Genesis
Part 5

Keeping Your Focus When Your Dreams Are Shattered

A Study on Joseph
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Lessons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lesson One: Genesis 37–39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Lesson Two: Genesis 40–41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Lesson Three: Genesis 42–47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Lesson Four: Genesis 48–50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appendix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Explanations of the New American Standard Bible Text Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Observation Worksheets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td>Abraham’s Sojournings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>Genesis at a Glance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>Journal on God</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HELPFUL STUDY TOOLS

ARTHUR, KAY; ARTHUR, DAVID; DE LACY, PETE
How to Study Your Bible

The New Inductive Study Bible—New American Standard Bible

Word Study Tools

RECOMMENDED COMMENTARIES

WALVOORD, JOHN F.; ZUCK, ROY B., EDs.
The Bible Knowledge Commentary (Old Testament): An Exposition of the Scriptures

KIDNER, DEREK F.
Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Genesis

RECOMMENDED SOFTWARE

Logos Bible Software
Powerful search engines and up to 4,000 electronic Bible study resources (commentaries, lexicons, Bible dictionaries etc.) make it fast and easy to do simple and complex searches of multiple sources, then pull materials together for orderly presentation—excellent for word and topical studies based on English or original Hebrew and Greek. Available at www.logos.com.
LESSON ONE—Genesis 37–39

JEALOUSY

“. . . and so Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs. The patriarchs became jealous of Joseph . . . .”1

PASSION

“‘Your daughter-in-law . . . has played the harlot, and . . . is also with child by harlotry.’ ”2

AND HEARTACHE

There was a man named Joseph . . . a real man, a human being like us who lived nearly 4000 years ago and faced many of the same temptations, trials, and tests that we face. And because of this, there is much we can learn from his story that can help us in the twists and turns of our lives.

Although Joseph is mentioned earlier in the book of Genesis, his story begins in chapter 37. In the Appendix of this book you will find Genesis 37–50 printed as Observation Worksheets.


   a. Mark Joseph in a distinctive color, including pronouns referring to him.

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1Acts 7:8-9
2Genesis 38:24
b. Now look at where you marked Joseph and list what these first four verses tell you about him.

2. We want to be sure you have a good understanding of Joseph’s background.

a. As you observed in Genesis 37:1-3, Joseph’s father is referred to by two names: Jacob and Israel. Jacob is the son of Isaac and the grandson of Abraham. God made covenant promises to Abraham and to Isaac and to their descendants.

In Genesis 28 He also gave the promises to Jacob. Read Genesis 28:13-15 and write down what you learn about God’s promises to Jacob.

b. Genesis 32:22-30 tells us how Jacob obtained his name Israel. Write down what you learn regarding his name being changed, who changed his name, and why he was named this.
c. Read Genesis 35:22b-29, and record

1) How many sons Jacob had

2) Who Jacob’s father was and how old he was when he died.

3) The name of Jacob’s brother.

4) Listed below is the birth order of Jacob’s (Israel’s) sons and their mothers’ names. Find Joseph, underline his name and see who his mother is.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Birth Order of Jacob’s (Israel’s) Sons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mother</strong></td>
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<td>Leah</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilhah (Rachel’s maid)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zilpah (Leah’s maid)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Leah (maid)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
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3. Now let’s see what we can learn about Joseph’s mother, Rachel. Look up the following verses and list any insights you gain regarding Rachel.

a. Genesis 29:16-30
b. Genesis 29:31–30:8

c. Genesis 30:22-24

d. Genesis 35:16-20

4. Has anything you observed helped you understand Jacob’s (Israel’s) partiality toward Joseph and his brothers’ animosity toward him? It will help to write out your insights.

In the times in which we live when there are so many blended families as a result of divorce and remarriage, can you see the relevance of Joseph’s story? Maybe you have been there yourself or find yourself in a similar situation at the moment. It will be interesting, won’t it, to see how all this plays out and what lessons there are to be learned and applied.
DAY TWO

When you study a book of the Bible, you want to slow down enough to develop skills of observation. And since the Bible is God’s Book, you need to ask God to help you see and understand what He has written and preserved for you. So always begin your study with prayer.

Today we are going to read Genesis 37, observing and marking the text so we can see exactly what the text says. Because we are going to walk through this chapter with you step-by-step, the lesson looks long but it’s not. Don’t panic. Simply do what you can. Remember it’s better to learn at least one truth than to miss it all.

1. Read Genesis 37:5-11.
   a. When you observe a chapter, begin with the obvious; look first at people. See what the text says about them. List the main characters in this paragraph.
   
   b. In one or two short sentences summarize what this paragraph is all about.
   
   c. According to the text, how do Joseph’s brothers feel about him? Or to put it another way, what words in the text describe their feelings?
d. Mark every occurrence of *hated* in Genesis 37:3-11. You might want to draw a dark colored heart with a slash through it. Observe who hates who, why, and how this hatred manifests.

e. Now, did you notice any other important word that was repeated several times that helps you understand what the text is all about? Write that word below and then mark it in a distinctive way every time it occurs in Genesis 37:5-11. Also mark any pronouns used in place of this key word.

f. As you observe the text, give special attention to Joseph’s dreams. You will want to see and answer the following. Be brief in your answer.

1) What Joseph dreamed

2) What his brothers understood the dreams to mean

3) What this evoked in Joseph’s brothers

4) What Joseph’s father understood the dream to mean and what he did with this information
   a. When you observe a passage, you want to pay careful attention to any
      mention of geographical references.* So mark them and then trace
      Joseph’s journey on the map in the Appendix, “Abraham’s Sojournings.”
   b. Summarize what occurs in this paragraph in no more than two sentences.
      Just pretend you are telling another person what is covered in this
      paragraph.

   a. Verse 18 opens with “they.” Who are “they”? When you observe the text,
      you want to always check pronouns and make sure you know to whom
      they are referring.
   b. Do you see any key word that you marked previously in Genesis 37:5-11?
      If so, mark it in the same way. Hint: note how Joseph is referred to in
      verse 19.
   c. What do Joseph’s brothers want to do to him? Look for references to this
      and mark them in the same way. This is a key phrase.
   d. Which of the brothers opposes this? Where is he in the birth order?
   e. What does this brother suggest they do with Joseph?
f. Now summarize in a sentence or two what occurs in this paragraph.

4. Let’s move on to Genesis 37:25-28. Read this paragraph and then complete the following:

a. Who are the main characters in this paragraph? List them with a brief description of the role each plays.

b. Mark the key words you marked in the previous paragraph along with references to killing Joseph. Also don’t forget to mark geographical locations.

c. Once again in a sentence or two summarize what occurs in this paragraph.

5. Finally read Genesis 37:29-36.

a. Did you notice how often Joseph’s tunic is mentioned? In light of this repetition you may want to go back and mark it as a key word throughout the chapter. Then you can trace the saga of the varicolored tunic. Some believe that the Hebrew word indicates it was a full-length robe.

The various references can give you an idea of what this tunic meant to Jacob. List your observations below.
b. Mark key words; watch for geographical references.

c. Note below any expressions of emotion.

d. Now summarize the content of this paragraph in one or two sentences.

e. Finally, at the beginning of your Observation Worksheet record where Joseph is as the chapter opens and then at the end of your worksheet record where Joseph is as the chapter closes. Also note Jacob’s status in the beginning of the chapter and when the chapter ends.

6. Now stop and think about Genesis 37. Record the main theme of this chapter on the line for chapter 37 on the “Genesis at a Glance” chart in the Appendix.

If you will do this after you finish studying each chapter, from chapter 37 through chapter 50, then when you complete your study you will have a handy summary of this portion of the book of Genesis.

7. This record of Joseph not only gives us an account of the sons of Jacob, it also serves another purpose. Read Romans 15:4. Then think about how this chapter might instruct us as we find ourselves in similar situations, how it might cause us to persevere, to be encouraged, to be warned, or what hope might come from it—if any at this point. So often reading of others in similar situations or circumstances and their relationship to God, negative or positive, helps us evaluate where we are, or where we are headed.

For example, has anything similar happened to you? Has there been a conflict in your family—a case of favoritism, partiality of a parent toward a child? Have you had to deal with a seething jealousy? Have any family members ever ganged up on you? Do you see yourself in any of these characters? Can
you relate to Joseph? Or maybe Reuben or Judah? Or are you like Joseph’s brothers, so eaten up with jealousy that you can hardly talk with them decently, kindly? Has your jealousy turned to hatred? Is there murder in your heart?

Whether you relate to any of these situations or know others who are in them, you want to pay careful attention to what transpires in the chapters to come. Take a moment now to stop and pray about it. You might even want to write out a prayer to our Father and tell Him what you want to learn from all of this.

Record any practical insights you personally have gained in your observations of this chapter.

1. As chapter 37 opens, the author of Genesis lets us know what he is going to cover next in his Genesis account. Look at the phrase, “These are the records of the generations of Jacob.”

The phrase “These are the records of the generations” first occurs in Genesis 2:4 (while the text in the NASB reads “This is the account of the heavens and the earth,” the literal Hebrew reads, “These are the generations of the heavens and the earth.”) It is then repeated in Genesis 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1, 9; and 37:2.

In Genesis 37, God focuses first on Jacob’s son, Joseph. Then in Genesis 38, God moves our attention to another of Jacob’s sons.
Read Genesis 38 and note the main characters in this chapter. List them below.

2. Now read Genesis 38 again and observe the chapter, the same way you did Genesis 37.
   a. Watch for key repeated words and mark them.
   b. Don’t forget to double underline every geographical location.
   c. Mark time references because they help you discover the “when” of something.
   d. Watch for references to the Lord in this chapter. What do you learn about God from these references? It is so helpful to keep a journal on God as you study the Word of God; it’s a real faith builder.

In the Appendix we have included several pages you might want to use for your journal as you study Genesis 37–50. Every time you come across a new insight on God you should record the book, chapter, and verse and what you learn about Him from the text. The journal will then become a wonderful aid to worship, for to worship God is to look at His worth and give Him the reverence and praise worthy His name.

3. The Law did not exist at this point in the history of Israel, but it is apparent from the text that what was written in the Law at a later time regarding the duty of the brother-in-law (Genesis 38:8) was part of the culture then.

Read the following Scriptures and next to them record what they say with respect to carrying on the bloodline of a family member. As you look at these two passages, you will see how long this custom of the law continued.

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3The Law wouldn’t be given until 430 years after the Abrahamic Covenant, when the children of Israel came out of Egypt (Genesis 15:12-16; Galatians 3:16-17).
a. Deuteronomy 25:5-10

b. Matthew 22:23-33

4. Read Matthew 1:1-3 and note who is recorded in the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Now, isn’t it exciting to see the hand of God in this event in Judah’s life?

5. Finally write the theme of Genesis 38 on the “Genesis at a Glance” chart.

_O Beloved, life may be difficult with all of its unexpected, unwelcome twists and turns, and yet we never know what God is about! And although we may not know or understand all that is transpiring and what God’s ultimate purpose is, our calling is simply to be faithful to our God and His precepts no matter the situation. The question then becomes, Am I?_
DAY FOUR

1. Your assignment for today is a simple one. Following the pattern of what you did as you observed the other chapters this week, read Genesis 39 and mark the text.

   a. Also mark the words blessing, blessed (see bless*) and sin.* Although sin is not repeated throughout the chapter, it is always good to mark the word when you come across it in your Bible. This way it will be easy to find and to discern what God says is sin and consequently avoid it. Mark synonyms such as iniquity and transgression in the same way.

   b. You might find it helpful to list the main points about Joseph in the margin of your Observation Worksheet.

      When you finish, reflect on what you observed. Are there any qualities beyond his physical appearance that you admire, respect or desire to imitate? It seems we are so caught up in the physical that we often neglect the character side of who we are.

2. Now pause and put yourself in Joseph’s sandals. How would you feel if you were in the place and position of Joseph as described at the end of this chapter? What would your reaction be? How would you be feeling about God? How would you respond to Him? Write your answer. Then consider how you are to behave, to respond.
3. Record the main theme of Genesis 39 on the “Genesis at a Glance” chart, and you are finished for today. However, it would be a good idea to spend some time in prayer and meditation. Think of what you are learning; talk to God about it and ask Him what you are to do with all you are learning.

**DAY FIVE**

1. Let’s think some more about what you observed yesterday as you looked at Genesis 39. Read the chapter once more and then answer the following questions:

a. Is Joseph’s response typical of the moral culture of today? Explain your answer.

b. Would it have been a sin for Joseph to have sexual relations with Mrs. Potiphar? Why? Look up the following Scriptures and record what the Word of God teaches regarding sex outside of marriage and its consequences.

   1) Exodus 20:14

   2) Leviticus 20:10

   3) Proverbs 6:20-35
4) Hebrews 13:4

If you have the time, you may want to look up the following passages and note what they teach about sex outside marriage. If you are not familiar with these passages, may suggest that you write them somewhere in your Bible for future reference so you can share with others what God says on the subject.

Deuteronomy 22:13-30
Job 31:1, 9-12
Proverbs 5:1-23; 7:1-27
Matthew 5:27-30
Ephesians 5:5-6
1 Thessalonians 4:3-8
Revelation 21:8

2. Now feel free to see what commentaries say about Genesis 37–39.

Aren’t you touched by how relevant all this is to our day, to our lives! Press on. You are going to learn so much over the next three weeks that it will astound you and, we pray, make you hunger for more and more. . . as you hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Blessings . . . .
NOW Jacob lived in the land where his father had sojourned, in the land of Canaan.

2 These are the records of the generations of Jacob.

Joseph, when seventeen years of age, was pasturing the flock with his brothers while he was still a youth, along with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives. And Joseph brought back a bad report about them to their father.

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic.

4 His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms.

5 Then Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more.

6 He said to them, “Please listen to this dream which I have had;

7 for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf rose up and also stood erect; and behold, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf.”

8 Then his brothers said to him, “Are you actually going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?” So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

9 Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, “Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.”
10 He related it to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, “What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?”

11 His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.

12 Then his brothers went to pasture their father’s flock in Shechem.

13 Israel said to Joseph, “Are not your brothers pasturing the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send you to them.” And he said to him, “I will go.”

14 Then he said to him, “Go now and see about the welfare of your brothers and the welfare of the flock, and bring word back to me.” So he sent him from the valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

15 A man found him, and behold, he was wandering in the field; and the man asked him, “What are you looking for?”

16 He said, “I am looking for my brothers; please tell me where they are pasturing the flock.”

17 Then the man said, “They have moved from here; for I heard them say, ‘Let us go to Dothan.’” So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.

18 When they saw him from a distance and before he came close to them, they plotted against him to put him to death.

19 They said to one another, “Here comes this dreamer!

20 “Now then, come and let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; and we will say, ‘A wild beast devoured him.’ Then let us see what will become of his dreams!”

21 But Reuben heard this and rescued him out of their hands and said, “Let us not take his life.”
22 Reuben further said to them, “Shed no blood. Throw him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but do not lay hands on him”—that he might rescue him out of their hands, to restore him to his father.

23 So it came about, when Joseph reached his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the varicolored tunic that was on him;

24 and they took him and threw him into the pit. Now the pit was empty, without any water in it.

25 Then they sat down to eat a meal. And as they raised their eyes and looked, behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing aromatic gum and balm and myrrh, on their way to bring them down to Egypt.

26 Judah said to his brothers, “What profit is it for us to kill our brother and cover up his blood?

27 “Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.” And his brothers listened to him.

28 Then some Midianite traders passed by, so they pulled him up and lifted Joseph out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. Thus they brought Joseph into Egypt.

29 Now Reuben returned to the pit, and behold, Joseph was not in the pit; so he tore his garments.

30 He returned to his brothers and said, “The boy is not there; as for me, where am I to go?”

31 So they took Joseph’s tunic, and slaughtered a male goat and dipped the tunic in the blood;

32 and they sent the varicolored tunic and brought it to their father and said, “We found this; please examine it to see whether it is your son’s tunic or not.”
Then he examined it and said, “It is my son’s tunic. A wild beast has devoured him; Joseph has surely been torn to pieces!”

So Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days.

Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, “Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son.” So his father wept for him.

Meanwhile, the Midianites sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, Pharaoh’s officer, the captain of the bodyguard.
AND it came about at that time, that Judah departed from his brothers and visited a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah.

2 Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua; and he took her and went in to her.

3 So she conceived and bore a son and he named him Er.

4 Then she conceived again and bore a son and named him Onan.

5 She bore still another son and named him Shelah; and it was at Chezib that she bore him.

6 Now Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar.

7 But Er, Judah’s firstborn, was evil in the sight of the L ORD, so the LORD took his life.

8 Then Judah said to Onan, “Go in to your brother’s wife, and perform your duty as a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother.”

9 Onan knew that the offspring would not be his; so when he went in to his brother’s wife, he wasted his seed on the ground in order not to give offspring to his brother.

10 But what he did was displeasing in the sight of the L ORD; so He took his life also.

11 Then Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, “Remain a widow in your father’s house until my son Shelah grows up”; for he thought, “I am afraid that he too may die like his brothers.” So Tamar went and lived in her father’s house.

12 Now after a considerable time Shua’s daughter, the wife of Judah, died; and when the time of mourning was ended, Judah went up to his sheepshearers at Timnah, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite.
13 It was told to Tamar, “Behold, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep.”

14 So she removed her widow’s garments and covered *herself* with a veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in the gateway of Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah had grown up, and she had not been given to him as a wife.

15 When Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot, for she had covered her face.

16 So he turned aside to her by the road, and said, “Here now, let me come in to you”; for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. And she said, “What will you give me, that you may come in to me?”

17 He said, therefore, “I will send you a young goat from the flock.” She said, moreover, “Will you give a pledge until you send it?”

18 He said, “What pledge shall I give you?” And she said, “Your seal and your cord, and your staff that is in your hand.” So he gave *them* to her and went in to her, and she conceived by him.

19 Then she arose and departed, and removed her veil and put on her widow’s garments.

20 When Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite, to receive the pledge from the woman’s hand, he did not find her.

21 He asked the men of her place, saying, “Where is the temple prostitute who was by the road at Enaim?” But they said, “There has been no temple prostitute here.”

22 So he returned to Judah, and said, “I did not find her; and furthermore, the men of the place said, ‘There has been no temple prostitute here.’ ”

23 Then Judah said, “Let her keep them, otherwise we will become a laughingstock. After all, I sent this young goat, but you did not find her.”
24 Now it was about three months later that Judah was informed, “Your daughter-in-law Tamar has played the harlot, and behold, she is also with child by harlotry.” Then Judah said, “Bring her out and let her be burned!”

25 It was while she was being brought out that she sent to her father-in-law, saying, “I am with child by the man to whom these things belong.” And she said, “Please examine and see, whose signet ring and cords and staff are these?”

26 Judah recognized them, and said, “She is more righteous than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Shelah.” And he did not have relations with her again.

27 It came about at the time she was giving birth, that behold, there were twins in her womb.

28 Moreover, it took place while she was giving birth, one put out a hand, and the midwife took and tied a scarlet thread on his hand, saying, “This one came out first.”

29 But it came about as he drew back his hand, that behold, his brother came out. Then she said, “What a breach you have made for yourself!” So he was named Perez.

30 Afterward his brother came out who had the scarlet thread on his hand; and he was named Zerah.
NOW Joseph had been taken down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the bodyguard, bought him from the Ishmaelites, who had taken him down there.

2 The LORD was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian.

3 Now his master saw that the LORD was with him and how the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hand.

4 So Joseph found favor in his sight and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge.

5 It came about that from the time he made him overseer in his house and over all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian’s house on account of Joseph; thus the LORD’s blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field.

6 So he left everything he owned in Joseph’s charge; and with him there he did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.

7 It came about after these events that his master’s wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, “Lie with me.”

8 But he refused and said to his master’s wife, “Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge.

9 “There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?”
10 As she spoke to Joseph day after day, he did not listen to her to lie beside her or be with her.
11 Now it happened one day that he went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the household was there inside.
12 She caught him by his garment, saying, “Lie with me!” And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside.
13 When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside,
14 she called to the men of her household and said to them, “See, he has brought in a Hebrew to us to make sport of us; he came in to me to lie with me, and I screamed.
15 “When he heard that I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside me and fled and went outside.”
16 So she left his garment beside her until his master came home.
17 Then she spoke to him with these words, “The Hebrew slave, whom you brought to us, came in to me to make sport of me;
18 and as I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside me and fled outside.”
19 Now when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spoke to him, saying, “This is what your slave did to me,” his anger burned.
20 So Joseph’s master took him and put him into the jail, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined; and he was there in the jail.
21 But the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer.
22 The chief jailer committed to Joseph’s charge all the prisoners who were in the jail; so that whatever was done there, he was responsible for it.
23 The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph’s charge because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made to prosper.
GENESIS AT A GLANCE
Theme of Genesis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Creation in Six Days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Creation of Mankind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Cain &amp; Abel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Life under the Curse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Setting for the Flood Judgment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Flood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The End of the Flood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>God’s Covenant with Noah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Nations Separated after the Flood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Babel/Terah and family to Haran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>God Calls Abram/Abram &amp; Pharaoh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Abram and Lot Separate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Abram Rescues Lot/Melchizedek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>God’s Covenant with Abram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Hagar Bears Ishmael</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Circumcision—Sign of the Covenant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Promise of Isaac/Abraham Intercedes for Sodom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Destruction of Sodom &amp; Gomorrah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Abraham &amp; Abimelech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Sarah Bears Isaac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Abraham Offers Isaac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Sarah Buried at Hebron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Rebekah Becomes Isaac’s Wife</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Chapter Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Abraham Marries Keturah/Dies/Jacob &amp; Esau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>God’s Covenant with Isaac/Isaac &amp; Abimelech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Isaac Blesses Jacob</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>God’s Promise to Jacob/Jacob’s Vow to God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Jacob Serves for Leah &amp; Rachel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Jacob’s Children/Prospers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Jacob’s Covenant with Laban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Gifts for Esau/Jacob Wrestles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Jacob Meets Esau/Settles in Shechem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Dinah &amp; Shechem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Jacob to Bethel/Benjamin Born/Rachel Dies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Generations of Esau</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Keeping Your Focus When Your Dreams Are Shattered

JOURNAL ON GOD