# Genesis 39-50

Study Notes

## Overview

This week’s passage is a very well-known passage of scripture. The account of Joseph is more than just a great story: it demonstrates not only the attributes of God, but how a person should work out their faith in all circumstances by maintaining God’s perspective, not their own. This passage brings to a close the account of the patriarchs and sets the scene for not only book of the Exodus, but the rest of the Old Testament.

## Themes

### Faithfulness

* Joseph is faithful to God and his master as a slave of Potiphar [39:3-4]
* Joseph is faithful to God and to the prison keeper [39:23]
* Joseph is faithful to God when interpreting the other prisoner’s dreams [40:8]
* Joseph is faithful to God when interpreting Pharaoh’s dreams [41:16]
* Joseph is faithful to God when dealing with his brothers [45:5]
* Joseph is faithful to God and Pharaoh when lord of Egypt [47:23]

### Sin

* Joseph’s brothers’ sin haunts their consciences [42:21, 50:15]
* Joseph’s brothers’ sin affects their relationship with their father [42:36]
* Joseph’s brothers’ sin, while still evil is used by God for His glory [50:19]

## Passage Overview

| Verses | Details | Notes |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 39:1-23 | Joseph and Potiphar | Joseph is honest & faithful despite the circumstances |
| 40:1-22 | Joseph in prison | Joseph is still faithful to God, giving glory to God |
| 41:1-36 | God uses Pharaoh for good | God will bless Pharaoh for His glory & Israel’s benefit |
| 41:37-57 | Joseph is lifted up in Egypt | God blesses Joseph greatly for His glory & purpose |
| 42:1-38 | Joseph’s dream is fulfilled | Joseph tests his brothers, but loves them still |
| 43:1-14 | Israel’s desperation | The famine is so severe Israel’s sons return to Egypt |
| 43:15-34 | Joseph honours his brothers | Despite his feelings, he must remain Egyptian for now |
| 44:1-34 | Joseph’s final test | Joseph now knows for sure their hearts have changed |
| 45:1-15 | Joseph reveals himself | “God sent me before you to preserve life” [45:5] |
| 45:16-28 | His brother returns | Pharaoh is pleased with Joseph, preserves his family |
| 46:1-4 | God’s promise to Israel | Israel worships God one last time in the promised land |
| 46:5-27 | All of Israel migrates | God blessed Israel’s family, He will now preserve them |
| 46:28-30 | Joseph’s and Israel’s joy | Israel is no longer broken, God has granted his desire |
| 46:31-34 | Israel is to remain separate | They are not to assimilate into Egypt like Joseph did |
| 47:1-12 | Israel is given land in Egypt | They remain shepherds (Egyptians were farmers) |
| 47:13-26 | The famine worsens | God increases Pharaoh’s power and wealth greatly |
| 47:27-31 | Israel longs for the home | Despite Egypt’s wealth, Israel seeks the promised land |
| 48:1-22 | Israel blesses Joseph’s sons | Israel blesses in obedience to God, not as man would |
| 49:1-27 | Israel blesses his sons | The blessings look beyond Egypt to the promised land |
| 49:28-50:14 | Israel’s death and burial | Egypt joined in mourning for Israel, such was their respect |
| 50:15-21 | Joseph’s brothers’ fear | “You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good” |
| 50:22-26 | Joseph’s death | He is mummified, but will be buried in the promised land |

## Key People

| Name | Meaning | Notes |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Joseph | May God add | The protagonist of this passage. Becomes Egyptian |
| Potiphar | He whom Ra gave | A captain of the guard. Shortened form of Potiphera |
| Pharaoh | Great house (the king’s title) | Probably Amenemhet III[[1]](#footnote-1) |
| Israel | Struggles/strives with God | 130 years old when he arrives in Egypt |

## Israel’s Blessings

### Joseph’s Sons

| Name | Interpretation |
| --- | --- |
| Ephraim | Though the younger, his people shall be the more numerous than any other in Israel |
| Manasseh | The older brother is to be a numerous people, although not a great as his brother |

### Israel’s Sons

| Name | Interpretation |
| --- | --- |
| Reuben | Unstable; slept with his father’s concubine Bilhah [35:22], and so lost his birth right |
| Simeon | Violent, angry; scattered among Israel (Simeon’s territory was lost to the Philistines) |
| Levi | Also violent and angry; scattered amongst all of Israel to be a priestly tribe |
| Judah | The lion of Judah: kingly, wealthy, inherits the birth right. David & Christ are of Judah |
| Zebulun | Territory will be between Tyre and Galilee. Nazareth is in Zebulun [Mat 4:12-16] |
| Isaachar | Isaachar is strong, but will pay off enemies (rather than fight) to keep their good land |
| Dan | Will judge Israel, also militarily forceful [Jud 18]. Samson came from Dan [Jud 13:2] |
| Gad | Gad’s territory in Gilead, between the Jordan & the desert was subject to many raids |
| Asher | Asher’s territory was very rich, north of Carmel, along the Mediterranean coast |
| Naphtali | Naphtali was blessed by the Lord, possessed land around Galilee, north of Zebulun |
| Joseph | Will be very large and fruitful (see the blessings of Ephraim and Manasseh) |
| Benjamin | Conquers then divides the spoils [2 Sam 1:24]. Saul came from Benjamin |

1. I recommend reading Ages in Chaos by Immanuel Velikovsky for more information on Pharaohs in the Bible. See also <http://www.varchive.org/ce/joseph.htm> for evidence of who the Pharaoh was in Joseph’s time [↑](#footnote-ref-1)