

Joseph in Potiphar's house

39:1 Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites,¹ who had brought him down there. **2** And Jehovah was with Joseph, and made him a successful man; and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. **3** And his master saw that Jehovah was with him, and that Jehovah made all that he did prosper in his hand.² **4** So Joseph found favor in his eyes, and served him; and he made him overseer of his house, and put into his hand all that he had. **5** And it came to pass, from the time that he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that Jehovah blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of Jehovah was on all that he had, in the house and in the field. **6** So he left all that he had in Joseph's hand, and knew nothing of what he had, except for the bread that he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in body and appearance.

7 And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph, and said, "Lie with me".³ **8** But he refused, and said to his master's wife, "Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has given all that he has into my hand. **9** There is no one greater in this house than I, neither has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" **10** So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not listen to her, to lie with her, or to be with her. **11** But it happened on a certain day, that he went into the house to do his work; and none of the men of the house was there inside; **12** and she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me". But he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and went outside. **13** So when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside, **14** she called to the men of her house and said to them, "See, my husband has brought in a Hebrew to mock us; he came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice."⁴ **15** And it happened, when he heard that I raised my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me, and fled and went outside." **16** So she kept his garment with her until his master came home. **17** Then she spoke to him in the same way, saying, "The Hebrew servant whom you brought to us came in to me to mock me. **18** And it happened, when I raised my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me and fled outside."

Joseph in prison

39:19 So it was, when his master heard his wife's words, which she spoke to him, saying, "Your slave did to me according to these words", that his anger was aroused. **20** Then Joseph's master took him and put him in the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined;⁵ and there he stayed. **21** But Jehovah was with Joseph, and shewed him kindness, and gave him favor in the sight of the prison warden. **22** And the warden committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; whatever they did there, he was responsible. **23** The warden did not check on anything that was under Joseph's care, because Jehovah was with him, and Jehovah prospered whatever he did.

40:1 It came to pass after those things, that the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt. **2** And Pharaoh was very angry with his two officers, with the

¹ It was God's will that Joseph be bought by that man, so that he would end up in the right prison.

² But what could Potiphar have known about Jehovah? How did he know that it was Jehovah who blessed Joseph? He sensed that some supernatural power was with Joseph, and Moses, writing centuries later, gave that Power His proper name. We are not told how much time elapsed between Joseph's arrival and his promotion.

³ She certainly had an easy life, with servants to do all the housework, and Joseph was attractive. So what happened, happened.

⁴ How come no one heard that loud cry?

⁵ God used that bad woman to put Joseph in the right place, for the sequence of following events. She put her husband in a tight spot; he may very well have had his doubts about what really happened, but he had to keep up appearances. He must have advised the warden about Joseph, which is why he treated him differently. And he certainly wasn't pleased to have lost God's blessing on his home and business. Psalm 76:10 says that God uses the wrath of man to His own glory.

chief cupbearer and with the chief baker. **3** So he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison, the place where Joseph was confined. **4** And the captain of the guard put Joseph in charge of them, and he ministered to them; and they were in custody many days. **5** Then the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison, had a dream, both of them, each man's dream in one night,¹ each dream having its own interpretation. **6** And Joseph came in to them in the morning and looked at them, and saw that they were sad. **7** So he asked Pharaoh's officers, who were with him in the custody of his lord's house, saying, "Why are your faces sad today?" **8** And they said to him, "We each have had a dream, but there is no one to interpret it." And Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations come from God? Then tell me!"²

9 Then the chief cupbearer told Joseph his dream and said to him, "In my dream there was a vine before me. **10** On the vine there were three branches; when it budded, its blossoms came out, and its clusters ripened into grapes. **11** Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand." **12** Then Joseph said to him, "This is the interpretation of it: The three branches represent three days. **13** In three days' time Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your position, and you will give Pharaoh's cup into his hand, according to the former custom when you were his cupbearer."³ **14** But remember me when it goes well with you; and please show me kindness and make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house. **15** For I was indeed stolen away from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve to be put in this dungeon."⁴

16 When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said to Joseph, "I also dreamed, and there were three white baskets on my head. **17** And in the uppermost basket were all kinds of baked food for Pharaoh, and the birds ate it from the basket on my head." **18** So Joseph answered and said, "This is the interpretation of it: The three baskets represent three days. **19** In three days' time Pharaoh will lift off your head from you and hang you on a tree, and the birds will eat away your flesh from you."⁵ **20** So it happened, on the third day, Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker in the midst of his servants. **21** He restored the chief cupbearer to his office as cupbearer, and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand. **22** But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them. **23** However, the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him."⁶

Joseph and Pharaoh

41:1 Now it came to pass, after two full years, that Pharaoh had a dream; and behold, he was standing by the river.⁷ **2** And then, seven cows, well-favored and fat-fleshed, came up out of the river; and they fed in the meadow. **3** And then, seven other cows came up out of the river after them, ugly and emaciated, and stood beside the first cows on the river's bank. **4** Then the ugly and emaciated cows ate up the seven sleek and fat cows! Then Pharaoh awoke. **5** Then he slept and dreamed again; and behold, seven heads of grain, plump and healthy, grew up on one stalk. **6** And then, seven thin heads, scorched by the east wind, grew up after them. **7** And the seven thin heads devoured the seven plump and full heads! Then Pharaoh awoke, and indeed, it was a dream. **8** And it came to pass in the morning, that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called

¹ That they both had their dream on the same night was obviously from God; in fact, the dreams themselves were from God.

² Evidently Joseph expected God to give him the interpretations. Had God prepared him in some way?

³ God gave him the interpretation immediately.

⁴ Even though God had used Joseph in the prison, he wanted to get out, which was natural.

⁵ Joseph did nothing to soften the message!

⁶ That was typical of human nature without God.

⁷ The Nile.

all the magicians of Egypt, and all his wise men; and Pharaoh told them his dreams: but there was no one who could interpret them for Pharaoh.

9 Then the chief cupbearer spoke to Pharaoh, saying, “I must now confess my neglect.¹
10 Pharaoh was angry with his servants and put me in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, me and the chief baker. **11** And we each had a dream the same night, he and I, each dream having its own interpretation. **12** And a young Hebrew man was there with us, a slave of the captain of the guard. And we told them to him, and he interpreted our dreams for us; he interpreted to each man according to his dream. **13** And it happened just as he interpreted to us: he restored me to my position, and him he hanged!”

14 Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him quickly out of the dungeon. He shaved, changed his clothes and came in to Pharaoh. **15** So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it; but I have heard it said about you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it”. **16** Joseph answered Pharaoh, “Not I; God will give Pharaoh a propitious answer”. **17** Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “In my dream, I was standing on the bank of the river. **18** And then, seven cows, well-favored and fat-fleshed, came up out of the river, and they fed in the meadow. **19** And then, seven other cows came up after them; they were scrawny, very ugly and emaciated; such as I have never seen in all the land of Egypt.”² **20** Then the ugly and emaciated cows ate up the first seven fat cows! **21** And after they had eaten them up, no one could tell that they had eaten them, for their appearance was just as ugly as at the beginning. Then I awoke. **22** Then I dreamed again, and behold, seven heads, plump and healthy, came up on one stalk. **23** And then, seven heads, withered, thin and scorched by the east wind, sprang up after them. **24** And the thin heads devoured the seven good heads. So I told the magicians, but there was no one who could interpret for me.”

25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “Pharaoh had only one dream; God has told Pharaoh what he is about to do. **26** The seven good cows are seven years; the seven good heads are seven years; it is one dream. **27** And the seven thin, ugly cows that came up after them are seven years; and the seven thin heads scorched by the east wind are seven years of famine. **28** It is just as I said to Pharaoh; God has told Pharaoh what he is about to do. **29** Indeed, seven years of great plenty will come throughout the land of Egypt; **30** but after them will come seven years of famine, and all that plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt, and the famine will consume the land. **31** And the plenty in the land will not be remembered, because of the famine that follows, for it will be very severe. **32** And the dream was repeated twice to Pharaoh, because God has determined this thing, and God will do it soon. **33** Now therefore, let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man, and let him set him over the land of Egypt. **34** Let Pharaoh do so, and let him appoint administrators over the land, to collect a fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven years of plenty. **35** And let them gather all the food of those good years that are to come, and let them store up grain under Pharaoh's hand, let them store it for food in the cities. **36** Then that food will be as a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that will be in the land of Egypt, that the land may not perish through the famine.”³

37 Well the advice pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. **38** And Pharaoh said to his servants, “Can we find anyone like this man, in whom the spirit of God is?” **39** Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. **40** You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in respect to the throne will I be greater than you.” **41** And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I am indeed setting you over all the land of Egypt”. **42** Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on

¹ The neglect of having forgotten Joseph, his request.

² This observation was Pharaoh's reaction.

³ The advice Joseph gave was not part of the dreams, but God obviously spoke through him. That was why God gave the dreams. In the long run, God intended to preserve the lives of Jacob and his descendants; and it was in Goshen that they proliferated.

Joseph's hand; and he clothed him with fine linen garments and put a gold chain around his neck. **43** And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried out before him, "Bow the knee!" So he set him over all the land of Egypt. **44** Pharaoh also said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh; and without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."¹ **45** And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphenath-Paneah, and gave him Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara, priest of On, as his wife. And Joseph went out over the land of Egypt. **46** Joseph was thirty years old² when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.

Joseph rules Egypt

41:47 During the seven years of plenty, the land produced abundantly. **48** He gathered up all the food of the seven years that were in the land of Egypt, and he stored it in the cities, putting in each city the food from its surrounding fields. **49** So Joseph gathered grain in great abundance, like the sand of the sea, until he stopped counting it, because it was beyond counting. **50** Before a year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph, whom Asenath the daughter of Potiphara, priest of On, bore to him. **51** Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh:³ "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house". **52** He called the name of the second Ephraim:⁴ "For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction".

53 Then the seven years of plenty that were in the land of Egypt ended, **54** and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. The famine was in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. **55** And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried out to Pharaoh for bread. And Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph; whatever he tells you, do." **56** So when the famine was severe throughout the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout the land of Egypt. **57** And all the countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, for the famine was severe in all the lands.⁵

Joseph and his brothers

42:1 When Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why are you just looking at one another?" **2** He said, "Indeed, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down there and buy for us from there, so that we may live and not die." **3** So Joseph's ten brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt. **4** But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with his brothers, for he said, "Lest he come to harm". **5** So the sons Israel went to buy grain among the others who went, because there was famine in the land of Canaan. **6** Now Joseph was governor over the land; he was the one selling to all the people of the land.

Then Joseph's brothers came and bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. **7** When Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he acted as a stranger toward them and spoke harshly to them. He said to them, "Where do you come from?" And they said, "From the land of Canaan, to buy food". **8** Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him. **9** Then Joseph remembered the dreams he had dreamed about them, and said to them, "You are spies!

¹ I understand that that was an exaggerated way of saying that all the people in Egypt would be under Joseph's authority, a condition guaranteed by Pharaoh himself. But what a difference, what a transformation: from prisoner in a dungeon to ruler of the country!

² I will attempt an arbitrary calculation. I imagine that Joseph spent some four years in the prison, and that he spent some three years with Potiphar, before being sent there (his promotion did not happen overnight). In that event, he would have been twenty-three when he arrived in Egypt. Since he was born at the end of the fourteen years that Jacob worked for his wives, he would have been about seven when Jacob settled at Succoth. If Jacob stayed thirteen years in Succoth (as I have argued elsewhere), Joseph was twenty when they entered Canaan. If Benjamin was born a year later, he would have been around nineteen when he was taken to Egypt; since the last time Joseph saw him he was a toddler, he would not have recognized him.

³ The name means 'forgetting'.

⁴ The name means 'fruitful'.

⁵ We may assume that they were neighboring lands.

You have come to see where the land is unprotected!"¹ **10** And they said to him, "No, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food. **11** We are all sons of the same man; we are honest; your servants are not spies." **12** But he said to them, "No, but you have come to see the unprotected land". **13** And they said, "Your servants are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; indeed, the youngest is with our father this day; and the other is no more." **14** Then Joseph said unto them, "It is just as I said to you, 'You are spies!' **15** This is how you will be tested: As surely as Pharaoh lives, you shall not leave here, unless your youngest brother comes here. **16** Send one of you to fetch your brother; and you shall be kept in prison, that your words may be tested, whether there is any truth in you; or else, as surely as Pharaoh lives, you are spies." **17** And he put them all in prison for three days.

18 On the third day Joseph said to them, "I fear God; do this, and you will live. **19** If you are honest men, let one of you brothers be bound in your prison house;² and you go, carry grain for the famine in your households. **20** And bring your youngest brother to me; so your words will be verified and you will not die." And they did so. **21** Then they said to one another, "We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he begged us,³ but we did not listen; therefore this distress has come upon us."⁴ **22** And Reuben answered them, saying, "Did I not say to you, 'Do not sin against the boy'? But you did not listen! So his blood is being required." **23** They did not know that Joseph understood them, for he spoke to them through an interpreter. **24** So he went away from them and wept. Then he returned to them and spoke to them. And he took Simeon from among them and bound him before their eyes. **25** Then Joseph commanded that their sacks be filled with grain, and that each man's money be returned to his sack, and that they be given food for the journey. And it was done for them. **26** So they loaded their grain on their donkeys and departed from there. **27** And one of them, when he opened his sack to give food to his donkey at the lodging place, he saw his money—there it was in the mouth of his sack! **28** So he said to his brothers, "My money has been returned; here it is in my sack!" Then their hearts failed them, and they were terrified, saying to one another, "What is this that God has done to us?"⁵

Jacob and his sons

29 They came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan and told him everything that had happened to them. They said, **30** "The man, the lord of the land, spoke harshly to us and treated us like spies of the land. **31** And we said to him, 'We are honest men, we are not spies. **32** We are twelve brothers, our father's sons; 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 will know that you are honest: leave one of your brothers with me and take food for the famine of your households, and go. **34** Bring your youngest brother to me; then I will know that you are not spies, but that you are honest. Then I will give your brother to you, and you may trade in the land.'" **35** Then it happened, as they emptied their sacks—each man's bundle of money was in his sack! When they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid.⁶

36 Then their father Jacob said to them, "You have bereaved me; Joseph is not, and Simeon is not; and you would take Benjamin! All this is against me." **37** Then Reuben said to his father, "You may kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you; give him into my hand, and I will bring him back to you". **38** But he said, "My son shall not go down with you,⁷ for his brother is dead, and he

¹ José starts to 'get even' with his brothers.

² That is, the house where they had been in prison; evidently they had not been put in a nasty prison.

³ Joseph begged not to be sold.

⁴ It seems that they were marked by what they did to Joseph; their consciences were troubled.

⁵ They attributed the situation to God; well, it was certainly strange, inexplicable by normal logic.

⁶ Indeed, the thing was very strange.

⁷ Jacob was condemning Simeon to rot in prison, but he probably didn't think of that.

alone is left. If harm should happen to him on the way that you go, you would bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow.”

43:1 Now the famine was severe in the land. **2** And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the grain which they had brought from Egypt, that their father said to them, “Go back, buy us a little food”. **3** But Judah answered him, saying, “The man emphatically 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** And Israel said, “Why did you treat me so badly as to tell the man that you had another brother?” **7** And they said, “The man asked us pointedly about ourselves, and about our kindred, saying, ‘Is your father still alive? Do you have another brother?’ And we answered him according to those words. How could we have known that he would say, ‘Bring your brother down’?”

8 Then Judah said to his father Israel, “Send the youth with me, and we will arise and go, so that we may live and not die, both we, you and our children. **9** I myself will be surety for him; you can require him from my hand. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, I will bear the blame before you forever. **10** For if we had not delayed, surely by now we would have returned a second time.”¹ **11** Then their father Israel said to them, “If it must be so, do this: Take some of the best produce of the land in your vessels and carry a gift to the man: a little balm and a little honey, spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds.”² **12** And take double the money in your hand; and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was an oversight. **13** Take your brother also and arise; go back to the man. **14** And may God Almighty give you mercy before the man, and may he release your other brother and Benjamin to you. And I, if I am bereaved, bereaved I will be!”³

Joseph and his brothers, second time

43:15 Then the men took the gift, double the money in their hand, and Benjamin. They arose and went down to Egypt and presented themselves to Joseph. **16** When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, “Take these men to the house, and kill and prepare an animal; for these men will eat with me at noon”. **17** So the man did as Joseph had said; he brought the men into Joseph’s house. **18** Well the men were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph’s house; and they said, “It is because of the money that was returned in our sacks the other time that we are being brought here, to incriminate us and to subdue us, to enslave us and to take our donkeys.”⁴ **19** So they approached the steward of Joseph’s house and spoke to him at the door of the house. **20** And they said, “Oh my lord, we indeed came down the first time to buy food; **21** but it happened, when we came to the lodging place, and opened our sacks, there, each man’s money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight; so we have brought it back in our hand. **22** And we have brought other money in our hand to buy food; we do not know who put our money in our sacks.” **23** And he said, “Peace be to you, do not fear. Your God, also the God of your father,⁵ has given you treasure in your sacks; your money came to me.”⁶ Then he brought Simeon out to them.⁷

24 The steward brought the men into Joseph’s house and gave them water, and they washed their feet; he also gave their donkeys fodder. **25** Then they prepared the present for Joseph’s coming at noon, for they had heard that they were to eat bread there. **26** When Joseph entered the house, they brought the present that was in their hand to him, in the house, and bowed down

¹ Judah begins to take the lead, which will become evident later on.

² It seems there were still some edible things, but not the basic food.

³ Poor Jacob!

⁴ Well, the men had reason to be afraid, but it seems that there was pessimism as well.

⁵ It seems curious to me that the man should say it was God; in fact, their God!

⁶ The man did not lie; he had indeed received the money; only Joseph had ordered that it be returned.

⁷ Joseph kept his word; they brought Benjamin, and he released Simeon.

to him to the ground. **27** He asked them how they were doing, and said, "Is your father, the old man of whom you spoke, well? Is he still alive?" **28** And they said, "Your servant our father is well; he is still alive". And they bowed their heads and bowed down. **29** Then he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, "Is this your youngest brother of whom you spoke to me?" Then he said, "May God be gracious to you, my son". **30** And Joseph hurried and looked for a place to weep, for he was deeply moved with emotion toward his brother; and he went into his private room and wept there. **31** Then he washed his face and came out; and he restrained himself, and said, "Serve the bread!"

32 So they served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves; because the Egyptians could not eat bread with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians.¹ **33** And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth; and the men looked at each other in astonishment.² **34** And portions were taken to them from before him; but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs. So they drank and were merry with him.

44:1 Joseph commanded the steward of his house, saying, "Fill these men's sacks with as much food as they can carry, and put each man's money in the mouth of his sack. **2** Also put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest,³ along with his grain money." And he did as Joseph had said. **3** When the morning dawned, the men were sent away, they and their donkeys. **4** When they were not yet far from the city, Joseph said to his steward, "Get up, follow the men until you overtake them. And say to them, 'Why have you repaid evil for good? **5** Where is the cup from which my lord drinks, and by which he really does divination?⁴ What you have done is wicked.'" **6** And he overtook them and spoke those words to them. **7** And they said to him, "Why does my lord say such things? Far be it from your servants to do such a thing. **8** Look, we even brought back to you from the land of Canaan the money that we found in the mouth of our sacks. How then could we steal silver or gold from your lord's house? **9** Let the one of your servants with whom it is found die,⁵ and we also will be my lord's slaves." **10** And he said, "Very well then, let it be according to your words; the one with whom it is found will be my slave, but you will be innocent."⁶ **11** So they hurried, and each man put his sack down on the ground, and each one opened his sack. **12** Then the steward searched, beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest;⁷ and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.⁸ **13** Then they tore their clothes, and each man loaded his donkey and returned to the city.

14 So Judah⁹ and his brothers came to Joseph's house, and he was still there; and they fell to the ground before him.¹⁰ **15** Then Joseph said to them, "What is this that you have done? Did you not know that someone like I am can certainly divine?" **16** Then Judah said, "What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? And how can we clear ourselves? God has exposed the iniquity of

¹ Racism has been around for a long time!

² The men's reaction allows us to deduce that they had been seated at the table in order of age, from oldest to youngest. Only someone within the family could have known that. See also 44:12.

³ That was dirty! However, they had caused him years of physical suffering, as well as emotional suffering. He did not cause them any physical suffering (except for a little for Simeon), and their emotional suffering was short-lived.

⁴ Joseph certainly used the cup to drink from, but it seems unlikely to me that he practiced divination. Why? God spoke to him. I imagine that he instructed the steward to speak this way just to heighten the seriousness of the accusation.

⁵ That was extreme! They were desperate.

⁶ He accepted their proposal, but softened it considerably.

⁷ How did he know the order? He remembered the instructions he had received to place them at the table.

⁸ Well now, Benjamin knew he hadn't done anything; and each man's money was back in his sack, which also wasn't their doing. So it was obvious that a higher power was working against them. And since they had offered themselves as slaves, if the cup were found, there was no way out. They returned to the city. Furthermore, to return without Benjamin would likely result in their father's death.

⁹ Notice that Judah is now the leader.

¹⁰ They did this several times, just as Joseph had dreamed.

your servants; so then, we are my lord's slaves, both we and he in whose hand the cup was found." **17** But he said, "Far be it from me to do such a thing! The man in whose hand the cup was found, he shall be my slave. As for you, go up in peace to your father."

18 Then Judah came near to him and said, "O my lord, please let your servant speak a word in the ears of my lord, and do not let your anger burn against your servant, for you are like Pharaoh. **19** My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Do you have a father or a brother?' **20** And we said to my lord, 'We have an aged father, and a young son of his old age, whose brother is dead; and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loves him'. **21** Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him to me, that I may set my eyes on him'. **22** And we said to my lord, 'The youth 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 will see my face no more'. **24** So it was, when we went up to your servant my father, that we told him the words of my lord. **25** When our father said, 'Go back, buy us a little food', **26** we said, 'We cannot go down; but if our youngest brother goes with us, we will go down; for we may not 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 of them went away from me, and I said, "Surely he has been torn to pieces", and I have not seen him since. **29** If you also take this one away from me, and harm happens to him, you will bring down my gray hair to Sheol with sorrow.' **30** Now therefore, if I go to your servant my father, and the youth is not with us—since his life is bound up with his son's life—**31** it will happen, when he sees that the youth is not with us, that he will die. Thus your servants will bring down the gray hair of your servant our father with sorrow to Sheol. **32** For your servant became surety for the youth to my father, saying, 'If I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you, my father, forever'. **33** So then, please let your servant take the young man's place as my lord's slave, and let the youth go up with his brothers—**34** for how can I go up to my father unless the youth is with me?—lest I see the evil that will come upon my father.'" ¹

Joseph reveals himself to his brothers

45:1 Then Joseph could no longer contain himself before all who were with him, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave me!" ² So no one stayed with him when Joseph revealed himself to his brothers. **2** He wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and Pharaoh's household was informed about it. **3** Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Can my father still be alive?" ³ But his brothers could not answer him, for they were terrified of him. **4** Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Now come near to me". And they came near. Then he said, "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. **5** Now then, do not be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁴ **6** There has been a famine in the land for just two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. **7** Yes, God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the land, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. **8** So it was not really you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and ruler over all the land of Egypt. **9** Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. **10** You will live in the land of Goshen, ⁵ and you will be near me—

¹ Judah's intercession was eloquent and moving; so much so that Joseph could not contain himself. It was Judah's sensible suggestion that saved Joseph from being killed, when he was sold instead, but we do not know if Joseph could hear it. (If he heard it, he knew that he owed his life to Judah; so that he owed Judah some consideration.)

² He gave the order in Egyptian, which the brothers did not understand. Then he spoke in Hebrew, when he revealed himself to them.

³ The brothers were so convinced of Joseph's death that they hadn't even become suspicious, despite the strange things that had happened. So it seems that Joseph wanted to combat their disbelief: if Jacob could still be alive, so could Joseph.

⁴ Joseph clearly states that it was God who directed the whole story.

⁵ Joseph already had everything planned.

you and your children, your children's children, your flocks and your herds and all that you have. **11** I will provide for you there, because there will be five more years of famine, so that you will not become destitute, you and your household and all that you have". **12** Now really, your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that it is I who am speaking to you. **13** So you tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that you have seen; so hurry and bring my father down here." **14** Then he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. **15** Then he kissed all his brothers and wept over them; and after that his brothers talked with him.¹

16 Now this news was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, "Joseph's brothers have come". And it pleased Pharaoh and his servants well. **17** So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say to your brothers, 'Do this: Load your animals and depart; go to the land of Canaan. **18** Take your father and your households and come to me. I will give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you will eat the fat of the land. **19** Each of you individually is commanded: Do this: take wagons from the land of Egypt for your little ones and for your wives; take your father and come. **20** Do not worry about your possessions, for the best of all the land of Egypt will be yours'."²

21 Then the sons of Israel did so. And Joseph gave them wagons, according to Pharaoh's command; he also gave them food for the journey. **22** And he gave to each of them all a change of clothing; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of clothing. **23** He also sent to his father ten donkeys loaded with the best of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain, and bread and food for his father for the journey. **24** Then he sent his brothers away, and they departed. And he said to them, "Do not quarrel on the way!"³ **25** So they went up out of Egypt, and came to the land of Canaan, to Jacob their father. **26** And they told him, saying, "Joseph is still alive; indeed, he is ruler over all the land of Egypt." And Jacob's heart almost stopped; he did not believe them. **27** But they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had spoken to them; and he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him; and the spirit of Jacob their father revived. **28** Then Israel said, "It is enough;⁴ my son Joseph is still alive; I will go and see him before I die."

The people of Israel move to Egypt

46:1 Then Israel set out with all that he had and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. **2** And God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, "Jacob, Jacob!"⁵ And he said, "Here I am". **3** And He said, "I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make of you a great nation. **4** I will go down with you to Egypt, and will surely bring you back;⁶ and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes."⁷ **5** Then Jacob arose from Beersheba; 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. **6** They took their livestock and their possessions that they had acquired in the land of Canaan and went to Egypt, Jacob and all his descendants with him. **7** His sons and his sons' sons were with him. His daughters, and his sons' daughters, and all his descendants he took with him to Egypt.

8 These are the names of the children of Israel who went into Egypt: Jacob and his sons: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn. **9** The sons of Reuben: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron and Carmi. **10** The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman.⁸ **11** The sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath and Merari. **12** The sons of Judah: Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez and Zerah (but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan). The sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul. **13** The

¹ The brothers found it hard to believe that it could be Joseph, but they ended up being convinced.

² Pharaoh's generosity and goodwill are impressive.

³ This order is curious. It seems that Joseph didn't want anything to delay his father's coming.

⁴ The evidence was enough to convince him.

⁵ Why did God call him Jacob, instead of Israel?

⁶ God brought the descendants back, and Jacob's body was taken back.

⁷ This expression may mean that Joseph would close Jacob's eyes at the moment of his death. See 50:1.

⁸ If all of them got their wives from Shechem, all their wives were Canaanite, so how was this one different?

sons of Issachar: Tola, Puvah, Job and Shimron. **14** The sons of Zebulun: Sered, Elon and Jahleel. **15** Those were the sons of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob in Paddan-Aram, and his daughter Dinah; all the souls of his sons and his daughters were thirty-three.¹

16 The sons of Gad: Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi and Areli. **17** The sons of Asher: Jimnah, Ishuah, Isui, Beriah, and their sister Serah. And the sons of Beriah were Heber and Malchiel. **18** Those were the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to his daughter Leah; she bore those sixteen souls to Jacob.²

19 The sons of Rachel, Jacob's wife: Joseph and Benjamin. **20** And to Joseph, in the land of Egypt, were born Manasseh and Ephraim, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On, bore to him. **21** The sons of Benjamin: Belah, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim and Ard. **22** Those were the sons of Rachel, who were born to Jacob: fourteen souls in all.

23 The son of Dan: Hushim. **24** The sons of Naphtali: Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer and Shillem. **25** Those were the sons of Bilhah, whom Laban gave to Rachel his daughter; she bore them to Jacob: seven souls in all. **26** All the souls who went with Jacob to Egypt, who came from his loins,³ aside from the wives of Jacob's sons, were sixty-six souls in all. **27** The sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt, were two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob who went to Egypt were seventy.⁴

28 Jacob sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph, to give him directions to Goshen; and they came to the land of Goshen. **29** Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel. When he came to him, he fell on his neck and wept there for a long time.⁵ **30** And Israel said to Joseph, "Now I can die, for I have seen your face, and you are still alive".⁶ **31** Then Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, "I will go up and report to Pharaoh, and say to him, 'My brothers and my father's household who were in the land of Canaan have come to me. **32** And the men are shepherds, they tend livestock, and they have brought with them their flocks, their herds and all that they have.' **33** Now then, when Pharaoh calls you in, and says, 'What is your occupation?' **34** You must say, 'Your servants have tended livestock from our youth until now, both we and our fathers'; so that you may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians." ⁷

47:1 Then Joseph went and informed Pharaoh, and said, "My father and my brothers, their flocks and their herds, with all that they possess, have come from the land of Canaan; and indeed they are in the land of Goshen". **2** And he had taken five men from among his brothers, and he presented them to Pharaoh. **3** Then Pharaoh said to the brothers, "What is your occupation?" And they said to Pharaoh, "Your servants are shepherds, both we and our fathers". **4** They also said to Pharaoh, "We have come to dwell in the land; because there is no pasture for your servants' flocks, because the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. Therefore, please let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen." **5** Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Your father and your brothers have come to you. **6** The land of Egypt is before you; have your father and your brothers live in the best of the land; let them live in the land of Goshen. And if you know of any competent men among them, put them in charge of my livestock."

7 Then Joseph brought his father Jacob and placed him before Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.⁸ **8** Pharaoh said to Jacob, "How many are the days of the years⁹ of your life?" **9** And Jacob

¹ The number only includes one daughter.

² The number includes the sister.

³ 'Loins', plural, is used to refer to the male reproductive system. 'Loin', singular, means 'waist'.

⁴ In addition to Joseph and his two sons, Jacob himself is included, making 70. Without them, the number is 66.

⁵ Evidently that was how they expressed their emotions.

⁶ But he still lived 17 years!

⁷ This information seems curious to me; they had sheep, and someone had to take care of them.

⁸ Hebrews 7:7 says: "Without dispute, the lesser is blessed by the greater". Well, Pharaoh owed a great deal to Joseph, and Jacob was his father.

⁹ That is what Pharaoh said; and of course each year is made up of days. If most of the days were bad, then you had a bad year.

said to Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are one hundred and thirty years; the days of the years of my life have been few and troubled, and have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage."¹ **10** So Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh. **11** Then Joseph gave a possession to his father and his brothers in the land of Egypt, and settled them in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. **12** Then Joseph supplied his father, his brothers, and all his father's household with food, according to the number of their children.

The Egyptians sell themselves to Pharaoh

47:13 Now there was no bread in all the land, for the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine. **14** So Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, for the grain that they bought; and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. **15** Now when the money from the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan was gone, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, "Give us bread; why should we die in your presence? The money is gone!" **16** Then Joseph said, "If the money is gone, bring your livestock, and I will give you bread for your livestock". **17** So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for the horses, the flocks, the cattle and the donkeys. He fed them that year with bread in exchange for all their livestock. **18** When that year was over, they came to him in the second year and said to him, "We will not hide from my lord that our money is gone; my lord also has our herds of livestock. There is nothing left before my lord except our bodies and our lands. **19** Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for food, and we and our land will become Pharaoh's possession; give us seed that we may live and not die, and the land not become desolate." **20** So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for every man of the Egyptians sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them. So the land became Pharaoh's. **21** And he moved the people into the cities,² from one end of the borders of Egypt to the other end. **22** Only the land of the priests he did not buy, because the priests had a portion from Pharaoh, and they ate their portion, which Pharaoh had given them; therefore they did not sell their land.

23 Then Joseph said to the people, "Listen, I have already bought you and your land for Pharaoh; now here is seed for you to sow the land."³ **24** But you shall give a fifth of each harvest to Pharaoh, and four parts shall be yours for seed for the field, for your food, for yourselves and for those in your households, and for your little ones to eat." **25** So they said, "You have saved our lives; let us find favor in the eyes of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's slaves". **26** So Joseph established it as a law in the land of Egypt to this day, that a fifth should belong to Pharaoh; except for the land of the priests only; it did not become Pharaoh's.

The last days of Jacob

47:27 Now Israel lived in the land of Egypt, in the area of Goshen, and acquired possessions there; and they were fruitful and multiplied exceedingly.⁴ **28** And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years; so the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were one hundred and forty-seven years. **29** When the time approached for Israel to die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "If now I have found favor in your sight, please put your hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me. Please do not bury me in Egypt, **30** but let me lie with my fathers; you must carry me up out of Egypt and bury me in their burying-place." And he said, "I will do as you have said".

¹ By definition, a pilgrim is on a journey, away from his home. For those of us whose home is Heaven, life in this world is indeed a 'pilgrimage'. See Hebrews 11:8-10.

² This made it easier to control food distribution according to the size of each family. Rationing was probably necessary to have enough seed left over for planting in the eighth year. (Modern versions may have a different wording, following the Septuagint and Vulgate.)

³ Logically, this occurred after the seven years of famine.

⁴ Here 'Israel' refers to the descendants, not the man.

31 Then he said, "Swear to me!" And he swore to him. And Israel bowed down on the head of the bed.

Jacob blesses Joseph's sons

48:1 After those things, someone told Joseph, "Your father is sick!" So he took his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, with him. **2** And someone told Jacob, "Your son Joseph has come to you". So Israel strengthened himself and sat up on the bed. **3** Then Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz¹ in the land of Canaan and blessed me. **4** He said to me, 'Indeed, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make you a multitude of peoples, and I will give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession'. **5** Now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine. Just like Reuben and Simeon, they will be mine. **6** But your offspring, whom you beget after them, will be yours;² their inheritance will be part of the inheritance of their brothers. **7** When I came from Paddan, Rachel died on me in the land of Canaan, on the way, a short distance from Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).³

8 Then Israel saw Joseph's sons and said, "Who are these?" **9** And Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given me here". And he said, "Please bring them to me, and I will bless them". **10** (Now Israel's eyes could not see clearly, because of his old age.) So Joseph brought them near to him, and he kissed them and embraced them. **11** And Israel said to Joseph, "I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your descendants". **12** Then Joseph brought them from between his father's knees, and bowed his face to the ground. **13** Then Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near to him. **14** Then Israel stretched out his right hand and placed it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, crossing his arms; even though Manasseh was the firstborn. **15** Then he blessed Joseph and said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has fed me all my life long to this day, **16** the Angel who redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads, and may my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

17 But when Joseph saw that his father was laying his right hand on Ephraim's head, it displeased him; and he took hold of his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. **18** And Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this is the firstborn; lay your right hand on his head". **19** But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know; he too will become a people, and he too will be great; yet his younger brother will be greater than he, and his descendants will become a multitude of peoples." **20** And he blessed them that day, saying, "Israel will bless by you (sg),⁴ saying, 'May God make you like Ephraim and like Manasseh!'" So he put Ephraim before Manasseh. **21** Then Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am about to die; but God will be with you and will bring you back to the land of your fathers. **22** Also, to you I am giving one portion of the land more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow."⁵

Jacob blesses his sons

¹ Jacob spoke accurately; when God appeared to him, the name of the place was Luz. It was after this that Jacob changed the name to Bethel.

² However, we have no record of Joseph having fathered any more children than those two.

³ But why did Jacob mention Rachel's death at that moment? Perhaps in his mind, if she hadn't died, she would have given him more children, and he was considering Joseph's sons as such. I have never understood why Jacob didn't bury Rachel at Machpelah, perhaps 20 miles away.

⁴ The Hebrew text does indeed have 'you', singular.

⁵ There is no Record of when or how this occurred.

49:1 Then Jacob called his sons and said, "Gather together, and I will tell¹ you what will happen to you in the days to come. **2** Gather together and listen, sons of Jacob; listen to Israel your father. **3** 'Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, the beginning of my strength, excelling in dignity and excelling in power. **4** Unstable as water, you will no longer excel, because you went up to your father's bed and defiled it'²—he went up to my couch.³

5 Simeon and Levi are brothers; their weapons are instruments of violence.⁴ **6** May my soul not enter their council, and may my honor not associate with their assembly;⁵ for in their anger they killed men, and in their self-will they hamstrung oxen.⁶ **7** Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel! I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.⁷

8 'Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you.'⁸ **9** Judah is a young lion. 'You return from the prey, my son'. He crouches and lies down like a lion, and like a lioness; who will rouse him? **10** The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and the peoples will obey him.⁹ **11** He ties his young donkey to a vine, his donkey's colt to the choicest branch; he washes his garments in wine, his clothes in the blood of grapes. **12** His eyes will be sparkling from wine, and his teeth white from milk.¹⁰

13 Zebulun will dwell on the seashore and will be a haven for ships, and his border will adjoin Sidon.¹¹ **14** Issachar is a strong-boned donkey, crouched between two saddlebags. **15** When he saw a good resting place and that the land was pleasant, he bowed his shoulder to carry, and submitted to forced labor.¹²

16 Dan will judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. **17** Dan will be a serpent by the way, a viper by the path, that bites the horse's heels so that its rider falls backward—**18** 'O Jehovah, I wait for your salvation!'¹³ **19** Gad will be attacked by a band of raiders, but he will attack them back. **20** Asher will have plenty of bread, and he will give royal dainties. **21** Naphtali is a gazelle let loose; he proffers beautiful sayings.¹⁴

22 Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine by a spring, whose branches run over the wall. **23** The archers harass him, shoot at him and hate him. **24** But his bow remains strong, and the

¹ Jacob did not say that it would be God speaking. Much of what he said was more descriptive than prophetic.

Zebulun, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, and Benjamin receive only a brief mention. Dan, Issachar, Levi, Simeon, and Reuben receive a medium-size mention. Only Judah and Joseph receive greater attention.

² He started well, but ended badly. See the terrible verses in Ezekiel 18:24-26.

³ Here he gave an explanatory aside to the others.

⁴ They weren't just for defense.

⁵ As is typical of Hebrew discourse, Jacob repeatedly says the same thing twice.

⁶ In chapter 34, which recounts the sack of Shechem, they did kill the men, but there is no mention of them mistreating the animals. What good is an ox? It is for work, or to be eaten. Hamstrung, it can't work. To eat it, you just have to kill it; why torture it? Jacob said they were both cruel, and to hamstring an ox would really be cruel, besides being stupid and nonsensical. What they did to the men was indeed cruel.

⁷ The use of the first person is as if it were God speaking; in fact, the Levites were scattered among the other tribes. (Simeon was basically assimilated into Judah.)

⁸ Judah is described as rising to preeminence over his brothers, and in the prior chapters he repeatedly took the lead. The temple was built in Jerusalem, which was Judah's capital. The southern kingdom lasted much longer than the northern kingdom, and it was essentially Judah that returned from Babylon and represented Israel in Jesus' time.

⁹ Verse 10 seems to refer to the Messiah. The word "Shiloh" occurs only here in the OT, so it is difficult to know what meaning it is meant to represent. However, "him" seems to indicate a man, making the word a proper name. We imagine that it is a name for the Messiah.

¹⁰ The description seems to be one of unusual prosperity.

¹¹ As far as we know, the area that fell to Zebulun had no shore on any sea, and was far from Sidon. This word was not prophetic (Jacob 'missed his shot').

¹² The description is of a submissive but hard-working type.

¹³ Here we have a short prayer addressed to Jehovah. Jacob appears to be asking God to deliver him from Dan! In Revelation 7:5-8, Dan is omitted from the list of the twelve tribes. Anyone who acts like this viper is really perverse.

¹⁴ It is nice to see a loose gazelle, as well as to hear beautiful sayings!

arms of his hands are made agile by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob, by the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel;¹ **25** by the God of your father. 'May He help you, and may the Almighty bless you with blessings from heaven above,² with blessings from the deep below, with blessings of the breasts and of the womb.³ **26** The blessings of your father exceeded the blessings of my ancestors, to the limit of the everlasting hills.⁴ Let them⁵ rest on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separated from his brothers. **27** Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he will devour the prey, and in the evening he will divide the spoil."

28 Those were the twelve tribes of Israel, each one, and that is what their father said to them when he blessed them; he blessed each of them according to his blessing. **29** Then he commanded them and said to them, "I am about to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, **30** in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite as a possession for a burial place. **31** There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah. **32** The field and the cave that is in it were purchased from the sons of Heth."⁶ **33** When Jacob had finished commanding his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.⁷

Jacob is buried

50:1 Then Joseph fell on his father's face and wept over him, and kissed him. **2** Then Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel. **3** It took forty days, for that is how long it takes for those who are embalmed. And the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days.⁸ **4** After the days of mourning for him were over, Joseph spoke to Pharaoh's household, saying, "If I have now found favor in your eyes, please speak in Pharaoh's ears, saying, **5** 'My father made me swear, saying, "Behold, I am about to die; in my grave, which I dug for myself⁹ in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me". Now therefore, please let me go up and bury my father; then I will return'. "¹⁰ **6** And Pharaoh said, "Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear". **7** So Joseph went up to bury his father. All Pharaoh's servants, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt went up with him,¹¹ **8** along with all Joseph's house, his brothers, and his father's house. Only their little ones, their flocks, and their herds were left in the land of Goshen. **9** Chariots and horsemen also went up with him—a very great company.

10 When they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan,¹² they mourned there with a great and intense lamentation. He mourned for his father for seven days.

¹ Here Jacob gives three different titles to Jehovah, emphasizing God's role in protecting Joseph.

² We are used to thinking of blessings that come from above, but not from the abyss! I confess that I don't understand this reference.

³ Jacob is asking that Joseph be given many descendants.

⁴ In terms of children, he certainly surpassed Isaac and Abraham, but "to the limit of the everlasting hills" seems to be a bit of hyperbole.

⁵ That is, the blessings.

⁶ He emphasizes that the cave was duly purchased.

⁷ This expression, "he was gathered to his people", is repeated many times in the historical books. It cannot refer to the physical body, which would not be the case, but to the spirit. We have biblical teaching that the human spirit does not die.

⁸ Wow, that was a long time! And it was the Egyptians, not his family. Jacob had evidently earned their respect and affection to an unusual extent.

⁹ We have no Record of this, but it might be that he actually dug a hole for himself in the cave.

¹⁰ Joseph always respected Pharaoh's authority, and evidently was never considered to be a threat to that authority.

¹¹ This is curious. Why all the elders of Egypt? Could it be that during the 17 years he lived in Egypt, Jacob became a role model for the other elders?

¹² This is also curious. The interpretation of "beyond", or "on the other side", depends on the perspective; for those on the east side of the Jordan, the other side is the west side, and vice versa. But since the procession departed from Egypt, the perspective would be from there, and thus the threshing floor was on the east side of the Jordan. But the Jordan ends at the Dead Sea, and Machpelah is on the west side of the Dead Sea (about halfway up it), and

11 The Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land, observed the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad and said, "This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians!" Therefore its name was called Abel Mizraim,¹ which is beyond the Jordan. **12** So his sons did to him as he had commanded them; **13** for his sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre, which Abraham had bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite, as a burying-place. **14** After he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers and all who went up with him to bury his father.

The brothers' fear

15 Now Joseph's brothers, realizing that their father was dead, said, "What if Joseph harbors a grudge against us and actually repays us for all the evil that we did to him?" **16** So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Before your father died he commanded, saying, **17** 'Thus you shall say to Joseph: "I ask you now, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin, for they wronged you".'² So then, please forgive the trespass of the servants of your father's God."³ And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. **18** Afterward his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "We are your slaves!" **19** But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid; am I in God's place? **20** You really meant evil against me, but God meant it for good,⁴ to bring about this present situation, to save many people alive. **21** So now do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your children." So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

The death of Joseph

22 So Joseph lived on in Egypt, he and his father's household. Joseph lived one hundred and ten years, **23** and he saw the children of Ephraim to the third generation, as well as the children of Machir the son of Manasseh, whom he took on his knees. **24** And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die; but God will surely visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob". **25** And Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here".⁵ **26** And Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten; and they embalmed him and placed him in a coffin in Egypt.⁶

therefore of the Jordan as well. So the procession took a very large detour, going up the east side of the Sea until it reached the Jordan. The reason for the detour is not explained. [Even if the threshing floor in question were on the west side of the Jordan, to reach the river's endpoint, the procession would have had to pass through Machpelah, walking at least another unnecessary 40 km, only to walk back those 40 km! I think that we can agree that no one would do such a thing.] So I conclude that the threshing floor was indeed on the east side of the Jordan, and the reason for the detour remains unexplained.

¹ The name means: lamentation of the Egyptians.

² That was a lie; it seems that the men were really afraid.

³ Really now, when had they started acting like servants of Jehovah?

⁴ I have seen this repeatedly in my own life: people really intend to harm you, but God uses it for good. That is, God uses other people's evil intentions to get you where He wants you, within the plan He has for your life.

⁵ Indeed, Joshua 24:32 records that Joseph's bones were buried in Shechem, which in turn was within the area occupied by Joseph's son Manasseh.

⁶ The book of Genesis begins with creation and ends with a coffin. That is the story of our earthly life: it begins with creation and ends with a coffin. Alack.