

# The Joseph Narrative Assignment

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Instructor \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Next week we will begin studying different literary styles (genres) in the Bible. By far, the most common form of literature in the Bible is narrative. A narrative is a story – not a work of fiction, but a true recounting of historical events that are significant to God’s unfolding plan.

Narrative passages make up 40% of the Old Testament, and a large part of the New Testament. So we can’t ignore this important part of scripture. Referring to historical events in Israel’s history, Paul says they “happened to them as an example, and... were written for our instruction.” (1 Cor. 10:11)

The entire Bible itself actually forms one large narrative – it tells the story of how God brings his alienated creation back to himself. Within this broad, overall story, there are smaller stories that fit together to make the whole. The Old Testament focuses on God’s plan to make the descendants of Abraham into a nation that occupies the land he has chosen for them (see Genesis 12:1-3). Within this story, there are smaller stories still, like the story of Joseph in Genesis 37-50.

To truly understand the Joseph narrative, you must first understand its place in the book of Genesis and in the story of the Bible as a whole. Genesis is a book of beginnings. It introduces readers to the creator God, his special creation of human beings, the devastating consequences of their rebellion, and God’s selection of a people – Israel. Through his people, God intends to bless the world and bring his alienated creation back to himself. Genesis is also the beginning of the “Penteteuch,” the first five books of the Bible.

Take some time to page through Genesis. As you skim the book, carefully examine the outlines below.

<b>Literary Outline</b> – this outline reflects the organization of the author, Moses, who divided the body of Genesis into ten sections beginning with the phrase “the account of.”	<b>Thematic Outline</b> – this outline is grouped by important events, themes and main characters that are found in Genesis.
<p>I. Introduction (1:1-2:3)</p> <p>II. Body (2:4-50:26)</p> <p>    A. "The account of the heavens and the earth" (2:4-4:26)</p> <p>    B. "The written account of Adam's line" (5:1-6:8)</p> <p>    C. "The account of Noah" (6:9-9:29)</p> <p>    D. "The account of Shem, Ham and Japheth" (10:1-11:9)</p> <p>    E. "The account of Shem" (11:10-26)</p> <p>    F. "The account of Terah" (11:27-25:11)</p> <p>    G. "The account of Abraham's son Ishmael" (25:12-18)</p> <p>    H. "The account of Abraham's son Isaac" (25:19-35:29)</p> <p>    I. "The account of Esau" (36:1-37:1)</p> <p>    J. "The account of Jacob" (37:2-50:26)</p>	<p>I. Primeval History (1:1-11:26)</p> <p>    A. Creation (1:1-2:3)</p> <p>    B. Adam and Eve in Eden (2:4-25)</p> <p>    C. The Fall and Its Consequences (ch. 3)</p> <p>    D. The Rapid "Progress" of Sin (4:1-16)</p> <p>    E. Two Genealogies (4:17-5:32)</p> <p>    F. The Extent of Sin before the Flood (6:1-8)</p> <p>    G. The Great Flood (6:9-9:29)</p> <p>    H. The Spread of the Nations (10:1-11:26)</p> <p>II. Patriarchal History (11:27-50:26)</p> <p>    A. The Life of Abraham (11:27-25:11)</p> <p>    B. The Descendants of Ishmael (25:12-18)</p> <p>    C. The Life of Jacob (25:19-35:29)</p> <p>    D. The Descendants of Esau (36:1-37:1)</p> <p>    E. The Life of Joseph (37:2-50:26)</p>

Read Genesis 37-50. As you read, pay attention to the characters (including God) and the role they play in the story. Then, in the chart below, write three statements that describe what each character is like.

Character	What are they like?		
Joseph			
Jacob			
Judah			
Potiphar			
Potiphar's wife			
Egyptian jailor			
God			

After reading this narrative and examining each character, take a stab at identifying the controlling theme of the story. Clues to finding the controlling theme include:

1. Repeated summary statements. See an example of this device in Judges 17:6 & 21:25.
2. Blessings, promises, or covenants that God establishes with key characters in the narrative
3. Statements by God himself or another character that show how this story is part of a larger story (God's choice of Israel as his people, God's plan to bless the world through his people, etc.)

In the Joseph narrative, the controlling theme of the story is stated in chapter 45 and again in chapter 50. Review these chapters and in the space below, summarize what you feel is the controlling theme:

How is this story related to God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3?