

Genesis

This book tells us the story about God, whose name is Yahweh, making the world and animals and plants and people. It also tells us about Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their families. And it tells us about people trusting God, and about God helping them and taking care of them, so that they could trust him more.

About God the Creator

¹ In the very beginning, long, long ago, God made the earth below and the heavens above. At the time when God first started creating the world, ² it was all watery. Water covered everything and that was all. There was no dry land yet, only water, and it was dark. It was dark just like a cave is dark inside at night. But the spirit of God was moving over the water.

³ Then God spoke. "Let there be light," he said. And then the light came out. ⁴ God looked and saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ He called the light "Day" and the darkness "Night." Then night came. That was the first night.

Then a new day dawned and it was morning. ⁶ Then God spoke again. "Let the water separate, half above and half below." ⁷ Then God separated the water below from the water above so that there was a wide space in the middle. ⁸ God called the wide space "Sky." Then night came. That was the second night.

Then a new day dawned and it was morning. ⁹ And God spoke again. “Let the water come together in one place,” he said, “so that the earth can appear.” Then the water came together in one place and the earth appeared. ¹⁰ God called the earth “Dry land.” And the water that came together he called “Sea.” And God looked and saw that the dry land and the sea were both good.

¹¹ Then God spoke again. “Let different kinds of trees and other plants grow on the land. The plants will give seeds and the different kinds of trees will give fruit.” ¹² Then trees and other plants grew on the land. God looked and saw that the trees and plants were all good. ¹³ Then night came. That was the third night.

Then a new day dawned and it was morning. ¹⁴⁻¹⁵ Then God spoke again. “Let lights come out in the sky. Let them light up the world, so that the day is separate from the night, and so that all the days are separate. Day and night will follow one after the other. And let them light up the world, so that the dry season will be separate from the wet season. The dry season and the wet season will also follow one after the other.”

¹⁶⁻¹⁸ Then God made two big lights. He made the sun and put it in the sky, so that it would light up the world and rule over the day. Then he made the moon and put it in the sky to rule over the night. And then he made all the stars. He made the two big lights so that the light and the darkness would be separate. Then God looked and saw that the sun and the moon and the stars

were all good. ¹⁹ Then night came. That was the fourth night.

And then a new day dawned and it was morning. ²⁰ Then God spoke again. “Let many different kinds of fish fill the sea, and let birds fly in the sky.” ²¹ So God made creatures like big whales and dugongs and groper and other kinds of fish that filled the sea. And he made birds. Then God looked and saw that they were all good. ²² Then God blessed the sea creatures and the birds. He said to the fish, “Increase and fill the sea,” and to the birds, “Increase!” ²³ Then night came. That was the fifth night.

And then a new day dawned and it was morning. ²⁴ Then God spoke again. “Let there be different kinds of animals and snakes, big ones and little ones, on the earth.” ²⁵ So he made the different animals and snakes, big ones and little ones. Then God looked and saw that they were all good.

²⁶ Then God spoke again. “Now we will make people and they will be like us. And they will rule over the fish and the birds and the animals and the snakes.” ²⁷ So God created people, making them like himself. He created them male and female.

²⁸ And then he blessed them and said to them, “Have children, and let them have children too, so that they can live in the world and rule over it. You will rule over the fish and the birds and the animals.

²⁹ “I have made all kinds of food for you, seeds that the grasses provide and fruit that the trees

provide, for you to eat. ³⁰ And I have given plants to the animals and to the birds for their food.”

³¹ And God looked and saw that all the things he had made were good. Then night came. That was the sixth night. And then a new day dawned and it was morning.

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¹ In that way God made the world and the sky and everything on the earth and in the sky and in the sea. And then he finished his work. ² He worked for six days from when he started until he finished it all, and then he stopped working.

³ Then he said, “This seventh day I am resting. So this day is different. It will be separate from the other days, because I have rested from my work today. This is my holy day.” ⁴ That is how God made the world.

About Eden

At first when Yahweh God made the world, ⁵ there were no plants on the land and no seeds had started to grow. And he hadn't yet made the rain fall on the ground. And there were no people to grow trees and plants. ⁶ But water kept coming up out of the ground and it watered the land.

⁷ Then Yahweh God took some soil and made a man from it. He blew his breath into the man's nose so that he could live. And the man came alive.

⁸ Then Yahweh God planted trees and other plants in a place called Eden, in the east. And there he put the man he had made. ⁹ It was a beautiful place because Yahweh God had planted

all kinds of trees that were lovely to look at, and that provided good fruit. In the middle of all those fruit trees and other plants Yahweh God planted one tree that gives life and one tree that gives knowledge about what is good and what is bad.

¹⁰ A river flowed in Eden and watered the ground. It flowed on further and divided into four. ¹¹ One of the rivers is called Pishon, the one that flows through the land called Havilah. ¹² In that place there is beautiful gold under the ground and other precious stones and also sweet-smelling perfume.

¹³ Another river called Gihon flows through the land of Cush. ¹⁴ Another river called Tigris flows to the east through the land of Assyria and further on. And another river is called Euphrates. They are the four rivers.

¹⁵ Yahweh God put the man there in Eden so that he could grow food and look after the place. ¹⁶ He said to him, “You can eat the fruit from any of the trees, ¹⁷ except one. This tree gives knowledge about what is good and what is bad and you mustn't eat its fruit. If you do eat it you will die the same day.”

¹⁸ Then Yahweh God said, “It is not good for this man to live alone. So I will make a helper to be with him.”

¹⁹ So Yahweh God took some soil and made animals and birds out of it. He brought the animals and birds to the man so that he could name them all. ²⁰ So the man named the animals and the birds, but none of them was a good helper for him.

²¹ Then Yahweh God made the man go to sleep. He went fast asleep and while he was sleeping Yahweh God took a rib from him and closed up his flesh. ²² He made a woman out of the rib and he brought her to him.

²³ The man said, “Ah! Here is someone like me! My bone is in her, and also my flesh. Yahweh God has made this person from a man today, so her name is ‘Woman.’” ²⁴ So because of that a man will leave his father and his mother to live with his wife, and then they will become one.

²⁵ The man and the woman were both naked, but they weren't ashamed.

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About Adam and Eve disobeying God

¹ When Yahweh God made all the animals, there was one snake that was very good at tricking people. It was better than all the other animals. The snake went to the woman and spoke to her. “God said to you, ‘Don't eat the fruit of any of these trees.’ Did he really say that?”

² “No,” said the woman. “We can eat fruit from these trees, ³ but we can't eat the fruit from just one tree in the middle. God told us, ‘Don't eat the fruit of that tree and don't touch it.’ If we touch it we will die.”

⁴ The snake said, “No. That is not true. You won't die. ⁵ God said that to you because he knows that if you eat that fruit you will be like God, and you will know what is good and what is bad.”

⁶ Then the woman looked at the tree and saw that it was beautiful. She thought, “It would be

good if I could eat this fruit. And it would be good to be wise.” And so she took some and ate it and gave some to her husband. Then he ate some too.

⁷ After they had eaten it, suddenly their minds were opened and they realized that they were naked. So they sewed some fig leaves together and put them on.

⁸ When the sun was setting they heard Yahweh God coming and they hid from him among the trees. ⁹ But Yahweh God called out to the man, “Where are you?”

¹⁰ The man answered, “I heard your voice, and I was afraid and I hid because I was naked.”

¹¹ God said to him, “Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat the fruit that I told you not to eat?”

¹² The man said, “This woman you gave me, she gave me the fruit and I ate it.”

¹³ Then Yahweh God said to the woman, “Why did you do that?”

She answered, “The snake tricked me and I ate it.”

About Yahweh God judging them

¹⁴ Yahweh God said to the snake, “Because of what you have done today, you will have to suffer. I am not cursing the other animals, but I am cursing you today. So from now on you will crawl on your stomach and you will have to eat dust until you die.

¹⁵ “You and this woman will hate each other. I will put hatred between you. Her children and yours will always hate each other. Her children

will crush your head and you will bite their heels.”

¹⁶ Then Yahweh God spoke some very strong words to the woman too. He said, “When you are pregnant, you will be in pain. I will make your suffering worse and you will be in pain when you give birth to a child. Even though you will suffer, you will still want your husband, but your husband will rule over you.”

¹⁷ Then Yahweh God said to the man, “You listened to your wife, and you ate the fruit that I told you not to eat. Because of that I am cursing the ground today. It will be spoilt. You will have to work hard all your life, so that your food will grow. ¹⁸ The earth will give weeds and thorns. So you will have to go looking for bush foods. ¹⁹ You will have to work hard until the sweat pours out of your body. You will work hard so that the earth will provide your food. You won't stop until you die and go back to the ground, and they bury you there. I made you out of the soil and you will become soil again.”

²⁰ And the man was called Adam and he named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all people. The name Eve means “living.” ²¹ And Yahweh God made clothes from animal skins for Adam and his wife, and he gave them the clothes to wear.

About God sending Adam and Eve out of Eden

²² Then Yahweh God thought, “Now this man is like us. He knows what is good and what is bad, so he must not eat the fruit from the tree of life and live forever.”

²³ So Yahweh God sent the man and the woman out of Eden. He said to Adam, “I took some soil and I made you. So from today you will have to work in the soil.” ²⁴ Then after he had sent them out, Yahweh God put some angels called cherubim in Eden in the east, and also a flaming sword that turned this way and that. He put it there so that no one could go where the tree of life was standing. So he made that place out of bounds.

About Adam's family

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About Cain and Abel

¹ Adam and his wife Eve lived together. They slept together and after a while Eve knew that she was pregnant. Later she gave birth to a son and said, “Yahweh has helped me, and so now I have given birth to a son.” And she named him Cain, because Cain means “I have got.”

² Later she gave birth to another son and named him Abel. So now there were two boys. When Abel grew up he looked after sheep, but Cain grew trees and plants for food. ³ Cain gave some of the food that he had grown as an offering to Yahweh.

⁴ His younger brother Abel killed the first lamb of one of his sheep, and he gave the best fat as an offering to Yahweh. Yahweh was pleased with Abel and the fat. ⁵ But he rejected Cain and his offering of food.

Cain became very angry and his face changed. ⁶ Yahweh said to him, “Why are you angry? And why has your face changed? ⁷ If you do the right thing, then you will be smiling. But if you don't do the right thing, it is as though an evil spirit is waiting for you and it is ready to tie you up. It wants to rule over you, but you must rule over it.”

⁸ Then Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let's go out into the bush.” And they went into the bush together, and Cain killed his brother there. He hit him and he died.

⁹ Yahweh said to Cain, “Where is your brother?”

He answered, “Don't ask me, I don't know. Why should I look after my brother?”

¹⁰ Then Yahweh said to him, “Why did you kill him? That was terrible. I know that you killed him because I can see his blood on the ground. Because you have killed him, it is as though he is calling out to me so that I can pay back and kill you in your turn. ¹¹ So now I am cursing you. You can no longer grow food, because the earth has drunk that blood. ¹² If you try to grow plants, they won't provide food, because the earth is spoilt. You will have to wander around without a homeland.”

¹³⁻¹⁴ Then Cain said, “That is terrible, driving me away from this place and from yourself. Because of your words I will have to suffer greatly. After today I will be wandering around homeless, and anyone who finds me will kill me.”

¹⁵ But Yahweh said, “No. If anyone kills you I will make sure that people pay back and kill seven others.” And Yahweh put a mark on Cain so that people wouldn't kill him. Then he warned the people about Cain.

¹⁶ And Cain left Yahweh and went away. He lived in another country called “Wandering,” which is east of Eden.

About Cain's descendants

¹⁷ Cain and his wife had a little boy called Enoch. Then Cain built many houses to make a city and he called it after his son.

¹⁸ Later Cain's son Enoch had a son and he called him Irad. And Irad's son was called Mehujael. Then Mehujael had a son and he was called Methushael. Then Methushael had a son and he was called Lamech.

¹⁹ Lamech had two wives, Adah and Zillah. ²⁰ Adah gave birth to a baby boy and she called him Jabal because Jabal means “to lead.” Then when Jabal grew up he was the ancestor of people who look after sheep and cattle. And he and his family were the first to live in tents. ²¹ His younger brother was called Jubal because Jubal means “musical instrument.” He was the ancestor of people who play musical instruments.

²² Then Lamech's second wife, Zillah, gave birth to a baby boy called Tubal Cain. When he grew up Tubal Cain made many tools like tomahawks and other things for cutting, digging and hammering. He made them all from iron. His younger sister was called Naamah.

²³ Lamech said to his two wives,
“Listen now, Adah and Zillah.
I have killed a man because he hit me first.
²⁴ If anyone had killed Cain, seven people would
have died.
But if anyone kills me, then seventy-seven
people will die.”

About Seth and Enosh

²⁵ Adam and his wife Eve had another son.
After he was born, Eve said, “God has given me
another baby boy. My first son died, because
Cain killed him. But this one will take his place.”
So she named him Seth because Seth means “he
has given.”

²⁶ When Seth grew up he had a son and he
called him Enosh. At that time people began
worshipping Yahweh.

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About Adam's descendants

¹⁻² When God created people, he made them
like himself. He created them male and female.
Then he blessed them and said, “You will be
called ‘people’.” These are the names of Adam's
descendants.

³ When Adam was 130 years old, he had a son
who was like himself and he called him Seth.

⁴ After that Adam lived another 800 years and
he had other children. ⁵ Then when he was 930
years old he died.

⁶ When Seth was 105 years old he had a son
called Enosh. ⁷ After that he lived another 807
years and he had other children. ⁸ Then when
he was 912 years old he died.

⁹ When Enosh was 90 years old he had a son called Kenan. ¹⁰ After that he lived another 815 years and he had other children. ¹¹ Then when he was 905 years old he died.

¹² When Kenan was 70 years old he had a son called Mahalalel. ¹³ After that he lived another 840 years and he had other children. ¹⁴ Then when he was 910 years old he died.

¹⁵ When Mahalalel was 65 years old he had a son called Jared. ¹⁶ After that he lived another 830 years and he had other children. ¹⁷ Then when he was 895 years old he died.

¹⁸ When Jared was 162 years old he had a son called Enoch. ¹⁹ After that he lived another 800 years and he had other children. ²⁰ Then when he was 962 years old he died.

²¹ When Enoch was 65 years old he had a son called Methuselah. ²²⁻²⁴ Enoch had fellowship with God. And he had other children, and when he was 365 years old Enoch disappeared, because God took him away.

²⁵ When Enoch's son Methuselah was 187 years old he had a son called Lamech. ²⁶ After that he lived another 782 years and he had other children. ²⁷ Then when he was 969 years old he died.

²⁸ When Lamech was 182 years old he had a son. ²⁹ He said, "Yahweh cursed the ground and it was spoilt. But when this child grows up he will comfort us and make our hard work easier." So he named him Noah because Noah means "he will comfort." ³⁰ After that, Lamech lived another 595 years and he had other children. ³¹ Then when he was 777 years old he died.

³² When Noah was 500 years old he had his family. His first son was Shem, the next was Japheth and the youngest was Ham.

6

About wicked people

¹⁻² There were now many people and they were spread out in different places. Then the sons of God came to where they were living. When they saw the people they could see that the girls were very beautiful, so they took them to be their wives. ³⁻⁴ Then there were very big, tall people living there. They were the children and the grandchildren of the sons of God and their wives. They were very strong, so everyone used to talk about them.

And Yahweh said, "I don't want people to live forever. They should grow old and die, because they are only people. So from now on they will live for 120 years and that is all."

⁵ When Yahweh looked at the people, he saw that they were all very wicked. They kept on thinking about evil all the time. ⁶ Then he said, "I wish I hadn't made these people and put them in the world. ⁷ I will kill them. I made these people, but they will have to die, and also the animals and the birds. I wish I hadn't made them." ⁸ But Yahweh was pleased with Noah.

About Noah's family

About Noah building a boat

⁹⁻¹⁰ This is the story of Noah. He had three sons called Shem, Ham and Japheth. He was a good man and he did nothing wrong. He was the only good person and he had fellowship with God. ¹¹⁻¹² All the other people were wicked. They were always fighting each other. God looked down and saw all those people, and they were very, very bad.

¹³ God said to Noah, "I am going to kill all these people, because they have done so much evil. ¹⁴ So I want you to build yourself a boat. Make it from good cypress pine wood. And when you build it, make many rooms in it. Put sticky tar on the wood along the inside and along the outside, so that the water won't come into the boat. ¹⁵ You must make it very long, 133 metres from the front to the back. And you must make it very big, 22 metres from the left side to the right. From the ground to the top it must be 13 metres. ¹⁶ Make a roof for it, and all around the roof underneath leave a small space of 44 centimetres. You must make three layers, one on top of the other, and you must put a door in it too.

¹⁷ "I am going to send a flood on the earth, so that every living thing here will drown. Everything else will die, but you will stay alive. ¹⁸ I will make a covenant with you.

"So you must go into the boat with your wife and your sons and their wives. ¹⁹⁻²⁰ You must take into the boat every kind of animal and every kind of bird. You must take one male and one female of each kind, so that they will stay alive.

²¹ You must take food, all different kinds of food for yourselves and for the animals and birds.”

²² And Noah did everything that God told him, everything that he wanted.

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About the flood

¹ Yahweh said to Noah, “Go into the boat now, you and your family. I know that you are the only person in all the world today who does what is right. ² Take some animals on to the boat. Take some of the ones that you can eat, seven males and seven females of each kind. And take some of the tabooed ones that you must not eat, one male and one female of each kind. ³ And also take seven male birds and seven female birds of each kind. You must take all those animals and birds so that they will stay alive now and so that they will increase again in the world later on.

⁴ “In seven days I will send rain. The rain will keep on falling for forty days and forty nights. It will keep on and on. It will destroy everything I have made in the world, the birds, the animals and the people.” ⁵ And Noah did everything that Yahweh told him to do.

⁶ At the time when the first rain fell, Noah was 600 years old. ⁷ Noah went inside the boat with his wife and his sons and their wives. They went in to keep alive. ⁸ And all the male and female animals and all the male and female birds went inside the boat, the ones that they could eat and the tabooed ones they couldn't eat. ⁹ They went in as God had told Noah.

¹⁰ Then they waited and waited for seven days. And then the first rain fell on the ground.

¹¹ Noah was 600 years old. One month had already passed and now it was full moon, and a great amount of water burst out of the springs under the ground. And the heavens opened and the rain poured down from above. ¹² The rain kept on and on falling, it didn't stop for forty days and nights.

¹³ But on the day when the first rain fell, Noah and his wife and his sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, and their wives went into the boat that they had made. ¹⁴ All the many animals and birds, those that lived in the bush and those that people looked after, they all went into the boat, big ones and little ones. ¹⁵ Male and female, every kind that breathed, Noah took them all into the boat. ¹⁶ Noah did everything God had told him to do. Then Yahweh shut the door of the boat, but Noah and the others were already inside.

¹⁷ The rain fell from above for forty days and nights. And the water bubbled up from under the ground. It covered the land and it rose up and up until the boat began to float. ¹⁸ The water kept on rising and getting deeper and deeper until the boat was moving freely as the water carried it here and there. ¹⁹ Then the water still kept rising until it covered the high rocks and the big hills, and even the mountains. ²⁰ It kept on rising and rising until it was seven metres above the tops of the mountains. And there the water stopped.

²¹ All the other animals and birds and people died. ²² Everything that lived on the earth, everything that breathed died. ²³ Yahweh destroyed everything. Only Noah and his family, his wife and his sons and their wives, and the animals that went into the boat, they alone stayed alive.

²⁴ And the flood stayed for five months.

8

About the water drying up

¹ God did not forget Noah and the animals and birds in the boat. He sent a wind to dry up the water and make it go down. ² The water bubbling up from the ground was stopped and the sky was closed and no more rain fell.

³ Then the water went down and down and kept on going down until the five months had passed. ⁴ It was full moon again now. And the boat landed on a mountain called Ararat. ⁵ And the water kept on going down and down.

Then two more months passed and it was new moon now. Then the mountain tops appeared from the water that had covered them. ⁶ After forty days Noah opened a window in the boat. ⁷ And he sent out a crow from the window. It flew away and kept on circling around and around. It didn't come back but it kept flying around until all the water was gone.

⁸ While Noah was waiting for the crow, he opened the window again and sent out a dove to see if the water had all gone. ⁹ He sent the dove out but it wandered around. There was still water everywhere. So it circled around and

around and then came back to the boat, because there was nowhere for it to rest. Noah stretched out his hand and took the dove through the window and brought it back inside.

¹⁰ Noah waited another seven days. Then he sent out the dove again. ¹¹ And then late in the afternoon it came back to him, bringing a green leaf to the boat. So Noah knew that there was no more water now.

¹² He waited another seven days and then he sent the dove out once more. This time it didn't come back to him.

¹³ After the boat landed five months passed. Then at the new moon the water was all gone. Noah was an old man, he was 601 years old now. He opened the roof of the boat and looked out over the land and saw that the ground was getting dry.

¹⁴ After two more months, before the new moon, the land was quite dry.

¹⁵ Then God said to Noah, ¹⁶ “Go out of the boat now. Go out with your wife and your sons and their wives. ¹⁷ Let out all the birds and animals. Take them with you, so that they can increase and live all over the earth.”

¹⁸ So Noah and his family went out of the boat. ¹⁹ And the animals and birds all came out in groups of their own kind.

About Noah sacrificing animals to Yahweh

²⁰ Noah collected some stones and piled them up to make an altar so that he could sacrifice some animals for Yahweh. Then he took one each of the animals and birds that they could eat and burnt them whole, without cutting them,

on the altar. He sacrificed them there and he praised Yahweh. ²¹ When Yahweh smelled them he was pleased.

He said to himself, “That is the last time. I will never curse the earth again because people have done wrong. I know that even while people are young, they are still bad. Their thoughts are evil. But I will no longer destroy everything that lives in the world. I won't do it again.

²² “This is the way it will be. People will grow food again in this world and gather it. The hot season and the cold season will follow one another until the world is finished. And night and day will always follow each other too.”

9

About God's covenant with Noah

¹ God blessed Noah and his sons and he said to them, “You will have many children, so that your descendants can live all over the world. ² All the animals, birds and fish will be afraid of you. And you will rule over them. ³ You can eat them now. I gave you plants for food before, but now I am giving you these animals and birds and fish, so that you can eat meat as well as other food. ⁴ But you must not eat meat with the blood still in it. You mustn't eat it, because the life is in the blood.

⁵ “If one of you kills another person, other people will punish you. And if a dangerous animal kills you, then I will pay it back and kill it.

⁶ I have made you all like myself, and so if you hit another person and he dies, then someone else will kill you.

⁷ “You must have many children so that your descendants will live all over the world.”

⁸ God also said to them, ⁹ “Today I am making my covenant with you and with your descendants. ¹⁰ It is for all of you and also for everything that lives and breathes here today, everything that you brought out of the boat with you. ¹¹ I am telling you these very important words today. Listen! From now on I will never do again what I have done in this world. I will never again send a lot of rain and flood the whole earth and destroy all the people and birds and animals.

¹²⁻¹³ “Now I will show you that I will never change my covenant. It will last forever for you and for everything that breathes. I will put my rainbow in the clouds for you. When you see it you will think about my covenant, and later when your children and then their children see it, they will think about it too. That rainbow will be a sign. ¹⁴ When I cover the sky and put a rainbow in the clouds, ¹⁵ I too will think about my promise that I am telling you today. It is also for the animals and the birds that live in the world now. I am telling you today that they will not drown again.

¹⁶⁻¹⁷ “So when you see the rainbow and when I see it too, I will think about my covenant. The rainbow will be a sign that it won't change, it will always be there for you today and afterwards for all people and fish, animals and birds who live in this world.”

About Noah and his sons

¹⁸ The three sons of Noah who went into the boat and came out again were called Shem, Ham and Japheth. Ham was the father of Canaan.
¹⁹ Noah's sons were the ancestors of all other people after the flood ended.

²⁰ Noah grew food and he was the first to grow grapes. ²¹ He made some wine from the grapes and he and his family drank it. One day Noah drank some of the wine he had made and became drunk. He took off his clothes and slept naked in his tent.

²² Ham, the father of Canaan, came to his father and when he saw him naked he went out and told his two brothers.

²³ Noah's two older sons took a cloth over to him. They held it behind them and walked backwards to where their father was lying. They covered him with the cloth because they didn't want to see their father naked. When they had put the cloth over their father they went away.

²⁴ Then Noah became sober again. When he heard what his youngest son had done he was very angry. ²⁵ He cursed Ham and his descendants and said,
“I am cursing Canaan!

His brothers will rule over him.

²⁶ I am praising Yahweh, the God of Shem.

Shem will rule over Canaan.

²⁷ God will give Japheth many children and they will increase.

And his descendants will live with Shem's people. Japheth will also rule over Canaan.”

The name Japheth means “they will become many.”

²⁸ After the flood had ended Noah lived another 350 years. ²⁹ Then when he was 950 years old he died.

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About Noah's descendants

¹ These are the names of Noah's descendants. His three sons were Shem, Ham and Japheth. They all had sons after the flood.

² These were Japheth's sons. Their names were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech and Tiras. ³ And these were the sons of Gomer, the eldest son. Their names were Ashkenaz, Riphath and Togarmah. ⁴ And these were the sons of his younger brother, Javan. Their names were Elishah, Spain, Cyprus and Rhodes. ⁵ Later on the descendants of Elishah and his brothers spread along the coast and on the islands.

So they became separate tribes, one group in one place and another group in another place. Each tribe spoke its own language. They all lived separately but they had the same ancestor Japheth.

⁶ These were the sons of Ham. He was Japheth's younger brother. Their names were Cush, Egypt, Libya and Canaan. ⁷ These were the sons of the eldest, Cush. Their names were Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah and Sabteca. And Raamah's two sons were called Sheba and Dedan.

⁸ Cush had another son called Nimrod. He was the first to rule over other people as well as his own family. ⁹ Yahweh helped him and so he was a very good hunter. That is why people say to

each other today, “May Yahweh help you too, so that you can be a good hunter like Nimrod was long ago.”

¹⁰ First Nimrod ruled over three cities, Babylon, Erech and Accad. They were all in Babylonia. ¹¹ Then he went from Babylonia to Assyria and there his workers built many houses. They went on and on building until there were four cities called Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah ¹² and Resen. Resen was between Nineveh and the big city Calah.

¹³ Ham's son, Egypt, had seven sons. Their names were Lydia, Anam, Lehab, Naphtuh, ¹⁴ Pathrus, Casluh and Caphtor. Caphtor, Egypt's youngest son, was the ancestor of the Philistine people. The descendants of Egypt were named after Lydia and his brothers.

¹⁵ Ham's son, Canaan, had two sons called Sidon and Heth. Sidon was the firstborn, ¹⁶ but Canaan also had other sons, so he was the ancestor of very many people. They were the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, ¹⁷ the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, ¹⁸ the Arvadites, the Zemarites and the Hamathites. These people spread out, until they became separate tribes, one group in one place and another group in another place.

¹⁹ All their areas were called by the one name Canaan, so Canaan was a very big country. The different places in Canaan spread from Sidon down to Gerar in the south near Gaza. And they went right over to the east, as far as Sodom,

Gomorrhah, Admah and Zeboiim, which is near Lasha.

²⁰ All the tribes lived separately, one group in one place and another group in another place. And each tribe spoke its own language. They all lived separately but they had the same ancestor Ham.

²¹ Shem, Noah's first son, was the first of the Hebrew people. ²² These were Shem's sons. Their names were Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud and Aram. ²³ And Aram's sons were called Uz, Hul, Gether and Meshek. ²⁴ Arpachshad's son was called Shelah, and Shelah's son was called Eber. ²⁵ Eber had two sons. One of them was called Peleg, and while he was alive all the people spread out and separated. So they called him Peleg, because Peleg means "they were separated." And his brother was Joktan. ²⁶ Joktan's sons were called Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, ²⁷ Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, ²⁸ Obal, Abimael, Sheba, ²⁹ Ophir, Havilah and Jobab. They were all Joktan's sons.

³⁰ The land belonging to those people went from Mesha over to Sephar in the eastern hill country. ³¹ They became separate tribes, one group in one place and another group in another place. And each tribe spoke its own language. They all lived separately but they had the same ancestor Shem.

³² All those many people were the descendants of Noah. They followed after Noah's sons until there were many separate nations. After the flood all those people separated into different groups all over the world.

11

About a tower in Babylon

¹ At first, the people who lived at that time were living in different places but they all spoke the same language. ² They lived in the east, and as they wandered around they found a flat place called Babylonia and they stayed there.

³ Then those people talked about building houses. They said, "Let us make some houses out of mud." So they wet some mud with water and made bricks and put them in the hot sun until they became hard. And they got some sticky tar. They put the bricks down one by one, and put some tar in between them so that the houses would be strong. And so they made their mud houses.

⁴ Then they said, "Come on, let us make a lot of houses. And let us make one very tall one. It won't be like these others, it will be really tall. Let us make it so tall it will reach the sky. We want to show each other that we are strong, and also show our grandchildren that their grandfathers were good at work and very clever. Let us do this now so that we won't live all over the country, but all together in one place."

⁵ Then the people made many small houses and one very high tower. And Yahweh came down to see them. ⁶ "They are all one people," he said, "and they speak one language. First they have made this tower, and soon they will be doing other things. They will go on doing more and more things, whatever they want to do.

⁷ “Let us go down and mix up their language so that they won't understand each other.”

⁸ And Yahweh went down and mixed up their language and sent them all over the world. So the people stopped building the city. ⁹ They called the city Babylon because Yahweh mixed up their language there and Babylon means “he mixed up the language.” And so Yahweh sent the people all over the world and they didn't know each other any more.

About Shem's descendants

¹⁰ This is about Shem's descendants. After the flood two years went by and then Shem was 100 years old and he had a son called Arpachshad. ¹¹ After that he lived another 500 years and had other children.

¹² When Arpachshad was 35 years old, he had a son called Shelah. ¹³ After that, he lived another 403 years and had other children.

¹⁴ When Shelah was 30 years old, he had a son called Eber. ¹⁵ After that, he lived another 403 years and had other children.

¹⁶ When Eber was 34 years old, he had a son called Peleg. ¹⁷ After that, he lived another 430 years and had other children.

¹⁸ When Peleg was 30 years old, he had a son called Reu. ¹⁹ After that, he lived another 209 years and had other children.

²⁰ When Reu was 32 years old, he had a son called Serug. ²¹ After that, he lived another 207 years and had other children.

²² When Serug was 30 years old, he had a son called Nahor. ²³ After that, he lived another 200 years and had other children.

²⁴ When Nahor was 29 years old, he had a son called Terah. ²⁵ After that, he lived another 119 years and had other children.

²⁶ After Terah was 70 years old, he had three sons called Abram, Nahor and Haran.

About Terah's descendants

²⁷ These are the descendants of Terah. His three sons were Abram, Nahor and Haran. Haran had a son called Lot, ²⁸ and Haran died in Ur, the city where he was born. Ur was in the country of Babylonia. Haran died there while his father Terah was still alive. ²⁹ Abram had a wife, Sarai, who was his younger sister but she had a different mother. People used to marry their sisters like that in that country. Nahor's wife was Milcah, Haran's daughter. Haran had another son called Iscah. ³⁰ Sarai was not able to have children.

³¹ Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the one whose father Haran had died, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, Abram's wife, and they left the city of Ur to go to the land of Canaan.

Some time later they reached a city called Haran and they stayed there. ³² The old man Terah, Abram's father, died in that city when he was 205 years old.

About Abram's family

12

About God calling Abram

¹ Yahweh said to Abram, “Leave this country belonging to you and your father and leave your people here, and go to a different country that I will show you.

² ‘I will give you many descendants,
and they will become a great nation.
I will bless you. I will make you very great,
so that many people will know your name.
Then you will bless others.

³ Some people will bless you,
and so I will bless them.
But if anyone curses you,
I will curse them.
I will bless all the nations
just as I am blessing you today.’ ”

⁴ Abram was an old man now, he was 75 years old. He left the city of Haran and went to a different country called Canaan, because Yahweh had told him to go there. And his nephew Lot went with him. Lot's father and Abram were brothers. ⁵ Abram took his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot, and all the men and women who lived with him and worked for him. They took all the things and all the money that they had got in Haran, and they set off.

They went on and on until they arrived in the land of Canaan. ⁶ At that time people called Canaanites were still living in the land. They had special trees in different places in the country and the people spoke to them.

Abram and all his people stayed in Canaan and went from place to place until they reached the hill country. There was a special tree there in a place called Moreh near the town of Shechem.

⁷ Yahweh came and appeared to Abram at the tree and said, “This is the country I will give to your descendants.” Then Abram took some big stones and stood them up and made an altar so that he could pray to Yahweh, and then he worshipped him there.

⁸ From there Abram and all his people went south, and they made their camp in the hill country between a town called Bethel on the west and one called Ai on the east. And Abram did the same as before. He took some big stones and stood them up and made an altar so that he could pray to Yahweh, and then he worshipped him there.

⁹ Abram and his people stayed in Canaan, but they moved camp and went from place to place towards the south.

About Abram and his wife in Egypt

¹⁰ But there was very little food in Canaan. There was so little food that Abram and his family left Canaan and went down to Egypt to live there for a while. ¹¹ When they reached Egypt, before they went into the country, Abram said to his wife Sarai, “You are a beautiful woman. ¹² When the Egyptians see you they will think, ‘That is Abram’s wife.’ Maybe they will kill me and let you live. ¹³ So tell them, ‘I am Abram’s sister,’ and then they will let me live and they will be kind to me.”

¹⁴ When they left Canaan and went into Egypt, the Egyptians saw that Sarai really was beautiful.

¹⁵ There was a king in Egypt who ruled over the whole country, and some of his servants told him about Abram's beautiful wife. They took Sarai to him, ¹⁶ and because she was beautiful the king was kind to Abram. He gave him servants and sheep, goats, cattle, donkeys and camels.

¹⁷ But Yahweh didn't want Sarai to stay with the king in his palace, and he sent very bad sicknesses to him and to the people who lived with him and they became very sick.

¹⁸ Then the king sent for Abram and asked him, "What have you done to me? Why didn't you tell me that Sarai was your wife?" ¹⁹ Because you said, 'This woman is my sister,' I took her for my wife. That was very wrong to trick me. Now take your wife and go! Get right away from me!"

²⁰ Then the king told his men to send them away, and they took Abram and put him out of the country with all his family and everything they owned.

13

About Abram and Lot separating

¹ Abram and his family went back from Egypt north to Canaan. Abram took his wife and family, his servants and everything they owned. Lot went with them too.

²⁻⁵ Abram was a very rich man. He had many sheep, goats and cattle and lots of silver and gold. Lot was also a rich man. He too had many sheep,

goats and cattle. And he took all of them and his family and his servants with him.

So they went from place to place. They went towards Bethel until they reached a place between Bethel and Ai. They camped there, in the same place where they had camped a long time ago, and where Abram had made the altar. And then Abram worshipped Yahweh there.

⁶⁻⁷ Other people who owned that country were still living there. They were the Canaanite people and the Perizzite people.

Abram and his family stayed there. But after a while there was not enough grass and land for both Abram and Lot, because there were so many sheep and cattle and other animals. So Abram's men who looked after the sheep and cattle and Lot's men argued over water and grass for the animals.

⁸ Then Abram said to Lot, "We come from one family. Your men and my men shouldn't be arguing, they shouldn't hate each other. ⁹ So let us go different ways. You say the place you want, so you can go there, and I will go to a different place so that we can live away from each other."

¹⁰⁻¹³ So Lot looked round and saw a big river valley called the Jordan, and it was very good land. The river went all the way to a place called Zoar. There was plenty of water and trees and other plants, just like the place that Yahweh made called Eden, and also like the land of Egypt. Lot wanted the land with the big Jordan valley for himself, so he went off to the east and the two men separated.

Abram stayed in the land of Canaan, but Lot made his camp near the city of Sodom. The people of Sodom were wicked. They didn't obey Yahweh; they were always doing evil things. But Lot and his family stayed there, before Yahweh destroyed the two cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

About Abram going to Hebron

¹⁴ After Lot had gone, Yahweh said to Abram, "From where you are standing, look around you, ¹⁵ because I will give this country to you and to your children. All this land that you can see will be yours forever. ¹⁶ And I will give you many descendants. They will be so many that no one will be able to count them. It would be just like trying to count all the bits of dirt in the ground! ¹⁷ Now, go and look over the whole land, because I will give it all to you," Yahweh said to Abram.

¹⁸ So Abram moved and went and made a new camp at Hebron. He stayed near the special trees belonging to a man called Mamre, and there Abram made an altar with stones to pray to Yahweh, and then he worshipped him.

14

About Abram rescuing Lot

¹⁻⁹ There was a man called Chedorlaomer who was a powerful king in his own city called Elam. He became ruler over five other kings, Bera, Birsha, Shinah, Shemeber and the king of the city called Bela. That city had two names, Bela and Zoar. Bera was the king of Sodom, Birsha was

the king of Gomorrah, Shinah was the king of Admah and Shemeber was the king of Zeboiim.

Chedorlaomer had been ruler over the other five kings for a long time. He had ruled over them and all their people for twelve years. The next year the five kings decided that they wouldn't obey him any longer.

The next year Chedorlaomer took his soldiers to a place called Ashteroth Karnaim, and three other kings took their soldiers there to help him. Their names were Amraphel, Arioch and Tidal. Amraphel was the king of Babylonia, Arioch was the king of Ellasar and Tidal was the king of Goiim.

Those four kings had a lot of soldiers and they helped each other. They fought against the people called Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim. Then they went to Ham and fought against the people called Zuzim. Then they went to a flat place called Kiriathaim and fought against the people called Emim. They killed many of the Rephaim and the Zuzim and the Emim.

From there they went to the hill country of Edom and fought against the Horite people. They killed many of the people and ran after some of them, driving them away until they reached Elparan on the edge of the desert.

From there they turned around and came back to a place called Kadesh. At that time it was called Enmishpat, but today it is called Kadesh. They kept on fighting people and they took all the country that belonged to the Amalekites. Then

they fought the Amorite people who lived in Hazazon Tamar and they killed many of them.

Then the five kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim and Bela got their soldiers together in a flat place called Siddim to fight the four kings of Elam, Goiim, Babylonia and Ellasar. At that time there was no sea there, but today there is a sea there called the Dead Sea. ¹⁰ There were a lot of pits full of tar like very sticky mud in that flat place. Two of the kings, the king of Sodom and the king of Gomorrah, tried to run away from the fighting, but they fell into the pits of tar and couldn't get out. But the other three kings ran away to the hills.

¹¹⁻¹² Then the four kings of Elam, Goiim, Babylonia and Ellasar went to Sodom and Gomorrah with their men and took all the people and the food and everything else from both those places. Lot, Abram's nephew, was living in Sodom and so they took him too with all his things. Then they went away.

¹³ One man escaped from Chedorlaomer and the other kings, and he went to Abram, the Hebrew, because Abram was Lot's uncle. Abram was living near the special trees that belonged to Mamre, the Amorite. Mamre and his two brothers, Eshcol and Aner, were Abram's friends. So the man who had escaped found Abram and told him that his nephew Lot had been taken away.

¹⁴ When Abram knew that Chedorlaomer and the other kings had taken his nephew Lot, he called together all his fighting men, 318

of them. Then Abram and his men followed Chedorlaomer and the other kings and their men a long way until they reached a town called Dan. ¹⁵ At Dan Abram spread out his soldiers and fought Chedorlaomer and the other kings and their men at night. Abram and his men killed many men belonging to Chedorlaomer and the other kings and they ran after the rest until they reached a place called Hobah, which is on the other side of Damascus. ¹⁶ Then they grabbed everything that Chedorlaomer and the others had taken from Sodom and Gomorrah. And Abram took his nephew Lot home with all his things. And he also brought back the women and other people Chedorlaomer and the others had taken from Sodom and Gomorrah.

About Melchizedek and Abram

¹⁷ When Abram came back after fighting Chedorlaomer and the other kings, the king of Sodom went to meet him. They met in a flat place called Shaveh, which is also called the King's Valley. ¹⁸ A man called Melchizedek came to Abram too. He was the king of Salem and also a priest of God, the God who is greatest. He brought damper and wine to Abram.

¹⁹ Then Melchizedek prayed to God and said,
“You are the greatest God,
the one who made heaven and all the world.
Bless Abram.
²⁰ You have looked after him and helped him
today
and so he has chased all those soldiers away.
And now we praise you!”

Then Abram gave Melchizedek one tenth of all the good things he had taken from Chedorlaomer and the other kings, and brought back with him.

²¹ The king of Sodom said to Abram, “Keep all these things for yourself, but give me back all my people.”

²²⁻²³ Abram answered, “I will not keep anything of yours, not even a piece of string or a sandal strap. I say this to you and I use Yahweh's name. He is the one who made heaven and all the world. I am telling you this so that Yahweh, the greatest God, will hear and I won't change it. Then you can never say, ‘I have helped Abram to become rich.’ ²⁴ I will not take anything for myself. But my men have already eaten food, so that is ours, and no more. But let these men, Aner, Eshcol and Mamre take their share.”

15

About God making a covenant with Abram

¹ After some time, while he was inside his tent, Abram had a vision of Yahweh and he heard him speaking to him. Yahweh said to him, “Don't be afraid. I will stand between you and trouble so that you will be safe, and I will give you good things.”

² Abram answered, “Lord Yahweh, why will you give good things to me? I have no children. Only one man is like my son, my servant Eliezer of Damascus. ³ You haven't given me any children, so Eliezer will take my things when I die.”

⁴ Then Abram heard Yahweh speaking to him again. He said, “Look! Eliezer won't take your things when you die. Truly you will have a son, and he will be the one who will have your things.”

⁵ Then Yahweh took Abram outside and said to him, “Look up to the sky and try and count the stars. Your descendants will increase until they are as many as those stars.”

⁶ Abram trusted in Yahweh. So because of that Yahweh was pleased with Abram.

⁷ Then Yahweh said to Abram, “I am Yahweh, the one who brought you out of Ur in Babylonia. I have brought you here to give you this land for yourself.”

⁸ But Abram said, “Lord Yahweh, how will I know this land belongs to me?”

⁹ Yahweh said to him, “Bring me a bullock, a goat and a male sheep, a ram. Get ones that are three years old. And also bring a dove and a pigeon.”

¹⁰ Abram went and got them and brought them to God. Then he killed them, cut them down the middle, and put the pieces of meat down on the ground, some on one side, and some on the other side, facing each other in two rows. But he didn't cut up the birds. ¹¹ Some big birds like whistling kites came down to the meat, but Abram drove them away.

¹² Then when the sun was going down Abram went sound asleep. While he was sleeping he became very frightened.

13-16 Then Yahweh said to him, “You will live until you become an old man and you will just die without any trouble, and then they will bury you. When you die, your descendants will go to a different land and they will live there as strangers. Cruel people who belong to that country will take your descendants and make them work hard for them there. Your descendants will go on living in that place for 400 years, because I won't yet drive out the Amorite people belonging to this country. These Amorite people are wicked but they will become more wicked later and then I will punish them and drive them out. Then I will become angry with those cruel people in that different country, and your descendants will leave there and they will come back here. When they come out of that country they will bring many things, many animals and a lot of money with them. They will be very, very rich.”

17 Then the sun set and it became dark. Suddenly coals and ashes appeared in a clay pot, with smoke rising from it. And fire appeared burning brightly like a torch of burning cypress pine. The two fires went between the pieces of meat that Abram had put on the ground.

18 Right at that time Yahweh made a covenant with Abram. Yahweh said to him, “These are my words and I won't change them. Truly I will give this whole land to your descendants. It goes from Egypt right over there to the big Euphrates River. 19 These are the people who own these areas today. Some places belong to the Kenite

people, some to the Kenizzite people, some to the Kadmonite people, ²⁰ some to the Hittite people, some to the Perizzite people and some to the Rephaim people. ²¹ Some places belong to the Amorite people, some to the Canaanite people, some to the Girgashite people, and some to the Jebusite people. Truly I will give all these places of theirs to your descendants.”

16

About Hagar and Ishmael

¹ Abram stayed there in Canaan. He lived there for ten years, but his wife Sarai still didn't have any children. Before that Sarai had taken a girl from Egypt called Hagar. Her husband had bought her from her family so that she could work for Sarai as a servant.

² So Sarai said to her husband, “Yahweh hasn't given me any children yet. So take this girl and sleep with her. Then if she has any children they will be mine.”

Abram agreed. ³ So Sarai gave Hagar to her husband to be his wife ⁴ and they knew each other.

After a while Hagar knew that she was pregnant and she became proud towards Sarai. And she said to Sarai, “Now I am good because I am carrying Abram's child.”

⁵ Sarai said to her husband, “Because she is carrying your child, she has become proud. I myself told you to take her. She has become proud because she is carrying a child. She keeps on speaking unkindly to me. She has been doing

it all the time,” Sarai said. “Which one of us is right, you or me? Let Yahweh decide!”

⁶ Abram said, “She is yours, and she is working for you. You are the one who controls her, so you may do anything you want with her.”

Then Sarai was cruel to Hagar and kept on teasing her. She beat her with a stick, because of the way she had been speaking to her. And so Hagar ran away.

⁷ She ran far away into the desert. She followed the road that went to Shur, and after a while she found a waterhole. And Yahweh's angel met her there. ⁸ He said to Hagar, “You are the girl who has been working for Sarai, aren't you? What are you doing here? Where have you come from and where are you going?”

Hagar answered, “I am running away from Sarai.”

⁹ “Go back to Sarai and work for her, because you belong to her,” Yahweh said to Hagar.

¹⁰ “I will give you so many descendants that no one will be able to count them.

¹¹ You will have a baby boy and you will call him Ishmael,

because I have heard you crying.”

The name Ishmael means “God hears.”

¹² The angel also said to her,

“Your son will be like a man from the bush.

He will cause trouble for everyone

and everyone will cause trouble for him.

He will live by himself, away from all his family.”

¹³ “Oh!” thought Hagar. “That wasn't an angel. I have seen Yahweh himself. I have seen him with my own eyes and I am still alive!” So

she called Yahweh “The God Who Sees Me.”
¹⁴ Because she said that, today people call that waterhole, “The Owner of the Waterhole Is Alive and He Sees Me.” The waterhole is between Kadesh and Bered.

¹⁵ Then Hagar went back to Sarai and gave birth to a baby boy for Abram, and Abram called him Ishmael. ¹⁶ When the baby was born, Abram was 86 years old. He was a very old man.

17

About circumcision being a sign of the covenant that Yahweh made

¹ When Abram was 99 years old, Yahweh came and appeared to him and said, “I am the most powerful God, and you must always obey me. You must always do what is right. ² Let us make a covenant together. I am making this covenant with you so that it will last forever. I will give you many descendants.”

³ Abram bowed down and put his face to the ground to worship God.

And God said to him, ⁴ “I am making this covenant with you and I will not change it. I am telling you that you will be the ancestor of many different people. ⁵ From today your name will not be Abram but now you will be called Abraham. I am giving you this new name because you will be the ancestor of many nations.” God said that because Abram means “great father,” but Abraham means “father of many people.”

⁶ And God said, “I will give you many descendants. Some of them will be kings in their countries. Your descendants will become so many that they will become nations.

⁷ “I won't change my covenant that I have made. It will last forever, for you and also for your descendants. I will be your God today and always and I will be the God of your descendants.

⁸ You are living as a stranger here today. But I will give this land to you and your descendants. Even though it belongs to other people today, it will be yours later. The whole land of Canaan will belong to your descendants forever. And I will be their God forever.”

⁹ Then God said to Abraham, “You must keep my covenant that I have made with you and agree to it. You must not change it and your descendants must not change it. ¹⁰ You must promise to circumcise all your men, and your descendants must do the same and circumcise every male person. You must all agree to do this. ¹¹⁻¹² From today you must circumcise your sons when they are eight days old. Not only your children, but those you have bought to work for you as servants, they too must circumcise their sons. It doesn't matter if they were born in your house or in a different country, they must do the same. Then when you do that, everyone will know that you and I have made this covenant together.

¹³ “Don't circumcise just some of your men but circumcise them all. Then if you do that, it will be a sign that the covenant you and I have made

together won't change but it will be forever. ¹⁴ Then the men who haven't been circumcised won't be my people, because they haven't kept my covenant that I have made."

¹⁵ Then God said to Abraham, "You must no longer call your wife Sarai, but from today you must call her Sarah. ¹⁶ I will bless her. And I will give you a son, and this son of yours will be Sarah's son. I will bless Sarah and she will be the mother of nations. Some of her descendants will become kings and rule in their countries."

¹⁷ Then Abraham bowed down and put his face to the ground to praise God. But he laughed because he thought, "How can I have children when I am already 100 years old? And how can Sarah have a child when she is 90 years old? She is a very old woman already!" ¹⁸ He asked God, "Why can't Ishmael have my things when I die?"

¹⁹ But God said, "No! Your wife Sarah will give birth to a baby boy for you and you will call him Isaac." God said that because Isaac means "he laughs."

Then he said, "The covenant that I have made with you will be for him too, and it will never change. It will last forever, for him and for his descendants forever. ²⁰ I have heard what you asked me about Ishmael, and so I will bless him too, and I will also give him many children and many descendants. His twelve sons will be kings who will rule over their countries. All his many descendants will be one great nation.

²¹ "As for Isaac, Sarah will give birth to him next year. Then I will keep my covenant, the one that you and I have made, with Isaac in his turn."

²² When God finished speaking to Abraham, he left him.

²³ On that same day Abraham obeyed God and circumcised his son Ishmael and all the other men and boys living in his house. He circumcised his servants, those he had bought, and those who were born in his house, and all the children of the servants.

²⁴ Abraham was 99 years old at the time when they circumcised him, ²⁵ and his son Ishmael was thirteen years old. ²⁶ They circumcised them both on the one day, ²⁷ and also all the servants who stayed with Abraham.

18

About God promising to give Abraham a son

¹ Abraham stayed by the special trees belonging to Mamre. And Yahweh came and appeared to him again there. In the middle of the day Abraham was sitting at the doorway of his tent.

² He looked up and saw three men standing there. He got up quickly and ran to them and bowed down and put his face to the ground, because people in that place did that in those days when strangers arrived at their homes.

³ Abraham said to them, "Don't go. Stay here for a while and I will look after you. ⁴ Let me bring some water for you to wash your feet. This is a good shady tree. Come and sit here to rest for a little while. ⁵ I will bring some food for you to eat to make you strong when you go on your way. I am very pleased that you have come to my place, so let me look after you."

They answered, “Yes, what you are doing for us is good.”

⁶ Abraham hurried off and ran inside to Sarah and said, “Quickly, take the best flour and make dampers.”

⁷ Then he ran outside again and chose a good, fat calf for them to eat, and gave it to his servant, who killed it and cooked it.

When the meat was cooked and ready to eat, ⁸ Abraham took it with some milk and cream and other food, and brought it to the three men. There in the shade of the tree he himself looked after them while they ate.

⁹ Then they asked Abraham, “Where is your wife Sarah?”

He answered, “She is there inside.”

¹⁰ One of the men was Yahweh and he said to Abraham, “In nine months I will come back here, and your wife will have a son.”

Sarah was behind him. She was inside the tent, behind the door, listening to the men talking with Abraham. ¹¹ Abraham and his wife were both very old now and Sarah's monthly periods had stopped.

¹² So Sarah laughed to herself and thought, “How can I have a child? Now that I am an old woman, I am weak. How can I do that? My husband is already an old man. How can we have a child?”

¹³ Yahweh said to Abraham, “Why did your wife laugh? Why did she say, ‘Am I really going to have a child, when I am an old woman?’

¹⁴ I am Yahweh and I can do anything. I have

already said, 'In nine months I will come back and Sarah will have a son.' ”

¹⁵ Sarah heard what Yahweh said from inside the tent. She was afraid, and she said, “I didn't laugh.” “Yes, you did,” Yahweh answered. “You laughed.”

About Abraham asking Yahweh about Sodom

¹⁶ Then the three men left and Abraham went with them. They went up a hill and looked down from there towards Sodom.

¹⁷ And Yahweh said to himself, “I will tell this man what I am going to do. I won't hide it from Abraham, I will speak about it now.

¹⁸ His descendants will become a great nation. I will bless all the nations in the same way I am blessing him today. ¹⁹ I have chosen Abraham so that he can tell his sons to obey me. Then they in their turn will tell their sons to obey me and do what is right. If they obey me I will bless them as I have promised Abraham.”

²⁰ Then Yahweh spoke to Abraham and said, “I have been told that those people of Sodom and Gomorrah are very wicked. They are doing bad things all the time. ²¹ I must go down and see if the things I have heard are true.”

²² Then the two men left and went on down the hill and over towards Sodom. But Yahweh stayed there with Abraham. ²³ Abraham asked Yahweh, “Are you really going to destroy the wicked people and the good people too? ²⁴ If there are fifty good people in the city, will you destroy all the people? Won't you leave the city as it is to save the good people? ²⁵ You won't kill

them all, the good and the bad. Surely not! You can't do that! You can't punish good people. You are the one who must judge everyone, and so you must do what is right.”

²⁶ Yahweh answered, “If I find fifty good people in Sodom today, I will leave their city alone for their sake.”

²⁷ Then Abraham spoke again. He said, “I am bold speaking to you, Lord, but please let me say a few more words. I am only an ordinary man. I am not good enough to speak to you. ²⁸ But maybe there will only be forty-five good people. If there aren't five more, will you destroy the whole city?”

Yahweh answered, “No. I will not destroy the city today.”

²⁹ Then Abraham spoke again. He said, “Maybe there will only be forty good people. Then what will you do?”

Yahweh answered, “Then I will not destroy the city today.”

³⁰ Abraham said, “Please don't be angry, Lord, but let me speak again. Maybe there will only be thirty good people. Then what will you do?”

Yahweh answered, “Then I will not destroy the city today.”

³¹ Abraham said, “I am bold still speaking to you, Lord, but please let me say more. Maybe there will only be twenty good people. Then what will you do?”

Yahweh answered, “Then I will not destroy the city today.”

³² Abraham said, “Please don't be angry, Lord, and I will speak just once more. Maybe there will only be ten good people. Then what will you do?”

Yahweh answered, “If there are ten good people I will not destroy the city.” ³³ Then Yahweh finished speaking and left Abraham, and Abraham went home.

19

About Lot staying in Sodom

¹ The two angels went down the hill and on to Sodom. They went on walking and arrived when the sun went down. Lot was sitting at the gate. When he saw the two men coming he got up and went to meet them. He bowed down because people in that place did that in those days when strangers arrived in their city. ² He said to them, “I am here to look after you. Come to my house. You can wash your feet and stay for the night with me. In the morning you can get up and go on your way.”

But they said, “No, we will stay here on the road.”

³ But Lot kept on asking them and at last they agreed and went with him to his house. Lot told his servants to cook dampers and get other food ready for the two men. When the dampers were cooked they ate their meal.

⁴ Before they went to bed, all the men of Sodom came to Lot's house. They surrounded his house, both young and old. ⁵ They called out to Lot and asked, “Where are the men who came to stay with you? Bring them out here to us. We want to

sleep with them!” But the men of Sodom wanted to do wrong with them.

⁶ Lot went outside and shut the door. ⁷ He said to them, “Friends, you must not do such a wicked thing! ⁸ Look, I have two daughters. They have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you. You can do whatever you want with them, but you can't have these two men. They are in my house and I am looking after them.”

⁹ But the men said to him, “Get out of our way! You are a stranger, you can't tell us what to do! Get out of our way, or we will do worse to you!” Then they grabbed Lot and pushed him towards the house. They moved near to break the door. ¹⁰ But the two men inside reached out their hands and grabbed Lot and pulled him back into the house and shut the door. ¹¹ Then they made the men outside blind, so that they couldn't see to find the door.

About Lot leaving Sodom

¹²⁻¹³ Then the two men said to Lot, “Yahweh has heard that these people are very bad, and he has sent us here to destroy this city. So if you have any of your family here, get them and take them out of the city, because we really are going to destroy it.”

¹⁴ Then Lot went to the two men who were going to marry his daughters, and said, “Hurry up and get out of here, because Yahweh is going to destroy this place.” But they thought Lot was joking and they didn't take any notice.

¹⁵ At dawn the angels told Lot to hurry. “Quick,” they said, “take your wife and your two

daughters and get out, so that you won't die when we destroy the city." ¹⁶ Lot didn't hurry, but Yahweh had pity on him. So the men took him, his wife and his two daughters by the hand and brought them out of Sodom.

¹⁷ Then one of the angels said, "You must be quick! Run and don't look back. Don't stop in the valley. Keep on running to the hills over there so that you don't die."

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ But Lot said, "No! The hills are too far away. We will never reach them. You have had pity on me, you have been kind to me and saved me. But I can't go all the way to those hills, they are too far away and I will die on the way. ²⁰ Look! See that little town over there. It is not so far. Let me go there. You can see it is just a little place. If I go there I will be safe."

²¹ He answered, "All right, I won't destroy that town, so you can go there. ²² Run quickly. I won't destroy the city until you get there." Then people called the town Zoar, because the name Zoar means "little" and Lot said, "It is a little place."

About Sodom and Gomorrah

²³ Lot and his few relatives hurried to Zoar. The sun was rising when they reached it. ²⁴ Then suddenly Yahweh made salty fire fall on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. ²⁵ He destroyed the two cities and the whole valley that was near them. All the people who lived in those cities and everything that grew on the land died. ²⁶ But Lot's wife looked back and died. The salty fire covered her and made her like a rock.

²⁷ The next morning Abraham got up and went to the place where he had talked with Yahweh. He hurried up the hill ²⁸ and looked down below. He looked at Sodom and Gomorrah and the whole valley and saw smoke rising from the ground. There was smoke everywhere. The whole place was on fire and covered with smoke. ²⁹ God destroyed Sodom where Lot had been living and also Gomorrah. But he remembered Abraham and let Lot escape to Zoar so he would be safe.

About Lot and his daughters

³⁰ Lot was afraid and he didn't want to stay in Zoar. So he took his two daughters away to the hills and they lived there together in a cave.

³¹ The older daughter said to her sister, "Our father is getting old. And there are no men here for us to marry so that we can have children.

³² Come on, let's make our father drink wine until he is drunk, and sleep with him, so that he can make us pregnant." ³³ That night they gave him wine until he was drunk and then the older daughter slept with her father. But because he was drunk he didn't remember about it.

³⁴ The next day the older daughter said to her sister, "I slept with him last night, so now let's make him drunk again tonight and you can sleep with him this time. Then our father will make both of us pregnant." ³⁵ That night they gave him wine again until he was drunk, and Lot's younger daughter slept with him too. But again, because he was drunk he didn't remember about it.

³⁶ In this way Lot made both of his daughters pregnant. ³⁷⁻³⁸ Later on the older daughter had a son and she called him Moab, because Moab means “from my father.” The younger one also had a son and she called him Benammi, because Benammi means “son of my people.” When they grew up Moab became the ancestor of the Moabite people and Benammi became the ancestor of the Ammonite people.

20

About Abraham and Abimelech

¹ Abraham and his people left Mamre and went towards the south. They lived between two places in Canaan, a town called Kadesh and the desert called Shur.

Later they left Canaan and went north to Philistia, and stopped in a place called Gerar.

² While Abraham was in Gerar he said to the people there, “Sarah is my sister.” Sarah was his sister first, but then she became his wife. People used to do that long ago in that country.

The king of Gerar was called Abimelech. He sent some of his people to Sarah to bring her to him to be his wife. ³ Then one night Abimelech had a dream. God came and appeared to him and said, “You are going to die because you have taken this woman. She is already married.”

⁴ At that time Sarah was in Abimelech's house, but he had not yet married her and he said to God, “I have done nothing wrong. So why will you kill me and my family?” ⁵ Abraham himself said, ‘This woman is my sister.’ And she said, ‘He

is my brother.' So what I did was all right. I did nothing wrong."

⁶ In the dream God said to him, "Yes, I know. It is not your fault. That is why I stopped you, and you didn't sin against me or against her, and you didn't touch her. ⁷ Give this woman back to her husband now. He is a prophet, and he will pray for you so that you will not die. But I am warning you, if you don't send this woman back to him you will die, you and all your people."

⁸ The next morning Abimelech got up and called all his important servants and told them about the dream, and they were very frightened. ⁹ Then Abimelech called Abraham and asked, "What have you done to us? What wrong have I done to you to make you send this trouble on me and my people? That was very bad. No one should ever do that kind of thing to me. ¹⁰ Why did you do it?"

¹¹ Abraham answered, "I thought, 'None of these people obey God. They will kill me to get my wife.' ¹² She really is my sister. She is my father's daughter, but not my mother's, and I married her. ¹³ So when God sent me from my father's country to other countries, this is what I told her. 'Say to people, This is my brother. Then I will know that you really love me.' "

¹⁴ Then Abimelech gave Sarah back to Abraham, and at the same time he gave him sheep, cattle and servants. ¹⁵ He said to Abraham, "Here is my whole land, and you can live anywhere you like." ¹⁶ And he said to Sarah, "Today I am giving

your brother 1,000 silver coins. Now your people will know that you have done nothing wrong.”

¹⁷⁻¹⁸ Because of everything that had happened to Sarah, Abraham's wife, none of the women in Abimelech's palace could have children, because Yahweh stopped them. So Abraham prayed to God for Abimelech and God healed him and his wife and the women who were his servants, so that they could have children again.

21

About Isaac being born

¹ Yahweh kept his word to Sarah and he was kind to her. ² She became pregnant and then she gave birth to a son for Abraham, even though he was already an old man. So the words God spoke to Abraham about Isaac being born became true.

³⁻⁵ Abraham was 100 years old when his son was born and he called him Isaac. When the baby was eight days old, his father circumcised him, because God had told him to do this.

⁶ The baby's mother said, “I feel wonderful, because God has blessed me and made me laugh. So when people hear that I have a baby boy, they will laugh with me. ⁷ No one ever said to my husband, ‘Your wife will nurse her own baby,’ but now I have given birth to a baby boy for an old man.”

⁸ The child grew and he learnt to eat food. Then Abraham said, “Now my son can eat food, so I will ask many people to eat here with me.” So Abraham and his people met together for a feast.

About Abraham sending Hagar and Ishmael away

⁹ One day Sarah's son Isaac was playing with Ishmael. Ishmael's mother was Hagar, the Egyptian woman who worked for Sarah. While they were playing together Sarah saw Ishmael teasing Isaac.

¹⁰ She said to her husband, "Send this servant girl away with her son, make them both go away from here. This woman's son mustn't take even one of your things when you die. My son must get all your things."

¹¹ When Abraham heard this, he was very upset, because Ishmael was also his son.

¹² But God said to him, "Don't be upset about the boy and your servant Hagar. Isaac will be the ancestor of those people I told you about. So you can do what Sarah told you and send Hagar and Ishmael away. ¹³ But I will also give many children to Hagar's son, so that his children will become many and they also will become a nation. He too is your son."

¹⁴ The next morning Abraham got up and gave Hagar food and water. In that country people used to take a bullock's skin and sew it like a bag for water. So she carried water in a bullock's skin on her shoulder for them to drink on the way. Then Abraham sent Ishmael off with his mother and they went away. The old man sent them both right away from there.

They went on and on until they reached a desert place called Beersheba, and they wandered about there. ¹⁵ They kept on walking and

drinking the water they had brought, and then after a while the water was finished.

The boy lay down in a little bit of shade and his mother left him there ¹⁶ and went and sat down a short distance away and cried and cried. She said, "I don't want to see my son die." The boy also began to cry.

¹⁷ God heard him crying, and God's angel spoke from heaven to his mother. He said, "Why are you upset? Don't be afraid. God has heard your son crying. ¹⁸ Get up, go and take him by the hand and pick him up. Comfort him and stop him crying. Later when he grows up I will give him many children and many descendants and they will become a great nation."

¹⁹ God opened the woman's eyes and she looked around and saw a waterhole. She went and filled the bullock's skin and gave her son a drink of water, and he drank.

²⁰ God was with the boy Ishmael. While he grew up God was still close to him. He went to a place called Paran that was also a desert. He was good at hunting birds and animals. ²¹ After some time his mother found an Egyptian girl to be his wife, and he married her.

About Abraham and Abimelech making an agreement at Beersheba

²² One day Abimelech, king of Gerar, went to Abraham with Phicol, the officer in charge of his army. Abimelech said to Abraham, "God is with you all the time. ²³ So I want us to be friends. Promise me that you won't trick me, my children or my descendants. Tell me now so that God will

hear you, and do not change it. I have been good to you, so tell me that you will be good to me and to the people in this country where you are living now.”

²⁴ Abraham agreed and said, “Yes. That is good, and so you and I will always be friends from today.” ²⁵ Then Abraham also said to Abimelech, “Some of your servants have taken a waterhole of mine.”

²⁶ Abimelech said, “I didn't know that. You didn't tell me about it, and this is the first time I have heard of it. Who could have taken it?”

²⁷ Then Abraham gave some sheep and cattle to Abimelech, and in that way they made their agreement. ²⁸ Then Abraham also took seven of his lambs. ²⁹ “Why did you do that?” asked Abimelech.

³⁰ Abraham answered, “Take these seven lambs for yourself. If you take them, then later you can say, ‘Abraham is the one who dug this well.’” So Abimelech took the seven lambs, ³¹ and the place was called Beersheba, because the two men made their agreement at the well. The name Beersheba means “the well where they promised.”

³² Then Abimelech and Phicol went back home to Philistia. ³³ But Abraham stayed at Beersheba for a little while and planted a tree there. It was called a tamarisk tree. Then he worshipped Yahweh, the God who lives forever. ³⁴ After he had planted the tree and worshipped Yahweh, Abraham left Beersheba and he too went to Philistia, and he lived there for a long time.

22

About Abraham giving Isaac to God

¹ Some time later God tested Abraham to see if he would really obey him. So he called out to him, “Abraham!”

The old man said, “Here I am!”

² God said to Abraham, “Take your only son, the one you love so much, and go to a place called Moriah. When you arrive there I will show you a mountain, and you must kill your son there on the mountain, and sacrifice him. You must give him to me.”

³ The next morning Abraham got up and chopped some firewood and put it on a donkey, and he called two of his servants and his son Isaac to come to him. And then they went off together to the place that God had told Abraham about.

⁴ They went on and on walking and then on the third day Abraham saw the mountain a long way off. ⁵ Then Abraham said to his two men, “Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I are going over there, so that we can worship God. Then we will come back here to you.”

⁶ Then Abraham took the firewood, and gave it to his son Isaac and he carried it on his back while the old man took a knife and hot coals for the fire and they went on together. As they walked along, ⁷ Isaac said to his father, “Father!”

His father said, “What is it?” “Here are the firewood and coals, but where is the lamb for you to burn as a sacrifice?” the boy asked.

⁸ Then Abraham said, “God himself will give us a lamb.”

They went on walking ⁹ until they reached the place God had told Abraham about. Abraham took some stones for an altar and built it and then he put the firewood on top. He took his son and tied him up, and put him on top of the firewood. ¹⁰ Then he took the knife and lifted it up to stab his son Isaac and kill him. ¹¹ But Yahweh's angel called out to him from heaven and said, “Abraham!”

Abraham answered, “What is it?”

¹² The angel said, “Don't kill him! Now I know that you obey God, because you haven't kept your only son to yourself.”

¹³ Then Abraham looked around and saw a male sheep, a ram. It was caught in a thorny bush by the horns. So Abraham went and got it and killed it and put it on top of the firewood. Then he burnt it as a sacrifice and gave that to God instead of giving his son.

¹⁴ Abraham named the mountain “Yahweh Gives Good Things.” And even today the people of that place still say, “On Yahweh's mountain God gives his people good things.”

¹⁵ Then Yahweh's angel called out to Abraham again from heaven. ¹⁶ “Listen to these words of Yahweh,” he said. “Yahweh said, ‘I am making a promise, and I am using my own name so that my promise will be strong and I won't change it. I will bless you because you didn't try to keep your only son for yourself. I am making this promise and it won't change. ¹⁷ Truly I will give you many

descendants. They will be so many they will be like the stars you can see in the sky or like the grains of sand on the beach. They will fight with people in other places and rule over them.

¹⁸ “Then all the nations will say to me, Bless us in the same way you have blessed Abraham's descendants. That will happen because you have obeyed my words,’ Yahweh said.”

¹⁹ Then Abraham and Isaac went back to the two men they had left behind. And from there they went home to Philistia.

After a while Abraham and his family went to Beersheba and they stayed there.

About Nahor's descendants

²⁰⁻²³ Some time later Abraham heard about Nahor, his younger brother. Nahor lived in the country where Abraham had lived before he went to Canaan. His wife's name was Milcah. Nahor and Milcah had eight sons. The first was called Uz, and his younger brothers were Buz, Kemuel the father of Aram, Chesed, Hazo, Pildash and Jidlaph and the youngest son was Bethuel. And Bethuel had a daughter called Rebecca. ²⁴ One of Nahor's servants was also his wife, and her name was Reumah. Nahor's and Reumah's sons were Tebah, Gaham, Tahash and Maacah.

23

About the burial cave

¹ Sarah lived to be 127 years. ² She died in Canaan in the town called Hebron. Her husband cried and was very upset about his wife dying.

³ Then Abraham left the place where his wife's body was lying and went to the Hittite people to talk to them there in Hebron. He found them in their usual place for talking, sitting at the gate where the people gathered together.

Abraham said to them, ⁴ "I am a stranger. I have come from a different country but I am living here with you today. So let me buy some land so that I can bury my wife."

⁵ They said, ⁶ "Listen to us. We look on you as a great leader. So go and look at our land. And if you see a good place, you can bury your wife there. None of us will refuse to give you our land. Don't worry, you can bury your wife anywhere."

⁷ Then Abraham bowed down to them, because people in that country always used to do that when they were among strangers. ⁸ He said, "That is good, that I can bury my wife here. So ask Ephron, Zohar's son, for me. ⁹ Ask him about the cave called Machpelah so I can buy it. It is at the edge of his land. Ask him so that I can buy it and give him the whole price, here where you can all see me. Then it will be mine for me to put all my dead people in it."

¹⁰⁻¹¹ Ephron himself was sitting there with the Hittite people. He said, "Listen to me. I will give that whole field of mine to you, and also the cave. I will give it to you today, in front of my people, so that you can put your wife in it." And all the people there heard him.

¹² But Abraham bowed down again in front of the Hittite people. ¹³ Then he spoke to Ephron, so that everyone could hear him. He said, "Wait a

moment, and listen. I will buy your whole field. Take the money today and I will put my wife there.”

¹⁴ Ephron answered, ¹⁵ “The right amount of money for that place is only 400 coins. So now let us not talk about that any more, and you can bury your wife there.”

¹⁶ Abraham agreed and counted the money that Ephron had said, in front of everyone. Then he put down 400 coins. He made the money exactly right so that it would be the full amount.

¹⁷ So Abraham bought that land at Machpelah from Ephron. It is near Mamre's place. He bought the land with the grass and all the trees and also the cave. ¹⁸ Those people who lived there heard everything that Abraham said. So they knew now that the land belonged to him. ¹⁹ And Abraham put his wife Sarah in that cave in the country of Canaan. ²⁰ The land belonged to the Hittite people first, and now it belonged to Abraham, and also the cave, so that he could put his dead people in it.

24

About Isaac's wife

¹ Abraham was now a very old man, and Yahweh had blessed him all the time. ² He said to his oldest servant, who looked after all his things, “Put your hand here between my legs. ³ I want you to make a promise and not change it and say Yahweh's name. He is God, the one who made heaven and all the world. I want you to promise that you will not get a wife for Isaac from here

in Canaan. ⁴ You must get one from among my family. I want you to go back to the country where I was born and get a wife for my son Isaac from there.”

⁵ But the servant said, “Maybe the girl won't want to come here. Shall I send your son back to that country to stay there?”

⁶ “No,” Abraham answered. “Don't do that. You must not send my son there. ⁷ Long ago Yahweh brought me here from my father's home and from my family. Yahweh is the God who made the heavens, and he made a promise to me. He said to me, ‘I will give this country to you and to your descendants.’ He will send his angel ahead of you, to help you get a wife there for my son. ⁸ If the girl doesn't want to come with you, then I will free you from your promise to me. But you must not send my son back there.” ⁹ So the servant put his hands between Abraham's legs and promised to do everything Abraham had asked.

¹⁰ Then the servant took ten of Abraham's camels and loaded them with many good things of Abraham's. Then he left and went towards the north.

He went on until he arrived in the country called Mesopotamia. Then he went on until he reached the city where Abraham's brother Nahor lived. ¹¹ He didn't go straight into the city, he stopped the camels outside at the waterhole. He made them sit down and he waited for a while. It was late afternoon. At that time the young women who lived in the city used to come to the well to get water.

¹² Then the servant prayed to Yahweh and said, “Please, Yahweh, the God of my master Abraham, help me today and keep your promise to my master. ¹³ Look! Here I am standing at the well. Soon the young women of the city will come here for water. ¹⁴ I will speak to one of them and say, ‘Please put down your jar and let me have a drink.’ Maybe she will say, ‘Yes, drink. And then I will also bring water for your camels.’ If she says that to me, I want her to be the one you have already chosen for Isaac's wife. Then I will know that you have kept the promise you made to Abraham.”

¹⁵ While he was still praying a young girl called Rebecca arrived. She was carrying a water-jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel. Bethuel's father was Nahor, Abraham's younger brother, but his mother was Milcah. ¹⁶ She was a beautiful young girl who had never slept with a man. She went to the well and went down and filled the jar and came up again. ¹⁷ The servant ran to meet her and said, “Please give me a drink of water.”

¹⁸ “Here you are, have a drink,” she said. She quickly put down her jar and held it for him while he drank. ¹⁹ When he had finished she said to him, “I will also bring water for your camels until they have had enough.” ²⁰ She quickly emptied her jar into the stone drinking trough that was near the well so that people could give their animals water to drink. She ran to the well again and brought more water for his camels. She went on bringing water until all the camels

had had enough to drink.

²¹ The servant kept watching her, but he didn't say a word. He was waiting to see if Yahweh had chosen her for Isaac's wife. ²² When the camels had finished drinking, he gave her some beautiful things. First he put a gold ring in her nose. Then he put two big gold bangles on her arms. ²³ He said, "Who is your father? Is there room in his house for my men and me to stay for the night?"

²⁴ "My father is Bethuel," she said. "His father is Nahor and his mother is Milcah. ²⁵ There is plenty of grass for your camels and plenty of room for you to stay."

²⁶ Then the servant bowed down with his face to the ground and worshipped Yahweh. ²⁷ He said to him, "Yahweh, you are the God of Abraham. I am praising you because you have kept your promise to him and you have brought me straight to his family today."

²⁸ The girl ran home and told her mother everything. ²⁹⁻³⁰ Her brother Laban saw the nose-ring and the bangles and he heard what she told her mother. He ran outside and went to the well where the servant was waiting. He was still standing near the well with his camels.

³¹ Laban said, "Come home with me. Yahweh is pleased with you. Don't stay here. I have room for you and your men in my house and a place for the camels too."

³² So Laban and Abraham's servant and his men went to Laban's house. Laban unloaded the camels and gave them grass to eat. Then he brought water for Abraham's servant and his

men to wash their feet. ³³ His own servants cooked food and brought it to them.

Abraham's servant said to Laban, "We won't eat yet. I want to speak first."

Laban said, "Then speak."

³⁴ Then Abraham's servant told Laban and Bethuel about his master. He said, "I am Abraham's servant. ³⁵ Yahweh has blessed my master Abraham and so he is a rich man today. Yahweh has given him sheep, goats, cattle, camels and donkeys. He has given him silver and gold, and also men and women to work for him as servants. ³⁶ My master's wife Sarah gave birth to a son for him when she was old, and my master has given everything he owns to him.

³⁷ "My master made me promise to obey him. He said, 'Don't get a Canaanite girl to be a wife for my son. ³⁸ But go to my father's people and get a girl from there for him.' ³⁹ I said, 'What will I do if she won't come with me?' ⁴⁰ And Abraham said, 'Yahweh himself, the one I still obey as I have always done, will help you. He will send his angel to you to help you and show you what to do. You will get a wife for my son from my own people. ⁴¹ But if you go to my people and they refuse and you can't get someone, then I will free you from that promise when you come back without anyone.'

⁴² "When I arrived here today, while I was waiting at the waterhole I prayed to Yahweh and said, 'Yahweh, God of my master Abraham, help me and show me the right girl today. ⁴³ Look! I am standing here at the well. When a young

girl comes here for water, I will say to her, May I have a drink from your jar? ⁴⁴ If she agrees and also says, I will bring water for your camels, then I want her to be the wife you have chosen for Abraham's son.'

⁴⁵ "I was praying quietly, and while I was still praying Rebecca came with a water-jar on her shoulder. She went down to the well for water and I said to her, 'Please give me a drink.' ⁴⁶ She quickly put down her jar from her shoulder and said, 'Drink, and I will get water for your camels too.' So I drank and she brought water for my camels. ⁴⁷ I said, 'Who is your father?' She answered, 'My father is called Bethuel, and his father is Nahor and his mother is Milcah.' Then I put the ring in her nose and the two bangles on her arms. ⁴⁸ I bowed down and worshipped Yahweh. I praised Yahweh, the God of my master Abraham. Yahweh is the one who brought me straight here. He brought me to you, Bethuel, one of Abraham's family, and to your daughter, so that she can be a wife for Abraham's son. ⁴⁹ Now if you will have pity on my master and be good to him, please tell me. And if not, say so, and I will decide what to do."

⁵⁰ Then Laban and Bethuel said to him, "Yahweh himself has done everything you have told us today, so we can't decide, we can't refuse your master. ⁵¹ Here is Rebecca. Take her and go, so that your master's son can have her, because Yahweh himself has decided."

⁵² When Abraham's servant heard this, he bowed down and worshipped Yahweh. ⁵³ Then

he brought clothes and jewellery made of silver and gold and other precious things and gave them to Rebecca. And he gave expensive presents to her brother and her mother.

⁵⁴ Then Abraham's servant and the men with him ate and drank and spent the night in Bethuel's house. Then the next morning Abraham's servant got up and said to Rebecca's family, "Let me go back to my master now."

⁵⁵ But Rebecca's mother and her brother said, "Let her stay a bit longer, a week or ten days, and then we will let her go."

⁵⁶ The servant said, "Don't make us stay. Yahweh has helped me and shown me the right girl. Now let us go back to my master."

⁵⁷ They said, "Let us call her and see what she says." ⁵⁸ So they called Rebecca and asked, "Do you want to go with this man?"

"Yes," she answered. ⁵⁹ So they let Rebecca go with Abraham's servant and his men. And they sent an old woman, Rebecca's servant, too.

⁶⁰ And they blessed Rebecca before she left. They said,

"You will be the ancestor of many, many people.

May your descendants be strong.

When they fight other people, they will rule over them."

⁶¹ Then Rebecca and her young women servants and the old woman collected their things and got on the camels. Then they set off with Abraham's servants.

⁶² They went on and on until they reached Canaan. Then they kept on going south.

Isaac was living there in the south of Canaan, in the desert at the waterhole called “The Owner of the Waterhole is Alive and He Sees Me.” ⁶³ He came out of his tent when the sun was setting, and while he was out walking he saw the camels coming.

⁶⁴ When Rebecca saw Isaac, she got down from her camel ⁶⁵ and asked Abraham's servant, “Who is that man walking towards us?”

He answered, “He is my master.” So she took a cloth and covered her face.

⁶⁶ Then the servant told Isaac everything that he had done. ⁶⁷ Isaac took Rebecca into his tent. It had belonged to his mother Sarah. Then Rebecca became his wife and Isaac loved her and she comforted him after his mother's death.

25

About Abraham's descendants

¹ Abraham had another wife whose name was Keturah. ² These are the names of the children Keturah gave birth to for Abraham. They were called Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah.

³ Keturah's son Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan. Dedan's descendants became so many that there were three groups. They were called the Asshurim, the Letushim and the Leummim people.

⁴ Keturah's son Midian had five sons. They were called Ephah, Ephher, Hanoah, Abida and Eldaah.

Keturah was the ancestor of all those people.

5-6 While Abraham was still alive he gave presents to his sons, the sons of Hagar and Keturah. Then he sent all those sons away from his son Isaac. He sent them to the east to live there.

Then Abraham said, “When I die, all my cattle, sheep, goats, camels, donkeys and all my silver and gold and other things will all belong to Isaac.”

About Abraham's death

7 Abraham lived for 175 years. 8 They were good years. And then he died. 9 His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave called Machpelah that was near Mamre's place. First of all the cave had belonged to Ephron, the one whose father was Zohar the Hittite. 10 Abraham had bought the cave from the Hittite people and both Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried there.

11 After Abraham died, God blessed his son Isaac. He lived near the waterhole called “The Owner of the Waterhole is Alive and He Sees Me.”

About Ishmael's descendants

12 Ishmael was Abraham's first son. His mother was Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian servant. 13 He had twelve sons. The first was called Nebaioth. The names of the others were Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, 14 Mishma, Dumah, Massa, 15 Hadad, Tema, Jetur and Naphish and the last one was Kedemah. 16 Those twelve men were the ancestors of separate tribes and their villages and camping places were called by their names.

17 Their father Ishmael was a very old man now, and when he was 137 years old he died.

¹⁸ Ishmael's descendants lived in the land between Havilah and Shur. That was their country, and when people went from Egypt over to Assyria they went through there. Ishmael's family lived away from Isaac's family and from Abraham's other descendants.

About Isaac's family

About Jacob and Esau

¹⁹ This is the story of Abraham's son Isaac. ²⁰ Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebecca. Rebecca was the daughter of Bethuel who was an Aramean from Mesopotamia. And Rebecca's brother was Laban. ²¹ Rebecca had no children. So Isaac prayed to Yahweh for her to have children. Yahweh heard his prayer and Rebecca became pregnant. ²² She knew that she was going to have twins. Before they were born they struggled together inside her.

Rebecca said, "Oh dear, what has happened to me?" So she prayed to Yahweh about the children.

²³ Yahweh said to her,
"There are two people inside you.

They will be the ancestors of two nations.

Their people will be against each other and live separately.

One brother will be stronger than the other,
and the older brother will work for the younger one."

²⁴ Twin boys were born. ²⁵ The first one was reddish and his skin was hairy, so he was named Esau, because Esau means "hairy." ²⁶ When the second one was born, he was holding on tightly

to the heel of the first. So he was named Jacob, because Jacob means “he is holding the heel.” But when people talk about others and say, “He is holding the heel,” that means, “he is tricking people.” Their father Isaac was sixty years old when they were born.

²⁷ The two boys grew up. Esau was good at hunting and he loved being out in the bush. But Jacob was a quiet man who liked to stay at home.

²⁸ Isaac loved Esau more, because he liked eating the animals he killed, but Rebecca loved Jacob.

²⁹ One day Jacob was cooking some bean soup and Esau came back from hunting. He was hungry ³⁰ and he said to his younger brother Jacob, “I am very hungry. Give me some of that red soup.” That is why Esau had two names. One was Esau and the other was Edom, because Edom means “red.”

³¹ “Yes, I will give you some,” Jacob answered. “But you must tell me that I am the firstborn and the leader now, and not you.”

³² Esau said, “All right! I am dying of hunger, so what good is it to me if I am the firstborn?”

³³ Jacob said, “I want you to make a promise and not change it. You must promise me that I will be the firstborn and the leader now.” So Esau agreed and made the promise. ³⁴ Then Jacob gave him some damper and some of the soup he had cooked. Esau ate the damper and drank the soup and he got up and left, saying, “What does it matter? Let him be the firstborn!”

26

About Isaac in Gerar

¹ Long ago while Abraham was in Canaan there was very little food there and Abraham went to Egypt. Now while his son Isaac was also in Canaan there was very little food as before, and Isaac went west to Gerar. Gerar belonged to the Philistine people and their king was Abimelech. So Isaac went to him.

² Yahweh came and appeared to Isaac and said to him, “Don't go to Egypt. Obey me and stay here. ³ If you live here I will stay near you and I will bless you. I will give all these lands to you and to your descendants. I will keep the promise I made long ago to your father Abraham. ⁴ I will give you many descendants. They will be so many they will be like the stars you can see in the sky, and I will give them all these lands. Different people will all say to me, ‘Bless us, just as you blessed Isaac.’ ⁵ And I will bless you, because Abraham obeyed me and kept all my laws.”

⁶ So Isaac stayed in Gerar. ⁷ Some men there asked Isaac about his wife Rebecca and he said, “She is my sister.” He did not want to call her his wife, because he was afraid that the men there would kill him to get Rebecca. She was very beautiful and that is why they wanted her.

⁸ Later on King Abimelech was looking out of his house and he saw Isaac and Rebecca, and they looked like a man with his wife. ⁹ Abimelech called for Isaac and said to him, “She is your wife, isn't she! Why did you tell people she was your sister?”

Isaac said, "I thought, 'People here might kill me so that they can take my wife.'" "

¹⁰ "Why have you done this? You have tricked us, haven't you!" Abimelech said. "Any of my men might have slept with your wife, and that would be your sin, not ours." ¹¹ Then Abimelech warned all his people and said to them, "If any of you hurts this man or his wife, you will die. I will tell my soldiers and they will kill you for it."

¹² Then Isaac stayed there and planted seeds for food. Later on in the same year he gathered lots and lots of food because Yahweh blessed him. ¹³ He went on living there and he became very rich because Yahweh was helping him.

¹⁴ He had many sheep and cattle and many servants. And so the Philistine people became jealous of him. ¹⁵ They filled all the waterholes with earth. Long ago while his father Abraham was still alive, Abraham's servants had dug them, and now the waterholes belonged to Isaac.

¹⁶ Then Abimelech said to Isaac, "Go away! Leave our country. You are more powerful than we are now." ¹⁷ So Isaac and his people left that place and went to a flat place near Gerar. They set up their camp there and stayed for some time.

¹⁸ Once again Isaac and his men dug the waterholes that his father's servants had dug before. Abraham had named the wells, but after he died the Philistines had filled his wells with earth. Now Isaac gave the wells the same names again.

¹⁹ Isaac's servants dug a well in a flat place and they found fresh water. ²⁰ But the shepherds of

Gerar argued with Isaac's shepherds. They said, "This water belongs to us." So Isaac named the well "They Argued."

²¹ Then Isaac's servants dug another well. But the men of Gerar and Isaac's men argued about that one too, and Isaac named the well "They Hated Each Other."

²² Then Isaac and his people got up and moved camp and dug another well, but there was no argument this time. Isaac said, "Yahweh has given us a place to live, so now everything will be all right for us here. This well will be called 'He Gave Us a Place.'"

²³ Then Isaac and his people left there and went to Beersheba. ²⁴ That night Yahweh came and appeared to Isaac and said to him, "I am the God of your father Abraham. Don't be afraid, because I will stay near you. I will bless you and give you many descendants as I promised Abraham long ago. He was my servant and I made a covenant with him."

²⁵ Then Isaac built an altar of stones and worshipped Yahweh. Then he made his camp there, and his servants dug another well.

About Isaac and Abimelech

²⁶ While Isaac was at Beersheba, King Abimelech came to him from Gerar. He brought two men with him. One was Phicol, the leader of his army, and the other was his servant Ahuzzath, who used to tell Abimelech what to do. ²⁷ Isaac said to them, "Why have you come here to me today? You were angry with me before and you chased me away."

²⁸ They answered, “Now we know that Yahweh is with you, and we want to make a promise and not change it. We want you to promise ²⁹ that you and your people won't harm us. We didn't do you any harm. We were kind to you. We didn't fight, we just sent you and your people away from our area, and you went peacefully. Now we know that Yahweh has blessed you.”

³⁰ Then Isaac prepared a feast for them, and they ate and drank. ³¹ And then they slept.

The next morning Abimelech and Isaac got up and talked together. They promised not to fight each other and not to change their minds. First one promised and then the other. Then Isaac said, “Now you can go home.” Isaac stayed in his camp and Abimelech and his two servants went back to Gerar. Now they were friends.

³² That same day Isaac's servants came back after digging a waterhole, and said to him, “We have found fresh water.”

³³ Isaac said, “We will call the well Beer-sheba.” That name means “the well where they promised.” So Beersheba where Isaac was living got its name from the well.

About Esau's wives

³⁴ When Isaac's son Esau was forty years old, he took two girls to be his wives. They were both Hittites. One of them, the daughter of Beeri, was called Judith and the other, the daughter of Elon, was called Basemath. ³⁵ But they made Isaac and Rebecca miserable.

27

About Isaac giving a special blessing to Jacob

¹ Isaac was now an old man and he was blind. He called for his older son Esau and said to him, “Son!” “What is it?” he answered.

² Isaac said, “You can see that I am old now. Maybe I will die soon. ³ Take your spears and go out into the bush and find an animal for me. Kill one and bring it back here ⁴ and cook it so that it will be tasty for me to eat. Then bring some here for me. Then I will eat it and give you my special blessing. I want to give it to you before I die.”

⁵ Rebecca heard what Isaac said to Esau. So when Esau went out to hunt, ⁶ she said to Jacob, “I heard your father talking to Esau. ⁷ He said, ‘Bring me an animal and cook it for me so I can eat it. Then I will give you my special blessing before I die, and Yahweh himself will hear it.’ ⁸ Look, my son,” Rebecca continued, “listen carefully and do everything I tell you. ⁹ Go and find two of our fat young goats. Bring them here to me, and I will cook them nicely, just as your father likes his meat. ¹⁰ Then you can take some to him to eat, and he will give you his special blessing before he dies.”

¹¹ Jacob said to his mother, “You know my older brother is very hairy. My hands aren't hairy like his. ¹² Maybe if my father touches me he will find out it is me. Then he will know that I am not Esau but I am tricking him. So I won't get a special blessing, I will be cursed.”

¹³ His mother said, “If you are cursed, then you won't be in trouble, I will. Do as I say and bring the goats here.”

¹⁴ So Jacob went and got the goats and brought them to his mother. And she cooked them just as Isaac liked. ¹⁵ She went and got some good clothes of Esau's and gave them to Jacob and he put them on. ¹⁶ Then she put goat skin from the goat that Jacob had killed on his hands and arms and on the back of his neck. ¹⁷ Then she gave him the meat and damper that she had cooked.

¹⁸ Then Jacob went and took the food to his father and said, “Father!” “What is it?” his father said. “Which of my sons are you?”

¹⁹ Jacob said, “I am your firstborn son Esau. I have done what you told me. Please sit up and eat this meat. I have brought it so that you can give me your special blessing.”

²⁰ The old man said, “Son! How did you find the animal so quickly?”

Jacob said, “Yahweh your God helped me, so I found it quickly.”

²¹ Isaac said, “Come closer and let me touch you. Are you really Esau?” ²² Jacob came close to his father and Isaac touched him. Then he said, “When you speak your voice is like Jacob's, but your hands are like Esau's.” ²³ Isaac didn't recognize Jacob because his hands were all covered in goat skin. They were like Esau's. He was ready to give his special blessing to Jacob ²⁴ but again he asked him, “Are you really Esau?” “Yes,” said Jacob.

²⁵ Isaac said, “Give me the meat that you have brought. I will eat it first and then I will give you my special blessing.” Jacob gave his father the meat, and also brought some wine for him to drink. ²⁶ Then his father said, “Come over here and kiss me, son.” ²⁷ Jacob moved closer to kiss him and his father smelled Esau's clothes that Jacob was wearing.

And so he gave him his special blessing. He said,

“My son, you smell very good,
just as the earth that God made smells good.

²⁸ May God give you dew from heaven,
and then your plants will grow so that you
will have plenty of food.

May he give you plenty of seeds for food and
plenty of wine.

²⁹ May nations work for you as servants.
May they say, ‘You are a great person,’
and bow down to you.

May you rule over your family.

May they also bow down to you.

If people curse you, may they be cursed too.

But if they speak good words to you, may
good come to them too.”

³⁰ Isaac finished his special blessing and Jacob left him.

About Esau wanting his father's special blessing

At the same time Jacob's older brother Esau came back bringing an animal that he had killed.

³¹ He cooked the meat so that it was tasty and

took it to his father and said, “Father, you asked me for some meat. Here it is now. Please sit up and eat it. Then give me your special blessing.”

³² “Who are you?” Isaac asked.

Esau answered, “I am your firstborn son, Esau.”

³³ The old man was very upset and began to shake all over. He said, “Someone has killed an animal and brought me the meat before you. I have eaten it and given him my special blessing already. I can't take back those words. That blessing is his forever. Who was that person?”

³⁴ When Esau heard that he was very angry. He cried out loudly and said, “Father, give me a special blessing too.”

³⁵ Isaac said, “Your brother came here and tricked me. So I gave him my special blessing. It should have been yours because you are the firstborn, but now it is your brother's.”

³⁶ Esau said, “I am your firstborn son, but he tricked me before, and so now he is like your firstborn son. And now he has done it again. You should have given me that special blessing, but he got it. Oh dear, it is his now! Twice he has tricked me. Truly he is called Jacob. Please, isn't there a blessing for me too?” The name Jacob means “he tricks people.”

³⁷ Isaac said, “I have already made him rule over you. I told him that his relatives would work for him as servants. I told him he would have plenty of seeds for food and plenty of wine. There is no more, my son. The blessing is finished, so there is nothing for you.”

³⁸ Esau kept on asking and asking him. “Isn't there just one more special blessing? Isn't there also a word for me? Please give me a special word too.” And Esau was upset and began to cry.

³⁹ Isaac said,
“The dew won't fall from heaven to water your land.

The earth will not be good for you.

⁴⁰ You will be a brave fighter.

For a while you will work for your younger brother.

Then later you will escape so that he won't rule over you.”

About Jacob leaving home

⁴¹ Then Esau really hated his brother Jacob, because his father had given him his special blessing. He said, “In a short time my father will die. Then I will kill Jacob.”

⁴² Rebecca heard what Esau said and called Jacob to her and said, “Look, my son. Your brother wants to pay you back and kill you because of what you have done. ⁴³ Listen to me! Go at once to Haran. Go to my brother Laban, ⁴⁴⁻⁴⁵ and stay there with him for a while. Later your brother will forget what you have done and he will calm down. Then I will send someone to bring you back. If you don't go away, maybe both of you will die on the one day. And then both my sons will be gone!”

⁴⁶ Then she went to her husband Isaac and said, “Those women from here that Esau married don't belong to us; they are Hittites. I am tired of

them. If Jacob also takes one of them for a wife, then what good will that do me?”

28

¹ Then the old man called Jacob to him. He said, “Don’t take a Canaanite woman for your wife. ² But go to Mesopotamia, to your grandfather Bethuel. You can take a girl from there, one of your uncle Laban’s daughters. ³ May the most powerful God bless you and your wife and give you many children, so that you may be the ancestor of many nations. ⁴ May he bless you and your descendants just as he blessed Abraham before. And may you own this country that God first gave to Abraham, where you grew up and where you live today.”

⁵ Then Isaac sent Jacob away to Mesopotamia, to Laban. Laban was the son of Bethuel the Aramean, and he was also Rebecca’s brother. And Rebecca was the mother of Jacob and Esau.

About Esau taking another wife

⁶ Esau heard that Isaac had blessed Jacob and had sent him away to Mesopotamia to find a wife there. He also knew what Isaac had told Jacob when he blessed him. He had said, “Do not marry a Canaanite woman.” ⁷ And Esau knew that Jacob had obeyed his father and mother and had gone away to Mesopotamia. ⁸ Then Esau realized that his father did not like the Canaanite women. ⁹ So he went to Ishmael to get a wife from his family. Ishmael was Abraham’s son. Then Esau married Ishmael’s daughter. She

was called Mahalath and her brother was called Nebaioth.

About Jacob having a dream at Bethel

¹⁰ Jacob left Beersheba and set off to go to Haran. ¹¹ He went on and on until sunset, when he stopped and camped there for the night. He lay down to sleep and made his head comfortable on a stone. Then he slept, ¹² and had a dream. This is what he dreamed. He saw a long ladder reaching from the ground high up to heaven and angels were going up and coming down on it.

¹³ Yahweh was standing beside Jacob, and he said to him, "I am Yahweh, the God of Abraham and Isaac. I will give to you and to your descendants this land that you are lying on.

¹⁴ Your descendants will be many like the dust of the earth. They will own this place and they will make their country bigger on all sides. I will bless all the nations just as I am blessing you now and I will bless your descendants later. ¹⁵ I will stay near you and keep you safe wherever you are. Then afterwards I will bring you back again to this place. I will not leave you; I will do everything I have promised you."

¹⁶ Jacob woke up and said to himself, "Yahweh is here in this place and I didn't know!" ¹⁷ Then he was afraid and said, "This is a very frightening place! It must be the house of God! It must be the gate that opens into heaven!"

¹⁸ Jacob got up next morning and took the stone that his head had been resting on and stood it up there so that people would know that

Yahweh had come and appeared there. Then he poured olive oil on the stone so that it would belong to God. ¹⁹ He named the place Bethel, because Bethel means “house of God.” At first the town nearby was called Luz.

²⁰ Then Jacob made a promise to Yahweh. He said, “If you will stay near me and keep me safe on my way and give me food and clothes, ²¹ and if I come back safely to my father's home, then you, Yahweh, will be my God.” ²² Then he said, “I have stood this stone up here today so that I can remember you, and this will be the place where people will worship you. If you give me ten cattle, I will give one back to you. If you give me ten of anything, I will give you back one. I will always do that.”

29

About Jacob arriving at Laban's home

¹ Then Jacob got up and moved camp and went towards the east. He travelled on and on ²⁻³ until he was near his uncle's place. But before he realized where he was he suddenly came to a waterhole out in the fields. The shepherds who lived there used to take their sheep there for water. Every afternoon they took them to the waterhole but they used to wait for each other there. First they brought all the sheep together and then they moved the big stone at the opening of the well. They got water and filled the stone drinking trough that was nearby and let the sheep drink. After the sheep had finished

drinking they shut up the well again with the stone. The shepherds always used to do that.

When Jacob arrived at the waterhole some sheep were lying there. There were three flocks, but the opening of the well was still shut.

⁴ Jacob asked the shepherds, “Where do you come from?”

“From Haran,” they answered.

⁵ Jacob asked, “Do you know Laban, Nahor's grandson?”

“Yes,” they said.

⁶ “Is he well?” he asked.

“He is well,” they answered. “Look, here comes his daughter Rachel, who looks after his sheep. She is bringing them to drink.”

⁷ Jacob said, “The sun is still high, so you can't take your sheep inside yet. Why don't you let them drink and take them back to the grass?”

⁸ “No,” they said. “We are waiting for the other sheep. We don't move the stone until all the sheep are here. Then we let them drink.”

⁹ While Jacob was still talking to them, Rachel arrived with her father's sheep. ¹⁰ When Jacob saw Rachel and his uncle's sheep, he went to the well, moved the stone and gave the sheep water to drink. ¹¹ Then he kissed Rachel and began to cry because he was so happy. ¹² He said to her, “I am your father's nephew. My mother is Rebecca.”

Then Rachel ran home and told her father. ¹³ When Laban heard about his nephew Jacob he ran to meet him. When he found him he hugged and kissed him and brought him inside

the house. Then Jacob told Laban everything that had happened.

¹⁴ Laban said, “Yes indeed, you are my relative.” Then Jacob stayed there for a month.

About Jacob marrying Leah and Rachel

After one month had gone, ¹⁵ Laban said to Jacob, “You shouldn't work for me for nothing just because you are my nephew. How much money will I give you?”

¹⁶ Laban had two daughters. The name of the older one was Leah and the name of the younger one was Rachel. ¹⁷ Leah had lovely eyes, but Rachel had a good figure and was beautiful. ¹⁸ Jacob loved Rachel and wanted to marry her. So he said to Laban, “I will work for you for seven years, and then you can give me Rachel for my wife.”

¹⁹ Laban said, “I don't want to give her to anyone else, only to you. That is good, so stay with me.” ²⁰ So Jacob stayed there and worked for Laban.

A long time passed. He stayed there working for Laban for seven years so that he could have Rachel for his wife. He kept on working, but it seemed to him a short time, because he wanted Rachel so much.

²¹ Then Jacob said to Laban, “Seven years have gone now. Let me have your daughter.”

²² So Laban prepared a feast and asked many people and they came to eat with him. ²³ But that night Laban took his older daughter Leah to Jacob, and not Rachel. So Jacob and Leah slept

together. ²⁴ Laban gave his servant girl Zilpah to Leah to work for her.

²⁵ Jacob didn't know that he had slept with Leah until the next morning. He went to Laban and said, "Why have you done this to me? I worked hard to get Rachel, and you have tricked me!"

²⁶ Laban answered, "I can't give you Rachel yet, I have to give you the older one, Leah, first, because we always do that in our country. ²⁷ Just wait, and stay with Leah for seven days, while all the people are here with us. Then if you will work for me for another seven years, I will give you Rachel." ²⁸ Jacob agreed and he stayed with Leah for seven days.

Then afterwards Laban gave Rachel to Jacob for his wife. ²⁹ He also gave his servant girl Bilhah to his daughter Rachel to work for her. ³⁰ Then Jacob and Rachel slept together, and he loved her more than Leah. Then he worked for Laban another seven years.

About Jacob's children

³¹ Yahweh saw that Jacob loved Rachel more, so he gave Leah children and not Rachel. She was unable to have children, ³² but Leah became pregnant and she had a son. She said, "Yahweh has seen my sadness, and now my husband will love me." So Leah named him Reuben, because Reuben means "look, a son."

³³ Then Leah became pregnant again, and she had another son. She said, "Yahweh has given me another son, because he heard that my

husband doesn't love me." So Leah named him Simeon, because Simeon means "he has heard."

³⁴ Then Leah became pregnant again, and she had another son. She said, "Now I have given my husband three sons. So he won't send me away, he will hold on to me." So Leah named him Levi, because Levi means "he holds her."

³⁵ Then Leah became pregnant again, and she had another son. She said, "This time I will praise Yahweh." So she called him Judah, because Judah means "I will praise him." Then she stopped having children.

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¹ Rachel was still unable to have any children, and so she became jealous of her sister Leah. She said to Jacob, "If you don't give me any children I will die."

² Jacob became angry with her and said, "God is the one who is stopping you from having children. I am not God."

³ Rachel said, "Here is my servant Bilhah. Sleep with her so that she can have a child for me. Then I can have sons and grandsons." ⁴ So she gave Bilhah to Jacob to be his wife and he slept with her.

⁵ Bilhah became pregnant and then she had a son for Jacob. ⁶ And Rachel said, "God has judged us and he is pleased with me. He has heard and answered me and given me a son." So she named him Dan, because Dan means "he has judged."

⁷ Then Bilhah became pregnant again and she had another son for Jacob. ⁸ And Rachel said, "I have been against my older sister, but I have

been stronger.” So she called him Naphtali, because Naphtali means “we have been against each other.”

⁹ Leah realized that she had stopped having children and so she gave her servant Zilpah to Jacob to be his wife. ¹⁰ Then Zilpah had a son for Jacob. ¹¹ Leah said, “Good has come to me.” So she named him Gad, because Gad means “good has come.”

¹² Then Zilpah had another son for Jacob. ¹³ And Leah said, “I am so happy! Now women will say, ‘She is a happy woman’.” So she named him Asher, because Asher means “happiness.”

¹⁴ At the time when the people were gathering the wheat that they had grown, Reuben found some fruit called mandrakes where they were working. He picked some and took them home to his mother Leah. But Rachel said to Leah, “Please give me some of the mandrakes your son has found.”

¹⁵ Leah answered, “You have already taken my husband away from me. Are you going to take my son's mandrakes away too?”

Rachel said, “If you give me some mandrakes, you can sleep with Jacob tonight.” In that country the people thought that if women ate mandrakes they would become pregnant.

¹⁶ The sun was setting when Jacob returned from where the wheat was growing and Leah went to meet him. She said to him, “We are going to sleep together tonight. I have given some mandrakes to Rachel today. So I have bought you

with mandrakes.” So that night Leah and Jacob slept together.

¹⁷ God answered Leah's prayer and she became pregnant, and then she had another son for Jacob. Now she had five sons. ¹⁸ She said, “God has been kind to me because I gave my servant to my husband.” So she named him Issachar, because Issachar means “I bought him.”

¹⁹ Then Leah became pregnant again and she had another son for Jacob. Now she had six children. ²⁰ She said, “God has given me a precious baby. So now my husband will be pleased with me, because I have given him six sons.” She named him Zebulun, because Zebulun means “he was pleased with me.”

²¹ Later Leah had a daughter and she named her Dinah.

²² But God didn't forget Rachel. He remembered her and her prayer and he gave her children. ²³ She also became pregnant and she had a son. She said, “I was ashamed, but now I am no longer ashamed because God has given me a son. ²⁴ Maybe Yahweh will give me another son.” So she named him Joseph, because Joseph means “he will give another.”

About Jacob's sheep and goats

²⁵ After Joseph was born, Jacob said to Laban, “Let me go so that I can return home. ²⁶ I have worked for you, so give me my wives and my children so we can all go. You know that I have worked well for you.”

²⁷ Laban said, "I want you to stay. I have found out that Yahweh has blessed me because you have been here with me. ²⁸ You have worked for me, so tell me the amount of money, and I will give it to you. How much do you want?"

²⁹ Jacob said, "You know that I have done your work well. I have looked after your sheep and goats very carefully. ³⁰ Before I came here you had only a few sheep and goats, and today you have very many. Yahweh has blessed you everywhere I went. But from now on I want to do my own work."

³¹⁻³³ "How much will I give you?" Laban asked.

Jacob said, "I don't want any money. Just let me go and take the black lambs and young goats that are spotted. I will take those and that is all. From today you can easily find out if I am honest. When you look and see any goat of mine that is not spotted or any sheep that is not black, you will know that it has been stolen. If you agree, I will go on looking after your sheep and goats."

³⁴ "Yes," said Laban, "That will be good."

³⁵ But the same day Laban took away all the male goats that were striped or spotted and all the female ones that were spotted or had any white on them. He also took away the black sheep and he gave them to his sons for them to look after. ³⁶ Then Laban and his family left Jacob and took Laban's sheep and goats and went a long way away. After three days they made their camp and stayed there. And Jacob looked after all Laban's other sheep and goats.

³⁷ Then Jacob got some green branches and peeled some of the bark off so that he could see the white part inside. Then they looked striped. ³⁸⁻⁴⁰ He took the branches to the waterhole where his animals drank and he put them in the drinking troughs, so that they would be in front of the animals when they came to the water. He put them there because the animals were taking each other and mating there at the water. So when they mated the branches were in front of them and they looked over towards Laban's striped and black sheep and goats that he had taken away. When they mated there in front of the branches, later they had striped and spotted young ones. Jacob kept the young animals separate from the old ones. And he kept all his own animals separate from the other animals that he looked after for Laban.

⁴¹ When the sheep and goats that were fat were mating, Jacob put the branches in front of them at the drinking troughs, so that they would mate there in front of the branches. ⁴² But he didn't put the branches in the drinking troughs of the weak sheep and goats. Because of that soon Laban's sheep and goats were all weak and Jacob's were all fat. ⁴³ In this way Jacob became very rich. He had many sheep and goats, camels, donkeys and servants.

31

About Jacob running away from Laban

¹ After a while Jacob heard that Laban's sons were talking about him. They said, "Jacob has

taken everything that belonged to our father. He is rich now, but all those things of his were our father's first." ² Jacob also saw that Laban was no longer as friendly as he had been before. ³ Then Yahweh said to him, "Go back to your father's country and to your own people. I will go with you."

⁴ So Jacob sent word to Rachel and Leah and they came and met him where his sheep and goats were. ⁵ He said to them, "I have noticed that your father has not been as friendly as he was at first. But my father's God has been with me, and he is still with me. ⁶ You both know that I have worked well for your father, ⁷ but he has cheated me. He should have paid me but he has changed my pay ten times. But God did not let Laban harm me. ⁸ Sometimes Laban said, 'I will give you the spotted goats.' Then all the goats had spotted young. Sometimes he said, 'I will give you the striped goats.' Then all the goats had striped young. ⁹ God took the goats away from your father and gave them to me.

¹⁰ "When the goats were taking each other, I had a dream. I saw that the male goats that were mating were striped or spotted. ¹¹ Then God's angel spoke to me in the dream and said, 'Jacob!' 'What is it?' I answered. ¹² He said, 'Listen to God's message. God said, The male goats that are mating are striped or spotted. I am making this happen because I have seen all the harm that Laban has been doing to you. ¹³ I am the God who came and appeared to you while you were at Bethel. You stood up a stone there and poured

olive oil on it to make it holy, and you made a promise to me. Now go back to the place where you were born.’ ”

¹⁴ Rachel and Leah answered Jacob, “When our father dies, there will be nothing here for us. ¹⁵ He treats us as he treats strangers. Long ago he sold us to you, but he has finished all the money you gave him. ¹⁶ Everything that God has taken from our father belongs to us now and to our children. So do whatever God has told you.”

¹⁷⁻¹⁸ So Jacob got his things ready to go back to his father in Canaan. He put his children and his wives on the camels, and sent the sheep and goats ahead with everything he had got in Mesopotamia. ¹⁹ Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and while he was away Rachel stole her father's carved gods. ²⁰ Jacob didn't tell Laban that he was going away; he tricked him. ²¹ He took everything he owned and he and his family left in a hurry. They crossed the Euphrates River and went towards the hill country of Gilead.

About Laban chasing Jacob

²² Three days later some people told Laban that Jacob had run away. ²³ So Laban took his relatives with him and chased him. They chased Jacob for seven days until they reached the hill country of Gilead, ²⁴⁻²⁵ where Jacob had set up his camp. Laban and his relatives set up their camp there too. That night Laban had a dream. God came to him in his dream and said to him, “Don't say anything wrong to Jacob.”

²⁶ The next day Laban went to Jacob and said, “Why did you trick me and take my daughters just as people take women away in a war? ²⁷ Why did you trick me and run away? You didn't tell me. If you had told me, I would have sent you off happily with singing and music. ²⁸ You stopped me from kissing my grandchildren and my daughters before they left. That was foolish of you. ²⁹ If I want to, I can harm you. But last night your father's God spoke to me in a dream. He warned me and told me not to say anything wrong to you. ³⁰ I know you were always thinking about going home and that is why you left, but you have stolen my gods. Why did you steal them?”

³¹ Jacob answered, “I was afraid, because I thought that you would take your daughters away from me. ³² But if you find your gods with any of us here that person will die. Look around for anything of yours and take it, so that our relatives can watch you.” But Jacob didn't know that his wife Rachel had stolen Laban's gods.

³³ Laban went to Jacob's tent and searched there first, then in Leah's and then in Bilhah's and Zilpah's tent, but he couldn't find his gods. Then he went to Rachel's tent. ³⁴ Before this Rachel had taken them and put them in a camel's bag and she was sitting on top of the bag inside her tent. Laban searched there but he didn't find them. ³⁵ Rachel said to her father, “Don't be angry with me, because I can't stand up. I am having my monthly period.” Laban looked everywhere but he couldn't find his gods.

³⁶ Then Jacob got angry. “What have I done wrong? What law have I broken that you are looking for me? ³⁷ You have looked through all my belongings, and what have you found that belongs to you? Put it here where your relatives and mine can see it. Let them decide which one of us is right.

³⁸ “I have been with you now for twenty years. I looked after your sheep and goats and they never miscarried. I have not eaten even one ram. ³⁹ When a wild animal killed any of your sheep I gave you some of mine. I didn't take them to you to show you so that you would know that it was not my fault. You said to me, ‘If anyone steals one of my sheep or goats during the day or during the night you will have to give me one of your own.’ ⁴⁰ Many times I was hot in the daytime and cold at night. I couldn't sleep.

⁴¹ “It was like that the whole time I was with you. I worked for fourteen years for you to give me your daughters. Then afterwards I worked another six years for your sheep and goats. But you changed my pay ten times. ⁴² If God had not been with me you would have sent me away empty-handed. But the God of my fathers, the God of Abraham and Isaac, saw my trouble and my work, and last night he decided between us.”

About Jacob and Laban making an agreement

⁴³ Laban answered Jacob, “These women are my daughters and their children belong to me. And these sheep and goats are mine. Everything you see here belongs to me. But I can't do

anything. I can't keep my daughters and their children. ⁴⁴ So let us make an agreement. And let us make a pile of rocks so that we won't forget."

⁴⁵ So Jacob took a stone and stood it up as a special stone so that they would not forget their agreement. ⁴⁶ He told his men to gather some rocks and pile them up. Then they ate a meal beside the pile of rocks. ⁴⁷ Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha and Jacob called it Galeed. Both these names mean "rocks to remember." ⁴⁸ Laban said to Jacob, "These rocks are here today so that we will both remember our agreement afterwards," and that is why Jacob called the place Galeed. ⁴⁹ Laban also said, "May Yahweh watch over us while we are separated." Because he said that, the place was also named Mizpah, which means "he will see us."

⁵⁰ Laban went on, "If you harm my daughters or if you marry any other women, even though I don't know about it, remember that God is watching us. ⁵¹⁻⁵² Look at these rocks that I have piled up here between us and this one special stone that I have stood up so that we will remember. I will never go past these rocks I have gathered. So I won't fight you. And you must never go past these rocks I have gathered today or this special stone. So you mustn't fight me. ⁵³ Abraham's God who is also the God of Nahor will judge between us."

Then Jacob promised to keep Laban's word and not change it. And when he made his promise he used the name of the God his father Isaac worshipped. ⁵⁴ Then he killed a bullock and

burned it on the mountain as a sacrifice for God. Then he asked his relatives to a meal, and after they had eaten they stayed on the mountain for the night.

⁵⁵ The next morning Laban got up and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters goodbye, and then he went back home.

32

About Jacob counting his animals to give to his brother

¹ Jacob also left to go back to his father. As he went on his way some angels met him. ² When he saw them he said, "This is God's camp." So he called the place Mahanaim, because Mahanaim means "two camps." ³ Jacob sent some men ahead with a message for his older brother Esau.

The men met Esau in the country of Edom, ⁴ and they said to him, "Your brother Jacob is coming after us and he is ready to obey you. He has been staying with your uncle Laban for a very long time. ⁵ He has cattle and donkeys and sheep and goats now, and also servants. He wants you to be pleased when you see him."

⁶ Then they went back to Jacob and said to him, "We went to your brother, and now he is coming to meet you. There are 400 men with him." ⁷ Jacob was frightened and worried when he heard that. So he separated the people who were with him into two groups. Then he also separated his cattle, sheep, goats and camels into two groups. ⁸ He thought, "If Esau fights with the first group then the others will escape safely."

⁹ Then Jacob prayed to God. He said, “God of my grandfather Abraham and God of my father Isaac, listen to me! I am going back to my father’s country and my people, because you told me to, Yahweh. You said you would do good for me. ¹⁰ You didn’t leave me all the time I was in Mesopotamia, you were kind to me. But I didn’t do anything good for you. When I crossed the Jordan River the first time, I had nothing except a walking stick, but you have given me many good things. So today I have these two groups of people and two groups of animals. ¹¹ Please help me again now, so that my brother Esau won’t kill me.

“I am frightened. I am afraid that Esau is coming to fight us and kill all of us men, and the women and children too. ¹² You promised me that you would do good for me and also that I would have many children. You told me that their children would go on having children until there are very many of them. They will be so many that no one will be able to count them, just as we can’t count the grains of sand on the beach. So please don’t forget your promise to me.”

¹³ Jacob stayed there that night. In the morning he gathered some goats and other animals together and counted them to give to his older brother Esau. ¹⁴ There were 200 female goats and 20 males, ¹⁵ and 200 female sheep and 20 males, and 30 female camels and their young ones, and 40 female bullocks and 10 males and 20 female donkeys and 10 males. ¹⁶ He separated the animals into five groups, goats,

sheep, camels, bullocks and donkeys, all in separate groups. And he told five servants to look after them. He said to them, “Go on ahead now. Let one group go first and let the next group follow later.”

¹⁷ He said to the first servant, “When my brother Esau meets you he will ask, ‘Who is your master? And where are you going? And whose are these goats and other animals?’ ¹⁸ Then you must say, ‘They belong to Jacob. He is ready to obey you and he has sent these for you. He is coming after us.’ ”

¹⁹ Jacob told all his servants who were looking after the sheep and other animals to say the same to Esau. He said to them, “When you meet Esau you must say to him, ²⁰ ‘Yes, Jacob is ready to obey you and he is coming after us.’ ” Jacob was thinking, “First my brother will get these goats and other animals. Then later he will meet me. Maybe he will forgive me because of what I have given him.”

²¹ Then Jacob sent the servants ahead with the animals, but he stayed there for the night.

About Jacob's new name

²²⁻²³ That same night Jacob got up and sent off his two wives, Rachel and Leah, and they crossed the Jabbok River. He sent off the two women, Bilhah and Zilpah, the servants who were also his wives, and they crossed over with all his children. And he also sent all his belongings on ahead, ²⁴ but he stayed alone.

During the night a man came to Jacob and fought with him. They kept on and on fighting until it was nearly dawn. ²⁵ When the man saw that Jacob didn't weaken, he hit him on the hip. And Jacob's hip was hurt and thrown out of joint. ²⁶ The man said to Jacob, "Let me go now. Soon it will be dawn."

Jacob answered, "If you bless me, then I will let you go."

²⁷ The man asked, "What is your name?"

"I am Jacob," he answered.

²⁸ The man said, "You won't be called Jacob any longer, you will have a new name Israel. You have shown people that you are strong with God and with men. So from today you will be called Israel." God said that because Israel means "he fought with God."

²⁹ Jacob said, "Tell me your name."

But he answered, "Why do you want to know my name?" Then he blessed Jacob.

³⁰ After the man had gone away Jacob thought, "That was God himself! I have seen his face, and I am still alive." So he called the place Peniel, because Peniel means, "God's face."

³¹ As the sun was coming up, Jacob left there and crossed the Jabbok River. But he was limping now, because his hip was aching. ³² Even today when the Israelite people eat meat, they don't eat the muscle from the hip of bullocks and other animals, because that man struck Jacob on the hip.

33

About Jacob and Esau meeting

¹⁻² On that same day Jacob saw Esau coming to him and the 400 men with him. Then Jacob told Bilhah and Zilpah, to get their children together and stand in front. Then he told Leah to get her children together and stand in the middle. And he told Rachel and her son, Joseph, to stand behind the others. ³ Then Jacob went towards Esau and bowed down to the ground so that his brother would know he was ready to obey him. Seven times he bowed down. ⁴ But Esau ran to meet Jacob and hugged him and kissed him. And the two men cried and cried because they were so happy. ⁵ Esau looked up and saw the children and their mothers. He said, “Who are these people?”

Jacob said, “God has been kind to me and given me these children.” ⁶ Then Bilhah and Zilpah came up with their children and bowed down to Esau. ⁷ Then Leah and her children came and bowed down, and last of all Joseph and Rachel came and bowed down to Esau.

⁸ Esau said, “Those animals I saw on the way, what did they mean?”

Jacob answered, “They are yours. I wanted you to be happy.”

⁹ Esau said, “I have plenty of my own now, my brother. So keep them.”

¹⁰⁻¹¹ Jacob said again, “I really want you to take them, because you have had pity on me. You didn't become angry and send me away. You have been kind to me your younger brother.

When I see your face it is like seeing God's face. God has been kind to me and he has given me everything I have needed.” And so in the end Esau took everything.

¹² Esau said, “Let us go now. I will go ahead of you.”

¹³ But Jacob said, “You know that the children are not strong. And I must look after the sheep and cattle with their young ones. If I make them go fast even for one day they will all die. ¹⁴ You go ahead and I will follow. I will go slowly with the animals and my children until I catch up with you in Edom.”

¹⁵ Esau said, “Then I will leave some of my men with you.”

“Why?” asked Jacob. “I only want to make you happy.”

¹⁶ So that day Esau left to go back to Edom.

¹⁷ But Jacob went a different way.

He went on until he arrived at Succoth. He built a house there for himself and shelters for his cattle. He named the place Succoth, because Succoth means “shelters.”

¹⁸ Some time later Jacob left there and went on further to Shechem. From far away in Mesopotamia he had come safely until he arrived in Canaan. He set up his camp near the city of Shechem. ¹⁹ Jacob bought a place and gave the descendants of Hamor 100 silver coins. Hamor was Shechem's father. ²⁰ He piled up some stones and made an altar for God. He called it “God, the God of the Israelite people.”

34

About Shechem running off with Dinah

¹ One day Dinah, the daughter of Jacob and Leah, went to visit some of the Canaanite women.

² A man called Shechem saw her. His father was Hamor the Hivite and he was the ruler there. His son Shechem saw Dinah and grabbed her and took her to the bush and raped her. ³ He thought she was very beautiful and fell in love with her and spoke kindly to her. ⁴ He said to his father, “Get this girl for me for my wife.”

⁵ Then Jacob heard what Shechem had done to his daughter, but his sons were not with him. They were out with his cattle. So Jacob waited for them to come back and didn't say anything.

⁶⁻⁷ When Jacob's sons came home, Shechem and his father Hamor came to talk to Jacob. When Jacob's sons heard about it they were very angry. They said, “That is a terrible thing he has done. He has shamed all of us Israelites by raping her.”

⁸ Shechem's father Hamor said to Jacob, “My son loves your daughter, so please give her to him. ⁹ Let us make an agreement today. You can all give us your daughters and we will give you our daughters. ¹⁰ Then you can stay here in our country with us. You can live anywhere you want to. You can find any kind of work you like so that you can get food, and you can buy land.”

¹¹⁻¹² Then Shechem said to Dinah's father and brothers, “Please have pity on me. Tell me and I will give you anything you want. If you will

agree and let us get married, then I will give you money and presents.”

¹³ But Jacob's sons tricked Shechem and his father because of what Shechem had done. ¹⁴ They said, “We can't give our sister to you if you aren't circumcised. We would be ashamed. ¹⁵ If you circumcise yourselves and all your men and become like us, then we can give you our sister. ¹⁶ We will give our daughters to you and you can give your daughters to us. We will stay here and join you as one people. ¹⁷ But if you don't agree to be circumcised we will take our sister and leave.”

¹⁸ That seemed good to Shechem and his father. ¹⁹ So Shechem didn't wait and he did what was suggested because he loved Dinah. He was the most important member of his family.

²⁰ Then Hamor and Shechem went to the meeting place at the city gate and told the people. ²¹ “These men are friendly,” they said. “Let them live in our country with us and let them travel freely. This land is big enough for them too. Let us marry their daughters and give them ours for their wives. ²² But these people want us men to circumcise ourselves as they do. If we don't, they won't agree to live among us and be one people with us. ²³ If they live here with us, then all their sheep and other animals and everything they have brought here will be ours. So let us tell them that they can live among us.”

²⁴ All the people said, “That would be good,” and all the men circumcised each other.

²⁵⁻²⁶ Three days later while the men were still hurting, two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, older brothers of Dinah, took their swords and crept up and went quietly into the city. Then they killed Hamor and his son Shechem and all the men. Then they took Dinah from Shechem's house and ran away. ²⁷ After they had killed all the men, Jacob's other sons came and took everything away. In that way they paid them back because they had shamed their sister. ²⁸ They took the sheep and goats, cattle and donkeys and everything, all that was inside the city and out in the bush. ²⁹ They took everything valuable. And they took all the women and children and everything that was in the houses.

³⁰ Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought trouble on me. Now the Canaanite people will hate me. The Perizzites and everybody in this country will hate me. I have only a few men. If they all get together to fight against me, they will destroy us."

³¹ But they answered, "We don't want our sister to be shamed and that is why we did it."

35

About Jacob going back to Bethel

¹ God said to Jacob, "Go to Bethel straight away and live there. When you arrive build an altar for me. I am the God who came and appeared to you when you were running away from your brother Esau."

² So Jacob spoke to his family and to all who were with him. He said, “Get rid of the carved gods you have got. Wash yourselves and put on clean clothes. ³ We are going to leave here and go to Bethel. I will build an altar there for God. He is the one who helped me when I was in trouble. He has been with me everywhere I have gone.”

⁴ So they gave Jacob all the carved gods they had and also the earrings they were wearing. Jacob dug a hole and threw everything into it and buried it. The hole he dug was near Shechem under the special tree there. ⁵ Jacob and his sons went away and all the people in Shechem and in other towns nearby were afraid and didn't chase them.

⁶ Jacob and all his people travelled on to Luz. Luz is in Canaan but today it is called Bethel. ⁷ He built an altar there and named the place “the God of Bethel.” Jacob gave it that name because God had shown himself to him there when he was running away from his brother.

⁸ Rebecca's servant Deborah died and they took her body south to a big tree and buried her under it. The tree was near Bethel and they called it “the tree where they wept.”

⁹ After Jacob returned from Mesopotamia God came and appeared again to him and gave him a special blessing. ¹⁰ He said, “Your name is Jacob, but from now on it will be Israel.” He gave Jacob this new name ¹¹ and said to him, “I am the most powerful God. You will have many descendants. There will be so many that they become separate nations, and some will be kings. ¹² I will give

you the land I first gave to Abraham and then to Isaac. Now I will give it to you and to your descendants after you.” ¹³ Then God left him.

¹⁴ Then Jacob set up a stone so that he would remember what God had said. He set it up there where God had spoken to him, and he poured wine and olive oil on it so that it would be holy. ¹⁵ Then he named the place Bethel, because Bethel means “house of God.”

About Rachel's death

¹⁶ Then Jacob and his family left Bethel to go south to a place called Ephrath. But before they reached Ephrath Rachel was ready to have her baby, so they stopped on the way. Rachel was in great pain. ¹⁷ A servant woman was helping her, but Rachel was in a lot of pain. The woman said to her, “Don't be afraid, it is another boy.” ¹⁸ But Rachel was dying. As she breathed her last breath she named him Benoni, because Benoni means “son of my sorrow.” But Jacob named him Benjamin, because Benjamin means “good will come to my son.”

¹⁹ After Rachel died they buried her beside the road that goes to Ephrath. They used to call it Ephrath but they changed the name and now it is called Bethlehem. ²⁰ Jacob set up a stone there where they buried her to remember her, and it is still there today. ²¹ Jacob and his family left there and went to a place called Eder. There was a tall building there and they made their camp on the other side of it.

About Jacob's sons

²² While Jacob and his family were living there, Jacob's son Reuben took Bilhah, his father's servant woman. His father heard about it and he was very angry.

Jacob had twelve sons. ²³ Leah's sons were Reuben (Jacob's eldest son), Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun. ²⁴ Rachel's sons were Joseph and Benjamin. ²⁵ The sons of Rachel's servant Bilhah were Dan and Naphtali. ²⁶ The sons of Leah's servant Zilpah were Gad and Asher. All these sons were born in Mesopotamia.

About Isaac's death

²⁷ Jacob and his family went to his father Isaac to the place where Abraham and then his son Isaac had lived. It was called Mamre and it was near Hebron. And they stayed there with Isaac. ²⁸⁻²⁹ Isaac was very old now. When he was 180 years old he died and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

36

About Esau's descendants

¹ These are the names of Esau's descendants. He had two names, Esau and Edom. ² Esau married Canaanite women. One wife was Adah, the daughter of Elon the Hittite. Another wife was Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah and the granddaughter of Zibeon the Hivite. ³ Another wife was Basemath. She was Ishmael's daughter and the sister of Nebaioth.

⁴ Adah and Esau had one son Eliphaz. Basemath and Esau had one son Reuel. ⁵ Oholibamah and Esau had three sons called Jeush, Jalam

and Korah. These sons of Esau's were born in Canaan.

⁶ Then Esau went away taking his wives and sons and daughters and the people who were living with him. He also took his cattle and all his belongings that he had got in Canaan. He went away to live separately from Jacob, ⁷ because the land where he and Jacob were living was not big enough and they had too many cattle. ⁸ So Esau went to Edom and lived there in the hill country with his family.

⁹ Esau was the ancestor of the Edomite people, and these are the names of his descendants. ¹⁰⁻¹⁴ His five sons were called Eliphaz, the son of Adah, Reuel the son of Basemath, and Jeush, Jalam and Korah, the three sons of Oholibamah. Oholibamah's father was Anah and her grandfather was Zibeon.

The six sons of Eliphaz were called Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, Kenaz and Amalek. Amalek's mother was a woman called Timna.

The four sons of Reuel were called Nahath, Zerah, Shammah and Mizzah.

¹⁵ Esau was the ancestor of many people. His first son Eliphaz was the father of the leaders called Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz, ¹⁶ Gatam and Amalek. Their grandmother was Esau's wife Adah.

¹⁷ Esau's son Reuel was the father of the leaders called Nahath, Zerah, Shammah and Mizzah. Their grandmother was Esau's wife Basemath.

¹⁸ Esau's sons Jeush, Jalam and Korah were also leaders and their mother was Esau's wife Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah.

¹⁹ The sons and grandsons of Esau were all leaders of separate tribes.

About Seir's descendants

²⁰ Seir was a Horite and his sons lived in the hill country of Edom. Their names were Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, ²¹ Dishon, Ezer and Dishan. These sons of Seir were the leaders of the Horite people who lived in Edom.

²² Lotan's two sons were called Hori and Heman. And Lotan had a sister called Timna.

²³ Shobal's five sons were Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho and Onam.

²⁴ Zibeon's two sons were Aiah and Anah. Anah was the man who found the hot springs in the desert, when he was looking after his father's donkeys.

²⁵ Anah's son was called Dishon, and his daughter was called Oholibamah.

²⁶ Dishon's four sons were called Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran and Cheran.

²⁷ The three sons of Ezer were Bilhan, Zaavan and Akan.

²⁸ The two sons of Dishan were Uz and Aran.

²⁹⁻³⁰ These men were the leaders of the Horite people, Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer and Dishan. They ruled separately over their people in the country of Edom.

About the kings of Edom

³¹ Before there were any kings in Israel, these kings ruled over the Edomite people in turn.

³² The first was Bela, the son of Beor. His city was Dinhabah.

³³ After he died, Jobab, the son of Zerah, took his place. He came from Bozrah.

³⁴ After he died, Husham, a Temanite, took his place and ruled.

³⁵ After he died, Hadad, the son of Bedad, ruled. His city was called Avith. When Hadad was fighting the Midianite people in Moab, his soldiers drove away the Midianites.

³⁶ After Hadad died, Samlah from Masrekah ruled.

³⁷ After he died, Shaul ruled. He came from Rehoboth on the river.

³⁸ After he died, Baal-Hanan, the son of Achbor, ruled.

³⁹ After he died, Hadad from Pau ruled. His wife was called Mehetabel, and her father was Matred and her grandfather was Mezahab.

⁴⁰ Esau was the ancestor of the Edomite people, and these were their rulers, Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, ⁴¹ Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, ⁴² Kenaz, Teman, Mizbar, ⁴³ Magdiel and Iram. The country where they lived was named after them.

About Jacob's family

37

About Joseph and his brothers

¹ Jacob went on living in the land of Canaan where his father had lived, ² and this is the story of Jacob's family.

Joseph was seventeen years old. He and some of his brothers were looking after their father's

sheep and goats. His brothers' mothers were Bilhah and Zilpah, two of Jacob's wives. When his brothers did wrong, Joseph went to his father Jacob and told him.

³ Joseph's father loved him the most, because he was born when his father was old. So Jacob made a beautiful long coat for Joseph. ⁴ But the brothers saw that their father loved Joseph more than them, and so they hated Joseph. They didn't speak kindly to him any more.

⁵ One night Joseph had a dream. So he told his brothers about it but they hated him even more.

⁶ Joseph said to them, "Listen to this dream I have had. ⁷ We were all working outside. We had cut some wheat and now we were tying the bundles up with string. But suddenly my plants stood up and yours surrounded mine. Then yours bowed down and mine kept on standing there. Yours bowed down because they knew that mine were very important."

⁸ The brothers said to him, "So you think you will rule over us, do you!" Then they hated him still more because of that dream and because they knew that their brother went and told his father the wrong things they did.

⁹ Later Joseph dreamed again, and he told his brothers again. "I have had another dream," he said. "The sun and the moon and eleven stars all bowed down to me." ¹⁰ He also told his father.

His father was angry with him. "What kind of dream was that?" he said. "Are you thinking your mother and brothers and I will come and bow down to you?"

11 His brothers were jealous of him but his father kept on thinking about the two dreams.

About Joseph's brothers getting tired of him and sending him to Egypt

12 At that time Jacob and his sons were living in a flat place called Hebron. Joseph's brothers had gone to Shechem to look after their father's sheep and goats there.

13 Jacob said to Joseph, "You must go to Shechem too. Your brothers are looking after the sheep and goats there."

Joseph said, "Yes, I will go."

14 Jacob said, "Go and find your brothers and see if they are well and see if the sheep and goats are all right. Then come back and tell me." So Jacob sent him off and he went to Shechem.

15 He was wandering around searching for his brothers. But a man saw him and asked, "What are you looking for?"

16 "I am looking for my older brothers," Joseph said. "They are looking after their sheep and goats. If you know where they are, can you tell me?"

17 "Yes," he said. "They were here but now they have gone. I heard them talking about going to a place called Dothan." So Joseph also went to Dothan.

And he found his brothers there. 18 But before he got there, they looked up and saw him coming from a long way away. So they decided to kill him.

19 They said to each other, "Here comes that dreamer. 20 Come on now, let's kill him and

throw his body into a dry well. We can tell people a wild animal killed him. Then we will find out if his dreams are true or not.”

²¹ But the oldest brother, Reuben, heard them and wanted Joseph to live. He said to the others, “We shouldn't kill him ²² or hurt him. Let us take him and throw him into this dry waterhole. Then we can leave him in this place where there are no people.” He was thinking that he would take him from the well later, and send him back to his father.

²³ When Joseph came up to his brothers, they pulled off his beautiful long coat. ²⁴ Then they took him and threw him into the dry well. ²⁵ Then they sat down and ate some food together.

While they were still eating, they saw some Ishmaelite people coming. They were travelling from a place called Gilead to Egypt. They were going by camel and they were taking sweet-smelling perfume and powder and gum to Egypt, to sell to the people there.

²⁶⁻²⁷ But one of the brothers, Judah, spoke to the others. “Hey!” he said. “Let us sell Joseph to these people. If we kill him we won't get any money. So why should we kill him and hide his body? He is our brother.” And his brothers agreed.

²⁸ Then the Ishmaelite people reached the place where the brothers were waiting. Those people had two names, they were called Ishmaelites and also Midianites. The brothers went to the well and pulled Joseph out and gave him

to the Ishmaelites, who gave them twenty coins for him. And they took him to Egypt.

²⁹⁻³⁰ But when the others gave Joseph to those people Reuben wasn't there. He came back to them and looked in the well but Joseph wasn't in the well. He tore the coat he was wearing because he was so upset. He said, "He is not in the well! What can I do?"

³¹ Then the brothers killed a goat and took its blood and dipped Joseph's coat in the blood.

³² Then they went home taking the coat back to their father. "We found this coat. Isn't it Joseph's coat?" they said.

³³ Jacob looked at it and he recognized Joseph's coat. "Yes, it is his! A wild animal has killed him," the old man said. "It has torn him to pieces!"

³⁴ He was very upset and tore the clothes he was wearing. Then he put on rough clothes that had been made from goat hair. Jacob was very sad about his son for a very long time. ³⁵ All his sons and daughters came to try and make him happy, but they couldn't make him smile. He said, "When I go to the place of the dead, I will still be sad." So he kept on being sad about his son.

³⁶ The Midianite men who bought Joseph took him to Egypt. There was a king there who ruled the whole country. There were also many officers in charge of other people. So the men who took Joseph to Egypt sold him to an officer called Potiphar. He was in charge of the soldiers who looked after the king's palace.

38

About Judah and Tamar

¹ At that time Judah left his brothers and went to stay with a man called Hirah who lived in a town called Adullam. They were friends. ² There Judah met a Canaanite girl whose father was called Shua, and he married her.

³ She had a son and his father named him Er. ⁴ Later she became pregnant again and had another son and named him Onan. ⁵ Later she had another son and named him Shelah. But when the baby was born his father was staying in a place called Achzib.

⁶ When Judah's oldest son Er grew up, his father got a wife for him called Tamar. ⁷ But Er was not a good man, he kept on doing evil things. Yahweh did not like what he was doing and so he killed him.

⁸ Then Judah spoke to Er's younger brother Onan. He said, "Now that your brother has died, go to his widow and sleep with her so that you can have children for him. Then you can bring them up for him."

⁹ But Onan said to himself, "If I have children with this widow they won't be mine. They will belong to my dead brother." So when he went and slept with her he didn't want to have his brother's children, and he let his semen spill on the ground and he didn't make Tamar pregnant.

¹⁰ But Yahweh didn't like what he had done and so he killed Onan too in the same way he had killed his older brother Er. ¹¹ So now Judah had

only one son left alive, and he was afraid that Shelah would be killed like his two brothers.

So he said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Go back to your father's house and stay there as a widow. Then when my youngest son Shelah grows up you can marry him." So Tamar went back alone to her father's house.

¹² After some time Judah's wife also died and he was very sad and stayed at home. When he was ready to go out again, Judah decided to go to a place called Timnah because his sheep were there. So he went there with his friend Hirah.

¹³ Someone said to Tamar, "Your father-in-law is coming to Timnah to cut the wool from his sheep."

¹⁴ Tamar knew that Judah's youngest son Shelah had grown up now. But Judah had still not given him to her as her husband. He had not kept his promise. Tamar was still wearing her widow's clothes. So she took them off and put on other clothes and covered her face with some material. Then she went to a place called Enaim and sat down near the gate. Enaim was on the road that went to Timnah.

¹⁵ Later Judah saw her there and thought she was a woman who slept with other men because she had covered her face. Those kinds of women used to cover their faces. ¹⁶ So Judah didn't know it was his daughter-in-law Tamar.

He went over to her at the side of the road and said, "Come on, how much money do you want?"

She said, "What will you give me?"

¹⁷ He answered, "I will send you a young goat afterwards."

“Yes,” she said, “but give me something of yours now to keep until you give me the goat, so that you don’t forget.”

¹⁸ He asked, “What can I lend you?”

She said, “That cord of yours with your name and the walking stick you are carrying.” So he gave them to her and they slept together and he made her pregnant. ¹⁹ Then Tamar went home and uncovered her face and put on her widow’s clothes again.

²⁰ Judah gave a young goat to his friend Hirah. He said, “Take this to that woman and get that stick and the cord with my name that I gave her.” Hirah went to Enaim but he couldn’t find the woman.

²¹ He asked some men there, “Where is that bad woman who was sitting at the side of the road?”

They answered, “There have never been any women who sleep with other men in this place. And there aren’t any here today.”

²² Judah’s friend went back to him and said, “I couldn’t find her. The men there told me that there are no bad women in that place.”

²³ Judah said, “Let her keep the things. We don’t want people to laugh at us. I wanted to give her the goat but you couldn’t find her.”

²⁴ Three months later someone said to Judah, “Your daughter-in-law has been sleeping around and now she is pregnant.”

Judah said to them, “Take her away and burn her to death.”

²⁵ They were taking her away to burn her, but on the way she sent the things to her father-in-law. And she sent him a message saying, “I am pregnant today, but just look at these two things. Who do you think they belong to? The man who made me pregnant gave them to me.”

²⁶ When Judah saw the things he said, “They are mine. I didn’t give her my son Shelah. I should have given my son to her and I didn’t do it. It is my fault and not hers.” And Judah never slept with Tamar again.

²⁷ The time came for Tamar to give birth, but she had two babies. ²⁸ While she was in labour one of them put out an arm. The woman who was helping Tamar caught it and tied some red cotton round it so that she would know that it was the first. She said, “This one was born first.”

²⁹ But the baby pulled his arm back and the other one was born first. The woman said to him, “You have got out by yourself!” So he was named Perez, because Perez means “he got out by himself.”

³⁰ Then his younger brother with the red cotton was born and he was named Zerah, because Zerah means “red.”

39

About Joseph and Potiphar's wife

¹ Joseph was living in the country of Egypt because the Ishmaelite people had taken him there and sold him to a man called Potiphar. Potiphar worked for the king and was in charge of the soldiers who looked after the king's palace.

² Joseph lived in Potiphar's house and worked for him. Yahweh was with Joseph and made everything go well for him. ³ Potiphar saw that Yahweh was with Joseph and always helped him to work well. ⁴ So Potiphar was pleased with Joseph and put him in charge of his house and everything he owned.

⁵ From then on, after Joseph started working for Potiphar, Yahweh blessed Potiphar and all his family. Yahweh blessed them because Joseph was there in Potiphar's house. Joseph worked well and everything went well inside Potiphar's house and also outside in his fields. ⁶⁻⁷ Potiphar trusted Joseph so he gave him everything in his house to look after and he didn't have to think about anything except the food he ate.

After a while Potiphar's wife saw that Joseph was very good-looking. He was so strong and good-looking that she wanted to sleep with him. She asked him ⁸ but he refused.

“No,” said Joseph. “Look, my master, your husband, doesn't have to think about anything in his house because I am here. He has made me the boss over everything he owns. ⁹ I am his servant but I am a master in his house just like him. He hasn't held on to anything of his except you, his wife. I don't want to do anything wrong and I won't sin against Yahweh.”

¹⁰ She kept on and on asking him, but he still refused and would not sleep with her.

¹¹ But one day when Joseph went into the house to do his work, none of the other servants were there. He was working by himself.

12-13 Potiphar's wife caught him by his coat and said, "Come and sleep with me." He escaped and ran outside but he left his coat in her hand. When she saw Joseph's coat in her hand, ¹⁴ she called out to her servants and said, "Look at this coat! My husband has brought this Hebrew man into the house and he has shamed us today. He came into my room and wanted to rape me, but I screamed out loud. ¹⁵ When he heard me scream he left his coat with me and ran outside."

¹⁶ She kept Joseph's coat until her husband came home. ¹⁷ Then she told him the same thing and said, "That Hebrew servant you brought here came into my room to shame me. ¹⁸ I screamed and he ran outside and left his coat with me."

¹⁹ Her husband, Joseph's master Potiphar, was very angry when he heard what his wife said. ²⁰ He told his men to grab Joseph and put him in the king's prison and there he stayed.

²¹ But Yahweh was still with Joseph and was kind to him. And so the prison guard was pleased with him, ²² and put him in charge of all the other prisoners. ²³ Joseph worked well and the prison guard didn't have to worry about anything, because Yahweh was with Joseph and helped him. So everything always went well for him.

40

About Joseph explaining the two men's dreams

¹⁻² Some time later the king of Egypt became angry with two of his servants. One of them

looked after his wine, and the other cooked all kinds of food in the king's palace. ³ But the king put them both in jail, because he didn't want them any more. And they stayed in the prison guard's house, in the same place where Joseph was already staying. ⁴ The prison guard gave Joseph to them so that he could work for them.

They spent a long time in jail. ⁵ One night there in jail the two men each had a dream. They both had a dream on the same night but their dreams were different.

⁶ In the morning Joseph came to them. When he saw them he could tell that they were both upset. ⁷ "Why are you so upset today?" he asked.

⁸ They answered, "Each of us had a dream, but there is no one here to explain the dreams to us."

Joseph said, "Only God can show people about dreams. Tell them to me."

⁹ The man who looked after the king's wine said, "In my dream I saw a grapevine ¹⁰ with three branches. First of all I saw the leaves, and then the flowers came out straight away and the grapes ripened. ¹¹ I was holding the king's cup in my hand. So I picked the grapes and squeezed the juice into the cup and gave it to the king."

¹² Joseph said, "I will tell you about it. The three branches are three days. ¹³ In three days the king will let you out. He will forgive you and then you will work for him again as you did before. You will look after his wine and give him his cup again. ¹⁴ But when everything is going well for you, don't forget me. Speak to the king for me so that he will let me out of this

jail too. ¹⁵ Some bad people took me away from my country and my Hebrew people. And even here in Egypt I have done nothing wrong. They shouldn't have put me in this jail.”

¹⁶ When the cook heard that the other man's dream was good, he said to Joseph, “I had a dream too. I was carrying three baskets of food on my head. ¹⁷ In the top basket there were all kinds of cakes that I had cooked for the king, but the birds were eating them.”

¹⁸ Joseph said, “I will tell you about your dream. The three baskets mean three days. ¹⁹ In three days the king will let you out of jail too. But they will cut your head off! Then the king will tell his soldiers to hang your body on a tree and the birds will eat your flesh.”

²⁰ Three days later the king asked all his officers to come to his house for a feast because it was his birthday. He let the two men out of jail and called them to him. They went and stood before him and his officers. ²¹ Then the king gave the man who looked after his wine the same work that he had done before. ²² But he put the cook to death. He told his soldiers to cut off his head. So everything happened as Joseph had said. ²³ But the man who looked after the king's wine didn't think about Joseph. He forgot all about him.

41

About the king's dream

¹ After two years had passed, the king had a dream. In his dream he was standing beside a

big river in his country, called the Nile River,
2 and he saw seven cows come up out of the river. They were good, fat ones. They came up on to the riverbank and began to eat the grass.
3 Then seven more cows came up, but they were thin and bony. They came up on to the bank and stood there with the other cows. 4 And the thin cows ate the fat ones. Then the king woke up.

5 He went to sleep again and had another dream. In his dream he saw some heads of corn. He saw seven all on one stem, and they were fat and ripe. 6 Then seven more heads of corn began to grow, but they were thin and small because the east wind had dried them up. 7 And the thin ones swallowed the fat ones. The king woke up and realized that he had been dreaming.

8 In the morning the king was worried about his dreams and he called all the wise men who lived in Egypt to come to him. He told them about his dreams, but no one could explain them to him.

9 Then the king's servant who looked after his drink said to him, "Oh dear! I have forgotten something. 10 You were angry with me and with your cook and you put us in jail. We stayed in the house of the officer who was in charge of the soldiers who looked after your palace. 11-12 We were with a young Hebrew man who was working for the officer. We both had a dream on the same night, but our dreams were different. We told our dreams to the man and he explained them to us.

13 “Afterwards everything happened as the man had said. You let me out of jail and brought me into your house to work for you as I had done before. But you put your other servant to death.”

14 Then the king sent some men to the jail and they brought Joseph out straight away. He shaved and changed his clothes and went to see the king.

15 The king said to him, “I have had a dream, and no one can explain it to me. But my servant told me that you know how to explain people's dreams to them.”

16 Joseph answered, “I can't explain it. But God will explain it to you and you will be happy.”

17 The king said, “In my dream I was standing beside the Nile River. 18 I saw seven cows come up out of the water. They were good, fat cows. They came up on to the riverbank and began to eat the grass. 19 Then seven more cows came up out of the water, but they were very thin. I have never seen such thin cows in the whole of Egypt. 20 The thin cows ate the fat ones, 21 but they didn't get fat from eating them. They stayed just as thin as before. And then I woke up.

22 “I had another dream,” the king went on. “I saw some corn. I saw seven heads on one stem and they were fat and ripe. 23 Then seven more heads began to grow, but they were thin because the east wind had dried them. 24 But those thin ones swallowed the fat ones. I told my wise men, but none of them could explain my two dreams for me.”

²⁵ Joseph said to the king, “Those two dreams of yours are the same. God has told you what he is going to do.

²⁶ “The seven fat cows are like seven years. And the seven fat heads of corn are like seven years too. The two dreams mean the same thing.

²⁷ The seven thin cows which came up out of the water last and also the seven thin heads of corn that dried up when the east wind blew are like seven years. In those seven years there will be no rain and so no food will grow.”

²⁸ Then Joseph said, “It is just as I told you, God has shown you in a dream what he is going to do later. ²⁹ First seven good years are coming. There will be plenty of food in all the land of Egypt. ³⁰⁻³¹ After that there will be seven bad years. There will be no rain and no food will grow and these people will forget about all the good food in the land, because the country will look so bad.

³² “You have dreamed twice because God has decided and in a little while he will make it happen.”

³³ Then Joseph said to the king, “Now you should choose a wise man and put him in charge of Egypt. ³⁴⁻³⁶ And you should get some workers to help him. In the seven good years there will be plenty of food in Egypt, so they should put some of the food in storehouses. If there are five bags of food, people can eat four and put one in the storehouse. You should tell the workers to store up plenty of food in the towns. And you should tell them to guard the food so that no one can

take it. It must be kept safe for later. Then when the seven bad years come in Egypt the food will still be there for everyone to eat, so that they will live and not starve to death.”

About Joseph becoming governor of Egypt

³⁷ The king and his officers liked what Joseph said. ³⁸ So the king said to his officers, “We will never find a man as good as Joseph, because he has God's spirit in him.”

³⁹ Then he said to Joseph, “God has shown you all this. So I know that there is no one as wise as you are. ⁴⁰ I will put you in charge of my country, and all my people will obey your orders. I am the king and I hold all Egypt. But you will be next to me so that everyone will obey you too. ⁴¹ Today I am making you governor over all Egypt.”

⁴² Then the king took from his finger the ring that had his name on it and put it on Joseph's finger. And he put a beautiful coat on him and a gold chain around his neck. ⁴³ He also gave him a carriage pulled by horses for him to ride in. It was a very good one just like the king's.

The king spoke again to Joseph and said, “When you ride in the carriage, my servants will go along the road ahead of you and call out, ‘Move out of the way! Move back for the governor!’”

⁴⁴ “I am the king, so everyone in Egypt must obey me. I have said to them, ‘You must all obey Joseph's orders. You must go to him and ask his permission before you do anything.’”

⁴⁵⁻⁴⁷ Then the king gave Joseph an Egyptian name, Zaphenath Paneah. And he gave him a wife called Asenath. She was the daughter of Potiphara, who was a priest for the Egyptian people in a city called Heliopolis.

Joseph was thirty years old when he began the work that the king gave him. For seven years plenty of food grew, just as Joseph had told the king. And Joseph left the king's palace and went everywhere all over Egypt. ⁴⁸ He went to the cities and told the people what to do. In each city the people collected the food they had grown in the different places nearby and they stored it all in a big storehouse there in their city. ⁴⁹ There was so much food that Joseph couldn't measure it any more, because it was like the grains of sand on the beach.

⁵⁰⁻⁵² Then while there was still plenty of food in Egypt, Asenath and Joseph had a son. Joseph said, "God has helped me and I have forgotten all my suffering and all my father's family." So he named his first son Manasseh, because Manasseh means "I have forgotten."

Later while there was still plenty of food, Asenath and Joseph had another son. Joseph said, "God has given me children in this land where I have had so much trouble." So he called the child Ephraim, because Ephraim means "he has given me children."

⁵³ The seven good years in Egypt ended. ⁵⁴ Then seven bad years came, just as Joseph had said. The food didn't grow any more and people

in every other country were hungry, except in Egypt where there was food in the storehouses.

⁵⁵⁻⁵⁶ Those years got worse all over Egypt and the Egyptians began to be hungry and they went to the king. They begged him for food, but the king said to them, “Go to Joseph and do what he tells you.” So they all went to Joseph and he opened the storehouses and sold food to them.

⁵⁷ Then many people came to Egypt from other countries to buy food because they were bad years everywhere.

42

About Joseph's brothers going to Egypt to buy food

¹⁻⁵ There was only a little food in Canaan where Jacob and his family were living, and they were very hungry. When Jacob heard that there was plenty of food in Egypt, he said to his sons, “What are you doing just talking to each other? Go to Egypt. I have been told that there is food there. Go and buy some so that we won't starve to death.”

Then Joseph's ten brothers went to Egypt with others to buy food. But their young brother Benjamin stayed at home. His father wouldn't let him go with the others because he loved Rachel's son so much and he was afraid something might happen to him.

⁶ At that time Joseph was the governor in Egypt and many people from every country were coming to him to buy corn. So Joseph's brothers

came and they bowed down before him with their faces to the ground to show him that they knew he was a very important person. ⁷⁻⁸ When Joseph saw his brothers he recognized them, but they didn't recognize him. He behaved as though he didn't know them and asked angrily, "Where do you come from?"

"We have come from Canaan to buy food," they answered.

⁹ Joseph remembered the two dreams he had dreamed about them and said, "You have come to spy on us, to find out if our people here in Egypt are weak and to make trouble for us."

¹⁰ "No," they answered. "We are ordinary people and we know that you are the governor. We have come here to buy food and nothing else. ¹¹ We are all brothers and we are good, honest men. We don't want to spy."

¹² But Joseph said, "No, you have come here to see if our people are weak."

¹³ "Master," they said. "There were twelve of us brothers with the same father in the land of Canaan, but one brother is dead and the youngest is at home with our father."

¹⁴ Joseph said, "No. I still think you have come here to spy on this place. ¹⁵⁻¹⁶ And I will keep thinking that until I know if you are telling me the truth. I will find out. I will put you in jail here, but one of you must go home and get your youngest brother. If you don't bring him here to me I will know that you came to spy on us. I will not let the rest of you go home until your youngest brother gets here. I am saying this to

you today and I am using the king's name. He is the king of all Egypt and I am using his name to make my words strong.” ¹⁷ Then he put them in jail for three days.

¹⁸ After three days Joseph said to them, “I worship God and I don't want you to die. If you bring your youngest brother here, you will live. ¹⁹ I will let some of you go, but one of you must stay here in jail, so that I can find out if you are honest. You others can go home and take the food you have bought so that your families won't starve. ²⁰ Then come back and bring your youngest brother here to me. Then I will know that you have been telling me the truth today, and I will not put you to death.”

They agreed and said to Joseph, “We will do what you have told us.” ²¹ Then they said to each other, “Yes, we have been in jail because we gave our brother to those people. We didn't listen to him when he was in trouble and calling out and asking us to help him. That is why we were put in jail.”

²² Reuben said to his brothers, “I told you we shouldn't hurt him, but you wouldn't listen to me. That is why we are in trouble now.” ²³ Joseph understood what they were saying but they didn't know, because he had not been speaking his own language, but using the Egyptian language. Someone had been translating it for them so that they could understand. ²⁴ Joseph was nearly crying, but he didn't want his brothers to see him cry and he went outside for a little

while. When he was ready to speak again, he came back to them. He chose Simeon to be put in jail and told his servants to tie him up in front of his brothers.

About Joseph's brothers going back to their father in Canaan

²⁵ Then Joseph said to his servants, "Fill the men's bags with food to take home. Put their money back inside each bag, and give them food to eat on the way." So his servants did what Joseph said. ²⁶ Joseph's brothers put the bags on the donkeys and then they left to return to Canaan.

²⁷ They kept on going on until the sun set and night came. Then one of them opened his bag to feed his donkey, and found his money at the top of the bag. ²⁸ He called to his brothers and said, "Here is my money in my bag. They have returned it to me!" This gave them a shock and they were very frightened and asked each other, "What has God done to us?"

²⁹ They went on until they reached Canaan and went home. Then they told their father everything that had happened. ³⁰ They said, "The governor who gave us the food spoke angrily to us. He tried to tell us we had gone there to see their country and to find out if they were strong or weak people.

³¹ "But we said, 'We are not spies. We are honest men. ³² There were twelve of us brothers with the same father. But one brother is dead and the youngest is still with our father in Canaan.'

³³ “The man said, ‘I will find out the truth about you and decide if you are honest men. One of you will stay here with me. The rest of you will take food to your families so that they don't starve. ³⁴ Then you will come back here with your youngest brother. When you bring him to me I will know that you are honest men and I will give your brother back to you. Then if you want to you can stay here and move around freely in this land.’ ”

³⁵ Then they opened their bags, and in each bag they found the money they had given the Egyptians. When they and their father saw it they were afraid.

³⁶ Jacob said, “Look what you have done! I will lose all my children. Joseph is gone and Simeon is gone too. And now you want to take Benjamin away from me. You are making me suffer so much!”

³⁷ Reuben said to his father, “I will look after Benjamin. If I don't bring him back to you, you can kill my two sons. But I really will bring him back.”

³⁸ But Jacob said, “I cannot let my son Benjamin go with you, because his older brother is dead. He is the youngest and he is the only one left. I am an old man now. If anything happened to him on the way I would die. You will upset me and kill me in my old age.”

43

About Joseph's brothers taking Benjamin to Egypt

1-2 The brothers stayed in Canaan with their father but their food was nearly finished. Jacob and his sons had eaten all the food that the brothers had brought back. They were always hungry.

So Jacob said to his sons, “Go back to Egypt again and buy some more food for us.”

³ But Judah said to his father, “The governor of that place won't let us in if we don't take our brother with us. That is what he told us. ⁴ If you send Benjamin with us then we can buy food. ⁵ But if you don't let him go, then we won't go. That man told us we can't see him unless our brother goes with us too.”

⁶ Jacob said, “Why did you tell him about this brother of yours? That has made me so sad. You shouldn't have told him.”

⁷ They answered, “But he kept on asking about our family and he said, ‘Is your father still alive? Have you any more brothers?’ So we had to tell him. We didn't know he would tell us to bring our brother with us.”

⁸ And Judah said to his father, “Let him go with me, and we will go straight away. Then we and our children won't starve to death. ⁹ I myself will look after him. If I don't bring him back safely, you can blame me. ¹⁰ If we hadn't waited so long we could have been to Egypt twice by now.”

¹¹ Jacob said, “If Benjamin doesn't go we won't have any food. So take him and go. Take some good things from our country so that you can give them to the governor, a little gum and a little wild honey and some sweet-smelling things and

some nuts. ¹² And take twice the money you took before. Give them back the money they put in your bags. Maybe they made a mistake. ¹³ Now go back quickly to the man and take Benjamin with you. ¹⁴ I am praying to God that the man will have pity on you and let both Simeon and Benjamin come back with you. Maybe they won't come back, but if Benjamin doesn't go, we won't have any more food.”

¹⁵ Then the brothers went back to Egypt with Benjamin. They took money as at first, but they took twice as much. They also took things from Canaan to give the governor. And so they set off. They kept on going until they reached Egypt. And they went to Joseph.

¹⁶ Then Joseph saw them and Benjamin was with them. He called the servant in charge of the other workers in his house and said, “Take these people to my house. They will eat with me at midday. Kill a bullock and cook it and get some other food ready.”

¹⁷ The servant took them, as Joseph had said, to his house, ¹⁸ but they were afraid because he brought them to Joseph's house. They thought, “He is bringing us here because of that money that they put back in our bags the first time! Maybe they will suddenly grab us and beat us and take our donkeys and make us work for him all the time.”

¹⁹ So when they reached the door of Joseph's house, they said to the servant, ²⁰ “Please. Listen to us. We came here once before to buy food. ²¹⁻²² When we were on the way home and we sat

down at night we opened up our bags, and we saw at the top of our bags the money that we had already given for the food. We don't know who put it there. So we have brought it all back here again, and also much more money, so we can buy more food.”

²³ But he said to them, “Never mind, don't be afraid. God must have put that money there for you, the God you and your father worship. Yes, I took that money the other time for the food.” Then he went to the jail and he took Simeon out and brought him to his brothers.

About the brothers eating together with Joseph

²⁴ The servant took them into Joseph's house and gave them water to wash their feet. Then he gave their donkeys food to eat. ²⁵⁻²⁶ He told them that they were going to eat with Joseph. So they got ready the things they had brought with them from Canaan to give to Joseph.

Then at midday Joseph arrived, and they took the presents into the house and gave them to him and bowed down before him with their faces to the ground. ²⁷ Then he said, “Are you well? You told me before about your father. Is he well? Is he still alive and well?”

²⁸ And they said, “Our father is still alive and well.” And again they bowed down in front of him, because he was the governor.

²⁹ Joseph looked around and saw his brother Benjamin, his own mother's son. He said, “So this is your youngest brother, the one you were

telling me about.” Then he said to Benjamin, “God bless you.”

³⁰ Joseph was so full of feelings when he saw Benjamin that he was nearly in tears. He left suddenly and went to his room and cried there.

³¹ Then he washed his face and wiped the tears away and went back and controlled himself. He told his servants to bring the food.

³² Joseph was sitting separately by himself at one table, and the brothers were sitting away from him at a different table. Some Egyptians were also eating there. They were separate too because they didn't want to sit with people from a different country. ³³ The brothers were sitting near Joseph facing him. They had been told how to sit, with Reuben sitting down first because he was the oldest, then Simeon and all the others and last of all Benjamin the youngest. They were seated properly, the eldest first right through to the youngest. When they saw this they were very surprised.

³⁴ Joseph gave the food to his servants and they carried it to his brothers. But Joseph gave a lot more food to Benjamin. He had five times as much food. Then they ate and drank until they were all drunk.

44

About the cup that was lost

¹ After they had finished eating, Joseph called his servant in charge of the other workers in his house. He said to him, “Fill the men's bags with

food, and put their money back again at the top of each bag. ² And also put my special silver cup at the top of the youngest brother's bag.” Then the servant went and did what Joseph told him.

³ The next morning Joseph got up and let the men go with their donkeys. So they set off. ⁴ When they had gone a little way, Joseph spoke to the servant in charge of his house. “Go quickly,” he said. “Run after the men. When you reach them, say to them, ‘What have you done to my master? He was good to you but you have paid back evil to him. ⁵ Why did you steal that special cup of his? No one else drinks from that cup except him because he owns it. When he wants to find out about people and about what they have done, that's what he would use to show him. You have done a very bad thing!’ ”

⁶ The servant went and caught up with them and told them Joseph's message. ⁷ They said, “Why do you say this? We didn't steal the governor's cup. ⁸ You know that we brought back from Canaan the money we had found in our bags. Why would we steal silver or gold or anything precious belonging to your master? ⁹ If you find the cup with any one of us, then you may kill him. The rest of us will become your servants.”

¹⁰ He answered, “What you say is all right, but if one of you has taken the cup only he will be my servant. You others can go home free.”

¹¹ So they quickly took their bags down from the donkeys and opened them. ¹² The servant searched very carefully. He began by looking in

the oldest one's bag. That was Reuben's. Then he looked in the next brother's bag and in the next. He kept on looking until he found the cup in the bag of the youngest brother Benjamin.

¹³ The brothers tore their clothes because they were so upset. They put the bags on to the donkeys again and went back to the city.

About Judah asking the governor for Benjamin

¹⁴ Joseph was still in his house. When the brothers arrived they bowed down to him with their faces to the floor. ¹⁵ “Why did you do that?” Joseph said to them. “Didn't you know that I am the governor and I know things that are hidden from other people, and so I know everything you have done?”

¹⁶ Judah answered, “There is nothing we can say to you. God has shown you our sin and we can't show you that we are good people. So all of us are now your servants, not just the one who took the cup, but all of us.”

¹⁷ Joseph said, “Not at all! That's no good. Only the one who took my cup will be my servant. You others can go back to your father.”

¹⁸ Then Judah went up close to Joseph and said, “Please let me just speak to you. Don't be angry with me. You are like the king who rules all Egypt. ¹⁹ You said, ‘Is your father alive? Have you got another brother?’ ²⁰ So we told you about our father and about our younger brother. He was born when our father was an old man. His older brother is dead and he is the only one of his mother's children who is still alive. And his

father loves him very much. ²¹ You told us to bring him here because you wanted to see him. ²² But we said, ‘He can’t leave his father, because if he leaves him his father will die.’ ²³ Then you said, ‘If you don’t bring your youngest brother here, I won’t let you come into my house again.’

²⁴ “When we went back to our father we told him what you had said.

²⁵ “Then later on our father told us to come back here to Egypt to buy some more food. ²⁶ But we said, ‘No. If our youngest brother doesn’t go with us, we can’t see the governor. We will only go if our youngest brother goes too.’ ²⁷ Our father said to us, ‘You know that my wife Rachel had only two sons. ²⁸ One is no longer with us. A wild animal must have killed him because he went away and didn’t come back. ²⁹ So if you take this son of mine now and something happens to him, then I will die. You will make me so sad that I will die.’ That’s what our father told us.

³⁰⁻³¹ “So if I go back to my father and I don’t take our youngest brother, our father will die. He really will die if he doesn’t see this boy with us. He loves him very much, and because he is an old man, the sorrow would kill him.

³² “And also I told my father that I myself would look after him and bring him back to him. I said, ‘If I don’t bring him back safely, you can always blame me.’ ³³ Please, let him go with my other brothers and I will be your servant here. ³⁴ I will not go back if I cannot take him back to my father. If my brother doesn’t go back to him then

my father will die, and I don't want to see that happen.”

45

About Joseph telling his brothers about himself

¹ Joseph could not hold back his tears in front of his servants any longer. So he told them all to go outside. No one else was there when he told his brothers about himself and said to them, “I am your brother Joseph.” ² He couldn't hold back his tears and he cried so loudly that his servants heard him crying from outside, and they took the news to the king of Egypt.

³ Joseph said to his brothers, “I am your brother Joseph. Is my father still alive?” But when they heard that he was their brother they were so afraid they couldn't answer.

⁴ Joseph said to them, “Come closer.” They came closer and he said, “I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold to some people and they brought me here to Egypt. ⁵ Now do not be upset or blame yourselves because you gave me to them. It was God who sent me here. He brought me ahead of you to save many people's lives. ⁶ There have only been two years with a little bit of food and there will be five more years with very little food. No food will grow in all that time.

⁷ “God sent me ahead to help you so that you and your children would not starve and so that your descendants will keep on living after you die. ⁸ It was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me the governor and I am

in charge of all the officers here. I also rule the whole country of Egypt, just as the king does.

⁹ “Now go straight away to my father with a message from me. Say to him, ‘God has made your son Joseph the ruler of all Egypt. So don't wait, but go to him quickly, ¹⁰ you and your children and grandchildren. Take your sheep, your goats and your cattle and everything else that you have and go to him in Egypt. You can live there in the part of Egypt called Goshen. ¹¹ You can live near him so that he can take care of you. There will be very little food for five more years, and he doesn't want you and your family and your animals to starve.’ ”

¹² Then Joseph said to them, “All of you, and you too, Benjamin, can see that I really am your brother Joseph. ¹³ Tell my father that I am the ruler here in Egypt and tell him about everything you can see today, and bring him here quickly.”

¹⁴ Joseph hugged Benjamin and began to cry, and Benjamin cried too. ¹⁵ Then Joseph hugged all his brothers, and still crying he kissed them. After that, his brothers began to talk with him.

¹⁶ When the king heard that Joseph's brothers had arrived in Egypt, he was pleased, and so were his officers. ¹⁷ The king said to Joseph, “Tell your brothers to put their things on their donkeys and go back to Canaan. ¹⁸ Tell them to bring your father and their wives and children back here. I will give them the best land in Egypt, and they will have so much food that they won't be able to eat it all.”

¹⁹ The king also told Joseph to let his brothers take some big wagons. He said, “The horses can take the wagons empty to Canaan so that your brothers' wives and little children can ride in them when they come to Egypt. And tell them to bring your father with them.

²⁰ “Say to your brothers, ‘Don't worry about leaving all your things behind when you come, because you will have plenty of good things here.’”

²¹ Then Jacob's sons put their things on their donkeys. Joseph did as the king said and gave his brothers the wagons and also some food to eat on the way. ²² He also gave each of them new clothes to wear, but he gave Benjamin five lots of clothing and 300 silver coins. ²³ He sent many good things from Egypt to his father and they put them on to ten donkeys. They loaded ten more donkeys with all kinds of food for all the people to eat when the brothers brought their wives and children and their father from Canaan back to Egypt with them.

²⁴ Before his brothers left, Joseph said to them, “Don't argue on the way.” Then he sent them off, ²⁵ and they left Egypt and went to Canaan.

They arrived in Canaan and went home to their father Jacob. ²⁶ They told him, “Joseph is still alive! He is the ruler over all the land of Egypt.” But Jacob got such a shock that he couldn't believe them. ²⁷ They told their father everything Joseph had said. They showed him the wagons that Joseph had given them so that he and the rest of his family could go to Egypt

too. Their father felt better when he heard their story and saw everything.

²⁸ Then Jacob said to his sons, “My son Joseph is still alive. That really is good news. Now I want to go and see him before I die.”

46

About Jacob and his family going to Egypt

¹ Jacob and his family collected all their things to go to Egypt. They set out, but first they went to Beersheba. Jacob burnt a sacrifice there for God, the God of his father Isaac. ² That night Jacob saw God in a vision. God called to him and said, “Jacob!”

Jacob answered, “What is it?”

³ Then God said, “I am your father's God. Don't be afraid to go to Egypt. I will give you many descendants and they will become a great nation.

⁴ I will go with you to Egypt. When you die, Joseph will be with you. Then later I will bring your descendants back here.”

⁵ Then Jacob's sons put their father and their little children and their wives on to the wagons that the king of Egypt had sent to Jacob and they left Beersheba ⁶⁻⁷ to go to Egypt. They took their animals and all the things they had got while they were in Canaan. Jacob took with him all his sons and his daughter, his grandsons and his granddaughters.

⁸ Jacob's oldest son Reuben went with him to Egypt ⁹ and his four sons. Their names were Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron and Carmi. ¹⁰ Simeon

and his six sons also went. Their names were Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar and Shaul. Shaul's mother was a Canaanite woman. ¹¹ Levi and his three sons also went. Their names were Gershon, Kohath and Merari. ¹² Judah and his three sons also went. Their names were Shelah, Perez and Zerah. Two of Judah's sons, Er and Onan, had already died in Canaan. The two sons of Perez, Hezron and Hamul, also went to Egypt. ¹³ Issachar and his four sons also went. Their names were Tola, Puah, Jashub and Shimron. ¹⁴ Zebulun and his three sons also went. Their names were Sered, Elon and Jahleel. ¹⁵ Leah had these six sons of Jacob's while he was in Mesopotamia. Jacob and Leah's daughter Dinah was also born there. All Leah's sons, her grandsons, her great-grandsons and her daughter Dinah were 33 people altogether.

¹⁶ Gad and his seven sons also went to Egypt. Their names were Zephon, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arod and Areli. ¹⁷ Asher and his four sons and their sister Serah also went. His sons' names were Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi and Beriah. Beriah's two sons Heber and Malchiel also went. ¹⁸ Zilpah's two sons, her grandsons, her great-grandsons and her granddaughter were 16 people altogether. Zilpah was the servant that Leah's father Laban gave to Leah.

¹⁹ Jacob's wife Rachel had two sons, Joseph and Benjamin. ²⁰ While Joseph was in Egypt, his wife Asenath had two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. Asenath's father was Potiphara, and he was a priest for the Egyptian people in Heliopolis. ²¹ Benjamin's ten sons went to Egypt with him.

Their names were Bela, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim and Ard.
²² Rachel's two sons and her grandsons were fourteen people altogether.

²³ Dan and his son Hushim also went to Egypt.

²⁴ Naphtali and his four sons also went. Their names were Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer and Shillem.

²⁵ So Bilhah's sons and her grandsons were seven people altogether. Bilhah was the servant that Rachel's father Laban gave to Rachel.

²⁶ All Jacob's descendants who went to Egypt were 66 people, and his sons' wives also went.

²⁷ Before Jacob and his family went there, Joseph had two sons. So at the time when Jacob was living in Egypt as an old man, he and his family who were living there were 70 people altogether.

About Jacob and his family settling in Egypt

²⁸ So Jacob and all his family left Canaan and went to Joseph in Egypt. Jacob sent his son Judah ahead to take a message to Joseph. And so Judah went.

When he arrived in Egypt Judah went on further to Joseph. He said to him, "My father is coming, so go to Goshen so that you can meet each other there."

Jacob and the others kept on going and also arrived in Egypt and went to Goshen. ²⁹ And Joseph got in his carriage and went to Goshen to meet his father.

When Joseph arrived where his family was, he jumped down from his carriage and ran and

hugged his father and cried. He cried and cried until at last he could stop crying.

³⁰ Jacob said to him, “Now that I have seen you with my own eyes and I know that you are still alive, I am ready to die.”

³¹ Then Joseph said to his father and his brothers and the rest of his father's family who had come with him, “I must go to the king and tell him that my family has come to me from Canaan today. ³² I will say to him, ‘My brothers have brought all their sheep and cattle here from Canaan, so that they can look after them here. They are shepherds. And they have brought all their things here with them.’

³³ “When the king calls for you and asks what work you do, ³⁴ tell him that, and say, ‘Our ancestors always looked after sheep and cattle and we do the same. We looked after them while we were children and we are still looking after them today.’ When he hears that, he won't refuse, he will let you stay in this whole area of Goshen where you are now.” Joseph said this because he knew that the Egyptian people don't like that kind of work or the shepherds who do that work.

47

¹ Joseph took five of his brothers and they went to where the king was. When they arrived there, Joseph said to the king, “My father and my brothers have come here from Canaan. They have brought their sheep and cattle and all that they own. They are over in Goshen. ² But I have

brought some of my brothers here with me to meet you.”

³ The king said to them, “What work do you do?”

They answered, “We are shepherds just as our ancestors were. ⁴ We have come to live in this country, because there is very little food in Canaan, and there is no grass for our sheep and cattle. Please give us permission to live in Goshen.”

⁵ The king said to Joseph, “Now that your father and your brothers have arrived, ⁶ the land of Egypt is theirs. Let them settle in Goshen, the best part of Egypt. And if there are any good workers among them, let them look after my sheep and cattle.”

⁷ Then Joseph went back to his father and brought him to the king. Jacob came up to the king and said, “May God bless you.”

⁸ The king asked him, “How old are you?”

⁹ Jacob answered, “I have been wandering for 130 years until now. But those years have been hard and few. I have not lived like my ancestors. They lived good, long years as they wandered from place to place.”

¹⁰ Before Jacob left the king, he said again, “May God bless you,” and then he went away.

¹¹⁻¹² Then Joseph gave his father and his brothers the best place to live in, as the king had told him. It was near the city called Rameses. He also gave food to his father, his brothers and to all the rest of his family, from the oldest to the

youngest. He helped his family there in Egypt so that they could settle down.

About there being very little food

¹³ There was no food because those years were so bad. All the people in Egypt and Canaan were hungry and very weak. ¹⁴ They came from everywhere to Joseph to buy food. Joseph gave them the food that the Egyptians had put in the storehouses before, when there was plenty of food in Egypt, and he took their money to the palace.

¹⁵ This went on for some time until all the money in Egypt and Canaan was spent. Then the Egyptians came to Joseph and asked for food. "Please give us food," they said. "Don't let us starve to death. Our money is all gone, so you must help us."

¹⁶ Joseph said to them, "Bring your horses and sheep and other animals here to me. Because you haven't any money, give them to me so that I can give you food." ¹⁷ So they brought their animals to him and he gave them food. That year he gave them food and they gave him their horses and sheep and goats and cattle and donkeys.

¹⁸ The next year the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, "Our money is all gone, and all our animals are yours now. We can't hide this and we are telling the truth. We have nothing left to give you. There are only our bodies and our land. ¹⁹ But please help us and don't let us die. And don't let our land lie empty. Buy us and our

land and then you can give us food today. We will be the king's workers and all our land will belong to him too. Give us food now so we won't die. And give us seeds so we can grow food, so the land won't stay empty any longer.”

²⁰ So Joseph bought all the land in Egypt for the king. But those years were still bad, and one by one the Egyptian people gave their land to the king, until it all belonged to him. ²¹ Joseph bought all the Egyptian people and they all became the king's workers. ²² The only land he did not buy was the land that belonged to the priests. They did not have to give their land because the king gave them money to buy food, but he didn't give money to anyone else.

²³ Joseph said to the Egyptians, “Look, I have bought you and your land for the king. Here are seeds for you to plant. ²⁴ Later on when the plants have grown and you cut them down you must give some to the king. If you have five bags of food you will give one to him. The rest will be for you and your families to eat and for seed to plant later.”

²⁵ They answered, “You have saved our lives and you have been good to us. So we will be the king's workers.”

²⁶ So Joseph made a law for all the people of Egypt about their land. He said, “Every year when you collect the food you have grown, you must give some to the king. If you have five bags of food, you must give him one, and if you have ten bags you must give him two. You must do

that every year.” This is still the law today. All the land of Egypt belongs to the king, except the land of the priests.

About Jacob giving his last words to Joseph

²⁷ The Israelite people lived in Egypt in the part called Goshen. There they became rich with food and animals and other things. And they had many children. ²⁸ And Jacob lived in Egypt for 17 years. But he was now an old man, 147 years old. ²⁹ When it was nearly time for him to die he called for his son Joseph and he came to him.

Jacob said to him, “Put your hand between my legs, so that you can make this promise and you won't change it. Tell me that you will not bury me here in Egypt. ³⁰ I want you to bury me where my father and grandfather are buried. So carry me there to Canaan.”

Joseph answered, “Yes, I will do as you say.”

³¹ Jacob said, “Promise me and don't change it.”

Joseph put his hand between his father's legs and said, “I am making this promise. When you die, I will take you to Canaan and bury you there.”

When Jacob heard his son say that, he thanked God, there where he lay on his bed.

48

About Jacob giving his special blessing to Ephraim and Manasseh

¹ Some time later Joseph was told that his father was sick. So he took his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, and they went to visit

Jacob. ² When they arrived someone told Jacob that his son had come to see him. The old man was very weak now, but he sat up on his bed when he saw his son Joseph.

³ Jacob said to him, “Long ago the God who is most powerful came and appeared to me while I was in Canaan. He spoke to me at Luz and blessed me. ⁴ He said, ‘I will give you many children, so that your descendants will become many nations. I will give this country to your descendants to be theirs forever.’” Today the place Luz is called Bethel.

⁵ Jacob also said, “Your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, belong to me. They were born in Egypt before I came here but they are like my two sons Reuben and Simeon. ⁶ If you have any more sons, they won't belong to me. Only Ephraim and Manasseh are mine. So when I die those two will get some of my things, but any children you have afterwards won't get anything. They will only get something if Ephraim and Manasseh give it to them later.

⁷ “I am doing this because your mother Rachel was my favourite wife. When she died long ago I was very upset. She died near Ephrath in Canaan as I was coming back from Mesopotamia. I buried her there beside the road to Ephrath.” That place was called Ephrath at first, but today it is called Bethlehem.

⁸ When Jacob saw Ephraim and Manasseh, he said to Joseph, “Who are these boys?”

⁹ Joseph answered, “These are the sons God has given me here in Egypt.”

Jacob said, "Bring them here to me so I can give them my special blessing." ¹⁰ Jacob's eyes were weak and he couldn't see well because he was old. Joseph brought the boys to him and he hugged them and kissed them.

¹¹ Jacob said to Joseph, "I thought I would never see you again. But God has even let me see your children."

¹² Then Joseph took them from Jacob and bowed down to him with his face to the ground.

¹³ Then he said to his sons, "Ephraim, go and kneel at his left side, and Manasseh go and kneel at his right." They went over and knelt on each side of the old man. ¹⁴ But Jacob stretched out his hands and crossed them over and put his right hand on Ephraim's head, even though he was younger, and he put his left hand on the head of Manasseh, who was the older brother.

¹⁵ Then he gave his special blessing to Joseph and said,

"My grandfather Abraham and my father Isaac obeyed God,

the one who has looked after me from when
I was little until now when I am an old
man.

May this same God bless these two boys.

¹⁶ God's angel has stood between me and trouble,
so may he bless them.

May my name live on with these two boys,
and may my grandfather's name and my
father's name live on with them too.

May they have many children and many descen-
dants."

¹⁷ Joseph was upset when his father crossed his right hand over on to Ephraim's head. So he took his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. ¹⁸ He said to his father, "Not that way. This is the older one. Put your right hand on him."

¹⁹ But his father refused. "I know," he said. "Manasseh will also have many descendants. But his brother will be more important, and his descendants will become great nations."

²⁰ Jacob gave the two boys another blessing and said,

"When the Israelite people bless each other they will use your names. They will say,
'May God bless you today, just as he blessed Ephraim and Manasseh long ago.'"

When Jacob said that, he was putting Ephraim before Manasseh.

²¹ Then Jacob said to Joseph, "You can see that I am going to die soon. But God will be with you and he will take you back to the country where your ancestors used to live. ²² I am giving you the hill country of Shechem. I am not giving that good country to your brothers, I am giving it you. Long ago I took it from the Amorite people when I fought them, and now it is yours."

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About Jacob giving his special blessing to his sons

¹ Then Jacob called for his sons and said to them, "Come here, and gather around close to me so that I can speak to you. I will tell you

what will happen to you and your children and all your descendants in the future.”

² The old man had two names. One was Jacob, but God had given him another important name, Israel. He said to his sons,

“Come together and listen to me.

Listen to your father Israel.”

Then he spoke his last words to them one by one, before he died. ³ First he said to Reuben,

“Reuben, you are my firstborn son.

When you were born, people knew that I was a strong man.

And you are stronger than your brothers today.

⁴ But you did a very bad thing to me, because you slept with my servant.

You didn't respect me, your father.

You are like rain that none of us can control, because no one can control you.

So, because of the wrong you did, you will no longer be greater than your brothers, you will always be less important.”

⁵ Then Jacob spoke to his sons Simeon and Levi and said,

“Simeon and Levi, you have the same mother.

But you both have swords to fight hard.

⁶ I won't go with you when you talk together secretly.

I won't go to your meetings,

because you killed men when you were angry,

and you crippled some bullocks for fun.

⁷ Trouble will happen for you,

because you still want to fight and you are still angry.

You are both cruel men.

So I will spread out your people among all the Israelite people.”

⁸ Then Jacob spoke to his son Judah.

“Judah,” he said, “your brothers will praise you.

They will come and bow down to you, because you are strong.

You will grab the people who hate you.

You will hold them by the neck.

⁹ You are like a lion.

It kills wild animals and comes back to its cave.

It stretches out its legs and goes to sleep.

We can't wake it up, because it is too dangerous.

¹⁰ Judah, you will be a ruler later.

Your descendants will be rulers too.

They will rule until the king comes here.

People from other countries will come to him,

bringing many things for him.

And they will bow down to him, because they will know he is very great.

¹¹ You will be like someone with lots of good grapevines.

His vines grow big and he ties his young donkey to the best one.

He has so much wine he can wash his clothes in it.

¹² His eyes are no longer clear because he has been drinking wine.

And his teeth are white from drinking milk.”

¹³ Then Jacob spoke to his son Zebulun and said,

“Zebulun, you will live beside the sea.

Your country will reach right over to Sidon.
Ships will come into its bays.”

14 Then Jacob spoke to his son Issachar and said,

“Issachar, you are like a donkey that doesn't want
to work.

It lies down between two bags,

because it doesn't want to carry them on its
back.

15 But it will get up and carry the bags on its back,
because it is a good place.

And like the donkey you will also work for other
people.”

16 Then Jacob spoke to his son Dan and said,
“Dan, you will be a judge, deciding if your people
are good or bad.

But your people are also Israelite people.

17 But you will be waiting on the road,
just like a snake that hides in the grass
and bites the horse's heel,
so that if anyone is riding on the horse he
will fall on his back to the ground.”

18 Then Jacob spoke to God and said,
“I am waiting for you to help me, Yahweh, and
keep me safe from trouble.”

19 Then Jacob spoke to his son Gad and said,
“Thieves will fight you,
but you will drive them away.”

20 Then Jacob spoke to his son Asher and said,
“Asher, your land will produce good food.
It will be so good that a king will eat it.”

21 Then Jacob spoke to his son Naphtali and
said,

“Naphtali, you will be like a deer that runs
wherever it likes,
and has lovely baby deer.”

²² And then Jacob spoke to his son Joseph. He
said,

“Joseph, you will be like a good tree that stands
by a spring of water,
and gives good shade and produces lots of
fruit.

²³ Your enemies hated you,
and kept coming to fight you with spears.

²⁴ They ran after you with their spears, but your
hands didn't shake,
so you were stronger than they were.

You were strong because my God helped you to
fight.

My God is very powerful,
and he has made me strong,
and he has looked after me.

²⁵ It is my God who helps you to fight.

It is my God who is very powerful
and he is blessing you.

He gives you rain from above
and water from under the ground.

He gives you many cattle and children.

²⁶ He gives you plenty of different kinds of food
to eat and beautiful flowers to look at.

He gives you good things from the mountains.

I am asking God to give all these good things to
you, my son.

You are the one he has chosen and he has made
you different from your brothers.”

²⁷ Then Jacob spoke to his youngest son Ben-
jamin and said,

“You are like a dangerous wild dog.
It kills other animals and eats them.
You go in the morning to fight and you kill people
and you grab their things.
And when the sun sets you and your people
share those things.”

²⁸ These are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father Jacob said, as he spoke different words of blessing to each one.

About Jacob dying

²⁹⁻³⁰ Then Jacob told his sons what they were to do. “I am going to die soon,” he said. “I will go to my father's people and you must bury me with them. You must put my body in the cave at Machpelah near Mamre in Canaan. You know the cave that is on the land that belonged to Ephron the Hittite. Abraham bought the land and the cave so that he could put his dead people in the cave. ³¹ They put Abraham and his wife Sarah in it and later they put Isaac and his wife Rebecca there too. And I buried Leah there. ³² So put me too in the cave that Abraham bought.” ³³ When Jacob had finished speaking to his sons, he lay down and took his last breath and died.

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¹ When Joseph saw that his father had died, he threw himself on him and kissed him and cried loudly. ² Then he said to his servants, “Get sweet-smelling oil and powder and put them on my father's body.”

They got them and put them on Jacob's body. ³ They did the same every day and the Egyptians

kept on being sad about him all the time. At the end of forty days the servants finished, but the Egyptians went on being sad for another month.

⁴ When the time for crying was finished, Joseph said to the king's officers, "Please take this message to the king for me and tell him, ⁵ 'Before my father died he said to me, I am going to die soon. Take my body to Canaan and bury me in my father's cave that is there already. Keep my word and don't forget. So please let me go and take my father to the cave, and then I will come back again.' "

⁶ They took Joseph's message to the king, and the king answered, "Take your father to the cave as he told you."

⁷ So Joseph took his father's body to the cave in Canaan. All the king's officers and all the leading men of Egypt went with him. ⁸ Joseph's two sons and their wives and children and Joseph's brothers and their families went too. All the bigger children went and only the little ones stayed in Goshen, with the sheep, goats and cattle. ⁹ Some men rode on horses and some went in carriages pulled by horses. A big crowd of people all went with him to Canaan.

¹⁰ They went a long way until they reached a place called Atad that was east of the Jordan River. The people there were working to get the wheat seeds off the stems for their food. Joseph and the people who were with him stopped there and cried loudly for a long time. It was part of their ceremony and they stayed there seven days.

¹¹ When the Canaanite people saw Joseph and the others crying at Atad, they said, “Those Egyptians are holding a big death ceremony.” They called the place Abel Mizraim, because that name means “the Egyptians cried.”

¹² Then Joseph and the people who were with him left that place and went on. They crossed the Jordan River and travelled on in Canaan until they reached Machpelah.

There at Machpelah Jacob's sons did everything their father had told them while he was still alive. ¹³ They put his body in the cave near Mamre. First of all the cave had belonged to Ephron the Hittite. Long ago Abraham had bought Ephron's land and the cave that was in it so that they could bury the bodies of his family in it when they died. ¹⁴ After Joseph had buried his father there, he went back to Egypt with his brothers and with all the people who had gone with him.

About Joseph speaking kindly to his brothers

¹⁵ After their father had died, Joseph's brothers said, “Maybe Joseph still hates us. Maybe he has decided to do something bad to us, because of what we did to him first. What shall we do?”

¹⁶ So they sent a message to Joseph and said, “Before our father died, ¹⁷ he told us to ask you to forgive us for the wrong we did to you. We are the servants of our father's God. So please forgive us now.” When Joseph heard that he cried.

18 Then the brothers came themselves to Joseph and bowed down to him. “We are your workers,” they said.

19 But Joseph said to them, “Don't be afraid. I am not like God. 20 Long ago you planned evil against me, but God changed that evil into good, so that he could save many people. Look, they are alive today because of what happened long ago. 21 Don't be afraid, because I will look after you and your children.” So with those kind words Joseph encouraged his brothers and they stopped worrying.

About Joseph dying

22 Joseph kept on living in Egypt with all his family until he was an old man, 110 years old. 23 While he was still alive he saw Ephraim's children and grandchildren. He also saw the children of his grandson Machir. Machir's father was Manasseh, Joseph's older son.

24 Before he died, Joseph spoke to his brothers. He said, “I am going to die, but God will look after you. He will take you away from here to the place he told Abraham about before. He promised that place to Abraham and to Isaac and to Jacob.”

25 Then Joseph said to his brothers, “I want you to promise me today that when God takes you to that country you will take my body with you.” And they promised Joseph that they would do it.

26 So Joseph died there in Egypt. He had lived 110 years. His family put sweet-smelling oil and powder on his body and put it in a special box.

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