

JOSEPH – FROM A SLAVE TO A PRIME MINISTER

CONTENTS

1. A rich family's spoiled brat
2. At slave's work in Egypt
3. In jail
4. From a jailbird to a Prime Minister
5. The guilt of two decades
6. Prime Minister's tears
7. Brothers are put to a test
8. The great reconciliation
9. The family arrives in Egypt
10. Father's blessing
11. The everlasting home country

1. A RICH FAMILY'S SPOILED BRAT

Gen 37:1-28

BACKGROUND: Joseph had been born in a family that consisted of 'your children, my children and our children'. His father had four wives. His real mother had died in childbirth, when Joseph was under 10 years of age. Joseph had only one whole brother – Benjamin – who was much younger than he.

1-4

Note that pigments were expensive in those days. Joseph wore his fine robe also in working days, so that his brothers had to see it all the time (23). Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah were Joseph's stepmothers.

- Why do you think Joseph told his father about the brothers' doings?
- When or in which situation do you think one should tell about his/her siblings doings to their parents? (verse 2)
- Think about Jacob's motives: why did he give such a fine robe only to Joseph and not to all of his sons?
- Do you think it is possible to love all one's children equally or at least not to show it, if you are favoring one child in your heart over the others? (4)
- Think silently in your minds about your own family: why does hatred and quarrel between family members arise?

5-11

Joseph would have to go through a tough youth. He would not have the same kind of Bible for his use as we do. That is why God spoke to him in his dream.

- Why did God want to give the young Joseph especially that kind of dreams?
- Why didn't Joseph keep his dreams to himself but instead told them to his family?
- What does it tell us about Joseph that he didn't try to interpret his dreams himself?

- How can we know, if a dream we have dreamt, has a special message?

12-17

Look at the map the distances between Hebron – Shechem and Shechem – Dothan.

- Count how many days Joseph’s journey would take.
- How did Jacob dare to send his 17-year old boy alone to such a journey?
- What does this part reveal us about Joseph’s character?

18-22

The brothers recognized Joseph by his colorful robe already from far away.

- How is it possible that the brothers didn’t think or care about the pain they would inevitably cause to their old father?
- What do you think: what should the eldest brother Reuben have done or said in that situation?

23-28

The brothers ate with a good appetite the meal Joseph had brought with him while Joseph himself was sitting at the bottom of a deep, dark and cold cistern. Apparently Reuben had gone to check that the passing caravan would not steal their sheep. The brothers still remembered even after 20 years the pain of Joseph’s soul that he openly showed in this situation. (42:21*)

- What was the idea behind stripping him of his robe (23)?
- What does it tell about the brothers that they were able to eat their meal while at the same time their little brother was crying out for help at the bottom of a cistern?
- What made Judah suggest such a horrible destiny for his own brother? (26-27)
- What kind of thoughts were probably going around in Joseph’s mind when he saw his brothers bargaining with the Midianite merchants?
- In which way did this 17 years old young man perhaps show ‘his soul’s pain’ to his big brothers?

Summarizing questions

- Compare the injustice that has been done to you by your family and relatives with the injustice that was done to Joseph.
- Why does God let such things happen to His child?
- In how many cases in this chapter Joseph is Jesus’ prefigure?

IN CONCLUSION: Also Jesus was the Father’s beloved Son whom the other sons did not accept (Joh 1). Also he wore the robe of righteousness given by his Father that his brothers stripped of him. Also he was caught and sold to Gentiles. (Phil 2) He took the nature of a servant.

AT SLAVE’S WORK IN EGYPT Gen 39

BACKGROUND: It was the 19th – 18th century BC and the time of the Middle Kingdom in Egypt. The capital was situated in Memphis in those days (Take a look at the map.) The Commander of the imperial guard was a very highly esteemed courtier, who was responsible for the safety of the Pharaoh.

1-6a Read verse 2 and look at the map Joseph’s journey from Dothan to Memphis.

- If a camel can travel 25 km a day, how long did Joseph's journey take?
- How long do you think it took before Joseph got over the shock that the sudden change of life caused him?
- Do you think it is possible for a man to get over that kind of destiny without bitterness? Why – why not?
- Imagine how the selling of Joseph at the market of Memphis took place.
- Which traits of Joseph's character probably made the highly esteemed slaves buyer to pay attention to him?
- What kind of work did Joseph probably have to do in the beginning of his career as a slave?
- What prevented Joseph from totally giving up all hope and trying?
- How long do you think it took for this 17-year old orphan boy before he could master the language of Egypt?
- In which way Joseph was probably tested before he was given more responsibility?
- If Joseph had been full of bitterness, how would it have appeared in his life?
- How did Joseph know that the Lord was with him?
- How did others know that the Lord was with Joseph?
- How is it possible that twenty year old Joseph was ranked higher in the order of precedence than those who were born in the house and those who were twice his age?

6b-10

Joseph was at that age, when the hormones are spinning around inside and he was not able to arrange himself a wife. That is why in many courts those days the male servants were castrated, so that no secret relationships could develop between them and their mistress. In Potiphar's house castration had not been done, but the master had clearly told the slaves not to touch his wife (9).

- What kind of a marriage Joseph was probably dreaming of in his mind?
- What do you think about a woman who makes such a suggestion to her young slave (7, 10)?
- What kind of feelings does a man's "no" usually raise in a woman's heart?
- In which ways did Mrs. Potiphar probably try to break Joseph's self-control?
- Which option is more likely in your opinion: a) Mrs Potiphar had really honestly fallen in love with Joseph or b) Mrs Potiphar had already previously had relationships with her slaves?
- If Joseph had started a sexual relationship with his mistress how could he have defended himself in front of his own conscience?
- Read carefully Joseph's answer in verses 8-9. What was the thing that kept this young man from taking sexual pleasure where he could have had it?
- How can we resist sexual temptations like Joseph did? (You can also answer silently in your mind.)

11-20

- Why did Mrs. Potiphar refuse to give up (11-12)?
- Would there have been some other way in which Joseph might have found himself out of the painful situation (other than escape)? If yes, then which way?
- Do you think Mrs. Potiphar considered the consequences of her actions when deciding to take revenge on Joseph (13-14)? Give reasons for your answer.
- Who do you think the other slaves believed: the mistress or Joseph? Give reasons for your answer.
- What inconsistencies does Mrs. Potiphar's story contain (17-18)?
- Potiphar knew that Joseph had always been an honest man. Why didn't he believe Joseph's word in this situation?
- Why does the world usually believe a woman's word rather than a man's word, when it is a question of sexual harassment?
- What did Joseph probably think about God in that moment, when he was thrown to prison?

- Why was Joseph put in the nobility's prison and not in the slaves' prison?

Summarizing question:

- In which way does Joseph's destiny remind Jesus' destiny?

IN CONCLUSION: Both Joseph and Jesus overcame the temptations of the devil, but they both were being punished as if they had failed to stand their temptations.

3. IN JAIL
Gen 39:21-40:23

39:21-23

Read these verses. Note that all the prisoners in that prison were educated men (so called "political prisoners". Joseph himself was about 24 years of age when he was put in prison.

- In which ways Joseph could have reacted to the fact that he was put in prison without a trial or any possibility to appeal his judgment?
- What does it show about Joseph that even after this he did not give up?
- In which ways the Lord was with Joseph in prison (23)?
- What things did Joseph learn when doing the tasks of a trusted prisoner that were of use for him in the future?

40:1-8

Later we find out that this happened two years before Joseph's release when he was 28 years of age. Joseph had been 11 years in Egypt by that time.

- Compare verse 3 with 39:1. What extra flavor did it cause to Joseph's imprisonment that the prison was situated in Potiphar's yard?
- What new sides of Joseph's character and abilities does this chapter reveal us?
- What do you think about verse 8?

9-15

These verses describe how a fierce hope of release was born in Joseph's heart.

- Did Joseph reason the interpretation of the cupbearer's dream or did he receive a divine revelation for it? Give reasons to your answer.
- Why doesn't Joseph mention his brothers or Mrs Potiphar when telling about his life (15)?
- What kind of future Joseph probably wished for himself at this point?

16-23

- What would have happened, if Joseph had colored or improved on the interpretation of the baker's dream (instead of telling it as it was)?
- Do you think that the situation described in verse 23 tempted Joseph to unbelief and despair? Give reasons for your answer.
- How would Joseph have behaved, if he had lost all his faith in God and His help?
- Why didn't God reveal Joseph in his dream that his imprisonment would last only two more years (41:1)?
- What would happen, if God revealed us how long our suffering will last?
- What kind of things Joseph was protected from while spending the years of his youth in prison?

- What kind of things did Joseph learn in slavery and imprisonment that he would never have learned in his father's house?
- Compare your own youth with Joseph's youth. Which one of you has had a better position in life?

Summarizing question:

- Where can you find Jesus in this chapter?

IN CONCLUSION: Verses 13 and 19 reveal us the two different meanings that the word "exaltation" have in the Bible and in Jesus' life. Jesus was first exalted to the cross, then to the right hand of the Father. *"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."* (John 3:14-15)

4. FROM A JAILBIRD TO A PRIMEMINISTER
Gen 41

BACKGROUND: Dreams and their interpreters were highly esteemed in ancient Egypt. The shepherds instead were not appreciated in this agricultural culture. Joseph was now 30 years of age and he didn't try to hide the fact that he was a Hebrew shepherd by birth.

1-14

- What were Joseph's two last years in prison probably like?
- What was so shocking about Pharaoh's dreams that brought him so out of his mind?
- How long did it probably take for Joseph to get washed, dressed and barbered before he could be brought to the impatiently waiting Pharaoh?
- What kind of feelings and thoughts were probably tossing around in Joseph's mind?

15-36

The melting of snow in the mountains of Ethiopia made the river Nile flood regularly every year which caused Egypt to suffer from famines very often.

- Compare the two versions of Pharaoh's dreams with each other. Why wasn't one version enough to give the necessary information?
- Imagine how Joseph looked like when standing in front of the Pharaoh's throne. In which way was he probably different from the Egypt's wise men that were crowding around the Pharaoh (24)?
- How would Joseph have spoken, if he had wanted to gain Pharaoh's favor?
- What do Joseph's words in verse 16 show about him and his faith?
- What had retained Joseph's self-esteem during those thirteen long years of slavery and imprisonment?
- A fifth of the harvest in the years of abundance was to be stored up for bad days. Where did Joseph suddenly get that figure "a fifth" from?
- Which other things testify of Joseph's intelligence?

37-46

The taming of horses was something new and it had begun only recently. Therefore the horses were as highly valued as an expensive luxury car today.

- Egypt had hundreds of gods. Why is it that the Pharaoh didn't mention any of them by name in this situation (38-39)?

- Which things made the Pharaoh take the risk and leave his whole kingdom to the hands of a totally unknown foreigner?
- What prevented Joseph from becoming too proud of the honor he had received for himself?
- What does it show about Joseph that he married the wife that the Pharaoh chose for him (45)?
- What does it show about Joseph that he never looked for another wife for himself?
- Asenath was the daughter of a priest, from a place that the Greeks call Heliopolis today. (Take a look at the map). What things changed in Asenath's life after she became Joseph's wife (45)?
- What kind of Prime Minister Joseph could have become, if he had ascended to power right after leaving his father's tent, without slavery and imprisonment?
- What was Potiphar's and his wife's reaction towards the new Prime Minister probably like?

47-57

The grain is kept preserved well in Egypt, because the air there is dry. Through the names of the sons we get to have a glimpse straight into Joseph's heart.

- When did Joseph realize that all the tragedies in his life were part of God's plan for his life after all?
- What does the name Manasseh show us about his father's life (51)? (Do you think this verse means that Joseph had really forgotten his father and his home? Give reasons for your answer.)
- What does the name Ephraim tell us about his father's walk in faith (52)?
- If you think back about your life, which verse describes it better: 51 or 52?

Summarizing question:

- Where can you find Jesus in this chapter?

5. THE GUILT OF TWO DECADES

Gen 42: 1-28

BACKGROUND: Joseph had been lost $13 + 7 + 1 = 21$ years and he was now 38 years old. His brothers were 40 – 50 years of age, except for Benjamin, who was still under thirty. The big brothers were married and had children.

1-4

- Do you think that the brothers sometimes talked about Joseph's destiny with each other? Why, why not? (1-2 and 21)
- In which ways did the secret about Joseph's destiny affect the life of Jacob's clan?
- How had the father probably raised his youngest son, Joseph's whole brother (4)?

5-12

- How is it possible that the brothers didn't recognize Joseph?
- What kind of thoughts were probably going around in Joseph's mind at that moment? (Do you think Joseph still felt the desire for revenge?)
- Suddenly Joseph remembered all the dreams he had seen in his childhood. How did they affect him (9-12)?
- Why did Joseph begin to call his brothers spies instead of revealing them who he was?
- What would you do, if the person who has hurt you the most, suddenly were at your mercy?

13-20

Note that each of the brothers had a wife and children in the land of Canaan and they would starve to death, if the brothers wouldn't soon get back home.

- What did Joseph first demand of his brothers (13-17)?
- What does it show about Joseph's brothers that none of them wanted to fetch Benjamin from the land of Canaan?
- What did Joseph want to achieve by putting his brother in prison?
- What made Joseph change his mind and let his brother out of the prison (18-19)?
- Why did Joseph ask the brothers to bring him especially Benjamin and not for instance their father (20)?
- What kind of things does this chapter reveal us about Joseph's faith?

21-28

- Look at the verses 21-22 and 28. What do you think: which one has lived a happier life since their last encounter; Joseph or his brothers? Why?
- How does a bad conscience affect a man's everyday life and his relationships?
- What do you do, if your conscience is blaming you? (You can answer this question also silently.)
- What does it show about Joseph that he still was able to cry in that situation (23-24a)?
- Why did Joseph cry?
- What was probably the hardest thing for Simeon when he had to stay alone in the Egyptian prison (24b)?
- Why did Joseph want to return his brothers the price of the grain (27-28 and 35)?

Summarizing question:

- Where can you find Jesus in this chapter?

6. PRIME MINISTER'S TEARS Gen 43:1-34

BACKGROUND: The situation in the beginning of this chapter is following: Simeon has been left in the Egyptian jail and will not be released before Benjamin is taken to the angry Prime Minister. Simeon's wife and children are waiting for their father to come back home. Meanwhile all the food has been eaten in the camp and Jacob's grandchildren are looking at their grandfather with big eyes and pale faces.

1-7

- Didn't Joseph understand in what kind of a difficult situation he would put his father or didn't he care?

8-14

- Judah had once suggested the selling of Joseph. What could have been his motive when he made the promise mentioned in verses 8-10 to his father?
- What made Jacob to change his mind and let Benjamin go?
- Were the words of old Jacob in verses 11-14 expression of faith or unbelief? Give reasons for your opinion.
- Jacob was not allowed to keep the dearest person on earth close to himself. Why did God want to test an old man by taking away the most precious thing from him?
- Why does God sometimes test also us in the same way – by taking away the most precious thing from us?

- What good did the separation probably do to Jacob's and Benjamin's relationship?

15-24

Note that Joseph's servants didn't understand the language the brothers were speaking. They always had to use an interpreter. Read also verse 42:25.

- What does it tell us that Joseph's steward used such a name of God (23)?
- How did Joseph's steward know which and what kind of God these men and their father believed in?
- What did the brothers realize when they saw Simeon (23b)?
- Why are all these details written in the Bible?

25-34

Read verse 32. We know on the basis of the secular history that Egyptian farmers despised the nomads calling them "the desert's trampers".

- Why did Joseph want to eat together with his brothers?
- What does Joseph's first question show us about him (27-28)?
- What kind of thoughts went through Joseph's mind when he saw his little brother Benjamin after 20 years of separation?
- Why did Joseph cry (29-39)?
- What do you think the steward and servants were thinking about their master's crying?
- Do you think Joseph was ashamed of his crying like men usually are? Give reasons for your answer.
- Verse 32 reveals that Joseph had never eaten at the same table with the Egyptians even though he was the second man of the state. Why hadn't Joseph tried to conceal his nomadic origin and strive to become an Egyptian citizen?
- What things amazed the brothers when they were sitting at the dining table (33-34)?
- Which explanation is in your opinion more plausible: Did Joseph want to pour his brothers so much alcohol that they would get drunk or did the brothers drink it willingly too much?

Summarizing question:

- Where can you find Jesus in this chapter?
- Look for common characteristics between this meal and the last supper.

7. BROTHERS ARE PUT TO THE TEST

Gen 44: 1 – 45:3

1-10

- What do you think Joseph's steward was thinking about all this mess?
- Why did Joseph choose exactly this way to test his brothers and why the cup had to be put especially in Benjamin's sack?
- What does the brothers' answer show us about them (7-9)?

11-17

The situation was still following: if the brothers were not able to bring the grain quickly back home, their families would starve to death.

- What was probably the worst thing for the brothers when the cup was found in Benjamin's sack after all?
- Do you think some of the brothers doubted Benjamin, even for a second? Give reasons for your answers.
- How did Benjamin himself probably feel about this situation?
- Why didn't the brothers envy Benjamin anymore for the father's favor like they used to envy Joseph?
- What does it show about the brothers that none of them wanted to leave with the load of grain without their little brother (13)?
- What is needed for an adult to get rid of the sibling rivalry?
- What kind of thoughts probably went through the men's minds as they were travelling back to the city (13)?
- What does the words of the verse 16 show us about Judah?
- How can the burden of guilt change a person?
- What do you think: Had the brothers talked to God about their guilt in those 20 years? Give reasons for your answer.

18-24

- What kind of a picture Judah gives of his old father and his relationship to him?
- What does Judah say about his little brothers Joseph and Benjamin and what does he leave unsaid?
- Judah had suggested the selling of Joseph over 20 years earlier. Now he would be ready to stay in Egypt for the rest of his life. What would be the consequences, if Joseph took his suggestion seriously?

45:1-3

- What had Joseph found out about his brothers before he revealed himself to them?
- Why didn't Joseph want the Egyptians to be present in this situation?
- What caused such a massive outburst of feelings in Joseph?
- Try to describe the brothers' feelings in that moment when they heard the Prime Minister of Egypt saying in their own language the words: "I am Joseph!"
- Why did Joseph ask a question to which he already knew the answer (cf.43:27-28)?

Summarizing question:

- Where can you find Jesus in this chapter?

IN CONCLUSION: Jesus, who was born of the tribe of Judah, became voluntarily a slave so that he could buy us free from the slavery of sin, death and devil. Jesus did exactly the exchange that his ancestor Judah in our text suggests.

8. THE GREAT RECONCILIATION Gen 45:4-25

4-8

Joseph had had 22 years to think about the purpose of his suffering and his relationship to his brothers.

- What do you think is most touching in this description?
- What had made Joseph convinced that it was God himself who had sent him to Egypt and not the brothers (5,7,8)?

- What is the difference between these two statements: “God permitted it that Joseph was sold as a slave” or “God sent Joseph to slavery”?
- How would Joseph probably have acted in this situation, if he had taken his misfortune from his brothers’ hand and not from God’s hand?
- How did the brothers feel when they heard Joseph’s words, especially verse 5?
- What should happen so that you could say about the pain that another person has caused you: “It was not he/she, it was God”?

9-15

- What do Joseph’s words tell about his relationship to his old father (9-13)?
- What kind of things Joseph wanted his father to know about him?
- Think about that day from Benjamin’s point of view who hadn’t known anything about the selling of Joseph. How did all this probably affect him (14)?
- What did Joseph probably talk about with each of his brothers (15)?
- In what ways did Joseph try to show his love for his brothers?
- What do these verses teach us about forgiveness?

16-20

You probably remember that in principal the Egyptians didn’t tolerate nomads among them.

- What made the Pharaoh make all these promises?

21-25

Shekel was a measure of weight: 10-16 grams.

- As a child Joseph had received an exceptional robe from his father. Why did he now want to give each of his brothers especially a fine robe and for Benjamin even five robes?
- How many kilos of silver did Benjamin get (22)?
- Do you think the other brothers felt a stitch of jealousy in their hearts when they saw Benjamin getting special treatment? Give reasons for your answer.
- What kind of quarrel Joseph was probably afraid of when he said the words of verse 24?
- How did the brothers’ faith in God change on this journey?

Summarizing question:

- In which ways Joseph is Jesus’ prefigure in this chapter?
- How does Joseph’s behavior resemble the behavior of the Prodigal Son’s father?

IN CONCLUSION: Joseph is Jesus’ prefigure as a forgiving brother. *“For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”* (Hebr 2: 17-18, NIV)

THE FAMILY ARRIVES IN EGYPT Gen 46:31 - 47:31

BACKGROUND: Locate Goshen and Rameses in the map. The Pharaohs called Ramesses ruled Egypt hundreds of years after these events so during Jacob's time that place must have had another name. It's like when we would call Norway's capital in the 19th century Oslo even though its name was Christiania in those days.

46:31-34

- What kind of plan Joseph seems to have had for his family?
- What kind of conflicts Joseph probably tried to avoid here?
- What does verse 34 reveal also about Joseph's own life?

47:1-6

- For which purpose was this encounter arranged?
- The Bible reader gets the picture that Joseph was standing all the time very tensed beside his brothers. What made him so tensed?
- What kind of picture do you get from Pharaoh?
- Do you think the brothers gave a good impression of themselves to the Pharaoh or did he keep his promise only because of Joseph? Give reasons for your answer.
- Do you think the Pharaoh knew what the brothers had done to Joseph? Give reasons for your opinion.

7-10

Imagine the scene when a 130 years old, white haired patriarch enters the throne room, limping and leaning to his stick. (He had a hip problem as a memory of God's blessing.)

- Why did Jacob greet the Pharaoh by blessing him when entering and also when leaving the throne room?
- How do you think the 130 years old Jacob managed the etiquette of the Egyptian court?
- What do you think; how did Jacob see his own life (9)?
- What kind of picture the Pharaoh apparently got of his Prime Minister's father?

11-12

- In which ways the life of Jacob's family was different in Egypt from what it has been in the land of Canaan?
- What was the relationship between Joseph and his brothers probably like from now on?

13-20

- If you had been in Joseph's shoes, how would you have arranged the feeding of the people?
- What would have happened, if the food had been distributed for free?

21-26

From the later history of Egypt we find out that the priesthood indeed was tax free, rich and powerful.

- What tells or implies us that the people regarded the 20 % taxation as moderate and their "land slavery" as tolerable?

27-31

- Why does Jacob talk about his funeral especially to Joseph?

- Why does the place of his grave seem to be extremely important to Jacob (29-31)?
- How are you prepared for your death?

Summarizing question:

- Where can you find Jesus in this chapter?

IN CONCLUSION: Jesus proclaimed Jacob as living almost 2000 years after his death: “*But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.*”(Matt. 22: 31-32)

10. FATHER’S BLESSING
Gen 48 and 49:22-26

BACKGROUND: Joseph’s sons were a bit over 20 years of age. (They were born already before the beginning of the famine). Manasseh and Ephraim had been raised in the Egyptian upper classes: their other grandfather was a priest of the Ra-god.

1-6

Luz is same as Bethel where Jacob had seen the stairs leading to heaven (verse 3). The division of the tribe of Joseph into two parts guaranteed that there would be 12 tribes living in the Promised Land. The Levites were not allowed to possess any land, because the Lord was their inheritance.

- How did Joseph probably feel when he received the message of his father’s illness (1)?
- Why did Joseph want to take his sons with him for the journey (1b-2)?
- What do you think; why did Jacob want to adopt Joseph’s sons (5)?

7-12

At least six decades had passed since Rachel’s, Joseph’s mother’s death.

- Now that Jacob was facing death he wanted to tell Joseph something about his mother. Why?
- What was Joseph’s relationship to his father like now, when he was about to die?
- How did the children probably feel beside their grandfather’s deathbed?
- When they after 400 years left Egypt to go back to Israel, the descendants of Manasseh and Ephraim were among them. How was Joseph able to prevent his sons from becoming Egyptians and gentiles?
- What should we do so that our children would not become gentiles in the midst of the post-Christian culture?

13-20

Manasseh was Joseph’s firstborn, but Jacob gave “his right hand’s blessing” to Ephraim. We see that the tribe of Ephraim became thereafter the biggest tribe in Israel. Jacob was the first person in the Bible who talked about God as a good shepherd (15).

- What was Jacob’s assessment of his father’s and his grandfather’s life (15a)?
- What is Jacob’s final assessment of his own life (15b-16)?
- On what grounds can Jacob say he had been redeemed from every evil (16a); wasn’t then the death of Rachel or the disappearance of Joseph a misfortune after all?

- The words spoken on the deathbed are usually remembered by the family forever. What would you like to say as your last words?

21-22

The word “ridge of land” is Shechem in Hebrew. Jacob had bought the land (the only spot of land he ever owned in his lifetime) in Shechem, but had to give it up because of the massacre his sons had caused there after the rape of their sister.

- God had promised to give Jacob the land of Canaan. What was Jacob thinking now about this promise? Compare the verses 4 and 21.
- How can the inconsistency in verse 22 be explained: did Jacob buy that spot of land or did he took it into his possession by fighting (cf. 33:19)

49:22-26

Jacob blessed all his sons, but here we will deal only with the blessing that Joseph received.

- What did Jacob foresee about Joseph’s and his descendants’ future (22-24)?
- What are the blessings of the skies above and the blessings of the deep springs below? What have they been in your life (25-26)?
- Joseph was a noble man and the prince among his brothers (26b). Why didn’t God make him the forefather of the Messiah, but instead Judah who was nowhere near as good a man as Joseph was.

Summarizing question:

- Where can you find Jesus in this chapter?

IN CONCLUSION: Joseph never saw Shechem with these eyes, but his bones indeed were buried there after 400 years (Joshua 24:32). And there Jesus encountered the Samaritan woman and said to her: ¹³ *Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”* (John 4: 13-14)

11. THE ETERNAL FATHERLAND Gen 50

BACKGROUND: Joseph really got to close his father’s eyes, just like God had promised Jacob. Note that Joseph was not allowed to visit even once the Promised Land after he had been made to leave it as a 17 years old young man.

1-10

The Hebrews were usually not embalmed so an exception was made for Jacob and Joseph. The embalment took usually 70 days, but it could be performed also in a shorter time period, cf. verse 3. Look at the map the distances between Goshen and Abel-mizraim and Abel-mizraim and Hebron.

- What does Joseph’s grief show about him (1)?
- How did the Pharaoh make sure that his Prime Minister would return from his homeland to Egypt?

11-14

In a way Jacob had two burials; first in Abel-mizraim that was west of the Jordan and then in Mamre, in the cave of the field Machpelah. The Egyptian nobles of the court were apparently not allowed to attend the second burial. That tomb still exists in Hebron but it cannot be researched.

- Imagine how Joseph might have felt as he was able to visit the Promised Land one more time. What kind of thoughts might have gone through his head on that journey?

15-21

- What made the brothers fear Joseph's revenge (15)?
- Why didn't the brothers ask for forgiveness in their own name(16-17)?
- Why did Joseph weep (17b)?
- What did Joseph's tears communicate to the brothers?
- What did the brothers mean with their plea in verse 18b?
- What do the verses 19-21 show us about Joseph?
- What if Joseph had answered his brothers: "It's ok" – what would have been the influence of these words?
- Do you think the brothers got finally peace in their hearts after all this? Give reason for your answer.
- What did the brothers learn about mercy by this episode?

22-26

Immortality was an obsession for the Egyptians. The grander the grave and the more it was full of things, the better the eternity they believed. But Joseph didn't believe so.

- Do you think Joseph was allowed to be in a high position in Egypt until his old age? Give reasons for your answer.
- What was Joseph's attitude towards his own death?
- Why didn't Joseph build himself a grand grave with full of treasures as the other nobles of Egypt did?
- The New Testament describes Joseph's faith like this: *By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones.*(Hebr. 11:22*) Why did the writer of the letter to Hebrews regard specifically this request as the greatest evidence of faith in Joseph's life?

Summarizing question:

- How does Joseph appear as Jesus' prefigure in this chapter?
- What is the most important thing you have learned when studying Joseph's life?

IN CONCLUSION: Joseph and other patriarchs didn't believe in the land of Canaan that was promised them but in the everlasting home country behind it: *"All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.* (Hebr. 11:13-16)