

# Daily Reading Guide

The Book of

# GENESIS



The **Methodist Church** 

**BIBLE**  
month







# INTRODUCTION

**Genesis** is the starting point for all Christian theology and explores many of the foundational questions of life and faith:

**Who is God?**

**What is God like?**

**How does God interact with the world?**

**How is that world meant to be?**

**What does it mean to be human?**

**What does it look like to be God's people?**

Through the book, we get to journey with many different characters as they wrestle (sometimes literally!) with finding answers to these questions in the midst of the messiness and uncertainty of life.

Through this **Daily Reading Guide**, join us for the adventure and discover for yourself the life-giving truths that this brilliant book ponders and imparts.







# DAY 1

## Genesis 1:1 – 2:4a

We learn two very important, counter-cultural lessons from this poetic creation story. First, God is a God who lovingly, artistically, and intentionally creates life. Second, we have been lovingly, artistically, and intentionally created to partner with God in the continued nurturing of that life. This makes the Bible's understanding of creation very different to other ancient Near Eastern ideas. Our God is not at war with other cosmic beings, creation is not an accident, and humans do not merely exist to be slaves to various deities. Rather, Yahweh is a God who is sovereign, who values life, and who creates us as beings in a privileged relationship with God.

***What poetic patterns can you see in this text? What rhythms and refrains can you detect?***

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# DAY 2

## Genesis 2:4b-25

The second chapter of the Bible offers us a different creation story that contrasts with, but also complements, the first. Instead of exploring the whole cosmos and every creature in it, we're now focusing in on a garden and two humans. This chapter could be considered an example of what partnering with God in the continued nurturing of creation is meant to look like. Adam and his new wife, later to be called Eve (3:20), represent all of us: their names literally mean 'Humanity' and 'Life'. They are equals: the woman is created out of one half of Adam – taken from his side (not simply his rib as is often translated) and the term "helper" used to describe her is most often applied to Yahweh. They find a sense of unashamed freedom in following God's guidance and instruction about what is good and life-giving.

***What similarities and differences can you notice between this creation account and that of Genesis 1? In what ways are they complementary and contrasting?***





# DAY 3

## Genesis 3:1-24

Genesis never actually describes this story as a 'fall'. Nor does the word 'sin' even feature. It serves as a defining example of how the partnership between humanity and God can break down. The woman and her husband (who is right there with her) are tempted and deceived away from God's life-nurturing guidance. They 'see' something that is good, pleasing, and desirable and 'take' it for themselves, despite being warned not to. This act of defiance against God appears to fracture the harmony of the cosmos. The relationships humans had enjoyed with each other, with God and with creation are all impacted. Shame, fear, blame, pain, toil, and inequality are all experienced as consequences. Worst of all, they are exiled from Eden – the place of God's presence.

***Think of how you have seen this episode depicted in films or art. What is different?***

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# DAY 4

## Genesis 4:1 – 5:32

Sin is now “lurking at the door” of new generations (4:7). Will they crush it or be struck by it (3:15)? Similar to his parents, Cain has an opportunity to respond to God’s determinations positively or negatively. Like his parents, he chooses death. After killing his brother, God exiles Cain too. In what appears to be a deliberate escalation of violence, Lamech avenges himself 77 times. Things are going rapidly downhill. The genealogy begins with a reminder that humans are meant to be God’s image-bearing partners. We’re taken through the generations leading up to Noah, who is introduced to us as someone who might represent a hopeful shift in the spiralling state of humanity.

***Do you find it helpful that sin is personified as something that “lurks at the door”? Or do you see it more as an interior moral failure?***

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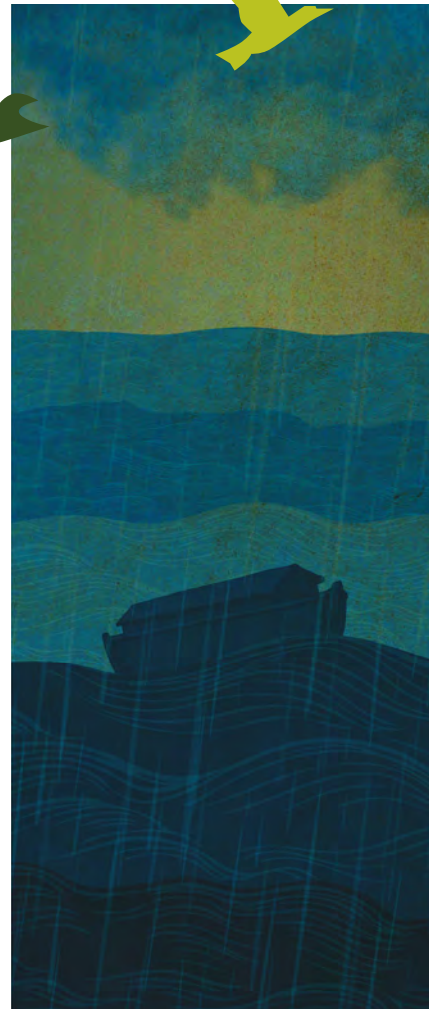
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# DAY 5

## Genesis 6:1 – 9:29

This is a well-known story with a couple of key, often-overlooked details. First, God's primary reaction to the corruption of humanity is grief and regret, not anger (6:6). Second, the climax of the story is that God determines *not* to be this kind of destructive deity ever again (8:21; 9:11; 9:15). This is a story about God deciding to adapt around human failure. Despite knowing that humans themselves continue to be corrupt, and despite that corruption having a negative impact on creation, God commits to still nurturing creation in partnership with them (8:21; 9:1-3). Noah and his family are the Bible's first example of a 'remnant' – a group of faithful people whom God rescues from judgement in order to continue the creation-nurturing partnership with them.

***What elements does this story share with Genesis 1:6-8?***





# DAY 6

## Genesis 10:1-32

This chapter isn't simply a family tree. You might recognise many of the names of people here as the names of places; the 'families' described are made up of politically allied groups and nations. Notice that the lineage of Ham – who in the previous chapter sinned against his father, Noah, and was cursed because of it – contains people that Israel was often at war with: Egypt, Canaan, Babylon, Assyria. Central to the theology of this chapter is the idea that, even though nations may rise against one another and even though Israel may find themselves at odds with particular groups, all of humanity is actually part of the same family.

***Do you feel a sense of connection to all humans, or more to the ones in your tribe?***

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# DAY 7

## Genesis 11:1-32

The Tower of Babel is a curious story. It is an episode from Ham's family line, which, as we're told in chapter 10:10, has spread to Shinar – ancient Babylonia. The unity the people were seeking wasn't necessarily bad, but in this case it was turned against God and built upon the exploitation of others. Their desire was to elevate themselves to God-like status and resist the divine command to "fill the earth". The last time humans sought this kind of renown they had 'ruined' the earth (6:4-12). By describing the use of bricks for building the tower, the narrator also implies that slave labour has been employed (cf Exodus 5). Their scattering appears to be an example of God's commitment to not carrying out flood-like judgement again. The subsequent genealogy of Shem refocuses us on the line of election and anticipates the story of Abraham.

***Brickmaking was a pioneering technology that enabled the people to build higher than ever before; are there modern technologies (eg Artificial Intelligence) that concern you?***

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# DAY 8

## Genesis 12:1-20

The divine-human partnership that was offered globally (first via Adam and then via Noah), now finds a new focus in one family. The original instruction to multiply and rule (1:28) is now redefined: Abram must go and leave behind all he knows and will father a great nation that is to be a blessing to all other nations. Abram's partnership with God gets off to a rocky start. He goes to the place God shows him, but when he arrives, he decides it doesn't look very promising: there is a famine, so he leaves. Whilst in Egypt, his fear and deception lead to curses, not blessings, falling on Pharaoh's household. This is the first of many occasions in which Abram struggles to trust in God's faithfulness; a theme we will focus on in the second week of this Bible Month.

***God's first word to Abram is "Go". How easy do you find it to trust God when the future is unclear?***

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# DAY 9

## Genesis 13:1 – 14:24

The pendulum of Abram's faith seems to swing back and forth. The initial success of going where God told him to is followed by an initial failure in Egypt. Now, in the midst of a land feud with Lot, Abram relinquishes claims to specific lands, apparently trusting God to provide for him. God blesses Abram for his faith and reaffirms the promises already made (13:14, cf 12:6-7). Lot's choice of the best land quickly comes back to bite him. He is taken captive during a localised war. Abram rescues him and then exercises further faith by refusing to take payment or possessions from Sodom, instead relying on God's provision alone. Melchizedek blesses Abram, who in turn blesses Melchizedek.

*Is this reciprocal blessing an early example of the outworking of God's words in chapter 12:3?*





# DAY 10

## Genesis 15:1-21

As Debra Reid notes in the *30 Days with Genesis* booklet, following God hasn't been a bed of roses for Abram thus far. And, despite his tentative faith, he still has no land rights and no offspring. God appears to know Abram's fears and comes to him in a vision. In a frank conversation, Abram voices his concerns and God responds by emphatically restating the promises, giving them covenantal weight through a ritual. Abram is given an insight into just how long it might take for these promises to actually be fulfilled but is reassured that they will come to pass. His choice to believe in God despite his present circumstances (no land, no offspring!) marks a shift in their relationship. In a move that becomes significant for New Testament understandings of what it means to be one of God's people, he is now declared "righteous".

***In the covenantal ritual, both parties normally walked together between the animal halves. How does the text show that this particular covenant was more one-sided?***

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# DAY 11

## Genesis 16:1-16

This story is as profound as it is troubling. In another moment of mistrust in God, Abram and Sarai conspire to obtain the offspring they've been promised but not yet had. They force the issue through a practice we would now describe as involving the rape, impregnation, abuse, and exile of a servant who they literally call 'immigrant' (in Hebrew, *Hagar*). The Angel of the Lord goes looking for her. His instruction to return to Abram and Sarai and the words spoken over Ishmael are uncomfortable. But in a startling move, God makes covenantal promises with this alternative Abrahamic lineage. The testimony of this mistreated, outcast, foreign victim is that God is a God who sees her. The implication of the narrative is that God is concerned for those beyond the covenant community and committed to seeing them blessed too (cf 12:3-4).

***How does the story of Hagar in the wilderness compare with the story of Moses and the burning bush in Exodus 3?***

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# DAY 12

## Genesis 17:1 – 18:15

Again, God reaffirms the covenant promises to Abram – twice! By this point, we're in no doubt about the unworthiness of Abram and the relentless patience and faithfulness of God. The first reaffirmation is symbolised through the ritual act of circumcision. It is interesting that this act involves marking the same bodily organ Abram had previously used in his attempt to force God's promises (chapter 16). Perhaps it is meant to serve as constant reminder that God is meant to be the source of fruitfulness and blessing? In v 17-18, Abram, now renamed Abraham, still seems to lack faith that God can provide offspring through Sarai (now Sarah), proposing Ishmael serve as heir instead. Sarah also has doubts, laughing at the very thought of conceiving. Now this promise gets a timeline: within a year, a son will be born.

***Both Abraham and Sarah find what they're asked to believe laughable. Are there elements of the Christian faith you find hard it to believe?***



# DAY 13

## Genesis 18:16 – 19:38

The stories here reflect several themes already encountered. Abraham's pendulum has swung back to faithfulness. Here he intercedes for the blessing – or salvation – of nations (cf 12:2). Remarkably, God is open to changing plans in response to Abraham's interventions; this is the divine/human partnership at work! God has come down to see and assess the situation, just like at Babel (18:21 cf 11:5), having heard the outcry of victims, as with Hagar (18:20 cf 16:11). Similar to Noah's time, everyone apart from one family have turned towards evil (cf 6:9-12). This time, however, judgement is meted out in a localised rather than global way. The text offers little reflection on the uncomfortable accounts of Lot's daughters though it is right to be bothered by them. The incest sequence is best understood as a crude origin story for the Moabites and Ammonites: these Israelite enemies are depicted with a shameful progeny but still included in Abraham's family.

*How does Abraham manage to change God's mind?*

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# DAY 14

## Genesis 20:1 – 21:34

History seems to keep repeating itself with subtle but meaningful differences. In Genesis 12, God's plan was to build a nation through Abraham that would bless the world. But the first thing Abraham does is give away his wife and bring a curse on Pharaoh's house. Now the same thing happens again. Still with no son and again fearful of a foreign ruler, Abraham lies about Sarah being his sister and gives her away, this time to Abimelech. God intervenes, resulting in Abimelech recognising God (20:3-7; 21:22), blessing foreigners with refuge and property (20:14-15), and challenging Abraham to be a better human (21:23)! Abimelech here is the one depicted as acting as like a faithful covenant partner! Meanwhile, Sarah has at last conceived Isaac, reigniting family tensions. Hagar and Ishmael are sent away, but God continues to protect and care for them. These stories remind us that God cares for and works through those beyond the 'chosen' people.

***Hagar is an inspirational figure for many womanist black-female theologians. Can you see why?***



# DAY 15

## Genesis 22:1-24

Many people find this story uncomfortable. Why would God ask Abraham to sacrifice Isaac? What does it say about Abraham that he is willing to? It is helpful to set this narrative in the context of ancient Near Eastern religions and as the climax of Abraham's story. Abraham's consistent challenge has been to trust in God's commands and ability to fulfil the covenant promises. Now God has asked him to do something that many ancient Near Eastern gods would ask of people – sacrifice your child. After all he's been through, and the many times God has shown up, Abraham seems to finally understand and trust God (v 8, 12), demonstrating faith where he previously has failed to (v 9-10). Simultaneously, God is revealed to be unlike those other gods, providing a substitute sacrifice instead. This story presents God as both 'tester' and 'provider' – two themes that become central to Israel's wilderness wonderings (see Exodus 15:22 – 17:7, 20:20).

***How does this story make you feel? In what ways does it serve as a climax of Abraham's story so far?***

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# DAY 16


## Genesis 23:1 – 24:67

These chapters begin the transition of the narrative focus from Abraham to his descendants. Sarah's death and burial lead to a highly significant moment: for the first time since he set out from Ur, Abraham has become a landowner. He buys the land rather than accepting it as a gift to ensure the deed is legitimate and can be attributed to God's provision rather than Hittite kindness. All God's covenant promises have been fulfilled: Abraham has received land and an heir. As the narrator notes, God has now blessed him in every way (24:1). The final piece of the puzzle it seems is finding Isaac a suitable wife, which proves to be a relatively painless task. One that introduces us to Laban, who will pop up later during Jacob's travels.

*Count how many times Rebekah and Isaac are each mentioned in chapter 24. Why do you think Isaac is such a minor character in the story?*



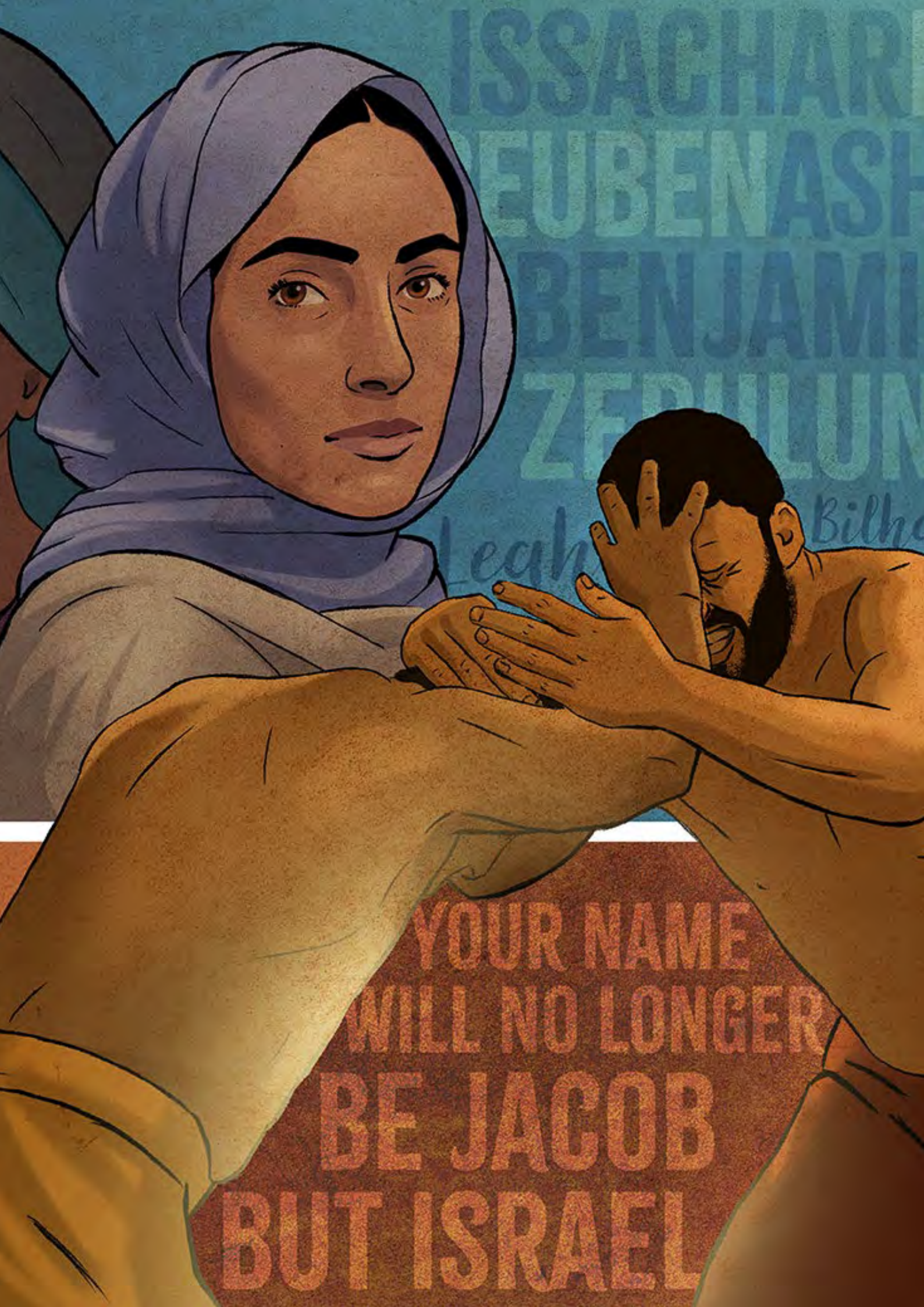
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ISSACHAR

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BENJAMIN

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YOUR NAME  
WILL NO LONGER  
BE JACOB  
BUT ISRAEL



# DAY 17

## Genesis 25:1 – 26:35

These chapters complete the transition of the narrative from Abraham to his descendants. Abraham's death is a peaceful one, but his offspring already seemed destined for conflict: Ishmael and Isaac both spawn twelve tribes that we are told will live in hostility to one another. Rebekah is informed that her unborn twins also represent two nations, and that the younger will dominate the older. The birth itself demonstrates this conflict; Jacob comes out grappling with his brother. The parents appear to stoke the rivalry, each choosing a favourite. God renews the covenant with this new generation while Isaac faces his own version of his father's tests: famine, fear of foreign rulers, and arguments over wells. The narrator is clear, Abraham's life has come to an end, but the story, calling, promises and tensions very much continue.

***What do you feel about Isaac and Rebekah each having a favourite twin?***

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# DAY 18

## Genesis 27:1 – 28:9

Jacob's story is a fascinating one. We are told before he is born that he is destined to be the covenantal heir (25:23). Yet he seems determined to force the issue anyway, trying to ensure it through theft. He is devious, greedy, and self-interested. His life seems to echo the failures in Eden and foreshadow the later struggles of the nation of Israel. It is noteworthy here that Jacob refers to the Lord as *Isaac's God* (27:20). He isn't sure yet that he wants to serve God himself; he wants the covenant's blessings without the responsibilities. As he is exiled, ostensibly to find a suitable wife but mostly for his protection, he does indeed receive the covenant promises (28:3-4). But the question raised is whether or not he will rely on God for their provision, or go about acquiring them by his own means.

***Who do you think bears the blame for this deception – Jacob or Rebekah? Why?***

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# DAY 19

## Genesis 28:10 – 30:24

This is the first of Jacob's significant encounters with God. Despite Jacob's duplicity, God seems willing to honour the covenant, promising land, descendants, and protection. God's aim is still the blessing of the whole earth (28:14b) but Jacob remains focused on himself. He comes away from the encounter with only a provisional commitment: "If God will be with *me* and will watch over *me*... then the LORD will be my God" (28:20-21). Jacob the deceiver meets his match in Laban, whose trickery leads to a huge amount of ongoing grief for everyone involved. The seemingly romantic purity of Jacob's love for Rachel (28:20) is manipulated and distorted. The ensuing rivalry between Rachel and Leah and their use of their maidservants recalls the conflict between Sarah and Hagar. The meaning of the names given to the maidservants and sons subtly summarise the painful saga, emphasising that these promised descendants represent both conflict and blessing.

***How do you feel about the portrayal of Bilhah and Zilpah in this story?***







# DAY 21

## Genesis 32:3 – 33:20

Jacob finds himself, for the first time, at the end of strength and cunning. Fearful of Esau's wrath, he prays to God, fulfilling the bargain made back in chapter 28:20-21. In the midst of his fear, he finds himself wrestling an enigmatic being. The text identifies the being as a man (32:24-26), but this 'man' acts with divine authority (32:28-29), and Jacob refers to them as God (32:30). The narrator doesn't resolve this mystery but focuses on the result of the encounter. Jacob is renamed Israel – one who struggles with God – an apt description for his life and that of the nation he fathers! Now carrying a limp from this struggling, Jacob shows some humility (33:3), posturing himself as a servant (33:14), seemingly surrendering the position of power and blessing he'd deceitfully claimed years before. The years of wrestling and exile finally seem over; he settles peacefully in the Promised Land.

***Who do you think wrestled with Jacob? A human, an angel, God?***



# DAY 22

## Genesis 34:1-31

This is an odd and horrid story. As with the strange account of Lot and his daughters, the names of individuals also relate whole tribes and cities. It is likely this is a heavily biased and exaggerated retelling of cultural history, probably pointing towards the later issue of intermarriage between Israel and the surrounding nations (34:7-10 cf Deuteronomy 7:1-6). No actors come off well here. Dinah's rape and their self-interest (v 23) condemns Shechem and Hamor. But the vengeance of Jacob's sons is callous, crude and completely disproportionate: they weaponised the means through which others were able to join God's covenant community. In doing so, the family meant to bless other nations instead deceives, murders and loots. Verse 31 poses the reader a question: how should God's people respond when they are victims of injustice? The sons' solution is exposed as inhumane, sacrilegious folly.

***What does this tragic tale tell you about wrongdoing and revenge?***

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# DAY 23

## Genesis 35:1 – 36:43

These chapters represent another changing of the guard. They include the deaths of Rachel and Isaac, the birth of Benjamin, and the customary family lineages that mark the shift in narrative focus towards the next generations. With this transition comes a summary reminder of Jacob's personal transformation (35:10). He is now the faithful believer, leading his family in covenant fidelity (35:2-4). The covenant is also reiterated (35:11-12) marking its continuation beyond Jacob. The amicable separation of Jacob and Esau echoes that of Abraham and Lot. As with Ishmael (25:12-18), the lineage of Esau is given attention, offering an account of the formation of another future Israelite neighbour: the nation of Edom. Once again, this account stresses the familial connections that tie Israel to her would-be rivals. A reminder that, not only is God's blessing intended for all nations, but all nations also share the same fundamental heritage and DNA.

*In what ways has Jacob/Israel changed?*





# Notes

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# DAY 24

## Genesis 37:1-36

We're introduced to Joseph abruptly as a bit of a mixed character. He's a snitch (37:2) who seems to delight in his father's favouritism and has a bit of an arrogant streak (37:7, 9). His "bad report" about his brothers may well be accurate – they haven't exactly been good sons up until this point (cf 34:25-30; 35:22) and their jealousy of Joseph is almost as bad as Cain's was for Abel! The family dysfunctions are obvious, but at the centre of this chapter are questions of power – who gets to give it, who should receive it, and how should it be wielded? Jacob has clearly empowered Joseph. The dreams suggest God also backs this younger son. Joseph doesn't handle his position too well. The brothers seek to dethrone him whilst Reuben and Judah vie for leadership. These tensions and questions will continue through the rest of Joseph's story.

***Do you agree that Joseph is an arrogant snitch? Why?***

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# DAY 25

## Genesis 38

This uncomfortable, standalone chapter interrupts the unfolding narrative and raises many questions. A number of elements are worth noting. There are some clear similarities between this story and others: Lot's daughters (19:30-38), the birth of Jacob and Esau (25:19-26), etc. This is also another story about tricksters outsmarting one another. It was customary to care for widows by giving them heirs (cf Deuteronomy 25:5-10; Ruth 3:1-13; Mark 12:18-23). However, Onan (v 9) and Judah (v 11) are unwilling to fulfil this duty, hiding their reluctance in hollow shows of concern. Tamar's own trickery exposes this. When Judah realises what's happened, his anger at Tamar's 'guilt' immediately gives way to a recognition of his own. He is the villain in this story, who withholds justice from a widow and family member. Tamar's actions actually ensure the continuation of Judah's family line. She becomes a noteworthy foremother of David and Jesus (Matthew 1:3).

***What are the similarities and differences between Tamar and Ruth's unusual means of conceiving an heir?***

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# DAY 26

## Genesis 39:1 – 41:57

This is the first time the Lord is mentioned in relation to Joseph. It is God who guides his steps and gives him success (39:2), blessing Potiphar's household through him. Joseph's seasons in charge of Potiphar's house and then the royal prison prepare him for his later task of leading Pharaoh's Egypt. We are told he behaves fittingly, resisting temptation, but the narrator also wants us to note the lack of supervision he receives from his masters (39:6, 23). Will this be relevant later? Joseph appears quick to give God credit for his ability to interpret (40:8; 41:16), but he also appears to seek out opportunities to advance (40:14-15; 41:33). At each point in these chapters, those questions of power return: higher authorities show Joseph favour, increasing his responsibilities, but how does will he wield his power and gifts in each new setting (cf 41:49)?

***Is Joseph's acceptance of Pharaoh's neck chain, ring and chariot (41:42-43) appropriate, or a sign that he is betraying his people?***



# DAY 27

## Genesis 42:1 – 45:28

The various family reunions here display all the familiar tensions. Jacob still favours Rachel's children over his other sons (42:1, 4). Reuben and Judah continue to vie for leadership (42:37; 43:3-10). Joseph, back in a position of power, lords it over his brothers once again. His testing seems as much about cruel revenge as it does discerning whether they have reformed. No one seems particularly concerned for Simeon, who is abandoned in Egypt for a time! It is only the potential impact on Jacob of losing Benjamin that cuts through the dysfunctional drama. Judah's demonstration of self-sacrifice for the brother Joseph dearly loves is enough to end the power games. Joseph appears to recognise God's hand in his journey, but questions remain about his idea of salvation (45:7). The nepotistic indulgence of the gifts to his family is questionable during a time of international famine!

***Do you agree that God sent Joseph to Egypt? If so, why does God work in such messy ways?***

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# DAY 28

## Genesis 46:1 – 47:28

Up until this point in the Joseph story, God has mostly remained hidden – referred to by the narrator and other characters, but only acting behind the scenes. Now, God appears, making the same promise to Jacob as he had before, to go with him into a strange land and bring him home again (46:4 cf 28:15). The promised return, however, is directed towards the future nation of Israel; Jacob himself will die in Egypt (49:33 – 50:6). Joseph’s shrewdness reaches a climax here. First, he appears to swindle the best land for his own family. Next, he withholds the food he had stewarded on Egypt’s behalf and exploits the people out of all their wealth and property, eventually enslaving them. Ironically, they consider this salvation (47:25). The would-be saviour also claims what amounts to a double tithe as payment for their benevolence. These contrasts between God and Pharaoh begin to set the scene for the Exodus story.

***Is it right to regard Joseph, the exploiter and enslaver, as a hero of the faith? Why?***





# DAY 29

## Genesis 47:29 – 49:28

We begin to enter the final scenes of Genesis here as the narrative slowly shifts towards setting up the stories of Exodus. Jacob reiterates the covenant blessings, reminding Joseph and the reader that the Promised land is Canaan, not Egypt. Jacob also declares God to be his “shepherd” – an apt summary of his experience and the first reference to God in this role. He passes the covenant blessing to Joseph’s sons, continuing the surprising and counter-cultural preference for the younger son that runs through the rest of the book. Jacob’s parting words to the rest of his children appear to characterise the future histories of their tribes though these depictions are not all neatly tied to specific historical or biblical events. It is worth noting, however, the elevation of Judah to prominence, which alludes to a future royal line from which both David and the future Messiah come.

***Think back through Jacob’s life story: where is there a sense of God acting as a shepherd throughout it?***

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# DAY 30

## Genesis 49:29 – 50:26

The account of Jacob's burial is fascinating because it reads almost like a peaceful version of the exodus from Egypt. Here there is no slavery, plagues, fleeing or violence. Egypt mourns the loss of Jacob as if he was one of their own patriarchs, with chariots and Pharaoh's own dignitaries safely escorting the family to Canaan. The brothers then return to Egypt. Joseph's story ends quite abruptly but with some level of redemption. He appears to relinquish the control and power he once had (50:19) and reveals his own awareness of God's behind-the-scenes faithfulness (50:20). Despite finding home and prosperity in Egypt, Joseph states that he too yearns to be buried in the Promised Land (50:25). It will take another five books of the Bible until this yearning is satisfied (Joshua 24:32). His parting words to his brothers perfectly set up these following stories.

***Look back through this booklet and take in the whole sweeping narrative. What five words best summarise your experience over this month?***



# Notes

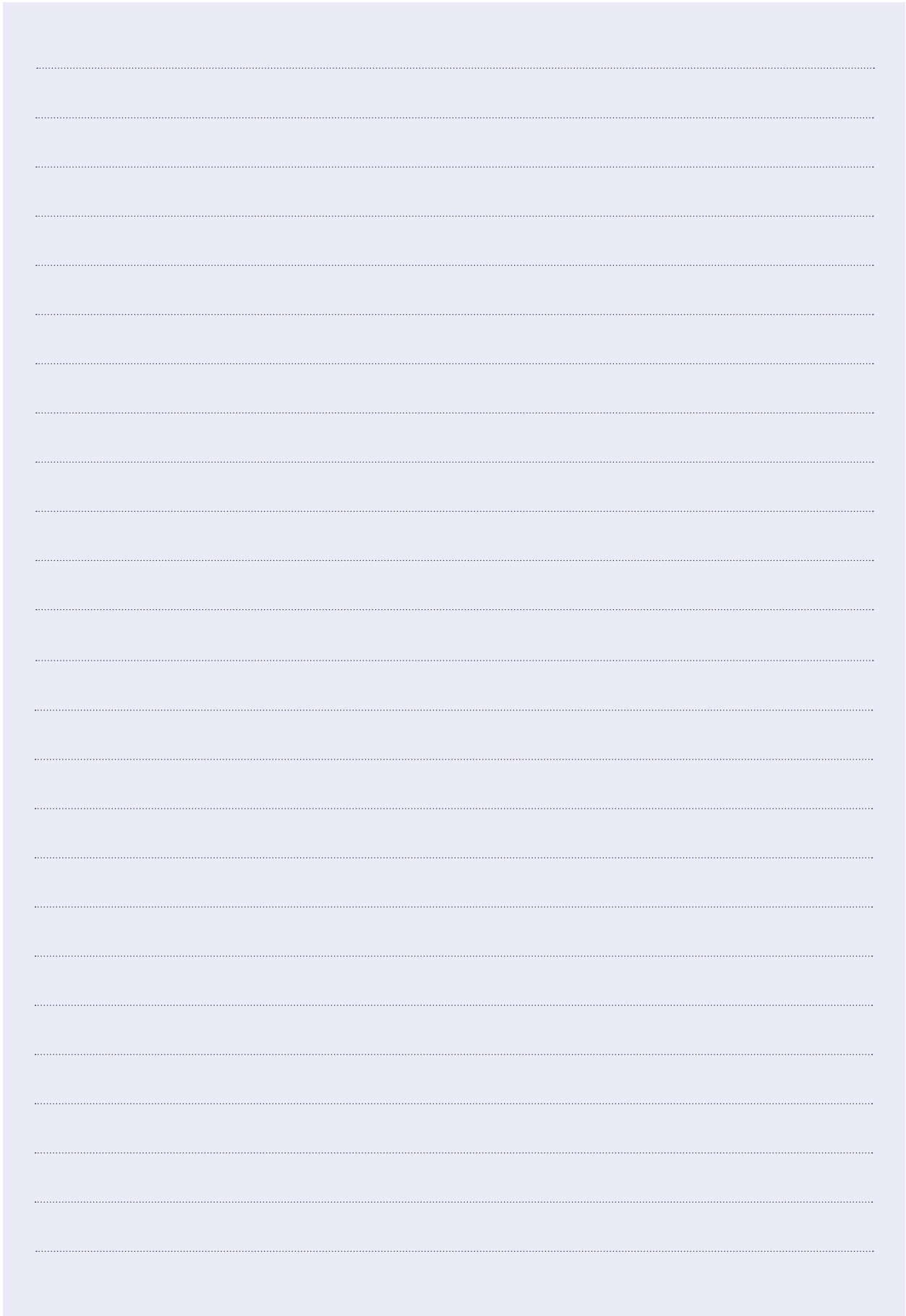
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# Notes

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