theme recurs in the Bible, as in the case of the birth of John the Baptist and of Jesus.

Reflect: What are some other biblical stories that illustrate this point?

Pray: God is the author and giver of all life. Pray that you will not make judgments and form opinions about others based solely on external circumstances.

Act: While the circumstances that resulted in the births of Moab and Ammon were unusual, both became important persons in God’s plan. Instead of relying primarily on background information about individuals, am I willing to see another as a unique person created by God to do a special work?

seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and left him outside the city. ¹⁷ When they had brought them outside, they^a said, “Flee for your life; do not look back or stop anywhere in the Plain; flee to the hills, or else you will be consumed.” ¹⁸ And Lot said to them, “Oh, no, my lords; ¹⁹ your servant has found favor with you, and you have shown me great kindness in saving my life; but I cannot flee to the hills, for fear the disaster will overtake me and I die. ²⁰ Look, that city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one. Let me escape there—is it not a little one?—and my life will be saved!” ²¹ He said to him, “Very well, I grant you this favor too, and will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken. ²² Hurry, escape there, for I can do nothing until you arrive there.” Therefore the city was called Zoar.^b ²³ The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zoar.

²⁴ Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the LORD out of heaven; ²⁵ and he overthrew those cities, and all the Plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. ²⁶ But Lot’s wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

²⁷ Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD; ²⁸ and he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the Plain and saw the smoke of the land going up like the smoke of a furnace.

²⁹ So it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the Plain, God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had settled.

The Shameful Origin of Moab and Ammon

³⁰ Now Lot went up out of Zoar and settled in the hills with his two daughters, for he was afraid to stay in Zoar; so he lived in a cave with his two daughters. ³¹ And the firstborn said to the younger, “Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of all the world. ³² Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, so that we may preserve offspring through our father.” ³³ So they made their father drink wine that night; and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; he did not know when she lay down or when she rose. ³⁴ On the next day, the firstborn said to the younger, “Look, I lay last night with my father; let us make him drink wine tonight also; then you go in and lie with him, so that we may preserve offspring through our father.” ³⁵ So they made their father drink wine that night also; and the younger rose, and lay

^a Gk Syr Vg; Heb he

^b That is *Little*

Note on Genesis 19:30–36: The incest between Lot and his daughters horrifies us, but as an ancient folklore theme, it may well originate in Israelite stories of how perverse the Moabites and Ammonites are from their beginnings, and is a kind of ethnic putdown that comes from tribal rivalries.

Read Genesis 20:1–7

This story has to do with miscommunication and misinformation.

Reflect: Abimelech says he acted “in the integrity of my heart.” What does it mean to act with “integrity of heart”?

Pray: Sometimes questionable actions are done with “integrity of heart” and the best intentions. Pray that you will be less judgmental in forming opinions about others.

Act: Acting with “integrity of heart” calls for a willingness to change when something new becomes known. When, like Abimelech, you act with “integrity of heart” and then discover the need to change your behavior, how willing are you to do this?

Read Genesis 20:8–18

In Bible stories we often see people act out of fear, as Abraham does here.

Reflect: Can you identify with Abraham’s fear?

Pray: Communication with God and with others requires that I look realistically at my fears. I will pray for the grace to do this.

Act: As a result of a new understanding, Abimelech’s relationship with both Abraham and Sarah changes. Is there a relationship in my life that I need to change based on some new understanding?

with him; and he did not know when she lay down or when she rose. ³⁶ Thus both the daughters of Lot became pregnant by their father. ³⁷ The firstborn bore a son, and named him Moab; he is the ancestor of the Moabites to this day. ³⁸ The younger also bore a son and named him Ben-ammi; he is the ancestor of the Ammonites to this day.

Abraham and Sarah at Gerar

20 From there Abraham journeyed toward the region of the Negeb, and settled between Kadesh and Shur. While residing in Gerar as an alien, ² Abraham said of his wife Sarah, “She is my sister.” And King Abimelech of Gerar sent and took Sarah. ³ But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, “You are about to die because of the woman whom you have taken; for she is a married woman.” ⁴ Now Abimelech had not approached her; so he said, “Lord, will you destroy an innocent people? ⁵ Did he not himself say to me, ‘She is my sister’? And she herself said, ‘He is my brother.’ I did this in the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands.” ⁶ Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart; furthermore it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her. ⁷ Now then, return the man’s wife; for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all that are yours.”

⁸ So Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants and told them all these things; and the men were very much afraid. ⁹ Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said to him, “What have you done to us? How have I sinned against you, that you have brought such great guilt on me and my kingdom? You have done things to me that ought not to be done.” ¹⁰ And Abimelech said to Abraham, “What were you thinking of, that you did this thing?” ¹¹ Abraham said, “I did it because I thought, There is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife. ¹² Besides, she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. ¹³ And when God caused me to wander from my father’s house, I said to her, ‘This is the kindness you must do me: at every place to which we come, say of me, He is my brother.’” ¹⁴ Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen, and male and female slaves, and gave them to Abraham, and restored his wife Sarah to him. ¹⁵ Abimelech said, “My land is before you; settle where it pleases you.” ¹⁶ To Sarah he said, “Look, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver; it is your ex-

operation before all who are with you; you are completely vindicated.”¹⁷ Then Abraham prayed to God; and God healed Abimelech, and also healed his wife and female

slaves so that they bore children.¹⁸ For the LORD had closed fast all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham’s wife.

Read Genesis 21:1–8

The name “Isaac” is based on what happened when Abraham and Sarah become aware that they would become parents in their old age. “God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.”

Reflect: What does the birth of Isaac signify?

Pray: Unusual occurrences in life are often opportunities to experience God’s presence. How does a new way of seeing affect the way you pray, understand, and relate to God?

Act: How open are you to unexpected events in your life? What are some examples?

Read Genesis 21:9–21

“Do not be afraid” are familiar words communicated often by God’s messengers in the Bible.

Reflect: In this passage, who is afraid? Of what is the person afraid?

Pray: God responds to Hagar with an angel who reassures her in a difficult time. God opens her eyes. Pray for God to open your eyes to see God’s messengers who have been sent to you.

Act: What lesson can I learn for my own life from this story of Hagar and her son Ishmael?

The Birth of Isaac

21 The LORD dealt with Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as he had promised.² Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him.³ Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son whom Sarah bore him.⁴ And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.⁵ Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.⁶ Now Sarah said, “God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.”⁷ And she said, “Who would ever have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”

Hagar and Ishmael Sent Away

8 The child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.⁹ But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac.^a¹⁰ So she said to Abraham, “Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac.”¹¹ The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son.¹² But God said to Abraham, “Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named for you.¹³ As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring.”¹⁴ So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beersheba.

15 When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes.¹⁶ Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, “Do not let me look on the death of the child.” And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept.¹⁷ And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, “What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is.¹⁸ Come, lift up the boy and hold him

^a Gk Vg: Heb lacks *with her son Isaac*

Read Genesis 21:22–34

Abraham and Abimelech make a pact at Beer-sheba and this location becomes a special place.

Reflect: Beer-sheba becomes a special place because of Abraham's actions in which he invoked God's name. Are there special places in which you have invoked God's name?

Pray: Pray to be conscious of the fact that invoking the name of God is a sacred action.

Act: How do I invoke God's name? How serious am I in making oaths?

Read Genesis 22:1–8

God asks Abraham to undertake a difficult journey and task.

Reflect: How does Abraham respond to God's request? How does Abraham respond to Isaac's queries?

Pray: "The LORD will provide." Pray to be receptive in allowing God to provide for your needs when you are dealing some difficulty, hardship, or adversity in your life.

Act: Life is a journey in which unexpected difficulties can occur. What does Abraham's response teach you?

fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him." ¹⁹ Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink.

²⁰ God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow. ²¹ He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

Abraham and Abimelech Make a Covenant

²² At that time Abimelech, with Phicol the commander of his army, said to Abraham, "God is with you in all that you do; ²³ now therefore swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my offspring or with my posterity, but as I have dealt loyally with you, you will deal with me and with the land where you have resided as an alien." ²⁴ And Abraham said, "I swear it."

²⁵ When Abraham complained to Abimelech about a well of water that Abimelech's servants had seized, ²⁶ Abimelech said, "I do not know who has done this; you did not tell me, and I have not heard of it until today." ²⁷ So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two men made a covenant. ²⁸ Abraham set apart seven ewe lambs of the flock. ²⁹ And Abimelech said to Abraham, "What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs that you have set apart?" ³⁰ He said, "These seven ewe lambs you shall accept from my hand, in order that you may be a witness for me that I dug this well." ³¹ Therefore that place was called Beer-sheba;^a because there both of them swore an oath. ³² When they had made a covenant at Beer-sheba, Abimelech, with Phicol the commander of his army, left and returned to the land of the Philistines. ³³ Abraham^b planted a tamarisk tree in Beer-sheba, and called there on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God.^c ³⁴ And Abraham resided as an alien many days in the land of the Philistines.

The Command to Sacrifice Isaac

22 After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ² He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you." ³ So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him. ⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place far away. ⁵ Then

^a That is *Well of seven* or *Well of the oath*

^b Heb *He*

^c Or *the LORD, El Olam*

Read Genesis 22:9–19

This section has two key verses regarding Abraham as a person of great faith: “Now I know that you fear God.” “I will bless you.”

Reflect: What do these words mean?

Pray: As in the case of Abraham, God blesses people in the difficult moments of their lives. In my prayer, how do I experience God’s blessings?

Act: Sometimes difficult things are asked of us by God. What does this story about Abraham teach me? What can I learn from his example?

Read Genesis 22:20–24

God’s promise to Abraham of many descendants is fulfilled.

Reflect: What do you think Abraham’s reaction to this is?

Pray: Relatives and family members are part of our lives. Do I pray for them? Do I see them as blessings from God?

Act: Family is an experience in which patience is learned. How have I experienced this?

Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; the boy and I will go over there; we will worship, and then we will come back to you.”⁶ Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together.⁷ Isaac said to his father Abraham, “Father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” He said, “The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?”⁸ Abraham said, “God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So the two of them walked on together.

9 When they came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill^a his son.¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”¹² He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.”¹³ And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.¹⁴ So Abraham called that place “The LORD will provide”;^b as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.”^c

15 The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven,¹⁶ and said, “By myself I have sworn, says the LORD: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son,¹⁷ I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies,¹⁸ and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.”¹⁹ So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beer-sheba; and Abraham lived at Beer-sheba.

The Children of Nahor

20 Now after these things it was told Abraham, “Milcah also has borne children, to your brother Nahor:²¹ Uz the firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram,²² Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel.”²³ Bethuel became the father of Rebekah. These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham’s brother.²⁴ Moreover, his concubine, whose name was Reumah, bore Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

^a Or to slaughter
^b Or will see; traditionally transliterated Jehovah Jireh
^c Or he shall be seen

Read Genesis 23

Abraham finds a burial place for his wife Sarah.

Reflect: Why are burial places important?

Pray: How often do you remember in your prayers those who have died?

Act: Everyone is affected by death. In what ways do you keep the memory and example of those who have died part of your life?

Sarah's Death and Burial

23 Sarah lived one hundred twenty-seven years; this was the length of Sarah's life. ² And Sarah died at Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan; and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. ³ Abraham rose up from beside his dead, and said to the Hittites, ⁴ "I am a stranger and an alien residing among you; give me property among you for a burying place, so that I may bury my dead out of my sight." ⁵ The Hittites answered Abraham, ⁶ "Hear us, my lord; you are a mighty prince among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our burial places; none of us will withhold from you any burial ground for burying your dead." ⁷ Abraham rose and bowed to the Hittites, the people of the land. ⁸ He said to them, "If you are willing that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and entreat for me Ephron son of Zohar, ⁹ so that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he owns; it is at the end of his field. For the full price let him give it to me in your presence as a possession for a burying place." ¹⁰ Now Ephron was sitting among the Hittites; and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the Hittites, of all who went in at the gate of his city, ¹¹ "No, my lord, hear me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it; in the presence of my people I give it to you; bury your dead." ¹² Then Abraham bowed down before the people of the land. ¹³ He said to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, "If you only will listen to me! I will give the price of the field; accept it from me, so that I may bury my dead there." ¹⁴ Ephron answered Abraham, ¹⁵ "My lord, listen to me; a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver—what is that between you and me? Bury your dead." ¹⁶ Abraham agreed with Ephron; and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver that he had named in the hearing of the Hittites, four hundred shekels of silver, according to the weights current among the merchants.

¹⁷ So the field of Ephron in Machpelah, which was to the east of Mamre, the field with the cave that was in it and all the trees that were in the field, throughout its whole area, passed ¹⁸ to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the Hittites, in the presence of all who went in at the gate of his city. ¹⁹ After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah facing Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan. ²⁰ The field and the cave that is in it passed from the Hittites into Abraham's possession as a burying place.

Read Genesis 24:1–14

Abraham demonstrates concern about the future well-being of his son, Isaac.

Reflect: Why is the basic human experience of showing care and concern for others so important?

Pray: In the various searches of our lives, we, like Abraham's servant, need to turn to God in prayer. At this point in my life, for what do I need to pray?

Act: Abraham is concerned about his son. Abraham's servant brings his concerns to God in prayer. How confident am I in bringing my own needs and the concerns of others to the Lord?

Read Genesis 24:15–33

Both Rebekah and Laban welcome Abraham's servant, an outsider, into their lives.

Reflect: What is the significance of this action?

Pray: Laban invites Abraham's servant with the words: "Come in, O blessed of the LORD." Prayerfully consider ways in which you can make these words part of your own dealings with others.

Act: Life is a journey in which many people's paths cross our lives. For which of the people whom you have met are you most grateful to God?

The Marriage of Isaac and Rebekah

24 Now Abraham was old, well advanced in years; and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. ² Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his house, who had charge of all that he had, "Put your hand under my thigh ³ and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I live, ⁴ but will go to my country and to my kindred and get a wife for my son Isaac." ⁵ The servant said to him, "Perhaps the woman may not be willing to follow me to this land; must I then take your son back to the land from which you came?" ⁶ Abraham said to him, "See to it that you do not take my son back there. ⁷ The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me and swore to me, 'To your offspring I will give this land,' he will send his angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there. ⁸ But if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be free from this oath of mine; only you must not take my son back there." ⁹ So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master and swore to him concerning this matter.

¹⁰ Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and departed, taking all kinds of choice gifts from his master; and he set out and went to Aram-naharaim, to the city of Nahor. ¹¹ He made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water; it was toward evening, the time when women go out to draw water. ¹² And he said, "O LORD, God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today and show steadfast love to my master Abraham. ¹³ I am standing here by the spring of water, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. ¹⁴ Let the girl to whom I shall say, 'Please offer your jar that I may drink,' and who shall say, 'Drink, and I will water your camels'—let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac. By this I shall know that you have shown steadfast love to my master."

¹⁵ Before he had finished speaking, there was Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, coming out with her water jar on her shoulder. ¹⁶ The girl was very fair to look upon, a virgin, whom no man had known. She went down to the spring, filled her jar, and came up. ¹⁷ Then the servant ran to meet her and said, "Please let me sip a little water from your jar." ¹⁸ "Drink, my lord," she said, and quickly lowered her jar upon her hand and gave him a drink. ¹⁹ When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw for your camels also, un-

Read Genesis 24:34–49

Abraham's servant tells his personal story to Laban.

Reflect: What are the significant parts of this story? What is the role of God in this story?

Pray: Abraham's servant says that he asked the Lord to help him in his search. For what am I searching? What do I need to bring before the Lord God in prayer?

Act: Abraham's servant bows in worship and blesses the Lord God. How often do I perform this type of action? How do I cultivate developing an attitude of gratitude for the blessings God has bestowed upon me in my life?

til they have finished drinking.”²⁰ So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough and ran again to the well to draw, and she drew for all his camels.²¹ The man gazed at her in silence to learn whether or not the LORD had made his journey successful.

22 When the camels had finished drinking, the man took a gold nose-ring weighing a half shekel, and two bracelets for her arms weighing ten gold shekels,²³ and said, “Tell me whose daughter you are. Is there room in your father’s house for us to spend the night?”²⁴ She said to him, “I am the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor.”²⁵ She added, “We have plenty of straw and fodder and a place to spend the night.”²⁶ The man bowed his head and worshiped the LORD²⁷ and said, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken his steadfast love and his faithfulness toward my master. As for me, the LORD has led me on the way to the house of my master’s kin.”

28 Then the girl ran and told her mother’s household about these things.²⁹ Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban; and Laban ran out to the man, to the spring.³⁰ As soon as he had seen the nose-ring, and the bracelets on his sister’s arms, and when he heard the words of his sister Rebekah, “Thus the man spoke to me,” he went to the man; and there he was, standing by the camels at the spring.³¹ He said, “Come in, O blessed of the LORD. Why do you stand outside when have prepared the house and a place for the camels?”³² So the man came into the house; and Laban unloaded the camels, and gave him straw and fodder for the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him.³³ Then food was set before him to eat; but he said, “I will not eat until I have told my errand.” He said, “Speak on.”

34 So he said, “I am Abraham’s servant.³⁵ The LORD has greatly blessed my master, and he has become wealthy; he has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female slaves, camels and donkeys.³⁶ And Sarah my master’s wife bore a son to my master when she was old; and he has given him all that he has.³⁷ My master made me swear, saying, ‘You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live;³⁸ but you shall go to my father’s house, to my kindred, and get a wife for my son.’³⁹ I said to my master, ‘Perhaps the woman will not follow me.’⁴⁰ But he said to me, ‘The LORD, before whom I walk, will send his angel with you and make your way successful. You shall get a wife for my son from my kindred, from my father’s house.⁴¹ Then you will be free from my oath, when you come to my kin-

Read Genesis 24:50–67

Before Rebekah departs, her family bestows a blessing upon her.

Reflect: What are the words of this blessing? Why is this blessing bestowed?

Pray: For whom in my own family should I pray?

Act: Traveling is an important part of our human experience. The journey that Rebekah made to join Isaac symbolizes the many journeys we undertake in our lives. Consider spending time in prayer or invoking God's blessing during such times.

dred; even if they will not give her to you, you will be free from my oath.'

42 "I came today to the spring, and said, 'O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, if now you will only make successful the way I am going! 43 I am standing here by the spring of water; let the young woman who comes out to draw, to whom I shall say, "Please give me a little water from your jar to drink," 44 and who will say to me, "Drink, and I will draw for your camels also"—let her be the woman whom the LORD has appointed for my master's son.'

45 "Before I had finished speaking in my heart, there was Rebekah coming out with her water jar on her shoulder; and she went down to the spring, and drew. I said to her, 'Please let me drink.' 46 She quickly let down her jar from her shoulder, and said, 'Drink, and I will also water your camels.' So I drank, and she also watered the camels. 47 Then I asked her, 'Whose daughter are you?' She said, 'The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bore to him.' So I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her arms. 48 Then I bowed my head and worshiped the LORD, and blessed the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me by the right way to obtain the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son. 49 Now then, if you will deal loyally and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so that I may turn either to the right hand or to the left."

50 Then Laban and Bethuel answered, "The thing comes from the LORD; we cannot speak to you anything bad or good. 51 Look, Rebekah is before you, take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the LORD has spoken."

52 When Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed himself to the ground before the LORD. 53 And the servant brought out jewelry of silver and of gold, and garments, and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave to her brother and to her mother costly ornaments. 54 Then he and the men who were with him ate and drank, and they spent the night there. When they rose in the morning, he said, "Send me back to my master." 55 Her brother and her mother said, "Let the girl remain with us a while, at least ten days; after that she may go." 56 But he said to them, "Do not delay me, since the LORD has made my journey successful; let me go that I may go to my master." 57 They said, "We will call the girl, and ask her." 58 And they called Rebekah, and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" She said, "I will." 59 So they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse along with Abraham's servant and his men. 60 And they blessed Rebekah and said to her,

Read Genesis 25:1–18

The descendants of Abraham are many and quite varied. Prior to his death, he saw the fulfillment of the promise God made to him.

Reflect: How did Abraham experience the covenant promises made to him by God?

Pray: Pray that you too, like Abraham, will see many great things that God has done for you in your life.

Act: Our heritage and ancestry form an important part of our identity. Think about who and what from your past has helped shape you as a person of faith. What can you learn from this?

“May you, our sister, become
thousands of myriads;
may your offspring gain possession
of the gates of their foes.”

⁶¹ Then Rebekah and her maids rose up, mounted the camels, and followed the man; thus the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

⁶² Now Isaac had come from^a Beer-lahai-roi, and was settled in the Negeb. ⁶³ Isaac went out in the evening to walk^b in the field; and looking up, he saw camels coming. ⁶⁴ And Rebekah looked up, and when she saw Isaac, she slipped quickly from the camel, ⁶⁵ and said to the servant, “Who is the man over there, walking in the field to meet us?” The servant said, “It is my master.” So she took her veil and covered herself. ⁶⁶ And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. ⁶⁷ Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent. He took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.

Abraham Marries Keturah

25 Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. ² She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. ³ Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan. The sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim. ⁴ The sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoah, Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah. ⁵ Abraham gave all he had to Isaac. ⁶ But to the sons of his concubines Abraham gave gifts, while he was still living, and he sent them away from his son Isaac, eastward to the east country.

The Death of Abraham

⁷ This is the length of Abraham’s life, one hundred seventy-five years. ⁸ Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people. ⁹ His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite, east of Mamre, ¹⁰ the field that Abraham purchased from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried, with his wife Sarah. ¹¹ After the death of Abraham God blessed his son Isaac. And Isaac settled at Beer-lahai-roi.

Ishmael’s Descendants

¹² These are the descendants of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah’s slave-girl, bore to Abraham. ¹³ These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, named in the order of their birth:

^a Syr Tg: Heb from coming to

^b Meaning of Heb word is uncertain

Read Genesis 25:19–34

Sibling rivalry between Isaac and Rebekah's twin sons, Esau and Jacob, begins in the womb and continues throughout their lives.

Reflect: Consider the ways in which this story is reminiscent of the story of Cain and Abel.

Pray: We often act and live according to certain societal and familial expectations. Pray for the strength to handle situations that do not go according to plan.

Act: This description of family life exemplifies imperfections and problems. What can I learn from this story and apply to my own life?

Nebioth, the firstborn of Ishmael; and Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, ¹⁴Mishma, Dumah, Massa, ¹⁵Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. ¹⁶These are the sons of Ishmael and these are their names, by their villages and by their encampments, twelve princes according to their tribes. ¹⁷(This is the length of the life of Ishmael, one hundred thirty-seven years; he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people.) ¹⁸They settled from Havilah to Shur, which is opposite Egypt in the direction of Assyria; he settled down^a alongside of^b all his people.

The Birth and Youth of Esau and Jacob

19 These are the descendants of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham was the father of Isaac, ²⁰and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, sister of Laban the Aramean. ²¹Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD granted his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived. ²²The children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is to be this way, why do I live?"^c So she went to inquire of the LORD. ²³And the LORD said to her,

"Two nations are in your womb,
and two peoples born of you shall be divided;
the one shall be stronger than the other,
the elder shall serve the younger."

²⁴When her time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb. ²⁵The first came out red, all his body like a hairy mantle; so they named him Esau. ²⁶Afterward his brother came out, with his hand gripping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob.^d Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

²⁷When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents. ²⁸Isaac loved Esau, because he was fond of game; but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Esau Sells His Birthright

²⁹Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. ³⁰Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stuff, for I am famished!" (Therefore he was called Edom.^e) ³¹Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." ³²Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" ³³Jacob said, "Swear to me first."^f So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. ³⁴Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank, and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

^a Heb *he fell*

^b Or *down in opposition to*

^c Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain

^d That is *He takes by the heel* or *He supplants*

^e That is *Red*

^f Heb *today*

Read Genesis 26:1–11

Because he is afraid, Isaac is dishonest about his relationship with Rebekah. Abimelech uncovers this deception. This story is very similar to the story about Abraham and Sarah recounted in Genesis 20.

Reflect: What do you think about Isaac's deception and dishonesty in this situation? How might you have acted?

Pray: Sometimes one may do what appears to be "the right thing" for "the wrong reasons." Pray for those who have misled you, whether intentionally or not.

Act: Isaac's deception and dishonesty about his relationship with Rebekah almost created serious problems. Consider how the maxim "honesty is the best policy" is an advisable way by which to live one's life.

Read Genesis 26:12–35

This passage describing the relationship between Isaac and Abimelech seems to parallel the earlier story in Genesis 21:22–34. The same promise made earlier to Abraham is made now to Isaac.

Reflect: What happens as a result of the forging of a relationship between Isaac and Abimelech?

Pray: Isaac goes to Beer-sheba and builds an altar to pray. Do I have a sacred or special place where I go to pray to God?

Act: Abimelech and Isaac enter into an agreement of mutual respect. In what ways do I strive to respect and live peaceably with those who are different from my faith tradition and religious beliefs?

Isaac and Abimelech

26 Now there was a famine in the land, besides the former famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Gerar, to King Abimelech of the Philistines. ²The LORD appeared to Isaac^a and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; settle in the land that I shall show you. ³Reside in this land as an alien, and I will be with you, and will bless you; for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will fulfill the oath that I swore to your father Abraham. ⁴I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, and will give to your offspring all these lands; and all the nations of the earth shall gain blessing for themselves through your offspring, ⁵because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws."

⁶ So Isaac settled in Gerar. ⁷ When the men of the place asked him about his wife, he said, "She is my sister"; for he was afraid to say, "My wife," thinking, "or else the men of the place might kill me for the sake of Rebekah, because she is attractive in appearance." ⁸ When Isaac had been there a long time, King Abimelech of the Philistines looked out of a window and saw him fondling his wife Rebekah. ⁹ So Abimelech called for Isaac, and said, "So she is your wife! Why then did you say, 'She is my sister'?" Isaac said to him, "Because I thought I might die because of her." ¹⁰ Abimelech said, "What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us." ¹¹ So Abimelech warned all the people, saying, "Whoever touches this man or his wife shall be put to death."

¹² Isaac sowed seed in that land, and in the same year reaped a hundredfold. The LORD blessed him, ¹³ and the man became rich; he prospered more and more until he became very wealthy. ¹⁴ He had possessions of flocks and herds, and a great household, so that the Philistines envied him. ¹⁵ (Now the Philistines had stopped up and filled with earth all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the days of his father Abraham.) ¹⁶ And Abimelech said to Isaac, "Go away from us; you have become too powerful for us."

¹⁷ So Isaac departed from there and camped in the valley of Gerar and settled there. ¹⁸ Isaac dug again the wells of water that had been dug in the days of his father Abraham; for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham; and he gave them the names that his father had given them. ¹⁹ But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of spring water, ²⁰ the herders of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herders, saying, "The water is ours." So he

^a Heb him

called the well Esek,^a because they contended with him. ²¹ Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that one also; so he called it Sitnah.^b ²² He moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it; so he called it Rehoboth,^c saying, "Now the LORD has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land."

²³ From there he went up to Beer-sheba. ²⁴ And that very night the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham; do not be afraid, for I am with you and will bless you and make your offspring numerous for my servant Abraham's sake." ²⁵ So he built an altar there, called on the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there. And there Isaac's servants dug a well.

²⁶ Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, with Ahuzzath his adviser and Phicol the commander of his army. ²⁷ Isaac said to them, "Why have you come to me, seeing that you hate me and have sent me away from you?" ²⁸ They said, "We see plainly

that the LORD has been with you; so we say, let there be an oath between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you ²⁹ so that you will do us no harm, just as we have not touched you and have done to you nothing but good and have sent you away in peace. You are now the blessed of the LORD." ³⁰ So he made them a feast, and they ate and drank. ³¹ In the morning they rose early and exchanged oaths; and Isaac set them on their way, and they departed from him in peace. ³² That same day Isaac's servants came and told him about the well that they had dug, and said to him, "We have found water!" ³³ He called it Shihbah;^d therefore the name of the city is Beer-sheba^e to this day.

Esau's Hittite Wives

³⁴ When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite; ³⁵ and they made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah.

Isaac Blesses Jacob

27 When Isaac was old and his eyes were dim so that he could not see, he called his elder son Esau and said to him, "My son"; and he answered, "Here I am." ² He said, "See, I am old; I do not know the day of my death. ³ Now then, take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field, and hunt game for me. ⁴ Then prepare for me savory food, such as I like, and bring it to me to eat, so that I may bless you before I die."

⁵ Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game and bring it, ⁶ Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "I heard your father say to your brother Esau, ⁷ 'Bring me game, and prepare for me savory food to eat, that I may bless you before the LORD before I die.' ⁸ Now therefore, my son, obey my word as I command you. ⁹ Go to the flock, and get me two choice kids, so that I may prepare from them savory food for your father, such as he likes; ¹⁰ and you shall take it to your father to eat, so that he may bless you before he dies." ¹¹ But Jacob said to his mother Rebekah, "Look, my brother Esau is a hairy man, and I am a man of smooth skin. ¹² Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be mocking him, and bring a curse on myself and not a blessing." ¹³ His

^a That is *Contention*

^b That is *Enmity*

^c That is *Broad places or Room*

^d A word resembling the word for *oath*

^e That is *Well of the oath or Well of seven*

Read Genesis 27:1–29

Sibling rivalry and family deception reach their height in this section. Jacob and Rebekah conspire to deceive Isaac.

Reflect: Esau had given away his birthright to Jacob earlier, in Genesis 25:27–34. Why do you think Esau would be surprised by Jacob's actions here?

Pray: Isaac's failing health made him vulnerable. Pray for those who are vulnerable and for those who try to take advantage of them.

Act: Maintaining honest relationships with others is desirable. What dishonest relationships in my own life need to be corrected? Are there people whom I have deliberately misled and with whom I need to restore an honest relationship?

Read Genesis 27:30–45

Esau is greatly angered by his brother Jacob's actions and seeks revenge. This account has overtones of the Cain and Abel story in Genesis 4.

Reflect: In a moment of weakness, Esau gave away his birthright to Jacob. What type of blessing does Esau now receive from Isaac?

Pray: Like Esau many of us hold a grudge against another—even perhaps a family member—based on a negative past experience. Pray for a willingness to let go of a past hurt and the strength to make a new beginning of a strained relationship.

Act: Difficult past events often affect our outlook on the present and future. While the past cannot be undone, consider positive ways to move forward, learning from the past and leaving the ultimate judgment for God to make.

mother said to him, "Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my word, and go, get them for me."¹⁴ So he went and got them and brought them to his mother; and his mother prepared savory food, such as his father loved.¹⁵ Then Rebekah took the best garments of her elder son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob;¹⁶ and she put the skins of the kids on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck.¹⁷ Then she handed the savory food, and the bread that she had prepared, to her son Jacob.

18 So he went in to his father, and said, "My father"; and he said, "Here I am; who are you, my son?"¹⁹ Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me; now sit up and eat of my game, so that you may bless me."²⁰ But Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?" He answered, "Because the LORD your God granted me success."²¹ Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Come near, that I may feel you, my son, to know whether you are really my son Esau or not."²² So Jacob went up to his father Isaac, who felt him and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau."²³ He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him.²⁴ He said, "Are you really my son Esau?" He answered, "I am."²⁵ Then he said, "Bring it to me, that I may eat of my son's game and bless you." So he brought it to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank.²⁶ Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come near and kiss me, my son."²⁷ So he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his garments, and blessed him, and said,

"Ah, the smell of my son
is like the smell of a field that the LORD has
blessed.

²⁸ May God give you of the dew of heaven,
and of the fatness of the earth,
and plenty of grain and wine.

²⁹ Let peoples serve you,
and nations bow down to you.
Be lord over your brothers,
and may your mother's sons bow down to you.
Cursed be everyone who curses you,
and blessed be everyone who blesses you!"

Esau's Lost Blessing

30 As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, when Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of his father Isaac, his brother Esau came in from his hunting.³¹ He also prepared savory food, and brought it to his father. And he said to his father, "Let my father sit

Read Genesis 27:46—28:9

Jacob is sent to his uncle Laban to seek a wife. A new location, different circumstances, and making new beginnings: these emerge again as important biblical themes in this section.

Reflect: What are the new beginnings that both of Isaac’s sons are undertaking?

Pray: Very often family circumstances require us to make significant changes and adaptations in our lives. Pray for your family and for other families that may be experiencing unsettling times.

Act: Making choices involves saying both yes and no at the same time. Consider the commitments that you make and resolve to be firm in them.

up and eat of his son’s game, so that you may bless me.” ³² His father Isaac said to him, “Who are you?” He answered, “I am your firstborn son, Esau.” ³³ Then Isaac trembled violently, and said, “Who was it then that hunted game and brought it to me, and I ate it all^a before you came, and I have blessed him?—yes, and blessed he shall be!” ³⁴ When Esau heard his father’s words, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, “Bless me, me also, father!” ³⁵ But he said, “Your brother came deceitfully, and he has taken away your blessing.” ³⁶ Esau said, “Is he not rightly named Jacob?^b For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright; and look, now he has taken away my blessing.” Then he said, “Have you not reserved a blessing for me?” ³⁷ Isaac answered Esau, “I have already made him your lord, and I have given him all his brothers as servants, and with grain and wine I have sustained him. What then can I do for you, my son?” ³⁸ Esau said to his father, “Have you only one blessing, father? Bless me, me also, father!” And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.

³⁹ Then his father Isaac answered him:

“See, away from^c the fatness of the earth shall
your home be,
and away from^d the dew of heaven on high.

⁴⁰ By your sword you shall live,
and you shall serve your brother;
but when you break loose,^e
you shall break his yoke from your neck.”

Jacob Escapes Esau’s Fury

⁴¹ Now Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him, and Esau said to himself, “The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob.” ⁴² But the words of her elder son Esau were told to Rebekah; so she sent and called her younger son Jacob and said to him, “Your brother Esau is consoling himself by planning to kill you. ⁴³ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; flee at once to my brother Laban in Haran, ⁴⁴ and stay with him a while, until your brother’s fury turns away—⁴⁵ until your brother’s anger against you turns away, and he forgets what you have done to him; then I will send, and bring you back from there. Why should I lose both of you in one day?”

⁴⁶ Then Rebekah said to Isaac, “I am weary of my life because of the Hittite women. If Jacob marries one of the Hittite women such as these, one of the women of the land, what good will my life be to me?”

^a Cn: Heb of all

^b That is *He supplants* or *He takes by the heel*

^c Or *See, of*

^d Or *and of*

^e Meaning of Heb uncertain

Read Genesis 28:10–22

Dreams play an important part in the life of many biblical figures. In this passage Jacob has a powerful dream and sets up a memorial stone to mark a special place for prayer, Bethel.

Reflect: What is the significance of Jacob's dream?

Pray: The Lord God communicates in various ways. Pray for the openness and insight to discern what God is presently asking you to do with your life.

Act: Once again, the image of a special place to pray emerges. Make the time and find a place in which you, like Jacob can pray alone to the Lord God.

28 Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, “You shall not marry one of the Canaanite women. ²Go at once to Paddan-aram to the house of Bethuel, your mother’s father; and take as wife from there one of the daughters of Laban, your mother’s brother. ³May God Almighty^a bless you and make you fruitful and numerous, that you may become a company of peoples. ⁴May he give to you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your offspring with you, so that you may take possession of the land where you now live as an alien—land that God gave to Abraham.” ⁵Thus Isaac sent Jacob away; and he went to Paddan-aram, to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob’s and Esau’s mother.

Esau Marries Ishmael’s Daughter

6 Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram to take a wife from there, and that as he blessed him he charged him, “You shall not marry one of the Canaanite women,” ⁷and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and gone to Paddan-aram. ⁸So when Esau saw that the Canaanite women did not please his father Isaac, ⁹Esau went to Ishmael and took Mahalath daughter of Abraham’s son Ishmael, and sister of Nebaioth, to be his wife in addition to the wives he had.

Jacob’s Dream at Bethel

10 Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. ¹²And he dreamed that there was a ladder^b up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³And the LORD stood beside him^c and said, “I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; ¹⁴and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed^d in you and in your offspring. ¹⁵Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” ¹⁶Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, “Surely the LORD is in this place—and I did not know it!” ¹⁷And he was afraid, and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”

18 So Jacob rose early in the morning, and he took

^a Traditional rendering of Heb *El Shaddai*

^b Or stairway or ramp

^c Or stood above it

^d Or shall bless themselves

Read Genesis 29:1–14

Jacob's journey to his uncle Laban continues. Jacob meets Rachel and recounts his story to Laban who recognizes him as "my bone and my flesh."

Reflect: What does it mean to say "Surely you are my bone and my flesh"?

Pray: Being part of a larger, extended family is part of one's spiritual identity. Prayerfully reflect upon your own story and the significant people in your life.

Act: Rachel acts as a messenger with good news for her father. Consider how you can be a messenger of good news to someone in your family.

the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. ¹⁹ He called that place Bethel;^a but the name of the city was Luz at the first. ²⁰ Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, ²¹ so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God, ²² and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that you give me I will surely give one-tenth to you."

Jacob Meets Rachel

29 Then Jacob went on his journey, and came to the land of the people of the east. ² As he looked, he saw a well in the field and three flocks of sheep lying there beside it; for out of that well the flocks were watered. The stone on the well's mouth was large, ³ and when all the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would roll the stone from the mouth of the well, and water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place on the mouth of the well.

⁴ Jacob said to them, "My brothers, where do you come from?" They said, "We are from Haran." ⁵ He said to them, "Do you know Laban son of Nahor?" They said, "We do." ⁶ He said to them, "Is it well with him?" "Yes," they replied, "and here is his daughter Rachel, coming with the sheep." ⁷ He said, "Look, it is still broad daylight; it is not time for the animals to be gathered together. Water the sheep, and go, pasture them." ⁸ But they said, "We cannot until all the flocks are gathered together, and the stone is rolled from the mouth of the well; then we water the sheep."

⁹ While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep; for she kept them. ¹⁰ Now when Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of his mother's brother Laban, and the sheep of his mother's brother Laban, Jacob went up and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of his mother's brother Laban. ¹¹ Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and wept aloud. ¹² And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's kinsman, and that he was Rebekah's son; and she ran and told her father.

¹³ When Laban heard the news about his sister's son Jacob, he ran to meet him; he embraced him and kissed him, and brought him to his house. Jacob^b told Laban all these things, ¹⁴ and Laban said to him, "Surely you are my bone and my flesh!" And he stayed with him a month.

Jacob Marries Laban's Daughters

¹⁵ Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my

^a That is *House of God*

^b Heb *He*

Read Genesis 29:15–30

This passage recounts another interesting story about family deception. Even though Jacob has been misled, he demonstrates his true love for Rachel.

Reflect: How much am I, like Jacob, willing to love under difficult circumstances?

Pray: Events in our lives do not always go according to what we may have planned. Pray that disappointments and setbacks will not adversely affect your outlook on life.

Act: Things are not always under our control. Consider how you deal with your own disappointments and setbacks. What can you learn from such experiences to help you in the future?

Read Genesis 29:31—30:24

Sibling rivalry between the sisters Leah and Rachel leads to drastic steps and actions. The fact that the various children are specifically named is significant.

Reflect: Like the naming of the animals by the man in the story of creation, the naming of offspring was important among our ancestors in the faith. Why do you think naming is important?

Pray: God calls each of us by name to do something unique and special. Pray to the Lord to discover what you are being called to do.

Act: Reflect on your own name and why it was chosen or on the names that you have given to your own children. Consider how the process of naming gives us a share in God's act of creation.

kinsman, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?" ¹⁶ Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. ¹⁷ Leah's eyes were lovely,^a and Rachel was graceful and beautiful. ¹⁸ Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." ¹⁹ Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to any other man; stay with me." ²⁰ So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her.

²¹ Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife that I may go in to her, for my time is completed." ²² So Laban gathered together all the people of the place, and made a feast. ²³ But in the evening he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her. ²⁴ (Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah to be her maid.) ²⁵ When morning came, it was Leah! And Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?" ²⁶ Laban said, "This is not done in our country—giving the younger before the firstborn. ²⁷ Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years." ²⁸ Jacob did so, and completed her week; then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as a wife. ²⁹ (Laban gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel to be her maid.) ³⁰ So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah. He served Laban^b for another seven years.

³¹ When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, he opened her womb; but Rachel was barren. ³² Leah conceived and bore a son, and she named him Reuben;^c for she said, "Because the LORD has looked on my affliction; surely now my husband will love me." ³³ She conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Because the LORD has heard^d that I am hated, he has given me this son also"; and she named him Simeon. ³⁴ Again she conceived and bore a son, and said, "Now this time my husband will be joined^e to me, because I have borne him three sons"; therefore he was named Levi. ³⁵ She conceived again and bore a son, and said, "This time I will praise^f the LORD"; therefore she named him Judah; then she ceased bearing.

30 When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister; and she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I shall die!" ² Jacob became very angry with Rachel and said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?" ³ Then she said, "Here is my maid Bilhah; go in to her, that she may bear upon my knees and that I too may

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Heb *him*

^c That is *See, a son*

^d Heb *shama*

^e Heb *lawah*

^f Heb *hodah*

Read Genesis 30:25–43

Jacob makes an interesting bargain with Laban.

Reflect: How honest are people's dealings with one another in this story?

Pray: Honesty is essential in all good relationships. Prayerfully reflect upon situations in which you have experienced dishonesty and pray for those who may have misled you.

Act: Relationships and dealings with others need to be fair and honest. Consider where you need to make improvements in your own life.

have children through her.”⁴ So she gave him her maid Bilhah as a wife; and Jacob went in to her.⁵ And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son.⁶ Then Rachel said, “God has judged me, and has also heard my voice and given me a son”; therefore she named him Dan.^a⁷ Rachel’s maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son.⁸ Then Rachel said, “With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled^b with my sister, and have prevailed”; so she named him Naphtali.

⁹ When Leah saw that she had ceased bearing children, she took her maid Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife.¹⁰ Then Leah’s maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son.¹¹ And Leah said, “Good fortune!” so she named him Gad.^c¹² Leah’s maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son.¹³ And Leah said, “Happy am I! For the women will call me happy”; so she named him Asher.^d

¹⁴ In the days of wheat harvest Reuben went and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, “Please give me some of your son’s mandrakes.”¹⁵ But she said to her, “Is it a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son’s mandrakes also?” Rachel said, “Then he may lie with you tonight for your son’s mandrakes.”¹⁶ When Jacob came from the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him, and said, “You must come in to me; for I have hired you with my son’s mandrakes.” So he lay with her that night.¹⁷ And God heeded Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son.¹⁸ Leah said, “God has given me my hire^e because I gave my maid to my husband”; so she named him Issachar.¹⁹ And Leah conceived again, and she bore Jacob a sixth son.²⁰ Then Leah said, “God has endowed me with a good dowry; now my husband will honor^f me, because I have borne him six sons”; so she named him Zebulun.²¹ Afterwards she bore a daughter, and named her Dinah.

²² Then God remembered Rachel, and God heeded her and opened her womb.²³ She conceived and bore a son, and said, “God has taken away my reproach”;²⁴ and she named him Joseph,^g saying, “May the LORD add to me another son!”

Jacob Prospers at Laban’s Expense

²⁵ When Rachel had borne Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, “Send me away, that I may go to my own home and country.²⁶ Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go; for you know very well the service I have given you.”²⁷ But Laban said to him, “If you will allow me to say so, I have learned by divination that the LORD has blessed me because of you;²⁸ name your wages, and I will give it.”

^a That is *He judged*

^b Heb *niphthal*

^c That is *Fortune*

^d That is *Happy*

^e Heb *sakar*

^f Heb *zabal*

^g That is *He adds*

²⁹ Jacob said to him, “You yourself know how I have served you, and how your cattle have fared with me. ³⁰ For you had little before I came, and it has increased abundantly; and the LORD has blessed you wherever I turned. But now when shall I provide for my own household also?” ³¹ He said, “What shall I give you?” Jacob said, “You shall not give me anything; if you will do this for me, I will again feed your flock and keep it: ³² let me pass through all your flock today, removing from it every speckled and spotted sheep and every black lamb, and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and such shall be my wages. ³³ So my honesty will answer for me later, when you come to look into my wages with you. Every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats and black among the lambs, if found with me, shall be counted stolen.” ³⁴ Laban said, “Good! Let it be as you have said.” ³⁵ But that day Laban removed the male goats that were striped and spotted, and all the female goats that were speckled and spotted, every one that had white on it, and every lamb that was black, and put them in charge of his sons; ³⁶ and he set a distance of three days’ jour-

ney between himself and Jacob, while Jacob was pasturing the rest of Laban’s flock.

³⁷ Then Jacob took fresh rods of poplar and almond and plane, and peeled white streaks in them, exposing the white of the rods. ³⁸ He set the rods that he had peeled in front of the flocks in the troughs, that is, the watering places, where the flocks came to drink. And since they bred when they came to drink, ³⁹ the flocks bred in front of the rods, and so the flocks produced young that were striped, speckled, and spotted. ⁴⁰ Jacob separated the lambs, and set the faces of the flocks toward the striped and the completely black animals in the flock of Laban; and he put his own droves apart, and did not put them with Laban’s flock. ⁴¹ Whenever the stronger of the flock were breeding, Jacob laid the rods in the troughs before the eyes of the flock, that they might breed among the rods, ⁴² but for the feebler of the flock he did not lay them there; so the feebler were Laban’s, and the stronger Jacob’s. ⁴³ Thus the man grew exceedingly rich, and had large flocks, and male and female slaves, and camels and donkeys.

Read Genesis 31:1–24

Laban’s attitude toward Jacob changes and, as a result, their family relationship becomes different.

Reflect: What happens when a relationship changes for the worse rather than the better?

Pray: When relationships are strained, pray for a better sense of understanding.

Act: Imperfect relationships challenge individuals in their interactions. Be willing to be satisfied with imperfections by being realistic about your expectations of what may be changed. Do not become discouraged if a prior relationship cannot be restored to “the way things once were.”

Jacob Flees with Family and Flocks

31 Now Jacob heard that the sons of Laban were saying, “Jacob has taken all that was our father’s; he has gained all this wealth from what belonged to our father.” ² And Jacob saw that Laban did not regard him as favorably as he did before. ³ Then the LORD said to Jacob, “Return to the land of your ancestors and to your kindred, and I will be with you.” ⁴ So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah into the field where his flock was, ⁵ and said to them, “I see that your father does not regard me as favorably as he did before. But the God of my father has been with me. ⁶ You know that I have served your father with all my strength; ⁷ yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not permit him to harm me. ⁸ If he said, ‘The speckled shall be your wages,’ then all the flock bore speckled; and if he said, ‘The striped shall be your wages,’ then all the flock bore striped. ⁹ Thus God has taken away the livestock of your father, and given them to me.

¹⁰ “During the mating of the flock I once had a dream in which I looked up and saw that the male goats

Read Genesis 31:25—32:2

Jacob and Laban confront each other over past interactions as they try to resolve a family squabble.

Reflect: What type of confrontation occurs?

Pray: In difficult situations when confrontation of another is necessary, pray for the grace to be fair and honest.

Act: Disputes and misunderstandings need to be resolved with prudence, fairness, and justice. When confronting another, focus on the specific issue and do not raise other past problems.

that leaped upon the flock were striped, speckled, and mottled. ¹¹ Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob,’ and I said, ‘Here I am!’ ¹² And he said, ‘Look up and see that all the goats that leap on the flock are striped, speckled, and mottled; for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. ¹³ I am the God of Bethel,^a where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me. Now leave this land at once and return to the land of your birth.’ ¹⁴ Then Rachel and Leah answered him, ‘Is there any portion or inheritance left to us in our father’s house? ¹⁵ Are we not regarded by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and he has been using up the money given for us. ¹⁶ All the property that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and to our children; now then, do whatever God has said to you.’

¹⁷ So Jacob arose, and set his children and his wives on camels; ¹⁸ and he drove away all his livestock, all the property that he had gained, the livestock in his possession that he had acquired in Paddan-aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.

¹⁹ Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel stole her father’s household gods. ²⁰ And Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean, in that he did not tell him that he intended to flee. ²¹ So he fled with all that he had; starting out he crossed the Euphrates,^b and set his face toward the hill country of Gilead.

Laban Overtakes Jacob

²² On the third day Laban was told that Jacob had fled. ²³ So he took his kinsfolk with him and pursued him for seven days until he caught up with him in the hill country of Gilead. ²⁴ But God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream by night, and said to him, ‘Take heed that you say not a word to Jacob, either good or bad.’

²⁵ Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, and Laban with his kinsfolk camped in the hill country of Gilead. ²⁶ Laban said to Jacob, ‘What have you done? You have deceived me, and carried away my daughters like captives of the sword. ²⁷ Why did you flee secretly and deceive me and not tell me? I would have sent you away with mirth and songs, with tambourine and lyre. ²⁸ And why did you not permit me to kiss my sons and my daughters farewell? What you have done is foolish. ²⁹ It is in my power to do you harm; but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, ‘Take heed that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad.’ ³⁰ Even though you had to go because you longed greatly for your father’s house, why did you steal my gods?’ ³¹ Jacob answered Laban, ‘Because I was afraid, for I thought that you would take

^a Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Heb *the river*

your daughters from me by force. ³²But anyone with whom you find your gods shall not live. In the presence of our kinsfolk, point out what I have that is yours, and take it." Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the gods.^a

³³ So Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the tent of the two maids, but he did not find them. And he went out of Leah's tent, and entered Rachel's. ³⁴ Now Rachel had taken the household gods and put them in the camel's saddle, and sat on them. Laban felt all about in the tent, but did not find them. ³⁵ And she said to her father, "Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise before you, for the way of women is upon me." So he searched, but did not find the household gods.

³⁶ Then Jacob became angry, and upbraided Laban. Jacob said to Laban, "What is my offense? What is my sin, that you have hotly pursued me? ³⁷ Although you have felt about through all my goods, what have you found of all your household goods? Set it here before my kinsfolk and your kinsfolk, so that they may decide between us two. ³⁸ These twenty years I have been with you; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried, and I have not eaten the rams of your flocks. ³⁹ That which was torn by wild beasts I did not bring to you; I bore the loss of it myself; of my hand you required it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. ⁴⁰ It was like this with me: by day the heat consumed me, and the cold by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes. ⁴¹ These twenty years I have been in your house; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times. ⁴² If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear^b of Isaac, had not been on my side, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God saw my affliction and

the labor of my hands, and rebuked you last night."

Laban and Jacob Make a Covenant

⁴³ Then Laban answered and said to Jacob, "The daughters are my daughters, the children are my children, the flocks are my flocks, and all that you see is mine. But what can I do today about these daughters of mine, or about their children whom they have borne? ⁴⁴ Come now, let us make a covenant, you and I; and let it be a witness between you and me." ⁴⁵ So Jacob took a stone, and set it up as a pillar. ⁴⁶ And Jacob said to his kinsfolk, "Gather stones," and they took stones, and made a heap; and they ate there by the heap. ⁴⁷ Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha:^c but Jacob called it Galeed.^d ⁴⁸ Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me today." Therefore he called it Galeed, ⁴⁹ and the pillar^e Mizpah,^f for he said, "The LORD watch between you and me, when we are absent one from the other. ⁵⁰ If you ill-treat my daughters, or if you take wives in addition to my daughters, though no one else is with us, remember that God is witness between you and me."

⁵¹ Then Laban said to Jacob, "See this heap and see the pillar, which I have set between you and me. ⁵² This heap is a witness, and the pillar is a witness, that I will not pass beyond this heap to you, and you will not pass beyond this heap and this pillar to me, for harm. ⁵³ May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor—the God of their father—"judge between us." So Jacob swore by the Fear^b of his father Isaac, ⁵⁴ and Jacob offered a sacrifice on the height and called his kinsfolk to eat bread; and they ate bread and tarried all night in the hill country.

⁵⁵^g Early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them; then he departed and returned home.

^a Heb *them*

^b Meaning of Heb uncertain

^c In Aramaic *The heap of witness*

^d In Hebrew *The heap of witness*

^e Compare Sam: MT lacks *the pillar*

^f That is *Watchpost*

^g Ch 32.1 in Heb

Read Genesis 32:3–21

Jacob continues dealing with past issues by seeking out his brother Esau and, with some anxiety, making an attempt at reconciliation.

Reflect: Why is reconciliation in strained relationships difficult?

Pray: Pray for someone from your past whom you need to forgive for the hurt and pain that he or she has caused you.

Act: Jacob has a plan for reconciliation with his estranged brother, Esau. Consider a specific plan or action that you could take to achieve reconciliation with another.

32 Jacob went on his way and the angels of God met him; ²and when Jacob saw them he said, “This is God’s camp!” So he called that place Mahanaim.^a

Jacob Sends Presents to Appease Esau

3 Jacob sent messengers before him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom, ⁴instructing them, “Thus you shall say to my lord Esau: Thus says your servant Jacob, ‘I have lived with Laban as an alien, and stayed until now; ⁵and I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, male and female slaves; and I have sent to tell my lord, in order that I may find favor in your sight.’”

6 The messengers returned to Jacob, saying, “We came to your brother Esau, and he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him.” ⁷Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two companies, ⁸thinking, “If Esau comes to the one company and destroys it, then the company that is left will escape.”

9 And Jacob said, “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O LORD who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your kindred, and I will do you good,’ ¹⁰I am not worthy of the least of all the steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan; and now I have become two companies. ¹¹Deliver me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I am afraid of him; he may come and kill us all, the mothers with the children. ¹²Yet you have said, ‘I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted because of their number.’”

13 So he spent that night there, and from what he had with him he took a present for his brother Esau, ¹⁴two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, ¹⁵thirty milch camels and their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. ¹⁶These he delivered into the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, “Pass on ahead of me, and put a space between drove and drove.” ¹⁷He instructed the foremost, “When Esau my brother meets you, and asks you, ‘To whom do you belong? Where are you going? And whose are these ahead of you?’ ¹⁸then you shall say, ‘They belong to your servant Jacob; they are a present sent to my lord Esau; and moreover he is behind us.’” ¹⁹He likewise instructed the second and the third and all who followed the droves, “You shall say the

^a Here taken to mean *Two camps*

Read Genesis 32:22–32

As Jacob wrestles with his past, he struggles with a messenger from God at Peniel.

Reflect: How in my own personal struggles have I “seen God face to face”?

Pray: Dealing with our past struggles is not easy. Pray for the strength and courage to face your past with honesty and learn how to improve in the future.

Act: History is a great teacher. What lessons from my own past—mistakes, errors, and sins—can teach me to do better in the future?

Read Genesis 33

Despite the difficult history between them, Jacob and Esau make attempts at reconciliation.

Reflect: What does “reconciliation” imply in terms of relationship?

Pray: Reconciliation is a difficult process to undertake. Pray to be able to take the first step in this process, as Jacob did.

Act: Thoughtful gestures and actions, along with a willingness to admit mistakes from the past, assist in the reconciliation process. Can you think of some specific steps you could take to initiate a process of reconciliation with someone from whom you are estranged?

same thing to Esau when you meet him, ²⁰ and you shall say, “Moreover your servant Jacob is behind us.” For he thought, “I may appease him with the present that goes ahead of me, and afterwards I shall see his face; perhaps he will accept me.” ²¹ So the present passed on ahead of him; and he himself spent that night in the camp.

Jacob Wrestles at Peniel

²² The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. ²³ He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. ²⁴ Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. ²⁵ When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob’s hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. ²⁶ Then he said, “Let me go, for the day is breaking.” But Jacob said, “I will not let you go, unless you bless me.” ²⁷ So he said to him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Jacob.” ²⁸ Then the man^a said, “You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel,^b for you have striven with God and with humans,^c and have prevailed.” ²⁹ Then Jacob asked him, “Please tell me your name.” But he said, “Why is it that you ask my name?” And there he blessed him. ³⁰ So Jacob called the place Peniel,^d saying, “For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.” ³¹ The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip. ³² Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the thigh muscle that is on the hip socket, because he struck Jacob on the hip socket at the thigh muscle.

Jacob and Esau Meet

33 Now Jacob looked up and saw Esau coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two maids. ² He put the maids with their children in front, then Leah with her children, and Rachel and Joseph last of all. ³ He himself went on ahead of them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near his brother.

⁴ But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. ⁵ When Esau looked up and saw the women and children, he said, “Who are these with you?” Jacob said, “The children whom God has graciously given your servant.” ⁶ Then the maids drew near, they and their children, and bowed down; ⁷ Leah likewise and her children drew near and bowed down; and finally Joseph and Rachel drew near, and they bowed down. ⁸ Esau said, “What do you

^a Heb he

^b That is *The one who strives with God or God strives*

^c Or *with divine and human beings*

^d That is *The face of God*

mean by all this company that I met?” Jacob answered, “To find favor with my lord.”⁹ But Esau said, “I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself.”¹⁰ Jacob said, “No, please; if I find favor with you, then accept my present from my hand; for truly to see your face is like seeing the face of God—since you have received me with such favor.¹¹ Please accept my gift that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have everything I want.” So he urged him, and he took it.

12 Then Esau said, “Let us journey on our way, and I will go alongside you.”¹³ But Jacob said to him, “My lord knows that the children are frail and that the flocks and herds, which are nursing, are a care to me; and if they are overdriven for one day, all the flocks will die.¹⁴ Let my lord pass on ahead of his servant, and I will lead on slowly, according to the pace of the cattle

that are before me and according to the pace of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir.”

15 So Esau said, “Let me leave with you some of the people who are with me.” But he said, “Why should my lord be so kind to me?”¹⁶ So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir.¹⁷ But Jacob journeyed to Succoth,^a and built himself a house, and made booths for his cattle; therefore the place is called Succoth.

Jacob Reaches Shechem

18 Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, on his way from Paddan-aram; and he camped before the city.¹⁹ And from the sons of Hamor, Shechem’s father, he bought for one hundred pieces of money^b the plot of land on which he had pitched his tent.²⁰ There he erected an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel.^c

The Rape of Dinah

34 Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the region.² When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the region, saw her, he seized her and lay with her by force.³ And his soul was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob; he loved the girl, and spoke tenderly to her.⁴ So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, “Get me this girl to be my wife.”

5 Now Jacob heard that Shechem^d had defiled his daughter Dinah; but his sons were with his cattle in the field, so Jacob held his peace until they came.⁶ And Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him,⁷ just as the sons of Jacob came in from the field. When they heard of it, the men were indignant and very angry, because he had committed an outrage in Israel by lying with Jacob’s daughter, for such a thing ought not to be done.

8 But Hamor spoke with them, saying, “The heart of my son Shechem longs for your daughter; please give her to him in marriage.⁹ Make marriages with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters for yourselves.¹⁰ You shall live with us; and the land shall be open to you; live and trade in it, and get property in it.”¹¹ Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, “Let me find favor with you, and whatever you say to me I will give.¹² Put the marriage present and gift as

^a That is *Booths*

^b Heb *one hundred qesitah*

^c That is *God, the God of Israel*

^d Heb *he*

Read Genesis 34

This is a rather bloody ancient tribal story explaining two things: why intermarriage with Canaanites is not right, and why the tribes of Levi and Simeon later on lost their role among the tribes and got no land. Their violence did them in!

Reflect: The violence of the two brothers leads to not only mass killing but also to permanent hatred between Israel and its neighbors. One act, terrible as it may be, leads to anger and revenge resulting in even worse crimes.

Pray: Consider the example of Jesus and how he forgave his killers as you pray for the gift of self-control over your anger and feelings of revenge.

Act: Try to realistically assess your threshold of anger and rage when you are wronged, and develop a few exercises to use in controlling such feelings in ways that prevent them from festering and deepening.

high as you like, and I will give whatever you ask me; only give me the girl to be my wife.”

13 The sons of Jacob answered Shechem and his father Hamor deceitfully, because he had defiled their sister Dinah. 14 They said to them, “We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a disgrace to us. 15 Only on this condition will we consent to you: that you will become as we are and every male among you be circumcised. 16 Then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters for ourselves, and we will live among you and become one people. 17 But if you will not listen to us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and be gone.”

18 Their words pleased Hamor and Hamor’s son Shechem. 19 And the young man did not delay to do the thing, because he was delighted with Jacob’s daughter. Now he was the most honored of all his family. 20 So Hamor and his son Shechem came to the gate of their city and spoke to the men of their city, saying, 21 “These people are friendly with us; let them live in the land and trade in it, for the land is large enough for them; let us take their daughters in marriage, and let us give them our daughters. 22 Only on this condition will they agree to live among us, to become one people: that every male among us be circumcised as they are circumcised. 23 Will not their livestock, their property, and all their animals be ours? Only let us agree with them, and they will live among us.” 24 And all who went out of the city gate heeded Hamor and his son Shechem; and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.

Dinah’s Brothers Avenge Their Sister

25 On the third day, when they were still in pain, two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, took their swords and came against the city unawares, and killed all the males. 26 They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem’s house, and went away. 27 And the other sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, because their sister had been defiled. 28 They took their flocks and their herds, their donkeys, and whatever was in the city and in the field. 29 All their wealth, all their little ones and their wives, all that was in the houses, they captured and made their prey. 30 Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, “You have brought trouble on me by making me odious to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites; my numbers are few, and if they gather themselves against me and attack me, I shall be destroyed, both I and my household.” 31 But they said, “Should our sister be treated like a whore?”

Read: Genesis 35:1–15

The chapter theme is set in verse 2: “Put away the foreign gods that are among you, and purify yourselves, and change your clothes.”

Reflect: The underlying message contained in verse 2 is that we need to make every effort to refrain from sin-filled ways.

Pray: Recall the first commandment: “I am the LORD your God...; you shall have no other gods before me.” Pray for the grace to grow closer to God, our creator and redeemer, and not be taken in by the gods of power, money, material objects, and the like.

Act: Develop a spiritual life that will strengthen your will to avoid near occasions of sin and that will help you give honor and praise to God.

Jacob Returns to Bethel

35 God said to Jacob, “Arise, go up to Bethel, and settle there. Make an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau.” ² So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Put away the foreign gods that are among you, and purify yourselves, and change your clothes; ³ then come, let us go up to Bethel, that I may make an altar there to the God who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone.” ⁴ So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods that they had, and the rings that were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak that was near Shechem.

⁵ As they journeyed, a terror from God fell upon the cities all around them, so that no one pursued them. ⁶ Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him, ⁷ and there he built an altar and called the place El-bethel,^a because it was there that God had revealed himself to him when he fled from his brother. ⁸ And Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died, and she was buried under an oak below Bethel. So it was called Allon-bacuth.^b

⁹ God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan-aram, and he blessed him. ¹⁰ God said to him, “Your name is Jacob; no longer shall you be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name.” So he was called Israel. ¹¹ God said to him, “I am God Almighty;^c be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall spring from you. ¹² The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you.” ¹³ Then God went up from him at the place where he had spoken with him. ¹⁴ Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with him, a pillar of stone; and he poured out a drink offering on it, and poured oil on it. ¹⁵ So Jacob called the place where God had spoken with him Bethel.

The Birth of Benjamin and the Death of Rachel

¹⁶ Then they journeyed from Bethel; and when they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel was in childbirth, and she had hard labor. ¹⁷ When she was in her hard labor, the midwife said to her, “Do not be afraid; for now you will have another son.” ¹⁸ As her soul was departing (for she died), she named him Ben-oni;^d but his father called him Benjamin.^e ¹⁹ So Rachel died, and she was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem), ²⁰ and Jacob set up a pillar at her grave; it is the pillar of Rachel’s tomb, which is there to this day. ²¹ Israel journeyed on, and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder.

^a That is *God of Bethel*

^b That is *Oak of weeping*

^c Traditional rendering of Heb *El Shaddai*

^d That is *Son of my sorrow*

^e That is *Son of the right hand* or *Son of the South*

Read Genesis 35:16–29

Jacob returns home but loses his beloved Rachel.

Reflect: Generally, in today's culture, families do not experience the pressures of extended travel, although some may find it necessary to relocate for economic or other reasons.

Pray: O God, have mercy on families and individuals whose lives are uprooted as a result of natural disasters, unemployment, oppression, or other challenging circumstances.

Act: In caring for family members, the friend next door, and those throughout the world who are in need, we fulfill living the second great commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Read Genesis 36

The intimate relationship of Edom and Israel is traced through Esau and his family.

Reflect: Esau and Jacob were twins, but that did not make for peace between them. Nevertheless, God made room for both of them in his plan.

Pray: Our prayer should especially seek to heal any jealousy, conflict, or resentments we have toward those closest to us.

Act: Jesus told us to leave our gift at the altar and be reconciled before we come to him (Mt 5:23–24). Do we make every effort to do so?

22 While Israel lived in that land, Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine; and Israel heard of it.

Now the sons of Jacob were twelve. ²³ The sons of Leah: Reuben (Jacob's firstborn), Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. ²⁴ The sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. ²⁵ The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maid: Dan and Naphtali. ²⁶ The sons of Zilpah, Leah's maid: Gad and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paddan-aram.

The Death of Isaac

27 Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had resided as aliens. ²⁸ Now the days of Isaac were one hundred eighty years. ²⁹ And Isaac breathed his last; he died and was gathered to his people, old and full of days; and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

Esau's Descendants

36 These are the descendants of Esau (that is, Edom). ² Esau took his wives from the Canaanites: Adah daughter of Elon the Hittite, Oholibamah daughter of Anah son^a of Zibeon the Hivite, ³ and Basemath, Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebaioth. ⁴ Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau; Basemath bore Reuel; ⁵ and Oholibamah bore Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. These are the sons of Esau who were born to him in the land of Canaan.

⁶ Then Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the members of his household, his cattle, all his livestock, and all the property he had acquired in the land of Canaan; and he moved to a land some distance from his brother Jacob. ⁷ For their possessions were too great for them to live together; the land where they were staying could not support them because of their livestock. ⁸ So Esau settled in the hill country of Seir; Esau is Edom.

⁹ These are the descendants of Esau, ancestor of the Edomites, in the hill country of Seir. ¹⁰ These are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz son of Adah the wife of Esau; Reuel, the son of Esau's wife Basemath. ¹¹ The sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz. ¹² (Timna was a concubine of Eliphaz, Esau's son; she bore Amalek to Eliphaz.) These were the sons of Adah, Esau's wife. ¹³ These were the sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These were the sons of Esau's wife, Basemath. ¹⁴ These were the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah, daughter of Anah son^b of Zibeon: she bore to Esau Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.

^a Sam Gk Syr: Heb *daughter*

^b Gk Syr: Heb *daughter*

Clans and Kings of Edom

15 These are the clans^a of the sons of Esau. The sons of Eliphaz the firstborn of Esau: the clans^a Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz, ¹⁶Korah, Gatam, and Amalek; these are the clans^a of Eliphaz in the land of Edom; they are the sons of Adah. ¹⁷These are the sons of Esau's son Reuel: the clans^a Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah; these are the clans^a of Reuel in the land of Edom; they are the sons of Esau's wife Basemath. ¹⁸These are the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah: the clans^a Jeush, Jalam, and Korah; these are the clans^a born of Esau's wife Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah. ¹⁹These are the sons of Esau (that is, Edom), and these are their clans.^a

²⁰These are the sons of Seir the Horite, the inhabitants of the land: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, ²¹Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan; these are the clans^a of the Horites, the sons of Seir in the land of Edom. ²²The sons of Lotan were Hori and Heman; and Lotan's sister was Timna. ²³These are the sons of Shobal: Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam. ²⁴These are the sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah; he is the Anah who found the springs^b in the wilderness, as he pastured the donkeys of his father Zibeon. ²⁵These are the children of Anah: Dishon and Oholibamah daughter of Anah. ²⁶These are the sons of Dishon: Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran. ²⁷These are the sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan. ²⁸These are the sons of Dishan: Uz

and Aran. ²⁹These are the clans^a of the Horites: the clans^a Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, ³⁰Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan; these are the clans^a of the Horites, clan by clan^c in the land of Seir.

³¹These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom, before any king reigned over the Israelites. ³²Bela son of Beor reigned in Edom, the name of his city being Dinhabah. ³³Bela died, and Jobab son of Zerah of Bozrah succeeded him as king. ³⁴Jobab died, and Husham of the land of the Temanites succeeded him as king. ³⁵Husham died, and Hadad son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the country of Moab, succeeded him as king, the name of his city being Avith. ³⁶Hadad died, and Samlah of Masrekah succeeded him as king. ³⁷Samlah died, and Shaul of Rehoboth on the Euphrates succeeded him as king. ³⁸Shaul died, and Baal-hanan son of Achbor succeeded him as king. ³⁹Baal-hanan son of Achbor died, and Hadar succeeded him as king, the name of his city being Pau; his wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, daughter of Mezahab.

⁴⁰These are the names of the clans^a of Esau, according to their families and their localities by their names: the clans^a Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, ⁴¹Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, ⁴²Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, ⁴³Magdiel, and Iram; these are the clans^a of Edom (that is, Esau, the father of Edom), according to their settlements in the land that they held.

Joseph Dreams of Greatness

37 Jacob settled in the land where his father had lived as an alien, the land of Canaan. ²This is the story of the family of Jacob.

Joseph, being seventeen years old, was shepherding the flock with his brothers; he was a helper to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father. ³Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves.^d ⁴But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him.

^a Or chiefs

^b Meaning of Heb uncertain

^c Or chief by chief

^d Traditional rendering (compare Gk): a coat of many colors; meaning of Heb uncertain

Read Genesis 37:1–11

Joseph's brothers found unbearable the love that Jacob expressed for Joseph. The fact that Joseph was clothed in a splendid robe only exasperated the brothers all the more.

Reflect: History reveals many examples of sibling rivalries, especially when honor, power, or money are involved. Joseph portrays himself as a model of wisdom, which drives the brothers to attempted murder.

Pray: Lord, free us from being envious. Instead, grant that we may recognize the talents that you have given us and use them according to your will.

Act: Even though we are good people, are there times when we feel proud or envious in relation to others?

Read Genesis 37:12–36

Three elements in this chapter provide images that have impacted Christianity throughout the ages: (1) a robe (long tunic); (2) dreams/hopes (a kingdom, united under one God); (3) selling someone for pieces of silver.

Reflect: Hatred led the brothers to sell Joseph for gain. Further, it led them to destroy his privileged status by delivering to Jacob the bloodstained robe to announce Joseph's supposed death.

Pray: Lord God, you were rejected because your message to love one another was too hard to accept. Grant that we may not only open our hearts to your love but always be willing to pass it on to others.

Act: When you come in contact with spiteful or doom-and-gloom individuals during your daily life, how do you deal with them?

5 Once Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. ⁶He said to them, "Listen to this dream that I dreamed. ⁷There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright; then your sheaves gathered around it, and bowed down to my sheaf." ⁸His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Are you indeed to have dominion over us?" So they hated him even more because of his dreams and his words.

9 He had another dream, and told it to his brothers, saying, "Look, I have had another dream: the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." ¹⁰But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him, and said to him, "What kind of dream is this that you have had? Shall we indeed come, I and your mother and your brothers, and bow to the ground before you?" ¹¹So his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

Joseph Is Sold by His Brothers

12 Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. ¹³And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." He answered, "Here I am." ¹⁴So he said to him, "Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock; and bring word back to me." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron.

He came to Shechem, ¹⁵and a man found him wandering in the fields; the man asked him, "What are you seeking?" ¹⁶"I am seeking my brothers," he said; "tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock." ¹⁷The man said, "They have gone away, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers, and found them at Dothan. ¹⁸They saw him from a distance, and before he came near to them, they conspired to kill him. ¹⁹They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. ²⁰Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; then we shall say that a wild animal has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams." ²¹But when Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." ²²Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him"—that he might rescue him out of their hand and restore him to his father. ²³So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the long robe with sleeves^a that he wore; ²⁴and they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

²⁵Then they sat down to eat; and looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with

^a See note on 37.3

their camels carrying gum, balm, and resin, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. ²⁶ Then Judah said to his brothers, “What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? ²⁷ Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.” And his brothers agreed. ²⁸ When some Midianite traders passed by, they drew Joseph up, lifting him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

²⁹ When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he tore his clothes. ³⁰ He returned to his brothers, and said, “The boy is gone; and I, where can I turn?” ³¹ Then they took Joseph’s

robe, slaughtered a goat, and dipped the robe in the blood. ³² They had the long robe with sleeves^a taken to their father, and they said, “This we have found; see now whether it is your son’s robe or not.” ³³ He recognized it, and said, “It is my son’s robe! A wild animal has devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces.” ³⁴ Then Jacob tore his garments, and put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned for his son many days. ³⁵ All his sons and all his daughters sought to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and said, “No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning.” Thus his father bewailed him. ³⁶ Meanwhile the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh’s officials, the captain of the guard.

Read Genesis 38

When reading chapter 38, keep the word “deceit” in the forefront and consider how deceit plays a pivotal part in the story.

Reflect: In the previous story, Jacob’s sons needed an out to hide their guilt; Tamar now uses reverse tactics to uncover Judah’s guilt. In both cases all kinds of excuses were used to cover up evil actions.

Pray: Jesus, you encouraged us to keep the commandments, which include not bearing false witness against our neighbor. Grant that we may have the wisdom to live our lives in truth and respect for our neighbor.

Act: Are you willing to step away from the thinking of “the crowd” when less than truthful words are spoken about another individual?

Judah and Tamar

38 It happened at that time that Judah went down from his brothers and settled near a certain Adullamite whose name was Hirah. ² There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua; he married her and went in to her. ³ She conceived and bore a son; and he named him Er. ⁴ Again she conceived and bore a son whom she named Onan. ⁵ Yet again she bore a son, and she named him Shelah. She^b was in Chezib when she bore him. ⁶ Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn; her name was Tamar. ⁷ But Er, Judah’s firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD put him to death. ⁸ Then Judah said to Onan, “Go in to your brother’s wife and perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her; raise up offspring for your brother.” ⁹ But since Onan knew that the offspring would not be his, he spilled his semen on the ground whenever he went in to his brother’s wife, so that he would not give offspring to his brother. ¹⁰ What he did was displeasing in the sight of the LORD, and he put him to death also. ¹¹ Then Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, “Remain a widow in your father’s house until my son Shelah grows up”—for he feared that he too would die, like his brothers. So Tamar went to live in her father’s house.

¹² In course of time the wife of Judah, Shua’s daughter, died; when Judah’s time of mourning was over,^c he went up to Timnah to his sheepshearers, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite. ¹³ When Tamar was told, “Your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep,” ¹⁴ she put off her widow’s garments, put on

^a See note on 37.3

^b Gk: Heb *He*

^c Heb *when Judah was comforted*

a veil, wrapped herself up, and sat down at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. She saw that Shelah was grown up, yet she had not been given to him in marriage. ¹⁵When Judah saw her, he thought her to be a prostitute, for she had covered her face. ¹⁶He went over to her at the roadside, and said, "Come, let me come in to you," for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. She said, "What will you give me, that you may come in to me?" ¹⁷He answered, "I will send you a kid from the flock." And she said, "Only if you give me a pledge, until you send it." ¹⁸He said, "What pledge shall I give you?" She replied, "Your signet and your cord, and the staff that is in your hand." So he gave them to her, and went in to her, and she conceived by him. ¹⁹Then she got up and went away, and taking off her veil she put on the garments of her widowhood.

²⁰When Judah sent the kid by his friend the Adullamite, to recover the pledge from the woman, he could not find her. ²¹He asked the townspeople, "Where is the temple prostitute who was at Enaim by the wayside?" But they said, "No prostitute has been here." ²²So he returned to Judah, and said, "I have not found her; moreover the townspeople said, 'No prostitute has been

here.'" ²³Judah replied, "Let her keep the things as her own, otherwise we will be laughed at; you see, I sent this kid, and you could not find her."

²⁴About three months later Judah was told, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar has played the whore; moreover she is pregnant as a result of whoredom." And Judah said, "Bring her out, and let her be burned." ²⁵As she was being brought out, she sent word to her father-in-law, "It was the owner of these who made me pregnant." And she said, "Take note, please, whose these are, the signet and the cord and the staff." ²⁶Then Judah acknowledged them and said, "She is more in the right than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah." And he did not lie with her again.

²⁷When the time of her delivery came, there were twins in her womb. ²⁸While she was in labor, one put out a hand; and the midwife took and bound on his hand a crimson thread, saying, "This one came out first." ²⁹But just then he drew back his hand, and out came his brother; and she said, "What a breach you have made for yourself!" Therefore he was named Perez.^a ³⁰Afterward his brother came out with the crimson thread on his hand; and he was named Zerah.^b

Joseph and Potiphar's Wife

39 Now Joseph was taken down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. ²The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man; he was in the house of his Egyptian master. ³His master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hands. ⁴So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him; he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. ⁵From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had, in house and field. ⁶So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge; and, with him there, he had no concern for anything but the food that he ate.

Now Joseph was handsome and good-looking.

^a That is *A breach*

^b That is *Brightness*; perhaps alluding to the crimson thread

Read Genesis 39

This dramatic story underscores Joseph's integrity and morality. Notice how the words "The LORD was with him" are used of Joseph in this chapter.

Reflect: Although sold as a slave earlier and now falsely accused and sentenced to prison, Joseph is still highly trusted. See verses 21–23, which tell of God continually watching over him.

Pray: Heavenly Father, help me to overcome my weaknesses which often lead me to doubt and second-guess myself. Grant that I may be worthy of your forgiveness and everlasting love.

Act: God is always on call, waiting for us to consult with him either through conversational prayer, formal prayer, or whatever format we are most comfortable with. Are we always ready to turn to the Lord?

⁷ And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me."⁸ But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Look, with me here, my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my hand.⁹ He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"¹⁰ And although she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not consent to lie beside her or to be with her.¹¹ One day, however, when he went into the house to do his work, and while no one else was in the house,¹² she caught hold of his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside.¹³ When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside,¹⁴ she called out to the members of her household and said to them, "See, my husband^a has brought among us a Hebrew to insult us! He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice;¹⁵ and when he heard me raise my voice and cry out, he left his garment beside me, and fled outside."¹⁶ Then she kept his garment by her until his master came home,¹⁷ and she told him the same story, saying, "The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to insult me;¹⁸ but as soon as I raised my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me, and fled outside."

¹⁹ When his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, saying, "This is the way your servant treated me," he became enraged.²⁰ And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined; he remained there in prison.²¹ But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love; he gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer.²² The chief jailer committed to Joseph's care all the prisoners who were in the prison, and whatever was done there, he was the one who did it.²³ The chief jailer paid no heed to anything that was in Joseph's care, because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made it prosper.

The Dreams of Two Prisoners

40 Some time after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker offended their lord the king of Egypt.² Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker,³ and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined.⁴ The captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he waited on them; and they continued for some time in custody.⁵ One night they both dreamed—the cupbear-

^a Heb *he*

Read Genesis 40

The ancients believed that God spoke in dreams. Joseph's youthful dreams may have seemed vain, but now God uses that gift for serious divine purposes while Joseph is most helpless.

Reflect: Joseph, the day-dreamer, now finds himself the responsible interpreter of God's will. His faith is strong, even in desolation, and he is emphatic about the fact that his power over dreams comes only from God.

Pray: Jesus, may our faith be as strong as that of Joseph. Help us to realize that the spiritual strength that we strive for is built on the faith and trust that you have placed within our hearts.

Act: How frequently do we "hope and pray" for situations to change or things to happen while neglecting to consider the plan that God has for us?

er and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison—each his own dream, and each dream with its own meaning. ⁶When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled. ⁷So he asked Pharaoh's officers, who were with him in custody in his master's house, "Why are your faces downcast today?" ⁸They said to him, "We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them." And Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them to me."

⁹So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, "In my dream there was a vine before me, ¹⁰and on the vine there were three branches. As soon as it budded, its blossoms came out and the clusters ripened into grapes. ¹¹Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand." ¹²Then Joseph said to him, "This is its interpretation: the three branches are three days; ¹³within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office; and you shall place Pharaoh's cup in his hand, just as you used to do when you were his cupbearer. ¹⁴But remember me when it is well with you; please do me the kindness to make mention of me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this place. ¹⁵For in fact I was stolen out of the land of the Hebrews; and here also I have done nothing that they should have put me into the dungeon."

¹⁶When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was favorable, he said to Joseph, "I also had a dream: there were three cake baskets on my head, ¹⁷and in the uppermost basket there were all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating it out of the basket on my head." ¹⁸And Joseph answered, "This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days; ¹⁹within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head—from you!—and hang you on a pole; and the birds will eat the flesh from you."

²⁰On the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, he made a feast for all his servants, and lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants. ²¹He restored the chief cupbearer to his cupbearing, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand; ²²but the chief baker he hanged, just as Joseph had interpreted to them. ²³Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

Joseph Interprets Pharaoh's Dream

41 After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile, ²and there came up out of the Nile seven sleek and fat cows, and they grazed in the reed grass. ³Then seven other cows, ugly

Read Genesis 41:1–36

Note how God has guarded Joseph through all dangers, not the least of which would be Pharaoh's wrath were Joseph to fail to interpret. But Joseph's trust in God gives him confidence.

Reflect: The number seven is essential to the meaning of the dreams. It is also an important number in the Bible: seven days of creation, seven seals and bowls in the book of Revelation, seven last words of Jesus, even forgiveness seventy times seven times! The number seven symbolizes completion and emphasizes the divine guidance of events.

Pray: Heavenly Father, during the course of my week may I be more aware of the blessings bestowed on me and more conscious of your goodness.

Act: Do you have the faith, as Joseph did, to turn over difficult situations to God for his answer?

and thin, came up out of the Nile after them, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. ⁴The ugly and thin cows ate up the seven sleek and fat cows. And Pharaoh awoke. ⁵Then he fell asleep and dreamed a second time; seven ears of grain, plump and good, were growing on one stalk. ⁶Then seven ears, thin and blighted by the east wind, sprouted after them. ⁷The thin ears swallowed up the seven plump and full ears. Pharaoh awoke, and it was a dream. ⁸In the morning his spirit was troubled; so he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh.

⁹Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "I remember my faults today. ¹⁰Once Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and put me and the chief baker in custody in the house of the captain of the guard. ¹¹We dreamed on the same night, he and I, each having a dream with its own meaning. ¹²A young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. When we told him, he interpreted our dreams to us, giving an interpretation to each according to his dream. ¹³As he interpreted to us, so it turned out; I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged."

¹⁴Then Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was hurriedly brought out of the dungeon. When he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came in before Pharaoh. ¹⁵And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." ¹⁶Joseph answered Pharaoh, "It is not I; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer." ¹⁷Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "In my dream I was standing on the banks of the Nile; ¹⁸and seven cows, fat and sleek, came up out of the Nile and fed in the reed grass. ¹⁹Then seven other cows came up after them, poor, very ugly, and thin. Never had I seen such ugly ones in all the land of Egypt. ²⁰The thin and ugly cows ate up the first seven fat cows, ²¹but when they had eaten them no one would have known that they had done so, for they were still as ugly as before. Then I awoke. ²²I fell asleep a second time^a I saw in my dream seven ears of grain, full and good, growing on one stalk, ²³and seven ears, withered, thin, and blighted by the east wind, sprouting after them; ²⁴and the thin ears swallowed up the seven good ears. But when I told it to the magicians, there was no one who could explain it to me."

²⁵Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "Pharaoh's dreams are one and the same; God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. ²⁶The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years; the

^a Gk Syr Vg: Heb lacks *I fell asleep a second time*

Read Genesis 41:37–57

Pharaoh recognizes God's blessing on Joseph and rewards him with rule over his kingdom because he is "one in whom is the spirit of God."

Reflect: Joseph always seems to have just escaped the worst—from his brothers, from Potiphar—but still he remained a servant to others. Suddenly all is reversed; his ability to interpret dreams, his wisdom, his strong desire to be a servant for the whole nation makes him an ideal ruler.

Pray: Pray that our leaders may see in their roles an opportunity to serve others.

Act: Our world is constantly made aware of the mishandling of power by people in responsible positions. Should I find myself in a position of leadership, may I serve others as Jesus willingly served us.

dreams are one. ²⁷ The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, as are the seven empty ears blighted by the east wind. They are seven years of famine. ²⁸ It is as I told Pharaoh; God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do. ²⁹ There will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt. ³⁰ After them there will arise seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; the famine will consume the land. ³¹ The plenty will no longer be known in the land because of the famine that will follow, for it will be very grievous. ³² And the doubling of Pharaoh's dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about. ³³ Now therefore let Pharaoh select a man who is discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. ³⁴ Let Pharaoh proceed to appoint overseers over the land, and take one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven plenteous years. ³⁵ Let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and lay up grain under the authority of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it. ³⁶ That food shall be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that are to befall the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish through the famine."

Joseph's Rise to Power

³⁷ The proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. ³⁸ Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find anyone else like this—one in whom is the spirit of God?" ³⁹ So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has shown you all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. ⁴⁰ You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command; only with regard to the throne will I be greater than you." ⁴¹ And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." ⁴² Removing his signet ring from his hand, Pharaoh put it on Joseph's hand; he arrayed him in garments of fine linen, and put a gold chain around his neck. ⁴³ He had him ride in the chariot of his second-in-command; and they cried out in front of him, "Bow the knee!"^a Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt. ⁴⁴ Moreover Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." ⁴⁵ Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-paneah; and he gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, as his wife. Thus Joseph gained authority over the land of Egypt.

⁴⁶ Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went through all the land of Egypt. ⁴⁷ During the seven plenteous years the

^a *Abrek*, apparently an Egyptian word similar in sound to the Hebrew word meaning to kneel

earth produced abundantly. ⁴⁸ He gathered up all the food of the seven years when there was plenty^a in the land of Egypt, and stored up food in the cities; he stored up in every city the food from the fields around it. ⁴⁹ So Joseph stored up grain in such abundance—like the sand of the sea—that he stopped measuring it; it was beyond measure.

⁵⁰ Before the years of famine came, Joseph had two sons, whom Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, bore to him. ⁵¹ Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh,^b “For,” he said, “God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father’s house.” ⁵² The second he named Ephraim,^c “For God has made me fruitful in the land of my misfortunes.”

⁵³ The seven years of plenty that prevailed in the land of Egypt came to an end; ⁵⁴ and the seven years of famine began to come, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in every country, but throughout the land of Egypt there was bread. ⁵⁵ When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph; what he says to you, do.” ⁵⁶ And since the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses,^d and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. ⁵⁷ Moreover, all the world came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the famine became severe throughout the world.

Read Genesis 42:1–7

God opens another stage in his plan by sending a famine that forces Joseph’s brothers to come to him. Drama builds!

Reflect: Jacob acts decisively but fearfully, since he has already lost one son. The brothers must be in agony knowing that they are responsible for that loss.

Pray: Lord, grant that I may never waver in my trust that your guiding hand is behind everything that occurs in my life. Through you all things are possible.

Act: Are our concerns for our fellow human beings similar to those of Jacob for his family? What steps do I take to ensure that the less fortunate are being cared for?

Joseph’s Brothers Go to Egypt

42 When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, “Why do you keep looking at one another? ² I have heard,” he said, “that there is grain in Egypt; go down and buy grain for us there, that we may live and not die.” ³ So ten of Joseph’s brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt. ⁴ But Jacob did not send Joseph’s brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he feared that harm might come to him. ⁵ Thus the sons of Israel were among the other people who came to buy grain, for the famine had reached the land of Canaan.

⁶ Now Joseph was governor over the land; it was he who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph’s brothers came and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground. ⁷ When Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he treated them like strangers and spoke harshly to them. “Where do you come from?” he said. They said, “From the land of Canaan, to buy food.” ⁸ Although Joseph had recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. ⁹ Joseph also remembered the dreams that he had dreamed about them. He said to them, “You are spies; you have come to see the nakedness of the land!” ¹⁰ They said to him, “No, my lord; your servants have come to buy food. ¹¹ We are all sons of one man; we are honest men; your servants have never been spies.” ¹² But he said to them, “No, you have come to see the nakedness of the land!” ¹³ They said, “We, your servants, are twelve brothers, the sons of a certain man in the land of Canaan; the youngest, however, is now with our father, and one is no more.” ¹⁴ But Joseph said to them, “It is

^a Sam Gk: MT *the seven years that were*

^b That is *Making to forget*

^c From a Hebrew word meaning *to be fruitful*

^d Gk Vg Compare Syr: Heb *opened all that was in (or, among) them*

Read Genesis 42:8–28

Joseph knows the thoughts of the schemers, but they do not recognize him. He will test his brothers to see if they have repented and changed their hearts.

Reflect: The tables have turned and ironically the brothers find themselves suffering because of their youngest brother! But we note that their guilt has led them to a new compassion and concern that they lacked earlier.

Pray: Almighty God, I ask that I may always be open to your forgiveness and unqualified love. I pray for an increase in trust and faith in your plan for me and ask for the grace to be able to meet your expectations.

Act: Are you open to reconciling with God and neighbor? Do you see Christ in those with whom you come in contact each day?

just as I have said to you; you are spies! ¹⁵ Here is how you shall be tested: as Pharaoh lives, you shall not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here! ¹⁶ Let one of you go and bring your brother, while the rest of you remain in prison, in order that your words may be tested, whether there is truth in you; or else, as Pharaoh lives, surely you are spies.” ¹⁷ And he put them all together in prison for three days.

¹⁸ On the third day Joseph said to them, “Do this and you will live, for I fear God: ¹⁹ if you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here where you are imprisoned. The rest of you shall go and carry grain for the famine of your households, ²⁰ and bring your youngest brother to me. Thus your words will be verified, and you shall not die.” And they agreed to do so. ²¹ They said to one another, “Alas, we are paying the penalty for what we did to our brother; we saw his anguish when he pleaded with us, but we would not listen. That is why this anguish has come upon us.” ²² Then Reuben answered them, “Did I not tell you not to wrong the boy? But you would not listen. So now there comes a reckoning for his blood.” ²³ They did not know that Joseph understood them, since he spoke with them through an interpreter. ²⁴ He turned away from them and wept; then he returned and spoke to them. And he picked out Simeon and had him bound before their eyes. ²⁵ Joseph then gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to return every man’s money to his sack, and to give them provisions for their journey. This was done for them.

Joseph’s Brothers Return to Canaan

²⁶ They loaded their donkeys with their grain, and departed. ²⁷ When one of them opened his sack to give his donkey fodder at the lodging place, he saw his money at the top of the sack. ²⁸ He said to his brothers, “My money has been put back; here it is in my sack!” At this they lost heart and turned trembling to one another, saying, “What is this that God has done to us?”

²⁹ When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them, saying, ³⁰ “The man, the lord of the land, spoke harshly to us, and charged us with spying on the land. ³¹ But we said to him, ‘We are honest men, we are not spies. ³² We are twelve brothers, sons of our father; one is no more, and the youngest is now with our father in the land of Canaan.’ ³³ Then the man, the lord of the land, said to us, ‘By this I shall know that you are honest men: leave one of your brothers with me, take grain for the famine of your households, and go your way. ³⁴ Bring your youngest brother to me, and I shall know that you are not spies but honest men. Then I will re-

Read Genesis 42:29–38

This touching scene between father and sons is the beginning of the brothers' change in response to their anguished cry, "What is this that God has done to us?"

Reflect: God punishes the brothers for their earlier evil deeds by exposing them to the same kind of danger. They are dismayed but their reaction begins to show their conversion. The brothers show a new concern for their father's love, and Reuben even takes full responsibility for protecting the life of Benjamin.

Pray: Loving God, may I always be conscious of and live the fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Act: Do I play the "blame game" not only with God but also with those at whom I can point a finger if something I did went wrong? Do my moral values shape my everyday practices?

lease your brother to you, and you may trade in the land."¹

35 As they were emptying their sacks, there in each one's sack was his bag of money. When they and their father saw their bundles of money, they were dismayed.³⁶ And their father Jacob said to them, "I am the one you have bereaved of children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and now you would take Benjamin. All this has happened to me!"³⁷ Then Reuben said to his father, "You may kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you. Put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you."³⁸ But he said, "My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he alone is left. If harm should come to him on the journey that you are to make, you would bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol."

The Brothers Come Again, Bringing Benjamin

43 Now the famine was severe in the land.² And when they had eaten up the grain that they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, "Go again, buy us a little more food."³ But Judah said to him, "The man solemnly warned us, saying, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.'⁴ If you will send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food;⁵ but if you will not send him, we will not go down, for the man said to us, 'You shall not see my face, unless your brother is with you.'" ⁶ Israel said, "Why did you treat me so badly as to tell the man that you had another brother?" ⁷ They replied, "The man questioned us carefully about ourselves and our kindred, saying, 'Is your father still alive? Have you another brother?' What we told him was in answer to these questions. Could we in any way know that he would say, 'Bring your brother down?'" ⁸ Then Judah said to his father Israel, "Send the boy with me, and let us be on our way, so that we may live and not die—you and we and also our little ones. ⁹ I myself will be surety for him; you can hold me accountable for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever. ¹⁰ If we had not delayed, we would now have returned twice."

11 Then their father Israel said to them, "If it must be so, then do this: take some of the choice fruits of the land in your bags, and carry them down as a present to the man—a little balm and a little honey, gum, resin, pistachio nuts, and almonds. ¹² Take double the money with you. Carry back with you the money that was returned in the top of your sacks; perhaps it was an oversight. ¹³ Take your brother also, and be on your way again to the man; ¹⁴ may God Almighty^a grant you mer-

^a Traditional rendering of Heb *El Shaddai*

Read Genesis 43:1–14

Jacob is severely tested in this story but he shows complete trust in God and a great honesty—missing in his earlier life—by sending his sons back to Egypt.

Reflect: Jacob has the human weakness and fear and sense of being a victim that we all suffer from at times. But he shows his faith in God’s care by risking even his beloved son Benjamin.

Pray: God in heaven, grant me the wisdom to trust in you. May I grow in my relationship with you, realizing that your hand is at work in all that I accomplish.

Act: Human weakness is something we all experience. Our faith in God can help us to overcome that weakness. Whether we are faced with an occasion of sin or a habit difficult to control, God is there to listen to our pleas and come to our assistance.

Read Genesis 43:15–34

The Joseph story is unique for its portrayal of strong human emotions, and it reveals how God uses our deepest feelings and convictions to direct human events.

Reflect: Joseph’s joy at seeing his brothers helps heal the hurt they have done to him and illustrates the generous forgiveness God gives to repentant sinners—it is an Old Testament version of the prodigal son story!

Pray: Lord, give me the strength to forgive those who offend me and grant me the initiative to follow your path and live in harmony with others.

Act: Whenever the opportunity presents itself, do not hesitate to respond to individuals who wish to return to the faith after having been away from it.

cy before the man, so that he may send back your other brother and Benjamin. As for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.”¹⁵ So the men took the present, and they took double the money with them, as well as Benjamin. Then they went on their way down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph.

16 When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, “Bring the men into the house, and slaughter an animal and make ready, for the men are to dine with me at noon.”¹⁷ The man did as Joseph said, and brought the men to Joseph’s house.¹⁸ Now the men were afraid because they were brought to Joseph’s house, and they said, “It is because of the money, replaced in our sacks the first time, that we have been brought in, so that he may have an opportunity to fall upon us, to make slaves of us and take our donkeys.”¹⁹ So they went up to the steward of Joseph’s house and spoke with him at the entrance to the house.²⁰ They said, “Oh, my lord, we came down the first time to buy food;²¹ and when we came to the lodging place we opened our sacks, and there was each one’s money in the top of his sack, our money in full weight. So we have brought it back with us.²² Moreover we have brought down with us additional money to buy food. We do not know who put our money in our sacks.”²³ He replied, “Rest assured, do not be afraid; your God and the God of your father must have put treasure in your sacks for you; I received your money.” Then he brought Simeon out to them.²⁴ When the steward^a had brought the men into Joseph’s house, and given them water, and they had washed their feet, and when he had given their donkeys fodder,²⁵ they made the present ready for Joseph’s coming at noon, for they had heard that they would dine there.

26 When Joseph came home, they brought him the present that they had carried into the house, and bowed to the ground before him.²⁷ He inquired about their welfare, and said, “Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?”²⁸ They said, “Your servant our father is well; he is still alive.” And they bowed their heads and did obeisance.²⁹ Then he looked up and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother’s son, and said, “Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me? God be gracious to you, my son!”³⁰ With that, Joseph hurried out, because he was overcome with affection for his brother, and he was about to weep. So he went into a private room and wept there.³¹ Then he washed his face and came out; and controlling himself he said, “Serve the meal.”³² They served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not

^a Heb *the man*

eat with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians.³³ When they were seated before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth, the men looked at one another

in amazement.³⁴ Portions were taken to them from Joseph's table, but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs. So they drank and were merry with him.

Read Genesis 44:1–13

Joseph tries one more test—a very cunning and deceitful trap for the brothers. He intends to see how they would react if Benjamin's fate were in fact placed at risk.

Reflect: Joseph's cunning could be considered part of his revenge for what his brothers did to him. But he is more intent on seeing whether they really care about the boy enough to sacrifice themselves for him.

Pray: Dear Lord, I pray for your guidance to help me to overcome my weakness for self-satisfaction or scheming against another. Grant that I may follow the example of Jesus who, when dying on the cross, prayed to his heavenly Father: "Forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

Act: A logical extension of the gospel message is the application of Christian values—such as forgiveness—in the marketplace.

Joseph Detains Benjamin

44 Then he commanded the steward of his house, "Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money in the top of his sack. ²Put my cup, the silver cup, in the top of the sack of the youngest, with his money for the grain." And he did as Joseph told him. ³As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away with their donkeys. ⁴When they had gone only a short distance from the city, Joseph said to his steward, "Go, follow after the men; and when you overtake them, say to them, 'Why have you returned evil for good? Why have you stolen my silver cup?'^a ⁵Is it not from this that my lord drinks? Does he not indeed use it for divination? You have done wrong in doing this."

⁶When he overtook them, he repeated these words to them. ⁷They said to him, "Why does my lord speak such words as these? Far be it from your servants that they should do such a thing! ⁸Look, the money that we found at the top of our sacks, we brought back to you from the land of Canaan; why then would we steal silver or gold from your lord's house? ⁹Should it be found with any one of your servants, let him die; moreover the rest of us will become my lord's slaves." ¹⁰He said, "Even so; in accordance with your words, let it be: he with whom it is found shall become my slave, but the rest of you shall go free." ¹¹Then each one quickly lowered his sack to the ground, and each opened his sack. ¹²He searched, beginning with the eldest and ending with the youngest; and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. ¹³At this they tore their clothes. Then each one loaded his donkey, and they returned to the city.

¹⁴Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house while he was still there; and they fell to the ground before him. ¹⁵Joseph said to them, "What deed is this that you have done? Do you not know that one such as I can practice divination?" ¹⁶And Judah said, "What can we say to my lord? What can we speak? How can we clear ourselves? God has found out the guilt of your servants; here we are then, my lord's slaves, both we and also the one in whose possession the cup has been found." ¹⁷But he said, "Far be it from me that I should do so! Only the one in whose possession the cup was found shall be my slave; but as for you, go up in peace to your father."

^a Gk Compare Vg: Heb lacks *Why have you stolen my silver cup?*

Read Genesis 44:14–34

Judah stands up and not only pleads for Benjamin's life but offers his own life in place of his brother's. Now Joseph knows they have changed.

Reflect: Judah's deep reverence for his father, care for his youngest brother, and a willingness to sacrifice himself in place of Benjamin give us a model of what an ideal Israelite should be.

Pray: I will ask God to help me realize how my own faults and evil acts have hurt others, and I will try to exercise greater compassion toward them.

Act: Judah presents a model of the humble and repentant person who takes responsibility for his past sin and makes a commitment to act differently. What can I learn from his example?

Read Genesis 45:1–15

This scene touches the emotions like almost no other passage in the scriptures. The text is written by a master, and beyond the powerful depiction of reconciliation, we can see God's hand at work.

Reflect: The climax of the scene is Joseph's statement in verses 7–8. God had watched over Joseph, guiding everything that happened in order that all their lives might be saved.

Pray: Lord, reconciliation is not one of my strong points. Teach me not only to forgive but also to seek forgiveness, with the resolve to strengthen my spiritual life through loving thoughts, words, and deeds.

Act: It is important to remind ourselves and to remind others that God's saving intervention is at work in our daily interactions—if only we are open to accepting it.

Judah Pleads for Benjamin's Release

18 Then Judah stepped up to him and said, "O my lord, let your servant please speak a word in my lord's ears, and do not be angry with your servant; for you are like Pharaoh himself. ¹⁹ My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Have you a father or a brother?' ²⁰ And we said to my lord, 'We have a father, an old man, and a young brother, the child of his old age. His brother is dead; he alone is left of his mother's children, and his father loves him.' ²¹ Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me, so that I may set my eyes on him.' ²² We said to my lord, 'The boy cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.' ²³ Then you said to your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall see my face no more.' ²⁴ When we went back to your servant my father we told him the words of my lord. ²⁵ And when our father said, 'Go again, buy us a little food,' ²⁶ we said, 'We cannot go down. Only if our youngest brother goes with us, will we go down; for we cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us.' ²⁷ Then your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons; ²⁸ one left me, and I said, Surely he has been torn to pieces; and I have never seen him since. ²⁹ If you take this one also from me, and harm comes to him, you will bring down my gray hairs in sorrow to Sheol.' ³⁰ Now therefore, when I come to your servant my father and the boy is not with us, then, as his life is bound up in the boy's life, ³¹ when he sees that the boy is not with us, he will die; and your servants will bring down the gray hairs of your servant our father with sorrow to Sheol. ³² For your servant became surety for the boy to my father, saying, 'If I do not bring him back to you, then I will bear the blame in the sight of my father all my life.' ³³ Now therefore, please let your servant remain as a slave to my lord in place of the boy; and let the boy go back with his brothers. ³⁴ For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I fear to see the suffering that would come upon my father."

Joseph Reveals Himself to His Brothers

45 Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, "Send everyone away from me." So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. ² And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. ³ Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence.

Read Genesis 45:16–28

The story does not end with the brothers' repentance. God has an even greater plan that involves getting Jacob to come to Egypt to set the stage, centuries later, for the exodus.

Reflect: The focus is on returning to the promises made to Jacob in chapters 28, 32, and 35. Jacob moves to Egypt in response to the generosity of a pharaoh who honors the God of Joseph.

Pray: Ask that God may enlighten each of us to recognize the Lord's acting in our lives and in the lives of those around us and to help us share our spiritual insights with one another.

Act: Do we rejoice in the gifts of others and want to participate as a Christian community in making God known?

4 Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come closer to me." And they came closer. He said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. ⁷God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸So it was not you who sent me here, but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. ⁹Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. ¹⁰You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹I will provide for you there—since there are five more years of famine to come—so that you and your household, and all that you have, will not come to poverty.' ¹²And now your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that it is my own mouth that speaks to you. ¹³You must tell my father how greatly I am honored in Egypt, and all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here." ¹⁴Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, while Benjamin wept upon his neck. ¹⁵And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him.

16 When the report was heard in Pharaoh's house, "Joseph's brothers have come," Pharaoh and his servants were pleased. ¹⁷Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say to your brothers, 'Do this: load your animals and go back to the land of Canaan. ¹⁸Take your father and your households and come to me, so that I may give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you may enjoy the fat of the land.' ¹⁹You are further charged to say, 'Do this: take wagons from the land of Egypt for your little ones and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. ²⁰Give no thought to your possessions, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.'"

21 The sons of Israel did so. Joseph gave them wagons according to the instruction of Pharaoh, and he gave them provisions for the journey. ²²To each one of them he gave a set of garments; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five sets of garments. ²³To his father he sent the following: ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain, bread, and provision for his father on the journey. ²⁴Then he sent his brothers on their way,

and as they were leaving he said to them, “Do not quarrel^a along the way.”

25 So they went up out of Egypt and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. ²⁶And they told him, “Joseph is still alive! He is even ruler over all the land of Egypt.” He was stunned; he could not

believe them. ²⁷But when they told him all the words of Joseph that he had said to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. ²⁸Israel said, “Enough! My son Joseph is still alive. I must go and see him before I die.”

Read Genesis 46:1–30

This chapter brings to Egypt the family of Jacob—seventy persons in all. Thus God symbolically completes his plan. Fulfillment of the promise is temporarily postponed, but it is not in danger.

Reflect: Jacob’s fears are calmed because he holds the promise of God that his descendants will be a great nation. So he moves again, as Abraham once had, in response to God’s call. He places the future of his family in God’s hands.

Pray: Lord, come to my assistance, especially in times when fear overcomes me and when making a difficult decision is necessary. Teach me trust. Teach me to develop a stronger relationship with you and to listen for your word rather than to do my own guessing.

Act: Consider setting aside a special time each day to grow in knowledge and appreciation for what the Lord has done and is doing for you.

Jacob Brings His Whole Family to Egypt

46 When Israel set out on his journey with all that he had and came to Beer-sheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. ²God spoke to Israel in visions of the night, and said, “Jacob, Jacob.” And he said, “Here I am.” ³Then he said, “I am God,^b the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. ⁴I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again; and Joseph’s own hand shall close your eyes.”

⁵Then Jacob set out from Beer-sheba; and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob, their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons that Pharaoh had sent to carry him. ⁶They also took their livestock and the goods that they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and they came into Egypt, Jacob and all his offspring with him, ⁷his sons, and his sons’ sons with him, his daughters, and his sons’ daughters; all his offspring he brought with him into Egypt.

⁸Now these are the names of the Israelites, Jacob and his offspring, who came to Egypt. Reuben, Jacob’s firstborn, ⁹and the children of Reuben: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. ¹⁰The children of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul,^c the son of a Canaanite woman. ¹¹The children of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. ¹²The children of Judah: Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah (but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan); and the children of Perez were Hezron and Hamul. ¹³The children of Issachar: Tola, Puvah, Jashub,^d and Shimron. ¹⁴The children of Zebulun: Sered, Elon, and Jahleel ¹⁵(these are the sons of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob in Paddan-aram, together with his daughter Dinah; in all his sons and his daughters numbered thirty-three). ¹⁶The children of Gad: Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli. ¹⁷The children of Asher: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, Beriah, and their sister Serah. The children of Beriah: Heber and Malchiel ¹⁸(these are the children of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to his daughter Leah; and these she bore to Jacob—sixteen persons). ¹⁹The children of Jacob’s wife Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. ²⁰To Joseph in the land of Egypt

^a Or be agitated

^b Heb the God

^c Or Saul

^d Compare Sam Gk Num 26.24; 1 Chr 7.1: MT Job

Read Genesis 46:31—47:12

The story describes how Israel was settled in the “land of Goshen” in the Egyptian Delta. It is a blessed land, but will become the place of slavery in the book of Exodus.

Reflect: Jacob’s faith was rewarded. Consider times in your own life when your faith has been rewarded.

Pray: Lord, my blessings are numerous and I cannot imagine where I would be without you guiding my way. Increase my fidelity, so that everything I do on life’s journey may be according to God’s will.

Act: Take the time to be grateful for all that God has done for you.

were born Manasseh and Ephraim, whom Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, bore to him.²¹ The children of Benjamin: Bela, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard²² (these are the children of Rachel, who were born to Jacob—fourteen persons in all).²³ The children of Dan: Hashum.^a²⁴ The children of Naphtali: Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem²⁵ (these are the children of Bilhah, whom Laban gave to his daughter Rachel, and these she bore to Jacob—seven persons in all).²⁶ All the persons belonging to Jacob who came into Egypt, who were his own offspring, not including the wives of his sons, were sixty-six persons in all.²⁷ The children of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt, were two; all the persons of the house of Jacob who came into Egypt were seventy.

Jacob Settles in Goshen

28 Israel^b sent Judah ahead to Joseph to lead the way before him into Goshen. When they came to the land of Goshen,²⁹ Joseph made ready his chariot and went up to meet his father Israel in Goshen. He presented himself to him, fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while.³⁰ Israel said to Joseph, “I can die now, having seen for myself that you are still alive.”³¹ Joseph said to his brothers and to his father’s household, “I will go up and tell Pharaoh, and will say to him, ‘My brothers and my father’s household, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me.’³² The men are shepherds, for they have been keepers of livestock; and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have.’³³ When Pharaoh calls you, and says, ‘What is your occupation?’³⁴ you shall say, ‘Your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth even until now, both we and our ancestors’—in order that you may settle in the land of Goshen, because all shepherds are abhorrent to the Egyptians.”

47 So Joseph went and told Pharaoh, “My father and my brothers, with their flocks and herds and all that they possess, have come from the land of Canaan; they are now in the land of Goshen.”² From among his brothers he took five men and presented them to Pharaoh.³ Pharaoh said to his brothers, “What is your occupation?” And they said to Pharaoh, “Your servants are shepherds, as our ancestors were.”⁴ They said to Pharaoh, “We have come to reside as aliens in the land; for there is no pasture for your servants’ flocks because the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. Now, we ask you, let your servants settle in the land of Goshen.”⁵ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Your father

^a Gk: Heb *Hushim*

^b Heb *He*

Read Genesis 47:13–26

The detailed description of how Joseph cleverly got all the land under the control of the pharaoh was told to show Joseph's wisdom in governing—a skill that was highly prized in the ancient world.

Reflect: Some scholars think that Joseph is a model for Solomon, the wise king, and that this story justifies Solomon's seizure of the land and rights belonging originally to each tribe. But the story also explains how Israel rightfully gained land in Egypt.

Pray: Lord, help me to learn wisdom in governing the various aspects of my own life.

Act: Cultivating wisdom requires critical examination of our intentions and actions. Do we use our skills or knowledge to take advantage of others, or are we open to the choices God would have us make?

and your brothers have come to you. ⁶The land of Egypt is before you; settle your father and your brothers in the best part of the land; let them live in the land of Goshen; and if you know that there are capable men among them, put them in charge of my livestock."

⁷ Then Joseph brought in his father Jacob, and presented him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. ⁸ Pharaoh said to Jacob, "How many are the years of your life?" ⁹ Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The years of my earthly sojourn are one hundred thirty; few and hard have been the years of my life. They do not compare with the years of the life of my ancestors during their long sojourn." ¹⁰ Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from the presence of Pharaoh. ¹¹ Joseph settled his father and his brothers, and granted them a holding in the land of Egypt, in the best part of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had instructed. ¹² And Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father's household with food, according to the number of their dependents.

The Famine in Egypt

¹³ Now there was no food in all the land, for the famine was very severe. The land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine. ¹⁴ Joseph collected all the money to be found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, in exchange for the grain that they bought; and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. ¹⁵ When the money from the land of Egypt and from the land of Canaan was spent, all the Egyptians came to Joseph, and said, "Give us food! Why should we die before your eyes? For our money is gone." ¹⁶ And Joseph answered, "Give me your livestock, and I will give you food in exchange for your livestock, if your money is gone." ¹⁷ So they brought their livestock to Joseph; and Joseph gave them food in exchange for the horses, the flocks, the herds, and the donkeys. That year he supplied them with food in exchange for all their livestock. ¹⁸ When that year was ended, they came to him the following year, and said to him, "We can not hide from my lord that our money is all spent; and the herds of cattle are my lord's. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our lands. ¹⁹ Shall we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land in exchange for food. We with our land will become slaves to Pharaoh; just give us seed, so that we may live and not die, and that the land may not become desolate."

²⁰ So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh. All the Egyptians sold their fields, because the famine was severe upon them; and the land became

Read Genesis 47:27—48:22

Historically, the tribe of Joseph was broken up into two tribes: Manasseh and Ephraim. Although Manasseh was larger, Ephraim became more powerful and held the capital city, Samaria.

Reflect: The Bible presents detailed and extensive stories of origins because they underline how God guided the process of Israel's creation and ongoing existence.

Pray: Lord God, Jacob blessed Joseph's children by calling on you as shepherd and imploring the angel to watch over them. On my own journey may I always be aware that from birth to death you shepherd my life and provide me with my own guardian angel—my constant companion.

Act: Today's world revolves on an "instant wheel" that turns at unbelievable speed, so much so that personal communication is becoming a forgotten art. Even family communications can be affected. Consider the quality of communication in your own family. Could that quality be improved?

Pharaoh's. ²¹ As for the people, he made slaves of them^a from one end of Egypt to the other. ²² Only the land of the priests he did not buy; for the priests had a fixed allowance from Pharaoh, and lived on the allowance that Pharaoh gave them; therefore they did not sell their land. ²³ Then Joseph said to the people, "Now that I have this day bought you and your land for Pharaoh, here is seed for you; sow the land. ²⁴ And at the harvests you shall give one-fifth to Pharaoh, and four-fifths shall be your own, as seed for the field and as food for yourselves and your households, and as food for your little ones." ²⁵ They said, "You have saved our lives; may it please my lord, we will be slaves to Pharaoh." ²⁶ So Joseph made it a statute concerning the land of Egypt, and it stands to this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth. The land of the priests alone did not become Pharaoh's.

The Last Days of Jacob

²⁷ Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the region of Goshen; and they gained possessions in it, and were fruitful and multiplied exceedingly. ²⁸ Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years; so the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were one hundred forty-seven years.

²⁹ When the time of Israel's death drew near, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "If I have found favor with you, put your hand under my thigh and promise to deal loyally and truly with me. Do not bury me in Egypt. ³⁰ When I lie down with my ancestors, carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place." He answered, "I will do as you have said." ³¹ And he said, "Swear to me"; and he swore to him. Then Israel bowed himself on the head of his bed.

Jacob Blesses Joseph's Sons

48 After this Joseph was told, "Your father is ill." So he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. ² When Jacob was told, "Your son Joseph has come to you," he^b summoned his strength and sat up in bed. ³ And Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty^c appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and he blessed me, ⁴ and said to me, 'I am going to make you fruitful and increase your numbers; I will make of you a company of peoples, and will give this land to your offspring after you for a perpetual holding.' ⁵ Therefore your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are now mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are. ⁶ As for the offspring born to you after them, they shall be yours. They shall be recorded under the names of their brothers with regard

^a Sam Gk Compare Vg: MT *He removed them to the cities*

^b Heb *Israel*

^c Traditional rendering of Heb *El Shaddai*

to their inheritance. ⁷ For when I came from Paddan, Rachel, alas, died in the land of Canaan on the way, while there was still some distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath” (that is, Bethlehem).

⁸ When Israel saw Joseph’s sons, he said, “Who are these?” ⁹ Joseph said to his father, “They are my sons, whom God has given me here.” And he said, “Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them.” ¹⁰ Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, and he could not see well. So Joseph brought them near him; and he kissed them and embraced them. ¹¹ Israel said to Joseph, “I did not expect to see your face; and here God has let me see your children also.” ¹² Then Joseph removed them from his father’s knees,^a and he bowed himself with his face to the earth. ¹³ Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel’s left, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel’s right, and brought them near him. ¹⁴ But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, crossing his hands, for Manasseh was the firstborn. ¹⁵ He blessed Joseph, and said,

“The God before whom my
ancestors Abraham and Isaac
walked,
the God who has been my shepherd
all my life to this day,

¹⁶ the angel who has redeemed me
from all harm, bless the boys;
and in them let my name be
perpetuated, and the name of my
ancestors Abraham and Isaac;
and let them grow into a multitude
on the earth.”

¹⁷ When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; so he took his father’s hand, to remove it from Ephraim’s head to Manasseh’s head. ¹⁸ Joseph said to his father, “Not so, my father! Since this one is the firstborn, put your right hand on his head.” ¹⁹ But his father refused, and said, “I know, my son, I know; he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great. Nevertheless his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his offspring shall become a multitude of nations.” ²⁰ So he blessed them that day, saying,

“By you^b Israel will invoke blessings,
saying,
“God make you^b like Ephraim and
like Manasseh.”

So he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh. ²¹ Then Israel said to Joseph, “I am about to die, but God will be with you and will bring you again to the land of your ancestors. ²² I now give to you one portion^c more than to your brothers, the portion^c I took from the hand of the Amorites with my sword and with my bow.”

Jacob’s Last Words to His Sons

49 Then Jacob called his sons, and said: “Gather around, that I may tell you what will happen to you in days to come.

- ² Assemble and hear, O sons of Jacob;
listen to Israel your father.
- ³ Reuben, you are my firstborn,
my might and the first fruits of my vigor,
excelling in rank and excelling in power.
- ⁴ Unstable as water, you shall no longer excel
because you went up onto your father’s bed;
then you defiled it—you^d went up onto my couch!
- ⁵ Simeon and Levi are brothers;
weapons of violence are their swords.

^a Heb from his knees

^b you here is singular in Heb

^c Or mountain slope (Heb *shekem*, a play on the name of the town and district of Shechem)

^d Gk Syr Tg: Heb *he*

Read Genesis 49:1–27

This “Testament of Jacob” is considered a very ancient poem that predates the rest of the narrative of Joseph and Jacob. It speaks of blessings and curses for the different tribes.

Reflect: Jacob’s words are harsh toward some of his sons, but it is crystal clear that the future will belong to Judah and Joseph, both of whom will be blessed richly and with power over the others.

Pray: Lord God, grant us the wisdom to spread the news of your kingdom and help bring it about according to your will. Some of us are destined to be instructors, some counselors, some leaders; whatever part we are asked to play, may we do so as your servants, for the glory of God.

Act: In everything you do, remember that yours are the eyes, the ears, the hands that God has to work with to bring his message of love and understanding to the world.

- 6 May I never come into their council;
may I not be joined to their company—
for in their anger they killed men,
and at their whim they hamstring oxen.
- 7 Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce,
and their wrath, for it is cruel!
I will divide them in Jacob,
and scatter them in Israel.
- 8 Judah, your brothers shall praise you;
your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;
your father’s sons shall bow down before you.
- 9 Judah is a lion’s whelp;
from the prey, my son, you have gone up.
He crouches down, he stretches out like a lion,
like a lioness—who dares rouse him up?
- 10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet,
until tribute comes to him;^a
and the obedience of the peoples is his.
- 11 Binding his foal to the vine
and his donkey’s colt to the choice vine,
he washes his garments in wine
and his robe in the blood of grapes;
- 12 his eyes are darker than wine,
and his teeth whiter than milk.
- 13 Zebulun shall settle at the shore of the sea;
he shall be a haven for ships,
and his border shall be at Sidon.
- 14 Issachar is a strong donkey,
lying down between the sheepfolds;
- 15 he saw that a resting place was good,
and that the land was pleasant;
so he bowed his shoulder to the burden,
and became a slave at forced labor.
- 16 Dan shall judge his people
as one of the tribes of Israel.
- 17 Dan shall be a snake by the roadside,
a viper along the path,
that bites the horse’s heels
so that its rider falls backward.
- 18 I wait for your salvation, O LORD.
- 19 Gad shall be raided by raiders,
but he shall raid at their heels.
- 20 Asher’s^b food shall be rich,
and he shall provide royal delicacies.
- 21 Naphtali is a doe let loose
that bears lovely fawns.^c

^a Or *until Shiloh comes or until he comes to Shiloh or (with Syr) until he comes to whom it belongs*

^b Gk Vg Syr: Heb *From Asher*

^c Or *that gives beautiful words*

Read Genesis 49:28—50:26

The text tells of Jacob's death and return to the promised land to be with Abraham and Isaac. It ends with Joseph's words before his death, foretelling the return of all the rest of the people to the land that has been promised.

Reflect: The reconciliation of the brothers is renewed at the death of their father, and again Joseph reaffirms that God meant all these events for the good of the family (50:19–21).

Pray: Lord, come to my assistance. Help me to see Christ in others and your hand at work in all that happens.

Act: God's depth of compassion never ceases, even to those who stray from his teachings. When times get difficult, take a moment to recall the words of Joseph in Genesis 50:20–21: "Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones."

- 22 Joseph is a fruitful bough,
a fruitful bough by a spring;
his branches run over the wall.^a
- 23 The archers fiercely attacked him;
they shot at him and pressed him hard.
- 24 Yet his bow remained taut,
and his arms^b were made agile
by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob,
by the name of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel,
- 25 by the God of your father, who will help you,
by the Almighty^c who will bless you
with blessings of heaven above,
blessings of the deep that lies beneath,
blessings of the breasts and of the womb.
- 26 The blessings of your father
are stronger than the blessings of the eternal
mountains,
the bounties^d of the everlasting hills;
may they be on the head of Joseph,
on the brow of him who was set apart from
his brothers.
- 27 Benjamin is a ravenous wolf,
in the morning devouring the prey,
and at evening dividing the spoil."

28 All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them, blessing each one of them with a suitable blessing.

Jacob's Death and Burial

29 Then he charged them, saying to them, "I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my ancestors—in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite,³⁰ in the cave in the field at Machpelah, near Mamre, in the land of Canaan, in the field that Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite as a burial site.³¹ There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried; there Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried; and there I buried Leah—³²the field and the cave that is in it were purchased from the Hittites."³³ When Jacob ended his charge to his sons, he drew up his feet into the bed, breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.

50 Then Joseph threw himself on his father's face and wept over him and kissed him.² Joseph commanded the physicians in his service to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel;³ they spent forty days in doing this, for that is the time required for embalming. And the Egyptians wept for him seventy days.

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Heb *the arms of his hands*

^c Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

^d Cn Compare Gk: Heb *of my progenitors to the boundaries*

4 When the days of weeping for him were past, Joseph addressed the household of Pharaoh, "If now I have found favor with you, please speak to Pharaoh as follows: ⁵My father made me swear an oath; he said, 'I am about to die. In the tomb that I hewed out for myself in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me.' Now therefore let me go up, so that I may bury my father; then I will return." ⁶Pharaoh answered, "Go up, and bury your father, as he made you swear to do."

7 So Joseph went up to bury his father. With him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his household, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, ⁸ as well as all the household of Joseph, his brothers, and his father's household. Only their children, their flocks, and their herds were left in the land of Goshen. ⁹ Both chariots and charioteers went up with him. It was a very great company. ¹⁰ When they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, they held there a very great and sorrowful lamentation; and he observed a time of mourning for his father seven days. ¹¹ When the Canaanite inhabitants of the land saw the mourning on the threshing floor of Atad, they said, "This is a grievous mourning on the part of the Egyptians." Therefore the place was named Abel-mizraim;^a it is beyond the Jordan. ¹² Thus his sons did for him as he had instructed them. ¹³ They carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave of the field at Machpelah, the field near Mamre, which Abraham bought as a burial site from Ephron the Hittite. ¹⁴ After he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who had gone up with him to bury his father.

Joseph Forgives His Brothers

15 Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?" ¹⁶ So they approached^b Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this instruction before he died, ¹⁷ 'Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.' Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸ Then his brothers also wept,^c fell down before him, and said, "We are here as your slaves." ¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? ²⁰ Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. ²¹ So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones." In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

Joseph's Last Days and Death

22 So Joseph remained in Egypt, he and his father's household; and Joseph lived one hundred ten years. ²³ Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation; the children of Machir son of Manasseh were also born on Joseph's knees.

24 Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die; but God will surely come to you, and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." ²⁵ So Joseph made the Israelites swear, saying, "When God comes to you, you shall carry up my bones from here." ²⁶ And Joseph died, being one hundred ten years old; he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt.

^a That is *mourning* (or meadow) of Egypt

^b Gk Syr: Heb they commanded

^c Cn: Heb also came