



A Summary of the Old Testament

within the word

Lesson Four | Joseph

Day One

1. Jacob had 12 sons, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph and Benjamin. Can you imagine the competitions that went on in this family with 12 boys? Not only that, but there were four women in this household as well. Everyone would be vying for dad's attention and love.

Where does Genesis 37:1 say Jacob and his family are living?

2. Genesis 37:1-2 says Joseph was 17 years old. He was out caring for the flocks with Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher. This is the first indication of a strained relationship between Joseph and his brothers.

What report did he bring when he returned home?

3. Has anyone ever given a bad report about you?
Whether true or false, how did you feel about the person reporting?
4. Next, we see that Israel (Jacob) favored Joseph more than his other sons. As a parent, this is a formula for disaster in the home. I don't believe this was the only time his father showed favoritism. But Genesis 37:3-4 tells of one gift that became the straw that broke the camel's back.

What was that gift?

5. Favoritism is giving preference to one person over another.

How does this make you feel when you see it happening?

6. Genesis 37:5-11, describes two dreams Joseph had and shared with his family.

Jot down the facts of these two dreams or draw them out.

7. How did sharing his dreams with his family go over?

I do not want to try to guess what his reasons could have been for sharing these dreams. It seems obvious that this would be met with at least a bit of resentment.

Are there some things better kept to oneself?

Thinking before we speak and considering the feelings of others before sharing can prevent hard feelings.

8. Hostility in their home built to the point that one day, while tending the sheep, his older brothers came up with a plan to get rid of Joseph. Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers in the field.

As Joseph approached the place where his brothers were camped, what did they call him?

When he arrived, they grabbed him and threw him in a pit.

What did they say they planned to do with him?

9. Being the eldest, Reuben was probably quite accustomed to breaking up quarrels and fights among his brothers. He tries to defuse the situation by suggesting they throw him in a pit. The text tells us he planned to come back later and get him out. He might have thought a little time in a pit would teach him a lesson. While they sat eating a meal, Judah looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites on their way headed to Egypt. They sold Joseph for 20 pieces of silver. The heartless brothers took Joseph's coat, shredded it, dipped it in blood and took it to their father.

Read Genesis 37:31-35.

What was Jacob's response?

10. Can you imagine the pain this father felt, not knowing what had happened to his precious son?

Has anyone ever given you news that hurt so much you thought your heart would break?

Day Two

1. Genesis 37:36 tells us what happened to Joseph. Potiphar was the captain of Pharaoh's guard. He would have been responsible to carry out all sentences.

Read Genesis 39.

The scripture tells us that everything Joseph was put in charge of flourished.

What did Potiphar do when he realized it was Joseph being blessed?

2. Scripture tells us Joseph was well-built and handsome. After working in Potiphar's home for a time, his master's wife became infatuated with him. She tried to seduce him. However, Joseph was a man of true character and refused her advances.

Who did he say he would be sinning against if he did what she asked?

3. Can you believe the faithfulness of this godly man? Rather than give in to his master's wife he willingly went to prison.

Have you ever been lied about in such a way that it cost you dearly?
If so, how did you handle it?

4. While in prison Joseph, still enjoying the blessings of God on everything to which he put his hand, he was very quickly placed in charge of the prisoners.

In Genesis 40, we are introduced to two new prisoners, Pharaoh's cupbearer, (some translation refer to him as the chief steward or butler) and Pharaoh's baker. Both men have dreams that worried them. When Joseph saw they were troubled he asked them to share their dreams.

Briefly state the dream details below, the interpretation of the dream, the result for each man.

	The Cupbearer to Pharaoh	The Baker to Pharaoh
Dream Details		
Interpretation		
Result		

5. After two more years, Pharaoh himself has two very disturbing dreams. None of the Egyptian wise men could interpret the dreams. Then, the cupbearer to Pharaoh remembered Joseph and the promise he made 2 years earlier.

In the chart below list the details and the interpretation of Pharaoh's two dreams.

	Pharaoh's First Dream	Pharaoh's Second Dream
Dream Details		
Interpretation of dream		

6. There are some interesting things that can be learned from Pharaoh's dreams.

Make a list of things you discerned from this event. Here are a few questions, but you may see more.

- a. What did you see about God's dealings with men?
- b. What did the doubling of the dream mean?
- c. In what way did God show mercy?

7. Verse 16 is the key verse of Genesis 41.

Joseph shares that Jehovah is God. It is God who is sovereign and in control; he sets into motion the events of each day. This was a revelation to Pharaoh and the people of Egypt.

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica "Over the course of Egyptian history hundreds of gods and goddesses were worshipped. The characteristics of individual gods could be hard to pin down. Most had a principle association (for example, with the sun or the underworld) and form. But these could change over time as gods rose and fell in importance and evolved in ways that corresponded to developments in Egyptian society."

Once again, we see the love and mercy of God as he reveals himself to the Egyptians.

What is the likelihood that a Hebrew slave would rise to power and be second in command of all Egypt, answerable only to Pharaoh himself?

How would you say God is revealing himself today?

8. Somewhere between the age of 17-30, Joseph has spent many years in an Egyptian prison. God had gifted him with an unusual ability to manage things and he blessed Joseph's desire to serve God faithfully in all he did.

Let's consider for a few minutes some of the difficult and unjust things he has experienced.

- He has faced jealousy and hatred from his own family.
- He has been sold as a piece of property and suffered the humiliation of slavery.
- He has been lied about and falsely imprisoned for many, many years.

- He was forgotten by those who could have influenced his release.

How did Joseph respond to all he had endured?
 Have you suffered at the hands of others?
 How do you respond to injustice that comes your way?
 Would you say your response is pleasing to God?
 Is it a response that leaves the door open for God's blessing?

9. I do not want to pass by Genesis 41:50-52.

Joseph has two sons with the wife given to him by Pharaoh. Their names are Manasseh and Ephraim.

What was the meaning of these names?
 What does this tell us about Joseph and the healing he has experienced?

10. If you were to write down the story of your life, age 17 to present, would it include a healing from past hurts and injustices?

Day Three

1. Famine in the Bible represents judgment. God is preparing the land of Egypt, so they can make it through this time of judgment.

Under the wise direction of Joseph, Egypt has stored up grain for seven years in preparation for the famine to come. But this famine is not only in the land of Egypt; it extends to the land of Canaan also. Desperate for provisions, Jacob sends ten sons to Egypt to buy grain.

Read Genesis 42.
 Which of Jacob's 11 sons remained at home?

2. It has been nearly two decades since Jacob's sons have been together. Joseph is now second in command of all Egypt. He was dressed in his royal apparel when his brothers arrived and stood before him.

What did they do that fulfilled the first dream he had when just a young teenager?

3. Joseph recognized them, but they did not recognize him.

What thoughts do you think might have been going on in Joseph's head and heart that day?

(As you write your answer, bear in mind the character of this man)

4. When their motives were questioned, what did they say about themselves in Genesis 42:11 that did not ring true to Joseph?
5. Joseph has them placed in custody for three days while he considers his next move. On the third day he brings them out and challenges their honesty, *"If you are honest men...let one brother remain...and bring your youngest brother to me."*

Joseph chooses Simeon to be kept in Egypt. The brothers find all the money sacks in the bags of grain. When they tell Jacob the events, he blames them for even mentioning Benjamin.

Why did the brothers say they mentioned Benjamin?

6. When you read Reuben's vow what did you think?
Did this vow sway Jacob's decision?
7. When the grain was nearly gone and starvation was a real possibility, what changed?
8. Now we read of Judah making a pledge.

What did he pledge?

Was it this pledge that changed Jacob's heart?

9. To whom did Jacob say he would commit Benjamin's care?

Day Four

1. The brothers return to Egypt with double the money and Benjamin, to purchase grain and retrieve Simeon from prison.
(Just a side note, I wonder what was going through Simeon's thoughts while alone and separated from his family.)

When they arrive in Egypt, Joseph gives orders for a dinner at his home. Even this amazing invitation is met with fear. *"It is because of the money, which was placed back in our sacks the first time."*

They thought they were being called to Joseph's home to be taken for slaves and their property seized.

To whom do they make their appeal?

2. Guilt is such a terrible master. It seems to creep into everything and taint it.

The guard reassures them it is not about the money in their bags. He was given the money, and all is well. Simeon is returned to them and they prepare themselves to dine with this Egyptian ruler. When Joseph finishes his work that day, he returns to his house to eat a meal with them.

Read Genesis 43:26, 28.

What position did they take in Joseph's presence?

3. Joseph was overcome with emotion as he looked at Benjamin, who was now all grown. Joseph orders the meal to be served and the men sit down, in birth order, as was their custom. Benjamin is given five times the portion as the others. Joseph gives the steward of his house orders to put together the provisions for their journey home. He has one final test for these brothers.

Read Genesis 44.

In your own words what was the test?

4. Once the brothers return to Joseph, Judah becomes the spokesman. If you recall, Judah was the one who had pledged the safety of Benjamin.

Look at Genesis 44:18-29 in your Bible and circle each:

"we said"

"you said"

"then you said"

"our father said"

"we told him"

Then notice, in verses 30-34, you will see the pleadings on behalf of Benjamin. They desperately try to get this Egyptian ruler to feel empathy, for the position they find themselves in.

They asked questions, such as: Do you have a father or a brother? Then you will understand the fear we feel. If we go home without our youngest brother, it will kill our father.

Judah tells him that he had given a pledge to his father, my life for his.

Have you ever found yourself in a situation that requires the person in control to feel empathy toward you or you are doomed?

How hard did you work to help them relate to the situation you find yourself in?

5. Read Genesis 45:1-3

No longer is Joseph able to keep silent. He sends all the Egyptians servants out of the room. Weeping uncontrollably, he reveals who he is to his brothers.

What is their response to the revelation of this ruler's true identity?

6. Read Genesis 45:4-15.

The truth is out; the hiding is over. Forgiveness has been extended. Finally, we see there is purpose in the pain. We can endure many difficult things when we see there is purpose.

What was the purpose in these events?

7. God did not direct their jealousy and hatred. Neither did God lead them to show such cruelty and meanness to their brother. However, what he did was use the difficulty to bring about the restoration of a family and provide for the care of many people.

Are you willing to endure difficulties and allow God to provide restoration in a way you might never expect?

8. Did you notice that Joseph forgave without the brothers asking for forgiveness?

Can you think of a time you forgave without someone seeking forgiveness?
How did God use your humble heart to carry out his will?

9. The scene changes and Jacob packs up and heads to Egypt to see Joseph. He makes it as far as Beersheba and offers sacrifices to God. Previously, he had been considered too old to make this journey and he sent his sons. Now, he is in a wagon, provided by Pharaoh, to live in Egypt for at least the next few years.

Why was Jacob unafraid to make this journey?

Read Genesis 46:1-4

Day Five

1. We do not want to miss the important fact found in Genesis 46:26-27.

How many Israelites moved to Egypt that day?

(This may not seem important right now, but you will want to remember this fact for later in this study.)

2. Genesis 46:28-50:14, tells of the beautiful reunion of father and son. Pharaoh gives the land of Goshen to the Israelites. This is the best of all the land in Egypt. The Israelites are shepherds and this is lush land, perfect for grazing.

Genesis 47:27-28, how many years does Jacob live in the land of Egypt?
How old was he when he died?

Read Genesis 47:29-31

What important request did Jacob make Joseph swear he would carry out?

3. Just before Jacob died, he called Joseph in along with his two sons, Manasseh, the firstborn, and Ephraim, the second born. When Jacob was about to blessed them, he did something unusual.

Read Genesis 48: 8-22.

What did he do that caused Joseph to try to correct him?

4. Genesis 49 lists the blessings Jacob gives to his other sons. Most of these blessings did not sound much like a blessing. You might like to do a bit of research and see why Jacob spoke as he did.

The son	The blessing	The thought behind the blessing
Rueben	Genesis 35:22	Disqualified because
Simeon and Levi	Genesis 34	Disqualified because
Judah	Lion	
Zebulun	Haven	
Issachar	Donkey	
Dan	Serpent	
Asher	Provider	
Naphtali	Doe	
Benjamin	Wolf	

5. Which of God's character qualities have you seen this week as you have studied his word?

Add them to your list on **The Character of God** page.

Please, do not leave this question unanswered. The purpose of our study is to get to know our God.