

Genesis

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the surface of the deep. The Spirit of God moved over the surface of the waters.

³ God said, “Let there be light!” and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light “day,” and he called the darkness “night.” So there was evening, and then the morning, making day one.*

⁶ God said, “Let there be an expanse[†] in the middle of the waters to divide the waters.” ⁷ So God made an expanse to divide the waters that were above from the waters that were below. And that’s what happened. ⁸ God called the expanse, “sky.” So there was evening, and then the morning, making day two.

⁹ God said, “Let the waters below the sky collect together in one place so that the land may appear.” And so it was. ¹⁰ God called the land

* **1:5** It is significant that the “day” is measured from darkness to light, which is still the Jewish method of calculating days. † **1:6** “Expanse.” Older translations have often rendered this word as “firmament,” borrowing from the Latin “firmamentum.” That this referred to some ancient belief that the sky was like a dome of hammered metal, and therefore a tangible physical object, has now been shown to be mistaken. In fact, Latin translations from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries usually use the word “expansionem.”

“earth” and the waters “seas.” God saw that it was good.

¹¹ God said, “Let the earth produce vegetation—plants that produce seeds and trees that produce seeded fruit—each one according to its own kind.” And that’s what happened. ¹² The earth produced vegetation—plants that produce seeds and trees that produce seeded fruit—each one according to its own kind. God saw that it was good. ¹³ So there was evening, and then the morning, making day three.

¹⁴ God said, “Let there be lights in the sky to separate day from night, and to provide a way to mark seasons, days, and years. ¹⁵ They shall be lights in the sky to shine on the earth.” And that’s what happened. ¹⁶ God created two great lights:[†] the larger one in charge of the day, and the smaller one in charge of the night. He created the stars too. ¹⁷ God placed these lights in the sky to shine upon the earth, ¹⁸ to be in charge of the day and in charge of the night, and to separate light from darkness. God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ So there was evening, and then the morning, making day four.

²⁰ God said, “Let the waters be full of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the sky.” ²¹ So God created huge sea creatures and all the living things that swim and fill the waters, each one according to its own kind; and every bird that flies, each one according to its

[†] **1:16** Hebrew has words for sun and moon, but they are not used here, perhaps to avoid any temptation to worship the sun and the moon.

own kind. God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them and said, “Reproduce and increase, and fill the waters of the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.” ²³ So there was evening, and then the morning, making day five.

²⁴ God said, “Let the land produce living creatures, each one according to its own kind—the livestock, the creatures that run along the ground, and the wild animals, each one according to its own kind.” And that’s what happened. ²⁵ God made the wild animals, the livestock, and the creatures that run along the ground, all according to their own kind. God saw that it was good.

²⁶ God said, “Let us make human beings in our image who are like us.† They will have authority over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, and over the whole of the earth and every creature that moves on it.” ²⁷ So God created human beings in his own image. He created them in the image of God. He created them male and female.* ²⁸ God blessed them and told them, “Reproduce, increase, and spread throughout the earth and control it; exercise authority over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every creature that moves on the earth.”

† **1:26** This aspect of being “like” God conveys the idea of being “patterned” after God. The word is also translated “similitude,” “figure” or “form.” The most essential aspect of this resemblance is surely that of character. * **1:27** The repetition of “created” in this verse is surely significant, which is why this is placed first in each sentence.

²⁹ God said, “Look, I’m giving you as your food every seed-bearing plant anywhere on earth, and every tree that produces fruit with seeds. ³⁰ I’m giving all the green plants to all the land animals, to the birds, and to every creature that moves on the earth—to every living thing.” And that’s what happened.

³¹ God saw everything that he had created, and yes, it was very good. So there was evening, and then the morning, making day six.

2

¹ The creation of the heavens, the earth, and everything in them* was complete. ² By the time the seventh day came, God had finished the work he’d done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work he’d been doing. ³ God blessed the seventh day, and set it apart as holy, because he rested from all the work he’d done in creation.

⁴ This is the account of the Lord God’s creation when he made the heavens and the earth.

⁵ Up to this point there were no wild plants† or crops growing on the earth, because the Lord God hadn’t sent rain, and there was no one to cultivate the ground. ⁶ Dew came up from the earth and made the whole surface of the ground

* **2:1** “Everything in them”: literally, “all the array of them.” The word used for “array” is usually a military term designating the formation of an army of soldiers. † **2:5** “Plants”: the word can also mean “bushes” or “shrubs.”

wet. ⁷ The Lord God shaped the man Adam[†] from the dust of the ground. He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and Adam became a living being.

⁸ The Lord planted a garden in Eden, in the east. There he put the man Adam he had created. ⁹ The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow in the garden, beautiful trees and trees producing fruit that's good to eat. The tree of life was in the middle of the garden, along with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ¹⁰ A river flowed out from Eden to water the garden. From there it split into four branches. ¹¹ The first branch was called the Pishon and it flowed through the whole land of Havilah, where gold is found. ¹² (The gold from that land is pure. Bdellium[§] and onyx stone are also found there.) ¹³ The second branch was called the Gihon and it flowed through the whole land of Cush.* ¹⁴ The

[†] **2:7** The word for man is Adam, so it serves the purpose of identifying both the first man and his personal name. Since it is not always clear whether the term refers to man generically or the person of Adam, this version has chosen in most cases to translate “the man” as Adam, and then by extension, “the woman,” as Eve, even though she is not specifically named until 3:20. In this way the account is brought to a more personal level. In addition note that the word for ground is “adamah,” showing the close connection of the man to the earth. **§ 2:12** “Bdellium”: later references state that this is an aromatic resin. Whether this is the same substance as mentioned here is not known. * **2:13** “Cush”: in much of the Old Testament this is another name for Ethiopia; whether this is so here is uncertain.

third branch was called the Tigris[†] and it flowed east of the city of Asshur. The fourth branch was called the Euphrates.[‡]

¹⁵ The Lord God put the man in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and care for it. ¹⁶ The Lord God ordered Adam, “You are free to eat fruit from every tree in the garden, ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because the day you eat from it you are certain to die.”

¹⁸ Then the Lord God said, “It's not good for Adam to be alone. I will make someone to help him, someone that's like him.”

¹⁹ The Lord God used the ground to make all the wild animals, and all the birds. He took them all to Adam to see what he would call them, and Adam named every living creature. ²⁰ Adam gave names to all the livestock, all the birds, and all the wild animals. But Adam didn't find anyone like him who could help him.

²¹ So the Lord God put Adam into a deep sleep and as he slept the Lord God removed one of Adam's ribs and closed up the place where he took it with body tissue. ²² The Lord God made a woman, using the rib he'd taken from Adam, and presented her to Adam.

²³ “Finally!” said Adam. “Here is bone from my bone and flesh from my flesh. She shall be called

[†] **2:14** “Tigris”: literally “Hiddekel,” thought to be the old Hebrew name for the Tigris. See also Daniel 10:4. [‡] **2:14** “Euphrates”: literally “Parat,” usually thought to be synonymous with the Euphrates.

woman, because she was taken out of man.”§

²⁴ This is the reason a man leaves his father and mother and is joined* to his wife, and the two become one being. ²⁵ Adam and his wife Eve† were both naked, but they weren't embarrassed about it.

3

¹ The serpent was more cunning than any of the other wild animals that the Lord God had made. He asked Eve, “Did God really say that you can't eat fruit from every* tree in the garden?”

² Eve replied to the serpent, “We can eat from the trees in the garden, but not the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden. ³ God told us, ‘You mustn't eat from that tree, or even touch it, otherwise you'll die.’”†

⁴ “You certainly won't die,” the serpent told Eve. ⁵ “It's because God knows that as soon as you eat it, you'll see things differently, and you'll be like God, knowing both what is good and what is evil.”

§ **2:23** “Man”: a different Hebrew word is used here and in the following verse. * **2:24** “Joined”: literally, “clings to,” or

“sticks together with.” † **2:25** See note under 2:7. * **3:1**

“Every”: the word could also be translated “any,” however this would then mean that the serpent was suggesting that God had told Adam and Eve not to eat fruit from any tree in the garden, which seems less likely. † **3:3** “Otherwise you'll die.” The

word used for “otherwise,” can indicate a possibility of something happening, rather than absolute certainty. So the phrase could be translated, “otherwise you might die,” a difference from God's clear prohibition, also claiming that God had said the fruit was not to be touched.

⁶ Eve saw that the fruit of the tree appeared good to eat. It looked very attractive. She really wanted it so she could become wise. So she took some of its fruit and ate it, and she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it too.

⁷ Immediately they saw everything differently and realized they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves up.

⁸ Later they heard the Lord walking in the garden in the evening when the breeze was blowing. Adam and Eve went and hid out of sight of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

⁹ The Lord God called out to Adam, “Where are you?”

¹⁰ “I heard you walking in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid,” he replied.

¹¹ “Who told you that you were naked?” asked the Lord God. “Did you eat fruit from the tree I ordered you not to?”

¹² “It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit from the tree, and I ate it,” Adam replied.

¹³ The Lord God asked Eve, “Why have you done this?”

“The serpent tricked me, and so I ate it,” she replied.

¹⁴ Then the Lord God told the serpent, “Because of what you've done, you are cursed more than any of the other animals. You will slide along on your belly and eat dust as long as you live. ¹⁵ I will make sure you and your children, and the woman and her children, are enemies. One of

her children will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

¹⁶ He told Eve, “I will make pregnancy much more difficult, and giving birth will be very painful. However, you will still desire your husband, but he will have control over you.”[†]

¹⁷ He told Adam, “Because you did[§] what your wife told you, and ate fruit from the tree after I ordered you, ‘Don’t eat fruit from this tree,’ the ground is now cursed because of you. You will have to work painfully hard to grow food from it throughout your whole life. ¹⁸ It will grow thorns and thistles for you, and you will have to eat wild plants.* ¹⁹ You will have to sweat to grow enough food to eat until you die and return to the ground. For you were made from dust and you will return to dust.”

²⁰ Adam named his wife Eve, because she was to be the mother of all human beings. ²¹ The Lord God made Adam and Eve clothes from animal skins and dressed them.

²² Then the Lord God observed, “Look, the human beings[†] have become like one of us, knowing both what is good and what is evil. Now if they take the fruit from the tree of life and eat it, then they’ll live forever!” ²³ So the Lord

[†] **3:16** “But he will have control over you” or “and he will also desire you.” **§ 3:17** “Did”: the word is “listened to,” but not in the sense of only hearing something. It means acting on what has been heard, obeying. * **3:18** Plants were originally allocated to the animals. See 1:30. [†] **3:22** “The human beings”: literally, “the man,” but this must be understood inclusively since Eve had also fallen.

God expelled them from the Garden of Eden. He sent Adam to cultivate the ground from which he'd been made. ²⁴ After he drove them out, the Lord God placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden angels and a sword that flashed in every direction. They were to prevent access to the tree of life.

4

¹ Adam slept with his wife Eve and she became pregnant. She gave birth to Cain, and said, "With the Lord's help I have made a man." ² Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Abel became a shepherd, while Cain was a crop farmer.

³ Sometime later Cain brought some of the produce he'd grown as an offering to the Lord.

⁴ Abel also brought an offering: the firstborn lambs of his flock, selecting the very best parts to offer. The Lord was pleased with Abel and his offering, ⁵ but he wasn't pleased with Cain and his offering, which made Cain very angry and he frowned in annoyance.

⁶ The Lord said to Cain, "Why are you so angry? Why do you look so annoyed? ⁷ If you were doing what's right, then you'd be looking happy.* But if you don't do what's right, then sin will be like animal crouching outside your home, ready to pounce on you. It wants to have you, but you must be the one in control."

* **4:7** "Looking happy": literally, "lifted up." In the previous verse, the literal meaning is that Cain's "face fell." So the opposite would be for his face to be "lifted up," in other words, he would look happy.

⁸ Later, when Cain was talking with his brother Abel[†] they went out into the fields where Cain attacked his brother and killed him.

⁹ “Where is your brother Abel?” the Lord asked Cain.

“How should I know?” he replied. “Am I supposed to be my brother's care-giver?”

¹⁰ “What have you done?” the Lord asked. “Your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground. ¹¹ Consequently you are more cursed than the ground because you soaked it with your brother's blood. ¹² When you cultivate the ground, it won't produce crops for you. You'll be always on the run, wandering all over the earth.”

¹³ “My punishment is more than I can take,” Cain replied. ¹⁴ “Look! You're driving me away right now—cursing the ground and banishing me from your presence. I'm going to have to hide and always be on the run, left to wander all over the earth. Anyone who finds me is going to kill me!”

¹⁵ But the Lord replied, “No, Cain. Anyone who kills you will be punished seven times over.” The Lord placed a mark on Cain so that no one who came across him would kill him.

¹⁶ So Cain left the Lord's presence and went to live in a land called Nod, east of Eden.[‡]

[†] **4:8** The Septuagint and some other ancient versions add here, “Let's go out into the fields.” The way the sentence is structured in the Hebrew does suggest some words are missing. [‡] **4:16** “Nod” means “wandering.”

¹⁷ Cain slept with his wife and she became pregnant. She had a son named Enoch. At that time Cain was building a town, so he named it after his son Enoch. ¹⁸ Enoch had a son named Irad. Irad was the father of Mehujael, Mehujael was the father of Methushael, and Methushael was the father of Lamech. ¹⁹ Lamech married two women. The first was named Adah, and the second was named Zillah. ²⁰ Adah had a son named Jabal. He was the father[§] of those who live in tents and have livestock. ²¹ He had a brother named Jubal; he was the father of all those who play stringed and wind instruments. ²² Zillah also had a son. He was named Tubalcain and he was a blacksmith, making different kinds of tools out of bronze and iron. Tubalcain's sister was named Naamah.

²³ At one time Lamech told his wives, “Adah and Zillah, listen to me. You wives of Lamech, pay attention to what I have to say. I killed a man because he wounded me; I killed a young man because he injured me. ²⁴ If the sentence for killing Cain was to be punished seven times over, then if someone kills me, Lamech, the punishment should be seventy-seven times.”

²⁵ Adam slept with his wife again, and she had a son and named him Seth,* explaining that, “God has given me another child to replace Abel, the one Cain killed.” ²⁶ Later Seth had a son named Enosh,† because at that time people began to worship the Lord by name.

§ 4:20 “Father” can also mean “ancestor.” * 4:25 “Seth,” meaning “substitute,” or “given.” † 4:26 “Enosh,” meaning “mankind” or “people.”

5

¹ This is the record of Adam's descendants. When God created human beings, he made them to be like him. ² He created them male and female, and blessed them. On the day he created them he called them “human.”*

³ When Adam was 130, he had a son who was like him, made in his image; and he named him Seth. ⁴ Adam lived another 800 years after Seth was born, and had other sons and daughters. ⁵ Adam lived a total of 930 years, and then he died.

⁶ When Seth was 105, he had Enosh. ⁷ Seth lived another 807 years after Enosh was born, and had other sons and daughters. ⁸ Seth lived a total of 912 years, and then he died.

⁹ When Enosh was 90, he had Kenan. ¹⁰ Enosh lived another 815 years after Kenan was born, and had other sons and daughters. ¹¹ Enosh lived a total of 905 years, and then he died.

¹² When Kenan was 70, he had Mehalalel. ¹³ Kenan lived another 840 years after Mehalalel was born, and had other sons and daughters. ¹⁴ Kenan lived a total of 910 years, and then he died. ¹⁵ When Mahalalel was 65, he had Jared. ¹⁶ After Jared was born, Mahalalel lived another 830 years and had other sons and daughters. ¹⁷ Mahalalel lived a total of 895 years, and then he died.

¹⁸ When Jared was 162, he had Enoch. ¹⁹ After Enoch was born, Jared lived 800 years and had

* **5:2** “Human”: literally, “Adam,” or “man.”

other sons and daughters. ²⁰ Jared lived a total of 962 years, and then he died.

²¹ When Enoch was 65, he had Methuselah.

²² He had a close relationship with God. After Methuselah was born, Enoch lived another 300 years and had other sons and daughters.

²³ Enoch lived a total of 365 years. ²⁴ Enoch had such a close relationship with God that he didn't die,[†] he just wasn't there anymore, because God took him.

²⁵ When Methuselah was 187, he had Lamech. ²⁶ After Lamech was born, Methuselah lived another 782 years and had other sons and daughters. ²⁷ Methuselah lived a total of 969 years, and then he died.

²⁸ When Lamech was 182, he had a son. ²⁹ He named him Noah,[‡] with the explanation, "He will provide relief for us from all the hard manual labor we need to do in cultivating the ground the Lord has cursed." ³⁰ After Noah was born, Lamech lived another 595 years and had other sons and daughters. ³¹ Lamech lived a total of 777 years, and then he died.

³² Noah was 500 before he had Shem, Ham, and Japheth. §

[†] **5:24** "He didn't die": supplied for clarity. See Hebrews 11:5.

[‡] **5:29** "Noah": associated in meaning with "relief," "rest," and "comfort." § **5:32** From the internal evidence in Genesis it

appears Japheth was the oldest and Ham the youngest. Usually siblings are listed in birth order in the Old Testament, though for example Moses, despite being younger than Aaron, is listed first. Here it appears that Shem is considered to be more important, and so is listed first.

6

¹ People started to increase in number and spread out across the earth. Daughters were born to them, ² and the sons of God* saw that these women were beautiful, and they took whichever ones they wanted.

³ Then the Lord said, “My life-giving Spirit will not remain in these people forever, because they are only mortal. The time they have left will be 120 years.”†

⁴ There were giants‡ on earth in those days, and also later on. They were born after the sons of God slept with the daughters of these people. Their sons became the great warriors and famous men of ancient times.

⁵ The Lord saw how terribly evil people on earth had become—every single thought in their

* **6:2** “Sons of God”: some have seen this as a reference to angels, but Jesus clearly stated that angels do not marry (Matthew 22:30), and in the very next verse punishment falls on all as human beings. The sons of God can be identified as those in the lineage of Seth, distinguished from these women who are descended from Cain. The genealogies of both groups have just been presented (chapters 4 and 5). † **6:3** That this refers to a new maximum lifespan seems unlikely since many after this time lived much longer than 120 years. The Hebrew says literally, “His days shall be 120 years.” Here “days” can be taken simply as time, or even time remaining, until the Flood would come. ‡ **6:4** “Giants”: literally, “Nephelim.” This word is translated “giants” in the Septuagint. However, some take the word to be based on the Hebrew word “fallen.” These “giants” are also referenced later (see Numbers 13:33). In Symmachus’ Greek translation he renders “Nephelim” as “the violent ones.”

minds was evil all the time! ⁶ The Lord was sorry he'd made human beings to live on the earth; it made him very sad to think about it. ⁷ So the Lord said, "I'm going to wipe out these people I created from the earth, and not only them but also the animals, the creatures that run along the ground, and the birds, because I'm sorry I made them."

⁸ But the Lord was pleased with Noah.

⁹ This is the story of Noah and his family. Noah was a man of integrity, living a moral life among the people of his time. He had a close relationship with God. ¹⁰ Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

¹¹ God saw how corrupt the whole world had become, full of violent and lawless people. ¹² God recognized that the corruption in the world was due to everyone on earth living corrupt lives. ¹³ So God told Noah, "I have decided to put an end to all people on earth because they are all violent and lawless. I myself am going to destroy all of them, along with the earth.

¹⁴ Build an ark[§] out of cypress wood. Make rooms inside the ark, and coat it with tar, both inside and out. ¹⁵ This is how to build it: the ark is to measure 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high. ¹⁶ Make a roof for the ark, leaving a cubit-wide opening between the roof and the

[§] **6:14** The word used here for "ark" is different to that used later to describe the Ark of the Lord's Agreement.

top of the sides.* Put a door in the side of the ark, and construct three decks inside.

¹⁷ I myself am going to flood the earth with water that will destroy everything that breathes, Every living thing everywhere on earth will die.

¹⁸ But I will keep my agreement with you. You are to go into the ark, taking with you your wife and your sons and their wives. ¹⁹ Take a pair, male and female, of every kind of animal into the ark and make sure you keep them alive. ²⁰ The same applies to every kind of bird, livestock, and the creatures that run along the ground—a pair of every kind will come to you so they can be kept alive. ²¹ Take all kinds of food with you too. Store it so you and the animals will have enough to eat.”

²² Noah did exactly what God ordered him to do.

7

¹ The Lord told Noah, “Go into the ark with all your family. I have seen how you are a man of integrity, living a moral life among the people of this generation. ² Take with you seven pairs, male and female, of every kind of clean animal, and one pair, male and female, of every kind of unclean animal. ³ In addition take seven pairs, male and female, of all the birds, so their different kinds will survive throughout the earth. ⁴ In seven days I'm going to make it rain for forty days and nights. I'm going to wipe out from

* **6:16** The Hebrew of this last phrase is unclear.

the surface of the earth all the living creatures I made.”

⁵ Noah did exactly what the Lord ordered him to do.

⁶ Noah was 600 when the flood waters covered the earth. ⁷ Noah went into the ark, taking with him his wife and his sons and their wives, because of the flood. ⁸ Clean and unclean animals, birds, and creatures that run along the ground, ⁹ went into the ark with Noah. They came in pairs, male and female, just as God had told Noah. ¹⁰ After seven days the floodwaters swept over the earth.

¹¹ Noah was 600 when on the seventeenth day of the second month all the subterranean waters burst through the earth, and heavy rain poured down from the sky. ¹² Rain continue to fall on the earth for forty days and nights.

¹³ That was the actual day* when Noah, his wife, and their sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth together with their three wives went into the ark. ¹⁴ They had with them every kind of wild animals, livestock, creatures that run along the ground, and birds—everything with wings. ¹⁵ They all came into the ark with Noah in pairs—every living thing that breathes. ¹⁶ A male and a female of every creature entered, as God had told Noah. Then the Lord shut the door behind him.

¹⁷ The flood increased for forty days, lifting the ark so that it floated up from the earth.

¹⁸ The floodwaters surged and grew deeper and

* **7:13** “Actual day”: referring back to the day mentioned in verse 11.

deeper over the earth, but the ark floated along on the surface. ¹⁹ Finally the water grew so deep that even the highest mountains were covered—all that could be seen was sky. ²⁰ The water rose so much that it was higher than the mountains by fifteen cubits. ²¹ Everything living on earth died—the birds, livestock, wild animals, all creatures that run along the ground, and all the people. ²² Everything on land that breathed, died. ²³ The Lord wiped out all life on earth—people, livestock, creatures that run along the ground, and birds. All were killed. The only ones left were Noah and those with him on the ark. ²⁴ The earth remained flooded for 150 days.

8

¹ But God hadn't forgotten about Noah and all the wild animals and livestock with him in the ark. God sent a wind to blow over the earth, and the floodwaters started to drop. ² The subterranean waters were closed off, and the heavy rainfall was stopped. ³ The floodwaters steadily receded from the earth. They had gone down so much that by 150 days after the flood began ⁴ the ark grounded on the mountains of Ararat. This happened on the seventeenth day of the seventh month. ⁵ The waters continued to drop so that by the first day of the tenth month the tops of mountains could be seen.

⁶ Forty days later Noah opened the window he'd made in the ark, ⁷ and sent a raven out. It flew back and forth until the water on the earth had dried up. ⁸ Then he sent a dove out to see if the waters had gone down enough to expose dry

ground. ⁹ But the dove couldn't find anywhere to land. So it came back to Noah in the ark because water was still covering the whole earth. He reached out his hand, picked up the dove, and took it back into the ark with him. ¹⁰ He waited another seven days and sent the dove out from the ark again. ¹¹ When it came back to him in the evening it had a freshly-picked olive leaf in its beak, so Noah knew the floodwaters were mainly gone from the earth. ¹² Again he waited another seven days and sent the dove out again, but this time it didn't return to him.

¹³ By now Noah was 601, and by the first day of the first month, the floodwaters on the earth were gone. Noah pulled back the ark's covering and saw that the ground was drying out. ¹⁴ By the twenty-seventh day of the second month the earth was dry.

¹⁵ Then God told Noah, ¹⁶ “Leave the ark, you and your wife, your sons and their wives. ¹⁷ Let all the animals go—the birds, the wild animals, the creatures that run along the ground—so that they can breed and increase their numbers on the earth.” ¹⁸ So Noah and his wife, his sons and their wives, left the ark. ¹⁹ All the animals, all the creatures that run along the ground, all the birds—everything that lives on land—also left, each kind leaving together.

²⁰ Noah built an altar, and sacrificed some of the clean animals and birds as a burnt

offering. ²¹ The Lord accepted* the sacrifice, and said to himself, “I won’t ever again curse the ground because of human beings, even though every single thought in their minds is evil from childhood. I won’t ever destroy all life again as I have just done. ²² As long as the earth exists, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, will never come to an end.”

9

¹ God blessed Noah and his sons, and told them, “Reproduce, increase, and spread throughout the earth! ² All animals will be very afraid of you—this includes all the birds, all the creatures that run along the ground, and all the fish in the sea. You are in charge of them. ³ Every living creature that moves will be food for you, as well as all the green plants.* ⁴ But do not eat meat with the lifeblood still in it. ⁵ If your blood is shed by any animal, I will call it to account; and if your blood is shed by any person, I will call that person to account. ⁶ Whoever sheds the blood of a human being will have their blood shed by human beings. For God made human beings in

* **8:21** “Accepted”: literally, “smelled a pleasing aroma.” This is a “figurative extension” of this sensory process which meant that in the same way when we like something, and by extension, accept it, so does God. * **9:3** According to 1:30, the green plants were originally meant for the animals. Now both the plants and the animals themselves are permitted as human food. After the flood there would have been little food immediately available to eat.

his image. ⁷ Reproduce, increase, and spread throughout the earth—have many descendants!”

⁸ Then God told Noah and his sons who were there with him, ⁹ “Listen, I’m making my agreement with you and your descendants, ¹⁰ and with all the animals around you—the birds, the livestock, and all the wild animals of the earth—every animal that accompanied you on the ark.

¹¹ In my agreement I’m promising you that I won’t ever again destroy all life by means of a flood—there won’t be a destructive flood like this again.”

¹² Then God said, “I’m going to give you a sign to confirm the agreement I’m making between me and you and all living creatures, an agreement that will last for all generations.

¹³ I’ve placed my rainbow in the clouds, and this will be the sign of my agreement with you and with all life on earth. ¹⁴ Whenever I make clouds form over the earth and the rainbow appears,

¹⁵ it will remind me of my agreement between me and you and every kind of living creature that floodwaters won’t ever again destroy all life.

¹⁶ I will see the rainbow in the clouds and it will remind me of the eternal agreement between God and every kind of living creature that lives on the earth.”

¹⁷ Then God told Noah, “This is the sign of the agreement I’m making between me and every creature on earth.”

¹⁸ Noah’s sons who left the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham was the father of the Canaanites.) ¹⁹ All the people who are spread

over the world are descended from these three sons of Noah.

²⁰ Noah started to cultivate the ground as a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. ²¹ He drank some of the wine he'd produced, got drunk, and fell asleep in his tent, naked. ²² Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's private parts and went and told his two brothers who were outside. ²³ Shem and Japheth picked up a cloak and, holding it over their shoulders, walked in backwards and covered up their father's privates. They made sure to look the other way so they wouldn't see their father's privates.

²⁴ When Noah woke up from his drunken sleep, he discovered what his youngest son had done, ²⁵ and said, "May Canaan† be cursed! He will be the lowest kind of slave and will serve his brothers!"

²⁶ Then Noah continued, "May the Lord be blessed, the God of Shem, and may Canaan be his slave. ²⁷ May God give Japheth plenty of space to accommodate his many descendants, and may they live at peace among Shem's people, and may Canaan also be his slave."

²⁸ Noah lived for another 350 years after the flood. ²⁹ Noah lived a total of 950 years, and then he died.

† **9:25** Why Canaan is the one cursed and not Ham has long been a matter of debate. One suggestion is that it was the later Canaanites who were the particular enemies of Israel and who were subjugated by them, and so Canaan was prophetically more symbolically significant.

10

¹ The following are the genealogies* of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. They had sons born to them after the flood.

² The sons† of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.

³ The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.

⁴ The sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim.‡ ⁵ The descendants of these ancestors spread throughout the coastal areas, each group having their own language, with their families developing into different nations.

⁶ The sons of Ham: Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.

⁷ The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca.

The sons of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan.

⁸ Cush was also the father of Nimrod, who set himself up as the first tyrant on earth. ⁹ He was a powerful fighter who defied§ the Lord; which is why there's the expression, "Like Nimrod, a powerful fighter who defied the Lord." ¹⁰ His kingdom began in the cities of Babel,* Erech,

* **10:1** These genealogies are repeated in 1 Chronicles 1:5-27.

† **10:2** Note that "sons" throughout this chapter can also mean "descendants." ‡ **10:4** "Dodanim": the Septuagint takes the spelling to be Rodanim, as does the parallel passage in 1 Chronicles 1:7. Note that the last two names at least are probably those of a group of people rather than a personal name. § **10:9**

"Defied": The Septuagint reads "against" or "versus." * **10:10** "Babel" or "Babylon." Nimrod is the first person in Scripture described as having a kingdom, normally associated with an imposed rule using force.

Akkad, and Calneh, all located in the land of Shinar.[†] ¹¹ From there he moved into Assyria[‡] and built the cities of Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah, ¹² and Resen, which lies between Nineveh and the great city of Calah.

¹³ Mizraim was the father of the Ludites, the Anamites, the Lehabites, the Naphtuhites, ¹⁴ the Pathrusites, the Casluhites, and the Caphtorites (ancestors of the Philistines).[§]

¹⁵ Canaan was the father of Sidon, his firstborn, and of the Hittites,* ¹⁶ the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, ¹⁷ the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, ¹⁸ the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites.

Later the Canaanite tribes spread out ¹⁹ and the territory of the Canaanites stretched from Sidon towards Gerar and all the way to Gaza, then towards Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, all the way to Lasha. ²⁰ These were the sons of Ham according to their tribes, languages, lands, and nation.

²¹ Shem, whose older brother[†] was Japheth, also had sons. Shem was the forefather of all the sons of Eber.

²² The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram.

²³ The sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.[‡]

[†] **10:10** “Shinar”: or “Babylonia.” [‡] **10:11** “Assyria”: in Micah 5:6 Assyria is called “the land of Nimrod.” [§] **10:14** See Jeremiah 47:4 and Amos 9:7. * **10:15** “The Hittites”: literally “Heth.”

[†] **10:21** See note on 5:32. [‡] **10:23** “Mash”: The Septuagint and 1 Chronicles 1:17 read “Meshech.”

²⁴ Arphaxad was the father of Shelah. Shelah was the father of Eber.

²⁵ Eber had two sons. One was named Peleg, § because in his time the earth was divided; the name of his brother was Joktan.

²⁶ Joktan was the father of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, ²⁷ Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, ²⁸ Obal, Abimael, Sheba, ²⁹ Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. These were all sons of Joktan. ³⁰ They lived in the land lying between Mesha to Sephar, in the hill country to the east.

³¹ These were the sons of Shem, according to their tribes, languages, lands, and nations.

³² These were all the tribes descended from Noah's sons, according to their genealogies and national groups. From these ancestors the different nations of the earth spread around the world after the flood.

11

¹ At that time the whole world spoke just one language and used words with the same meaning. ² As they moved east they discovered a plain in the land of Shinar so they settled there.

³ They said to one another, "Come on, let's make some bricks and bake them with fire." (They used brick instead of stone, and tar instead of cement).* ⁴ Then they said, "Now let's build a city for ourselves with a tower whose top reaches the heavens. That way we'll gain a great

§ 10:25 The word means "divided." * 11:3 This was because in the Babylonian plain there was no stone to use for buildings.

reputation and we won't end up being scattered all over the world.”

⁵ But the Lord came down to take a look at the city and the tower that the people were building. ⁶ The Lord said, “Look! These people are united and they all speak one language. If this is what they can do now when they're just getting started, nothing will be impossible for them when they all put their minds to it! ⁷ We need to go down and mix up their language and make it confused so they won't be able to understand what they're saying to one other.”

⁸ The Lord sent them away from there and scattered them all over the world, and they gave up building the city. ⁹ That's why it was called Babel,[†] because the Lord made the language of the world confused.

¹⁰ The following is the genealogy of Shem. When Shem was 100, he had Arphaxad. This was two years after the flood. ¹¹ Shem lived another 500 years after Arphaxad was born and had other sons and daughters.

¹² When Arphaxad was 35, he had Shelah. ¹³ Arphaxad lived another 403 years after Shelah was born and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁴ When Shelah was 30, he had Eber. ¹⁵ Shelah lived another 403 years after Eber was born and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁶ When Eber was 34, he had Peleg. ¹⁷ Eber lived another 430 years after Peleg was born and had other sons and daughters.

[†] **11:9** Babel sounds like the Hebrew word for “confuse.”

¹⁸ When Peleg was 30, he had Reu. ¹⁹ Peleg lived another 209 years after Reu was born and had other sons and daughters.

²⁰ When Reu was 32, he had Serug. ²¹ Reu lived another 207 years after Serug was born and had other sons and daughters.

²² When Serug was 30, he had Nahor. ²³ Serug lived another 200 years after Nahor was born and had other sons and daughters.

²⁴ When Nahor was 29, he had Terah. ²⁵ Nahor lived another 119 years after Terah was born and had other sons and daughters.

²⁶ When Terah was 70, he had Abram, Nahor, and Haran.[†]

²⁷ The following is the genealogy of Terah. Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran was the father of Lot. ²⁸ However, Haran died while his father, Terah, was still alive, in Ur of the Chaldeans, the land of his birth. ²⁹ Abram and Nahor both got married. Abram's wife was named Sarai, and Nahor's wife was named Milcah. (She was the daughter of Haran, who was the father of both Milcah and Iscah). ³⁰ Sarai wasn't able to become pregnant and so had no children.

³¹ Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot, (who was the son of Haran), his daughter-in-law Sarai, (the wife of his son Abram), and left Ur of the Chaldeans to move to the land of Canaan. They got as far as Haran and settled

[†] **11:26** Once again (see note on 5:32) these sons are not listed in birth order. Abram is listed first because of his importance.

there. ³² Terah lived for 205 years and died in Haran.

12

¹ The Lord told Abram, “Leave your country, your relatives, your family home,* and travel to the country I’m going to show you. ² I will make you the ancestor of a great nation and I will bless you. I will make sure you have a great reputation and that you are a blessing to others. ³ I will bless those who bless you; I will curse those who curse you. Everyone on earth will be blessed through you.”

⁴ So Abram left following the Lord’s instructions, and Lot went with him. Abram was 75 when he left Haran. ⁵ With him went his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, together with all the possessions they had collected and the people that had joined them† in Harran. They left for the land of Canaan.

When they arrived there, ⁶ Abram traveled on through the country as far as a place called Shechem, stopping at the oak tree of Moreh. At that time the country was occupied by Canaanites.

⁷ The Lord appeared to Abram and said, “I’m going to give this land to your descendants.” So Abram built an altar to the Lord there because that was where the Lord appeared to him. ⁸ Then

* **12:1** “Your family home”: literally, “your father’s house.”

† **12:5** “The people that had joined them”: this would include servants, but the term used is not specific and applies to anyone who had joined Abram’s group for whatever reason.

he moved on to the hill country east of Bethel and set up camp there. Bethel was to the west and Ai to the east. He built an altar to the Lord there and worshiped him. ⁹ After that he went on his way, heading towards the Negev.[†]

¹⁰ But the land had been hit by famine. So Abram continued on to Egypt, planning to live there because the famine was so bad. ¹¹ As he approached Egypt and was about to cross the border, he said to his wife Sarai, “Look, I know what a beautiful woman you are. ¹² When the Egyptians see you, they’ll say, ‘She’s his wife,’ and they’ll kill me but not you! ¹³ Tell them you’re my sister so I’ll be treated well because of you, and my life will be spared for your sake.”

¹⁴ When Abram arrived in Egypt, the people there saw how beautiful Sarai was. ¹⁵ Pharaoh’s officials also noticed and spoke positively about her to Pharaoh. So Sarai was taken to his palace to become one of his wives. § ¹⁶ Pharaoh treated Abram well because of her, giving him sheep and cattle, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys, and camels.

¹⁷ But the Lord caused Pharaoh and the people in his palace to suffer from terrible diseases because of Sarai, Abram’s wife. ¹⁸ So Pharaoh ordered Abram brought to him and said, “What have you done to me? Why didn’t you tell me that she was your wife? ¹⁹ Why did you say, ‘She’s my sister,’ and let me take her to become

[†] **12:9** “The Negev”: the desert area to the south. § **12:15** “To become one of his wives”: supplied for clarity.

one of my wives? So here's your wife! Take her and leave!"

²⁰ Pharaoh ordered his guards to expel him and his wife from the country, along with everyone with them and all their possessions.

13

¹ So Abram left Egypt and went back into the Negev along with Sarai, Lot, and everyone with them, as well as all their possessions. ² Abram was very rich, having many herds of livestock and a great deal of silver and gold. ³ He left the Negev and traveled in stages to Bethel, back to the place where he'd camped before, between Bethel and Ai. ⁴ This was where he'd first built an altar. He worshiped the Lord there as he had done previously.

⁵ Lot, who was traveling with Abram, also had many flocks, herds, and tents, ⁶ so much so that the available land couldn't support both of them—they had so much livestock they couldn't stay together anymore. ⁷ Abram's and Lot's herdsmen were arguing, and in addition the Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time.

⁸ So Abram said to Lot, "Please don't let's have arguments between us, or between our herdsmen, because we're family. ⁹ You see all this land that's available right in front of you? We have to split up. If you choose to go to the left, I'll go to the right. If you choose to go to the right, I'll go to the left."

¹⁰ Lot looked over the whole Jordan valley towards Zoar, and saw that it was well-watered, looking like the Garden of Eden, like the land of Egypt. (This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) ¹¹ So Lot chose the whole Jordan valley and went east, and the two separated from each other. ¹² Abram went to live in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled down among the towns in the valley, setting up his tents near Sodom. ¹³ (The people of Sodom were very wicked, committing terrible sins that offended the Lord.)

¹⁴ After separating from Lot, the Lord told Abram, “Look around you from where you’re standing, to the north, south, east, and west. ¹⁵ I’m giving all this land you see to you and your descendants forever. ¹⁶ You will have so many descendants that they’ll be like the dust of the earth. If anyone could count dust then they could count the number of your descendants! ¹⁷ Go and walk through the whole land in all directions because I’m giving it to you.”

¹⁸ So Abram went to live at Hebron, setting up his tents among the oaks at Mamre, where he built an altar to the Lord.

14

¹ At that time Amraphel was king of Shinar,* and he allied himself with Arioch, king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, and Tidal, king of Goiim. ² They attacked Bera, king of Sodom, Birsha, king of Gomorrah, Shinab, king of Admah,

* **14:1** “Shinar”: an old name for Babylonia.

Shemeber, king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (otherwise known as Zoar).

³ All these in the second group[†] joined forces in the Valley of Siddim (the Dead Sea valley).

⁴ They had been under the rule of Chedorlaomer for twelve years, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled against him. ⁵ In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer invaded, along with the kings in his alliance. They defeated the Rephaites in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzites in Ham, the Emmites in Shaveh-kiriathaim, ⁶ and the Horites in their hill country of Seir, all the way to El-paran, near the desert. ⁷ Then they swung back through and attacked En-mishpat (otherwise known as Kadesh) and conquered the whole country belonging to the Amalekites, as well as the Amorites who lived in Hazazon-tamar.

⁸ Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (otherwise known as Zoar) marched out and prepared for battle in the Valley of Siddim. ⁹ They fought Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, Tidal, king of Goiim, Amraphel, king of Shinar, and Arioch, king of Ellasar—four kings on one side against five on the other.

¹⁰ There were many tar pits in the Valley of Siddim, and as the defeated kings of Sodom and Gomorrah ran away, some of their men[‡] fell into them while the rest ran to the hills. ¹¹ The

[†] **14:3** “In the second group” supplied for clarity. [‡] **14:10** “Some of their men”: while the text seems to suggest that the kings fell into the tar pits, verse 17 makes it clear that at least the king of Sodom had not died.

invaders took from Sodom and Gomorrah all their possessions and food and left. ¹² They also captured Lot, Abram's nephew, and his possessions, because he was living in Sodom. ¹³ But one of those captured escaped and went and told Abram the Hebrew[§] what had happened. Abram was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, whose brothers were Eshcol and Aner. All of them were Abram's allies.

¹⁴ When Abram found out that his nephew had been captured, he called together 318 fighting men who had been born in his household and chased after them all the way to Dan. ¹⁵ There he divided his men into groups and attacked at night, defeating the enemy and chasing them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. ¹⁶ Abram recovered all that had been taken, including Lot and his possessions, and also brought back the women and others who had been captured.

¹⁷ When Abram returned after defeating Chedorlaomer and his allies, the king of Sodom came out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (or Valley of the King). ¹⁸ Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine. He was a priest of the Most High God. ¹⁹ He blessed Abram, telling him, "May Abram be blessed by the Most High God, Creator of heaven and earth. ²⁰ May the Most High God be praised, who handed your enemies over to you." Then Abram gave Melchizedek one tenth of everything.

§ 14:13 "Abram the Hebrew": this is the first time Abram is called a Hebrew, and may be the way he was identified by the people of the time.

²¹ The king of Sodom told Abram, “Let me have the people back, and you can keep everything else for yourself.”

²² But Abram replied to the king of Sodom, “I raise my hand, making a solemn promise to the Lord, the Most High God, Creator of heaven and earth, ²³ that I refuse to take anything belonging to you, not a single thread or a sandal strap. Otherwise you might claim, ‘It was me who made Abram rich!’ ²⁴ I won’t take anything except what my men have eaten, and the share for those who accompanied me—Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre. Let them have their share.”

15

¹ After all this had happened, God spoke to Abram in a vision, telling him, “Don’t be afraid, Abram! I am your protector, and your truly great reward!”

² But Abram replied, “Lord God, what good is whatever you give me? I don’t have any children, and the heir to all that I have is Eliezer of Damascus.”* ³ Abram went on to complain, “Look! You haven’t given me any children, so a servant from my household has to be my heir!”

⁴ But then the Lord told him, “This man won’t be your heir. Your heir will be your very own son.”

⁵ The Lord took Abram outside and said to him, “Look up at the sky. See if you can count the

* **15:2** It was the practice of the time for childless couples to appoint their most trusted servant as their heir.

stars! That's how many descendants you will have!"

⁶ Abram trusted what the Lord said, and so the Lord counted Abram as being in a right relationship with him.

⁷ The Lord also told him, "I am the Lord, who led you from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land for you to own."

⁸ "But Lord God, how can I be certain that I will own it?" Abram asked.

⁹ The Lord told him, "Bring me a cow, a goat, and a ram, all of them three years old, together with a dove and a young pigeon." ¹⁰ So Abram took and killed the three animals. Then he cut them in half, and placed each half opposite the other. However, he didn't cut the birds in half. ¹¹ When vultures flew down on the carcasses, Abram frightened them off.

¹² As the sun went down, a deep sleep came over Abram, and at the same time a dense and terrifying darkness fell on him. ¹³ The Lord explained to Abram, "You can be absolutely sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, where they will be slaves and mistreated for 400 years. ¹⁴ However, I will punish the nation that makes them slaves, and later on they will leave, taking many valuable possessions with them. ¹⁵ But as for you, you will die in peace and be buried, having lived a good long life. ¹⁶ Four generations later your descendants will come back here to live, because right now the sins of the Amorites have not reached their full extent."

¹⁷ After the sun set and it grew dark, suddenly a smoking furnace and a flaming torch appeared and passed between the halves of the animal carcasses. ¹⁸ This is how the Lord made an agreement with Abram that day and promised him, “I’m giving this land to your descendants. It extends from the Wadi of Egypt[†] to the great Euphrates River, ¹⁹ and includes the territory of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, ²⁰ Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, ²¹ Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites.”

16

¹ Sarai, Abram’s wife, hadn’t been able to have any children for him. However, she owned a female Egyptian slave named Hagar, ² so Sarai said to Abram, “Please listen to me. The Lord hasn’t let me have any children. So please go and sleep with my slave. Maybe I can have a family through her.” Abram agreed to what Sarai had suggested. ³ So Sarai, Abram’s wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband as his wife. Abram had been living in the land of Canaan for ten years when this happened.

⁴ Abram slept with Hagar and she became pregnant. When she realized she was pregnant, she treated her mistress with contempt.*

[†] **15:18** “Wadi of Egypt”: Not the Nile, but what is known as the Wadi Arish today. See Numbers 34:5; Joshua 15:4, Joshua 15:47.

* **16:4** “She looked at her mistress with contempt,” literally, “her mistress looked small in her eyes.” Another translation would be “she looked down on her mistress.”

⁵ Then Sarai complained to Abram, “What I’m suffering is all your doing! I gave you my servant to sleep with, and now that she knows she’s pregnant, she treats me with contempt. May the Lord decide who’s at fault—you or me!”

⁶ “Listen, she’s your slave!” Abram replied. “You can do whatever you want to her.” Sarai treated Hagar so badly that she ran away.[†]

⁷ The angel of the Lord met Hagar at a spring in the desert—the spring on the road to Shur.

⁸ He asked her, “Hagar, Sarai’s slave—where have you come from, and where are you going?”

“I’m running away from my mistress Sarai,” she replied.

⁹ “Go back to your mistress and do what she tells you,” the angel of the Lord told her.

¹⁰ Then he continued, “I will give you many, many descendants—in fact they’ll be so many they can’t be counted.” ¹¹ The angel of the Lord

went on to tell her: “Listen! You’re pregnant, and you will have a son. You are to name him Ishmael,[‡] for the Lord has heard how you’ve suffered. ¹² He’ll be a wild donkey kind of man—he will fight with everyone, and everyone will fight with him. He will forever be fighting with his relatives.”

¹³ From then on Hagar called the Lord who spoke to her, “You are the God who sees me,” because she said, “Here I saw the one who sees

[†] **16:6** “Ran away”: the Hebrew says, “ran away from her,” but Hagar ran away from the camp rather than just avoid Sarai.

[‡] **16:11** Ishmael means “God hears.”

me.” ¹⁴ That's why the well[§] is called “the Well of the Living One who Sees Me.” It's still there, between Kadesh and Bered.

¹⁵ Hagar gave birth to a son for Abram. Abram named his son Ishmael. ¹⁶ Abram was 86 when Hagar had Ishmael.

17

¹ When Abram was 99, the Lord appeared to him and told him, “I am God Almighty. Live in my presence and don't do wrong.” ^{*} ² I will make my agreement between me and you, and I will give you many, many descendants.”

³ Abram bowed down with his face to the ground, and God told him, ⁴ “Listen! This is the agreement I'm making with you. You will be the father of many nations, ⁵ so your name won't be Abram any longer. Instead, your name will be Abraham[†] because I'm going to make you the father of many nations. ⁶ I will make sure you have a large number of descendants. They will become many nations, and some of their kings will also come from your line. ⁷ I promise to continue my agreement with you, and with your descendants who come after you, for generations to come. This is an eternal agreement. I will always be your God, and the God of your descendants. ⁸ I will give you and

§ **16:14** This well is the same water source that is called a spring in verse 7. ^{*} **17:1** “Live in my presence and don't do wrong,” literally, “walk before me and be innocent.” [†] **17:5** The name change is usually interpreted to be from Abram (“exalted father”) to Abraham (“father of many”).

your descendants the whole country of Canaan—where you've been living as a foreigner—as land to own forever, and I will be their God.”

⁹ Then God told Abraham, “Your part is to keep my agreement—you and your descendants for generations to come. ¹⁰ This is my agreement with you and your descendants who come after you, the agreement you are to keep: every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹ You are to circumcise your foreskin, and this will be the sign of the agreement between me and you. ¹² From now and for all generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised. This includes not only your sons but also those born in your household or bought from foreigners. ¹³ You must circumcise those born in your household or bought from foreigners as a sign in your bodies of my eternal agreement. ¹⁴ Any uncircumcised male who refuses circumcision will be excluded from his people because he has broken my agreement.”

¹⁵ Then God told Abraham, “Now about Sarai your wife. Don't call her Sarai any longer. Instead, her name will be Sarah. ¹⁶ I will bless her and I promise to give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will become the mother of nations, and kings will be among her descendants.”

¹⁷ Abraham bowed down with his face to the ground. But inside he was laughing, asking himself, “How on earth could I have a son at the age of one hundred? How could Sarah have a child when she is ninety?”

¹⁸ Abraham said to God, “May Ishmael always live under your blessing!”

¹⁹ “No, it's your wife Sarah who is going to have a son for you!” God replied. “You are to call him Isaac.[†] I will keep my agreement with him and his descendants as an eternal agreement. ²⁰ Now about Ishmael. I heard what you said, and I will also bless him. I will make sure he has a great many descendants. He will be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him into a great nation. ²¹ But it's with Isaac that I will keep my agreement, the son Sarah will give birth to about this time next year.” ²² When God had finished speaking with Abraham he left him.

²³ That day Abraham circumcised his son Ishmael as well as all those born in his household or purchased, in fact every male among the members of Abraham's household, just as God had told him. ²⁴ Abraham was 99 when he was circumcised, ²⁵ and his son Ishmael was thirteen. ²⁶ Both Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised on the same day. ²⁷ All the males in Abraham's household, including those born in his household or purchased from foreigners, were circumcised with him.

18

¹ The Lord appeared to Abraham at the oaks of Mamre. Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent as the day became really hot. ² He looked up and all of a sudden he saw three men

[†] **17:19** Isaac means “he laughs.”

standing there. As soon as he saw them, he ran over to meet them and bowed low to the ground.

³ He said, “Sir,* if you please, don’t continue your journey without spending some time here with me, your servant. ⁴ Let me have some water brought so you can wash your feet and rest under the tree. ⁵ Also let me bring some food so you can get your strength back before you go on your way, now that you’ve come to visit me here.”

“That would be fine,” they answered. “Please do as you’ve suggested.”

⁶ Abraham hurried back to the tent and told Sarah, “Quick! Make some bread using three large measures† of the best flour. Knead the dough and bake the bread.” ⁷ Then Abraham ran to the cattle herd and chose a good, young calf and gave it to his servant who quickly killed and cooked it. ⁸ Then he took some yogurt, milk, and the cooked meat, and placed the food in front of them. He stood nearby under a tree while they ate.

⁹ “Where is your wife Sarah?” they asked him.

“Over there, inside the tent,” he replied.

¹⁰ Then one said, “I promise you that I will come back to visit you about this time next year, and your wife Sarah will have a son.” Sarah was listening, hiding just inside the entrance to the tent behind him.

* **18:3** It seems Abraham was addressing just one of them, perhaps seeing him as their leader. † **18:6** “Large measures”: literally “seahs,” variously estimated as 20 quarts or 44 pounds.

¹¹ Abraham and Sarah were old, getting on in years. Sarah was well past the age of having children. ¹² Sarah was laughing inside, saying to herself, “Now that I’m old and worn out, how would I experience pleasure? My husband is old too!”

¹³ The Lord asked Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and ask, ‘How could it possibly be true that I’ll have a child now I’m so old?’” ¹⁴ Is anything too difficult for the Lord to do? I will come back next year when I said I would, in the spring, and Sarah will have a son.”

¹⁵ Sarah denied it because she was afraid, claiming, “I didn’t laugh.”

“Yes, you did laugh,” the Lord replied.

¹⁶ Then the men left. They looked down on Sodom[†] and headed in that direction. Abraham accompanied them part of the way.

¹⁷ Then the Lord said, “Should I keep from Abraham what I’m going to do?” ¹⁸ Abraham will definitely become a great and powerful nation, and all the nations on earth will be blessed through him. ¹⁹ I’ve chosen him so that he will teach his sons and their families to follow the way of the Lord by doing what is right and good, so that I, the Lord, can do for Abraham what I promised.”

²⁰ Then the Lord said, “There are many complaints made against Sodom and Gomorrah because they sin so blatantly. ²¹ I ‘m going to

[†] **18:16** Clearly they could see Sodom in the valley below from their viewpoint higher up.

see if these complaints that have reached me are completely true. I'll know if they're not."

²² The two men turned and went towards Sodom, but the Lord stayed there with Abraham.

²³ Abraham came to him and asked: "Are you really going to wipe out the good people along with the wicked? ²⁴ What if there are fifty good people in the town? Are you still going to wipe it out despite the fifty good people there? ²⁵ No, you can't do something like that! You can't kill the good with the wicked, otherwise you would be treating the good and the wicked in the same way. You can't do that! Isn't the Judge of all the earth going to do the right thing?"

²⁶ "If I find fifty good people in Sodom, I'll spare the whole town because of them," the Lord replied.

²⁷ "Since I've started, let me go on speaking to my Lord, even though I'm nothing but dust and ashes," Abraham continued. ²⁸ "What if there are forty-five good people, just five less? Are you still going to wipe out the whole town just because there are five fewer people?"

"I won't destroy it if I find forty-five," the Lord replied.

²⁹ Abraham spoke up again and he asked the Lord, "What if only forty can be found?"

"I won't do it for the sake of the forty," the Lord replied.

³⁰ "My Lord, please don't get angry with me," Abraham went on. "Let me ask this—what if only thirty were found?"

"I won't do it if I find thirty," the Lord replied.

³¹ “I admit I’ve been very bold to speak to my Lord like this,” Abraham said. “What if only twenty are found there?”

“I won’t do it for the sake of the twenty,” the Lord replied.

³² “Please don’t get angry with me, my Lord,” Abraham said. “Just let me ask one more thing. What if only ten are found there?”

“I won’t destroy it for the sake of the ten,” the Lord replied.

³³ The Lord left once he had finished speaking with Abraham, and Abraham went home.

19

¹ The two angels* arrived at Sodom in the evening. Lot happened to be sitting at the entrance to Sodom, and when he saw them he stood up to meet them, and bowed low with his face to the ground.

² “Sirs, please come and stay with me for the night,” he said. “You can wash your feet and then be on your way early in the morning.”

They replied, “No, it’s fine. We’ll spend the night here in the square.”

³ But Lot insisted, and they went with him to his house. He made them a meal and baked bread for them to eat. ⁴ But they hadn’t even gone to bed before the men of Sodom, young and old, from every part of town, came and surrounded the house. ⁵ They shouted out to Lot, “Where are the men who came to stay with you

* **19:1** “Angels”: the account alternates between calling the two visitors “angels” and “men.”

tonight? Bring them out here to us so we can have sex with them.”

⁶ Lot went out to talk to them in the doorway, closing the door behind him.

⁷ “My friends, please don't do such an evil thing! ⁸ Listen, I've got two virgin daughters. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do to them whatever you want, but please don't do anything to these men. It's my responsibility to look after them.”†

⁹ “Out of our way!” they shouted. “Who do you think you are, coming to live here and now trying to judge us? We'll do even worse things to you than we were going to do to these men!” They rushed forward at Lot and tried to break down the door.

¹⁰ But the men inside reached out and grabbed Lot, dragged him inside, and slammed the door shut. ¹¹ Then they made all the men in the doorway, young and old, suddenly go blind so they couldn't find the door.

¹² The two men asked Lot, “Is there anyone else here who's part of your family—sons-in-law, or sons or daughters, or anyone else in the town? If there are, make sure they leave, ¹³ because we are about to destroy this place. The complaints that have reached the Lord about its people have become so bad that he has sent us to destroy it.”

¹⁴ Lot went immediately to speak to the men who were engaged to marry his daughters. “Get

† **19:8** “It's my responsibility to look after them”: literally, “They have come under the protection of my roof.”

up quickly and leave,” he said, “because the Lord is about to destroy the town!” But they thought it was just a joke.

¹⁵ At dawn, the angels begged Lot to be quick, telling him, “Hurry up! Leave right now with your wife and your two daughters here, otherwise you’ll be wiped out when the city is punished.” ¹⁶ But Lot hesitated. The men grabbed his hand, and those of his wife and two daughters, and dragged them along, leaving them outside the town. The Lord was kind to them to do this.

¹⁷ As soon as they were outside, one of the men said, “Run for your lives! Don’t look back, and don’t stop anywhere in the valley! Run to the mountains otherwise you’ll be destroyed!”

¹⁸ “Please sir, not that!” Lot replied. ¹⁹ “If you don’t mind, since you have already been so kind to me by saving my life, don’t make me run to the mountains—I just can’t make it. The destruction will overtake me and I’ll die! ²⁰ Look, there’s a town nearby that’s close enough to run to, and it’s so small. Please let me run there—it’s really very small. It would save my life.”

²¹ “Fine—I’ll do as you ask,” he replied. “I won’t destroy this town you’ve mentioned. ²² But hurry up and run there quickly, because I can’t do anything until you get there.” (This is why the town was called Zoar.)[†]

²³ The sun had already risen by the time Lot reached Zoar. ²⁴ Then the Lord rained down fire

[†] **19:22** Zoar means “little place.” Originally it was called Bela (see 14:2).

and burning sulfur from the sky on Sodom and Gomorrah. ²⁵ He completely destroyed the towns and all their inhabitants, the whole valley and everything growing there. ²⁶ But Lot's wife, who was lagging behind, looked back, and she turned into a pillar of salt.

²⁷ Abraham got up early the next morning and went back to where he had stood before the Lord. ²⁸ He looked down at Sodom and Gomorrah and the whole valley floor, and saw the land burning, sending up smoke like from a furnace.

²⁹ When God destroyed the towns of the valley he didn't forget the promise he made Abraham, and he saved Lot from the destruction of the towns where Lot was living.

³⁰ Lot was afraid to stay in Zoar, so he left town and went to live in a cave in the mountains with his two daughters. ³¹ Sometime later the older daughter said to the younger one, "Our father is growing old, and there's no men left to give us children like everyone does. ³² Come on, let's get our father drunk with wine and sleep with him so we can keep his family line going."

³³ So they got their father drunk with wine that night. The older daughter went and slept with him, and he didn't notice when she lay down or when she got up.

³⁴ The next day the older daughter said to the younger one, "Last night I slept with our father. Let's get him drunk with wine again tonight and you can go and sleep with him so we can keep his family line going."

³⁵ So once again that night they got their father drunk with wine and the younger daughter went and slept with him, and he didn't notice when she lay down or when she got up.

³⁶ This is how both Lot's daughters became pregnant by their father. ³⁷ The older daughter had a son, and she called him Moab. § He is the ancestor of the Moabites of today. ³⁸ The younger daughter had a son too, and she called him Ben-ammi.* He is the ancestor of the Ammonites of today.

20

¹ Abraham traveled towards the Negev, staying between Kadesh and Shur. After that he moved on to live in Gerar. ² During his time there, when Abraham told people about his wife Sarah, he said, "She's my sister." So Abimelech,* king of Gerar, sent for Sarah and took her to become one of his wives. †

³ But God appeared to Abimelech in a dream and told him, "Listen! You're going to die because the woman you've taken is already married—she has a husband."

⁴ Abimelech hadn't touched Sarah, and he asked, "Lord, do you kill good people?" ⁵ Didn't Abraham tell me himself, 'She's my sister,' and

§ **19:37** "Moab": understood to mean "son of my father."

* **19:38** "Ben-ammi": "son of my people." * **20:2** "Abimelech" means "my father is the king," or "my father is Molech," a Canaanite god. This may well have been a formal title rather than a personal name (see also 26:8). † **20:2** "To become one of his wives": supplied for clarity.

didn't Sarah also say, 'He's my brother'? I did this in all innocence—my conscience is clear!”

⁶ God told him in the dream, “Yes, I know you did this in all innocence, so I prevented you from sinning against me. That's why I didn't let you touch her. ⁷ Send the man's wife back to him. He's a prophet. He will pray for you, and you will live. But if you don't send her back to him, you should know for sure that you and all your family will die.”

⁸ Abimelech got up early in the morning and called all his servants together. He explained everything that had happened, and they were all terrified. ⁹ Then Abimelech summoned Abraham and asked him “What have you done to us? How have I wronged you that you should treat me like this, bringing this terrible sin on me and my kingdom? You've done things to me that no one should ever do!”

¹⁰ Then Abimelech asked Abraham “What were you thinking when you did this?”

¹¹ “Well, I thought to myself, ‘Nobody respects God in this place. They'll kill me just to get my wife,’” Abraham replied. ¹² “Anyway, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father but not my mother, and I married her. ¹³ Since my God made me move far away from my family home, I told her, ‘If you really love me, then wherever you go with me you must tell people: He's my brother.’”

¹⁴ Then Abimelech gave Abraham gifts of sheep, cattle, and male and female slaves, and returned his wife Sarah to him. ¹⁵ Abimelech told

him, "Look over my land. You can choose to live anywhere you like." ¹⁶ Abimelech also told Sarah, "Notice that I'm giving your brother a thousand pieces of silver. This is to compensate you for the wrong done to you in the eyes of everyone with you, and to make sure that your name is publicly cleared."

¹⁷ Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female slaves, so that they could have children again.

¹⁸ For the Lord had made all the women unable to have children because Abraham's wife, Sarah, had been taken.†

21

¹ The Lord came to help Sarah as he'd said he would. The Lord did for Sarah what he'd promised. ² She became pregnant and had a son for Abraham when he was old, at the exact time God said she would. ³ Abraham named their son Isaac. ⁴ Abraham circumcised him when Isaac was eight days old, following God's command. ⁵ Abraham was 100 when Isaac was born.

⁶ Sarah declared, "God has made me laugh,* and all those who hear about this will laugh with me." ⁷ She also said, "Would anyone have announced to Abraham that Sarah was going to have children to nurse? But now I have had a son for Abraham even when he was old!"

⁸ The baby grew up, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a large feast. ⁹ But Sarah noticed that Ishmael, Hagar the Egyptian's son

† **20:18** "Was taken": supplied for clarity. * **21:6** Isaac means "he laughs."

she'd had for Abraham, was making fun of Isaac. ¹⁰ So she went to Abraham and told him, "You have to get rid of this slave woman and this son of hers! A slave woman's son is not going to be one of your heirs and inherit together with my son Isaac!"

¹¹ Abraham felt very bad about it because Ishmael was his son. ¹² But God told Abraham, "Don't feel bad about the boy and the slave woman. Do whatever Sarah tells you, because it's through Isaac that your descendants will be counted. ¹³ Don't worry—I will also make the son of the slave woman into a nation because he's your son."

¹⁴ Abraham got up early the next morning. He packed up some food and a skin of water which he gave to Hagar, putting them on her shoulder. Then he sent her and the boy away. She left and wandered through the Desert of Beersheba.

¹⁵ When the water ran out, she left the boy under one of the bushes. ¹⁶ She went and sat down some way off, a few hundred yards away,[†] saying, "I can't bear to watch my son die!" As she sat down she burst into tears.

¹⁷ God heard the boy's cries, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and asked her, "What's the matter, Hagar? Don't be afraid! God has heard the boy crying from where he is. ¹⁸ Get up, go over and help the boy up, and encourage him, for I will make him into a great nation."

[†] **21:16** "A few hundred yards away": literally, "a bowshot."

¹⁹ God opened her eyes and she saw a well nearby. She went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

²⁰ God blessed Ishmael and he grew up, living in the desert. He became a skilled archer. ²¹ He lived in the Desert of Paran. His mother chose a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

²² Around this time Abimelech came with Phicol, the commander of his army, to see Abraham. "God blesses you in everything you do," Abimelech said. ²³ "So swear to me right here and now that you won't betray me, my children, or my descendants. In the same way I've proved I'm trustworthy to you, do the same to me and my country where you're currently living."

²⁴ "I so swear," Abraham replied. ²⁵ Then Abraham raised an issue with Abimelech of a well that Abimelech's servants had taken by force.

²⁶ "I don't know who did this, and you didn't mention it before. I haven't heard anything about it until today," Abimelech responded.

²⁷ Then Abraham gave Abimelech some of his sheep and cattle, and the two of them made an agreement. ²⁸ Abraham also separated out seven female lambs from the flock.

²⁹ "What are these seven female lambs for that you've separated from the flock?" Abimelech asked.

³⁰ "I'm giving you these seven female lambs in return for your admission that I dug this well," Abraham replied. ³¹ That's why he called the

place Beersheba,[†] because the two of them swore and oath to each other.

³² After making the agreement at Beersheba, Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his army left and went home to the country of the Philistines. ³³ Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and there he worshiped the Lord, the Eternal God. ³⁴ Abraham lived in the country of the Philistines for a long time.

22

¹ Sometime later God tested Abraham. He called out to him, “Abraham!”

“I’m here,” Abraham replied.

² God told him, “Go with your son, the one you love, your only son, to the land of Moriah and sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I’ll show you.”

³ Abraham got up early in the morning and saddled up his donkey. He took two servants and Isaac with him and went to cut firewood for the burnt offering. Then he left with them to go to the place God had told him about.

⁴ After traveling for three days Abraham could see the place in the distance. ⁵ He told his servants, “Wait here with the donkey while I go with the boy and worship God. Then we’ll return.”

⁶ Abraham had Isaac carry the wood for the burnt offering, while he carried the fire and the knife, and they walked up together.

⁷ Isaac said to Abraham, “Father?”

[†] **21:31** Beersheba means both “well of swearing” and “well of seven.”

“Yes, my son?” Abraham replied.

“Well, we have the fire and the wood, but where's the lamb for the burnt offering?” Isaac asked.

⁸ “God will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son,” Abraham replied, and they went on walking up together.

⁹ When they arrived at the place where God had told him to go, Abraham built an altar and placed the wood on it. Then he bound his son Isaac and placed him on the altar on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Abraham picked up the knife, ready to slaughter his son.

¹¹ But the angel of the Lord shouted to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!”

“Yes, I'm here,” he replied.

¹² The angel said, “Don't touch the boy! Don't do anything to him, because now I know that you truly do what God tells you. You didn't refuse to give me your son, your only son.”

¹³ Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in some bushes. He brought the ram over and sacrificed it as a burnt offering in place of his son. ¹⁴ Abraham called the place “The Lord will Provide.” That's still a saying people use today: “the Lord will provide on his mountain.”

¹⁵ The angel of the Lord shouted again to Abraham from heaven, ¹⁶ “I swear by myself, says the Lord, that because you have done this and didn't refuse to give me your son, your only son, ¹⁷ you can be sure that I will bless you and give you many descendants. They will be as numerous as the stars of heaven and the

sand of the seashore, and they will conquer their enemies.* ¹⁸ All the nations of the earth will be blessed by your descendants because you did what I told you.”

¹⁹ Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they went back together to Beersheba where Abraham was living.

²⁰ Sometime later, Abraham was told, “Milcah has had sons for your brother Nahor.” ²¹ Uz was the firstborn, then his brother Buz, Kemuel (who became the ancestor of Arameans), ²² Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel. ²³ (Bethuel was Rebekah's father.) Milcah had these eight sons for Abraham's brother Nahor. ²⁴ In addition, Reumah his concubine had Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

23

¹ Sarah lived to be 127, ² and then she died at Kiriath-arba (or Hebron) in the land of Canaan. Abraham went in* to mourn her death and to weep over her.

³ Then Abraham got up from beside his wife's body and went to talk with the leaders of the Hittites. ⁴ “I am a foreigner, a stranger living among you,” he said. “Please let me buy a burial site so I can bury my dead wife.”

⁵ The Hittites answered Abraham, telling him, ⁶ “Listen, my lord, you are a highly-respected prince among us. Choose the very best of our

* **22:17** “Conquer their enemies”: literally, “take possession of the gates of their enemies.” * **23:2** “Went in”: possibly into the tent where the body lay.

burial sites to bury your dead. None of us will say no to you.”

⁷ Abraham got up and bowed low before the Hittites, the local people, ⁸ and said to them, “If you agree to help me bury my dead, listen to my proposal. Could you please ask Ephron, son of Zohar, ⁹ to sell me the cave of Machpelah that belongs to him, down at the end of his field. I’m willing to pay him the full price here in your presence so I can have my own burial site.”

¹⁰ Ephron the Hittite was sitting there among his people. He replied to Abraham in the presence of the Hittites who were there at the town gate. ¹¹ “No, my lord,” he said. “Please listen to me. I give you the field and the cave that is there. I give it to you and my people are my witnesses. Please go and bury your dead.”

¹² Abraham bowed low before the local people, ¹³ and said to Ephron so everyone could hear, “Please listen to me. I will pay the price for the field. Take the money and let me go and bury my dead there.”

¹⁴ Ephron replied to Abraham, telling him, ¹⁵ “My lord, please listen to me. The land is worth four hundred pieces of silver.† But what’s that between us? Go and bury your dead.”

¹⁶ Abraham accepted Ephron’s offer. Abraham weighed out and gave to Ephron the four hundred pieces of silver he’d mentioned, using the

† **23:15** “Four hundred pieces of silver”: it is generally agreed that this was an exorbitant amount.

standard weights used by merchants, and with the Hittites acting as witnesses.

¹⁷ So the property was legally transferred. It comprised Ephron's field in Machpelah near Mamre, both the field and the cave there, as well as all the trees in the field, and all the area up to the existing boundaries. ¹⁸ This all became Abraham's property, and the transaction was witnessed by the Hittites who were there at the town gate.

¹⁹ Then Abraham went and buried Sarah his wife in the cave in the field at Machpelah near Mamre (or Hebron) in the land of Canaan. ²⁰ Ownership of the field and the cave there was transferred from the Hittites to Abraham to serve as his burial place.

24

¹ Abraham by now was old, really old, and the Lord had blessed him in every possible way. ² At that time Abraham told his oldest servant who was in charge of his whole household, "Put your hand under my thigh,* ³ and swear an oath by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you won't arrange for my son to marry any daughter of the these Canaanite people that I'm living among. ⁴ Instead, go to my homeland where my relatives live, and find a wife there for my son Isaac."

⁵ "What if the woman refuses to come back with me to this country?" the servant asked.

* ^{24:2} A customary action of the time when swearing an oath.

“Should I take your son back to the country you came from?”

⁶ “No, you mustn't take my son back there,” Abraham replied. ⁷ “The Lord, the God of heaven, took me from my family home and my own country. He spoke to me and swore an oath to me in which he promised, ‘I will give this land to your descendants.’ He is the one who will send his angel ahead of you so that you can find a wife there for my son. ⁸ However, if the woman refuses to return here with you, then you are released from this oath. But make sure you don't take my son back there.”

⁹ The servant put his hand under the thigh of his master Abraham and swore an oath to do as he had been told. ¹⁰ Then the servant arranged for ten of his master's camels to carry all kinds of valuable gifts from Abraham and left for the town of Nahor in Aram-naharaim.† ¹¹ Arriving in the evening, he had the camels kneel down by the spring that was outside the town. This was the time when women went out to fetch water.

¹² He prayed, “Lord, the God of my master Abraham, please let me be successful today, and please show your faithfulness‡ to my master Abraham. ¹³ Look, I'm standing here beside this spring, and the young women of the town are coming to get water. ¹⁴ May it happen like this. The young woman that I ask, ‘Please hold your

† **24:10** “Aram-naharaim”: or “Mesopotamia.” ‡ **24:12** “Faithfulness”: this word, often translated “trustworthy love,” in this setting is really to do with “loyalty,” “commitment,” even “kindness.”

water jar so I can have a drink,’ and she replies, ‘Please drink, and I’ll give your camels water too’—may she be the one you’ve chosen as a wife for your servant Isaac. This way I’ll know that you’ve shown your faithfulness to my master.”

¹⁵ He hadn’t even finished praying when he saw Rebekah coming to get water, carrying her water jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel, son of Milkah. Milkah was the wife of Abraham’s brother Nahor. ¹⁶ She was very beautiful, a virgin—no one had slept with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jar, and came back up. ¹⁷ The servant ran over to meet her and asked, “Please let me drink a few sips of water from your jar.”

¹⁸ “Please drink, my lord,” she replied. She quickly lifted the jar down from her shoulder and held it for him to drink. ¹⁹ After she finished giving him a drink, she said, “Let me get water for your camels too until they’ve had enough.”

²⁰ She quickly emptied her jar into the trough and ran back to the spring to get more water. She brought enough for all his camels.

²¹ The man observed her in silence to see if the Lord had made his journey successful or not. ²² Once the camels had finished drinking, he gave her a gold nose-ring and two heavy gold bracelets for her wrists. §

§ 24:22 The weights are given as a half-shekel for the nose-ring, and ten shekels for the bracelets. Since the price of gold at the time is not known, it is impossible to estimate their value. However, they were significant gifts.

²³ Then he asked her, “Whose daughter are you? Also could you tell me, is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night?”

²⁴ She replied, “I'm the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah and Nahor.” Then she added, “We have plenty of straw and food for the camels,
²⁵ and yes, we have room for you to spend the night.”

²⁶ The man knelt down and bowed in worship to the Lord. ²⁷ “Thank you Lord, the God of my master Abraham,” he prayed. “You have not forgotten your commitment and faithfulness to my master. And Lord, you have led me directly to the home of my master's relatives!”

²⁸ She ran to her mother's house and told her family what had happened. ²⁹ Rebekah had a brother named Laban, and he ran out to meet the man who had remained at the spring. ³⁰ He'd noticed the nose-ring and the bracelets she was wearing, and he'd heard his sister Rebekah explaining, “This is what the man told me.” When he arrived the man was still there, standing with his camels beside the spring.

³¹ “Please come home with me, you who are blessed by the Lord,” said Laban. “What are you standing out here for? I've got a room at home ready for you, and a place for the camels to stay.”

³² So the man went home with him. Laban unloaded the camels and gave them straw and food to eat. He also provided water for the man to wash his feet, as well as for the men who were with him. ³³ Then Laban had food brought in.

But the man told him, “I'm not going to eat until I've explained why I'm here.”

“Please explain,” Laban replied.

³⁴ “I’m Abraham’s servant,” the man began.

³⁵ “The Lord has blessed my master so much, and now he is a wealthy and powerful man. The Lord has given him sheep and cattle, silver and gold, male and female servants, and camels and donkeys. ³⁶ His wife Sarah has had a son for my master even in her old age, and my master has given him everything he owns. ³⁷ My master made me swear an oath, saying, ‘You must not arrange for my son to marry any daughter of the Canaanite people in whose land I’m living. ³⁸ Instead, go to my family home where my relatives live, and find a wife there for my son Isaac.’

³⁹ I said to my master, ‘What if the woman refuses to come back with me?’

⁴⁰ He told me, ‘The Lord, in whose presence I have lived my life, will send his angel with you, and he will make your journey successful—you will find a wife for my son from my relatives, from my father’s family. ⁴¹ You will be released from the oath you swear to me if, when you go to my family, they refuse to let her return with you.’

⁴² Today when I arrived at the spring, I prayed, Lord, God of my master Abraham, please let the journey I have taken be successful. ⁴³ Look, I’m standing here beside this spring. May it happen like this. If a young woman comes to get water, and I say, ‘Please give me a few sips of water to drink,’ ⁴⁴ and she says to me, ‘Please drink, and I’ll get water for your camels too’ —may she be

the one you've chosen as a wife for your servant Isaac.”

⁴⁵ “I hadn't even finished praying silently when I saw Rebekah coming to get water, carrying her water jar on her shoulder. She went down to the spring to get water, and I said to her, ‘Please give me a drink.’ ⁴⁶ She quickly lifted the jar down from her shoulder and she said, ‘Please drink, and I'll get water for your camels too.’ So I drank, and she got water for the camels.

⁴⁷ I asked her, ‘Whose daughter are you?’ She replied, ‘I'm the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah and Nahor.’ So I put the ring in her nose, and the bracelets on her wrists.

⁴⁸ Then I knelt down and bowed in worship to the Lord. I thanked the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, for he led me directly to find my master's niece for his son. ⁴⁹ So please tell me now, will you show commitment and faithfulness to my master? Please tell me yes or no so I can decide what to do next.”

⁵⁰ Laban and Bethuel replied, “Clearly all this is from the Lord, so we can't argue one way or the other. ⁵¹ Rebekah's here, you can take her and leave. She can become the wife of your master's son, as the Lord has decided.”

⁵² As soon as Abraham's servant heard their decision, he bowed down in worship to the Lord. ⁵³ Then he unpacked silver and gold jewelry and expensive clothes and gave them to Rebekah. He also gave valuable presents to her brother and her mother. ⁵⁴ He and the men with him ate and drank, and spent the night there. When they got

up in the morning, he said, "Let me leave now and go home to my master."

⁵⁵ But her brother and her mother said, "Let her stay with us for another ten days or so. She can leave after that."

⁵⁶ "Please don't delay me," he told them. "The Lord has made my journey successful, so let me leave and go back to my master."

⁵⁷ "Let's call Rebekah and find out what she wants to do," they suggested.

⁵⁸ They called Rebekah in and asked her, "Do you want to go with this man now?"

"Yes, I'll go," she replied.

⁵⁹ So they let Laban's sister Rebekah leave with Abraham's servant and his men, together with the woman who had nursed her as a child.

⁶⁰ They asked a blessing on her, saying, "Our dear sister, may you become the mother to thousands and thousands of descendants, and may they conquer their enemies." ⁶¹ Then Rebekah and her servant girls got on the camels. They followed Abraham's servant and left.

⁶² Meanwhile Isaac, who was living in the Negev, had just come back from Beer-lahai-roi.

⁶³ He went out into the fields one evening to think things over.* He looked into the distance and saw camels coming.

⁶⁴ Rebekah was also keeping a look out. When she saw Isaac, she got down from her camel.

* **24:63** "Think things over": often translated "meditate," the word's meaning is uncertain. However, Isaac must have known that possibly his bride-to-be would soon be arriving, an event of considerable importance in his life.

⁶⁵ She asked the servant, “Who is this walking through the fields to meet us?”

“He’s my master, Isaac,”[†] he replied. So she put on her veil to cover herself.

⁶⁶ The servant told Isaac everything he’d done.

⁶⁷ Isaac took Rebekah into his mother Sarah’s tent, and he married her. He loved her, and she brought him comfort after his grief over his mother’s death.

25

¹ Abraham married another wife; her name was Keturah. ² She had the following sons: Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. ³ Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan. The descendants of Dedan were the Asshurites, the Letushites, and the Leummites. ⁴ The sons of Midian were Ephah, Ephher, Hanoah, Abida, and Eldaah. These were all descendants of Keturah.

⁵ Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac.

⁶ But while he was still alive, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them to live in the east, well away from Isaac.

⁷ Abraham lived to be 175 ⁸ when he breathed his last and died at a good old age. He had lived a full life, and now he joined his forefathers in death. ⁹ His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre, in the field that had belonged to Ephron, son of Zohar, the Hittite. ¹⁰ This was the field Abraham had

[†] **24:65** Isaac is not specifically identified in the text here, however the servant simply says, “He’s my master,” which would normally mean Abraham.

bought from the Hittites. Abraham was buried there with his wife Sarah. ¹¹ After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac, who was living near Beer-lahai-roi.

¹² This is the genealogy of Abraham's son Ishmael. His mother Hagar was Sarah's Egyptian slave. ¹³ These were the names of the sons of Ishmael according to their family genealogy: Nebaioth (firstborn), Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, ¹⁴ Mishma, Dumah, Massa, ¹⁵ Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. ¹⁶ These were the sons of Ishmael, and these became the names of the places where they lived and camped—the twelve family rulers of their tribes. ¹⁷ Ishmael lived to be 137. Then he breathed his last and died, and joined his forefathers in death. ¹⁸ Ishmael's descendants inhabited the region from Havilah to Shur, near the border of Egypt in the direction of Asshur. They were forever fighting with one other.*

¹⁹ The following is the genealogy of Abraham's son Isaac. Abraham was the father of Isaac. ²⁰ When Isaac was 40 he married Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan-aram and the sister of Laban the Aramean.

²¹ Isaac prayed to the Lord for help on behalf of his wife because she couldn't have children. The Lord answered his prayer and she became pregnant. ²² The twin babies inside her struggled with each other. So she asked the Lord, "Why is this happening to me?"

* ^{25:18} The Hebrew of this verse is unclear. However, see 16:12.

23 “You have two nations inside you,” the Lord replied. “You’re going to give birth to two peoples who will compete against each other. One will be stronger than the other; the older one will be the servant of the younger one.”

24 When the time came she gave birth to twins.

25 The first baby to be born was red, and covered with hair like a coat. So they named him Esau.[†]

26 Then his twin brother was born, holding on to Esau’s heel. So he was named Jacob.[‡] Isaac was 60 when they were born.

27 The boys grew up and Esau became a skilled hunter, at home in the countryside. Jacob was quiet and liked to stay at home in the tents.

28 Isaac loved Esau because he brought him tasty wild game to eat, while Rebekah loved Jacob.

29 One day Jacob was cooking some stew when Esau got back from the countryside, tired out and starving hungry. 30 “Give me some of that red stew,” Esau told Jacob. “I’m absolutely starving!” (That’s how Esau got his other name, “Edom,” meaning “red.”)

31 “First sell me your rights as the firstborn son,” Jacob replied.

32 “Look! I’m dying here! What use are the rights of the firstborn to me?” Esau declared.

33 “First you have to swear to me,” Jacob demanded. So Esau swore an oath selling his rights of the firstborn to Jacob. 34 Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and lentil stew. He ate and

[†] 25:25 Esau sounds like the word for “hair.” [‡] 25:26 Jacob sounds like the words “heel” or “deceiver.”

drank, and then he got up and left. By doing this Esau showed how little he cared for his rights as the firstborn son.

26

¹ There was a famine in the country—not the one that happened before in Abraham's time, but a later one. So Isaac moved to Gerar in the territory of Abimelech, king of the Philistines.

² The Lord appeared to Isaac and told him, “Don't go to Egypt—live in the country that I tell you to. ³ Stay here in this country. I will be with you and I will bless you, because I'm going to give you and your descendants all these lands. I will keep the solemn promise that I swore to Abraham your father. ⁴ I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and I will give them all these lands. All the nations of the earth will be blessed by your descendants, ⁵ because Abraham did what I told him, and kept my requirements, my commands, my regulations, and my laws.”

⁶ So Isaac stayed in Gerar. ⁷ When the men there asked him about his wife, he told them, “She's my sister,” because he was afraid. He said to himself, “If I say she's my wife, the men here will kill me to get Rebekah, because she's so beautiful.” ⁸ But later on, after he'd been there a while, Abimelech, king of the Philistines, happened to look out the window and saw Isaac lovingly fondling his wife Rebekah.

⁹ Abimelech sent for Isaac and complained. “From what I saw she's clearly your wife!” he

said. “Why on earth did you say, ‘She’s my sister’?”

“Because I thought I’d be killed because of her,” Isaac replied.

¹⁰ “Why would you do this to us?” Abimelech asked. “One of the men here might have slept with your wife, and you would have made us all guilty!”

¹¹ Abimelech issued orders to all the people, warning them, “Anyone who touches this man or his wife will be executed.”

¹² Isaac sowed grain that year, and the Lord blessed him with a harvest that was a hundred times what he planted. ¹³ He became a rich man, and his wealth steadily increased until he was very rich. ¹⁴ He owned many flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, as well as many slaves. He had so much that the Philistines became jealous of him. ¹⁵ So the Philistines used dirt to block up all the wells his father Abraham’s servants had dug.

¹⁶ Then Abimelech told Isaac, “You have to leave our country, because you’ve become much too powerful for us.”

¹⁷ So Isaac moved away and set up his tents in the Gerar Valley where he settled down. ¹⁸ He unblocked the wells that had been dug in his father Abraham’s time—the ones the Philistines had blocked after the death of Abraham. He gave them the same names his father had.

¹⁹ Isaac’s servants also dug a new well in the valley and found spring water. ²⁰ But the herdsmen from Gerar argued with Isaac’s herdsmen, claiming, “That’s our water!” So

Isaac named the well, "Argument," because they argued with him. ²¹ He had another well dug, and they argued over that one too. He named the well, "Opposition."^{*} ²² So they moved on from there and he had another well dug. This time there was no argument so he named the well, "Freedom,"[†] saying, "Now the Lord has given us freedom to expand and be successful in this land."

²³ From there he moved on to Beersheba. ²⁴ That night the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am the God of Abraham your father. Don't be afraid, for I am with you. I will bless you and give you many descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham." ²⁵ Isaac built an altar and worshiped the Lord. He also set up his tent, and his servants dug a well there.

²⁶ Sometime later Abimelech came from Gerar to see Isaac, along with Ahuzzath his advisor, and Phicol the commander of his army.[‡] ²⁷ "Why have you come to see me?" Isaac asked them. "Previously you hated me and told me to leave!"

²⁸ "Now we realize that the Lord is with you," they replied. "So we agreed that we should make a sworn agreement with you. ²⁹ You'll promise

^{*} **26:21** "Opposition": The word is in fact the female form of the word, "satan," meaning opponent or adversary. [†] **26:22** "Freedom": literally, "wide/open space," which is often used in Hebrew as a synonym for freedom, since people are then given room to move around. See for example Job 36:16; Psalms 118:5. [‡] **26:26** See 21:22. In view of the length of time between these events it is unlikely that they are the same individuals. These were probably official titles rather than personal names.

not to harm us in the same way we've never hurt you. You'll agree that we've always treated you well, and when we asked you to leave we did so kindly. Now look at how the Lord is blessing you!"

³⁰ So Isaac had a special meal prepared to celebrate the agreement. They ate and drank, ³¹ and got up early in the morning and they each swore oaths to one other. Then Isaac sent them on their way, and they left in peace.

³² It was that very day when Isaac's servants who'd been digging a well came and told him, "We've found water!" ³³ So Isaac named the well, "Oath," and that's why the name of the town is "Well of the Oath" (Beersheba) to this day.

³⁴ When Esau was 40, he married Judith, daughter of Beeri the Hittite, as well as Basemath, daughter of Elon the Hittite. ³⁵ They caused Isaac and Rebekah a great deal of grief.

27

¹ Isaac was old and going blind. He called for Esau, his oldest son, and said, "My son."

"I'm here," Esau replied.

² "I'm old now," said Isaac, "I may die soon, who knows?" ³ So please take your bow and arrows and go hunting in the countryside for some meat for me. ⁴ Make me that tasty food that I love and bring it to me to eat, so I can bless you before I die."

⁵ Rebekah heard what Isaac told his son Esau. So when Esau left to go hunting in the countryside for wild game, ⁶ Rebekah told her son Jacob,

“Listen! I heard your father tell your brother,
7 ‘Get me some wild game and make me some
tasty food so I can eat it and then bless you in the
presence of the Lord before I die.’ 8 Now then, my
son, listen to me and do exactly what I tell you.
9 Go to the flock and bring me two nice young
goats. I’ll cook them and make the tasty food
your father loves. 10 Then you take it to your
father to eat, so he can bless you in the presence
of the Lord before he dies.”

11 “But listen,” Jacob replied to his mother
Rebekah, “my brother Esau is a hairy man, and
I’m a smooth man. 12 Maybe my father will
notice when he touches me. Then it will look like
I’m deceiving him and I’ll bring a curse down on
myself instead of a blessing.”

13 “Let the curse fall on me, my son,” his
mother replied. “Just do what I tell you. Go and
get the young goats for me.”

14 So Jacob went and got them and took them
to his mother, and she made some tasty food,
the way his father loved. 15 Then Rebekah went
and got her older son Esau’s best clothes that she
had at home and put them on Jacob her younger
son. 16 She put the goatskins on his hands and on
the smooth part of his neck. 17 Then she handed
her son Jacob the tasty food and the bread she’d
made.

18 He went in to see his father, and called out,
“My father, I’m here.”

“Which son are you?” Isaac asked.

19 “It’s me Esau, your firstborn son,” Jacob told
his father. “I did what you told me. So please sit

up and eat some of my wild game meat so you can bless me.”

²⁰ “How did you find an animal so fast, my son?” Isaac asked.

“Because the Lord your God sent it my way,” Jacob replied.

²¹ “Come over here so I can touch you, my son,” Isaac told Jacob, “so I can tell if you're really my son Esau or not.”

²² Jacob went over to his father Isaac, who touched him and said, “It's Jacob's voice but Esau's hands.” ²³ Isaac didn't realize it was really Jacob because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's, so Isaac got ready to bless him.

²⁴ “It's really you, my son Esau?” he asked again. “Yes, it's me,” Jacob replied.

²⁵ Then he said, “My son, bring me some of your wild game to eat, so that I may give you my blessing.” Jacob brought some for him to eat, as well as some wine for him to drink.

²⁶ Afterwards he said to Isaac, “Come here and kiss me, my son.” ²⁷ So Jacob went over and kissed him, and Isaac could smell the clothes Jacob was wearing. So he went ahead with the blessing, saying to himself, “See—the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed.”

²⁸ “May God use the dew of heaven and fertile land to give you rich harvests of grain and new wine! ²⁹ May the people of different nations serve you and bow down to you. May you rule over your relatives, and may they bow down to you. May everyone who curses you be cursed, and may everyone who bless you be blessed.”

³⁰ After Isaac finished blessing Jacob—in fact Jacob had just left his father—Esau returned from his hunting trip. ³¹ He had also made some tasty food, and took it to his father. Esau said to Isaac, “Sit up, my father, and eat some of my wild game so you can bless me.”

³² “Who are you?” Isaac asked him.

“I’m your son, your firstborn son, Esau,” he replied.

³³ Isaac started to shake all over and asked, “So who was it who went hunting game and then brought it to me? I ate it all before you came back and I blessed him. His blessing will remain.”

³⁴ When Esau heard his father’s words, he cried out in great anger and bitterness, and pleaded with his father, “Please bless me too, my father!”

³⁵ But Isaac replied, “You brother came and deceived me—he stole your blessing!”

³⁶ “Isn’t he well named—Jacob the deceiver!”* said Esau. “He’s deceived me twice. First he took my birthright, and now he’s stolen my blessing! Haven’t you kept a blessing for me?”

³⁷ Isaac replied to Esau. “I have made him ruler over you, and have said that all his relatives will be his servants. I have declared that he will be well supplied with grain and new wine. So what is left that I can do for you, my son?”

³⁸ “Do you only have one blessing, my father?” Esau asked. “Please bless me too!” Then Esau began to cry very loudly.

* **27:36** “Deceiver.” See 25:26.

³⁹ Then his father Isaac declared, “Listen! You will live far away from fertile land, far from the dew of heaven that falls from above. ⁴⁰ You will make a living by using your sword, and you will be your brother's servant. But when you rebel, you will throw off his yoke from your neck.”

⁴¹ From then on Esau hated Jacob because of his father's blessing. Esau said to himself, “Soon the time will come when I'll mourn my father's death. Then I'll kill my brother Jacob!”

⁴² However, Rebekah found out what Esau was saying, so she sent for Jacob. “Look,” she told him, “your brother Esau is making himself feel better by making plans to kill you. ⁴³ So, my son, listen carefully to what I tell you. Leave immediately and go to my brother Laban in Haram. ⁴⁴ Stay with him for a while until your brother's anger cools down. ⁴⁵ Once he's cooled down and forgets what you did to him, I'll send for you to come back. Why should I lose both of you in a single day?”

⁴⁶ Then Rebekah went and told Isaac, “I'm so sick of these Hittite women—they're ruining my life! If Jacob also marries a Hittite woman like them, one of the local people, I'd rather die!”

28

¹ Isaac called for Jacob and blessed him. “Don't marry a Canaanite woman,” he ordered him.

² “Leave right away and go to Paddan-aram, to the home of Bethuel, your mother's father. Find yourself a wife there—a daughter of Laban, your mother's brother. ³ God Almighty bless you and

may your descendants be so numerous that you become the ancestor of many nations. ⁴ May he grant you and your descendants the same blessing he gave to Abraham, so that you may take over the land where you now live as a foreigner, the land God gave to Abraham.”

⁵ So Isaac sent Jacob on his way. He traveled to Paddan-aram, to Laban, son of Bethuel the Aramean. Laban was the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.

⁶ Esau found out that Isaac had blessed Jacob and had sent him to Paddan-aram to find a wife there, and that when he blessed him he ordered him, “Don’t marry a Canaanite woman.” ⁷ He also discovered that Jacob had done what his father and mother told him and had left for Paddan-aram. ⁸ This made Esau realize how much his father disliked Canaanite women. ⁹ So he went to Ishmael’s family and married an additional wife—Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, the sister of Nebaioth.

¹⁰ In the meantime Jacob had set off from Beersheba on his way to Haran. ¹¹ He arrived after sunset at a particular place and stopped there for the night. He picked up a stone, put it under his head, lay down and went to sleep.

¹² He dreamed he saw a stairway that started on earth, and the top reached all the way into heaven. He saw God’s angels going up and down on it. ¹³ Then he saw the Lord standing over him,* who said, “I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham, and the God of Isaac. I’m giving

* **28:13** “Over him”: or, “over it.”

you and your descendants the land you're lying on. ¹⁴ Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth, and will spread out west and east, and north and south. Everyone on earth will be blessed by your descendants. ¹⁵ Listen! I am with you and will take care of you wherever you go. I will bring you back to this country. I won't leave you because I'm going to do what I've promised you."

¹⁶ When Jacob woke up he said to himself, "The Lord is right here, in this place, and I didn't realize it!"[†] ¹⁷ He became frightened and said, "This is a scary place! It must be the house of God and the entrance to heaven."

¹⁸ When Jacob got up in the morning he took the stone he'd put under his head and set it upright as a stone pillar and poured some olive oil on it. ¹⁹ He named the place "Bethel,"[‡] (previously it was called Luz). ²⁰ Jacob also made a solemn promise, saying, "God, if you will be with me, and take care of me on my journey, and give me food to eat and clothes to wear ²¹ so I can return safely to my father's home, then you Lord will be my God. ²² This stone pillar that I've set up will be the house of God,[§] and I will give you one tenth of all you give me."

[†] **28:16** Jacob seems to be surprised that the Lord is present in some random location and not in some regular "sacred place."

[‡] **28:19** "Bethel" means "house of God." [§] **28:22** In other words, a place of worship.

29

¹ Jacob went quickly on his way,* and arrived in the land of the eastern people. ² As he looked around he saw a well in a field with three flocks of sheep lying down beside it, waiting to be given water. A large stone covered the top of the well. ³ The usual practice was that† once all the flocks had arrived, the shepherds would roll away the stone from the well and give their sheep water. Then they would put the stone back again.

⁴ Jacob asked them, “My brothers, where are you from?”

“We’re from Haran,” they replied.

⁵ “Do you know Laban, Nahor’s grandson?” he asked.

“Yes, we know him,” they replied.

⁶ “How is he?” he asked.

“He’s well,” they replied. “Look! In fact here’s his daughter Rachel coming with the sheep right now.”

⁷ “Look, there’s still plenty of daylight left,” said Jacob. “It’s too early to round up the sheep yet. Why not let them drink so they can go back to grazing?”

⁸ “We can’t do that until all the flocks have arrived,” they told him. “Then we roll away the stone from the well and let the sheep drink.”

⁹ While he was still talking with them Rachel arrived with the flock she was looking after for her father. ¹⁰ When Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of Laban, his mother’s brother, he went

* **29:1** “Went quickly on his way”: literally, “lifted up his feet.”

† **29:3** “The usual practice was that”: supplied for clarity.

over and rolled away the stone from the well so Laban's sheep could drink. ¹¹ Then Jacob kissed Rachel and wept for joy. ¹² (He had told her that he was the son of Laban's brother and Rebekah.) She ran and told her father what had happened.

¹³ As soon as Laban heard the news about Jacob he ran out to meet him. He hugged him and kissed him, and took him home. After Jacob had explained everything to Laban, ¹⁴ Laban told him, "No question about it—you're my own flesh and blood!" Jacob stayed with Laban for a month.

¹⁵ One day Laban said to him, "You're my relative so you shouldn't be working for me for nothing! Tell me, what should I pay you?"

¹⁶ Laban had two daughters. The older one was Leah, and the younger one was Rachel. ¹⁷ Leah had kind[†] eyes, but Rachel had a shapely figure and beautiful looks. ¹⁸ Jacob was in love with Rachel so he promised Laban, "I'll do seven years work[§] for you for Rachel, your younger daughter."

¹⁹ "Well it's better for me to give her to you than anyone else," Laban replied. "So stay here and work for me." ²⁰ Jacob worked for Laban for seven years, but to him they seemed like just a few days because he really loved her.

[†] **29:17** "Kind": literally, "soft" or "gentle." **§ 29:18** "Seven years work": in contrast to Abraham's servant Eliezer (chapter 24) Jacob had arrived with no gifts or dowry, so he offers his service as payment in kind.

²¹ Then Jacob said to Laban, “I’ve completed the time we agreed. Now give me your daughter to be my wife.”

²² So Laban organized a wedding banquet* and invited everyone around to come. ²³ But once it was dark Laban brought his daughter Leah to Jacob, and he slept with her. ²⁴ (Laban also arranged for his servant Zilpah to be Leah's personal maid.)

²⁵ When morning came, he saw it was Leah! He went to Laban and asked angrily, “What have you done to me? It was for Rachel that I worked for you! Why have you deceived me?”

²⁶ “Here we don’t give the younger daughter in marriage before the firstborn,” Laban replied. ²⁷ “Finish this week of wedding celebrations and then I’ll give you the other daughter as well, as long as you work another seven years for me.”

²⁸ Jacob agreed. He finished the week of wedding celebrations for Leah, and then Laban gave Jacob his daughter Rachel as his wife as well. ²⁹ (Laban also arranged for his servant Bilhah to be Rachel's personal maid.) ³⁰ So Jacob slept with Rachel as well, and he loved Rachel more than Leah. He worked for Laban another seven years for Rachel.

³¹ The Lord saw that Leah wasn't loved he helped Leah to have children, but not Rachel.

³² Leah became pregnant, and had a son she

* ^{29:22} “A wedding banquet”: the word actually means “a drinking party,” which is probably the only way the deception could have been successful.

named Reuben,[†] for she said, “The Lord saw how much I was suffering and now my husband will love me!”

³³ Then Leah became pregnant again, and had another son. She said, “The Lord has heard that I'm not loved so he gave me this son.” So she named him Simeon.[‡]

³⁴ Leah became pregnant for the third time, and had another son. She said, “Finally my husband will be attached to me because now I've given him three sons.” That's why he was named Levi.[§]

³⁵ Once again Leah became pregnant and had another son. She named him Judah,^{*} for she said, “Now I can really praise the Lord!” After that she had no more children.

30

¹ When Rachel realized she was unable to give Jacob any children she was jealous of her sister. She complained to Jacob, “I'll die if you don't give me children!”

² Jacob became angry with Rachel and told her, “Am I God? Do you think I'm the one stopping you having children?”

³ “Here's my personal maid Bilhah,” Rachel replied. “Sleep with her and she can have children for me so I'll have a family too.” ⁴ She gave her personal maid Bilhah to him as a wife and Jacob slept with her. ⁵ Bilhah became

[†] **29:32** “Reuben”: means “Look, a son!” and also sounds like “he saw my suffering.” [‡] **29:33** “Simeon”: means “he hears.” [§] **29:34** “Levi”: means “attached” or “joined.” ^{*} **29:35** “Judah”: means “praise.”

pregnant and had a son for Jacob. ⁶ Rachel said, “God has judged in my favor! He listened to me and gave me a son.” So she named him Dan.* ⁷ Rachel's personal maid Bilhah became pregnant again and had second son for Jacob. ⁸ Rachel said, “I've had a hard struggle with my sister, but I've won.” So she named him Naphtali.†

⁹ Leah realized she wasn't having any more children, so she gave her personal maid Zilpah to Jacob as a wife. ¹⁰ Zilpah had a son for Jacob. ¹¹ Leah said, “I'm really fortunate!” So she named him Gad.‡ ¹² Leah's personal maid Zilpah became pregnant again and had a second son for Jacob. ¹³ Leah said, “I'm so happy, and the other women will say I'm happy too!” So she named him Asher.§

¹⁴ At the time of the wheat harvest Reuben found some mandrake plants when he was out in the fields. He took them back to his mother Leah. Rachel asked Leah, “Please give me some of the mandrakes your son found.”

¹⁵ “Aren't you satisfied with stealing my husband?” Leah replied. “Are you going to take my son's mandrakes too?”

“Fine, he can sleep with you tonight if you give me some mandrakes in return,” Rachel responded.

¹⁶ When Jacob came in from the fields that evening, Leah went out to meet him. “You have

* **30:6** Dan means “judge.” † **30:8** Naphtali means “struggle.”

‡ **30:11** Gad means “fortunate.” § **30:13** Asher means “happy.”

to sleep with me because I've paid for you with my son's mandrakes," she told him. So he slept with her that night. ¹⁷ God heard Leah's request, and she became pregnant and had a fifth son for Jacob. ¹⁸ Leah said, "The Lord has rewarded me for giving my personal maid to my husband." So she named him Issachar.* ¹⁹ Then Leah became pregnant again and had a sixth son for Jacob. ²⁰ Leah said, "God has given me a good gift. Now my husband will honor me because I've given him six sons." So she named him Zebulun.† ²¹ Later she had a daughter she named Dinah.

²² Then God paid attention to Rachel and listened to her appeals, and helped her to have children. ²³ She became pregnant and had a son. "God has removed my disgrace," she said. ²⁴ She named him Joseph,‡ saying, "May the Lord give me an additional son."

²⁵ Once Rachel had given birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Let me leave so I can return to my home and my own country. ²⁶ Give me my wives and children because I worked for you to have them. Let me go now because you know very well how much work I've done for you."

²⁷ "Please be so kind as to stay," Laban replied, "because I have discovered§ that the Lord has blessed me because of you." ²⁸ Then Laban

* **30:18** Issachar means "reward." † **30:20** Zebulun is related to both the words for "gift" and "honor." ‡ **30:24** Joseph may mean both "may he add," and "he takes away," referring to Rachel's "disgrace." § **30:27** "Discovered": or "learned by divination."

continued, “Tell me how much to pay you and I'll give it to you.”

²⁹ “You certainly know how much work I've done for you, and how well your flocks have done under my care. ³⁰ You hardly had anything before I arrived, but now you have so much! The Lord has blessed you through what I've done. When am I going to be able to provide for my own family?”

³¹ “Well, what do you propose I give you?” Laban asked again.

“You don't have to give me anything,” Jacob replied. “If you want to do something for me, then how about this: I'll go on looking after your flocks, making sure they're fed. ³² Let me go through your flocks today and take all the sheep that are speckled or spotted, and all the dark ones, as well as all the speckled and spotted goats. They'll be my wages. ³³ In the future you'll be able to prove that I've been honest. When you check my flock, any goats that don't have speckles or spots, or any sheep that aren't dark will be considered stolen from you.”

³⁴ “Very good,” Laban agreed. “We'll do as you say.” ³⁵ However, the same day Laban went and removed all the striped and spotted male goats, all the speckled and spotted female goats, and all the dark sheep. He had his sons look after them and sent them away— ³⁶ a three day journey between them and Jacob, while Jacob was looking after the rest of Laban's flocks.

³⁷ Then Jacob cut some sticks from poplar, almond, and plane trees that had white wood under the bark. He peeled off some of the bark, making the sticks look streaked with white.

³⁸ He put the sticks he'd peeled in the water troughs where the flocks came to drink because that's where they mated. ³⁹ The flocks mated in front of the sticks and gave birth to young that were streaked, speckled, and spotted. ⁴⁰ Jacob separated all these ones out. Then he made his flock face towards those in Laban's flock that were streaked and dark. This is the way he kept his flocks apart from Laban's flock.

⁴¹ When the strong females were ready to breed, Jacob put the sticks in the troughs where the flocks could see them when they mated.

⁴² He didn't do this for the weaker females. The weaker ones went to Laban, and the strong ones went to Jacob. ⁴³ In this way Jacob became an extremely rich man with large flocks, and many male and female slaves, camels, and donkeys.

31

¹ Jacob found out that Laban's sons were saying, "Jacob has taken everything that belonged to our father. All the wealth he has actually came from our father." ² Jacob also noticed that Laban was treating him differently to the way he had before.

³ The Lord told Jacob, "Go back to the country of your forefathers, to your family home. I will be with you."

⁴ Jacob sent for Rachel and Leah, telling them to come and meet him out in the fields where he was with his flock. ⁵ “I’ve noticed that your father is treating me differently to the way he did before,” he told them. “But the God of my father will be with me. ⁶ You both know very well how hard I worked for your father. ⁷ But he’s been cheating me—he’s reduced my wages ten times! However, God hasn’t let him hurt me. ⁸ If he said, ‘You can have the speckled ones as your wages,’ then the whole flock had speckled young. If he said, ‘You can have the streaked ones as your wages,’ then the whole flock had streaked young. ⁹ This is how God took your father’s livestock and gave them to me. ¹⁰ During the time the flock was breeding I had a dream where I saw that the male goats mating with the flock were all streaked, speckled, or spotted. ¹¹ Then in the dream the angel of the Lord spoke to me and said, ‘Jacob!’ I replied, ‘I’m here.’

¹² He told me, ‘Take a look and you’ll see that all the male goats mating with the flock are streaked, speckled or spotted, for I’ve been watching everything that Laban has been doing to you. ¹³ I am the God of Bethel, where you poured olive oil on the stone pillar and made a solemn promise to me. Now get ready to leave this land and go back to your homeland.’ ”

¹⁴ “There’s nothing for us to inherit from our father’s estate anyway,” Rachel and Leah replied. ¹⁵ “He treats us like foreigners because he sold us to you, and now he’s spent all that money. ¹⁶ All the wealth that God has taken from him belongs

to us and our children, so do whatever God has told you to do!”

¹⁷ So Jacob got ready. He helped his children and his wives onto the camels, ¹⁸ and drove all his livestock in front of him. He took with him all his possessions and livestock he'd gained during his time in Paddan-aram, and left to go back to his father in the country of Canaan.

¹⁹ While Laban was away from home shearing his sheep, Rachel stole the household idols* that belonged to her father. ²⁰ Jacob also deceived Laban the Aramean by not informing him that he was going to run away. ²¹ So Jacob left in a hurry with everything he had, crossed the Euphrates River, and headed towards the hill country of Gilead.

²² Three days later Laban found out that Jacob had run away. ²³ Taking some of his relatives with him, he chased after Jacob and caught up with him seven days later in the hill country of Gilead. ²⁴ But during the night God came to Laban in a dream and told him, “Watch what you say to Jacob. Don't try to persuade him to

* **31:19** “Household idols”: small figurines considered important and “lucky,” representative of pagan gods and consulted for making decisions. Often they were female figures, and associated with fertility. They also seem to be significant in determining issues of ownership of property and land, which is perhaps another reason why Rachel took them and why Laban was so keen to have them returned.

come back, and don't threaten him either.”†

²⁵ Jacob had set up his tents in the hill country of Gilead when Laban caught up with him, so Laban and his relatives did the same. ²⁶ “Why did you deceive me like this?” Laban asked Jacob. “You carried off my daughters as if they were some prisoners captured by the sword! ²⁷ Why did you run away in secret, trying to trick me? Why didn't you come and tell me? I would have given you a good send-off, a celebration with singing and the music of tambourines and lyres. ²⁸ You didn't even let me kiss my grandchildren and daughters goodbye! You've really acted stupidly! ²⁹ I could really punish you badly, but the God of your father spoke to me last night and told me, ‘Watch what you say to Jacob. Don't try to persuade him to come back, and don't threaten him either.’ ³⁰ Clearly you wanted to leave and go back to your family home, but why did you have to steal my idols?”

³¹ “I ran away because I was afraid,” Jacob explained to Laban. “I was worried that you would take your daughters from me by force. ³² As for your idols, anyone you find who has them will die. You can search everything in the presence of our relatives, and if you find I have anything that belongs to you, you can take it.”

† **31:24** “Don't try to get him to come back, and don't threaten him either”: literally, “from good to bad.” This idiomatic expression covered the range of possible approaches Laban might have been tempted to take, from trying to induce Jacob to return by offering some reward, to threatening him with force or some kind of penalty.

(Jacob didn't know that Rachel had stolen the household idols.)

³³ Laban searched the tents of Jacob, Leah, and the two personal maids, but didn't find anything. He left Leah's tent and went into Rachel's tent. ³⁴ Rachel had put the household idols in a camel's saddlebag and was sitting on it. Laban carefully searched the whole tent but couldn't find them. ³⁵ She said to her father, "Sir, please don't get upset with me for not standing up in your presence, but I have my period." He looked everywhere but didn't find the idols.

³⁶ Jacob got angry with Laban and confronted him, saying, "What crime am I guilty of? What wrong have I done to you that you've come hunting me down? ³⁷ You've searched through all my possessions. Did you find anything belonging to you? If you did, bring it out here before my relatives and yours so they can decide who's right!

³⁸ I've worked for you for these past twenty years. During that time none of your sheep and goats miscarried, and I haven't eaten a single ram from your flock. ³⁹ If any of them were killed by wild animals, I never even brought you the carcass to prove the loss—I bore the loss myself. But you on the other hand always made me compensate you for any animals that were stolen, whether at night or in broad daylight.

⁴⁰ Whether it was sweating in the heat of the day, or freezing in the cold of the night when I couldn't sleep, I went on working for you for twenty years in your home. ⁴¹ I worked fourteen

years for your two daughters, and six more years with your flocks. You reduced my wages ten times! ⁴² If it weren't for the God of my father, the God of Abraham, the awesome God[†] of Isaac, who took care of me, you would have dismissed me with nothing. But God saw my suffering, how hard I worked, and he condemned you last night.”

⁴³ Laban replied, “These are my daughters and these are my children and these are my flocks! In fact, everything you see here is mine! However, what can I do now about my daughters and their children? ⁴⁴ So let's make a solemn agreement between you and I, and it will be a witness to our mutual commitment.”

⁴⁵ Jacob took a stone and set it upright as a pillar. ⁴⁶ Then he told his relatives, “Go and collect some stones.” They all[§] made a pile of stones and then sat beside it to eat a meal. ⁴⁷ Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha, while Jacob called it Galeed.*

⁴⁸ Laban announced, “This pile of stone serves as a witness between me and you.” This is why it was called Galeed. ⁴⁹ It was also called Mizpah,[†] for as Laban said, “May the Lord keep a close eye on both of us when we're not together. ⁵⁰ If you treat my daughters badly or marry more wives

[†] **31:42** “The awesome God”: literally “the Fear.” **§ 31:46**

“They all”: including both groups. * **31:47** Both names mean “pile of stones,” the first in Aramaic, the second in Hebrew.

[†] **31:49** “Mizpah”: meaning “watchtower.”

in addition to them, God will see what you do even if no one else finds out!”

⁵¹ Then Laban told Jacob, “Look at this pile of stones and this pillar that I have set up as a memorial of the agreement[†] between you and me. ⁵² They also act as a witness to our solemn promises to each other: I will not come past them to attack you; and you will not come past them to attack me. ⁵³ May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor—the God of our forefathers—be the one to judge between us in any dispute.” Jacob in turn made his solemn promise in the name of the awesome God of his father Isaac.

⁵⁴ Then he offered a sacrifice on the mountain and invited all his relatives to eat a meal there. They spent the night on the mountain. ⁵⁵ Laban got up early in the morning and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters goodbye. He blessed them, and then left to go back home.

32

¹ Jacob went on his way and some angels of God came to meet him. ² When he saw them he said, “This must be God’s camp!” He named the place “Two Camps.”

³ He sent messengers on ahead to meet his brother Esau who was living in the region of Seir in the country of Edom. ⁴ He told them, “This is what you are to say to my lord Esau. Your servant Jacob sends you this message. I’ve been staying with Laban up till now, ⁵ and I have cattle and donkeys and sheep and goats, and male

[†] **31:51** “A memorial of the agreement”: supplied for clarity.

and female slaves. I've sent these messengers to explain this to you my lord, hoping you'll be pleased to see me."

⁶ The messengers returned to Jacob and told him, "Your brother Esau is coming to meet you with 400 armed men!" ⁷ When Jacob heard this, he was absolutely terrified. He split all the people with him, along with the sheep, goats, cattle, and camels, into two groups, ⁸ saying to himself, "If Esau comes and destroys one group, the other one can get away."

⁹ Jacob prayed, "God of my grandfather Abraham, God of my father Isaac! Lord, you were the one who told me, 'Return to your own country and your family home, and I will treat you well.' ¹⁰ I don't deserve all the trustworthy love and faithfulness you have shown your servant. I crossed the Jordan years ago* with just my walking stick, and now I have two large camps. ¹¹ Please save me from my brother; defend me from Esau! I'm terrified that he's coming to attack me, my wives, and my children. ¹² You yourself told me, 'I will definitely treat you well. I will make your descendants as numerous as the sand of the seashore—too many to count.' "

¹³ Jacob stayed the night there. Then he picked out animals as a gift to his brother Esau: ¹⁴ 200 female goats, 20 male goats; 200 ewes, 20 rams; ¹⁵ 30 female camels with their young, 40 cows, 10 bulls; 20 female donkeys, 10 male donkeys. ¹⁶ He put his servants in charge of each of the separate

* **32:10** "Years ago": supplied for clarity.

herds and told them, "Go on ahead of me, and keep a good distance between the herds."

¹⁷ He gave these instructions to those with the first herd: "When my brother Esau meets you and asks, 'Who is your master, and where are you going, and whose are these animals with you?' ¹⁸ you are to say to him, 'Your servant Jacob sends these as a gift to my lord Esau, and he's following us.' " ¹⁹ He gave the same instructions to those with the second and third and all the subsequent herds, telling them, "This what you are to say to Esau when he meets you. ²⁰ You must also tell him, 'Your servant Jacob is right behind us.' "

Jacob said to himself, "Maybe by sending these gifts on ahead Esau won't be angry with me and when I meet him he'll be kind to me." ²¹ So the gifts went on ahead while Jacob spent the night at the camp.

²² He got up during the night and took his two wives and the two personal maids and his eleven sons and crossed the Jabbok River at the ford. ²³ After helping them cross he also sent over everything that belonged to him. ²⁴ But Jacob stayed there alone. A man came and wrestled with him until dawn. ²⁵ When the man realized he couldn't beat Jacob, he hit Jacob's hip socket and put it out of joint as he wrestled with him.

²⁶ Then the man said, "Let me go because it's almost dawn."

"I won't let you go unless you bless me," Jacob replied.

²⁷ "What's your name?" the man asked.

“Jacob,” he replied.

²⁸ “Jacob will no longer be your name,” said the man. “Instead you will be called Israel, because you fought with God and with men and you won.”

²⁹ “Please tell me your name,” Jacob asked.

“Why do you ask me my name?” the man replied. Then he blessed Jacob there.

³⁰ Jacob named the place Peniel, saying, “I saw God face to face and I'm still alive!” ³¹ The sun came up as Jacob left Peniel, limping along because of his damaged hip. ³² (That's why, even today, Israelites don't eat the thigh tendon attached to the hip socket, because that's where the man hit Jacob's hip socket.)

33

¹ Jacob saw Esau in the distance, coming towards him with four hundred men. So he split up the children between Leah, Rachel and the two personal maids. ² He placed the two personal maids with their children first, then Leah and her children, and Rachel and Joseph last. ³ Then Jacob went ahead of them and bowed low to the ground seven times before approaching his brother. ⁴ Esau ran over to him and hugged him. He put his arms around his neck and kissed him. The two of them wept.

⁵ Then Esau looked around at the women and children. “Who are these people with you?” he asked.

“They are the children God graciously gave your servant,” Jacob replied.

⁶ The personal maids and their children came over and bowed down. ⁷ Then Leah and her children came over and bowed down. Lastly Joseph and Rachel came over and bowed down.

⁸ “What were all the livestock for that I met on the way?” Esau asked.

“They’re a gift to you my lord so you’d treat me well,” Jacob answered.

⁹ “I have more than enough, my brother! You keep what you have,” said Esau.

¹⁰ “No, please!” Jacob insisted. “If you’re happy with me, then please accept the gift I’m giving you. Now I’ve seen your face again it’s like seeing the face of God, and you have welcomed me so kindly! ¹¹ Please take the gift I’ve brought to you because God has treated me so well and I have so much.” So Esau accepted it.

¹² “Let’s get on our way,” Esau said. “I’ll go ahead of you.”

¹³ “My lord can see that the children are weak,” Jacob responded. “Also, the goats, sheep, and cattle are nursing their young, and if I push them too hard, they’ll all die. ¹⁴ You go on, my lord, and your servant will come along slowly, walking with the children, and I’ll meet you at Seir.”

¹⁵ “Fine, but let me leave some of my men with you,” said Esau.

“You’re very kind, but there’s no need to do that,” Jacob replied.

¹⁶ So Esau started on his way back to Seir that day. ¹⁷ But Jacob headed to Succoth, where

he built himself a house and shelters for the livestock. That's why the place is called Succoth.*

¹⁸ Later Jacob continued his journey from Paddan-aram. He arrived safely at Shechem in the country of Canaan where he camped outside the town. ¹⁹ He bought the plot of ground where he was camping from the sons of Hamor, the founder of Shechem, for 100 pieces of money.†
²⁰ He built an altar there and called it El-Elohe-Israel.‡

34

¹ Dinah, Jacob and Leah's daughter, went to visit some of the local women. ² Shechem, son of Hamor the Hivite, the ruler of that area, saw her. He grabbed hold of her and raped her. ³ However, then he fell deeply in love with Dinah and tried to get her to love him too. ⁴ He went and asked his father, "Get this young girl for me so I can marry her."

⁵ Jacob found out that Shechem had violated* his daughter Dinah, but as his sons were away looking after the flocks in the fields he didn't say anything until they came home. ⁶ In the meantime Hamor, Shechem's father, arrived to talk with Jacob. ⁷ When Jacob's sons returned from the fields they were very upset when they heard the news and became extremely

* **33:17** "Succoth" means "shelters" or "stalls." † **33:19** "Pieces of money": literally, "kesitah," whose value is unknown.

‡ **33:20** "El-Elohe-Israel": meaning "God is the God of Israel."

* **34:5** "Violated": the word here is the one used in connection with being unclean.

angry because Shechem had done something outrageous in Israel by having sex with Jacob's daughter—something that should never be done.

⁸ Hamor told them, “My son Shechem is very much in love with your daughter and your sister Dinah.[†] Please allow him to marry her. ⁹ In fact we can have more marriages—you can give us your daughters and you can have our daughters. ¹⁰ You can live among us and settle down wherever you like. You can go where you want and buy land for yourselves.”

¹¹ Then Shechem himself spoke up, and said to Dinah's father and brothers, “Please accept me and my proposal, and I'll do whatever you ask.

¹² You can set the bride price as high as you like, and I'll pay it along with all the gifts I'll give. Just let me have the girl so I can marry her.”

¹³ Jacob's sons weren't honest when they answered him and his father Hamor because Shechem had violated their sister Dinah. ¹⁴ They told them, “We can't do this! We can't allow our sister to marry a man who's not circumcised. That would bring disgrace on us. ¹⁵ We will

only agree to it with this condition: all of you must be circumcised like us. ¹⁶ Then we will give you our daughters and take your daughters, and we will live among you and become one family.

¹⁷ But if you don't agree with us that you should be circumcised, then we'll take our sister and leave.”

[†] **34:8** “And sister Dinah”: supplied for clarity, since Hamor is addressing both Jacob and his sons.

¹⁸ Hamor and his son Shechem agreed to what was proposed. ¹⁹ The young man Shechem didn't waste any time in arranging this because he was infatuated with Jacob's daughter, and he was viewed as the most important person in his father's family. ²⁰ Hamor and Shechem went to the town gate and spoke to the other leaders there.

²¹ "These men are our friends," they told them. "Let's have them live here in our country and allow them to go wherever they want—it's big enough for all of them too. We can take their daughters as wives, and we can give our daughters to them to marry. ²² But they will only agree to this on one condition: they will only join us and become one family if every male among us is circumcised like they are. ²³ If that happens, won't all their livestock and property—all their animals—end up belonging to us? We just have to agree to this and they will come and live among us."

²⁴ Everyone there at the town gate agreed with Hamor and Shechem so every male in the town was circumcised. ²⁵ Three days later while they were still suffering pain, Simeon and Levi, two of Jacob's sons and Dinah's brothers, came with their swords into the town. Unopposed, they slaughtered every male. ²⁶ They killed Hamor and Shechem with their swords, took Dinah from Shechem's house, and left.

²⁷ Jacob's other sons arrived, robbed the dead bodies, and looted the town where their sister had been violated. ²⁸ They took their sheep,

goats, cattle, and donkeys. They took whatever was in the town, and in the fields— ²⁹ all their possessions. They captured all their women and children, and plundered everything in their homes.

³⁰ But Jacob criticized Simeon and Levi, telling them, “You’ve just caused me a lot of trouble! You’ve made me like a bad smell among the people in this country, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites. I only have a few men, and if these people gather to attack me, I and my whole family will be wiped out.”

³¹ But they replied, “Should we have let him treat our sister like a prostitute?”

35

¹ Then God told Jacob, “Get ready to go to Bethel and live there. Build an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you were running away from your brother Esau.”* ² So Jacob told his family and everyone who was with him, “Get rid of the pagan idols you have with you. Purify yourselves and change your clothes. ³ We have to get ready and go to Bethel so I can build an altar to God who answered me in my time of trouble. He has been with me wherever I went.”

⁴ They handed over to Jacob all the pagan idols they had, as well as their earrings,[†] and he buried them under the oak tree at Shechem.

⁵ As they left on their journey, the terror of

* **35:1** See 28:11 and on. † **35:4** “Earrings”: some commentators believe that these earrings also had some religious associations.

God spread over all the surrounding towns, so nobody tried to retaliate against Jacob's sons.

⁶ Jacob and everyone with him arrived at Luz (also known as Bethel) in the country of Canaan.

⁷ He built an altar there and called the place El-Bethel,[†] because that was where God had appeared to him when he was running away from his brother Esau.

⁸ Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died and was buried under the oak near Bethel. So it was named "the oak of weeping."

⁹ God appeared to Jacob again and blessed him after his return from Paddan-aram. ¹⁰ God told him, "Jacob will not be your name any longer. Instead of Jacob your name will be Israel." So God called him Israel.

¹¹ Then God said, "I am God Almighty! Reproduce, increase, and you will become a nation—in fact a group of nations—and kings will be among your descendants. ¹² I will give to you and to your descendants the land I also gave to Abraham and Isaac." ¹³ Then God left the place where he had been speaking to Jacob.

¹⁴ Afterwards Jacob set up a stone pillar where God had spoken with him. He poured out a drink offering on it, and also olive oil. ¹⁵ Jacob called the place Bethel, because he had spoken with God there.

¹⁶ Then they moved on from Bethel. While they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel went into labor and had great difficulty giving

[†] **35:7** "El-Bethel": meaning "the God of Bethel." Bethel in turn means "the house of God" (see 28:19).

birth. ¹⁷ When she was in the worst birth-pains, the midwife told her, “Don’t give up—you have another son!” ¹⁸ But she was dying, and with her last breath she named him Benoni.[§] But his father named him Benjamin.* ¹⁹ Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (also known as Bethlehem). ²⁰ Jacob set up a stone memorial over Rachel’s grave, and it’s still there to this day.

²¹ Israel[†] moved on and camped beyond the watch tower at Eder. ²² During the time he was living there, Reuben went and slept with Bilhah, his father’s concubine, and Israel found out about it.[‡]

These were the twelve sons of Jacob:

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 Rachel’s personal maid Bilhah: Dan and Naphtali.

²⁶ The sons of Leah’s personal maid Zilpah: Gad and Asher.

These were the sons of Jacob, who were born to him while in Paddan-aram.

²⁷ Jacob returned home to his father Isaac at Mamre, near Kiriath-arba (also known as Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had lived.

²⁸ Isaac lived to be 180 ²⁹ when he breathed his last and died at an old age. He had lived a full

§ 35:18 “Benoni” means “son of my suffering.” * 35:18 “Benjamin” means “son of my right hand.” The right hand was considered more favorable. † 35:21 “Israel”: referring of course to Jacob after his name change. ‡ 35:22 The Septuagint adds, “and it was very distressing to him.”

life, and now he joined his forefathers in death. His sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

36

¹ The following is the genealogy of Esau (also known as Edom). ² Esau married two Canaanite women: Adah, daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Oholibamah, daughter of Anah, and granddaughter of Zibeon the Hivite. ³ In addition he married Basemath, daughter of Ishmael and sister of Nebaioth.

⁴ Adah had a son for Esau named Eliphaz. Basemath had Reul. ⁵ Oholibamah had Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. These were the sons of Esau, who were born to him in Canaan.

⁶ Esau took his wives, sons and daughters, and everyone in his household, together with his livestock, all his other animals, and all the possessions he had gained while in Canaan, and went to live in a country far away from his brother Jacob. ⁷ He did this because the land they were living in couldn't support both of them with all their livestock. ⁸ Esau settled down in the hill country of Seir.

⁹ The following is the genealogy of Esau, father of the Edomites, who lived in the hill country of Seir:

¹⁰ These were the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz, son of Esau's wife Adah, and Reuel, son of Esau's wife Basemath. ¹¹ The sons of Eliphaz were: Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz. ¹² Timna, the concubine of Esau's son Eliphaz, had Amalek for Eliphaz. These were the descendants of Esau's wife Adah.

¹³ These were the sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. They were the descendants of Esau's wife Basemath.

¹⁴ These were the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah, daughter of Anah and granddaughter of Zibeon, whom she had for Esau: Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.

¹⁵ These were the tribal leaders of Esau's sons. The tribal leaders of the sons of Eliphaz (Esau's firstborn) were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz,

¹⁶ Korah,* Gatam, and Amalek. They were the tribal leaders of Eliphaz in the country of Edom, and they were the descendants of Adah.

¹⁷ These were the sons of Esau's son Reuel: tribal leaders Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. They were the tribal leaders descended from Reuel in the country of Edom, and they were the descendants of Esau's wife Basemath.

¹⁸ These were the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah: tribal leaders Jeush, Jalam, and Korah; they were the tribal leaders descended from Esau's wife Oholibamah, daughter of Anah.

¹⁹ All these were the sons of Esau (also called Edom), and they were their tribal leaders.

²⁰ These were the sons of Seir the Horite, who were living in the country: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, ²¹ Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan; they were the tribal leaders of the Horites, the descendants of Seir in the land of Edom.

²² The sons of Lotan were Hori and Hemam. Timna was Lotan's sister.

* **36:16** "Korah": as listed here is often considered to be a copyist's mistake since he is listed as a son of Esau in verse 14.

²³ These were the sons of Shobal: Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam.

²⁴ These were the sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah. (This was the Anah who discovered the hot springs[†] in the desert while he was looking after the donkeys of his father Zibeon.)

²⁵ These were the children of Anah: Dishon and Oholibamah, daughter of Anah.

²⁶ These were the sons of Dishon: Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran.

²⁷ These were the sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan.

²⁸ These were the sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran.

²⁹ These were the tribal leaders of the Horites: tribal leaders Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah,
³⁰ Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. They were the tribal leaders of the Horites listed according to their tribes in the country of Seir.

³¹ These were the kings who ruled in the land of Edom before there was any king who ruled over the Israelites:

³² Bela, son of Beor, ruled in Edom and the name of his town was Dinhabah.

³³ When Bela died, Jobab, son of Zerah from Bozrah, took over as king.

³⁴ When Jobab died, Husham from the land of the Temanites took over as king.

³⁵ When Husham died, Hadad, son of Bedad, took over as king. He was the one who defeated the Midianites in the country of Moab, and the name of his town was Avith.

[†] **36:24** "Hot springs": the meaning of this Hebrew word is uncertain.

³⁶ When Hadad died, Samlah from Masrekah took over as king.

³⁷ When Samlah died, Shaul from Rehoboth on the Euphrates took over as king.

³⁸ When Shaul died, Baal-hanan, son of Achbor, took over as king.

³⁹ When Baal-hanan, son of Achbor, died, Hadad took over as king. The name of his town was Pau, and his wife's name was Mehetabel, daughter of Matred, daughter of Me-zahab.

⁴⁰ These were the names of the tribal leaders descended from Esau, according to their families and where they lived, listed by name: tribal leaders Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, ⁴¹ Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, ⁴² Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, ⁴³ Magdiel, and Iram. These were the tribal leaders of Edom, listed according to the places where they lived in the country. Esau was the ancestor of the Edomites.

37

¹ Jacob settled down and lived in Canaan as his father had done.

² This is the story of Jacob and his family. Joseph was seventeen, and helped look after the flock with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. Joseph told his father about some of the bad things his brothers were doing.

³ Israel* loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because Joseph had been born to him when he was already old. He made a colorful

* **37:3** "Israel," that is, Jacob.

robe with long sleeves for Joseph. ⁴ When his brothers noticed that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and had nothing good to say about him.

⁵ Joseph had a dream, and when he told his brothers about it, they hated him even more. ⁶ “Listen to this dream I had,” he told them. ⁷ “We were tying up bundles of grain out in the fields when all of a sudden my bundle stood up, and your bundles came over and bowed down to it.”

⁸ “Do you really think you're going to be our king?” they asked. “Do you honestly believe you're going to rule over us?” They hated him even more because of his dream and how he described it.

⁹ Then he had another dream told his brothers about it. “Listen, I had another dream,” he explained. “The sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down before me.”

¹⁰ He also told his father as well as his brothers, and his father told him off, saying, “What's this dream that you've had? Are we—I and your mother and brothers—really going to come and bow down to the ground before you?” ¹¹ Joseph's brothers became jealous of him, but his father puzzled over the meaning of the dream.

¹² One day Joseph's brothers took their father's flocks to graze near Shechem. ¹³ Israel told Joseph, “Your brothers are looking after the sheep near Shechem. Get ready because I want you to go and see them.”

“I'll do it,” Joseph replied.

¹⁴ So he told him, “Off you go and see how your brothers and the flocks are doing, and come back and let me know.” So he sent him off.

Joseph set out from the Hebron Valley, ¹⁵ and arrived in Shechem. A man there found him wandering about in the field, so he asked him, “What are you looking for?”

¹⁶ “I’m looking for my brothers,” Joseph replied. “Can you please tell me where they’re looking after the flock?”

¹⁷ “They’ve already left,” the man replied. “I heard them say, ‘Let’s go to Dothan.’” So Joseph followed his brothers and caught up with them at Dothan.

¹⁸ But they saw him coming way off in the distance, and before he got to them, they made plans to kill him. ¹⁹ “Look, here comes the Lord of Dreams!” they said to each other. ²⁰ “Come on, let’s kill him and throw him into one of the pits. We’ll say that some wild animal has eaten him. Then we’ll see what happens to his dreams!”

²¹ When Reuben heard all this, he tried to save Joseph from them. ²² “Let’s not attack and kill him,” he suggested. “Don’t murder him, just throw him into this pit here in the desert. You don’t need to be guilty of violence.”† Reuben said this so that he could come back later and rescue Joseph from them and take him home to his father.

† ^{37:22} “You don’t need to be guilty of violence”: literally “you must not send a hand against him.” Reuben is suggesting that they don’t have to actively kill Joseph, but if they throw him into a pit he will die without them being guilty of committing murder.

²³ So when Joseph arrived, his brothers ripped off his robe—the colorful long-sleeved robe he was wearing—²⁴ grabbed him and threw him into a pit. (The pit was empty—it didn't have any water in it.)²⁵ They were just sitting down to have a meal when they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were carrying aromatic spices, balm, and myrrh to take to Egypt.

²⁶ “What's the point of killing our brother?” Judah asked his brothers. “Then we'd have to cover up his death!”²⁷ Instead, why don't we sell him to these Ishmaelites? We don't have to kill him. After all he's our brother, our own flesh and blood.” His brothers agreed.

²⁸ So when the Ishmaelites (who were traders from Midian)[†] came by, they pulled Joseph out of the pit and sold him to them for twenty pieces of silver. The Ishmaelites took him to Egypt.

²⁹ When Reuben came back later and looked into the pit, Joseph was gone. He tore his clothes in grief.³⁰ He returned to his brothers. “The boy's gone!” he moaned. “What am I going to do now?”

³¹ They slaughtered a goat and dipped Joseph's robe in the blood.³² Then they sent the colorful robe to their father with the message, “We found this. Please examine it and see if it's your son's robe or not.”

[†] **37:28** The text sometimes refers to them as Ishmaelites and sometimes as Midianites but are clearly one and the same group. Also verse 36.

³³ His father recognized it right away and said, "This is my son's robe! Some wild animal must have eaten him. Poor Joseph has been ripped to pieces, no doubt about it!"

³⁴ Jacob tore his clothes in grief and dressed in sackcloth. He mourned the death of his son for a long time. ³⁵ All his sons and daughters tried to console him, but he rejected their attempts. "No," he said, "I will go down into my grave mourning for my son." So Joseph's father went on weeping for him.

³⁶ In the meantime the Ishmaelites had arrived in Egypt and had sold Joseph to Potiphar. Potiphar was one of Pharaoh's officers, the captain of the guard.

38

¹ Around this time, Judah left his brothers and set up his tents at Adullam, near to a local man named Hirah. ² There Judah happened to see the daughter of a Canaanite man named Shua and married her. He slept with her, ³ and she became pregnant and had a son he named Er. ⁴ She became pregnant again and had a son she named Onan. ⁵ Then she had another son she named Shelah who was born in Kezib.

⁶ Much later, Judah arranged for Er, his firstborn son, to marry a woman named Tamar. ⁷ But Er did what was evil in the Lord's sight, so the Lord put him to death. ⁸ Judah told Onan, "Go and sleep with your brother's wife to fulfill the requirements of a brother-in-law to have children on behalf of your brother."

⁹ Onan realized that any children he had wouldn't be his own, so whenever he slept with his brother's wife he made sure she wouldn't become pregnant by withdrawing and spilling his semen on the ground. In this way he prevented any children being born on behalf of his brother. ¹⁰ But what he did was evil in the Lord's sight, so he also put Onan to death.

¹¹ Then Judah told his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Go to your father's house and live there as a widow until my son Shelah grows up." For he thought, "Maybe he'll die too, just like his brothers." So Tamar went and stayed in her father's house.

¹² A long time later Judah's wife, the daughter of Shua, died. After Judah had finished the time of mourning, he went to visit his sheepshearers at Timnah with his friend Hirah from Adullam. ¹³ Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is going to Timnah to shear his sheep." ¹⁴ So she took off her widow's clothes and covered herself with a veil, disguising herself. She sat down beside the entrance to Enaim, which is on the way to Timnah. She had realized that even though Shelah had now grown up, nothing had been done about her marrying him.

¹⁵ Judah saw her and thought she must be a prostitute because she had veiled her face. ¹⁶ He went over to her at the side of the road and said, "I want to sleep with you." He didn't know she was his daughter-in-law.

"What will you give me if I let you sleep with me?" she asked.

17 “I’ll send you a young goat from my flock,” he replied.

“What guarantee will you give me to make sure you’ll send it?” she asked.

18 “What guarantee do I have to give you?” he asked.

“Your signet seal and its cord, and your walking stick that you’re holding,” she replied. He handed them over to her. He slept with her and she became pregnant. 19 She left, went home, took off her veil, and put on her widow’s clothes.

20 Judah sent his friend Hirah from Adullam with a young goat to get back his belongings he’d left as a guarantee from the woman, but he couldn’t find her. 21 Hirah asked the men there, “Where’s the cult prostitute that sits by the entrance road to Enaim?”

“There’s no cult prostitute here,” they answered.

22 Hirah went back to Judah and told him, “I couldn’t find her, and the men there said, ‘There’s no cult prostitute here.’ ”

23 “Let her keep what I gave her,” Judah replied. “We’ll look ridiculous to people if we go on searching. In any case I did try to send her the young goat as promised but you couldn’t find her.”

24 Then about three months later Judah was told, “Tamar your daughter-in-law has had sex like a prostitute and now as a result she’s pregnant!”

“Bring her out and burn her to death!” Judah ordered.

²⁵ As she was brought out, she sent a message to her father-in-law, saying, “I’m pregnant by the man who owns these things.” Then she added, “Please look carefully at this signet seal and its cord and walking stick. Who do they belong to?”

²⁶ Judah recognized them right away and said, “She has honored the law more than I have, because I didn’t give her in marriage to my son Shelah.” He didn’t sleep with Tamar again.

²⁷ When the time came for Tamar to give birth, she was found to be carrying twins. ²⁸ One baby put out his hand, and the midwife tied a scarlet thread around on his wrist and said, “This one came out first.” ²⁹ But then he pulled back his hand and his brother was born, she said, “How did you burst out?” So he was named Perez.* ³⁰ Then his brother with the scarlet thread on his wrist was born. He was named Zerah.†

39

¹ Joseph had been taken to Egypt by the Ishmaelites, who had sold him to Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh’s officers, the commander of the royal guard.

² The Lord was with Joseph and made him successful. He lived in his Egyptian master’s house. ³ His master noticed that the Lord was with him and made him successful in everything he did. ⁴ Potiphar appreciated Joseph and his service, and put him in charge of his household

* **38:29** “Perez” means “burst out.” † **38:30** “Zerah” means “rising” (as in “sun”) with perhaps the implication of red color.

and made him responsible for everything he owned. ⁵ From the time he put Joseph in charge and trusted him with all he had, the Lord blessed Potiphar's household because of Joseph. The Lord blessed everything he had, whether in his house or in his fields. ⁶ So Potiphar left Joseph to care for everything he owned. He didn't bother with anything except to decide what food he was going to eat.

Now Joseph was handsome, having a good physique, ⁷ so some time later he caught the eye of his master's wife. She propositioned him, saying, "Come here! Sleep with me!"

⁸ But he turned her down, telling his master's wife, "Look, my master trusts me so much* he doesn't even bother to find out how his household is running. He's put me in charge of everything he owns— ⁹ no one in this house has more authority than me! He hasn't held back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. So how could I do such an evil thing as this, and sin against God?"

¹⁰ Day after day she persisted in asking him, but he refused to sleep with her and tried to avoid her. ¹¹ But one day he went into the house to do his work and none of the other servants

* **39:8** "Trusts me so much": supplied for clarity.

were there. ¹² She grabbed him by his clothing,[†] and demanded, “Sleep with me!” But leaving his clothing in her hand, he ran out of the house.

¹³ Seeing that he'd left his clothing in her hand, and had ran out of the house, ¹⁴ she shouted out to her servants, “Look at this! He[‡] brought this Hebrew slave here to dishonor us! This man came to try and rape me, but I screamed at the top of my voice. ¹⁵ When he heard me scream for help, he left his clothing beside me and ran outside.”

¹⁶ She kept his clothing with her until her husband came home. ¹⁷ Then she told him her story. It went like this: “That Hebrew slave you brought here tried to come and dishonor me. ¹⁸ But as soon as I screamed and called for help, he left his clothing beside me and ran outside.”

¹⁹ When Potiphar heard the story his wife told him, saying, “This is what your servant did to me,” he became angry. ²⁰ He took Joseph and put him in the prison where the king's prisoners were kept, and there he stayed. ²¹ But the Lord was with Joseph, showing him trustworthy love, and made the chief jailer pleased with him. ²² So

[†] **39:12** “Clothing”: the Hebrew word is a general word for clothing and is not specific. However, ancient Egyptian art depicts servants as wearing only a loincloth, and it is likely this what was Joseph was wearing. It also fits the story in that this piece of cloth could easily have been torn off. However, since nothing specific is mentioned, the general term is used here.

[‡] **39:14** Referring to her husband. It's interesting that she simply refers to him as “he,” an indication of her lack of respect for him, also evidenced by her willingness to commit adultery.

the chief jailer put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners there and gave him the responsibility for running the prison. ²³ The chief jailer didn't bother with anything for Joseph took care of it all for the Lord was with him and made him successful.

40

¹ Later on the cupbearer and the baker committed some offense against their master, the king of Egypt. ² Pharaoh was angry with these two royal officials—the chief cupbearer and chief baker—³ and imprisoned them in the house of the commander of the guard, the same prison where Joseph was. ⁴ The commander of the guard assigned Joseph to them as their personal attendant. They were kept in prison for some time.

⁵ One night while they were in prison the cupbearer and the baker for the king of Egypt each had a dream. They were different dreams, each with its own meaning. ⁶ When Joseph arrived the next morning he noticed they both looked depressed. ⁷ So he asked Pharaoh's officials who were imprisoned with him in his master's house, “Why are you looking so depressed?”

⁸ “We've both had dreams but can't find anyone to explain what they mean,” they said.

So Joseph told them, “Isn't God the one who can interpret the meaning of dreams? Tell me your dreams.”

⁹ So the chief cupbearer told Joseph his dream. “In my dream there was a vine right in front

of me,” he explained. ¹⁰ “The vine had three branches. As soon as it budded, it flowered, and produced clusters of ripe grapes. ¹¹ I was holding Pharaoh's wine cup, so I picked the grapes and squeezed them into the cup and gave it to Pharaoh.”

¹² “This is the meaning,” Joseph told him. “The three branches represent three days. ¹³ In three days' time Pharaoh will take you out of prison and give you back your job, and you will hand Pharaoh his cup as you used to. ¹⁴ But when things go well for you, please remember me with kindness and speak to Pharaoh on my behalf, and please get me out of this prison. ¹⁵ I was cruelly kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and now I'm here in this pit even though I've done nothing wrong.”

¹⁶ When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was positive, he said to Joseph, “I also had a dream. I had three baskets of cakes on my head. ¹⁷ In the top basket were all the cakes and pastries for Pharaoh to eat, and the birds were eating them from the basket on my head.”

¹⁸ “This is the meaning,” Joseph told him. “The three baskets represent three days. ¹⁹ In three days' time Pharaoh will take you out of prison and hang you on a pole, and birds will eat your flesh.”

²⁰ Three days later it happened to be Pharaoh's birthday, and he arranged a banquet for all his officials. He had the chief cupbearer and the chief baker released from prison and brought there before his officials. ²¹ He gave the chief

cupbearer his job back, and he returned to his duties of handing Pharaoh his cup. ²² But he hanged the chief baker just as Joseph had said when he interpreted their dreams. ²³ But the chief cupbearer didn't remember to say anything about Joseph—in fact he forgot all about him.

41

¹ A full two years later, Pharaoh had a dream that he was standing beside the River Nile. ² He saw seven cows coming up from the river. They looked well-fed and healthy as they grazed among the reeds. ³ Then he saw another seven cows that came up behind them. They looked ugly and skinny as they stood beside the other cows on the bank of the Nile. ⁴ Then the ugly, skinny cows ate the well-fed, healthy cows. Then Pharaoh woke up.

⁵ Pharaoh fell asleep again and had a second dream. Seven heads of grain were growing on one stalk, ripe and healthy. ⁶ Then seven heads of grain grew up after them, thin and dried by the east wind. ⁷ The seven thin and dried heads of grain swallowed up the ripe and healthy ones. Then Pharaoh woke up and realized he'd been dreaming.

⁸ The next morning Pharaoh was worried by his dreams,* so he sent for all the magicians and wise men in Egypt. Pharaoh told them about his dreams, but no one could interpret their meaning for him.

* **41:8** “By his dreams”: supplied for clarity.

⁹ But then the chief cupbearer spoke up. “Today I’ve just remembered a bad mistake I’ve made,” he explained. ¹⁰ “Your Majesty was angry with some of your officials and you imprisoned me in the house of the commander of the guard, along with the chief baker. ¹¹ We each had a dream. They were different dreams, each with its own meaning. ¹² A young Hebrew was there with us, a slave of the commander of the guard. When we told him our dreams, he interpreted for us the meaning of our different dreams. ¹³ Everything happened just as he said it would—I was given back my job and the baker was hanged.”

¹⁴ Pharaoh summoned Joseph, and they quickly brought him from the prison. After he’d shaved and changed his clothes, he was presented to Pharaoh.

¹⁵ Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I had a dream, but no one can interpret its meaning. But I’ve heard that when someone tells you a dream you know how to interpret it.”

¹⁶ “It’s not me who can do this,” Joseph replied. “But God will explain its meaning to set Your Majesty’s mind at rest.”

¹⁷ Pharaoh explained to Joseph, “In my dream I was standing on the bank of the Nile. ¹⁸ I saw seven cows coming up from the river. They looked well-fed and healthy as they grazed among the reeds. ¹⁹ Then I saw another seven cows that came up behind them. They looked sickly and ugly and skinny—I’ve never seen such

ugly cows in the whole of Egypt! ²⁰ These skinny, ugly cows ate the first seven healthy-looking cows. ²¹ But afterwards you couldn't tell they'd eaten them because they looked just as skinny and ugly as before. Then I woke up.

²² Then I fell asleep again. In my second dream I saw seven heads of grain growing on one stalk, ripe and healthy. ²³ Then seven heads of grain grew up after them, withered and thin and dried by the east wind. ²⁴ The seven thin heads of grain swallowed up the healthy ones. I told all this to the magicians, but none of them could explain its meaning to me.”

²⁵ “Pharaoh's dreams mean the same thing,” Joseph responded. “God is telling Pharaoh what he is going to do. ²⁶ The seven good cows and the seven good heads of grain represent seven good years of harvest.† The dreams mean the same thing. ²⁷ The seven skinny and ugly cows that came after them and the seven thin heads of grain dried by the east wind represent seven years of famine. ²⁸ It's just as I told Your Majesty—God has shown Pharaoh what he is going to do. ²⁹ There are going to be seven years with plenty of food produced throughout the whole country of Egypt. ³⁰ But after them will come seven years of famine. People will forget the time when there was plenty of food throughout Egypt. Famine will ruin the country. ³¹ The time of plenty will be completely forgotten because the famine that follows it will be so terrible. ³² The fact that

† **41:26** “Of harvest”: supplied for clarity.

the dream was repeated twice means that it has definitely been decided by God, and that God is going to do this soon.

³³ So Your Majesty should choose a man with insight and wisdom, and put him in charge of the whole country of Egypt. ³⁴ Your Majesty should also appoint officials to be in charge of the land, and have them collect one-fifth of the produce of the country during the seven years of plenty. ³⁵ They should collect all the food during the good years that are soon coming, and store the grain under Pharaoh's authority, keeping it under guard to provide food for the towns. ³⁶ This will be a food reserve for the country during the seven years of famine so that the people won't die of starvation."

³⁷ Pharaoh and all his officials thought Joseph's proposal was a good idea. ³⁸ So Pharaoh asked them, "Where can we find a man like this who has the spirit of God in him?" ³⁹ Then Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, telling him, "Since God has revealed to you all this, and there's no one like you with such insight and wisdom, ⁴⁰ you will be in charge of all my affairs, and all my people will obey your orders. Only I with my status as king[†] will be greater than you."

⁴¹ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Look, I'm putting you in charge of the whole country of Egypt." ⁴² Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in fine linen clothes and placed a

[†] **41:40** "My status as king": literally "the throne."

golden chain around his neck. ⁴³ He had Joseph ride in the chariot designated for his second-in-command while his attendants went ahead, shouting, “Bow down!”[§] This is how Pharaoh gave Joseph authority over all of Egypt.

⁴⁴ Then Pharaoh told Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, but without your permission nobody will lift a hand or a foot anywhere in the whole country.”

⁴⁵ Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-paneah,* and arranged for him to marry Asenath, the daughter of Potiphra, priest of On. This is how Joseph rose to power over the whole of Egypt.

⁴⁶ Joseph was thirty when he started working for Pharaoh, king of Egypt. After he had left Pharaoh, Joseph traveled on an inspection tour[†] throughout Egypt. ⁴⁷ During the seven years of good harvests, the land produced plenty of food.

⁴⁸ He collected all the food during the seven good years, and he stored the grain produced in the local fields in each town. ⁴⁹ Joseph piled up so much grain that it was like the sand of the seashore. Eventually he stopped keeping records because there was just so much!

⁵⁰ It was during this time, before the years of famine came, that Joseph had two sons by Asenath, the daughter of Potiphra, priest of

§ **41:43** “Bow down!” This Egyptian loan word is variously translated: “Attention!” “Make way!” “Praise!” “Do homage!” All relate to honoring a dignitary. *

* **41:45** Meaning “The God speaks and he (the subject) lives.” † **41:46** “On an inspection tour”: supplied for clarity.

On. ⁵¹ Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh,[†] because he said, “The Lord has made me forget all my troubles and all my father's family.” ⁵² His second son he named Ephraim,[§] because he said, “God has made me fruitful in the country of my misery.”

⁵³ The seven years of plenty in Egypt came to an end, ⁵⁴ and the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in all the other countries but the whole of Egypt had food. ⁵⁵ When all of Egypt was hungry, the people cried out to Pharaoh for food, and he told everyone, “Go and see Joseph and do whatever he tells you.” ⁵⁶ The famine had spread all over the country so Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold grain to the people of Egypt. The famine was very bad in Egypt, ⁵⁷ in fact the famine was very bad everywhere, so people from other countries all around came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph.

42

¹ When Jacob found out grain was available in Egypt, he asked his sons, “Why do you keep on looking at each other to do something?” ² I've heard there's grain in Egypt. Go there and buy some for us so we can stay alive—if not, we're going to die!”

³ So ten of Joseph's brothers went to Egypt to buy grain. ⁴ But Jacob did not send Joseph's

[†] **41:51** “Manasseh” means “cause to forget.” [§] **41:52** “Ephraim” means “fruitful.”

brother Benjamin with his other brothers, for he said, "I'm afraid something bad might happen to him." ⁵ So Israel's sons went to buy grain along with everyone else, because there was famine in Canaan too.

⁶ Joseph was the governor of the country and he sold grain to all the people there. So Joseph's brothers went to him, and bowed low before him with their faces to the ground. ⁷ Joseph recognized them as soon as he saw them, but he acted like a stranger towards them and spoke to them in a severe way, saying, "Where are you from?"

"From the country of Canaan," they replied. "We've come to buy food."

⁸ Even though Joseph recognized his brothers, they didn't recognize him. ⁹ Joseph thought back to the dreams he'd had about them, and told them, "No! You're spies! You've come to discover our country's weaknesses!"

¹⁰ "That's not true, my lord!" they responded. "We, your servants, have just come to buy food.

¹¹ We're all the sons of one man and we're honest. We're not spies!"

¹² "No! You've come to find our country's weaknesses!" he insisted.

¹³ "Your servants are twelve brothers, the sons of one man living in the country of Canaan," they explained. "The youngest is right now with our father, and one has passed away."

¹⁴ "As I said before, you're spies!" Joseph declared. ¹⁵ "This is how your story will be checked. I swear on Pharaoh's life that you'll

never leave this country unless your younger brother comes here. ¹⁶ One of you go back and bring your other brother here. The others of you will be kept here in prison until it's clear that you're telling the truth. If not, then I swear on Pharaoh's life it proves you're spies!"

¹⁷ So Joseph put all of them in prison for three days. ¹⁸ On the third day he told them, "Since I'm someone who respects God, do as I tell you and you'll live. ¹⁹ If you're truly honest, choose one of your brothers to stay here in prison. The rest of you can go back home with grain for your hungry families. ²⁰ But you must bring your youngest brother here to me to prove what you're saying is true. If not, you will all die." They agreed to do this.

²¹ "Clearly we're being punished for what we did to our brother," they said to each other. "We watched him in agony pleading with us for mercy, but we refused to listen to him. That's why we're in all this trouble."

²² Reuben said to them, "Didn't I tell you, 'Don't harm the boy!' But you didn't listen to me. Now we're paying the price for what we did to him."*

²³ They didn't realize that Joseph understood what they were saying because they were talking to him through an interpreter. ²⁴ Joseph stepped away from them because he started crying. He came back when he was able to speak to them

* **42:22** Literally, "Now his blood is required." The concept is that the blood of the victim cries out for vengeance.

again. He chose Simeon and had him tied up as they watched.

²⁵ Joseph gave the order to fill up their sacks with grain, and also to return the money they had paid by placing it in the sacks as well. He also ordered that they should be provided with food for their journey home. All this was done. ²⁶ The brothers loaded the grain onto their donkeys and then set off.

²⁷ On their way they stopped for the night, and one of them opened up his sack to give his donkey something to eat and saw his money there at the top of the sack. ²⁸ He told his brothers, "My money's been returned to me. It's right here at the top of my sack!" They were horrified! Trembling with fear they asked each other, "What is this that God's done to us?"

²⁹ When they arrived home in Canaan, they told their father Jacob everything that had happened. ³⁰ "The man who is the country's governor spoke to us in a severe way, and accused us of spying on the land," they explained. ³¹ "We told him, 'We are honest men. We're not spies!'" ³² "We are twelve brothers, the sons of one father. One has passed away and the youngest is right now with our father in the country of Canaan." ³³ Then the man who is the country's governor said to us, "This is how I'll find out if you're telling the truth: you are to leave one of your brothers here with me while the rest take grain home for your hungry families." ³⁴ Then bring your youngest brother to me. That way I'll

know you're not spies but you're telling the truth. I'll release your brother to you, and you can stay in the country and trade.' ”

³⁵ As they emptied their sacks, each one's money bag was there in his sack! When they and their father saw the money bags, they were horrified. ³⁶ Jacob their father accused them, “You have taken Joseph from me—he's gone! Simeon is gone too! Now you want to take Benjamin away! I'm the one who's suffering from all of this!”†

³⁷ “You can kill my two sons if I don't bring him back to you,” Reuben assured him. “Trust me with him, and I will bring him home to you myself.”

³⁸ “My son won't go there with you!” Jacob declared. “His brother is dead, and he's the only one I have left. If anything bad happens to him on the journey you're planning, you'll send this old man to his grave in grief.”

43

¹ The famine continued to be really bad in Canaan, ² so once they had finished the grain they'd brought from Egypt, their father told them, “You have to go back and buy some more grain for us.”

³ But Judah responded, “The man was adamant when he warned us, ‘I won't even see you unless

† **42:36** The sentence is literally, “on me are all these things.” The Hebrew construction focuses “on me” making it clear that Jacob is holding them responsible for his suffering.

your brother is with you.’ ⁴ If you send our brother Benjamin with us then we’ll go and buy food for you. ⁵ But if you won’t send him, then we won’t go, because the man was very clear, ‘I won’t even see you unless your brother is with you.’ ”

⁶ “Why have you made things so bad for me by telling the man you had another brother?” Israel asked.

⁷ “The man kept on asking direct questions about us and our family like ‘Is your father still alive?’ and ‘Do you have another brother?’ ” they replied. “We just answered his questions. How were we to know he’d say, ‘Bring your brother here!’?”

⁸ Judah said to his father Israel, “Send the boy in my care, and we’ll leave immediately, so that we can stay alive and not die—and that includes you and us and our children! ⁹ I promise to take care of him—I’ll be personally responsible for bringing him back to you. If I don’t, then I will always carry the blame! ¹⁰ Now let’s go, because if we hadn’t hesitated, we could have gone there and come back twice by now.”

¹¹ “If it has to be, then this is what you’ll do,” Israel replied. “Take with you the best our country produces. Pack your bags with gifts for the man—balm, a little honey, spices, myrrh, pistachios, and almonds. ¹² Take double the money that was returned to you in your sacks—maybe it was a mistake. ¹³ Take your brother and go back to the man right away. ¹⁴ May God Almighty make the man treat you kindly so when

you come before him he'll release your other brother and send Benjamin back. As for me, if I am to lose all my children, then so be it."

¹⁵ So they packed the gifts, took double the money, and set off, accompanied by Benjamin. They arrived in Egypt and went to have an audience with Joseph. ¹⁶ When Joseph saw Benjamin was with them, he told his household supervisor, "Take these men to my house. Slaughter an animal and make a meal, for they are going to eat with me at noon."

¹⁷ The man did as Joseph ordered and took them to Joseph's house. ¹⁸ They were really worried that they were being taken to Joseph's house. "It's because of the money that was put in our sacks the first time we came," they said to each other. "That's why we're being brought in—so he can accuse us and attack us! He'll make us his slaves and take our donkeys!"

¹⁹ So they went and spoke to Joseph's household supervisor at the entrance to the house. ²⁰ "Please excuse us, my lord," they said. "We came down the first time to buy food, ²¹ and when we stopped for the night, we opened our sacks and each of us found our money—the exact amount—at the top of our sacks. So we've brought it back with us. ²² We've also brought more money to buy food. We've no idea who put our money in our sacks!"

²³ "Everything's fine!" he told them. "Don't worry! Your God, the God of your father, must

have given you the treasure* hidden in your sacks. I got your money.” Then he brought Simeon out to meet them. ²⁴ The steward took them inside Joseph's house, gave them water to wash their feet, and supplied food for their donkeys. ²⁵ They got their gifts ready for when Joseph would come at noon, because they had found out that they were going to eat there.

²⁶ When Joseph arrived at the house they gave him the gifts they had brought for him, and bowed low to the ground before him. ²⁷ He asked how they were, and then he asked, “How is your elderly father doing that you spoke of? Is he still alive?”

²⁸ “Yes, your servant our father is still alive, and is well,” they replied and bowed low in respect.

²⁹ Then Joseph looked over at his brother Benjamin, the son of his own mother. “Is this your youngest brother that you told me about?” he asked. “God be gracious to you, my son,” he said.

³⁰ Joseph had to run out quickly because he was becoming so emotional at seeing his brother.† He looked for a place to cry, and went to his room to weep there. ³¹ Then he washed his face, got his emotions under control, and went back out. “Serve the food,” he ordered.

³² Joseph was served at a table by himself, and his brothers were served at a separate table.

* **43:23** “Treasure”: the word refers of course to the money, and is one used to describe money that is hidden or buried. † **43:30** He hadn't seen Benjamin for more than 20 years.

The Egyptians were also served at another table, because Egyptians cannot eat with Hebrews because they find this repulsive.[†] ³³ The brothers had been seated in front of him in order by age, from the firstborn, the oldest, down to the youngest, and they looked at each other in complete surprise.[§] ³⁴ The food was served to them from Joseph's table, and Benjamin received five times as much as anyone else. So they ate and drank plenty with him.

44

¹ Joseph ordered his household supervisor, “Fill the men's sacks with as much grain as they can hold and put each man's money at the top of his sack. ² Then put my special silver cup at the top of the sack of the youngest, along with the money for his grain.” He did as Joseph told him. ³ At sunrise they were sent on their way with their donkeys. ⁴ They had hardly left the city when Joseph told his household supervisor, “Go after those men, and when you catch up with them, ask them, ‘Why have you paid back good with evil by stealing my master's silver cup?’” ⁵ This is the cup he personally drinks from, and which he

[†] **43:32** It appears that since the Egyptians revered the cow goddess Isis they viewed anyone (including Hebrews) who ate such meat as unclean. **§ 43:33** It would of course have been impossible for anyone without intimate family knowledge to do this. ^{*} **44:4** “By stealing my master's silver cup”: Septuagint addition, used for clarity.

uses for divination.[†] What you've done is really evil!"

⁶ When he caught up with them, he told them what Joseph had said.

⁷ "My lord, what are you saying?" they replied. "We your servants wouldn't do anything like that!" ⁸ Remember that we brought back the money we found at the top of our sacks when we returned from Canaan. Why would we steal silver or gold from your master's house? ⁹ If any one of us is found with it, he shall die, and all of us will become your slaves."

¹⁰ "Whatever you say," the man replied, "but only the one found with it will become my slave since the rest of you will be free of any blame."

¹¹ They all unloaded their sacks and put them on the ground. They each opened their own sacks. ¹² The household supervisor searched the sacks, beginning with the oldest and working his way down to the youngest. The cup was found in Benjamin's sack. ¹³ The brothers tore their clothes in grief. Then they loaded their sacks back on their donkeys and headed back to the city.

¹⁴ Joseph was still at home when Judah and his brothers arrived, and they fell to the ground before him. ¹⁵ "Why did you do this?" Joseph asked. "Don't you know a man like me can find out things through divination?"

[†] **44:5** "Divination": a way of discovering secrets or hidden knowledge. Sometimes this is close to magic, but, in this case, it may be that Joseph is using a common superstition to cover up his plan.

¹⁶ “My lord, what can we say?” Judah replied. “How can we explain this to you? In what way can we prove our innocence? God has exposed the guilt of your servants. My lord, we are your slaves—all of us, including the one who was found with the cup.”

¹⁷ “I wouldn't do anything like that!” Joseph replied. “Only the man who was found with the cup will become my slave. The rest of you are free to return to your father.”

¹⁸ Judah came closer and said to him, “If you please, my lord, let your servant just say a word. Please don't become angry with your servant, even though you are as powerful as Pharaoh himself. ¹⁹ My lord, previously you asked us, ‘Do you have a father or a brother?’ ²⁰ We told you, my lord, ‘We have an elderly father, and a younger brother, born when our father was already old. The boy's brother is dead. He is the only one of his mother's children left, and his father loves him dearly.’

²¹ Then you ordered us, ‘Bring him here to me so I can see him.’ ²² We told you, ‘The boy can't leave his father; if he did, his father would die.’ ²³ But you told us, ‘If your youngest brother doesn't come with you, you won't see me again.’

²⁴ So when we went back to your servant, our father, we explained to him everything you had told us. ²⁵ However, later on, our father told us, ‘Go back and buy some more food.’ ²⁶ But we said, ‘There's no way we can go back unless Benjamin our youngest brother goes with us,

because we won't be able to see the man if Benjamin isn't with us.'

²⁷ Then my father said to us, 'You realize that my wife[†] had two sons for me. ²⁸ One is no more, ripped to pieces no doubt,[§] for I've never seen him since. ²⁹ If you take this one away from me too, and something bad happens to him, you'll send this old man to his grave in grief.'

³⁰ So if the boy isn't with us when I go back to my father, whose life depends on the life of the boy, ³¹ as soon as he sees the boy isn't there he'll die, and we will really send this old man, our father, to his grave in grief. ³² In fact I gave myself as the guarantee for the boy to my father. I told him, 'If I don't bring him back to you, then I will always carry the blame!'

³³ So please let me stay here as my lord's slave instead of the boy. Let him go back home with his brothers. ³⁴ For how could I ever go back to my father if the boy wasn't with me? I couldn't stand seeing the anguish that would cause my father."

45

¹ Joseph couldn't control his emotions any longer while all his attendants were there, so he shouted out, "Everybody leave me!" So there was nobody else there when Joseph revealed who he was to his brothers. ² But he cried so loudly

[†] **44:27** "My wife": referring to Rachel. Evidently Jacob considered her as his one true wife. [§] **44:28** See 37:33.

that the Egyptians could hear him, and they told Pharaoh's household about it.

³ “I’m Joseph!” he announced to his brothers. “Is my father still alive?” They couldn’t answer him as they were so surprised to see him face to face.

⁴ “Please come closer to me,” he told his brothers. They came over to him. “I’m your brother Joseph who you sold into slavery in Egypt. ⁵ But don’t be worried or get angry with yourselves that you sold me to be a slave here, because it was God who sent me ahead of you to save lives. ⁶ The country has suffered from famine for two years already, but there will be five more years with no plowing or reaping. ⁷ God sent me ahead of you to make sure you would still have descendants, to save your lives in this miraculous way.* ⁸ So it wasn’t you who sent me here, but God. He was the one who made me Pharaoh’s chief advisor† in charge of all his affairs, and ruler of the whole country of Egypt.

⁹ Now hurry! Go back to my father and tell him, ‘This message comes from your son Joseph: God has made me the ruler of the whole of Egypt. Come to me now; don’t wait. ¹⁰ You’ll live in the land of Goshen so you can be close to me with your children and grandchildren, and with your flocks and herds and everything that belongs to you. ¹¹ I’ll make sure you have food, because there are still five more years of famine to come.

* **45:7** “In this miraculous way”: or “with many survivors.”

† **45:8** “Pharaoh’s chief advisor”: literally, “a father to Pharaoh.”

Otherwise you and your family and your animals are going to starve.’ ”

¹² Then Joseph told his brothers,[†] “You can all see for yourselves—including my brother Benjamin—that it’s really me talking to you!

¹³ Tell my father how much I’m respected in Egypt. Tell him everything that you’ve seen. Hurry! Bring my father here quickly!” ¹⁴ He hugged Benjamin, and Benjamin hugged him back. They both wept for joy. ¹⁵ He kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and after that his brothers were able to start talking with him.

¹⁶ Word soon reached Pharaoh’s palace that Joseph’s brothers had arrived. Pharaoh and his officials were glad to hear the news.

¹⁷ Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Tell your brothers, ‘This is what you are to do: Load your donkeys with grain and go back to the country of Canaan.

¹⁸ Then bring your father and your families and return here to me. I will give you the best land in Egypt, and you shall eat the best food the country has to offer.’

¹⁹ Tell them to do this as well, ‘Take some wagons from Egypt for your children and your wives. Bring them and your father here. ²⁰ Don’t worry about bringing your possessions because the best of all Egypt is yours.’ ”

²¹ So that’s what the sons of Israel did. Joseph provided them with wagons, as Pharaoh had ordered. He also gave them supplies for their

[†] **45:12** “Then Joseph told his brothers”: supplied for clarity to show that Joseph is now addressing his brothers directly again.

journey. ²² He gave each of them new clothes. But to Benjamin he gave five sets of clothes and 300 pieces of silver. ²³ Joseph also sent to his father the following: ten donkeys carrying the best things from Egypt, and ten female donkeys carrying grain and bread and supplies needed for his father's journey.

²⁴ Then he saw his brothers off, and as they left he told them, "Don't argue on the way!" ²⁵ So they left Egypt and went back home to their father Jacob in the country of Canaan.

²⁶ "Joseph's still alive!" they told him. "It's true, and he's the ruler of the whole country of Egypt!" Jacob was stunned at the news—he just couldn't believe it! ²⁷ But when they told him everything that Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to take him to Egypt, Jacob came back to his senses. ²⁸ Israel said, "All right, I believe you! My son Joseph is still alive! I'm going to go and see him before I die."

46

¹ So Israel left for Egypt with everything he had. When he arrived at Beersheba he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. ² During the night God spoke to Israel in a vision. "Jacob! Jacob!" he called.

"I'm here," he replied.

³ "I am God, the God of your father! Don't be afraid to go to Egypt, because I will turn you

and your descendants* into a great nation. ⁴ I will go to Egypt with you, and I promise to bring you back again. And Joseph will personally close your eyes when you die.”

⁵ Then Jacob left Beersheba. His sons took him, their children, and their wives to Egypt using the wagons Pharaoh had sent. ⁶ They also took with them all their livestock and all the personal belongings they had accumulated in the country of Canaan.

So Jacob and everyone in his extended family went to Egypt, ⁷ including all his sons and grandsons, daughters and granddaughters.

⁸ The following is the genealogy of Israel and his sons who went to Egypt: 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 woman from Canaan.

¹¹ The sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

¹² The sons of Judah: Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah. However, Er and Onan died in Canaan.

The sons of Perez: Hezron and Hamul.

¹³ The sons of Issachar: Tola, Puvah, Job,[†] and Shimron.

¹⁴ The sons of Zebulun: Sered, Elon, and Jahleel.

* **46:3** “And your descendants”: supplied for clarity. † **46:13** “Job” is given as “Jashub” in Numbers 26:24 and 1 Chronicles 7:1.

¹⁵ These are the sons Leah had for Jacob in Paddan-aram, as well as his daughter Dinah. The total number of sons and daughters and grandchildren was thirty-three.

¹⁶ The sons of Gad: Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli.

¹⁷ The sons of Asher: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, Beriah, and their sister Serah.

The sons of Beriah: Heber and Malchiel.

¹⁸ These are the sons of Jacob Zilpah had, the servant given by Laban to his daughter Leah, a total of sixteen children and grandchildren.

¹⁹ The sons of Jacob's wife Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin.

²⁰ The sons Joseph had in the land of Egypt by Asenath, daughter of Potiphera, priest of On: Manasseh and Ephraim.

²¹ The sons of Benjamin: Bela, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard. ²² These are the sons that Rachel had for Jacob, a total of fourteen children and grandchildren.

²³ The son of Dan: Hushim.

²⁴ The sons of Naphtali: Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem.

²⁵ These are the sons of Jacob that Bilhah had, the servant given by Laban to his daughter Rachel, a total of seven children and grandchildren.

²⁶ All those who were part of Jacob's family who came to Egypt (his blood relatives, apart from wives of Jacob's sons) totaled sixty-six.

²⁷ Including the two sons Joseph had in Egypt,

the total number of Jacob's family who were in Egypt was seventy.

²⁸ Jacob sent Judah on ahead to meet Joseph and find out the way to Goshen. When they arrived in Goshen, ²⁹ Joseph ordered his chariot made ready and went to meet his father Israel there. As soon as he arrived, he hugged his father and wept for a long time.

³⁰ “Now I can die in peace because I have seen your face again and know you're still alive,” Israel told Joseph.

³¹ Joseph told his brothers and his father's household, “I'm going to go and report to Pharaoh and tell him, ‘My brothers and my father's household have arrived from the country of Canaan to join me. ³² They are shepherds and keep livestock. They have brought with them their flocks and herds and all their possessions.’

³³ When Pharaoh calls for you and asks you, ‘What work do you do?’ ³⁴ tell him, ‘Your servants have looked after livestock since we were children, both us and our fathers before us.’ That way you'll be able to live here in Goshen, because Egyptians look down on shepherds.”

47

¹ Joseph went to report to Pharaoh and told him, “My father and brothers, along with their flocks and herds and all their possessions, have arrived from the land of Canaan and now they're here in Goshen.” ² Joseph took five of his brothers to go with him and introduced them to Pharaoh.

³ Pharaoh asked the brothers, “What work do you do?”

“Your servants are shepherds, just like our fathers before us,” they replied.

⁴ “We have come to live in Egypt because there's no grass left in Canaan for our flocks to eat,” they explained. “The famine is really bad in Canaan. So we would like to please ask permission to live in Goshen.”

⁵ Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Now that your father and brothers have arrived to join you, ⁶ you can choose wherever you like in Egypt, the best place, for them to live. Let them live in Goshen. If you know any of them who are good at what they do, put them in charge of my livestock as well.”

⁷ Then Joseph went with his father Jacob and introduced him Pharaoh. After Jacob blessed Pharaoh, ⁸ Pharaoh asked him, “So how long have you lived?”

⁹ “I have been wandering for 130 years,” Jacob replied. “My life has been short and difficult—I have not lived as long as my forefathers who also wandered from place to place.” ¹⁰ Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh again before leaving him.

¹¹ So Joseph arranged for his father and brothers to live in Egypt and gave them land in the best part near Rameses, as Pharaoh had ordered. ¹² He also provided food for all of them—his father, his brothers, and his father's whole household—depending on family size.

¹³ No food was left in the whole country because the famine had become so bad. Throughout Egypt and Canaan people were starving.

¹⁴ By selling grain Joseph collected all the money in Egypt and Canaan, and placed it in Pharaoh's treasury. ¹⁵ Once the money from Egypt and Canaan had run out, the Egyptians all came to Joseph and demanded, "Give us food! Do you want us to die right in front of you? All our money is gone!"

¹⁶ "Bring me your livestock," Joseph told them. "I'll give you grain in exchange for your livestock if you've run out of money."

¹⁷ So they brought Joseph their livestock, and he provided them with grain in exchange for their horses, sheep, goats, cattle, and donkeys. He gave them grain in return for their livestock during that year.

¹⁸ But when that year was over, they came to him the next year and said, "My lord, we can't hide from you the fact that our money is gone and that you now own our livestock. All we have left to give you are our bodies and our land. ¹⁹ Do you want us to die right in front of you? So buy us and our land in return for food. Then our land will belong to Pharaoh, and we'll be his slaves. Just give us grain so we can live and won't die, and so the land won't be abandoned."

²⁰ So Joseph bought all the land in Egypt for Pharaoh. Each and every Egyptian sold their fields, because the famine was hurting them so badly. The land ended up being owned by

Pharaoh, ²¹ and all the people became his slaves,* from one end of Egypt to the other. ²² The only land he didn't buy belonged to the priests because they had a food allowance provided to them by Pharaoh, so they didn't have to sell their land.

²³ Then Joseph told the people, "Listen to me! Now that I have bought you and your land for Pharaoh, I'm giving you some seed for you to sow the fields. ²⁴ However, when it's harvested, you have to give one fifth of it to Pharaoh. The other four-fifths you can keep as seed for the fields and as food for you, your households, and your children."

²⁵ "You've saved our lives," they declared. "May you continue to treat us well, my lord, and we'll be Pharaoh's slaves."

²⁶ So Joseph made it a law for Egypt which is still in effect today that one fifth of all produce from the land belongs to Pharaoh. Only the priests' land was exempt since it did not belong to Pharaoh.

²⁷ The Israelites settled in Goshen in Egypt where they became prosperous landowners and rapidly increased in number. ²⁸ Jacob lived in Egypt for seventeen years, so he lived in total 137 years.

²⁹ When the time came for Israel to die, he called for his son Joseph and said to him, "If you think well of me, place your hand under my thigh and promise to treat me with trustworthy

* **47:21** "The people became his slaves": Septuagint and other ancient translations. The Hebrew has "he moved them to the cities."

love and faithfulness. Don't bury me here in Egypt. ³⁰ When I die, bury me with my forefathers. You must take my body from Egypt to the family tomb and bury me with them."

"I will do as you say," Joseph promised.

³¹ "Swear to me that you will," he said. Joseph swore that he would. Israel bowed in worship at the head of his bed.

48

¹ Sometime after this, Joseph was told, "Your father is sick." So Joseph went to see him, taking with him his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim.

² When Jacob was told, "Your son Joseph has come to you," he gathered his strength and sat up in bed. ³ Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in Canaan, and he blessed me there. ⁴ He told me, 'Listen! I will make you prosperous and make your descendants so numerous that you will become the ancestor of many nations, and I will give this land to your descendants to own forever.'

⁵ I am counting as mine your two sons Ephraim and Manasseh who were born here in Egypt before I arrived, just as Reuben and Simeon are mine. ⁶ Any other children you have after them will be yours, and will share their inheritance within the land of their older brothers. ⁷ I'm doing this because* tragically for me when I

* **48:7** "I'm doing this because": supplied for context. The sense seems to be that since Rachel died in childbirth having Benjamin, she wasn't able to have any more children, so in Jacob's mind he claims Joseph's sons as some kind of recompense.

was returning from Paddan-aram, Rachel died in Canaan some distance from Ephrath. I buried her there on the way to Ephrath” (also known as Bethlehem).

⁸ Israel saw Jacob's sons and said, “These are your sons then?”

⁹ “Yes, these are the sons God gave me here,” Joseph told his father.

“Bring them over here so I can bless them,” he said.

¹⁰ Israel's eyesight was failing because of his age and he couldn't see well, so Joseph brought them close to his father, and he kissed and hugged them. ¹¹ Israel said to Joseph, “I never thought I'd see your face again, and now God has even let me see your children!”

¹² Joseph took his sons from between Israel's knees, and bowed low with his face to the ground. ¹³ Then Joseph placed Ephraim on his right so he would be on Israel's left, and Manasseh on his left so he would be on Israel's right, and then brought them over to Israel.

¹⁴ But when Israel reached out his hands, he crossed them over and placed his right hand on Ephraim the younger son, and placed his left on Manasseh, the firstborn. ¹⁵ He blessed Joseph, saying,

“May the God my grandfather Abraham and my father worshiped—the God who has taken care of me like a shepherd throughout my life until now, ¹⁶ the Angel who has saved me from all kinds of trouble—may he bless these boys. May my name and the names of my grandfather

Abraham and father Isaac continue through them, and may they have many descendants that spread throughout the earth.”

¹⁷ Joseph was unhappy when saw his father had put his right hand on Ephraim, so he took his father's hand to try and move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. ¹⁸ “Not like that, father, this is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head,” Joseph told him.

¹⁹ But his father refused, saying, “I know what I'm doing. Manasseh will also become an important people, but his younger brother will be greater than him, and his descendants will become a large nation.”

²⁰ So Israel blessed them that day and said: “In the future the people of Israel will use your names to give a blessing, saying, ‘May God bless you like he did Ephraim and Manasseh.’ ” In saying this he placed Ephraim before Manasseh.

²¹ Then Israel said to Joseph, “I'm going to die soon, but God will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers. ²² I'm also giving you something in addition to what I'm giving your brothers—piece of land on the mountain slope of Shechem[†] that I took from the Amorites with my sword and bow.”

[†] **48:22** The word used here meaning “shoulder” refers to both a mountain slope and also the town of Shechem named after such a slope. In 33:18, it's recorded that Jacob bought a piece of land at Shechem, and in Joshua 24:32 it's stated that Joseph was later buried there. It is also referred to in John 4:5 as the land Jacob gave to Joseph.

49

¹ Jacob called his sons together, and said, “Gather round so I can tell you what's going to happen to you in the future. ² Come here, sons of Jacob, and listen to Israel your father.

³ Reuben. You are my firstborn, conceived when I was strong, born when I was vigorous! You were above all others in position, above all others in power. ⁴ But you boil over like water, so you won't be above anyone anymore, because you went and slept with my concubine;* you violated my marriage bed.

⁵ Simeon and Levi are two of the same kind—they use their weapons for destructive violence.†

⁶ I refuse to be part of their decisions; I refuse to participate in what they do. For they killed men in their anger; they crippled cattle just for fun. ⁷ I curse their anger because it is too harsh; I curse their fury because it is too cruel! I will separate their descendants throughout Jacob; I will scatter them throughout Israel.

⁸ Judah, your brothers will praise you. You will defeat your enemies. Your father's sons shall bow down to you in respect. ⁹ My son Judah is a young lion coming back from eating its prey. He crouches and lies down like a lion. Like a lion, who would dare to disturb him? ¹⁰ Judah will always hold the scepter, and the staff of authority will always be at his feet until Shiloh‡ comes; the

* **49:4** See 35:22. † **49:5** See 34:25. ‡ **49:10** “Shiloh”: there is considerable disagreement among commentators over this word. Many see this as a prophecy relating to the Messiah.

nations will obey him. ¹¹ He ties his donkey to the vine, his donkey's colt to the best vine. He washes his clothes in wine, his robes in the red juice of grapes. § ¹² His eyes sparkle more than wine, and his teeth are whiter than milk.

¹³ Zebulun will live on the seashore and provide a harbor for ships; his territory will extend towards Sidon.

¹⁴ Issachar is a strong donkey, lying down between two saddle bags.* ¹⁵ He sees that the place where he's resting is good, and the land is lovely, so he's willing to lower his back to accept the burden and to work as a slave.

¹⁶ Dan will judge† his people as one of the tribes of Israel. ¹⁷ Dan will be as dangerous as a snake beside the road, a viper by the path that bites the horse's heel, throwing its rider off backwards.

¹⁸ I trust in you to save me, Lord.

¹⁹ Raiders will attack Gad, but he will attack their heels.

²⁰ Asher will have delicious food—he'll produce fancy food for royalty.

²¹ Naphtali is a deer that's free to run; it gives birth to beautiful fawns. ‡

²² Joseph is a fruitful tree, a fruitful tree beside a spring, whose branches climb over the

§ **49:11** The intent of this verse is that the descendants of Judah would have such prosperity that they could afford to tie donkeys to their vines and have so much wine they could wash their clothes with it. * **49:14** "Saddle bags": or, "sheepfolds."

† **49:16** Dan means judge, see 30:6. ‡ **49:21** "Gives birth to beautiful fawns": or "gives beautiful words."

wall. ²³ The archers viciously attacked him; they shot their arrows at him with hate. ²⁴ But he held his bow steady, and his arms and hands moved quickly in the strength of the Mighty One of Jacob, who is called the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel. ²⁵ The God of your father will help you and the Almighty will bless you with blessings from the heavens above, with blessings from the depths below, with blessings for many children. § ²⁶ The blessings your father received were greater than the blessings of his forefathers, more than the blessings of the eternal mountains.* May they be upon the head of Joseph, on the forehead of the one set apart as a leader from his brothers.

²⁷ Benjamin is a vicious wolf. In the morning he destroys his enemies,† in the evening he divides the loot.”

²⁸ These are all of the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father told them as he blessed them, each according to their respective blessings.

²⁹ Then he gave them the following instructions: “I’m going to die soon. Bury me with my forefathers in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite. ³⁰ This is the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre in Canaan, that Abraham bought together with the field from Ephron the Hittite to own as a burial site. ³¹ Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried there, Isaac and

§ 49:25 “Many children”: literally “breasts and womb.”

* 49:26 The Hebrew of this verse is unclear. † 49:27 “Destroys his enemies”: literally “eats the prey.”

his wife Rebekah were buried there, and I buried Leah there. ³² The field and the cave were bought from the Hittites.”

³³ When Jacob finished giving these instructions he pulled up his feet into the bed, breathed his last, and joined his forefathers in death.

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¹ Joseph went and hugged his father, weeping over him and kissing him. ² Then Joseph instructed the physicians who worked for him to embalm his father's body. So the physicians embalmed Israel. ³ This took a full 40 days, the normal time for the process, and the Egyptians mourned for him for 70 days.

⁴ Once the time of mourning was over, Joseph said to Pharaoh's officials, “If you'd be so kind, please speak to Pharaoh on my behalf, and explain to him that ⁵ my father made me swear an oath, telling me, ‘You must bury me in the tomb I've prepared for myself in Canaan. Please allow me to go and bury my father and then I'll return.’”

⁶ Pharaoh replied, “Go and bury your father as he made you swear to do.”

⁷ Joseph went to bury his father, and all Pharaoh's officials went with him—all Pharaoh's senior advisors and all the leaders of Egypt—⁸ as well as Joseph's family, his brothers, and his father's family. They only left the small children and their flocks and herds back in Goshen. ⁹ They were accompanied by chariots and horsemen—a really large procession.

¹⁰ When they got to the threshing floor of Atad, on the other side of the Jordan, they wept loudly in sorrow. Joseph held a seven-day ceremony of mourning for his father there.

¹¹ The Canaanites who lived there watched the ceremony of mourning at the threshing floor of Atad. They said, “This is a very sad time of mourning for the Egyptians,” so they renamed the place Abel-mizraim,* which is on the other side of the Jordan.

¹² Jacob's sons did what he had instructed them to do. ¹³ They carried his body to Canaan and buried him in the cave at Machpelah in the field near Mamre, which Abraham had bought from Ephron the Hittite as a burial site.

¹⁴ After they had buried their father, Joseph and his brothers returned to Egypt along with all those who had gone with them. ¹⁵ However, now that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers became worried, saying, “Maybe Joseph is holding a grudge against us, and he'll pay us back for all the bad things we did to him.”

¹⁶ So they sent a message to Joseph to tell him, “Before your father died, he gave this order, ¹⁷ ‘This is what you are to tell Joseph: Forgive your brothers their sins, the bad things they did to you, treating you in such a nasty way.’ Now please forgive us our sins, we who are servants of the God of your father.” When Joseph received their message, he cried.

* **50:11** “Abel-mizraim”: meaning “mourning of the Egyptians.”

¹⁸ Then his brothers themselves came and fell down before Joseph and said, “We are your slaves!”

¹⁹ “You don't need to be afraid!” he told them. “I don't stand in the place of God, do I? ²⁰ While you planned bad things for me, God planned it for good so that in the end many lives could be saved.† ²¹ So don't worry. I'll go on taking care of you and your children.” Speaking kindly like this he calmed them down.

²² Joseph remained in Egypt, together with his father's whole family. He lived to be 110, ²³ and saw three generations of his son Ephraim, and the sons of Makir, Manasseh's son, were placed in his lap when they were born.

²⁴ “I'm going to die soon,” Joseph told his brothers, “but God will be with you, and he will lead you out of this country to the land that he swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

²⁵ Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath, saying, “When God comes to be with you, you must take my bones with you when you leave.”‡ ²⁶ Joseph died when he was 110. After his body was embalmed, he was placed in a coffin in Egypt.

† **50:20** See 45:5, 45:7. ‡ **50:25** “When you leave”: supplied for clarity.

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Version translation in American English

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