

Genesis with the first five OT books is regarded as Law written by Moses at about 1500 BC and Jesus affirms it in Lu. 24:44. **Theme: God's book on the beginnings. KV 1:1**

Genesis 1: God created the heavens and the earth. KV 1:1

Chapter 1-11 is on the start of the human race and creation begins in chapter one.

1. Creating concrete forms with vegetation on earth on the first to third day. 1-13

Genesis starts in v1-2 with a clear declaration that in the beginning, what is seen in the heavens and on earth is created by God. As stated also in Heb. 11:3 God created all these from nothing and initially on the earth's surface, only deep waters exist. It is formless, meaning that nothing of shape or structure exist and void means it is totally empty. Yet God's spirit is there and indeed He must be in control. There is no indication that it is in a chaotic environment as suggested by scholars. All the above are in place when the first day as narrated in v3-5 begins. The first "form" to be created is light and this is even before the creation of the sun in v16. So God Himself must be source of this light (Jn. 1:5) in the first three days. Note that He separates the light from the darkness so that they can be differentiated and there is a progression from darkness to light. A definition of day is given and it is the light and night is the darkness. Hours are not used in the definition and as the sun is not in place yet, it cannot be a 24-hour cycle. In the second day in v6-8, an expanse is created. In Hebrew it is "raqia", a tightly stretched and spread-out space. It is an apt term for the sky as it is today and the waters separated above is the atmosphere. The next "form" created on the third day in v9-13 is the appearance of dry land which God calls earth and the creation of all the vegetation. There is still no sun and so it is His light and power that is keeping all these alive. If God is there, even the sun is not needed.

2. Creating definite components to fill the void on the fourth to sixth day. 14-31

Next, the "filling" of the "void" in the initial creation is narrated. In v14-19 He makes the sun and moon to provide light for the day and night. The word "govern" is also used (16) and the rotation and angle of the earth must be fixed for seasons and years on this fourth day. In general it's a 24-hour day but God can change it as He wills (Josh. 10:12-13). All this is related in some way to the stars which is included as an afterthought. On the fifth day, God has two enactments for first time (20-23). He filled the sea and sky with moving living creatures. Sea monsters are mentioned first in v21, which must be extinct creatures like the dinosaurs. The second enactment relates to being fruitful and multiply and so procreation is a blessing from God to be relished. Finally on the sixth day God makes the land creatures (24-25) and the climax is the creation of man (26-28). Only man is stated to be in the image and likeness of God. So it is clear that in all of His creation, only man can grasp His ideas of righteousness and develop a personal relationship with Him. Then in v27, created in His image is repeated to affirm that it applies to both male and female. Man is to rule or to be a good care-taker of all living creatures (28). It seems in v29-30, in that early stage, both man and all land creatures are to be vegetarians. But after the flood in 9:3, the moving animals are also given to man for food and it's not an obligation today. Six times God asserts that His creation "was good" and in v31 it ends with a "very good".

Lesson to Ponder: The plain sense of the text will not allow deductions on the earth's age as the sun only appears on the 4th day. Creating conflict with science on it is needless.

Genesis 2: Creation of man and woman to live in the Garden of Eden. KV 15

Chapter two is God's creation of man's and His directives for him in the Garden of Eden.

1. Creation of the Garden of Eden for man to cultivate and keep. 1-15

Actually **v1-3** is a concluding statement that God's initial work of creation to fill the form and void on earth, is completed. His rest on the seventh day is from all work related to it and then in v8 God works again to plant the Garden of Eden. But God blesses the seventh day because of this rest and Ex. 20:11 gives it as the basis for observing the Sabbath. So inculcating a rest cycle in our work is to ensure that we will participate in this blessing. A new block of narrative begins in **v4**. The word account in Hebrew is "toledoth" meaning "generations" and in Genesis it is used 11 times to start such narratives. Perhaps Moses uses this word because the materials are passed down from previous generations. Chapter two is not another account of creation but rather it expands on the creation of man on earth and so the order is reverse to earth and heaven in v4. Information is provided in **v5-6** that no vegetation "of the field" is present yet, such as the cultivating of field crops by man. Rain will only come in 7:4 in the days of Noah but at that time, all the vegetation created on the third day (1:12) is watered by a mist from the earth, probably some form of rich underground springs. It is to stress that after man is created in **v7-9**, he is placed in a garden and the vegetation are all verdant wild plants as originally created. However only those pleasing to the sight and good for food are selected. Note in v7, the creation of man as a living being is not unique for the same Hebrew words are used for other creatures in 1:20 and 24. Man's uniqueness is to be made in God's image and likeness in **1:26-27**, enabling him to have a close relationship with Him. This is why YHWH or Lord, His personal name is used for the first time in v5 to stress this close relationship. Details on the rivers from the Garden of Eden is given in **v10-14** including Tigris and Euphrates to show the garden's lushness but revealing that it's located in present day Iraq. In **v15**, man is to cultivate and keep it under God's loving presence and really it is a paradise on earth.

2. The exercise to find a helpmate for man and the creation of woman. 16-25

God has lovingly given man the task of keeping the Garden of Eden but it also includes a test of prohibition in **v16-17**, with the knowledge of what sin is if he disobeys. In **v18-20** is an exercise to find for man a mate and the two reasons given are to ensure that he will not be alone and to provide help, obviously for the task that God has given him. It started in v19 with creatures that are already created, which is the tense in Hebrew (NIV states that "the Lord God had formed"). Only some are selected for the review but the naming process shows that they are given to man as possible helpers for God's task. No one suitable is found and so in **v21-22**, God created woman. But why go through the exercise when it is clear in creation that there is a mate for all animals? It must be to teach man that unlike the animals, this mate is not just for sex but also to be his helper and social companion. Adam appreciates this, as evident from his response in **v23-25**. The fact that she is created from him and named woman by him affirms that she is under his authority to help him in fulfilling God's mission. In v24, the declaration of oneness and leaving father and mother for this is the firm basis for marriage. The lack of shame in v25 is to affirm that without sin, life in paradise is a blissful existence without fear and disgrace.

Lesson to Ponder: Value is only ensured after testing and the tree of knowledge of good and evil is for this purpose. Such testing is actually more precious than gold (1Pet. 1:7).

Genesis 3: The sin of Adam and Eve and their eviction from Eden. KV 6, 24
Man disobeys God for the first time and the direct consequences are also described.

1. The deception of Adam and Eve into disobeying God. 1-7

It begins with the serpent speaking to the woman (**1-3**). The serpent is classified in v1 as a beast of the field and so it not supernatural in anyway but only craftier. As Satan is called the serpent in the NT (Rev. 12:9; 20:2) and it is possible for spiritual beings to possess animals, Satan must have done it to deceive the woman (2Cor. 11:3). She is not surprised by the serpent speaking because being newly created, like a young child she doesn't know that animals do not speak. Satan has a three-step technique which he still uses today. First in v1 he questions God's command or His words. In v2-3, she knows the command but "touch" is added, suggesting that she might not be in full acquiescent. So Satan in step two directly contradicts God's word in **v4** and says that she will not die. Then finally, he discredits God in **v5** by suggesting that He doesn't want man to be like Him. Satan will likewise makes us query God in our conflicts, pushing us both to reject His words and doubt the purity of His motives and we mustn't be ignorant of his schemes (2Cor. 2:11). The woman succumbs in **v6** for it is good for food, to fulfill the "lust of the flesh" and it delights or fulfills a "lust to the eye" and finally it makes her wise, which is the "pride of life" (1Jn. 2:16). Adam is with her and must have seen the entire exchange, making him fully accountable when he accepts and eats the fruit. Note in **v7**, the opening of the eyes is not the granting of sight for the first time as they can already see in v6. It is opening their minds to see their nakedness and to be afflicted with shame, a result of sin.

2. The subsequent consequences of their sin. 8-24

Their initial exchange with God after the sin is in **v8-11**. Obviously God already knows of the sin but He graciously guides them to their own admission of guilt. Still in **v12-13**, they partially put the blame on someone else. God's penal consequences are then given and first it is to the serpent (**14-15**) who is cursed more than all other beasts and so all will look at it with disdain. Eating the dust is not for nutrition but an agony that comes with crawling on the belly. Most vital is v15, the first messianic prophecy of the OT, for Christ is the woman's seed and the serpent's is the antichrist and between them there will be enmity. But Satan only bruises Christ's heel on the cross while He will fatally bruise him on the head. Next in **v16** for the woman, it is pain in childbirth, but "desire" for her husband is not sexual desire, as this is not a curse but a blessing linked to 1:28 in God's call to multiply. The Hebrew for desire is "tesuqah", use again in Genesis in **4:7** for the sin of Cain and it clearly means to control or dominate. So she will want to dominate her husband and yet he rules over her. Such tensions do beset us today and so in **Eph. 5:22** is the firm call for wives to subject to husbands. For Adam in **v17-19**, it is hard labor with sweat to make a living and it comes with problems, namely thorns and thistles to impede the plants of the field. Finally **v20-24** record three key events. Adam renames the woman Eve, validating again his rule over her (20). Then God still cares in v21 to make for them garments of skin. Killing of animals is needed and so already a hint on the need of blood sacrifices. But in v22, He will not allow them to eat the tree of life for it means living eternally with sin. He drives them out of Eden, which exists there until Noah's flood.

Lesson to Ponder: The desire to rule over her husband is ingrained in woman because of the curse. But it can be overcome by Holy women who place her hope in God (**1Pet. 3:5**).

Genesis 4: Further deterioration of mankind with the first murder by Cain. KV 8
Outside Eden, man even commits murder and moves further and further away from God.

1. Life outside Eden with events leading up to the murder. 1-8

Outside Eden, Eve gives birth to her first child Cain (**1-2**). She sees this as being helped by God and thus Adam and Eve continue to walk with God. This is not unexpected for they do admit their sins and so are not bitter against God for the eviction. Cain is a tiller of the ground and must have taken up his father's profession. Abel the second child is keeper of flocks and as men are still vegetarians (1:29), they must be for milk, skin and sacrifices. Production of food is surely more vital and so Cain must be the prominent one. Then in **v3-5** they bring their offerings to God. Cain's deeds are said to be evil in **1Jn. 3:12** and possibly he brings lots of fruits as a show off. In contrast, **Heb. 11:4** said Abel offers his by faith. It is by faith because outwardly it must appear smaller but they are the firstlings and fat portions, meaning the best of his flock and also the shedding of animal blood is what God wants in a sacrifice (Heb. 9:22). God's regard or in Hebrew "shaal" meaning approval for Abel's offerings must be visible to all, as Cain is overtly angry and disappointed. Jewish tradition depicts that fire spectacularly comes down from heaven to devour Abel's offering. It is clear in **v6-7** that God does speak to man in those days and cautions Cain by asking him relevant questions. God has two key advices and the first is to accept that he has *not* done well. Probably God has conveyed His preference for blood to Cain but he just persists on his plans. The second is to control his sinful impulse. When one is deeply angry against another, a self-review for errors is crucial and also to master hateful thoughts. Or else there can be dire consequence like Cain murdering Abel in **v8**.

2. God's confrontation and curse on Cain, the murderer. 9-16

God knows the sins of man and exposes Cain's murder in **v9-10**. He is not punished by execution for the death penalty only comes in 9:6 but the penal consequence is in **v11-12**, a drastic curse for a land tiller, as cultivation is no more possible for him. Also he has to wander, probably to find food from all over. In **v13-14** Cain negotiates with God but note that unlike Adam and Eve, he never admits that he has sinned. His concern is that in wandering, he is hidden from God and stands the danger of being slayed. Probably God's presence or Shekinah Glory is just outside Eden and the wandering will move him away from His protection. God agrees on the danger in **v15**, giving him a mark that assures His vengeance on any slayer and "sevenfold" is a complete number to express certainty. But who are his slayers? It is the other children of Adam as stated in 5:4 that are already being born. God is gracious to still care for Cain but in **v16** he went right out from His presence. In Hebrew, Nod is actually "wander" and so he goes about the land wandering.

3. Adam's two genealogical lines through Cain and Seth. 17-26

Cain's wife must be one of Adam's daughters and his descendants in **v17-22** are able to do great things in building (17), breeding (20), music (21) and craft (22). No mention that he ever returns to seek the Shekinah Glory but instead the ultimate is Lamech who kills even a boy in **v23-24** and boasts of avenging seventy-sevenfold, not by God but his own strength. So God prepares a godly line in **v25-26** to be further expanded in chapter five.

Lesson to Ponder: Attaining greatness can just be the way of Cain if we don't seek God.

Genesis 5: Genealogy line with God's likeness and image, from Adam to Noah. KV 3
In spite of man's sin, a godly line from Adam to Noah is preserved and recorded here.

1. The genealogy line from Adam to Methuselah but Enoch evaded death. 1-24

Cain is the line that departs from God. Still the curse in 4:11 is solely on him, unlike Adam's sin when the curse in 3:17 is on the ground. Adam's curse thus affects all future generations while the curse on Cain only affected himself. The rest of mankind can thus continue to farm and till with toil the ground. Under such an environment, chapter five records a line descended from Adam that has not departed from God. To start this off in **v1-2**, the Hebrew word "toledoth" or "generation" is used a second time (first time in 2:4) to indicate a new block of narrative providing information on this godly line. In v1, it affirms again that God has created Adam in His likeness and has blessed them as male and female (2). A key characteristic of this line is already stated in 4:26 that they call upon the Lord. This is vital, for to walk with God, just relating is not enough but we must deliberately call which is to actively seek Him. The 2nd generation is Seth in **v3-5** and v3 states clearly that Seth is in the likeness and image of Adam. In 1:26 God has created Adam in His image and likeness so that he can have a relationship and walk with God. To be like Adam in a similar way is to maintain that this is the line that walks with God. The patriarchs' ages are always provided and they are remarkably long years but these should be real for only after 6:3 are lifespans limited to 120 years due to man's iniquities. Note that in all generations, the text is careful to state that other children are also born. Thus the names given are the minority, selected because they have chosen to follow the Lord. It is the same today, that is, a decision to commit ourselves must be made if we are to be included in His plan. The line proceeds in **v6-8** to the 3rd generation of Enosh; **v9-11** to the 4th generation of Kenan; **v12-14** to the 5th generation of Mahalalel; **v15-17** to the 6th generation of Jared and **v18-20** to the 7th generation of Enoch. Up till then, death is always inevitable but with Enoch comes an unexpected blessing (**21-24**). In v24, he is taken by God and as no death is recorded, it must be to heaven. Also the word "taken" is similarly used for Elijah in 2Kg. 2:9-11 and he is indeed taken to heaven. This is the most outstanding outcome in the godly line but Heb. 11:5 states that it is only possible by faith. Enoch is the 7th generation but note that the ultimate deviant in Cain's line is also the 7th with Lamech in 4:23. Perhaps a perfect number is used to highlight this distinction.

2. The genealogy line from Methuselah to Noah. 25-32

After Enoch the same format is again used for the 8th generation Methuselah (**21-24**) and the 9th generation Lamech (**25-27**). The final 10th generation is Noah whose name means rest (**28-31**). In v29, an explanation is given for the name. It is with the hope that Noah will give them rest from the work and toil resulting from the Adamic curse. So the godly line wrestles with the curse rather than yielding to it, which is the correct approach. In the same way we all sin under the curse but must wrestle against it all the time (1Pet. 4:1-2). The final **v32** carries a positive hint as for the first time, the godly line has more than one progeny, namely Shem, Ham and Japheth, for God will be using them all in the flood.

Lesson to Ponder: The outstanding patriarch in the godly line is Enoch who walks 365 years with God. No achievements of the world is recorded as in Cain's line (4:20-23). But for godliness, this is the ultimate aim, to walk with God so close, that He takes us.

Genesis 6: Noah's call to build the ark in view of the sinfulness of man. KV 13-14
Mankind is fully corrupted but God preserves life through the godly line, using Noah.

1. The extreme sinful state of man compelling God to destroy them. 1-8

The chapter first depicts how man has so corrupted himself that God is ready to destroy the entire earth. Firstly it is the sons of God taking wives from the daughters of men (**1-4**). The sons of God is often taken as the godly line but careful study of the text shows that this is not so. In Hebrew the word for men in v1 is exactly the same as in v2. So the daughters of men in v2 should refer to the daughters of all mankind and not just the godly line. Then in the OT, all usages of the "sons of God" refers to angels (e.g. Job 1:6 & 2:1) and this shouldn't be an exception. Marriages of angels and women seems strange but it's the prominent Jewish interpretation. Such union is prohibited by God and so the angels are thrown into the abyss. The key reason this story should be accepted is because the NT affirms it in **2Pet. 2:4-5 and Jude 6**. Note that there is no contradiction with Matt. 22:30 which refers only to good angels in heaven, who neither marry nor are given in marriage. But Gen. 6 is speaking of fallen angels on earth and it is different. Melding with the spiritual world can really upset God (e.g. 2Chron. 33:6) and must be completely avoided. A product are the Nephilim in v4, unnatural creatures who become mighty on earth and must have breed much evil. The downward spiral continues and in **v5-6** every intent of the heart is evil, indicating that there is no hope for change. Thus when God is sorry, it is not that He has changed His mind. God does not change (1Sam. 15:29) but when man is solidly fixed in His evil ways, the only outcome is God unchanging anger. Man and all land creatures that he is involved with will be destroyed except for Noah for he walks with God (**7-8 and v9**). Still it is God's grace, for favor "chen" in Hebrew means grace.

2. The narrative on Noah beginning with God's call to build the ark. 9-22

The word "toledoth" is used for the third time to begin the narrative on Noah (**9**). It must be stressed that for Noah, it is *not* just righteously walking with God but he does it in a totally evil environment (**10-12**) which is also filled with violence. God instructs Noah in **v13-16** to build an ark or in Hebrew "tebah" which simply means a box. It is not known what gopher wood is, but must be either cypress or cedar. Amazingly the Hebrew root for pitch (14) or "kaphar" is atonement and so the ark signifies God's salvation by grace. It is huge (15) and in today's unit, it will be 450' long, 75' wide and 45' high, with a capacity of 1,500,000 cubic feet. In v16 the word for window can also mean an opening and it is probably a fissure longitudinally on the roof, one cubit (18") from the center, for the flow of air. The flood's goal is in **v17-19** and it is to destroy all air-breathing animals. Fishes will survive in the sea and plants as seeds, while insects which breathe by their exterior skeleton, can live on, floating on vegetation mats. Scientists have worked out that the 8,000 genus or about 50,000 species of air-breathing animals can be contained in the ark which should hold an equivalent of over 130,000 sheep. It will even include the <700 species of dinosaurs, for in their young age they are no bigger than a sheep. In **v20-21**, the animals will come to Noah but he is to gather enough food for them and his family. It's a happy ending because Noah in obedience does all that He has commanded (**22**).

Lesson to Ponder: In v18, God will then establish His covenant with Noah. It is plain that He will only use people who are obedient (22) but they too are saved by grace (8).

Genesis 7: Noah entering the ark and the advent of the flood. KV 16-17

The flood destroys the entire earth but life is preserved by God with Noah in the ark.

1. Events leading to Noah entering the ark. 1-16

It must be many years after the initial command when Noah is finally ordered to enter the ark (1). As stated in **Heb. 11:7**, the toil to prepare the ark is an act of faith but still in v1, Noah's righteousness is seen. Indeed Noah is saved by faith but it also produces righteous acts that are visible. In **v2-4**, Noah is directed to take into the ark seven pairs of clean animals and so it is not a repeat of 6:19-20, the general command to take all animals. As men are still vegetarians (1:30), clean animals are used mainly for sacrifices and so more of these are needed to populate the earth after the flood. It shows the vital role of worship in God's plans. The definition for "clean" is not recorded but it must have been revealed for Noah in **v5** did as God commanded. Note that Noah knows when the flood will come but only seven days before the event. Faith often entails patient waiting on the Lord but at last it comes in **v6-10**. Noah's family is ready and it is all because they have faithfully prepared for it. Next in **v11-16** is a final definitive statement of Noah entering the ark, while v1-10 is to mainly affirm that clean animals are also gathered. The flood actually begins in v11-12 and precise details of Noah's age is provided. Rain comes for the first time, as it has not been sent before (2:5) but the flood is also the result of fountains from the deep. It is stressed in v13, that on the selfsame day, they completed their entry to the ark and so God is able to close it behind them (16). This is a clear picture of salvation, for there must be that definite entry into His grace but then His protection is totally secured.

2. The flood comes and destroys the entire earth. 17-24

The occurrence of the flood is described in **v17-20**. As predicted in v4, the water rises for just 40 days. The word "prevail" or "gabar" in Hebrew is repeatedly used. It is to strongly overcome as in a battle and so the water is torrential but scientists have worked out that the ark as a lengthy box is best fitted to remain afloat and to withstand it. There must also be vast volcanic activities to burst the fountains of the deep (11) and configuration of the entire earth is greatly altered. This also occurs after the flood as oceans deepen to take the receding water (8:3) and consequently the high mountains such as Everest which possibly appears only after the event. In v19, the high mountains are thus not as high but still it is clear in v19-20 that the entire world is covered. An exact measure is given stating that the ark floats up to 15 cubits or 22 feet over the highest mountains at that time. Evidence for a universal flood is also found in nature with fossil graveyards in every continent and the large coal deposits which will require rapid covering of vast vegetation. But the best support is in the NT when Christ in **Lu. 17:27** speaks of destruction for all and **2Pet. 2:5** in not sparing the ancient world. Finally **v21-23** concludes that as predicted in 6:17, all creatures on land with the breath of life are blotted out except for those in the ark. There is a point of no return when those who fail to enter before the door is shut will forfeit all opportunity to survive. More detail is provided in **v24** that the high water level stays on for 150 days. Noah is told in v4 that the flood is 40 days and truly the storm lasted that long. Yet the water remains for five months where Noah has to wait patiently by faith.

Lesson to Ponder: Noah's world fail to expect the flood for they don't understand (Matt. 24:39). His return will be similar and so be alert to understand the signs (Matt. 24:32-33).

Genesis 8: Noah survives the flood and exit the ark with all the occupants. KV 18-19

The chapter tells how God preserves Noah and the ark's occupants to survive the flood.

1. The flood subsiding and the water abated to the earth's surface. 1-12

The reversal of the flood is in **v1-3** and v1 should be interpreted as God remembering to act for He never forgets (Deut. 4:31). At precisely the right time God will act and Noah has just to wait by faith. Note that the text also explains the mechanism for the reversal of the flood. God first sends a strong wind and then in v2 the actions in 7:11-12 reversed. The water recedes steadily and continuously (3). There must be major geological shift for oceans must be deepened to take the receding water and higher mountains will emerge. Precise dates are given in the narrative, which will enable calculation for the actual days in the ark. Thus v3 is in line with 7:24 that the water starts receding after 150 days of the flood. The date in **v4** means it is 151 days of the flood and so after just one day the ark is resting upon the mountains of Ararat. This is because the great wind in v1 should result in rapid evaporation and hence a swift fall in the water level. But it is essential for the ark to rest on solid ground as water recedes, for like water draining off in an opened sink, the currents will be immense. It really shows the wisdom of God in protecting the ark. Two more months transpired in **v5** or after 225 days in the ark, the mountain tops are visible, affirming to Noah that water is indeed receding. Next in **v6-12**, Noah sends sequentially four birds to assess whether the water has abated. Why not just wait for His command to exit the ark? But Noah is commanded in 6:21 to feed the animals in the ark. Food supply must be depleting and probably the main question in Noah's mind is how to keep them alive? So when God gives a command, He expects us to act on our own, as Noah did, finding ways to fulfil His word. Thus it is especially comforting for Noah when the dove returns with an olive leaf (11) indicating that there is vegetation providing food for the animals on release. The dove not returning in v12 affirms it, as it is surviving on its own.

2. The command for Noah and occupants to exit the ark. 13-19

In spite of the assurance from the dove Noah waited further. Based on the dates given, in **v13** he waited another 28 days until the earth looks dry. Then **v14** is after 57 more days and now the earth is "definitely dry" or in Hebrew "yabesh" in v14, while it is "chereb" in v13 which is just "free of water". Why the wait? The reason must be in **v15-17** namely God's command to exit the ark and Noah must be waiting to get that final confirmation from Him. Indeed even when condition seems reasonable, it is always prudent to get the final word from Him. Noah eagerly obeys in **v18-19** with his family as God repeats the blessing of procreation to all animals. In total they are in the ark for 371 days. It is by faith (**Heb. 11:7**) but it is real faith that has persisted through thick and thin (**Pro. 3:5-6**).

3. Noah's worship with sacrifices and God's affirmation for the world. 20-22

Noah is not just obedient but his appreciation of God is shown by his instant worship in **v20**. It is unique, for this is the first mentioned of altar in the OT. It really touches God's heart and **v21-22** affirms that God will never again destroy in one instant all living things. This is in fact a statement on grace for if man's heart is always evil (21), the only way for God to desist destruction is His grace, made possible only by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Lesson to Ponder: Not only is destruction evaded but **v22** promised a continuity in the circle of life. So we can trust His protection for all seasons and through all stages of life.

Genesis 9: After the flood, blessings and curse to Noah and his descendants. KV 1, 25
God established a new covenant with Noah but also a curse is depicted in the chapter.

1. Blessings and covenant with Noah and his descendants. 1-17

God has already promised in 6:18 to establish His covenant with Noah and now this is affirmed. There are five provisions in the Noahic Covenant and the first three are positive in nature **(1-3)**. Firstly he and his sons are to be fruitful and multiply, basically a repeat of 1:28, an earlier instruction given to Adam. It shows that offspring are a blessing from God. The second provision is new, which is the fear of man instilled in all animals. This should enable the third provision, the capturing of animals for food, for before in 1:29 men are vegetarians. Human diet will now be so much more delicious but with this must also follow a deep respect for life. Thus two prohibitive provisions are given in **v4-7**. The fourth provision is not to eat flesh when life is still in it (4) or when an animal is still alive and draining the blood will ensure that it will not occur. But the ultimate respect for life is that of another human who is in the image of God. So the fifth provision is instituting for the first time the capital punishment for any killer, whether man or beast (5-6). Yet the first provision must be the most vital and so it is repeated in v7. Next in **v8-11**, God makes it clear that it is a covenant or a binding agreement for all time and it also includes all animals. On God's part, it is a promise that He will never destroy the earth again by a flood. God then set up a sign to show that this covenant is active and it is the rainbow **(12-17)**. In v14, it will appear when He brings in a cloud that is when it rains. Note that before the flood, rain has never appeared (2:5) and hence the rainbow is seen for the first time. The rainbow is the sign to assure all flesh that God will remember (16-17). It is not dependent on man's righteousness for the Noahic Covenant is unconditional. So today when the beauty of the rainbow is seen, just praise God for His covenant and protection.

2. Incident related to the prophecy on Canaan's curse (18-27) and postlude (28-29)

The section is specially related to Canaan the son of Ham, who is thus included in the opening summary of Noah's family **(18-19)**. In the future, Israel will enter a promise land that is occupied by Canaanites. So occasionally Genesis will provide information on them and this is one such passage. In **v20-21**, Noah plants a vineyard. It's new to him for the word "began" is used and the drunkenness must be due to ignorance over the effects of alcohol. In the OT, it is severe disrespect to uncover the nakedness of one's father (Lev. 18:7) and is strictly prohibited. Ham sees Noah's nakedness and tells his brothers about it **(22-23)**. In Hebrew "tell" is "nagad" or to declare loudly, whilst he should have walked in backwards like his brothers to cover Noah. Thus as Noah awakens in **v24**, he must be sorely upset. But why is Canaan cursed and not Ham himself **(25-27)**? Note that the curse is never stated as a consequence of sin, as in the case of Cain in 4:10-14. So it is probably a prophetic statement that Noah gives to Ham regarding his son Canaan. The Canaanites which include those in Sodom and Gomorrah **(10:19)** are truly sinful and God's intent is for Israel to drive them out (Lev. 18:23-24). The curse is thus appropriate and Canaan will serve both Shem's descendants who are the Jews and Japheth's, especially when they dwell in the tents of Shem. Noah is blessed, dying in **v28-29** at a ripe age of 950 years.

Lesson to Ponder: Our fight against the devil is similar to Israel battling the Canaanites. The enemy is under a curse **(3:14; 9:25)** and victory is assured if our trust is in God.

Genesis 10: Table of nations, the spreading out of Noah's descendants. KV 32

The fourth "toledoth" or narrative account is from 10:1 to 11:9 and is about Noah's sons.

1. The descendants of Japheth – mainly spreading northward. 1-5

The chapter is another support for the accuracy of Genesis. It's written when the ancestral memories are still viable among the people and so the details given here will be validated. Not all, but selected ancestral lines are mentioned, clearly only those that will emerge as nations on earth. But be mindful that a table of nations shows that God's attention is on the entire world. It begins with Japheth (**1-4**), Noah's youngest son from whom comes 14 nations. They spread to the north of Palestine, into Europe as far as Magog (2) on the east, north of the Caspian Sea and to Tarshish (4) of Spain in the west. It is believed that they are the ancestry of most Europeans. In **v5** (also **20, 31, 32**) it is stated that the groups are separated firstly by land or geography, from the coastlands inwards to the inner lands. But they are also divided by languages, families and nations or political affinity.

2. The descendants of Ham – mainly Africa, Levant and Mesopotamia. 6-20

From Ham, Noah's second son will come 30 nations and they will spread to northern Africa, Mesopotamia and the Levant (which include present day Israel, Lebanon and Syria). Their many locations in Africa lead to the theory that all blacks are descendants of Ham. There is no indication in the text that this is so and it should *not* be taken as biblical especially when it comes with derogatory clichés. It also applies when Chinese are taken as descendants of Sinite (Latin "Sinae" = China) in v17. Descendants of Cush, the eldest are in **v6-12** with a special mention of Nimrod in v8-12. He is indeed mighty (8) and founded Babel or Babylon (10) and Nineveh (11), future capital of the great empires of Babylon and Assyria respectively. Yet greatness does not necessary result in the best outcome for His people for it is to these cities that the Jews will be exiled. Note that the phrase "before the Lord" need not to be taken as honoring God but as neutral for Satan too appears "before the Lord" (Job 1:6). Also in v10, Nimrod went from Shinar where the Tower of Babel is to Assyria (11) and why the move? It is probable that he is the leader for the rebellion in 11:4 (also Nimrod means rebellion) and is forced to leave after Babel. We need not seek greatness (**Jer. 45:5**) but rather to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness (**Matt. 6:33**). The descendants of the second son Mizraim are in **v13-14** and from them comes the Philistines, a great enemy of the Jews. Finally the descendants of Canaan are in **v15-20**. They occupy the land of Canaan and even up north to include the entire Levant and also Sodom and Gomorrah (19). But the area described in v19 is approximately the borders of the Promised Land which is later promised to Abraham.

3. The descendants of Shem – mainly Arabia and Mesopotamia. 21-32

Shem, Noah's eldest son is left to the end and from them will come 26 nations. Already **v21** hints on his importance by listing his great grandson Eber for this is the root word for "Hebrew". Only then in **v22-31** are all the relevant descendants listed but in 11:10-25, the godly line will be repeated as started in chapter five. All these point to God's special attention for the Jews. Shem's descendants are all living together now in the Middle East as Aram's sons (23) spread to Syria and Joktan's sons (26-29) are all over Arabia.

Lesson to Ponder: So the same root doesn't guarantee peace, but God can (Lu. 2:14).

Genesis 11: Judgment at Babel to separate mankind but a godly line persists. KV 9, 10
The chapter explains why mankind is divided but a godly line is preserved with Abram.

1. God's judgment of mankind at Babel: 1-9

It is stated in v1-2 that the world has only one language. But why is it in 10:5, 20, and 31, language is an attribute that separates the people? This is due to an event in Peleg's era (10:25) which is five generations after Noah and before that it can be assumed that the world is united. It concerns the "whole earth" and starts in v2 as they migrate to the east and find the plain of Shinar. In the OT, this refers to Babylonia which is in Mesopotamia, where civilization first emerges in recorded history. They build the city of Babel (9) or Babylon in Hebrew and as it is where Nimrod's kingdom begins (10:10), he is probably the leader of the migration. They are highly creative in v3 as stones are formerly used for buildings but these are lacking amidst the rivers in the plain. However they invent bricks or baked clay and affix them with tar made from crude oil, rather than using mortar such as cement. It is so successful that in v4 they venture to build a city with a high tower in the heavens. Many see this as building it to reach heaven where God is but the word "reach" is not in the text. Also in Hebrew "heaven" is plural and "heavens" in Genesis so far is used 22 times, always referring to the expanse of the sky (e.g. 7:3) and not to God's abode. It is best to go by the text in v4 and the problems are pride and rebellion. They seek to make a name for themselves that will unite them and prevent the scattering of humans over the earth which is disobedience to His command to fill the earth (9:1, 9:7). But note in v5-6, God's main concern is the outcome of their unity, namely that nothing will now be impossible for them. It cannot be the lack of limits over man's ability to sin for God is already aware of this (6:5, 9:21). Perhaps it is similar to 3:22 when He forbids man to eat the tree of life and live on forever with their sins. This must be the issue, for when man is united, they can discover the secret of life and live on forever with their sins. In fact it's happening now, for of the several thousand bacterial genes, scientists only need to decipher about 140 more to know how bacteria lives and then life may be created. God will not allow life to be created and so Christ may be coming soon. In v7-9, God is so concerned that He uses languages to confuse and scatter them over the whole earth.

The genealogy of the persisting godly line. 10-32

The table of nations in chapter 10 has already described the descendants of Noah's sons. This section repeats the descendants of Shem but showing how it leads to Abram (10-26) and it is the fifth "toledoth". It uses the same format as chapter five with the years of birth and lifespan affirming that this is the record of the godly line that God will use to bless the world with salvation. As before, only one descendant in each generation is recorded and they do have other sons and daughters. Note in v14 is Eber, the root word for Hebrew and in v18 is Peleg when the world is divided. Now it is traced to Terah father of Abram and then in v27-32, more details are provided as the sixth "toledoth" which will be on Abram. Relevant members of his family such as Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew are mentioned for they will be in the narrative. In v31 they are living in Ur of the Chaldeans in southern Mesopotamia and Terah takes his family north to Haran before dying in v32.

Lesson to Ponder: Just getting brothers and sisters to be united is not good enough and can even be fatal such as in v4, unless the goal is really for His glory alone (1Pet. 4:11).

Genesis 12: God's call for Abram and His continuing protection in Egypt. KV 1-2
God's special relationship with the Jews now begins with a call to Abram to follow Him.

1. Abram's call and his obedience of faith in migrating to Canaan. 1-9

The most important passage in the Pentateuch is unquestionably v1-3, for Abram's call is the initiation of God's work with the Jewish people. But if a godly line is preserved, why is the call needed? The answer is in Jos. 24:2 for Terah begins serving other gods in Ur, well known for her idols. Terah is probably born in Haran as it is called "your father's house" for Abram in v1 and also the names in the family match the places' names in the vicinity. But Terah moves south to Ur and now even the godly line is following idols. So Abram is called to depart and initiate a new beginning for God to work. The first call is actually in Ur (15:7) and this harmonizes with Acts 7:2-4 stating that the call is before Abram lives in Haran. Thus it must be Abram persuading Terah to move over to Canaan (11:31) but enroute to Haran, he settles there for an unstated reason. After Terah's death, God commands Abram to continue on to Canaan. God promises in v2 to make his name great, the very aim the ungodly seek to do in Babel (11:4). Two points must be noted. Firstly it's not wrong for God to make us great but one must *not* seek for it. Then in v2, Abram is made great only to be a blessing to others. In fact it is imperative in the Hebrew and so he is commanded to be a blessing to others. Second, indeed God will bless those who bless him but there will also be those who curse him (3). Walking with God will not remove all our enemies just that He will care for us and deal with them. Next in v4-6, Abram sets out for Canaan and Heb. 11:8 asserts that this is an act of faith for he doesn't even know precisely his destination. Abram ends up in Shechem which is located now in the West Bank and the Oak of Moreh is renowned for Canaanite idols and occult practice. God must have led him there for the promise to give Palestine to Abram's descendants is given for the first time (7-9). Abram never integrates with the local idol worshippers but instead he seeks the Lord ardently. In v7 he builds the first recorded altar to God in Israel and travels 20 miles south to near Bethel to build another altar (8) and even calls upon the name of the Lord. Abram is clearly getting ever closer to God as he journeys on evidently seeking a place to settle in. We all move but be sure as Abram, we must get close to God.

2. God protecting and enriching Abram in Egypt as promised. 10-20

It is amazing that after Abrams' great act of faith, this section is on his adversity and weakness. In v10 is a severe famine and so adversity can occur even when one is faithful. No negative implication is given in the text on his move to Egypt since it is needed for survival. But his scheme for Sarai to lie as his sister in v11-13 is definitely self-centered to protect himself and risking her to be sexually exploited. Perhaps his plan is to negotiate his way out with any potential suiter but in v14-16, it is Pharaoh who wants her to be his wife. All the gifts given in v16 means that Sarai's fate is sealed and Abram has lost his wife. It is an extreme act of weakness but also a clear confirmation of God's grace in His dealings with Abram. There is really nothing good in him and the deliverance of Sarai in v17-20 is His redemptive act of grace. Pharaoh must have left her untouched as he knows that she is Abram's wife and so severe are the plagues that he is asked to instantly leave.

Lesson to Ponder: For Abram, God's rescue of Sarai is pure grace but also the gifts from Pharaoh. Thus wealth in the believer's life is also God's grace and we should be thankful.

Genesis 13: Lot's departure and God's reaffirmation to give Abram the land. KV 14-15
Chapter 13 is on Abram's continuing devotion as God reaffirms His promise to him.

1. Events leading to and the eventual departure of Lot. 1-13

Abram's departure from Egypt is obviously arranged by God but what he does after that is a reflection of his spiritual state. Abram almost lost his wife in Egypt by lying and basically in v1-4 he backtracks his steps returning to the Negev where he was in 12:9. It is the region to the south of Judah but Abram continues on, moving north and returns to precisely where he builds an altar near Bethel (3) and actively calls upon the name of the Lord in 12:8. This is indeed the right action for someone failing the Lord and sincerely desires to get right with God. In returning to God, it is best to return and start from where one left off. So in v4 Abram again calls on the name of the Lord, a clear act of his recommitment to God. The text also suggests that Abram moves on without stopping and if one strays from God and is sorry for it, an immediate return is always the best. Next in v5-7 is background information on the reason for Lot's departure from Abraham. Already v2 affirms that Abram is a wealthy man but v5 shows that Lot is similarly well possessed. Although Pharaoh has richly endowed Abram in 12:16, his wealth is not from him alone. This is because there is no record that Pharaoh has given anything to Lot and also no mention of giving any of the silver and gold that Abram possesses in v2. So their wealth must be from God as He multiplies the possessions they brought from Haran in 12:5. But tension often follows wealth (1Tim. 6:9). The land is not able to sustain their flocks and friction emerges between their workers (7). There are others also sharing the land as it is noted that the Canaanite and Perizzite dwell in the land. Thus in v8-9, Abram prudently suggests that they separate. Two details in his suggestion must not be missed. Firstly he is gracious enough to offer Lot the first choice which is to put others above oneself (Philip. 2:3). Then Abram is merely asking Lot to move either to the left or right and not to leave Canaan, which is where God has directed them. But Lot in v10-13, looks beyond and sees the well-watered Jordan Valley where Sodom is located up to Zoar, which is south of the Dead Sea. A historical note in v10 says that it was like the Garden of Eden and Egypt and this is the reason for Lot's choice (11). He ignores the fact in v13 that the people there are exceedingly wicked and can affect his spiritual life. The result is Lot moving east, to live in the cities of the valley in Sodom while Abram faithfully remains in the land of Canaan.

2. God reaffirms promise to give the land to Abram and his descendants. 14-18

It is clear in v14-15 that God reaffirms His promise in 12:7 to Abram only after Lot has left. Lot is the progenitor of the Moabites and Ammonites (19:37-38) and so the promise does not include them although they dwell in the land, for it will be given to Abram and his descendants forever. The amazing nature of the promise is further revealed in v16-17, that Abram's descendants will be as uncountable as dust and the size of the land is as far as he can walk. Abram probably walked all over for in Ezekiel chapter 48, all of Palestine will be given to the Jews in the Millennium. In v18, Abram moves on to Hebron, another center of pagan worship and Abram again builds an altar to God. It is evident that God is everywhere and altars can be built anywhere, as long as someone desires to worship Him.

Lesson to Ponder: The promise in 12:7, is clarified in 13:15 and then God makes it a covenant in 15:18. It is how faith works, His promises gets clearer as we walk with Him.

Genesis 14: Abram's victory over the Mesopotamian kings to rescue Lot. KV 14-15
Chapter 14 shows Abram is also a worthy hero in war with proper relationships to others.

1. Background information – the wars of the kings. 1-12

This is still the era of the city states when countries have yet to emerge and between them there is war (**1-4**). On one side are four kings north of Palestine (1). Some of the locations are not known but as Shinar or Babylon and Elam are in Mesopotamia, they are probably allies nearby that vicinity. On the opposing side are five kings of cities around the “Salt” or the Dead Sea (2). The battle is at valley of Siddim (3) at the southern tip of the Dead Sea and it is due to the rebellion of the southern kings against the leader of the north, Chedorlaomer (4). Then **v5-9** depicts events leading to their actual battle. Firstly in v5-6 is the invasion of the northern kings and their path is through the length of the present Jordan, defeating many on the way. It is interesting that they proceed right down to El-paran or the present day Eilat which is 120 miles south of the Dead Sea before turning north. But it is absolutely sensible for their path is today known as the King's Highway, a natural path in the plain of Jordan where the modern highways are built. It's amazing that Biblical records are so rational in the details. Next as they proceed north in v7, further conquests are made and finally in v8-9, the nine kings confront each other for the actual battle in **v10-12**. The northern kings are victorious and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah die falling into pits of tar or crude oil. They confiscate all possessions but also capture Lot (12) which is the reason for Abram's involvement as a warrior in the narrative. Note that Lot is living in Sodom (also 19:1) but in **13:12**, he was outside the sinful city. It is inevitable that close exposures to sin can suck a person into the very midst of iniquity.

2. Abram's victory and effectiveness as a warrior. 13-16

Abram is informed in **v13-14** by a fugitive or a survivor and he is called the Hebrew or one from beyond. So he is not fully integrated into the community and yet has close allies in v13. This is in principle how a Christian live, not integrated but yet with close allies. The prime example is how he spring into action for Lot, one of his own although he has left him. Abram is clearly a great warrior (**14-16**). First he has 318 trained men ready for action. Then he acts strategically, pursuing them for over 150 miles north to Dan before surprising them at night with the help of his allies (see v24). Thirdly he is courageous to act boldly for God, willing to take on four victorious kings with a much smaller force.

3. The special meeting with two local kings. 17-24

Immense spiritual truths are found here. First there is Melchizedek of Salem or Jerusalem in **v17-20** who amazingly is *both* king and priest of the one true God. It's not a theophany for he holds a real earthly position, yet strangely no other information is provided. But in **Heb. 6:20-7:4** it harmonizes so well as a type of a new priesthood for Christ to be both king and priest. Then in **v21-24**, Abram will *not* take anything at all from the new king of Sodom (23). Christians must be content and never seek to get rich (**1Tim. 6:8-10**) but it is also vital as in Abram's case, that no visible elements of sin or unrighteousness as Sodom is seen to have enriched us. Obviously Abram isn't a practitioner of the prosperity gospel.

Lesson to Ponder: In **v22**, Abram has sworn not to take anything before meeting the King of Sodom. To combat sinful allures, such resolve *before* the event is important.

Genesis 15: Sealing of the formal covenant between God and Abram. KV 18

Abram demonstrates definite faith and this time God carries out the covenant rituals.

1. Reaffirmation of promises on descendants and the land to Abram. 1-8

In 14:22-24, to honor God Abram is the only one left empty-handed after the war and it is probably the reason for the comforting vision in v1. God is speaking to Abram the fourth time but it is their first with dialogue. This is intimacy with God which will come when one walks with Him. Abram is not to fear for God protects him as a shield and his reward will be very great, which seems to suggest material wealth. Yet Abram's response is to ask two questions and both are related to His promises given previously to him. The first in v2-6 is on His promise to give the land to his descendants (12:7; 13:15) and how is this possible when he has no offspring? God affirms that his heir will be from his body (4), i.e. his own son, but it is difficult to believe as Abram is over 80 years old. So God shows him the stars and promises that his descendants will be likewise. In spite of his age, he truly believes and in v6 it is reckoned to him as righteousness. This is the verse that Paul repeatedly quotes in support of salvation by faith (Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6). But Abram's faith is on God's promise of an heir and so how is this related to salvation? It is because the content of faith can differ through the ages. Now the basis for salvation for all time is always Christ's blood (Heb. 9:14), for only this can atone for sins. Faith and not works is always the means of salvation (Eph. 2:8-9), as in Abram's case. However in the NT, the content of faith is the Gospel of His death and resurrection (1Cor. 15:2-4). In the OT, the cross has yet to occur and so Abram's faith is solely on God's promises to him. In Rom. 4:20-22, God accepts this as faith and credits righteousness to him. It seems justified to assume that if Abram believes God's promises under such dire circumstances, surely he will also believe in the gospel if he is in the NT. Next in v7-8 is his second question and it relates to the promise of the land. Land ownership often require formal deeds and it is probably one reason God formally initiates a ritual to seal the covenant with Abram.

2. The preparation and sealing of the covenant. 9-21

The ritual is that of a blood covenant (9-11) and usually only one animal is sacrificed. God's request for five animals shows the solemnity of the covenant. Animals are cut in half opposite to one another, leaving a path in between for participants to walk, who are then bonded for life, with death as the penalty for non-compliance. Cutting the animals in half leads to massive blood staining of the path, a clear symbol of His atonement (Heb. 9:22). The small birds are not cut as bloodletting will be minimal. Abram is then put into a deep sleep in v12-16 when God reveals an amazing prophecy of being enslaved for 400 years in a foreign land. It is a prediction of the Exodus and the four generations are found in Ex. 6:16-21 with Levi, Kohath, Amram and lastly Moses and Aaron. Abram is also told in v15 that he will die in peace and go to his fathers, showing a definite belief in the afterlife even in Genesis. God's full control on timing is in v16 for the Amorites' iniquity is still not complete. It will be after the Exodus for by then the Canaanites are deep into witchcraft (Deut. 18:9-12). However in v17, only God walks the path as a flaming touch and not Abram, showing that nothing is required of him. It is an unconditional covenant of grace in v18, as God promises him the land belonging to the ten tribes listed in v19-21.

Lesson to Ponder: Asking honest questions is not doubting God and He welcomes it.

Genesis 16: The birth of Ishmael, a predicament in Abram's faith. KV 15

Abram is reckoned righteous in **15:6** for his faith and next is his struggle in the faith.

1. Sarai's offer of her maid Hagar to Abram as wife. 1-3

Abram's walk of faith in God reaches a climax in **15:6** and yet immediately in this next chapter is a narrative on his weakness in not fully trusting in the Lord. It comes about in **v1-3** when Sarai realizing that she is unable to bear a child, offers to Abram her Egyptian maid to be his wife. Such custom is accepted practice in Abram's days as recorded in the Code of Hammurabi. The maid must have been given to him by Pharaoh in 12:16 and Abram listens to the voice of Sarai. In chapter 16, the text has no precise statement that Abram's action is wrong but Paul states it clearly in Galatians chapter 3-4. The Galatians has accepted Paul's gospel of justification by faith as depicted in **Gal. 2:16** but are then misled to believe that perfection or sanctification in God is by keeping the law. So Paul in **Gal. 3:3** rebukes them affirming that both justification and sanctification are due to the Holy Spirit's work and are the result of faith. He then uses Abram to explain the concept. In **Gal. 3:6** Paul quotes 15:6 that Abram is saved by believing in God's promise. Then in **Gal. 4:22-23**, he states distinctly that the birth of the bondwoman or Hagar is an effort of the flesh while that of the free woman Sarai, is by faith in His promise. Thus conception with Hagar amounts to Abram trusting in his own effort to complete God's promise. Similarly for our salvation, it is erroneous to trust in our flesh to maintain it. But Abram finally restores his trust in God and Sarai begets Isaac (see **17:19**). This is assurance of salvation, trusting God to save us now and also until we enter into eternity (**Jn. 10:28**).

2. Hagar's conception and the subsequent dispute with Sarai. 4-6

Trusting in one's effort can have dire results. It may seem to work for Hagar conceives in **v4** but she then despises Sarai who is barren. Sarai puts the blame on Abram in **v5**, which is valid for Hagar is now his wife. So in **v6**, Abram returns to Sarai her power over Hagar and she flees from her harsh treatment. Efforts of the flesh seldom result in peace.

3. Hagar fleeing and her encounter with the angel of the Lord. 7-16

As she flees, Hagar meets the angel of the Lord in **v7-9**. It is a special term for an angel in the OT with "the" always attached. He is seen as divine as in **v13** but stop appearing after Jesus comes in the NT. Thus he is probably the pre-incarnate Christ. Hagar is instructed to return and submit to Sarai (**10-12**) which she must have obeyed. It shows that she is a believer and also in **v13-14**, she recognizes that she has seen God and still remains alive. Then in **v10** she is also given a similar blessing as Abram with countless descendants but a special promise regarding her child is given in **v11-12**. His name will be Ishmael and will be a wild donkey of a man, meaning someone who roams with a nomadic tendency. He will be in conflict with everyone which here refers to his brothers the Jews and finally in **v12**, living to the east means Arabia. Even today, Arabs see themselves as Ishmael's descendants and all the above predictions are fulfilled amazingly to the letter. Hagar must have reported the encounter to Abram for in **v15-16**, the child is named Ishmael. The Arab-Israeli conflict persists till today and it is due to Abram's misled efforts of the flesh.

Lesson to Ponder: Even when treated harshly, it is always best to listen to the Lord and submit, remembering especially in **v11** that He will give heed to the afflicted.

Genesis 17: Progress of the Abrahamic Covenant and Circumcision initiated. KV 11
Majestic nature of the covenant is now revealed with circumcision as a sign for the Jews.

1. Further revelations regarding the Abrahamic Covenant. 1-8

It is the fifth direct interaction between God and Abram starting in v1-3. Abram falling on his face (3) and God's departure upwards in v22 indicates that it's the first theophany. Such a direct face to face encounter shows that they are growing in intimacy. There may even be other encounters, just that they are not recorded. Still it is clear that Abram is walking closely with God for He starts with the command of walking before Him and be blameless. This is not a condition for the covenant but the statement indicates that to be close to God, these are needed. As God now comes to Abram, he must indeed be doing it through the years, resulting in a close intimate walk with Him. In v4-8, God seems to be adding new promises to the covenant but it shouldn't be reckoned a revision as stated by some commentators. Rather He is revealing and clarifying more of what the covenant means. It is like our salvation in Christ that as we grow, we begin to appreciate even greater promises related to it, which are there already from the beginning. Note that the covenant is already established in 15:18 but new revelations related to it are now given. Abram will be the father of nations (4), kings will come forth from him (6) and the word "everlasting" is added for the first time to describe God's commitment (7-8). A most valuable clarification is the promise to his descendants in v8, to always be their God, thus implying that faithful followers or a spiritual remnant will be there (Rom. 11:5). In v5, He even changes his name to Abraham and this is what happens when we walk with God. We should be changing to the better and appreciating even deeper His majestic ways.

2. The sign of Circumcision, Sarah's role and Abraham instant obedience. 9-27

All of God's promises in v4-8 are given unconditionally affirming that this is the term of the Abrahamic Covenant. Then v9-14 calls for the practice of circumcision to be started. It includes all male descendants but also foreigners born or bought and are thus members of the covenant community. Note that it's not a condition but only a sign for the covenant (11), as the rainbow in 9:12-13 is just a sign for the Noahic Covenant. Still v14 states that an uncircumcised male is cut off from his people to indicate that a Jew can choose not to be included. It may be the parents' choice but there is also an operation done in historic times known as "epispasm" where the foreskin is pulled back up. It is similar to Christ's salvation which comes also with the freedom for rejection. Next in v15-17 God changes Sarai's name to Sarah meaning "the princess". She is special, for in her old age she will bear a son and through him alone God will established His covenant (v19 & v21). In v17 Abraham's laughter is a sign of real joy, displaying faith that God will miraculously give them a child in their old age. God seems to value it in giving the name Isaac, for it means "he laughs". Abraham still assumes that Ishmael is heir to the covenant in v18 but God corrects him in v20-21 that it is not so, although in His own way God will bless Ishmael. Abraham is not chided as there is no evil motive linked to this error. After God's ascent in v22, Abraham instantly obeys in v23-25 to circumcise on the same day his entire household. In Hebrew, v26-27 is not pure repetition of v23, as the verb for "circumcised" is now the reflexive niph'al, use when actions are reflexive or voluntary from oneself.

Lesson to Ponder: When He commands, it is best to obey instantly and on the same day.

Genesis 18: God's intimate encounter with Abraham on the way to Sodom. KV 1

This chapter on Sodom's destruction also shows Abraham's growing intimacy with God.

1. The nature of the appearance and reaffirming the promise Sarah. 1-15

This is the sixth recorded direct interaction between God and Abraham (1-2). It is now 24 years after God's call in 12:1 but he is still a nomad living in a tent by the oaks of Mamre when three men appear in the afternoon. The Lord or Yahweh in v1 is said to appear and from **19:1** it's evident that the other two are angels. Their appearance must be ordinary as in **19:5** the Sodomites perceive them as mere humans. Yet Abraham runs to meet them with a welcome bow. His warm remarks in **v3-5** show that it is his practice of hospitality to strangers, also commanded in the NT, which mentions this event in Heb. 13:2. It is crucial in hospitality to meet valid needs and indeed Abraham offers the niceties of water, rest and refreshments so appropriate for weary travelers. Note that the three men speak for the first time in v5 to accept his offer and after that in **v6-8**, there is a distinct shift in Abraham's responses. The word "hurried" or "mahar" in Hebrew is used and it means to do things swiftly and with great intensity as Abraham prepares a feast fit for royalties. Three measures or 22 liters of the best flour is used for cakes (6), with a tender calf (7) and delicacies such as milk or yoghurt (8). Most of all he stands by their side rather than eating with them during the meal, thus giving them the highest of honor. It's clear as they later converse, Abraham now knows that God is there in human form, as v23 addressing Him as the Judge of the earth. It must be **v5**, for as the three men speak, Abraham realizes then that God is there and so he gives in response his optimal best. Next in **v9-15** is their exchanges regarding Sarah. Knowing Sarah's name is another a clue that God is there and then a promise reasserting that at precisely the same time next year, she will have a child (10). In v12, Sarah laughs and asks a question, similar to what Abraham did in **17:17**. But in v13-15, God shows displeasure over her response, while in **17:19** He seems pleased with Abraham's to even reaffirm His covenant with him. The key is in v14 for Sarah in her heart doubted God's ability to fulfil His promise, while Abraham do believe that nothing is too difficult for God. We can always ask God questions but be careful not to doubt His abilities. She is also gently rebuked in v15 for false denial but she must have repented from these transgressions because **Heb. 11:11** quotes her as an example of faith.

2. God moving on to Sodom and the intercession of Abraham. 16-33

God moves on to Sodom in **v16** with Abraham sending them off. Then in **v17**, God tells the other two angels that that they should be sharing with Abraham their divine plan. The key reason is his high spiritual status in **v18-19**, being chosen to bless all nations which is matched by his faithfulness to build a household upholding righteousness and justice. The divine plan in **v20-21** is to check out whether Sodom's sin is as grievous as reported. God knows all but He checks it out personally before any annihilation, which is truly precision in judgment. It is the first time God shares His personal deliberation with Abraham, even allowing him in **v22-32** to intercede for the righteous. Through all this Abraham speaks with honor and respect (27, 30 & 32), affirming that He is just (25). Yet God is in charge for it is "He" who finishes in **v33** when the righteous is reduce to ten. This is the size of Lot's family indicating that indeed Abraham is interceding for his beloved nephew.

Lesson to Ponder: Strive to grow spiritually and intimacy with God will come. Perhaps He will even allow us into His deliberations and to intercede directly for those we love.

Genesis 19: Destruction of Sodom but the saving of Lot by grace. KV 24-25

Abraham intercedes for Lot and the chapter shows how he is saved by God's compassion.

1. The angels' visit and appeal for Lot's family to depart. 1-14

As stated in 18:20-21, Yahweh is there to check on the certainty of Sodom's sin and the two angels arrive in the city that evening (1-3). Yahweh Himself is perhaps in Gomorrah but Lot is sitting at Sodom's gate. Lot moves to Sodom despite the sinfulness of the place (13:10-13) and initially lives in tents outside the city. As often the case, the world simply draws one in and now he resides inside the city. But 2Pet. 2:7-8 calls Lot righteous and so he is clearly a believer, albeit a carnal one drawn by the world, to which Rom. 12:1-2 commanded we are not to conform. As a true believer, Lot cannot be happy and he is tormented daily by this sinful environment. Nevertheless it is evident that Lot tries to be righteous and so the Sodomites take him as an alien in v9. Also on seeing the angels, even without knowing their true identity, like Abraham Lot is kind and hospitable in v2, insisting that they enter his house. It must be to avoid the violence in the square that may befall strangers at night. Even in his house the city gathers to homosexually assault the angels in v4-5. Lot is so honorable in trying to protect them (6-8) but he offers them his two virgin daughters. This cannot be right, but carnal believers will frequently make such unrighteous decisions in life. The Sodomites are so perverse that even this is rejected and they violently assault Lot. Definitely they are ripe for judgment and the angels protect Lot by striking the sinners blind (9-11). Sodom is doomed for destruction and the angels whose identities are now revealed offer Lot a chance to warn his family to vacate the city (12-14). Lot goes only to the sons in law of his virgin daughters probably because he knows that others are so set in their sins that it will be in vain. Even then he appears to the two men as jesting, showing that it is not easy to be a righteous person in an evil city.

2. Lot's deliverance and the destruction of Sodom with surrounding cities. 15-29

Dawn comes in v15-16 but in spite of the angels' strong call to leave, Lot hesitates and it must be for the good life. Some suggest that it is due to concern for his family but not so, for all those worthy of care are already there with him. The angels have to actually take their hands to bring them out and it is solely out of compassion. In v17 they are to escape to the mountains and *not* to look back. Yet Lot will not accept the angels' words and do not trust in the safety of the mountains (18-22). Instead he negotiates for fleeing on to the small border city of Zoar. Carnal believers often doubt God's words and rather act out their own self conceived ideas. The angels grant his request for there is no time to waste. Destruction comes by fire and brimstone (23-26) and Lot's wife becomes a pillar of salt for looking back but perhaps also because of the delay from Lot's quibbling. Righteous Abraham is spared all these agonies and he observes the tragedy from a distance (27-29).

3. The progenies of Lot produced under situations of disgrace. 30-38

Finally in v30, Lot ends up in the mountains as the angels first requested, but afraid as Zoar's populace must be like the Sodomites. But v31-36 shows that his daughters are morally perverse for they instigate incest relationships with their father, resulting in the forefathers of the Moabites and Ammonites (37-38), two traditional enemies of the Jews.

Lesson to Ponder: Carnal Lot reaps nothing of spiritual value for himself, or for others.

Genesis 20: Abraham's repeated treachery and God's gracious deliverance. KV 6-7
Critics often regard chapter 20 as a variant copy of the same event on Abraham's failure in Egypt in 12:11-20. But it doesn't explain the differences in details on time, person and place. Moreover it seems inexplicable to repeat the first patriarch's flaw if this is not true.

1. Abraham's treachery at Gerar and God's warning to Abimelech. 1-7

Abraham's stature and intimacy with God has grown since 12:1. Yet amazingly in this chapter is a narrative on his glaring flaw, as he repeats his treachery in Egypt (12:11-20) and he is even less righteous than a local monarch. But this is firm testimony that the Abrahamic Covenant is unconditional, just as salvation today is by grace. In v1-2 is the background when for reasons unstated, Abraham moves to Gerar which is 50 miles south of Hebron. Abimelech is not a name but a title for Gerar's monarch, just as Pharaoh is for the Egyptian king. He takes Sarah into his harem after Abraham repeats the same lie that she is his sister, but is all this possible for she is now 89 years old? Note that this time the reason is not stated and it can simply be a usual practice for ancient monarch to extend their harem with foreign women. Still Sarah is perhaps equivalent to a present-day female of about 50, in an era where lifespan is much longer and for her it is 127 years (23:1). She has never being pregnant and so must still be rather attractive. Then Abimelech is much older than Sarah for in 26:2, his son interacts with Isaac who is yet to be born. Similarly today, an attractive 50 year old woman can draw the attention of men in their 70's. Regardless, the narrative just assumes the truth of the event without further explanation. But in spite of man's failure, His protection is assured and Abimelech is sternly warned in a dream (3-5). The monarch pleads innocence which God agrees but in v6 God is the one who keeps him from sin, for ignorance does not negate sin (Num. 15:27). So we can look on God's grace, not only to forgive but also to keep us from sin. In v7, He wants the monarch to restore Sarah and in spite of Abraham's failure, God calls him a prophet, the first time this honored title is used. Thus God's honor to His servant also comes by grace.

2. Abimelech's obedient responses and God's promised healing. 8-18

In v8-10 is Abimelech's response to his dream. The fear in his household is over divine destruction, for what has occurred to Sodom must be common knowledge. Abimelech wants Abraham to explain his lie. His reason in v11-13 is just a lack of faith and the fear of man. He's a man listed as a hero of faith in Heb. 11:8-10, showing that doubts do occur even after believing and it is God's grace that keep us saved to the end. Note that Abraham has been telling this lie since 12:4, which is for 25 years and his excuse in v12 is that it is a half-truth. Hence even a half-lie can have damaging effects. Abimelech is indeed more righteous but he is also generous in his restitution to Abraham in v14-16. This is so in material things but he similarly ensures in v16 that Sarah's public reputation is vindicated. It is unclear as to how the ancient custom works but probably the silver validates that the marriage is unconsummated and that he is the one at fault. Finally Abraham prays and the household is healed in v17-18. They have a disease that closes all wombs and also stops the king from consummating in v6 (perhaps an outbreak of acute Herpes?). It must be going on for months and not days, which is how God protects Sarah.

Lesson to Ponder: Abraham is less righteous and yet He upholds him as the prophet and healing comes after his prayer. Thus the upholding of our ministry is also by God's grace.

Genesis 21: Abraham's establishment of his heir and sojourning in Beersheba. KV 12, 32
Abraham is really doing well in the land before God's great test for him in chapter 22.

1. The birth of Isaac and the sending away of Ishmael. 1-21

Finally the child that God has promised is born in **v1-2**. It is not just the miraculous gift of the child but all related details such as the timing in 18:14 is as promised. In **v3-5**, Abraham is obedient to the full, first to name him Isaac as instructed (17:19) and also to circumcise him (17:10). He is 100 years old and has waited 25 years for it, emphasizing the fact that waiting is a key element of genuine faith. However when God finally fulfills His promise, the joy is immense as in Sarah's case (**6-7**). Yet consequences of their errors will not just disappear for by the efforts of the flesh, Ishmael is born (**Gal. 4:22-23**). He is the firstborn and has full legal right to be Abraham's heir. The problem emerges during the feast for Isaac's weaning, for Ishmael is found mocking his brother (**8-11**). Sarah's demand for Abraham to drive him out shouldn't be interpreted as vicious for in v10, she simply wants Isaac to be the sole heir, in line with God's promise in **17:19**. It greatly distresses Abraham but God affirms in **v12-13** that it is His will. In fact in Hebrew, it literally reads "through Isaac is the seed call". Note that in Hebrew "seed" has no plural form and thus it is translated "descendants". Yet the singular may be intended making it a strong hint on the messiah as in **3:15**. Amazingly God also promises in v13 that a strong nation will come from Ishmael and indeed today the Arabs believe that he is the father of their nation as stated in the Quran. In obedience Abraham in **v14** sends Hagar and her son away with just bread and water to the wilderness of Beersheba, an area of arid desert. So the near death experience in **v15-19** is almost predictable. But Hagar has faith and prays in v16, as the same angel of God whom she met in **16:7** saves them. But surely Abraham knows the danger of sending them into the desert and so why the heartless act? The only logical answer is that it is instructed by God and he just obeys. God wants to ensure a clear break between Ishmael and Abraham. Their divine rescue is also His plan to initiate their trust in Him and remove any need for returning to Abraham for help. Furthermore, God blesses them in **v20-21** so that there is no such necessity. This clear break in the OT is solely needed for the Quran states that Ishmael is definitely a legal heir of Abraham.

2. Covenant with Abimelech in Beersheba for mutual just dealing in the land. 22-34

This section shows that Abraham is really doing well in the land. Firstly the king in **v22-24** wants a treaty of peace and he instantly agrees for as always, peacemakers are blessed (**Matt. 5:9**). Abraham however takes the opportunity to complain to the king that his well has been seized (**25-26**). The king is not aware of this, indicating that complaining is not Abraham's usual practice but he will bring up an issue when the opportunity arises. This is the proper way to act in a foreign land. Finally Abraham is indeed generous (**27-32**), offering the king sheep and oxen on the sealing of their covenant. Ewes are valuable female lambs as shown by their usage in special OT sacrifices (Lev. 14:10; Num. 6:14). Yet he provides all of them for the ritual of the covenant. The outcome is so vital for he is now assured of his water rights, an essential in an arid land. So Abraham is wealthy, has a solid treaty with a king that deeply respects him and truly has all that he wants. He knows that this is all from God and shows it in **v33-34** by planting a tamarisk tree to honor Him.

Lesson to Ponder: Abraham is doing well, basking in His blessings. Yet his greatest test is in chapter 22. So when things are going well, do be ready for testing can just be ahead.

Genesis 22: God testing Abraham by requesting for sacrifice of Isaac. KV 1-2

Abraham's greatest test is really to appraise his faith to see if it results in obedience.

1. The test of Abraham's obedience in the offering of Isaac. 1-19

The context of the situation is given in v1-2. It is after all those things in chapter 21 when Abraham successfully deals with both problems at home and in the community. Thus his greatest test occurs when things are going on so well. Note that he is just being tested and the killing of Isaac is never going to occur. But God knows that it is difficult for He says "Isaac your only son", as Ishmael has now been driven away and "whom you love". Love is "ahab" in Hebrew and it's the first occurrence of the word in the OT. Then Isaac is his only heir and so how can the Abrahamic Covenant or his main contribution in life be fulfilled with the death of his son? Hence both emotionally and logically it's bewildering. This is the eighth appearance of God to him and it must be clear to Abraham that it is His command. The record shows that Abraham from his initial response in v2 saying "Here I am" to the end is solidly obedient, as he prepares in v3-6 all the necessary paraphernalia for the sacrifice. Isaac is now an adolescent and he even carries the wood himself. The secret of Abraham's strength is not given but fortunately it is found in the NT in Heb. 11:17-19. It is by faith, for he fully believes that God is able to raise Isaac from the dead if needed and is so sure that in v5 he tells his servants that with Isaac he will return. On arrival at Moriah which is today's Jerusalem, he willingly takes Isaac up the hill (6), who then asks his father for the lamb (7-8). Actually in v8, "provide" in Hebrew is "raah" meaning "to see" and the Jewish TNK OT translates it as "God will see to the sheep for His burnt offering". So Abraham in his answer is not hiding his intent but stating to Isaac his belief that God will see to this matter regarding the sheep. Isaac must have accepted the answer for in v9-10 he allows himself to be bound and Abraham finally in obedience is ready to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord who is Christ pre-incarnate (see 16:7-9 notes) restrains him (11-13) and even provides a ram for the sacrifice. He obviously passes the test for God acknowledges that he fears Him (12) and that he is obedient in v18. So is Abraham justified by works? The NT in Jas. 2:21-23 explains that only in the sense that works perfected his faith, as Abraham is still reckoned righteous because he believes in God (15:6). Yet his faith has matured to fully trust God, thus enabling him to obey such a difficult command. In v14, Abraham calls the place "God will provide" and it is in reference to the sacrificial lamb. Amazingly it's in Jerusalem that Jesus the Lamb of God is crucified for our atonement. Finally in v15-19, God reaffirms his covenant to Abraham but this time He swears by Himself. In Heb. 6:13-19 it's cited as the strongest possible affirmation for our salvation by faith. This is because Abraham's obedience (18) proves that his faith is real and on the basis of this faith he is made righteous (15:6).

2. Descendants of Nahor to show genealogy linkage of Rebekah, Isaac's wife. 20-24

God's promise of blessing Abraham's descendants is only possible if Isaac has a godly wife. However the Canaanites are pagans and so the sections describes Nahor's eight children by his wife Milcah (20-22) with granddaughter Rebekah (23) to be Isaac's wife in 24:67. The four children in v24 from the concubine Reumah is just an afterthought.

Lesson to Ponder: Real faith must result in works. But we must strive to mature, to trust Him fully, enabling us like Abraham to do the impossible for the Lord (Jer. 32:27).

Genesis 23: Burial of Sarah through the purchase of Machpelah Cave. KV 19-20
Sarah's burial and how Abraham finally owns a property in the Promised Land.

1. Sarah's funeral mourning and Abraham seeking out a burial ground. 1-9

In v1-2 Sarah dies at the ripe age of 127 years when Abraham is 137 years and Isaac 37 years old. They obviously mourn for her, but in v3-4, Abraham has to appeal to the sons of Heth who are Hittites in the land for a burial ground, admitting before them that he is still a stranger and just a sojourner. God actually promises Abraham in 17:8 to give him all the land in Canaan, but now in his old age, he doesn't even own a plot to bury his wife. So has the promise failed? Definitely not if the text is carefully studied, for in 17:8 the promise is for an everlasting possession and not temporal. Indeed in the Millennium, Abraham will be resurrected to possess the land forever. For now in the temporal, as Jesus states in Jn. 16:33 trials are expected, but fear not for He has overcome the world. The response from the sons of Heth shows the status of Abraham in that local community (4-6). He has spent his life walking with God among them and this is the result. First they call him a "mighty prince", but in Hebrew literally it is "nasi" for prince and amazingly the second word is "Elohim" or God Himself. The ESV is most accurate in translating it as "king of God" and it is the only time this title is used in the OT. So they recognize him firstly as a nobility representing God. This is a model for us who are living for God, that the community do see us as God's noble representative. Second, they are willing to offer him the choicest of graves. Abraham must have been fair and righteous in all his dealings with others and now they response in kind when he is in need. Lastly, they declare that "none" will refuse him, showing that there is no pocket of enmity against the man. As instructed in 1Thess. 3:12 we are to love "all people" and he must have practiced that in the land. Next, v7-9 is probably how Abraham conducts business with the local people. He is well prepared and knows precisely what he wants, requesting to speak to Ephron the Hittite. Business is done at the city's gate where the elders gathered and transactions are legally recognized. When it comes to finance it is vital to ensure that it is honorable both before God and man (2Cor. 8:21). Finally, Abraham wants to pay the full price, just as in 14:22-23, he wants them to know that he is enriched by God and not by the world.

2. Abraham's negotiation and purchase of the Machpelah Cave. 10-20

Abraham's wealth is in his livestock (13:2) and God must have led him to focus on it as he has not seek to own any property. Yet when he is in need, Ephron is sitting right there at the gate for God must have arranged it (11-12) and he even offers to give Abraham the field. Indeed it can be the ancient way of bargaining but the offer is done in the presence of all. It will be difficult to withdraw the offer if Abraham seeks to exploit it for his gain. But in v13-16, he pays the full price as requested without bargaining, a hefty 400 shekels (=10 lbs.) of silver. Finally, v17-18 makes it absolutely clear that Abraham legally pays for and owns the field and cave of Machpelah. It's now known from a copy of the ancient "Hittite Law Code" that in those days, legal ownership is in terms of the field and what is in it and cannot be just a cave. So the text harmonizes well with history. Sarah in v19-20 is laid to rest in a field that they truly own, which in fact they will possess for all eternity.

Lesson to Ponder: His promise will be fulfilled, no matter how humble the beginning. It is a small burial plot for Sarah now but **full** occupation of Canaan in the end (Jer. 32:41).

Genesis 24: Isaac marries Rebekah, a woman from Abraham's hometown. KV 67

Before the passing of Abraham, Isaac's marriage is most crucial and this is the narrative.

1. Abraham's mission for his chief servant to find a wife for Isaac. 1-10

It must be soon after Sarah's burial when Abraham gives his chief servant the mission. The servant is probably *not* Eliezer in 15:2 for 60 years have since transpired. In v1-4, a key demand is the servant to swear an oath, not to take a Canaanite woman but to bring one from his relatives in Haran. It is not stated as a requirement for God's covenant but it must be Abraham's wisdom. Canaanites are laden with sin (Deut. 18:10-12) and also a lineage that is cursed (9:25-26). It is akin to the command in 2Cor. 6:14 not to be yoked unequally. The servant in v5-8 tables a realistic problem that the lady may not return with him, having not seen Isaac. Abraham in v7 affirms that it's a mission of faith, trusting in God to lead. Not binding the servant to the oath in v8 if the lady refuses to return, shows that there is no demand that he exercises this same degree of faith. But in no way can he ever bring Isaac back. He takes the oath and sets out for the 500 miles journey (9-10).

2. The chief servant's experience to identify Rebekah the bride. 11-27

The servant's action plan is in v11-14. He prepares well and prudently goes to Nahor, the city named after Abraham's brother, to seek out his relatives. But why don't he approach them directly? In fact by faith he has a better plan, to first ask God to show him the right girl (12-13). His prayer is answered for it all happens in v15-20 even before he finishes speaking (15). God richly provides, for the servant's request (14) is a girl with an attitude to serve which is vital but Rebekah is also beautiful (16). Only after identifying the right girl, he ascertains her family background in v21-23. The gifts in v22 is to show that they have the means to lodge and thus to get in touch with her family. When he realizes that she is linked to Nahor (24), he praises God in v26-27 for guiding him to just the right girl.

3. The interaction with Rebekah's family for her departure to Canaan. 28-61

The servant meets up with Rebekah's family in v28-32. They are clearly followers of the same God for Laban her brother in v32 also calls Him "Lord" or YHWH in Hebrew. The servant has an entourage as evident in v32 but above all, even before the meal he wants to report his experience of faith and v33-48 is basically a retelling of v2-21. It is certainly a good thing to lay it all out, how their God is in it and he convinced them, for in the end they agree in v49-51 that this is His will. Hence it is not for them to decide anymore but simply to let Rebekah go. So the celebrations start in v52-53 but then Rebekah's family wants her to stay behind for 10 days (54-56). Laban in fact can be deceptive in his dealings (see 29:25) and who knows what all these negotiations can lead to? It is finally Rebekah who is firm and insists on leaving (57-61), with a departure's blessing in v60.

4. Isaac meeting Rebekah and their marriage. 62-67

The couple finally meets and Isaac is in Beer-lahai-roi where Hagar first met the Lord (16:14). This is so poignant for Isaac too is meeting the Lord in meditation (62-63). Then God brings the girl and they marry in v64-67, with Isaac happily fulfilled and comforted.

Lesson to Ponder: Abraham believes God (7) but the servant exercises a same degree of faith as shown by his prayers (12). So for all involved in His work, such faith is needed.

Genesis 25: Death of Abraham and early turbulence between Isaac's children. KV 8-9
With Abraham's passing, outcomes of God's elected and non-elected lines are described.

1. Abraham's other descendants and his death. 1-11

It is now revealed that Abraham has another wife Keturah and progenies of her are listed up to the third generation (1-4). In v6 and in 1Chron. 1:32, she is called a concubine and thus it is possible that he takes her even before Sarah's death. But definitely they are all born after Isaac for there is no tension of usurping his place as the firstborn. Two points ought not to be missed. First, when Abraham is rejuvenated to produce Isaac, it seems to be permanent, thus allowing him to have more children. Then there is good evidence that all the children listed here become tribes or kingdoms. The most familiar is Midian (2), in which Moses' wife belongs (Ex. 2:15-16). Thus the promise in 17:4 is precisely fulfilled. In v5-6, sending them off before his death with gifts is sound wisdom to reduce dispute, not unlike the wisdom today of making an appropriate will before our demise. Abraham dies in v7-8, exactly a century after leaving Haran to walk with God by faith (**Heb. 11:8**). He is fully satisfied with life although he has *not* seen the fulfillment of most of the promises of God. So the process of walking with God will already fully satisfy and not necessary the actualization of His promises. It is heartwarming to read that at his burial, both his sons are there to honor him (9-10) but still God's blessing is with Isaac (11).

2. An account of Ishmael. 12-18

Ishmael's 12 princes are listed in v12-16 to affirm that 17:20 is truly fulfilled. v17-18 is a brief summary of his life and the locations mentioned show that they settle in Arabia, in defiance or conflict with his relatives, the Jews to fulfill 16:12, which persists till today.

3. Account of Isaac and early turbulence within God's elected line. 19-34

The word "toledoth" or generation records is used the seventh time for Ishmael above in v12 and now in v19 the eighth time for Isaac. Rebekah is similarly barren but Isaac prays and his wife conceived (20-21). It seems to be done without any struggle and it must be Abraham teaching him on how to trust God. But her problem is unique in v22-23 for the fetuses' struggle is so intense that she has to "inquire" the Lord. In Hebrew it is "darash" and it means to ask God's prophet. It must be Abraham for he is the first to be designated in the OT (20:7). God then says to her vividly that the older and stronger twin will serve the younger. The twin's birth is in v24-26. Esau is red and hairy which actually denotes a manly image, while Jacob meaning "heel grabber" seems driven to overtake his brother even in the womb. The boys grow into young adults in v27-28 with different personality. The narrative then depicts Esau selling his birthright for a mere stew (29-34). Note that in v30 Jacob's stew must be attractive for Esau requests for it. Also in v32, he is surely not about to die for in a rich family, food must be easily available in the next tent. Esau just does not value his birthright and thinks nothing of the swearing to give it away. So v34 concludes that he simply despises his birthright. In **Heb. 12:15-16**, Esau is depicted as immoral (no values of right or wrong) and godless (do not care for God's view). If we disregard God's value system, we will be like Esau. A good antidote will be **Rom. 12:2**.

Lesson to Ponder. To prove God's election in **Rom. 9:10-12**, Paul uses v23 for before they are born, it's declared. Actually Jacob just needs to walk with God; he need not connive to deceive Esau. Instead deceptions leads to trouble and he has to flee in 27:43.

Genesis 26: Isaac living victoriously under God's covenant in Canaan. KV 2-3.
Abraham walks with God but will his progeny do it? For Isaac, it is given in this chapter.

1. Isaac's victories and weaknesses in Gerar. 1-25

This is the only chapter that is devoted solely to Isaac and it is after Abraham's death (25:8). It starts in v1-2 of a famine similar to the one in 12:10 and Isaac goes to Gerar in Philistine's territory. "Abimelech" is a title for Gerar's king as "Pharaoh" in Egypt. Like Abraham he must be planning to proceed to Egypt but God's command is for him to stay in the land. We can look to godly forbearers as example but one must be alert for God to lead differently. Indeed in v2 He promises to lead Isaac in a precise manner. Then in v3-5 God renews the Abrahamic covenant with Isaac. In 15:6, Abraham is reckoned righteous based on his faith. Yet this covenant is passed on to the next generation because in v5 he is obedient, for it proves that his faith is real. Salvation is by faith but its fruits on earth is definitely a result of obedience (Matt. 7:16-17). But salvation for Isaac personally must also be by faith as affirmed by the event in v6-11. Instantly after He renews His covenant, Isaac succumbs to the same weakness as Abraham, lying that his wife is his sister (7). There is no need for God has already ingrained His fear in the gentiles' hearts. In v11, capital punishment is even declared for anyone who touches them. So Isaac is just as sinful and accepted only by His grace. As Isaac walks with God in v12-17, there is both immense blessings but also difficulties. When God leads, Isaac achieves massive success even in agriculture (12), a new area for him. He becomes really great for in v13, wealth in Hebrew is "gadal" or great in stature. Yet it is this attribute that arouses the envy of the gentiles. In v15 they fill up his wells and then the king also asks him to leave (16). Isaac departs to a valley on the fringe in v17 but difficulties persist in v18-22 as herdsmen keep quarrelling with him over water rights. But note that Isaac's response is always peaceful as he moves on (Rom. 12:18). It must be also because the Canaanites are still not ripe for judgment (15:15-16). Then even with strife, God finally makes a well for him (22) as He always will for us, when we walk with Him. God must have led Isaac to move on in v23-25 to Beersheba where He reaffirms His promise and Isaac builds his first altar to God.

2. Isaac's covenant with Abimelech. 26-35

Like Abraham in 21:22-23, the king seeks to make a covenant with Isaac (26-29). He comes with Phicol, a title for his commander-in-chief. First Isaac is honest and frank to the king (27) over previous hostilities but second in v30-31, he willingly makes an oath of peace. There is no hint for revenge which is the proper response (Rom.12:19). Third, the king proclaims in v28 that the Lord is with him leading to fear in their hearts. This should be the impact of our lives when we walk closely with God that all around can see that He is with us to enhance and protect us. The finding of the well in v32-33 occurs right after the oath to confirm that God is in the whole arrangement. Note that Isaac calls the well Shibah meaning 'oath' but not the city, for Beersheba which means 'well of oath' is already named by Abraham (21:31). Verse 33 is merely to explain why the city's name persists till this day. Finally v34-35 is a postscript of Esau's marrying Hittites. This is what we often cannot control, the marriage of progeny and it can cause the greatest grief.

Lesson to Ponder: Isaac repeats much of Abraham's experiences (e.g. v15). It is good in striving to repeat godly actions of the past but be ready also to accept their difficulties.

Genesis 27: Jacob's deception to acquire Isaac's patrimonial blessing. KV 35-36

Passing the Abrahamic Covenant to Isaac's progenies isn't simple and it begins in this chapter.

1. The plot and circumstances of the deception. 1-29

Many years have transpired and now Isaac is old with failing eyesight (**1**). The narrative in the chapter suggests that hostility exist within the family but why is this so? There are clues in the text to provide the answer. In **v1-4** Isaac intends to give a blessing before his death, which has the legal power of a will to his progenies. But he selects Esau and this is the *first* clue. God has declared in **25:23** that the older shall serve the younger and Isaac is not acting accordingly but instead he follows his fleshly tendency. He loves Esau more mainly because of his taste for wild game (**25:28**). So Isaac in his old age is not careful to follow all of God's word but acts according to the flesh. Next in **v5-10** is Rebekah's plot after hearing Isaac's words for she wants Jacob to be the heir. Actually this is in line with 25:23 but surely, plotting to deceive is not according to God's statutes (**Ps. 119:118**). So a *second* clue is that Isaac's negligence in following God's word has infiltrated into the family culture. Details of the plot is in **v11-17** and Jacob disagrees, not the ethical aspect but rather the plot's feasibility. However Rebekah insists on her own ways and demands obedience to her commands (**8, 13**). She is not only un-submissive but connives in many ways to deceive Isaac. This is unlike Sarah who brings her issues to Abraham (**21:9-10**), who may disagree but God can change his heart (**21:12**). No wonder **1Pet. 3:5-6** extols Sarah as a model of holiness. Thus a *third* clue is that the family is not aptly under the headship of Isaac. Then in **v18-24**, Jacob effectively executes the plot but it is filled with deceitful words. The *fourth* clue is evident in **v20** with Jacob's lie that God has helped him. Such confirmation of falsehood is taking His name in vain, prohibited in **Ex. 20:7**. Christian families tend to attribute their activities to God but without full sincerity of the heart, which is definitely an error (Mk. 7:6). In **v25-29**, Isaac is indeed convinced and confers his blessing. In it the headship of the clan is conferred (29) but also the earth's fatness and supremacy over nations which are components of the Abrahamic Covenant.

2. Deception uncovered and Esau's subsequent grudge. 30-45 (v46 with chapter 28)

The plot is revealed when Esau returns (**30-33**) but his response in **v34-36** shows that he is still angry with Jacob for ensnaring him to sell his birthright, insisting that he is rightly named Jacob which means supplanter. It's the *fifth* clue showing that bitterness is allowed to exist in the family, which should be dealt with (Heb. 12:15). Esau speaks to Isaac as a matter of fact regarding his birthright and so he knows. It should exclude Esau from the Abrahamic Covenant but still Isaac seeks to bless him. Ultimately Isaac shows a change of heart for when Esau pleads for another blessing in **v37-38**, he actually gives an anti-blessing (**39-40**) and now follows God's command, asserting that Esau will serve Jacob. Isaac's action is eulogized in **Heb. 11:20** and indeed obeying God, against one's fleshly tendency, can only be achieved by faith. Still in **v41-45** there's consequence in Rebekah's deceptions. Esau plans to kill Jacob and he must leave to avoid the bloodshed. In **v44**, her cry means that she has lost Esau and hope to save Jacob. But Jacob will be away for 20 years (31:40), never to see her again. So truly she is bereaved of both her sons in one day. The outcome will surely be better if she trusts God like Sarah to submit fully to Isaac.

Lesson to Ponder: Even a patriarch's family do deteriorate to such hostility. It bequeaths godly families to meditate on the clues above and work hard on it to avoid these woes.

Genesis 28: Jacob sent to Haran, meeting God en route in a dream. KV 11-12

Jacob is sent away initiating a series of events that will test and establish his faith in God.

1. Isaac sends Jacob to Haran to seek a wife from their relatives. 1-9

The narrative continues from Esau in 27:41 resolving to kill Jacob and it is reported to Rebekah. To prevent it she moans to Isaac in 27:46 that Jacob mustn't marry a Canaanite, so that he will send him away. Again her intention is valid but it's conniving, without full disclosure to Isaac. As such, Isaac's family is not a model of godliness and perhaps this is the reason for Jacob's departure, that God can mold him in His ways. So in v1-2 Jacob is sent off to Haran, 500 miles away to seek a wife from Laban, Rebekah's brother. Then in v3-5, Isaac blesses Jacob knowingly for the first time, in obedience and not according to his flesh. It is so different from his blessing in 27:28-29 which focuses on carnal results such as fatness of the land and dominance over others. Now it is on fruitful multiplication (as in God's blessing of 1:28) and the blessing of Abraham to possess the land. He is in fact persisting with his change of heart to follow God's will. The godly attitude seems to start diffusing downwards in v6-10. In v8, Esau realizes that his Canaanite's marriages displease his father and this is the stated reason for his marriage to Ishmael's daughter, a relative in the family (9). Esau must have persisted in this path of positive change, for when Jacob returns 20 years later, to his surprise Esau is a totally changed man (33:4).

2. Jacob's heavenly dream and his vow to God. 10-22

Jacob leaves for Haran and that very night he encounters God in a dream (10-11). It is clear evidence that God intends to work and mold him into His image. He dreams of a ladder or a staircase up to heaven in v12 but most pertinent is the Lord's declaration in the dream. In v13-14 God reaffirms the Abrahamic Covenant to Jacob, regarding the land and the magnitude of their descendants (cf. 15:5-7) but also the promise of blessing the world through them (cf. 22:18). However unique in this reaffirmation is v15 when God gets really personal with Jacob. He offers His very *presence* to be with him but also His *protection* wherever he goes. Next He *promises* to bring him home to this land and lastly even a *pledge* of not leaving him until all things are completed. Up till now, there is no evidence that Jacob has a close walk with God and it's apparent that God is offering him this valuable opportunity. Jacob awakes in v16-17 declaring that the Lord is in this place, thus recognizing that it's an encounter with God. In v17, he also expresses holy fear for in Hebrew, fear and awesome is "yare" or "holy fear". In fact he sees himself standing at the very gate of heaven. Next in v18-19 is Jacob's response of worship by setting up a pillar, pouring oil and renaming the place Bethel or The House of God. Finally Jacob's vow in v20-22 is often interpreted as bargaining with God but the Hebrew text has no such hint. Firstly all of his requests in v20-21 have already been unqualifiedly promised by God (v15) and there isn't a need for bargaining. Then it is hard to imagine that Jacob's response of fear and worship (17-19) switches next to an attitude of bargaining. Thirdly the 'if' in v20 is 'im' in Hebrew, which can mean since or surely. When it is substituted for 'if' in v20, all hints of bargaining vanishes and it becomes Jacob's oath of gratitude to honor God, to build His house and to start tithing (22) which is practiced up till this day.

Lesson to Ponder: God offers Jacob a close walk with Him and he responded with fear, worship and an oath of gratitude, to change his life forever. We can do it too (Deu. 4:29).

Genesis 29: Jacob integrates into Laban's family marrying his two daughters. KV 27
Jacob starts out on his own and as he establishes his family, he will be cheated by Laban his father in law. But he lives through it all, by trusting in God as stated in **31:7, 41-42**

1. Jacob in helping to water Rachel's flock, contacted Laban. 1-14

Jacob journeys on and in **v1-3** he probably encounters his first well near Haran. It turns out that those by the well do know his uncle Laban (**v4-6**). Even more amazing is that it is the well where Rachel, Laban's daughter waters her flock. It is similar to Abraham's servant being led by God to meet Rebekah at the spring in 24:14-15. So as promised in **28:15**, God is indeed leading Jacob on to fulfil His will. Next, Jacob will meet up with Rachel in v10, when he will roll the large stone mentioned in v2 from the well. But first, **v7-8** explains the reason behind his action. In v7 Jacob is actually querying the three shepherds by the well, as a fellow professional on the pasturing of sheep. Jacob being a nomadic shepherd has spent his entire life doing it and he tells them that it is still "high day", meaning that it is very early in the day. Instead of gathering the flock to let them rest around the well, they should quickly water and release them for pasture and thus to feed for the rest of the day. They reply in v8 that it is not possible because their custom is to wait for *all* users of the well to gather. Only then will they remove the stone to water their flocks. The reason is probably to avoid undue repeated soiling of the well and to ensure proper sharing of the water. In **v9-10**, Rachel arrives with her father's flock and Jacob acts for this is the right professional action to take as a shepherd. Such a mindset, doing what he believes to be right is approved in the NT (**Phil. 4:8**). So he removes the stone to water her flock even though it is a large stone, making it a demanding task. Some commentators see it as God endowing Jacob with super power to remove the stone but in fact this is not stated in the text. Next in **v11-14** is the meet up with Rachel and Laban. So often commentators paint the kiss of Rachel in v11 as romantic in nature but Laban does the same for Jacob in v13. It is more an intimate embrace of relatives for Rebekah has been away for 97 years and the "things" narrated by Jacob must be a multitude of facts to update one another. It is a reunion that God will use to work on Jacob's life.

2. Laban's deception of Jacob in serving him 14 years for his two daughters. 15-30

The warm reunion must have disarmed Jacob and his trust in Laban is complete as they discuss about wages in **v15-20**. The two daughters are attractive in their own ways (16-17). In Hebrew, weak is "rak" or gentle and it probably means attractive eyes, a crucial feature in a culture where veiling is common. But Rachel has both a beautiful face and form, or "toar" in Hebrew meaning her figure. Jacob has fallen deep in love with her and Laban uses it to retain him. It is a blissful seven years and when it ends, Jacob requests for Rachel's hand (**21-22**). Laban seems amiable to arrange a wedding but after that his true self is revealed. In **v23-26** Laban deceives Jacob and Leah is given instead. It's really the deceiver being deceived, as Jacob deceives Isaac and Esau. A good way for God to teach Jacob the ill effect of his sin is allowing him to experience it. In **v27-30**, Jacob serves another seven years which he accepts because of his love for Rachel. Jacob will have many children from his wives in **v31-35** which will be included with chapter 30.

Lesson to Ponder. Laban may deceive but as always God can turn what is meant for evil to be for good (**50:20**). From Jacob's wives and maids will issue the 12 tribes of Israel.

Genesis 30: Jacob establishing his family and prosperity with God's help. KV 30
Amidst family, relative and work conflicts, God still establishes His will in Jacob's life.

1. The procreation of Jacob's progenies by his four wives. 29:31-30:24

The chapter is filled with self-conceived ideas of how God will act but it turns out to be incorrect. The birth of Leah's first four sons is in 29:31-35 and God does it in view of the fact that Leah is unloved (31). So God cares even for the affairs of an individual family. Leah, for the first three sons, thinks that God will use it to turn Jacob into loving her. It didn't happen but Leah to her credit, changes her focus to God alone and names the fourth child Judah to stress that she is just praising God. She then stops bearing but the reason for this is not given. In v1-8 Rachel is driven by jealousy and even wants Jacob to play God in giving her a child (1-2). Then like Sarah, she gives her maid Bilhah to Jacob resulting in two new-born sons. Rachel self-contrives that God has vindicated her (6) and that she prevails (8) in her wrestling with her sister. Obviously she does not for Leah will soon be doing the same with her maid Zilpah in v9-13 to deliver two more sons. *This is merely His sovereign will to produce progenies for the 12 tribes and these self-conceived interpretations are not edifying.* However Leah responses to Zilpah's births seem more mature as she sees herself as fortunate (11) and happy (or 'blessed' in Hebrew - v13) with no hint of scoring an advantage over her sister. It doesn't mean she has stopped trying for in v14-21, she trades the mandrakes for a night with Jacob. It needn't be envisaged in v15 that Rachel has full control of Jacob's conjugal rights for he accepts Zilpah from Leah as wife. Perhaps Jacob has arranged who he sleeps with on a regular basis and Rachel just trades her night for the mandrakes. This plant is a known aphrodisiac but the credit of all births is given to God alone. So Leah sees her new births as wages (18) and a gift (20) from God, again with no negative slight on her sister. In v20 all she wants from Jacob is honor which is what Zebulun means and this is justified (1Pet. 3:7). Leah also has Dinah (21) which is for the story in chapter 34, for there are other daughters (37:35). Finally it is God who gives Rachel a son in v22-24 and she sees it as taking away her reproach or disgrace. She has to wait many years but what a great honor for Joseph will save the clan.

2. Jacob building up his prosperous herds in spite of Laban's deception. 25-43

Jacob enters into discussion with Laban on returning to Canaan (25-26) who indeed tries to persuade him to stay for Jacob's service has benefitted him greatly (27-30). Jacob's decision probably stems from his dream in 31:10-13 when God asks him to return and it must also be the basis for his strange request on the differing colored sheep and goats in v31-33. This is unusual as sheep and lambs are usually white, while goats are dark brown or black. Actually Jacob is requesting what he sees being produced by God in his dream. Laban agrees but deceives Jacob again (34-36) by first removing the colors requested to minimize the needed gene pool and the three days journey in v36 negates any chance of cross mating. Jacob is not deterred and it must be his trust in God's dream. He uses in v37-43 striped rods to encourage the animals to mate, often interpreted as the means to also produce the differing colors. This is not stated in the text but clearly in 31:9-10 Jacob gives God the credit. The result is the large flocks and servants of his own in v43.

Lesson to Ponder: In v31, Jacob wants nothing from Laban except an agreed wage for the future. Real faith entails avoiding impressions that the world has enriched us (14:23).

Genesis 31: Jacob deceives Laban to flee Haran for Canaan. KV 26

The chapter shows how well God protects and leads Jacob as He promised in 28:15.

1. Jacob decides to flee from Haran with family under God's guidance. 1-21

A result of Jacob's wealth, as is often the case is hostility, from both Laban and his sons (1-3). So in v3, God instructs Jacob to return to Canaan and it seems to be by direct communication. Jacob calls his wives to the field for a private discussion on the matter (4-9). First, he extols God as the reason for all his benefits (5). Indeed he serves Laban with all his strength and yet in return he is cheated 10 times (6-7). In the end it is God who protects him by controlling the colors of the flocks, affirming that it isn't due to the striped rods Jacob devises in 30:37. Then Jacob tells of a dream where God shows him the births of animals in differing colors (10-13). This is not the v3 communiqué and must be in time past as the differing colors was the basis for his wages' negotiation in 30:32. In v13, God already calls for his return and this is in his initial negotiation with Laban in 30:25. In the end his wives agree to his return (14-16) and so the journey begins (17-18). But note that his wives' consent is not so much driven by God's call for his return, but that their wealth is rightfully theirs (16). This perhaps explains why Rachel steals Laban's idols (terephim in Hebrew) in v19-21. In those days these are evidence of ownership and she must have taken them to ensure that Laban's sons have no claim over what they own. She obviously does not worship the idols for it is disrespect to place them in one's saddle (34). Yes, it's vital for the wives to agree but the correct reason for it must also be clear.

2. Laban pursues Jacob and their confrontation at Gilead. 22-42

When Laban knows of Jacob's departure, he aggressively pursues them (22-24). But God speaks to him in a dream and he must neither speak "good or bad" to Jacob. So he must not harm Jacob but neither must he attract him back by good appeal. Laban catches up with them at Gilead, just east of the Jordan River (25-26). He confronts Jacob in v27-30 for deceiving him (27-30) and pretends that he misses a joyful farewell. In Hebrew, the word for son and grandson is the same and so the grandchildren are included in v28. He confirms in v29, that God's dream plays a direct role for his action of not harming Jacob but in v30, he calls the idols or "terephim" as "my gods" affirming that he is a pagan. So God can drive fear even into the hearts of unbelievers. Jacob insists on his innocence in v31-32 and as he does not know of Rachel's stealing of the idols, he even promises death for the offender. So in v33-35 is Laban's extensive search for the idols. Rachel's claim in v35 is that she is menstruating but it again suggests that she has no religious respect for these idols as this will make them unclean. In v36-42, Jacob becomes angry at just the right time to stop Laban's search. So God is protecting his family in spite of Rachel's mistake and it is based on Jacob's faith. This is spelt out so precisely in v42 that it is God seeing his affliction and toil, and protects him by passing judgment in the dream in v24.

3. The establishment of their covenant at Mizpah. 43-55

In those days, serious actions are confirmed by a covenant (43-49). Laban wants for his family proper treatment and no wars in the future (50-52) and it is then sealed in v53-55.

Lesson to Ponder: Laban is a pagan and yet when it comes to confirming a covenant, he puts his trust in the God of Jacob (48-49) and Abraham (52-53), rather than on his idols.

Genesis 32: Jacob prepares to meet Esau but prevails in his struggle with God. KV 28
After 20 years Jacob returns to Canaan to confront his animosity with Esau.

1. Jacob's arrival in Canaan and message to contact Esau. 1-5

Jacob departs from Canaan with a dream of angels (28:12) and now on his return in v1-2, a meeting with angels must be God's way of assuring him. Mahanaim means two camps to stress that his camp is there with God's camp. Jacob sends messengers to Esau in v3-5 embracing two vital principles for peace. In humility he calls himself a servant and Esau his Lord. Then he lays down his purpose outright (5), which is to find favor with Esau. The description of his wealth is to affirm that he's not back to grab any of his inheritance.

2. Fearful news of Esau's coming and Jacob's preparations. 6-23

The messengers return with alarming news that Esau is coming to meet him with 400 men (6). In fear Jacob prepares for the worst; firstly he divides his entourage into two companies (7-8) so that if attacked, at least one party will escape. There is no indication in the text that this is inappropriate for indeed one should be prepared but victory depends on the Lord (Pro. 21:31). So his ensuing step is to pray for deliverance in v9-12. At least two points are worthy of note. He is fully conscious of God's grace, admitting that he had started only with his staff and now He has given him two companies (10). Yet he is not dependent on what he now has but more on God's promises (12). Next, Jacob does all he can to placate the situation. The company in front must be his servants and livestock and he prepares a lavish gift of 580 animals for Esau (13-21). It even includes milking camels (15) whose milk is known to be peculiarly sweet and wholesome. He also works out the optimal presentation, moving them out in droves with pleasant words from his servants that they are presents for Esau (18). It demonstrates generosity which is always helpful in making peace but it also shows details of his wealth and how much God has blessed him. In v20 Jacob states that the present is to "appease" Esau. In Hebrew this is "kaphar" the same word for atonement. So Jacob now knows that he is in the wrong and the animals are an imagery of sin sacrifices. Lastly he takes the other company behind in v22-23, his immediate family, across the Jabbok River ready to meet Esau, with all that he possesses.

3. Jacob's mysterious wrestle with a divine being to obtain His blessing. 24-32

It is evident that Jacob wants to be alone for he sends his family away in v23. Since he has seen angels of God in the area (v1) he most likely aspires to somehow meet with the divine to plead for His blessing. The result is the struggle of v24-29. As he is certain in v30 that he has seen God, the struggle must be with God Himself. If this is so, then the "not prevailed" in v25 is His gracious concession to Jacob. A key point is Jacob wanting God to bless him and persists in this even after he is dislocated (25). It is clear that Jacob struggles immensely in life and in spite of the pain he persists in following God. This is a quality that is valued by Him for He changes his name to Israel or "God struggles" to signify that this should always be the case and not to be "Jacob" which means "grapping heals". The wrestling event is perhaps God's way to ingrain this truth into Jacob. It is so historic that name and symbol are made for remembrance in the life of the nation (30-32).

Lesson to Ponder: God allows all kinds of hurts in our lives to refine us but like Jacob we must persist to follow Him in spite of his failures and let God be his protector (31:7).

Genesis 33: Jacob's safe arrival in Canaan after reconciliation with Esau. KV 4, 18
The chapter shows how much the two brothers have changed and it is the work of God.

1. Jacob's encounter and reconciliation with Esau. 1-17

Esau has finally arrived and Jacob divides his family into three groups (1-2). The meeting with Esau is in v3-4 and the result is totally unexpected for Esau embraces and kisses him while they both wept. It is a powerful picture of how God can change lives. In v3, Jacob puts himself at the greatest risk, coming out in front to meet Esau, humbly bowing seven times. After striving to walk with God for 20 years, he is no more the old self-centered and devious Jacob. Esau started acting positively to obey Isaac in 28:7-9 taking a wife within the family. The positive trend must have continued for he is no more embittered but full of love for Jacob. The 400 men coming with Esau must be because Jacob's return is joyful news for the clan and so many come along to see him. In v5-7 the reason for the three groups is now clear and it's for presentation of the family to Esau. It's no secret that he loves Rachel above all and even Leah has accepted this. So she comes along last as the most honored wife. Jacob continues to show himself honest and generous in v8-11 regarding his gifts to Esau. He maintains the honesty in 32:5 that all this is to get Esau's favor. His urging for Esau to accept the gift shows genuine generosity for the old devious Jacob will certainly take some of it back. Both brothers seem to be well off indicating that God has been good to them as they walk with Him. Then in the spirit of caring, Esau makes two offers of assistance which Jacob declines. Firstly in v12-14 is the offer to lead Jacob's family to his dwelling in Seir. The reason for the decline is clearly stated in v13. Esau makes the trip with 400 men in one day. This is definitely too much for Jacob's tired entourage and the flocks may even die. Then for Esau's second offer in v15-16, as Jacob says "what need is there?" for he has ample servants with him. Esau accepts the reasons for with Jacob's entourage before him, their fatigue and multiple servants must be apparent. Thus Esau's return to Seir in v16 must be in a positive note. It shows that even after a loving reunion among brothers, they should persist to do that which is proper for their own families. Finally in v17, Jacob makes a stop in Succoth, just a few miles west. Note that he only makes booths or "sukkah" in Hebrew which are very temporary shelters and these become the basis for naming the site. The word house or "bayit" in Hebrew can also mean a dwelling place and it couldn't be a proper house for in v19, even on his own land, Jacob lives in tent. Commentators often take v17 as Jacob's deception of Esau in *not* going to Seir and he is back to his old self. But it is just a temporary stop for rest, a need clearly stated in v13-14 so that he can then proceed in his own leisure to Seir.

2. Jacob's arrival in Canaan and encampment in his own property. 18-20

Jacob formally arrives in Canaan in v18, to Shechem across the Jordan River and it states that he is from Paddan-aram, the place of origin. If it states that he is from Succoth, then perhaps it affirms that he has *not* gone to Seir. But as such, he has probably travelled to Seir and then to Shechem and so v18 depicts the journey from the beginning to the arrival point. He has arrived and proceeds to buy a piece of land in v19 but the unit of money is not defined. In v20 he even erects his first altar calling it "God, the true God of Israel".

Lesson to Ponder: With a changed life, God is able to fulfill His plan for Jacob. We too must change, to put on the new man for God to fulfill His plans in us (Eph. 4:23-24).

Genesis 34: The rape of Dinah and treachery of Jacob's sons. KV 29-31

The narrative in chapter 34-38 shows that Israel is not excelling in godliness but are in danger of sinful integration with the Canaanites. Ultimately a transfer to Egypt is needed.

1. The rape of Dinah and the negotiations for settlement. 1-17

Based on Joseph's birth in 30:23-24 and his age in 37:2, Jacob must have already spent 10 years in the city Shechem and Dinah is about 17 years of age. Jacob is a changed man but this is not evident in his family as narrated in v1-4. The Hebrew for "visit" is "raah", same word as for "shepherding". So it suggests an intimate visit with intense interest. She "went out" to do this and must be without the proper chaperon. Thus in v2 she is raped by Shechem, son of Hamor who is the ruler of the city. But the young man has evidently fallen in love with her and calls Hamor to formally secure her as his wife. The incident is made known to Jacob and his sons (v5-7). Their responses differ, with Jacob being more controlled (5), displaying his spiritual maturity (Pro. 15:18), while his sons are grieved and very angry. Hamor's offer in v8-10 is so attractive for he is offering them not only the right to trade but also to acquire property. Ancient records show that this is extremely attractive for nomads. Then in v11-12, Shechem makes *no* request for any dowry but is willing to give whatever they want for their favor. It is sincere for he is even willing to be circumcised (24). The incident shows that the push for Israel to assimilate is intense, like the lure for believers to love this world, which they must avoid (1Jn. 2:15). There are at least two issues in the offer that are displeasing to the Lord. Firstly God does not approve any intermarriage with Canaanites. Abraham is clear on this (24:3) and later Deu. 7:3-4 states it as a command. Thus becoming "one people" (22) with them will surely turn the Jews away from the Lord. Secondly the act of rape, deemed by the Jews as defile (5, 13) is not addressed at all in the offer. The ethics of the Hivites are obviously twisted and the Jews will be integrating with a decadent culture. So Jacob's sons make a counter offer in v13-17, but with deceit. Jacob is not involved (13) and it must be true, for later after the event, he rebukes them. The offer is sinful for it is returning evil for evil (Rom. 12:17) and also they degrade circumcision, the mark of God's covenant. But it's done to rescue Dinah who is still their hostage (26) and God must have allowed it to avert assimilation.

2. The agreement of the Hivites for full circumcision. 18-24

The Hivites agree to Israel's offer, very much driven by Shechem's passion for Dinah (18-20). He is deeply respected in the city (20) and it must be a reason for their success in persuading all the men to ridiculously circumcised (21-23). Yet the big incentive is v23, a promise that the wealth of these rich nomads can be theirs. In v24, the men's consent also means that they ignore his sinful act of raping, thus making them in a way accountable.

3. Simeon and Levi's slaughter and looting of the Hivite community. 25-31

The deceit works for after three days when Simeon and Levi massacre the men, they are unable to resist, being still in pain (25-26) and the city is also looted (27-29). All actions are condemned by Jacob as he rebukes the two sons for their violence in v30 and 49:5-7, with consequences of being scattered in Israel, to be fulfilled in Deu. 10:9 and Jos. 19:1.

Lesson to Ponder: In v31 the two sons have a valid reason, namely to denounce harlotry but it doesn't justify the violence. Even for a valid reason, the responses can be sinful.

Genesis 35: Jacob's final excursions in Canaan before reunion with Isaac. KV 27

God reaffirms the Abrahamic Covenant with Jacob but his struggles in life continues.

1. Jacob's journey to Bethel and meeting with God in that city. 1-15

After the tragedy in Shechem, God calls Jacob to depart for Bethel about 30 miles away **(1-4)**. God wants him to build an altar and it is unique for all previous altars are built as a response in worship, rather than being ordered by Him. But Jacob has vowed in **28:20-22** that if God helps him to return safely to Canaan, he will build God's house, i.e. a place of worship in Bethel. Actually Jacob knows that God has indeed helped him all the way (3) but has been slow in fulfilling his part of the vow. So God graciously calls him to fulfill it and Jacob to his credit takes it up seriously. He calls his household to clear up internally all idols and outwardly to be ceremonially clean. There is an overwhelming response in v4 for even symbols of idolatry, such as rings are surrendered and disposed. Indeed if the internal cleansing is genuine, the external will fall in place. God's faithfulness is instantly apparent for Jacob's greatest fear in **34:30** that the Canaanites will be violent against him never materialize on the way to Bethel **(5-6)** for God has instilled fear in their hearts. In **v7-8** he arrives in Bethel and build the altar, even honoring God by calling that site El-Bethel or God of the House of God. It is so unusual then to report the death of Rebekah's maid Deborah which is definitely a painful experience for "Allon-bacuth" means the Oak of Weeping. It must be that on Jacob's return to Canaan, Rebekah has already died but is survived by her maid who is with her since Haran (24:59). Deborah must be like a mother to Jacob on his return and thus the report of her death. The report shows that even when Jacob walks with God, the painful struggles in his life continues. God then appears to him in **v9-12**, a second time since leaving Haran, the first being the wrestle with Him at Peniel (32:30). Jacob is clearly committed to walk with God, who aptly reaffirms with him the Abrahamic covenant. In v11, the nations coming from him must be referring to the North and South Kingdoms that emerge after Israel is divided. The new name of Israel in v9 is often criticized by liberals as a redundant repeat of **32:28**. But actually 32:28 is merely a prediction of Jacob's new name, which he never uses until after v9. Now for the first time God "calls" him Israel and subsequently the name is used (e.g. 37:3). Jacob ardently worships God in **v13-15** but again *is* v15 a needless repeat of **28:19** in naming of Bethel? Not so, for Jacob is alone in 28:19 but now 30 years later he is the head of a huge clan. It seems reasonable to repeat a distant memory and ensure that Bethel is well recognized.

2. Tragedies encountered after Bethel. 16-22

The struggles in Jacob's life continues in **v16-21**. First is Rachel's death, the woman he loves and it is in childbirth. The midwife encourages her in v17, actually an answer to the prayer in **30:24**. Yet it comes with unexpected adversity namely her demise. Jacob takes it in his stride, as evident by renaming Benomi (son of sorrow) to Benjamin (son of my right hand). Then the adultery of his firstborn Reuben **(22)** which must be excruciating.

3. Details on the family, ending the reading (toldot) on Isaac with his death. 23-29

A summary of the 12 sons is again provided **(23-26)** before Jacob's actual reunion with Isaac in Hebron **(27)**. Isaac dies in **v28-29** at 180 and is thus blessed with 12 more years with Jacob but it means that he also witnesses the tragedy of Joseph's abduction to Egypt.

Lesson to Ponder: Jacob struggles. But he holds on to God and never gives up **(32:26)**.

Genesis 36: Descendants of Esau and pedigree information on the Edomites. KV 1
Two toledots are on Esau, the 9th for his descendants and the 10th as the Father of Edom.

1. Pedigree information and location of Esau and his descendants. 1-19

Israel will come from Jacob for God has chosen him to be the ancestor of His people (**Rom. 9: 10-11**). Yet amazingly, two toledots in chapter 36 are devoted to descendants of Esau, indicating that He cares also for the other offspring of the godly line. In **v1-4**, the ninth toledot begins on Esau's wives and children. One problem is with the names of his wives, for they are different from **26:34** and **28:9**, which liberals tend to label as mistakes in the OT. But it is common practice in those days to change names according to their experiences in life. In v2, the two wives (Adah and Oholibanmah) have typical Canaanite names but in 26:34, they are Judith (female form of Judah) and Basemath, which are Jewish names. So v2 must be using their names at birth, a usual format for a pedigree and these are changed after their marriage to Esau. Then in v3, Basemath must be given at birth and she changes it to Mahalath, a string instrument, due to her interest in music. It is in line with v1 using Esau his given name and putting Edom the changed name (25:30) in parenthesis. Esau in total has five sons from his three wives and next in **v5-8** is Esau's relocation to Seir or Edom east of Jordan. Esau is already frequently in Seir (e.g. 32:3) but this is migration of his entire clan. Obviously in v7, ample land resources is the issue and he is willing to concede the land to Jacob. Esau has perhaps accepted the reality of God's blessing in **27:28-29** as shown also by his full embrace of Jacob in 33:4. One need never fear in conceding, so as to follow God's will for He will care for us. So **Deut. 2:5** states that Seir is given to Esau as a possession. Then **v9-14** begins a 10th toledot to show that in this new site he is the Father of the Edomites with five sons and ten grandsons. Then 14 of them are relisted in **v15-19** but as "chiefs". These are so productive that they become tribes in Edom, affirming that Esau's relocation is much blessed by God.

2. Pedigree information for Seir of the Horites living in Edom. 20-30

The Horites are the original dwellers in Edom even before Esau. Seir's pedigree is given because of their genealogical link with Esau. The sons of Seir are in **v20-21** and in **v22-28** is the grandchildren. In v25 is Oholibamah, Esau's wife and v22 has Timnah, the concubine of Eliphaz, son of Esau. It is now apparent why Esau is often found in Edom for he is related to the inhabitants by marriage and it will make his relocation much easier. Still v7 states that his migration is because of conceding the limited resources of the promise land to Jacob. But it suggests that God has prepared him ahead of time for His relocation. Finally **v29-30** lists all those in Seir's pedigree who become chiefs. Of the 26 names, only seven are chiefs, indicating that Seir's family is not as fruitful as Esau's.

3. The kings who reigned in Edom and territorial ownerships of the land. 31-43

In **v31-39** is a list of eight Edomite kings. They are non-dynastic and thus must be elected by the tribes after each king aspires. Edom has become a nation as foretold in **25:23** but is subdued by David in **2Sam. 8:13-14** to fulfill "the older shall serve the younger". Note in **v40-43** is *not* another list of chiefs but localities or districts in Edom named after them.

Lesson to Ponder: Esau sells his birthright and is out of the Abrahamic covenant. But he obeys God to relocate and is much blessed. So to follow Him **later**, is better than **never**.

Genesis 37: Joseph's dissensions with his brothers who sell him off to Egypt. KV 28
The sale of Joseph to Egypt is vital for Israel's survival, which is the chapter's focus.

1. Joseph's dissensions with his brothers and his early dreams. 1-11

The 11th or last toledot begins in v1-2 and it is on Jacob. Yet most of it is on Joseph's deliverance of Israel. In fact, rabbinic source says that Joseph is a type for the messianic redemption of Israel but there are also many similarities to Christ's redemptive acts of the Jews in the Gospel. In v2, Joseph is 17 and while pasturing with the children of the concubines, he gives them a bad report. It is probably on the ill treatment of the herd for in v14, Jacob sends him off to assess the welfare of the flock. In v3-4, Jacob favors him as a son of his old age, which is explicable as Benjamin is merely a few years old. The varicolored tunic Jacob makes displays it, creating jealousy among the brothers. It is a good reminder that such favoritism is not prudent. In v5-11 Joseph already shows that he has the gift of dreams and both dreams indicate that he will rule over his family (v7 & v9). Joseph in his youth lacks wisdom and shares it openly to stir up further hatred from his brothers. But Jacob in v11 keeps all this in mind indicating that the old man do sense that they are revelations from God and it's crucial to reflect on things that are from Him.

2. The attempted murder on Joseph who is finally sold to Egypt. 12-36

To pasture the flock the brothers journey to Shechem 60 miles north (12-17). Perhaps the weather is not optimal that year and thus the need for seeking distant pasture. Joseph is sent to assess the welfare of the brothers and he enthusiastically accepts (13-14). He pushes on even when the brothers have moved further north to Dothan 16 miles away. This is a hint that the Messiah will come one day for the welfare of Israel amidst difficulties. Yet the brothers plot his death in v18-20 similar to the Jews plotting the demise of Christ in Mk. 14:1. Reuben's attempt to save Joseph in v21-24 shows that not all the brothers are against him just as not all of Israel oppose Christ. He has a plan to save Joseph, calling them to throw him into pit to die of starvation and then to rescue him when the brothers are not around. But the brothers sell him to a caravan that is on the way to Egypt (25-28) and this is needed for Israel's redemption. Likewise all attempts to save Christ failed for the cross is required for our redemption. Just as they sell Joseph to the gentiles of the caravan to be delivered to Egypt, Christ too is given into the hands of the Romans to be crucified. The 20 shekels of silver (28) is the price for a person from age 5-20 as stated in Lev. 27:5 and actually these matches with the 30 pieces of silver for Christ's betrayal in Matt. 27:9, the price for a slave in Roman days. In v29-32, they devise a fraudulent story for Jacob who genuinely believes that his son is killed by a wild beast (33-35). The blood on Joseph's tunic (31) even reminds us of the blood of Christ (Rom. 3:24). Jacob truly suffers and mourns, which will be for 22 years before he sees Joseph again in the touching reunion of 46:29. It is not unlike Jesus returning to reunite with Israel in His second advent but in the interim period, there is suffering and pain for the Jews. With all these similarities in the Gospel, if the Jews really take Joseph as a type for the Messiah, they must seriously consider Jesus to be the one. Finally, Joseph being sold in v36 to Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer is to link the narrative to the ongoing story.

Lesson to Ponder: Reuben has good intent and a plan, but his plot fails. Small wonder he is dreadfully disappointed (29-30). He need not be for God is still in control (Isa. 14:24).

Genesis 38: Story of Judah and the Levirate Obligation to Tamar. KV 26

Inserted here is a chapter to show that even Judah, the progenitor of Jesus is marrying and assimilating with the Canaanites. To be a distinct nation, relocating to Egypt is needed for Israel will be assigned separately to Goshen, without integration with the local Egyptians.

1. Judah marrying a Canaanite woman and Tamar becoming a widow. 1-11

Judah moves away from the family in Hebron to Adullam in the lower foothills. He is fully integrated with the Canaanites, has a close friend Hirah and later marries one to produce three children **(1-5)**. It is so different from Isaac (24:3) and Jacob (28:1) who will not intermarry. Judah then takes Tamar, the heroine of the story for his firstborn **(6-10)**. His son is evidently unrighteous for God takes his life for doing evil. A prevalent practice in those days, clearly recorded in Assyrian law is the custom of Levirate Marriage where the brother is obligated to produce children for his diseased widow. It is later written in as OT Law in **Deut. 25:5-6**. Yet his second son is calculative, for if the offspring is not his, it will reduce his share of inheritance. The use of the word “when” in v9 and spilling the semen suggests that he does this many times. It displeases God who takes his life also. Judah promises his youngest son to Tamar but his bad intent is already evident in **v11** for he superstitiously blames Tamar for his sons’ death and is not ready to keep this promise.

2. Judah’s mistake towards Tamar leading to her conception. 12-28

Tamar has a plot to seduce Judah and the details are in **v12-14**. The reason in v14 is that he has not given her his son Shelah as promised. So she disguises herself as a harlot to seduce him on his “business trip”. Recorded Assyrian law does allow the father to fulfil the Levirate Obligation although the subsequent OT law does not go that far. Hence, for Tamar, sex with Judah is acceptable and v12 is careful to state that Judah is a widower. It should also be noted that Tamar has been faithful in keeping her vow as a widow with the noble intent of preserving her dead husband’s name. In **v15-18**, she successfully deceives Judah to part with three-prized possession, his personal seal, the cord that holds it and his staff, as pledges for the harlot’s fee. It is to be a goat, which is no simple matter in those days and thus Judah is surely a person of means. Tamar in **v19** then returns to keep her vows as a widow. In **v20-23**, Judah cannot find her to deliver the goat so as to relieve his pledges. His fear to be a laughing stock in v23 is probably not because of using a harlot for they ask the locals regarding her whereabouts. Rather it is the embarrassment of being tricked of his possessions and then not paying his fee as promised. Finally, **v24-26** shows that Judah does have ideas of right and wrong. This is the law in the heart **(Rom. 2:14-15)**, for those without the law. He wants Tamar to be burnt for harlotry, an act he views as wrong but this is what he commits. When he recognizes the pledged items in v26, he admits that she is more righteous to persist in pursuing the Levirate Obligation for he has failed in keeping his promise. All this shows that Judah is in a dire ethical state under the carnal influence of Canaanites and Israel needs relocation away from this land.

3. The birth of Tamar’s twins. 27-30

God still blesses Tamar with twins and Perez will be the progenitor of David and Jesus.

Lesson to Ponder: Even with the Levirate Marriage Law, Tamar has to plot to achieve her goal. The story of Ruth shows that redemption by grace is far superior **(Ru. 4:13-15)**.

Genesis 39: Under God, Joseph's development and initial struggle in Egypt. KV 2
The story of Joseph now continues and like Jesus, he will be suffering as a righteous man.

1. Joseph's tempestuous journey in Potiphar's home. 1-19

Actually Joseph's sojourn in Egypt is arranged by God **(1-2)** for of all people, he is bought by Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's bodyguard who is also in charge of the king's prison. Joseph is just 17 years old and will be under Potiphar for the next nine years. Yet he is successful and found favor in the eyes of this master **(3-6)**. Joseph is doing it the right way for in v3, the master do see that his God, the Lord is with him and this is the reason for his success. It's as Jesus said in **Matt. 5:16** that others not only must see our good works but also glorify God because of it. It is often stated that if we follow God, He will bless us with prosperity and indeed this is one example. But it is crucial to note that He later also allows Joseph to be sent to jail and so prosperity is not guaranteed. Hence, we are commanded in **1Tim. 6:8-10** to be content and never to love prosperity or wealth. Next, Joseph is tested by the lust of Potiphar's wife **(7-10)**. As explained in v6, he is handsome in form and appearance and so she looks with desire on him. There is much we can learn from Joseph's ways. Firstly, he flatly refuses her advance but explains it in a way that she can understand (8), that it will be immense evil after all the good his master has done for him. He gives a common sense explanation rather than a complicated ethical reason. Still in the end, Joseph stressed that this is sin against his God and he will not do this great evil (9). Thus, he finally relates all his actions to his God. This is probably how Joseph deals with the unbelievers around him and it must be the reason why Potiphar, a pure pagan appreciates that his God is the reason for his prosperity (3). Joseph in v10 is firm in not listening to her but also not to "be with her", which is to accompany her in anyway. However, she waits until the house is completely empty to grab him **(11-12)**. Under such a crises, Joseph simply do the right thing, which is to flee immorality **(1Co. 6:18)**. Regrettably, she has his garment and uses it to accuse him of sexual assault **(13-15)**. She then in **v16-19** holds on to his garment to wait for Potiphar's return to accuse him before the master. Surely as she waits, Joseph can appeal to her but apparently, he stays away. Even under accusation in v17-18, there is no mention that he says a word. It is a vivid a picture of the messiah who will suffer quietly in righteousness **(Isa. 53:7)**.

2. Joseph put in prison but his ongoing success under God's care. 20-23

It is vital for Joseph to be in the king's prison in **v20** to meet the right prisoners in chapter 40 and it is only possible because Potiphar is in charge of the prison. Yet Joseph must be disheartened and his testing is reviewed in **Psa. 105:17-20**. It indicates that he is in chains in the initial days of imprisonment and it must a struggle for him to persevere in trusting God. But his faith persists for in **v21**, God is again blessing him with the same success he has in Potiphar's home. Now in **v22-23**, the chief jailer gives to Joseph the charge of all the prisoners. This is important for only in this context can Joseph in chapter 40, be close to the key prisoners who will share their intimate dreams with him. Joseph has absolutely no control. Yet, he is bought by the right person, put in the right prison and be given the right task to fulfil his destiny. It shows that God is always in full control **(Isa. 46:9-10)**.

Lesson to Ponder: Therefore, no matter how bleak the situation, just keep trusting God for He promises to establish His purpose, for it is His good pleasure to do it **(Isa. 46:10)**.

Genesis 40: Joseph interprets the dreams of Pharaoh's officials in prison. KV 8

God is evidently working out His plans even in prison so that Joseph can be Israel's savior.

1. Joseph serving Pharaoh's officials imprisoned in the same jail. 1-8

In ancient Egypt, Pharaoh is the mighty one, high on his throne and unreachable. It is impossible to believe that a Hebrew youth can work himself up to be a chief official in his court. Yet God does it to deliver Israel. It starts in **v1-4** when Pharaoh is furious with his chief cupbearer and baker (2). These are specially selected officials because of intrigue-ridden tendencies in the household to harm the king and the chief cupbearer isn't just a butler but also the monarch's advisor. Pharaoh is furious with them but the reason is not stated. Perhaps the situation is still unclear and so they are put in Pharaoh's special prison run by his captain of the bodyguard. It is like a prison for VIPs and in v4, Joseph is assigned to "take care" or in Hebrew "sarath" which is to serve them as a personal servant. After sometime, Joseph becomes their close confidant. Then amazingly, on the same night they each have their own distinct dream (**5-6**). Joseph sensitively sees that they are dejected (**7**), so different from his insensitive handling of his brothers in 37:4-5. It shows that there are changes in his life as he walks with God. Then in **v8**, he brings in God as a solution and actually, he is claiming that His God is able to interpret the dreams. A changed life worthy of God, bearing fruits for Him is essential (**Col. 1:10-11**) but one must also bring God in when the opportunity arises and Joseph is definitely doing both.

2. The descriptions of the dreams and Joseph interpretations. 9-19

There are professional interpreters of dream in those days (41:8) but their services are obviously not available in prison. Thus the cupbearer describes his dream to Joseph in **v9-11**, regarding three branches of ripe grapes which he squeezes into Pharaoh's cup and then instantly passes it on to the king. Joseph boldly predicts in **v12-13** that Pharaoh will release him in three days and restores him to his office. The text gives no clue on how Joseph interprets the dream but it is evident that he does it with great confidence. Like Daniel in **Dan. 1:17**, he must be specially gifted, having exercised the gift under God for many years and knows that that his interpretation is from Him (see 41:16 and Dan. 2:19). Joseph's prediction is extremely precise but he is so confident that in **v14-15** he requested a favor from the cupbearer. Joseph's request shows that he does experience pain over his plight, being kidnapped and imprisoned over nothing but Joseph seems able to rejoice in his sufferings as in **1Pet. 4:12-13**. The baker is so impressed that he shares his dream in **v16-17** about three baskets of bread on his head that are eaten up by the birds. With the same confidence, Joseph predicts the negative outcome in **v18-19**. It is so precise as the difference between v13 and v19 is just two words, that the baker's head is lifted up "from him" (19) to indicate his hanging. The precision shows that his gift is indeed from God.

3. The accurate fulfillments but the obligation to Joseph is forgotten. 20-23

Joseph's predictions are fulfilled precisely as stated for both dreams (**20-22**). He must be elated for this is confirmation that his God is real and that his deliverance is nigh. But in **v23** the cupbearer forgets his pledge and Joseph remains in prison. Under circumstances when God is so real, disappointments are surely most difficult to understand and endure.

Lesson to Ponder: It is vital therefore to trust God even when we do *not* understand and to do it with all our heart (**Pro. 3:6-7**). God will work out a way, as it will be for Joseph.

Genesis 41: Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dream and his elevation to leadership. KV 15-16
For Pharaohs, historical records exist and so here is the first OT interface with recorded history. Using **1Kgs. 6:1** and **Ex. 12:40**, the date can be estimated to be about **1876 B.C.** and the Pharaoh is Senusret III. It is amazing that the OT records can be so precise.

1. Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dream and advises on events management. 1-36

Pharaoh's dream is first described in **v1-8**. The word dream in Hebrew is always in the singular and so the two dreams are presented as one from the start. In v1-4 are seven lean cows eating up the seven fat ones, while v5-7 are seven thin corns gulping up seven fat ones, all from the same stalk. The details match Egypt so well, such as "marsh grass" in v2 or "achu" in Hebrew is actually papyrus. No one in v8 is able to interpret the dream but v24 uses the word "explain". Thus the magicians must have tried but not to Pharaoh's satisfaction. Then the cupbearer mentions Joseph to Pharaoh in **v9-13**. He does it with care stating that it is regarding his own offense or sin (9) but he points to Joseph's ability to interpret dreams (12). Actually, it will be difficult for the cupbearer to mention Joseph before Pharaoh without the dream. If it is as suggested by Joseph in **40:14-15**, to base it on injustice done to him, the crime of Potiphar's wife will have to be exposed and this is defamation of another high-ranking official. However, after two years, as the cupbearer is re-established in his post, God makes the dream and Joseph is presented without a need to mention the injustice. It is just waiting for God to work out His perfect plan and in **v14-16** Pharaoh promptly calls for Joseph. Again, the detail of shaving matches so well the clean-shaven image of ancient Egyptian drawings. In v16, Joseph gives all glory to God in his first address to Pharaoh. Pharaoh then in **v17-24** depicts his two dreams as one in the singular, which Joseph affirms in **v25** that indeed it is one and the same. Like before, his interpretation is immediate and sure, as he efficiently exercises his gift in **v26-32**. Egypt will have seven years of great abundance (29) followed by seven years of famine that will ravaged the land (30) and the events will be occurring soon (32). Then Joseph goes beyond interpretation and provides advice of wisdom (**33-36**). Someone must be appointed (33) to lead "overseers" in v34 to gather the food effectively in the years of abundance as reserve for the years of famine (36). It is so simple and yet so sensible.

2. Joseph is elevated and vested with authority to manage the events. 37-57

It is amazing but Pharaoh and his court want to appoint Joseph to be that leader (**37-41**). The reason in v38 is the evidence of the divine spirit in him and so living visibly as God leads is vital in all of life. In v41, he is over all of Egypt, namely the position of vizier or the prime minister, with all the formal and ceremonial symbols of power in **v42-45**. Why is there no opposition to his elevation? We do know that Senusret III is the *most powerful* king of his dynasty and is surely well able to elevate his appointee. Joseph commences on his work in **v46-49** systematically by first going through all the land. Then he properly gathers up the abundance and stores them securely in the city rather than in the fields. It's done so adeptly that the abundance is like sand of the sea (49). Next in the famine (**53-57**), he orderly sells the stored grains so well that many from afar are coming to buy (57).

Lesson to Ponder: Joseph's marriage to an Egyptian woman seems *not* to weaken his allegiance to the God for his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh (see **v50-52**), are apparently brought up in the Hebrew religion and made heads of two tribes of Israel. This is crucial.

Genesis 42: Brothers' first trip to Egypt and their repentance amidst afflictions. KV 21
God elevates Joseph as ruler of Egypt so that he will save Israel from the severe famine.

1. The brothers' first trip to Egypt. 1-28

Chapter 42-47 is the narrative on how Joseph delivers Israel and it begins in v1-5 when Jacob dispatches his sons to Egypt to purchase grain because the famine extends also to Canaan (5). It is clear in v2 that the purpose is to live and survive. Thus, it is a picture of Joseph providing salvation for Israel. In v5, they are depicted as sons of Israel joining the mass of humanity seeking life by buying grains in Egypt. In v6-9 Joseph, now the ruler of Egypt recognizes them but disguises himself and speaks to them harshly. His motive for this is not stated but it must be to bring his brothers to repentance over the sin of selling him to Egypt, as evident by his emotional response in v24 with their penance. Also in v4, Jacob barring Benjamin in the trip adds to this significance for he is a non-participant in crime, being a toddler at the time of the offence over 20 years ago. Joseph's expression of doubt in v9 that they are spies is outwardly reasonable for it is unusual for a group of brothers travelling together and they may be harboring sinister motives. The brothers takes it all in without suspicion and try to explain themselves in v10-13. Joseph now knows that his father and younger brother are still alive. He really gives them a hard time in v14-17 with confusing commands and actions. His command is for one of them to return to bring back Benjamin (16) and yet he puts all of them in prison (17). It is just like God causing afflictions, so that His people will repent (1Kgs. 8:35-36). But after just three days, Joseph begins to communicate sensibly with them (18-21). He brings God into the picture probably to awaken his brothers' consciences. By allowing nine to return will ensure that sufficient grain are delivered to save Israel but they must bring Benjamin back. Joseph's harsh treatment works for in v21-24, the brothers finally realize their guilt (21) and accept that there will be a reckoning (22). Joseph's emotional response in v24 affirms that this is the outcome he is looking for. Simeon is the eldest son agreeing to the sale of Joseph and it must be the reason for his bounding, to demonstrate the consequence of their sin. Joseph then orders their return in v25-28 and fully provides for them in all ways. However, finding of the sack of money (27) causes trembling (28) because this means that they have not paid for the grain. How then can they return and explain this in Egypt? They are evidently under great pressure and know in v28 that all this is from God.

2. The brothers' return and report to Jacob with agony of uncertainty. 29-38

The brothers return home and report to Jacob in v29-34 explaining the need to bring Benjamin if they are to retrieve Simeon. However finding the bundles of money in v35-36 causes Jacob to lose hope. Reuben offers the lives of his sons as pledges, which Jacob refuses (37-38). Note that he does not offer himself as Judah will in 43:9, which Jacob accepts. Definitely the model is to offer oneself and even to die for the sake of others (Acts 21:13). Jacob is unable to take the risk of losing Benjamin and thus prohibits their return to Egypt. Actually, the story is a vivid picture of how the Messiah will redeem Israel. Like Joseph He will suffer and then exalted to rule in heaven. But He will be working for Israel's repentance by afflictions that will come with the Great Tribulation.

Lesson to Ponder: Afflictions can be from God to get our attention. If this is the case, then it is best to response quickly, rather than struggling in agony like Jacob (Hos. 6:1-2).

Genesis 43: Brothers' second trip to Egypt and a honored feast at Joseph's house. KV16
The second trip is narrated in greater details, taking up three full chapters.

1. The deliberations and final decision for the second trip with Benjamin. 1-15

The famine remains severe as predicted in 41:20 and Jacob initiates the call to return to Egypt and buy a little food (1-2). Judah points out in v3-5 that the man who is Joseph has solemnly insisted that they must bring Benjamin with them. Joseph must have known that it is God's will for them to bring Benjamin but why is he so sure that they will return? It must be his firm belief that the famine will not end but will remain severe and thus their return is assured. Joseph is acting in accordance with God's prophecies, believing fully that His purpose will be accomplished (**Isa. 55:8-11**). Next in v6-7, Judah explains how this demand comes about and it is putting immense pressure both on Jacob and the brothers. But note the positive effects that this is having on them. Firstly, in v8-10, Judah in a sacrificial manner offers himself as surety and even to take the blame forever. It does have significance for in those days, this carries with it the consequence of being cut off from the family inheritance. Certainly, it is better than Reuben's offer of death to someone else, namely his sons (41:37). Second, it causes Jacob to finally commit the sons that he so dearly loves to God (**11-14**) instead of holding on to them. He does all he can to prepare a special gift and to return the money but in the end he allows Benjamin to be taken (13). In v14, Jacob trusts in God Almighty to act in releasing his sons but he also accepts the dire outcome of being bereaved. This is real faith in action, trusting God to act but at the same time willing to accept His will, whatever the consequence (**Jas. 4:15**).

2. Their arrival in Egypt and initial exchange with the house steward. 16-25

On arrival to Egypt, their experience is unbelievable. First their reception in v16-17, being warmly invited to Joseph's house to dine at noon, the biggest meal of the day in Ancient Egypt. As expected in v18-22, it instills fear into the brothers, wondering whether it is because their offense of unpaid money in the first visit. Second is the firm assurance by the house steward that they are free from guilt in v23 as the money in their sacks is treasure from God. The return of Simeon is evident that they are considered guiltless. Finally, in v24-25, their needs as tired travelers are being catered, giving them ample time to prepare the gift for Joseph. If Joseph is a type of their Messiah, then it is a picture of how He will receive Israel warmly, cover their faults and cares for their needs if they will only follow the Lord. It is similar to what Christ will surely do for us.

3. Joseph returning home and the unexpected feast in his house. 26-34

On returning home, Joseph asks whether Jacob is alive (26-28). It shows that in allowing them to return after the first trip, Joseph risks not seeing his father again. Then in v29-31, Benjamin's presence causes him much distress. Why then is Joseph putting up such an act, with all the risks and distresses? Perhaps the answer is in 42:9 that his present act is laid out in his early dreams. Thus, 37:7 prediction of *all* 11 brothers bowing to him leads to his demand for Benjamin. Still these pressures are enhancing the brothers. Benjamin's portion in v32-34 is five times more, yet they now show no jealousy to such favoritism.

Lesson to Ponder: In v33, their sitting order is an obvious hint that they are in good-hands. Such hints of His care are often present amidst afflictions that are sent by God.

Genesis 44: The brothers are cornered, but behave sacrificially for Benjamin. KV 33
Joseph continues his difficult act of pressuring his brothers, being led most likely by the memory of his early dreams (42:9) but these are actually enhancing them in many ways.

1. The brothers depart but bring back guilty with the stolen cup. 1-13

Joseph's plan is laid out in v1-5. As before, he returns all their money but fills the men's sack with food. This is affirming **43:23** that God has given them treasure in their sacks. Again, in the midst of afflictions, hints of God's care as promised may be evident if we care to look for it (**Ps. 86:17**). The added manipulation is to put a silver cup in the sack of the youngest (2). Joseph plans to catch them red-handed with the cup as if it is stolen (5). This is obviously an expensive cup as it is related to the practice of divination or reading the future. Indeed, in ancient Egypt, such a cup is used to read the future by dropping oil and other particles into it. It is often misunderstood that divination is prohibited in the OT, which is certainly the case if this is connected to witchcraft (Deut. 18:10). But means of telling the future, such as casting of lot is often described as a neutral act in the OT if it not connected to sorcery (e.g. Jon. 1:7 & 1Sam. 14:42). Note that for v5, in Hebrew the word "uses" is not there and it simply states that Joseph drinks and practises divination, rather than using the cup to do it. With his God given gift of dreams, Joseph certainly has no need to use the cup for divination and it is not stated in the text. The point in v5 is just to stress that it is an expensive cup. When the house steward catches up with them in v6-9, the brothers deny any act of stealing and remind him that they have returned all the money previously found in their sack in their first visit (8). In fact they will even accept the death sentence if proven guilty (9), but on searching in v10-13, the cup is found in Benjamin's sack. In v10, the house steward only wants the culprit to be his slave and the rest will be innocent, meaning that they can go free. Yet the brothers tore their clothes to show their conjoint grief (13) and return with Benjamin rather than allowing him to be enslaved. It is evidence of their selfless maturity to help an innocent younger brother.

2. Judah's passionate appeal to Joseph and sacrifice for Benjamin. 14-34

On returning to Joseph's house in v14-17, he tells them (15) that he practices divination, meaning that he knows all. It is here in v16 that Judah admits that their iniquity is found out. As they see themselves innocent in the stealing of the cup, this must be the admission of their sin in selling Joseph, before someone who knows all. Joseph then explains that he only wants Benjamin as a slave and the rest can go in peace. Yet in v18-34, Judah pleads for Benjamin to be spared, which is the longest speech in Genesis. He reviews in v18-23 that Benjamin's coming is due to Joseph's insistence. It is an agony for their father and the reason is given in v24-29. Joseph hears in v28-29 for the first time Jacob's reaction to his abduction and that he is still mourning for him. It must be heart wrenching for Joseph but this is precisely why Benjamin, the youngest remaining son is so precious to Jacob. Indeed in v30-31, if Benjamin is not returned, Jacob will die as his life is bound up with that of this youngest son. Finally, in v32-34, Judah makes the noblest of sacrifice to offer himself as a replacement for Benjamin. Firstly, he does it to complete his promise as his surety but also to save the life of his father. It is a demonstration of selfless maturity.

Lesson to Ponder: Central to Judah's plea is his deep concern for the welfare of Jacob his father. It is an integral part of honoring one's father as commanded in Eph. 6:2.

Genesis 45: Joseph reveals his identity and calls Jacob to Egypt. KV 12-13.

Joseph shows that his mission is to save Israel, an imagery of the messiah even for today.

1. Joseph reveals himself to the brothers with explanation on God's purpose. 1-15

Joseph reveals himself in v1-4 for he cannot control himself any longer. It must be the impact of Judah offering himself (43:34-35), epitomizing how the brothers have changed. This shows again that his role acting is to facilitate such changes and when it is so clear, he can only weep, as he sends all the Egyptians away. The brothers must be shocked for "dismay" in v3 or "bahal" in Hebrew means terrified. This ruler with an Egyptian name, Zaphenath-paneah (41:45) speaking through interpreters (42:23) suddenly tells them close up in Hebrew, that he is one of them (4). But it is a precise portrayal of Christ who is the Divine King and yet a Jew, if they will only accept Him. Note that the first item he checks out in Hebrew is whether Jacob is alive, for this is so vital for him. However, his next immediate item is God's great purpose for bringing him to Egypt (5-8). Still in v5, to his brothers who sold him, he does it in such a reassuring way. Three points ought to be noted. First, his brothers already recognize their sin (42:22) and are ready to accept God's penalty (44:16). There is no value in dwelling on their past failure and so Joseph gives them reaffirmation, which is what they need. Next, the brothers' intent is evil but God turns it all for the good (50:20). Obviously, sinners cannot change God's will to hurt us. Thirdly, to accomplish the goal, God has to arrange both Joseph's sale to Egypt and his elevation to rule as vizier. All things work out perfectly as promised in **Rom. 8:28** for those who will follow His calling. Next in v9-11, Joseph lays down what is needed for Israel to be saved. They must hurry back and bring Jacob to Egypt, where he has selected a special place, namely Goshen to care and provide for them. This can be an imagery that is relevant for Israel today. The famine is seven years, same as the Tribulation that will soon be coming. As only Joseph can deliver Jacob or Israel, only Christ can save the nation Israel, to a special place like Goshen that is prepared for her (**Rev. 12:14**). Finally, a key maneuver is in v12-15, for the brothers must believe that it's Joseph speaking and two steps are taken. First, v12 presents Benjamin as a witness, who surely must know Joseph well, being cared for by the same mother. Then in v15, Joseph gets intimate with the brothers by kissing and weeping. Their relationship is renewed and they begin talking with Joseph. Note that Benjamin, the only innocent brother is used to initiate the renewal. It's a spiritual hint of the present for God using the Messianic Jews to bring Israel to Him.

2. Pharaoh's formal invitation for Jacob and his final agreement to migrate. 16-28

Pharaoh, who has heard Joseph crying in his house (2) intervenes (16-20). He is pleased and amazingly in v18, he formally invites Jacob to Egypt, even providing in v19, wagons to take their families to Egypt. It is now not just Joseph but the entire Egypt supports their move. Then v21-24 is the preparations for the brothers' return as commanded by Pharaoh and Benjamin, the closest to Joseph is the most blessed (22). Finally, v26-28 depicts how Jacob is convinced on migrating to Egypt. It is Joseph's words but also the wagons, solid evidence of blessings from their future king that clinches it (27). So today, His words and evidence of the future kingdom will also be most effective in convincing Israel to believe.

Lesson to Ponder. Love is the chief evidence of the future kingdom (**Jn. 13:35**). So the command for the brothers not to quarrel in v24. It is the utmost hindrance to the kingdom.

Genesis 46: Jacob's migration to Egypt and the arrival at Goshen. KV 3-4

Finally, Israel migrates to Egypt, to a prepared place that will save them from the famine.

1. Jacob and his clan setting out for Egypt. 1-7

Based on Joseph's words and the evidence of wagons from his future kingdom (45:27), Jacob set out for Egypt (1). Genuine faith should always result in action and Jacob is deadly serious for he takes with him all his possessions. Accordingly Jacob sets out from Hebron, his last specified location in 37:14, down to Beersheba, which is 25 miles away. But why is he only worshipping God there and not in Hebron, at the start of the journey? Jewish tradition, recorded in the Book of Jubilee that Jacob in Beersheba hesitates on his move and is pondering instead to invite Joseph to come. This is possible for this city is at the edge of the over 400 miles desert, before arriving in Egypt. Thus the visions in v2-4 affirming him that it is God's will for him to leave the promise land. It is obvious that as one sets out on a path, even with strong evidence of His will, doubts can emerge. Still, He is ready to affirm and uphold us (**Isa. 41:10**). God's promise is so complete in v4, for He will surely bring him back to Canaan, but does that mean he will have to part with Joseph again? Thus the promise that Joseph will close his eyes and all these are fulfilled in 49:33 and 50:1. Still the most assuring part is that God will go down with him. The migration is movingly depicted in v5-7. It involves the entire clan and no one is left behind, fulfilling the prophecy given in 15:13. Note that bringing their possessions, is not doubting the words of Pharaoh in 45:20, which is *not* a command to bring nothing but rather an affirmation for Jacob not to worry about sufficiency in Egypt. After all, surely they will need to bring sufficient supplies and goods for such a large clan on the long journey.

2. The listing of all those who come to Egypt. 8-28

Amazingly, the list of names in the clan is carefully recorded, showing that the document is historical. It follows the order of their births and the four wives starting with Leah (8-15) listing 35 names. Still the 33 in v15 is correct for Er and Onan (12) has died. Zilpah is next with 16 names recorded (16-18). Then Racheal in v19-22 has 14 names, but Benjamin, who is about 23 years old has 10 sons (21) and perhaps some of them are born in Egypt. Last is Bilhah with seven names recorded in v23-25. Finally, the summary figure is in 26-27, namely 66 and 70 if Jacob, Joseph and his two sons are also included.

3. Jacob's reunion with Joseph in Goshen and preparation to meet Pharaoh. 27-34

The clan arrives in Goshen in v28-30 and movingly after 22 years, the reunion of Jacob and Joseph occurs. Joseph knows that as shepherds, his family will be loathsome or offensive to the Egyptians (34) and it is clear that he has prepared Goshen from the start in 45:10. This is a rich land in the eastern Nile Delta and yet separate from the Egyptian populace. It is a perfect land for them to survive the famine and being separated, they will ideally develop into a great holy nation as promised in v3. So in v31-32, Joseph explains to the family that he will be reporting to Pharaoh their arrival and instructs them in v33-34 on how to answer Pharaoh so that they may live on in the land of Goshen. It is all well prepared, a vivid imagery of a safe haven for Israel during the Tribulation (Rev. 12:14).

Lesson to Ponder: The detailed list in v8-28 is typical OT, for God never see the Jews as a nebulous group but as valued individuals. That is how He sees us too (Ps. 139:1-3).

Genesis 47: Wise leadership of Joseph for his family and Egypt in the famine. KV 12; 25
Evidently, Joseph's wisdom not only helps Israel but also all of Egypt during the famine.

1. Pharaoh's endorsement of Israel's arrival and settlement in Goshen. 1-12

It is clear that Joseph's plan for Israel to settle in Goshen is carefully crafted. Firstly, in v1-2 he ensures a positive audience by his family before Pharaoh. The five brothers must be the most presentable and they are already rehearsed in 46:33-34 on how to answer the king. Thus in v3-4, they give precisely the needed answer. Secondly, Joseph orchestrates it such that it is natural for Pharaoh to grant Goshen as a settlement for Israel. He brings them there in 46:28, so that on meeting Pharaoh, they are already in-place. Goshen is the rich grazing area for flocks where the king apparently also breeds his herds (6). Thus, it is natural for Israel who are herdsmen to settle in that area. The outcome is Pharaoh's full consent in v5-6 that they settle in Goshen which as confirmed by Pharaoh in v5 is among "the best of the land" in Egypt. Even the problem of shepherds being loathsome to Egyptians seems settled, for being in Goshen, Pharaoh in v6 wants them to be in charge of his livestock. In administering God's work, a careful planner like Joseph is needed and it is stated in the NT (**1Co. 9:26; 2Co. 8:20**). Lastly, in line with the deep respect for the aged in ancient times, Joseph prudently brings in his aged father Jacob to meet Pharaoh (7-10). Jacob's humility before the king is typical but note that he sees his years in v9 as unpleasant or "ra" in Hebrew, which can mean "difficult". Jacob in his later years follows the Lord (**28:20**) but it is a reminder that he still suffers for the errors in his early life, thus making his years difficult. Next in v11-12, they settle in the land of Rameses, which is the best area of Goshen. It is a well-known area and King Rameses who comes 600 years later is probably named after this, rather than vice-versa. Still amidst the severe famine, it cannot be cultivated and so in v12, Joseph provides for their entire household.

2. Joseph's wise management of Egypt during the famine. 13-28

In a severe famine, it is not easy to ensure that all of Egypt is well fed but Joseph's wisdom effectively manages it. First in v13-14, he works within their bartering system where grain are sold for money. Very quickly, all the money are gathered which Joseph honorably put back into Pharaoh's house. Next, the people in v15-17 has to exchange all their livestock for grain. All these occur in the first year of the famine for in v18, the "next year" in Hebrew is actually literally "the second year". So from the second year (18-20), they give their land to Pharaoh and even themselves to obtain grain. Note that throughout the process it is with their willingness and not by force. Also in v19, the word slaves or "ebed" in Hebrew is the same for servant and probably they are just submitting themselves as Pharaoh's servants, to be directed by him. With this leverage, Joseph takes a drastic step of great wisdom, for in v21-22 he transfers all Egypt, except the priests, to the cities. There are still six years of severe famine and it is impossible to feed everyone unless they are gathered at specific locations. Then in v23-24, the giving of seeds must be after the famine, for only then can farming be possible. The taxation of 20% is generous for kings in those days collect over 50%. It works and the people are thankful to Joseph in v25-26, who makes the 20% tax a law. The section of v27ff is with the next chapter.

Lesson to Ponder: A good indicator that people are effectively served is their unsolicited word of appreciation, as in v25. This is seen also in the ministry of Paul (**Acts 20:35-37**).

Genesis 48: Jacob's final blessings on Joseph and his children. KV 4

Chapter 47 (27-31) is included with chapter 48 as it is connected to Jacob's final hours.

Chapter 47:27-31: Jacob seeking Joseph's assurance for his burial in Canaan.

A summary of Jacob's abode in Egypt is in v27-28 where he lives on for 17 more years. After the famine, Israel excels, gaining properties in Goshen and multiply in abundance. However, as Jacob's death draws near in v29-30, he wants an oath from Joseph to both bury him in Hebron and personally carry him there. Why is Jacob so particular about the two stipulations, when burial is just a temporal event? It must be God's final promise in **46:4** before departing to Egypt, that he will both return and that Joseph will close his eyes. God also promise in **28:15** that He will always bring Jacob "back to this land". Thus, Jacob's great care is that his burial is done in God's way as stated (**Deut. 30:16**). It is not easy, as Pharaoh's consent must be granted but in v3, Joseph readily takes the oath.

1. Jacob's adoption of Joseph's two sons as his own. 1-7

In all families, instructions for inheritance are vital especially with regards to properties. For ancient Israel, this is linked to the patriarch's final blessings, which is the subject of chapter 48. The background on Jacob's terminal illness is in v1-2 and Joseph brings his two sons, now in their late teens to see their grandfather. Jacob first reviews how God has promised in Luz, the old name for Bethel (28:12-19,) to give the land in Canaan to his descendants forever (**3-4**). Then in v5-6, he adopts Ephraim and Manasseh to be his sons, and Joseph's offspring after the two sons will be included under them (6). The mention of Reuben and Simeon, his eldest sons suggest that they will now take the rights of the firstborn as also confirmed by genealogies recorded later, as in **1Chron. 5:1-2**. Verse 7 is Jacob's justification for this act, as Rachel dies early and has the least children. So her son Joseph deserves an extra share of the land. God's hand must be in all this to retain the 12 tribes' allocations of the land for in the future, Levi descendants caring for the temple area will not have a share. Inheritance is bound to birthrights on earth, but what a privilege that in our salvation, inheritance is purely based on His mercy (**1Pet 1:3-4**).

2. Jacob's blessings and elevation of Ephraim over Manasseh. 8-22

Jacob now notices the two boys (8-11) but his question on who they are is merely due to his poor eyesight, as he already knows them enough to adopt them. Jacob embraces them with deep emotions as he remembers His goodness to him. Joseph then takes them from Jacob's knees and presents the two sons in v12-14 for the all-important blessing. The patriarch's right hand is naturally reserved for the first-born and the blessing is conferred in v15-16. Note in v16, he speaks of the angel who redeems, the only occasion an angel is invoked in an OT prayer, a clear reference to the pre-incarnate Christ, recognizing Him as savior even then. However, Jacob hands are crisscrossed making Ephraim the firstborn and he insists that this is so (17-20). It is divinely inspired for Ephraim's leadership is so dominant that it is later synonymous with the Northern Kingdom (e.g. Isa. 7:2). Finally in v21-22, "portion" in Hebrew is "Shechem" and it can be bestowing the Amorite city to Joseph, for after the Exodus, this is precisely where they bury his bones (**Jos. 24:32**).

Lesson to Ponder: Jacob's blessings are focused entirely on the land that God will give them in the future, as we too must fix our minds fully on our future hope (**1Pet. 1:13**).

Genesis 49: Jacob's final blessings and prophecies regarding his children. KV 1

The future of Israel's tribes is also dealt with, plus amazing details on their Messiah.

1. Jacob's final prophecies and blessings on his 12 children. 1-27

By faith Jacob first in **48:5** adopts Joseph's children as his own (**Heb. 11:21**) and now has specific words for each of the 12. They are all to gather and listen with care (**1-2**). It starts with the three eldest children but they are more in the form of curses. Reuben in **v3-4** will lose his firstborn right for his sin with Bilhah (35:22) and it will be given to the sons of Joseph (**1Chro. 5:1**). His key weakness is lack of self-control, a reminder that this is so vital in serving God. Next in **v5-7**, Simeon and Levi will lose their territorial rights because of their slaughter of the Hamorites (34:25) and they will be scattered over Israel (7). Indeed in the future, Simeon is to be dispersed in the midst of Judah (**Jos. 19:1**) and Levi to many cities in Israel (**Jos. 21:8**). The curse is with their anger (7), which again must be under control if we are to serve God. Judah in **v8-12** is the one given the first blessing. As a lion whelp (a young lion) he will be in full control and v10 promises that his ruling scepter will not depart, pointing to the Monarchy of David. But who is Shiloh? He is clearly a person, who will come and rabbinic traditions take him as the messiah. He in fact must be Christ, for to Him all peoples of the earth will obey. Amazingly in v11 he uses a foal and an awkward repeat "donkey colt" or "ben aton" in Hebrew, meaning son of a female donkey. Precisely the same words are used in **Zech. 9:9**, the prediction of Christ's entry into Jerusalem, riding on a young donkey with his mother behind (**Matt. 24:7**). Next in v11, His robes are in blood, fitting well with Christ's return when He will drench in His enemies' blood (**Isa. 63:1-3**). The next blessing on Zebulun (**13**) is hard to fathom, as it is located inland. But first note that in Hebrew, it is dwell "to" and not "by" the seashore. Also the Via Maris, a major highway passes through it, which is a key essential in the ancient world to provide for ships, even more than to be by the sea. With this Zebulun is linked to the entire Phoenician coast as represented by Sidon. Issachar in **v14-15** are strong fighters but love the good resting places and pleasant lands. It is loving the good life and in the early battles against the Canaanites in Judges 1, they are not on record as participants. The Canaanites must have overcome and enslaved them in that period. In **v16-18**, Dan can lead but as a horned snake or viper, he is venomous and later misleads many by her golden calf (1Kgs. 12:28-29). They are not listed among the 144,000 in the Tribulation and it is one tribe that salvation must wait but they will be restored in the Millennium (Eze. 48:1). In **v19-21**, Gad will be a great defender as raiders, being given Israel's eastern border. Asher on the fertile west-shore will grow crops as royal dainties and Naphtali settling on a hilly region; is an active doe or female deer, able to write lovely poems as Judges 5. The utmost blessing (26) is in **v22-26** to be for Joseph. Hebrew tenses are completed actions showing that it's just for him. He is fruitful, running over the wall into Egypt (22). Attacked by his brothers and Potiphar's wife, he stays firm, helped by The Mighty One of Jacob, namely God and from Him comes the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel, amazingly another prophecy on Christ our precious stone (**1Pet. 2:4**). Finally, Benjamin are great warriors and Israel's first King, Saul is from this tribe (**27**).

2. The final instruction and death of Jacob. 28-33 (and Lesson to Ponder)

Jacob passes on, providing the appropriate words for his sons (28) and insists for a burial in Canaan (29). That is the way to die, with **the right words and right actions**.

Genesis 50: End of the Patriarchal Period – Jacob’s burial and Joseph’s death. KV13, 26
Genesis ends with Israel in Egypt, but the Exodus to Canaan is promised and anticipated.

1. The burial of Jacob. 1-13

God seems to be directing all the events His way (**1-3**). It is pertinent that Joseph falls on his father’s face for God promises that he will close his father’s eyes (**46:4**). Then Jacob is embalmed and Joseph’s physicians are commanded to do it. It is God’s way, for in ancient Egypt, embalmment comes with magic and idolatry practices when done by the embalmers, which the physicians will bypass. Still in v3, duration of embalmment and mourning fit the records of ancient Greek historians such as Herodotus. Next is Joseph’s request for burial in Canaan (**4-6**) but why does he do it indirectly through Pharaoh’s household? Many commentaries say it is because Joseph is unclean, in the midst of mourning, but note in v4, these days have passed. More likely it is because the departure of a senior official from Egypt is prohibitive and it is foolhardy to make a direct request. It also explains why Joseph never return to his family in Canaan, even after coming into power. Even so, in Joseph’s request, he is truthful to mention his oath to his father, even before getting Pharaoh’s permission (5). The request is granted, for God has promised Jacob in **46:4** that he will return to Canaan. In **v7-9** is the burial entourage to Canaan. Amazingly, it is not just Joseph’s family but all the elders of Pharaoh’s household and Egypt are included. Jacob must have an impact in his last 17 years in Egypt and he is honored with a king’s burial. We must *not* set our minds on this world’s honor (**Col. 3:2**) but God in His own way will honor His servants (**Ps. 91:15**). It is heartwarming when it occurs, as in Jacob’s burial. In **v10-11** they come to the threshing floor of Atad, which must be a flat area as this is needed for threshing, making it suitable for the ceremonies occurring in the seven days lamentation. These are so exceptional that the Canaanites name it Abel-mizraim, meaning "the mourning of Egypt." The present location of the area is unknown but it is beyond the Jordan (10). This always refers to an area east of the river and they must have journeyed south of the Dead Sea. There is a shorter path but rather mountainous and perhaps unsuitable for the large entourage with the chariots and horsemen in v9. It seems in **v12-13**, Jacob’s sons then carry him up the mountainous terrain and finally buried him in the cave of Machpelah as he has firmly charged.

2. The final and full resolution of Joseph with the brothers. 14-21

The brothers in **v14-15** are worried that Joseph still has a grudge against them, even after kissing all of them in 45:15. They must have never fully confessed their sin to Joseph and beg for his forgiveness, which they now do in **v16-18**. It is a strong reminder for keeping short accounts before others and not to harbor them in our hearts (**Pro. 28:13**). Joseph’s attitude is so positive, believing in **v19-21** that God can turn all evil into good outcome.

3. Joseph’s final years. 22-26

Joseph is blessed with 54 more years, even seeing his great grandchildren (**22-23**). Yet his ultimate act is to predict the Exodus in **v24-25** and to live by these words. He insists that they bring along his bones and the embalmment (**26**) is to ensure their survival. This final prophecy and charge is epitomized as Joseph’s great act of faith in **Heb. 11:22**.

Lesson to Ponder: Faith entails not just great prophetic words but also to live by them.