

## TRAIL I: THE ANCESTORS ERA [GENESIS]

### INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS.

The title "Genesis" comes from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. Septuagint Greek (LXX) translation of the Hebrew and Aramaic Old Testament, made for Greek-speaking Jews in Alexandria, Egypt by at least the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., and means "origin" or "beginning". The book justifies its title in at least three ways:

- (a) As *history* it tells the story of creation, of the earliest civilization, of the Great Flood, and of the origins of the chosen people of God.
- (b) As *revelation* it introduces virtually every theme and problem discussed in the Bible. It teaches primary truths about God and humanity. With regard to salvation, it tells of sin's entrance into our world, then of the utter failure of early human beings to save themselves from sin and God's just judgement, and finally of God's choice of one family through which all the families of the earth would be blessed.
- (c) As *practical teaching* it introduces us to personalities of profound and universal religious significance. By its unforgettable stories it teaches lessons of abiding value; showing God at work in human lives very much like our own.

The Pentateuch, or "Five Books", of which Genesis is the first, was attributed to Moses by the universal tradition of the Jews, which our Lord Jesus, the Messiah, took for granted, and seemed to have endorsed with his own authority (Mk 12:26; Jn 5:46,47). Its presentation of the customs of the second millennium B.C. in the ancient near east seems to confirm that it was originally written before those customs changed in the first millennium B.C. Even if the Hebrew text we now have took its final form somewhat later, it continued to preserve very accurately a very detailed tradition contemporary with the events recorded. Today there seems to be no compelling reason to deny Moses' original authorship of these five books. For Genesis itself; he would have had access to early Hebrew oral accounts plus possibly some written records. Writing itself is now known to have existed long before Moses' time in the ancient near east.

### ANALYSIS OF GENESIS:

- 1 -- 11 A sketch of primeval history.
- 12 - 50 The ancestors of God's chosen people (2000-- 1700 B.C.).
  - 12:1 - 25:18 Abraham.
  - 25:19-26:35 Isaac.
  - 27-36 Jacob.
  - 37 - 50 Joseph.

## THE ANCESTORS ERA [GENESIS]

### COMPREHENSIVE QUESTION:

If you only had the book of Genesis of all the books of the Bible, what gospel / good news would you have about God, humanity and this world?

#### TRAIL I -- SECTION 1: Genesis 1 & 2.

1. What truths stand out in these two chapters about: (a) the nature and character of God, (b) the nature of human beings, (c) the nature of the whole creation and (d) the relationships of these three to each other?
2. What does the frequent use of "And God said" in chapter 1 suggest about the primary mode of creation? What further light is provided on creation by Jn 1:1-3 and Cl 1:15-17?
3. How well does the order of creation in ch. 1 correspond to the major stages of the world's development suggested by modern science? From what perspective do these stages of creation seem to be described? Why do we still need these ancient accounts in a scientific age? Are the biblical and the scientific accounts of world and human origins compatible? How so? What accounts for the differences in the account of creation in ch. 2?
4. What might it mean to be made "in God's image"? Does imaging here involve being a representation or a representative (Ex 20:4)? Does this apply (a) to both men and women (Gn 9:6), (b) individually or jointly? What, then, do you make of Paul's argument in 1 Co 11:7f According to 1:26-28, what is humanity's general vocation? How is this vocation connected to our imaging of God? Is it helpful to call this our "cultural mandate"? How should humanity's ruling / having dominion represent God's own character and purposes for his world? How might some of the worst perversions of this mandate be avoided, if the verb "to rule" were rendered "to be responsible for"? What does ch. 2 add to our understanding of this vocation? What further light is thrown on our imaging and vocation by the earliest commentary, Ps 8?
5. What basic insights are given in ch. 2 about the proper relationships between (a) God and his creation, (b) humanity and animals, (c) humanity and plants, (a) humanity and the earth itself and (d) men and women (Mt 19:3-6; Ga 3:28)? With respect to (b), how important is it to know that the same term, "living being" [Hebrew = living soul], used of Adam at his creation in 2:7 is also used of every living creature in Gn 9:10, 12, 15f?

TRAIL I            --            SECTION 2:    Genesis 3.

1. What is taught here about (a) the evil one's methods, (b) the steps that lead to sinful acts, (c) the consequences of sin and (d) how we humans tend to deal with our knowledge of our own sin? Was Adam as deceived as Eve (1 Ti 2:14; Gn 2:16-22)? Who, then, was held most responsible (Gn 3:9, 17; Ro 3:12, 19)? Was human sinning inevitable? Why?
2. How do you respond to God's handling of human sin, then and now? Why? Are the consequences of sinning here meant to be permanent? Should humans try to mitigate any or all of them? How so?
3. What signs of hope for sinful humanity can you detect even here? Why are they present? What has this to do with God's character and purposes? Why is it a blessing that sinful humans were barred from eating of the tree of life?
4. Is this an account of humanity's first discovery of their ability to distinguish between good and evil? Are some theologians, therefore, correct to call it "a fall upward"? How could humans discern good before this? Can good be known in itself, without also knowing evil? How so? What does all this imply for the nature of human ethics?
5. What do you make of the possible later biblical allusions to this story, e.g., Gn 5:29; Lv 26:12; Dt 23:14; Jb 5:7; 14:1; 25:4-6; 31:33; Ps 90:3; 104:29; Ec 12:7; Is 14:14; 43:27f, Ek 28:22; Jn 8:44; Ro 5:12-21; 8:20-22; 16:20; 1 Co 14:23; 2 Co 11:3; 1 T 2:13ff; Ja 1:14; 1 Jn 2:16?

TRAIL I -- SECTION 3: Genesis 4 & 5.

1. According to these chapters, how would you describe (a) the early growth of human sin, (b) the evidence of its power and (c) its impact on individuals and societies? How well does this accord with the insight of modern social science into the behaviour of humans today?
2. How do the differences between Cain and Abel (1 Jn 3:11f; He 11:4) throw light upon differences within families you know today?
3. What can be learned about the character of God's judgement (3:14-24; 4:11-15) in comparison to that of some ancient peoples (4:23f)? Where did these people come from? Were they relatives of Cain? How so? What implications might some people draw from this story about the legitimacy of retribution and capital punishment? How cogent would their argument be for you? What was involved in the mark of Cain?
4. What do you think is involved in "walking with God" (5:22, 24; 6:9)? Could this be possible for you (Ga 5:16-25; Ro 8:1-17)? How? Why? What do you make of Enoch's unusual departure? What do you think later generations of God's people might have made of it? Is this something to which some Christians seem to aspire? How so?
5. How can the longevity of pre-flood humans be accounted for? Are numbers in the Old Testament always meant to be taken strictly literally any more than in writings and paintings of other ancient near eastern cultures? Do we always take numbers strictly literally even today? Why?

1. What can be learned here for our day concerning (a) human nature, (b) the relationship between spiritual, moral and physical matters, (c) God's attitude towards sin (8:21) and (d) his provision of a way of salvation?
2. What was there about Noah that enabled him to please Yahweh [The LORD] (7:1; He 11:7)? How did he stand out from others in his time? How was this possible? How might he and his family have felt about him being so different? Can you identify with him and/or them? Why?
3. How might you feel about facing Noah's new challenge? How do you feel and respond to apparently incredible, strange, unpopular and very difficult instructions from God? How might your family respond to such a tremendous project? Would they join you in it? Would you join them in it? Why?
4. Are you open now to God's calling you to undertake something new? Why? Are you even willing to ask Him what He might have in mind? Why? How might He make his will clear to you?
5. How well do children's picture storybooks represent what the biblical text suggests Noah and his family were facing here? What more sophisticated understandings do Christian and non-Christian adults have of this event? Is it even an historical event? Why do some intelligent adult Christians today still undertake expensive and arduous expeditions to find Noah's ark? Would you want to go on one? Would be interested in whatever they might find? Why?

TRAIL I            --            SECTION 5:            Genesis 7:1-8:19.

1. What was God's part in Noah's salvation and what was Noah's part (Ep 2:8-10; Phil 2:12f; 1 P 1:5)? How can we distinguish between God's part and ours? Can we always do so? Why would we want to?
2. From what aspects of the flood was Noah saved completely? What aspects of it did he have to endure while being brought safely through them (1 P 3:20)? What parallels can you see to the sorts of deliverance from God's judgement on sin that Jesus, God's Messiah brings people today?
3. While God is in the process of saving you, what job(s) has He given you to do as a participant in His greater enterprise of salvation? What are the challenges of your job(s) in comparison to those that Noah probably had to face during his year in the ark? How do you imagine the life challenges of the company confined on that ark for a year? What resources do you think God provided for Noah and his family? What does He provide for you (Mt 18:20; 28:18-20; Jn 14:16f; 15:26f; 16:7-14; Ac 1:8; 18:9f; Ro 8:9-17; 15:4; I Co 12:4-11; 1 Ti 3:15-17)?
4. How patient was Yahweh before and during the construction of the ark (1 P 3:20; 2P 3:8f)? How do you respond when God's judgement finally comes as tragedy upon those who reject him and his ways? Are such responses (a) understandable and (b) appropriate? Why? What about the collateral damage to those who seem innocent (e.g., most of the individual animals and some of the plants in the story)? Were all of the water creatures spared? Why?
5. What questions do you have about the physical logistics of such a great flood, whether it was a local or universal one? How important are these questions to believing the story? Why? What evidences should there be for such an event's historical occurrence? Would you recommend, finance or join a modern exploration of the mountains of Ararat to look for the frozen remnants of the ark? Why?

TRAIL 1      --      SECTION 6:      Genesis 8:20-9:17.

1. How does Noah's response to his divine rescue serve as an example to inspire God's people today to respond appropriately to his gracious deliverances in their own lives (Ro 12: 1f; He 13:15f)? How does this apply to you?
2. With whom is the new covenant of God made here? Why is it so inclusive? How might the specific terms (8:21; 9:8-17) of God's covenant encourage the survivors? What things does God promise not to do again or ever to change? Does this lift the curse of Gn 3:17-19? How would 8:21f and 9:2f effect both farmers, like Noah (9:20), and non-farmers? Does 8:21-9:5 suggest a separation of hunter-gatherer and agrarian societies? How relevant is this covenant and its terms to humanity even today? How universal and permanent is it? Why would a rainbow be such a fitting perennial sign of such a covenant? Is it to you?
3. Describe the relationships between God, humans and animals in 9:1-17? Has anything changed since Gn 1 and 2? What? What might the revelation of God's perspective on the relative worth of humans and other living beings, mean to people today who are seeking to pursue God's values? Is there a shift to Plan B here for humans from a strictly vegetarian diet (Gn 1:29) to an omnivorous one?
4. Does the reference here (9:6) to humans being made "in the image of God" imply that, even after the fall of humanity in solidarity with Adam (Ro 5:12, 14f, 17-19), sinful humans continue to remain in that special relationship with God? Why? Would Ps 8's commentary on Gn 1 support your answer? How so? What might this indicate about what is involved in being made in/as God's image? How does human sinning impact it?
5. Does 9:6 mandate or sanction capital punishment for murder? How does humans being made in/as God's image relate to this? Does this make a human life of infinite value? Why?

1. Why did Ham's "concern" lead to such terrible consequences for a whole family? Why was only one of his sons cursed? How significant for later Hebrew history, was it that this particular branch of Ham's family was the one cursed? What lessons can we draw from this? Why do you think this cursing was cited by some Christians to justify their support for South Africa's repressive Apartheid racial policy? Was their biblical application correct? How so? How well did they correctly read the next chapter's genealogies, when connecting Noah's curse with the particular Canaanite "race" that they were deprecating?
2. What do chs. 10f teach about the origins of nations and their relationship to one another and to God (Ac 17:26-28; Ro 3:29f; Ep 3:14f)? How important are individual nations to God Himself (Is 19:25; Mt 28:19; Lk 24:47; Rv 5:9; 7:9)?
3. What descriptions might fairly characterize your own nation in a general sketch of human history written a millennium or so from now? Why? How might God himself characterize your nation? Why?
4. What was so wrong with the attitudes and actions of the people of ancient Babel (1:28; 3:22-24; 9:7, 19; Is 14:12-15)? How, why and when might similar structures be built among us today? What consequences might this have for your congregation or community? Explain.
5. Does 11:1 and 6 teach that there was once only one universal human language (10:5, 20, 25)? If so, what language might that have been? Why? How are languages that exist today, related to one another? What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a great number of human languages? How are languages and cultures related? Would everyone having a universal language be helpful or not? Could such a language be compatible with many individual tribal or local languages? Why do you think a universal human language has been promoted so often in recent times? How new a phenomenon is this? Does such a language exist today? Do the Spirit-engendered linguistic phenomena on the day of Pentecost (Ac 2:4-12) reverse the divine confusion of languages at Babel? How so?

TRAIL I -- SECTION 8: Genesis 11:10-13:18.

1. In God's call to Abram, what is commanded and what is promised? How are God's commands and his promises connected (2 Ch 7:14; Mt 11:28)?
2. How did Abram's faith / trust first express itself (He 11:8)? In what way does God's call through Jesus Christ require a similar response (Mt 10:37-39; 19:27-29; Mk 10:29f; Lk 14:26f; 18:28-30)? Why is it so radical? What did Abram include in his faith-response to God's call? What might be included in your response to God's call through Jesus Christ?
3. How did Abram's later lack of trust in God in the face of famine and fear affect others as well as himself? In what difficult areas do you need to trust in God more? How might your response affect others? Why might you object if God helped you in spite of your specific lack of trust?
4. Was Abra(ha)m, the father of our faith (Ro 4), always a perfect example of faith/ trust in God (He 11:8-10, 17-19)? Was it, then, because of the great strength or perfection of his faith that Yahweh continued to bless and protect him? Why was it then? How true is this for you too?
5. What about the characters of Abram and Lot is revealed in how they handled their mutual economic problem? How do the ways you settle economic differences with others reveal your trust in God (Mt 6:19:34)? Why does your economic behaviour matter to God? Who are the others that your economic behaviour impacts? How so? Why would God care about this?

1. What do the events of chapter 14 reveal about Abram's character, his relationship to God, and his relationship to others?
2. Who was Melchizedek? How did Abram treat him so much differently than he did the other kings? Why did he? Why is Melchizedek seen as the Old Testament's model of a priestly Messiah (Ps 110:4; He 7)?
3. What does the appropriateness of the means, timing and content of God's revelation in chapter 15 to Abram indicate to all who also claim to trust in him?
4. Does Yahweh's response in 15:6 indicate that Abram's faith/ trust in him had matured by this point? What can we ourselves learn from (a) the basis on which Abram received encouragement and righteousness from God (Ro 4:2-5; 13-25), (b) the ground for faith that God provided Abram and (c) how Abram showed that he trusted in God's promises?
5. What does the variety of names for God in these chapters mean? Which of them should Christians use today? Why?

TRAIL I -- SECTION 10: Genesis 16 & 17.

1. What is revealed here about God's ability and desire to bring good out of very bad family situations? What are God's activities, timing and words as seen from the perspectives of the various participants: Abram/Abraham, Sarai/Sarah, a Hagar, Ishmael, Ishmael's descendants (many Arabs) and Isaac's descendants through Jacob (the Israelites/Jews)? How does Islam tell this story?
2. What are (a) the characteristics of the covenant-making process of chapter 15, (b) the blessings that covenant assured Abraham and (c) the conditions of receiving those benefits? What is added when that covenant is renewed at least 13 years later (Ch 17)? How important is this addition?
3. Why do you think that in English it is still said that a legal deal or covenant, even a cheque, is "cut" (15:10)?
4. Why might it be important to for Arab—Jewish relations today to remember that Ishmael was also included in the covenant with Abraham that was to be established with Isaac?
5. What's in a name: for God himself, for Abram/Abraham, Sarai/Sarah, Ishmael, Isaac? What are the meanings of your names and those of your family members, your congregation, your denomination / communion? How do these meanings influence how you view yourself and others, and even how you seek to live?

TRAIL I -- SECTION 11: Genesis 18.

1. What can you learn from Abraham's example about how it is possible (a) to receive Yahweh as a guest, (b) to enjoy fellowship with him and (c) to become one of those whom He calls his friends (2 Ch 20:7; Is 41:8; Jo 2:23)? What is involved in being friends of Christ, God's Messiah (Jn 15:13-15)? Into what rooms (spheres) of your life are you willing to welcome him to dwell as friend and lord (Rv 3:20)?
2. What might be too difficult for Yahweh (18:14)? Explain.
3. How relevant is 18:18f to Yahweh's covenant with Abraham and all his people (12:2f)? What about it is relevant to Christians who belong to Christ and, therefore, also are Abraham's offspring (Ga 3:29)? What should that mean to you (Mt 5: 16; 1 P 2:12; Ep 2:10)?
4. For what was sin(s) were Sodom and Gomorrah being investigated by Yahweh? Why wasn't their notorious reputation sufficient for Yahweh to pass judgement on them forthwith? How might this, as well as how Yahweh had been dealing with Abraham's own sinning, have prompted Abraham to plead with Yahweh to be gracious?
5. What are the characteristics of Abraham's dialogue with Yahweh? How many of them should mark your own dialogue with God, especially your intercessory prayer for others? Dare you press God further than Abraham did here (Jr 5:1; Dt 6:16; Lk 4:12; Ac 5:9; 15:10; 1 Co 10:9)?

TRAIL I -- SECTION 12: Genesis 19.

1. What is revealed in this chapter about (a) the evil latent in the human heart, (b) the certainty of divine judgement, (c) the priority of divine mercy and (d) the urgency of immediate obedient action while there is still time to escape judgement (Lk 23:32; 2 P 2:4-11; Jd 7)? Why do you think this incident is referred to a great number of times in the Koran?
2. Why might some people be judged even more harshly than the inhabitants of Sodom (Mt 10:15; 11:23f)? What might that mean for some who consider themselves to be members of God's special people (Is 1:10-20; 1 P 4:17) or even to be one of his prophets (Jr 23:14f; Mt 7:21-23) or teachers (Js 3:1; 1 Ti 1:3-7)?
3. What impact did Lot's righteous witness have upon the people of his community? Why? What might we learn today from this? How did the wicked ways of the Sodomites impact Lot ( 2 P 2:6-9)? How might they have compromised your own Christian life pattern?
4. What can we learn about the consequences of the compromises families may make by becoming too closely involved in an evil culture? How can we live fully in the world like Jesus (Jn 1:14) yet without being of it (Jn 17:11, 14-19; Ro 12:1f)?
5. How might the name "Moab" [the Hebrew, "Me-abi", interpreted in the Greek LXX translation as "from my father"] at one time been a Hebrew derogatory pun? How might "Ben-Ammi" [Hebrew = "Son of my people"] remind the Israelites of their close family ties to their nearest neighbours, the Ammonites? What should this relationship imply (Dt 2:18f)? Do you have or use names that have similar connotations and implications? With what results?

TRAIL I -- SECTION 13: Genesis 20 & 21.

1. How much had Abraham learned from his earlier encounter with Pharaoh (12:10-20)? What can we learn from a comparison of Abraham's and Abimelech's ethics? What difference does it really make that Sarah was Abraham's half-sister (20:12)? Have you ever been aware of God keeping you from sinning? When? How? What has this taught you about the variety of God's areas of interest and ways of operating in peoples' lives?
2. "Isaac" means laughter. What could the various kinds of laughter that Isaac provoked teach us about ourselves, others and God (16:5; 17:15-19; 18:5-15; 21:5-13; 24:64-67)?
3. Why does God deal so generously with many people who seem to his chosen people to be at or beyond the fringe of his sphere of interest and influence, people like Hagar (16:7-14; 21:17-21) and Abimelech (20 & 21)?
4. Why do you think that Abimelech was able (a) to believe that God was with Abraham and (b) to trust Abraham to keep his covenant, even after his earlier experiences with him? Why would people who know you trust your promises, or believe that God really is with you (1 P3:13-17)?
5. How relevant are the details of 21:8-21 to understanding present day Arab-Israeli relations? How do you think that the Koran might treat this incident? How could you find out? How might that facilitate Christian dialogue with contemporary Muslims who also see themselves as children of Abraham?

TRAIL I -- SECTION 14: Genesis 22.

1. Why do you think God made his command in v 2 so soft [Hebrew = "please take"]? Yet why was it a most severe test of Abraham's trust in God (9:5; He 11 :17f)?
2. How did Abraham's faith express itself (Ro 4:17; He 11:19; Ja 2:20-24)? What about your faith's expression (Ga 5:6; Eph 2:10; 1 Th 1:3)?
3. Why doesn't Yahweh take Isaac as Abraham's sacrifice after all? When do we discover if God has graciously provided a substitute (v 13)? Have you experienced this? When? How does God treat the treasures that we obediently dedicate to his service (Mt 6:19-22, 33; Mk 10:28-30; Lk 18:28-30 1 Ti 4:8)? Which of your treasures might Yahweh want from you (1 S 1: 27f; Lk 18:22f)? Why?
4. What reasons and assurance does Yahweh give in the covenant renewal here (22:16-18; Ro 4:2f, He 6:13f)? What does this mean for Christians?
5. What does this event reveal about Yahweh's character and about our inadequate human conceptions of him? What does this mean for your walk with God?

TRAIL I -- SECTION 15: Genesis 23.

1. What features in Abraham's character does this story bring out (14:21-24)? What may we learn from his example about facing life and death properly?
2. Sketch Sarah's character as presented in Genesis (11:29-23:2; He 11:11). With this in mind, plus 1 P 3:1-9, in what ways might modern Christian women want to call themselves "Daughters of Sarah"?
3. Why was Abraham so careful to get all the details just right when acquiring a suitable place to bury Sarah, the only piece of property that he ever actually owned in Canaan? Why were even the trees on the field mentioned when Abraham really just wanted the cave at the end of the field?
4. Why did Abraham prefer to pay such an inflated price for the property without any haggling, especially after he had been offered it free? What might you have done? Why (Pr 20:14)?
5. Why do you think the exact standard for the weight of the money – silver shekels – had to be specified (Dt 25:13-15; Am 8:5)?

1. Why was Abraham so insistent that his son, Isaac, remain in Canaan, but not take a Canaanite wife? Why was the former concern more important than the latter one (21:21)?
2. What can we ourselves learn from the attitude of Abraham's servant, [probably Eliezer of Damascus (15:2)], in his relation to (a) his master, (b) his mission, (c) Yahweh (v. 27) and (d) those he had to deal with in accomplishing his mission (v. 49) How can his confidence, care and concern be ours too (Cl 3:22-24)?
3. How did Eliezer make his choice? Of what did he become particularly conscious? What might we learn here about making major life decisions, even choosing a life partner?
4. What is your first impression of Rebekah? Why?
5. What can you learn from this chapter about (a) family life and (b) the role of women in that place and time? Are there any parallels today in your society?

TRAIL I -- SECTION 17: Genesis 24:61-25:34.

1. Quickly review Abram/Abraham's life (11:26-25:10) to create a timeline with him being born about 2000 BC noting (a) the major events in his life, (b) his age and location when these take place and (c) when his children and grandchildren are born.
2. What gives Abraham an outstanding place in world history? What makes him an example to us all (2 Ch 20:7; Is 41:8; Ga 3:6-9, 29; Ro 4; Ja 2:23)? Why do so many others besides Jews claim him as their father physically and/or spiritually? Who is he to you? Why?
3. What further light is thrown in this --SECTION on the characters of Isaac and Rebekah?
4. Compare Jacob and Esau as described in 25:27-34. How similar and different are the members of your immediate family? How does that affect your family life and your relationships with God? Explain. What do you think Abraham might have thought of these two grandchildren?
5. What lesson does He 12:14-17 draw from Esau's conduct here? What do your actions and words reveal about your fundamental values and priorities?

TRAIL I -- SECTION 18: Genesis 26.

1. What does God promise Isaac? Why? What significance might this have for you and your family (Ex 20:5f; 34:7; Ps 103:17f; 105:8f; Ac 2:39)?
2. How is Isaac very much Abraham's son (12:10-20; 20:1-18)? Why did Isaac fail so badly in spite of receiving striking promises from God and even knowing about his father's own experiences? When the promises were repeated (v.24), what was different about Isaac's response to Abimelech 11 and his might?
3. How were the attitudes of father, Abimelech I (Chs. 21f), and son, Abimelech II (ch. 26) [Hebrew = "father of a king" pr "my father is king"], towards Abraham's family different? Why?
4. What can we learn from the quarrel over the wells concerning how to behave in the face of opposition, hostility and even persecution (Pr 20:22; 24:29; Mt 5:38-48; Ro 12:17-21; 1 P 2:23)?
5. How do the names given by Isaac to the new wells that he dug chronicle the stages of his interaction with the Philistines [Hebrew: "Esek" = "contention"; "Sitnah" = "enmity"; "Rehoboth" = "broad place"; "Shibah" = "seven", from the Hebrew verbal root "to swear"]? How does this reflect the stages of development of some difficult human relationships? How does it fit your own experience?

TRAIL I -- SECTION 19: Genesis 27:1-45.

1. What are the roles played by each person in this story? What were their motives? Why was God pleased to bless Jacob, in spite of all his deception, rather than Esau (25:23; MI 1:2-5; Ro 9:10-16; He 12:6-17)? Do you think God was just? Why?
2. Why it have been that Isaac's oral blessing of Jacob was considered valid by Isaac even after he became aware of Jacob's and Rebekah's deception(26:7ff)? What might we learn about the serious consequences for others flowing from our honest mistakes? What can we do about that?
3. What element was lacking in Esau's tearful response to Jacob's two supplanting actions (25:29-34; 27:34-38; 2 Co 7:9-11; He 12:16f)? Why is that element so important to a gracious God? How do the following references clarify what that element means (Dt 4:30; Ne 1:9; Ps 7:12; Jr 3:11-14)?
4. What more can we learn about Isaac's and Rebekah's characters here? What is there to emulate? Explain. Does simply being recorded in the Bible "baptize" all of their behaviours or justify any and all deception? Why? Why is there no biblical evaluation of such behaviour in these stories?
5. What inference might be drawn about the authenticity of these stories, from the fact that some of Jacob's most "honourable" ancestors were sometimes portrayed as being far from ethically ideal? Why were they so portrayed anyway? What are we expected to learn from such imperfect examples( Ro 15:3; 1 Co 10:11f; He 11:4-21)?

1. What further insight do we get here into the realities of early Hebrew family life in Canaan? How many similarities and differences do you see to your own family life?
2. To what degree does Isaac now seem to have become reconciled to God's choice of Jacob? Why? How does this impact Esau's relationships?
3. What was the significance of Jacob's dream and its timing? What did the dream add to Jacob's understanding of God and His purpose for his life? How timely and illuminating are your dreams? For example? Do they help you understand yourself, others, and/or God? How?
4. What seems to have been Jacob's concept of Yahweh as revealed in his response after the dream? What sort of promises have you even made to God? When? What differences have they made in your behaviour? Why do you think Jacob included a tithe as part of his promise to God (14:20)? How appropriate would such a response be today? Why?
5. What inferences should be drawn from the details of Jacob's dream with regard to the nature of Yahweh, angels, the relationship between heaven and earth, ladders/stairs, etc.? Why?
6. Why might Esau think after Jacob's being sent off to uncle Laban in Paddan-aram, that a new marriage in Ishmail's much more local family would make himself just as acceptable to his parents as Jacob was and would continue to be (28:5-9)? Do you think he really dealt with his parents' concern? How so?

TRAIL I -- SECTION 21: Genesis 29:1-30.

1. How does Laban's trickery in dealing with Jacob compare to that of Jacob's earlier dealings with Esau and that of his father, Isaac (25:29ff; 27:1-29)? Why might a tricky character like Jacob not anticipate others' trickery?
2. What practical lessons did Jacob seem to learn (31:42; 32:10-12)? If you were Jacob, what might God be teaching you (Ga 6:7; Mt 7:1f)?
3. To what extent do the determination and energy shown by Jacob here seem to be new features in his life (29:10)? Why? What has motivated you to be focused, single-minded, and energetic?
4. How powerful and enduring was human love as a motive for Jacob? How powerful and enduring is it for you? Have you always found it sufficient? What love might be even more powerful and enduring (1 Jn 4:19)?
5. Why work? Why do people work? Why should people work (1 Th 3:10-12)? Why do you work? Who do you work for (Cl 3:22-24; Ep 6:5-7)? In doing what (Cl 3:17)? How do you know that any work for God, isn't as futile as it may sometimes seem to be (1 Co 15:58; Ep 6:7f; Cl 3:23f)? How well do you work (Cl 3:23; 1 P 2:18-23)?

TRAIL I -- SECTION 22: Genesis 29:31-30:43.

1. How does God show Himself to be the champion of the underdog here? What other examples of this are you familiar with? What affect did this favour of God have on the attitudes of Jacob, Rachael and Leah? How might you have felt if you were one of them?
2. Which of Jacob's wives turned out to be the ancestor of Jesus (Mt 1:2; Lk 3:33; He 7:14)? If Jacob could have foreseen this, what might he think of Pr 16:9 and 19:21?
3. What seems to have been the parental attitudes and behaviors characterizing the home life influencing Jacob's many sons and daughters (37:35f; 46:15)? What do the meanings of the names of the sons signify about their family life and history? How much do you think their family's polygamy contributed to their family problems then and later? What further problems might be created by breaking up existing polygamous marriages when Christianity comes to some families in countries where it has been practiced for generations?
4. How frequently do people receive a secondhand blessing from God as Laban did (30:27, 29f)? Have you ever witnessed this (1 Co 7:14)? When? How often are the recipients of secondhand blessing as perceptive and grateful as Laban seems to have been?
5. How do Jacob's and Laban's pledges of honesty to each other compare in light of their subsequent actions? How might you have dealt with a father-in-law like Laban? Or with a son-in-law like Jacob? What is the difference between shrewdness and cheating? How are you relating now to someone who you think has wronged you (Mt 6:12; 14f; 18:15-17)? To someone whom you may have wronged (Mt 5:23f)?

TRAIL I -- SECTION 23: Genesis 31:1-32:2.

1. To what extent is Jacob a changed man six years later (31:6, 38-42)? What evidence is there that he has come to a deeper knowledge of Yahweh (31:3-13, 42)? What can we learn from God's dealings with Jacob about His handling of sinners?
2. What factors combine to convince Jacob that it was now God's time for him to return to Canaan? Would the same factors have convinced you? Why? How was the inevitable opposition of Laban willingly overcome? What encouragement can we draw from the record of this process?
3. Which account of the situation is truer, that of Jacob or that of Laban and his sons? Why? What can we learn from this?
4. How do you account for the attitudes and actions of Jacob's wives here? What might their theologies and ethics have been in comparison to those of Jacob and Laban?
5. What is the actual contextual meaning of Laban's historic words at Mizpah (32:49)? How appropriate is it, therefore, to employ those words today as a "biblical" benediction in churches? What did it mean to Jacob's to meet the angels of God (32:1f) right after this? What might it have meant to you?

TRAIL I -- SECTION 24: Genesis 32:3-32.

1. Is it likely that Jacob got the bright idea to divide his entourage into two companies from the angels of God that he had just met (32:1f)? Why?
2. In what ways had Yahweh shown loving-kindness [Hebrew = “chesed”] and faithfulness [Hebrew = “emeth”] to Jacob thus far? How has He done so in your life? How close to the heart of the Bible's gospel, "good news", is the conjunction of loving-kindness and faithfulness in God's character and actions (Ex 34:6)? Are we any more worthy of a positive relationship with such a God than Jacob was conscious of being? What has our worth to do with it (Ep 2:8f)?
3. How does the theology of Jacob's prayer compare to that implicit in his actions before and after the prayer? How consistent are your prayers and actions theologically? Was Jacob's prayer more than just “a spiritual insurance policy” taking every possible safety precaution? How about some of your prayers?
4. What is suggested by Jacob's nocturnal wrestling match? How true is the claim of some Christians that God will bless us only when we echo Jacob's ultimatum to God (v. 26)? What, in fact, was Jacob's blessing here? Are the words of such an ultimatum really worth the costs and risks involved? How did Jacob prevail (Ho 12:2-6)?
5. How did Jacob and others really see God's face and live (16:13; 33:10; Ex 24:9-18; 33:20; Nu 12:5-8; Ju 6:22f; 13:21f; Jn 1:18; 5:37; 6:46; 12:45; 14:6-8; Cl 1:15; 1 Ti 6:16; 1 Jn 4:12)? In what sense is Jacob's claim true?

TRAIL I -- SECTION 25: Genesis 33:1-17.

1. Does Jacob's attitude and behaviour change after his experience of God at Peniel? How? Why?
2. How do the words and actions of Jacob and Esau express very different attitudes and feelings about their coming meeting? How often are we mistaken about what others will be thinking about us? How open are we to correction by actual experience?
3. How does this meeting of the two brothers compare with their earlier life together (25:19-34: 27:1-28:9)? What happened to them in the meantime to make a difference in their relationship? What can we learn here about resolving relational conflicts?
4. How far does Jacob live up to his new name, "Israel" (32:28), in this story? Why is he still called by his old name here and so often hereafter? How does our actual behaviour often still express our old nature and identity in spite of our new nature and relationship as God's children? Why?
5. Why do you think that there is no record of Jacob/Israel ever keeping his promise to visit his brother's home in Seir? What is there about funerals that temporarily reunites even separated families (35:27-29)? How relevant is this to you and your family? Could funerals provide opportunities for deeper reconciliations? How?

TRAIL I -- SECTION 26: Genesis 33:18-34:31.

1. Considering what Jacob/Israel had previously been calling God (27:20; 28:16 20-22; 30:30; 31:5, 42, 53; 32:9; 33:5, 11) what is the significance of the name he gives to God's altar in 33:20 ([see the footnote/marginal note if there is one] 28:21)? How do you address God in your prayers privately and publicly? Why? What does this imply about your personal relationship with God and about your public witness to that relationship?
2. What seem to be the main concerns, feelings and actions of Hamor, Shechem, Jacob (24:2; 27:46-28:4) and Dinah's brothers (49:5-7) in this sordid affair? Who behaved most honourably? What might have been a better approach for each participant including Dinah and her many sisters/half-sisters (37:35; 46:15)?
3. Should the head of a Christian family today follow Jacob's example? What should Jacob have done differently?
4. Why do Christians today rarely read or preach on this passage in our congregations? Why was it recorded in Scripture (Ro 15:4)? How profitable would it be for us to discuss it? What we can learn from this incident for situations we face all too often today?
5. What do you think Dinah and her many sisters/ half-sisters thought and felt about how the rape was handled? Is there a Christian view of rape? How so?

TRAIL I -- SECTION 27: Genesis 35.

1. Why was it advisable for Jacob to abandon Shechem and his only piece of real estate (33:18f; 34:30)? How did God help out?
2. What evidence is there here to indicate that Jacob had come to repentance, i.e., an about face? Why does repentance not always remove all the painful consequences of our sin? To what extent can you identify with Jacob here?
3. What are aspects of God's character that are revealed to Jacob in the covenant renewal at Bethel? How are they relevant to you?
4. How did God seem to be dealing with Jacob and his family on the gradual journey south to be reunited with his aging father, Isaac, at Mamre/Hebron? How could this also be considered an expression of God's fatherly love (He 12:6-11)? Should this "tough love" be part of the good news about God we share in our evangelism? Why (Lk 14:25-33)?
5. How grateful do you think Jacob was to have arrived home in time to be reconciled to Isaac? How would you imagine the meeting between Jacob and Esau and their large families at Isaac's funeral? Why? Why do you think Jacob took up residence thereafter in Hebron area (35:12; 37:1, 14)?

TRAIL I -- SECTION 28: Genesis 36.

1. How had Isaac's blessing of Esau (27:39f) begun to be fulfilled in the Edomite descendants of Esau recorded here?
2. What significance do you think this detailed record of Isaac's and Esau's earliest descendants might have for modern Arabs as some of his later descendants? What might it also mean for Isaac's and Jacob's modern Jewish descendants?
3. What do you make of the long history of strife between the descendants of Jacob (Israel and Judah) and Esau (Edomites) over the centuries (Nu 20:14-21; 2 S 8:13f; 1 K 11:14-17; 2K 14:7; 2 Ch 28:17) in light of God's choice of Jacob over Esau (25:23) and of Isaac's blessings of his sons (27:26-29; 39f)?
4. What can we learn about God's dealing with nations from the prophetic judgments on Edom, who "piled on" Judah when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 587 BC (Ob 1-21; Ps 137:7; Ek 25:12-14; 35:1-15; MI 1:2-5)?
5. How does the estimate of Esau in He 12:16 fit some of his most infamous later descendants, the Herod family of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (Mt 2:1-5, 16-23; 14:1-11; Mk 6:14-28; Lk 3:1, 19f; 9:7-9; 13:31f; 23:6-12; Ac 12:1-23)? To what extent do family characteristics persist over many generations? Do they apply to every family member, e.g., Herod Agrippa II (Ac 25:13-26:32)? What about Job, whom many scholars believe was an Edomite? Can people change? Can even a whole people change? How so?

TRAIL I -- SECTION 29: Genesis 37.

1. What sort of person was Joseph as a teenager? Have you met people like that? How do you relate to them? Can you appreciate the feelings of his family members? Why?
2. In what ways are both Jacob and Joseph partly responsible for Joseph's being sold into slavery by his half-brothers? What parallels have you observed in families that you know?
3. What can we learn from this story about the dynamics of (a) family life, (b) parenting and (c) sibling relationships?
4. Why did Reuben's plan fail? In what ways was it flawed from the start? If he had succeeded in getting Joseph back home alive this time, what further challenges remained to be faced?
5. Why were Jacob's sons herding their family's great flocks so far north in the hill country of Shechem, and even further north in the fertile plain near Dothan, 12.5 km from their father's residence in the well-watered valley of Hebron? In what sense was the family still semi-nomadic? Why?

1. Why is this biblical passage rarely read in public in Christian congregations today? What, however, could we profitably learn from it in a day like ours when God's people seem just as involved with their pagan neighbours as Jacob's family was then?
2. How was Tamar, who was willing to pose as a Canaanite cult prostitute, more righteous than Joseph's son, Judah (Dt 25:5-10; Ru 4:1-13)? How does our society today cope with childlessness, widowhood, singleness? What can the Christian family do to compensate when our social customs and services fail?
3. Why might it be that Tamar, as the mother of Perez, is one of the very few women singled out for mention in the honourable lineage of Jesus' father Joseph (Mt 1:3)? Why might it be that all of the women mentioned also happen to have been somewhat sexually "irregular" from a Jewish point of view? How willing are we to acknowledge the sexual irregularities in our family tree, and even to emphasize them? How does God use even sexual irregularities to accomplish his good purposes (Mt 1:18-25)?
4. What kind of man is Judah at this stage of his life? What do you make of his apparent "double standard"? What about your character is revealed by your strongest judgement of the sins of others? How might this relate to Jesus' "Golden Rule" (Mt 15:12) and his "Law of Love" (Mt 5:43-48; Jn 15:12; Ro 5:8) and even his way of recognizing virtue (Mt 7:16-20)?

1. In what ways did Joseph exemplify the best qualities of his ancestors? What positive and negative qualities of your ancestors do you exemplify? What qualities do you hope your children and grandchildren may inherit from you? And what do you hope they will not pick up from you? Why?
2. How could Joseph be described as a model slave, servant or employee? Does faithfulness to God and to life's relationships and commitments guarantee a trouble-free life? How so? What has been your experience here?
3. How do you cope with being wrongly accused? What are your attitudes to those who believe such false accusations? How does it help to know that God knows better and that He cares about your innocence (1 Pt 2:11-23; 3:13-17; 4:12-19; 5:6-11)? What evidence is there that Joseph's master, the captain of the bodyguard, really continued to believe in Joseph's reliability (39:20-23; 40:3f; 41:12)? Why, then, did he imprison Joseph for so long, even in a dungeon (40:15; 41:1, 14)?
4. What factors made Joseph so successful over and over in spite of his difficult circumstances? What are the ways that God continued to be with Joseph by blessing him and others associated with him? Have you found this true in your life? How?
5. Even in social and sexual situations, who ultimately do we sin against (a) according to Joseph (v 8f), (b) David (Ps 51:4) and (c) God (20:6)? Why? How often do you remember this? How and why, then, is repentance always appropriate?

TRAIL I -- SECTION 32: Genesis 40:1-41:14.

1. What qualities of Joseph are exhibited in ch 39 & 40? How do you respond to people with such qualities? Which of these qualities would you like to have? Why? How could they ever be yours?
2. What is Joseph's concept of God? How does your concept of him compare?
3. What is Joseph's claim about dream interpretation (40:8; 41:16)? Do you believe it? Why? Then why would you tell the dream to someone else? To whom? Have you ever interpreted a dream for someone? When? How were you able? How correct were you? Was the interpretation taken seriously? What was the outcome?
4. How could Joseph be an example to us about how to make the most of our circumstances? What are the greatest challenges of your present circumstances? What are the greatest opportunities? How are they related? How, then, can you focus on the one rather than the other?
5. How often do we forget people who help us? With what consequences for them? What can and should we do if and when something reminds us of how helpful someone had been to us? What else might we prefer to do? Why?

1. How important are dreams, among God's ways for guiding his people? How seriously do you take your dreams? Should you make more of them? Can you interpret them yourself? Who/what might help you discern their meaning? What sort of interpretations do you tend to get? Are they the kind you want? Are they trustworthy? How might you get God's interpretations? How would you recognize that they were his interpretations? Do you really want God's interpretations? Why?
2. What about Joseph so impressed Pharaoh and his court that he was made a ruler of Egypt? How should Christians recognize and employ leadership in (a) the church, (b) the community and (c) the country? How do you view and support fellow Christians who are called to such leadership positions? With what leadership do you think you could well be entrusted with? What help would you like to exercise it?
3. How do you view the traditional types of insignia and perks of human leadership? Are they a help or hindrance? Why? If they were given to you, what would you do with them and why?
4. What biblical evidence is there that Joseph remained a Jewish hero? How popular is his name even today for Jews? Is it a name you like? Why? Why might have motivated some later Jewish rabbinic legends to claim that Asenath, Joseph's Egyptian wife, was really the daughter of Joseph's raped half-sister, Dinah (34:2f), even in spite of contrary biblical evidence (46:15, 20)? Is this the sort of thing that Paul urges Timothy to avoid in 1 Ti 1:3f; 4:7 & 2 Ti 4:4?
5. If we Christians claim to have found in Jesus Christ the Bread of Life (John 6:35, 48, 51), and people around us are spiritually starving and dying, what spiritual lesson may we draw from vv 54-57? What other spiritual lessons might we draw from this whole story?

1. What motivated Joseph's apparent harshness towards his brothers? Why does God often use similar methods with his people (Jr 31:18-20; Pr 3:11f; He 12:6-11)? Have you ever experienced such treatment by God? What did that mean to you (a) then and (b) later?
2. Why do you think that Joseph put so much emphasis on whether or not his brothers were honest men telling the truth? How important is honesty and truth to you? To God? Why? When is verification of truth claims most needed? Why?
3. Why do you think Joseph kept Simon, the second eldest brother, as hostage, rather than Reuben, the eldest (29:31-33; 37:21-30)? What kind of person had Reuben become (35:22)? How and to what extent had Joseph's brothers come to recognize their guilt? How can we cope with guilt and its consequences?
4. Why do you think the brothers blamed God for the return of their money? Would you have done so? Why?
5. How just was the attitude of Jacob in v 36? What are your attitudes like, when everything seems against you? How could they be quite different (Ps 43:5; Ro 5:1-5; Ph 4:4-7; Ja 1:2-4)?

TRAIL I -- SECTION 35: Genesis 43.

1. What insight do we get here into Jacob's character and values in his old age? To what extent has he changed (37:10f, 34f; 42:1-4; 36-38; 43:1-14)? How have you and your values changed over the years? What has contributed to this? Are you happy with the change? Why?
2. Why do you think that Jacob yielded to Judah's appeal when he had rejected the earlier appeal of his eldest son, Reuben (35:22; 37:26; 38:26; 42:37f; 49:3f, 8)? What can we learn from this?
3. To what extent does Joseph seem to have adopted the customs of Egyptian culture without compromising his convictions about God and his will (39:9; 41:14, 16, 28, 32, 39, 42-45, 51f)? How can Joseph be a model for Christians on how to be "in the world" but "not of it" as God's children (Jn 17:14-16)? Where might you be in the greatest danger of compromising your Christian convictions? What can you do about this? How?
4. Why do you think that Joseph gave to Benjamin a food portion five times as large as he gave to his half-brothers (37:4)? When is such inequity warranted? Why?
5. What seem to be the best exports of rural Canaan in that era? How valuable might they be in highly civilized Egypt? Why might it be wise to take double the money with them the second time?

TRAIL I -- SECTION 36: Genesis 44.

1. How is Joseph's treatment of his brother, Benjamin, designed to bring out his half-brothers' present true character? To what extent do his half-brothers' behaviours show a real change in them (37:18-35)? How do you cope with favouritism?
2. Why do you think that in this second trip to Egypt it is Judah who takes the lead when matters become difficult (43:3, 8-10)? What qualities are revealed in his speech (vv 18-34)? How has he changed (37:26f; 38)? What might this teach us about despairing of anyone? How would you like to change? How can people change?
3. In what sense was Joseph a diviner (vv 5, 15; 37:5-10; 40:8; 41:8-16 25, 28, 38f)? Where does that place him in the long biblical prophetic tradition (20:7; Nu 12:6; Dt 13:1-5; Ac 21:9-14; 1 Co 12:10; 14:39)? Might this justify Christian involvement in the divination of our day (Lv 19:26, 31; 20:27; Dt 18:9-22; 2 K 17:17f)? Why (Is 8:19)?
4. Why does Judah say in v 16 that it was God who found out their iniquity (42:21f)?
5. Have you ever stood surety for someone or something as Judah did here? What was involved? Would you have responded as Judah did in a similar circumstance? Why?

TRAILII -- SECTION 37: Genesis 45.

1. For what of Joseph's present circumstances is God said to be responsible? How far does God's sovereignty, and therefore responsibility, extend? Are Joseph and his brothers not also responsible? How do you distinguish who is responsible, God, others and/or yourself? When Christians work together with God, do we share responsibility with him (Mk 16:20; 1 Co 3:9; 2 Co 6:1)?
2. What can we learn from Joseph about having a proper attitude in all our circumstances, both good and bad? How can our attitude be improved (Ro 12:2; Ep 4:23f)?
3. What were the depth and range of feelings of each of the participants in this reconciliation? How much does God himself long for and rejoice in the reconciliation of his wayward children to himself (Lk 15:20-24)? How have you responded to God's efforts to reconcile you to himself (2 Co 5:20)? Who is it that God calls to be ambassadors or servants/ministers of his reconciliation (2 Co 5:18-16:1)? What does this mean for you?
4. How convinced was Joseph that his brothers had completely changed? Are you completely changed by God's Spirit yet? How so? Why did Joseph not keep one of his brothers hostage until they returned with his father? What is involved in trusting people who are not completely trustworthy? Are you able to do it? Why? How?
5. What does it take to convince Jacob that Joseph really is alive and thriving in Egypt 20 years after being presumed dead? Why? What would help you believe what seems improbable, if not impossible? For you, which impossibilities are harder to believe, good or bad ones? Why?

1. How did God show his care in dealing with Jacob's concern about leaving Canaan, the land of God's promise (28:13-15; 35:10-12)? How does God show his care in dealing with your major concerns (Ps 37:5; 1 P 5:7)? How could this be true for your present anxieties (Mt 6:25-33; Lk 12:22-33)?
2. How might the fulfillment of God's promise (46:3) be easier to keep in the settled civilization of Egypt than in the semi-nomadic conditions of the patriarchs' lives in Canaan? What does this teach us about God's providence? What twists and turns has God's providence taken in your life? Can you face the future possible twists and turns with God's promises (Pr 3:5f; Mt 18:20; 28:20)?
3. Why did Jacob and his family bring everything they had to Egypt in spite of Pharaoh's promise to give them something better in Egypt (45:10, 18, 20; 46:2ff; 47:4)? What would you have done? Why? Who was Jacob that he should bless a Pharaoh (47:7-10)?
4. What characteristics of Joseph are revealed in his management of Jacob's arrival and settlement in Goshen?
5. How does settlement in the relatively isolated land of Goshen in the eastern delta of the Nile River provide what was needed to help preserve their Israelite identity in an alien culture? How did it also appeal to Egyptian sensitivities about mixing with shepherds? Why might Egyptians have been so concerned? Should Israelites have been concerned about mixing with Egyptians? Why?

1. What do you think of the socio-economic principles and practices employed by Joseph to help the famine victims of Egypt? Who were privileged? Why? Who benefited in the short and in the long term? Why might Pharaoh have good reason to be very pleased with Joseph's plan and its long-term results? How applicable are these principles and practices today? Are there other biblical socio-economic considerations you would want to add? How so?
2. Why do you think that Jacob was so insistent that he be buried with his ancestors in the cave of the field at Machpelah near Mamre/Hebron (23:19; 47:29ff; 49:29-32)? What determines where you want to be buried?
3. Might Jacob be remembering his own ascendancy over Esau, his elder brother (25:21-34; ch. 27), in deliberately preferring Joseph's younger son, Ephraim? How does your own experience influence your treatment of your children, grandchildren and others? Does this help them? How? How was God's hand evident in this?
4. Notice how Jacob transferred Reuben's birthright of a double portion of inheritance as the first born son to Joseph by means of adopting Joseph's two teenage sons as his own (48:5f, 25f, 22; 1 Ch 5:1). Which of Jacob's two wives now had the son who received the special blessing? How might Jacob's action have influenced the later form of the birthright law (Dt 21:15-17)?
5. What seemed to have influenced Jacob's two brief contrasting assessments of his life at 130 years (47:9) and at 147 years (48:15f)? How could they both be true? What might be a more objective assessment? How would you sum up your life to date? Are you open to a different future? Why?

TRAIL I -- SECTION 40:

Genesis 49.

1. How well do Jacob's predictions and metaphors fit the characters of Reuben, Judah and Joseph as we know them so far?
2. What kind of future, especially spiritually, might someone who knew you years ago have predicted for you? What metaphors might they have used? How correct would they have been? What metaphors would now be more appropriate? How do you account for what they failed to predict? What difference can knowing God and following His ways make in a life? Why?
3. How diverse and sometimes unpromising were the human materials which God chose for the fulfillment of his purposes (Dt 7:7f; 9:4-6)? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the people that you see God using today? Which are more useful to him, our human strengths or our weaknesses (Ph 4:13; 2 Co 12:9f)? How closely connected are they? What has human giftedness to do with spiritual giftedness (1 Co 12:4-11)? Which do/ does God use? Why?
4. Try to frame some tentative predictions and metaphors for some of your family members and friends, especially for your children and grandchildren. Pray for them now in light of your hopes and concerns.
5. What is implied in the brief but pregnant description of Jacob's death (49:33)? Would you want to die in similar circumstances?

TRAIL I -- SECTION 41: Genesis 37-50 Review.

1. In what ways might Joseph's early life have prepared him for the responsible roles God intended for him to play later? How did God help him to remain so free of bitterness in the face of undeserved suffering? What kept him from being spoiled by increasingly great responsibility and wealth (40:8; 41:16, 25, 39, 51f; 42:18; 45:4-9; 50:19-21; Ac 7-9f)? How could God help you cope and even triumph in somewhat similar circumstances (1 Co 10:13; 1 P 4:19; 2 P 2:9)?
2. What roles did Joseph see God playing in his life to make it fruitful? What roles do you see that God has played in your life to make it fruitful?
3. What sorts of influence for good did the life of the one man, Joseph, have upon his family, Egypt and the surrounding peoples? How was that possible for Joseph? What might be the positive impacts of your life in its various spheres? How could that be possible through you?
4. How long did the powers that be remember Joseph and his great contribution to Egypt (Ex 1:6-9)? How typical is that even today? How well is even Jesus' much greater contribution to all humanity remembered and appreciated in our "post-Christian" era? Why is that? What can be done about it?
5. In what ways might Joseph be viewed as a prototype of God's coming Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth?

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**Review your rough notes on the Comprehensive Question for Train 1 (at the beginning of Section1) and write up your answer now**

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