

11.11 Jacob Blesses Joseph's Children (Genesis 47:13–48:22; Hebrews 11:21)

✓ “*Check*” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows
[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that usually should not be read. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.
- (optional) Herein Is Love Commentary Series; *Genesis, A Commentary for Children*, by Nancy Ganz, Shepherd Press, 2002.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *Egyptian priests*: servants of Egyptian gods and temples; they did not serve a congregation but rather performed rites and magic to keep local gods from leaving their temples (<http://www.touregypt.net/featuresstories/priests.htm>. This site details Egyptian religion but is not recommended for students because of the Scripture admonition to be ignorant of the gods of the heathen—Exodus 23:13; Deuteronomy 12:30.)

Scripture (NASB)

13 Now there was no food in all the land, because the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine. 14 Joseph gathered all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan for the grain which they bought, and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. 15 When the money was all spent in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, “Give us food, for why should we die in your presence? For *our* money is gone.” 16 Then Joseph said, “Give up your livestock, and I will give you *food* for your livestock, since *your* money is gone.” 17 So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them food in exchange for the horses and the flocks and the herds and the donkeys; and he fed them with food in exchange for all their livestock that year. 18 When that year was ended, they came to him the next year and said to him, “We will not hide from my lord that our money is all spent, and the cattle are my lord's. There is nothing left for my lord except our bodies and our lands. 19 Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for food, and we and our land will be slaves to Pharaoh. So give us seed, that we may live and not die, and that the land may not be desolate.”

20 So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for every Egyptian sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them. Thus the land became Pharaoh's. 21 As for the people, he removed them to the cities from one end of Egypt's border to the other. 22 Only the land of the priests he did not buy, for the priests had an allotment from Pharaoh, and they lived off the allotment which Pharaoh gave them. Therefore, they did not sell their land. 23 Then Joseph said to the people, “Behold, I have today bought you and your land for Pharaoh; now, *here* is seed for you, and you may sow the land. 24 At the harvest you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh, and four-fifths shall be your own for seed of the field and for your food and for those of your households and as food for your little ones.” 25 So they said, “You have saved our lives! Let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's slaves.” 26 Joseph made it a statute concerning the land of Egypt *valid* to this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth; only the land of the priests did not become Pharaoh's.

27 Now Israel lived in the land of Egypt, in Goshen, and they acquired property in it and were fruitful and became very numerous. 28 Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years; so the length of Jacob's life was one hundred and forty-seven years.

29 When the time for Israel to die drew near, he called his son Joseph and said to him, “Please, if I have found favor in your sight, place now your hand under my thigh and deal with me in kindness and faithfulness. Please do not bury me in Egypt, 30 but when I lie down with my fathers, you shall carry me out of Egypt and

bury me in their burial place.” And he said, “I will do as you have said.” 31 He said, “Swear to me.” So he swore to him. Then Israel bowed *in worship* at the head of the bed.

48:1 Now it came about after these things that Joseph was told, “Behold, your father is sick.” So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim with him. 2 When it was told to Jacob, “Behold, your son Joseph has come to you,” Israel collected his strength and sat up in the bed. 3 Then Jacob said to Joseph, “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, 4 and He said to me, ‘Behold, I will make you fruitful and numerous, and I will make you a company of peoples, and will give this land to your descendants after you for an everlasting possession.’ 5 Now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are. 6 But your offspring that have been born after them shall be yours; they shall be called by the names of their brothers in their inheritance. 7 Now as for me, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died, to my sorrow, in the land of Canaan on the journey, when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).”

8 When Israel saw Joseph’s sons, he said, “Who are these?” 9 Joseph said to his father, “They are my sons, whom God has given me here.” So he said, “Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them.” 10 Now the eyes of Israel were *so* dim from age *that* he could not see. Then Joseph brought them close to him, and he kissed them and embraced them. 11 Israel said to Joseph, “I never expected to see your face, and behold, God has let me see your children as well.” 12 Then Joseph took them from his knees, and bowed with his face to the ground. 13 Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel’s left, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel’s right, and brought them close to him. 14 But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh’s head, crossing his hands, although Manasseh was the firstborn. 15 He blessed Joseph, and said, “The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, 16 The angel who has redeemed me from all evil, Bless the lads; And may my name live on in them, And the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; And may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.”

17 When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on Ephraim’s head, it displeased him; and he grasped his father’s hand to remove it from Ephraim’s head to Manasseh’s head. 18 Joseph said to his father, “Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn. Place your right hand on his head.” 19 But his father refused and said, “I know, my son, I know; he also will become a people and he also will be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.” 20 He blessed them that day, saying, “By you Israel will pronounce blessing, saying, ‘May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!’” Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh.

21 Then Israel said to Joseph, “Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers. 22 I give you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow.”

Hebrews 11:21 (ESV) By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff.

Introduction/Review:

Jacob/Israel had moved from Canaan to Egypt with the help of Pharaoh and Joseph, Pharaoh’s chief over all the country. The famine devastated both Egypt and Canaan, but Israel’s family was cared for by Joseph.

Story:

Payment for grain

What about the inhabitants of Egypt? How did they fare during the famine? Well, obviously, there was nothing to eat. At first, they paid money to Joseph for food. Joseph collected all that money and gave it to Pharaoh. Eventually, all the money of the Egyptians was spent; it was all in Pharaoh’s possession.

The Egyptians came to Joseph, asking, “Give us food, for why should we die? Our money is gone.”

How they could buy food now that their money was gone? Joseph's solution was this: "Give up your livestock, and I will give you food in exchange for your animals since your money is gone." That's what they did; they paid for food with their horses, flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, and donkeys. Sadly, this costly payment bought food ✓for about only one year. Now what would the Egyptians do?

The next year they came to Joseph and said, "We will not hide from my lord that our money is all spent, and our cattle are my lord's. There is nothing left for my lord except our bodies and our lands. Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for food, and we and our land will be slaves to Pharaoh.

What were these people saying? [They wanted to become slaves and to sell their land in order to be able to live.] What a sacrifice; yet, it was necessary in order even to exist.

So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh because every Egyptian sold his field when the famine continued to be so severe. In this way all the land of Egypt became Pharaoh's. One class of people was exempt from selling land, for Pharaoh had already been supporting them and continued to do so. That class was that of the priests. Joseph didn't meddle with this arrangement ✓already in place.

Relocation of people

Joseph relocated the people who sold him their land: "he removed them to the cities from one end of Egypt's border to the other" (Genesis 47:21). Why would he do that? A few reasons are considered: ✓(1) Hopefully, being removed from their property, the people might forget their land more easily than if they had stayed on it. (2) Thus, their children would not think of the formerly-owned land to be theirs. (3) Being put in cities and not living in outlying areas, there might be less chance of an uprising. (4) Another possible reason was "to teach the Egyptians not to reproach the Israelites with being exiles and strangers, when they were all of them removed from their native places, and were strangers, where they were" (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/genesis-47-21.html>).

Rent of land

As the famine neared its end, Joseph said to the people, "Here is seed for you, and you may sow it in the land. When you harvest the grain, you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh; four-fifths shall be your own for seed, for your food, for food of your servants, and food for your little ones."

This arrangement was fine with the Egyptians. They exclaimed, "You have saved our lives! Let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's slaves."

So Joseph made a long-lasting law that Pharaoh should have one fifth of all harvests.

Meanwhile, Israel lived in the land of Egypt, in Goshen, where they acquired property, were fruitful, and grew in number.

Demand from Jacob

One day about seventeen years after his arrival in Egypt, Jacob knew the time of his death was near. He called Joseph and directed him, saying, "Please do not bury me in Egypt, but when I die, carry me out of Egypt and bury me in the burial place of my fathers."

Joseph answered, "I will do as you have said."

Jacob wanted more assurance. He said, "Swear to me."

So Joseph swore to him. Then Israel bowed in worship at the head of his bed.

Blessing by Israel

Joseph went back to his home. Sometime later, probably not very long, a messenger told Joseph, "Your father is sick." So Joseph took his two sons, Manasseh (the older) and Ephraim (the younger), ✓who were

probably about twenty years old, and set off to visit his father.

Someone told Jacob, “Joseph has come to visit you.” That good news encouraged Israel to gather his strength and to sit up, perhaps on the side of his bed.

This visit was to be a time of blessing; so when Joseph arrived, Jacob rehearsed his own past blessings: “God Almighty appeared to me on the heavenly ladder at Bethel in the land of Canaan and blessed me. He said to me, ‘I will make you fruitful and numerous, and I will give this land to your descendants after you for an everlasting possession.’”

Then Jacob got down to the present blessing he was about to bestow: “Your two sons are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine just as Reuben and Simeon are.” In other words, not Reuben, Jacob’s actual firstborn son, but Joseph, his firstborn of Rachel, would receive a double portion. Manasseh and Ephraim would become two tribes from Joseph, who otherwise would be one tribe.

Jacob continued by reminiscing about Joseph’s mother. He said, “When I returned from Haran, sadly, Rachel died in the land of Canaan as we journeyed. We still had ✓about a mile or two to get to Ephrath when she died. I buried her there on the way to Bethlehem.”

Now, Jacob had trouble seeing, maybe not quite as much trouble as his father, Isaac, who was totally blind. He saw two other forms besides Joseph and asked, “Who are these?”

Joseph answered, “They are my sons, whom God has given me here.”

“Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them,” said Jacob.

When Joseph brought them close to him, his father kissed and hugged them, saying, “Just think. I never expected to see your face, but God has let me see your children as well.” Oh, God is good!

Joseph, thinking, too, of God’s goodness, bowed with his face to the ground, ✓perhaps in worship of God or in honor to his father.

Then Joseph took his sons and placed them before his father for the blessing. He put Ephraim toward Israel’s left hand, for the person on the left, the younger, would not receive as great a blessing as the one on Jacob’s right. Joseph placed Manasseh, the older son, toward Israel’s right hand.

Ephraim before Manasseh

Imagine Joseph’s confusion when Israel crossed his hands and stretched his right hand to the head of Ephraim, the younger, as if he would receive the greater blessing. With his arms crossed in this way, Jacob placed his left hand on Manasseh’s head even though Manasseh was the firstborn.

Israel’s blessing was fairly generic. He said, “The God before whom my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads, and may my name and the names of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, live on in them. May they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.”

What was going on here? Joseph was concerned—in fact, displeased. Before his father could continue any farther, he grasped his father’s hand to take it from Ephraim’s head to Manasseh’s head, saying, “Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn. Place your right hand on his head.”

But Jacob refused. “I know, my son,” he said. “I know. He also will become a great people. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.” So Jacob continued his blessing: “By you Israel will bless, saying, ‘May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!’” He didn’t say, “Manasseh and Ephraim,” but “Ephraim” before “Manasseh.” Putting Ephraim’s name first, he made him the recipient of the greater blessing.

Israel then said to Joseph, “I am about to die, but God will be with you and bring your body back to the land of your fathers. ✓I give you one portion more than your brothers.”*

Thus, Jacob/Israel blessed Joseph by giving his sons a double portion and by prophesying that he would go back to his homeland after he died.

*Teacher, you will notice I have changed this last sentence significantly from the text. Rather than explain this alteration, I refer you to John Gill's explanation at <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/genesis-48-22.html>.

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus
Again, we are reminded of Bethlehem and Rachel's "mourning for her children" when Herod slaughtered the babies there after Jesus had escaped to Egypt.
- "Honor your father and mother."
- As the Egyptians were required to pay one fifth of their harvest to Pharaoh, so we should be faithful to pay any debts we have and to pay a tenth to the Lord.

Activities:

- Play dough: hands and arms crossed; a bed
- Snack: Numbers 11:5 mentions fish as one of the foods missed by the Israelites. Make a tuna fish and macaroni salad, perhaps using alphabet macaroni or some other shape that would be interesting to students.
- Have students play act Jacob's blessing of Joseph's sons. Also, bowing to no one in particular, practice bowing to the ground as Joseph did before his father.
- Discuss the Biblical examples when the younger was blessed more than the elder: those examples are Jacob himself; Isaac, the promised son; Joseph over his brothers; Ephraim over Manasseh.
- Figure two-to-one parts for a variety of numbers. Say something like, "Peter, your family has six children. Into how many parts would the inheritance be divided? [Seven.] If you are firstborn, how many portions would you get? [Two.] How many would your siblings get? [One each.] This is how it was in Jacob's day; it is no longer the rule for us."
- Sing stanzas 1–6 of "Joseph," found at Lesson 11.01 or on the Songs page at teachingthebibleto kids.org, where an audio and a visual are available.
- Review questions: (Game: Color a 13-section circle found below. Back with paper towel and cut out all sections of the circle. For each correct answer, a student may place a section on a flannel board to complete the circle.)
 1. How did the Egyptians pay for grain? [First, with money; next with livestock; then with their land and selves.]
 2. For whom did Joseph buy all the land of Egypt? [For Pharaoh.]
 3. What did Joseph do with the people? [Moved them to cities.]
 4. Whose land did Joseph not buy? [The priests' land.]
 5. Why did Joseph not buy the priests' land? [Because they got an allotment from Pharaoh; they lived off that allotment.]
 6. How would the people rent the land after the famine was over? [They would give Pharaoh one fifth of the harvest.]
 7. How long did Jacob live in Egypt? [Seventeen years.]
 8. What did Jacob make Joseph promise? [To bury him in Canaan.]
 9. About whom was Jacob thinking as he spoke to Joseph? [Rachel.]

10. Joseph brought whom to his father for a blessing? [His two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.]
11. What was unusual about the way Jacob blessed Manasseh and Ephraim? [He crossed his hands, giving the greater blessing to the second born, Ephraim.]
12. Compared to his other sons, what did Jacob promise Joseph? [That he would have a double portion.]
13. What would Israel say when pronouncing a blessing. Hint: “May you be like _____ _____ _____.” [Ephraim and Manasseh, with Ephraim being mentioned first.]

Memory Verse[s]: (NASB)

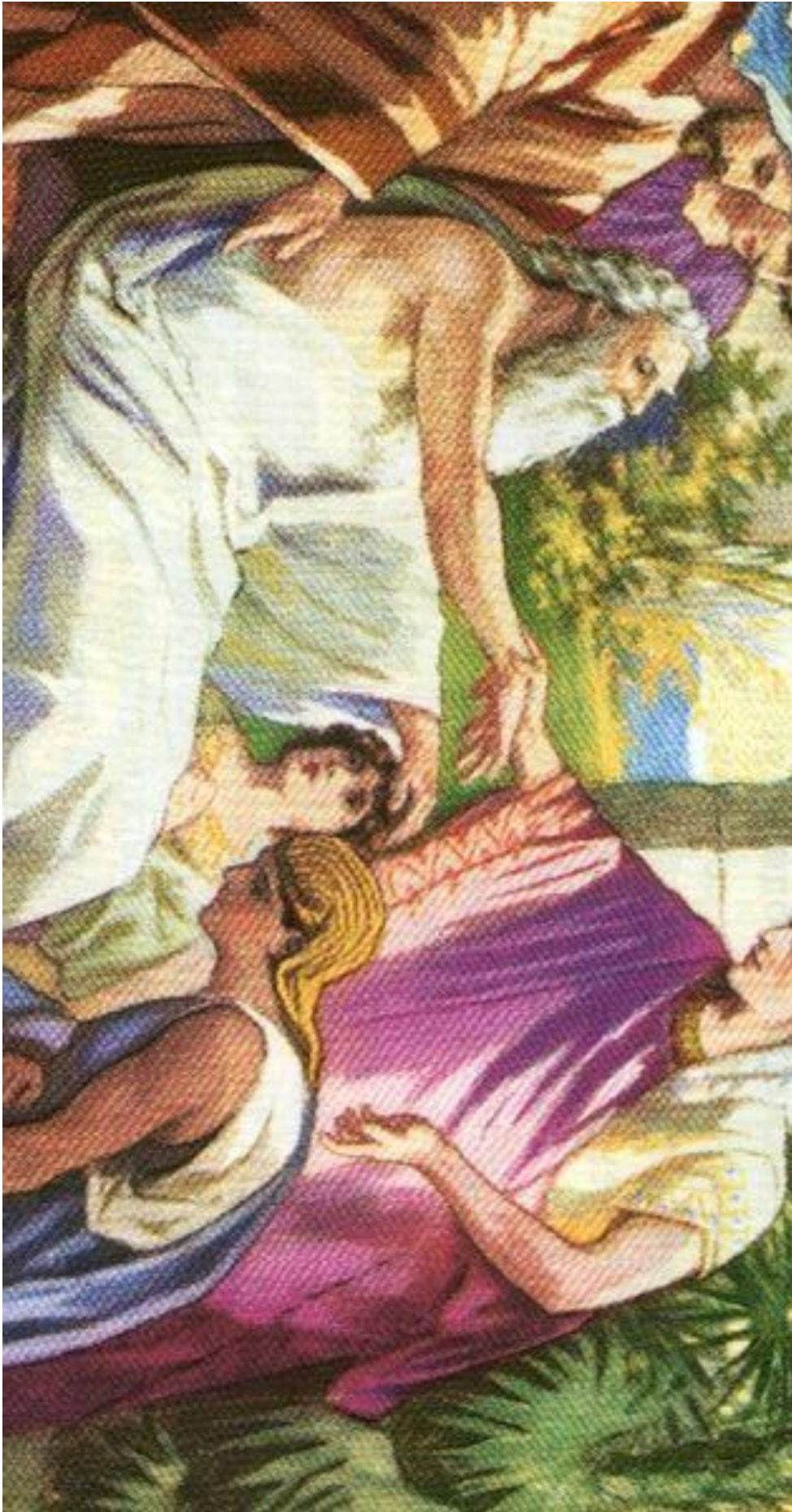
- Genesis 48:15, 16—“God . . . has been my shepherd all my life to this day, The angel . . . has redeemed me from all evil.”

Handwork:

- Print one clipart circle found below for each student. Follow the instructions for coloring. [Teacher, complete one for yourself to use in the presentation of the story. If you find it difficult to provide twelve different colors, mix media—crayons, colored pencils, and markers.]

Egyptian priests





Buying Grain

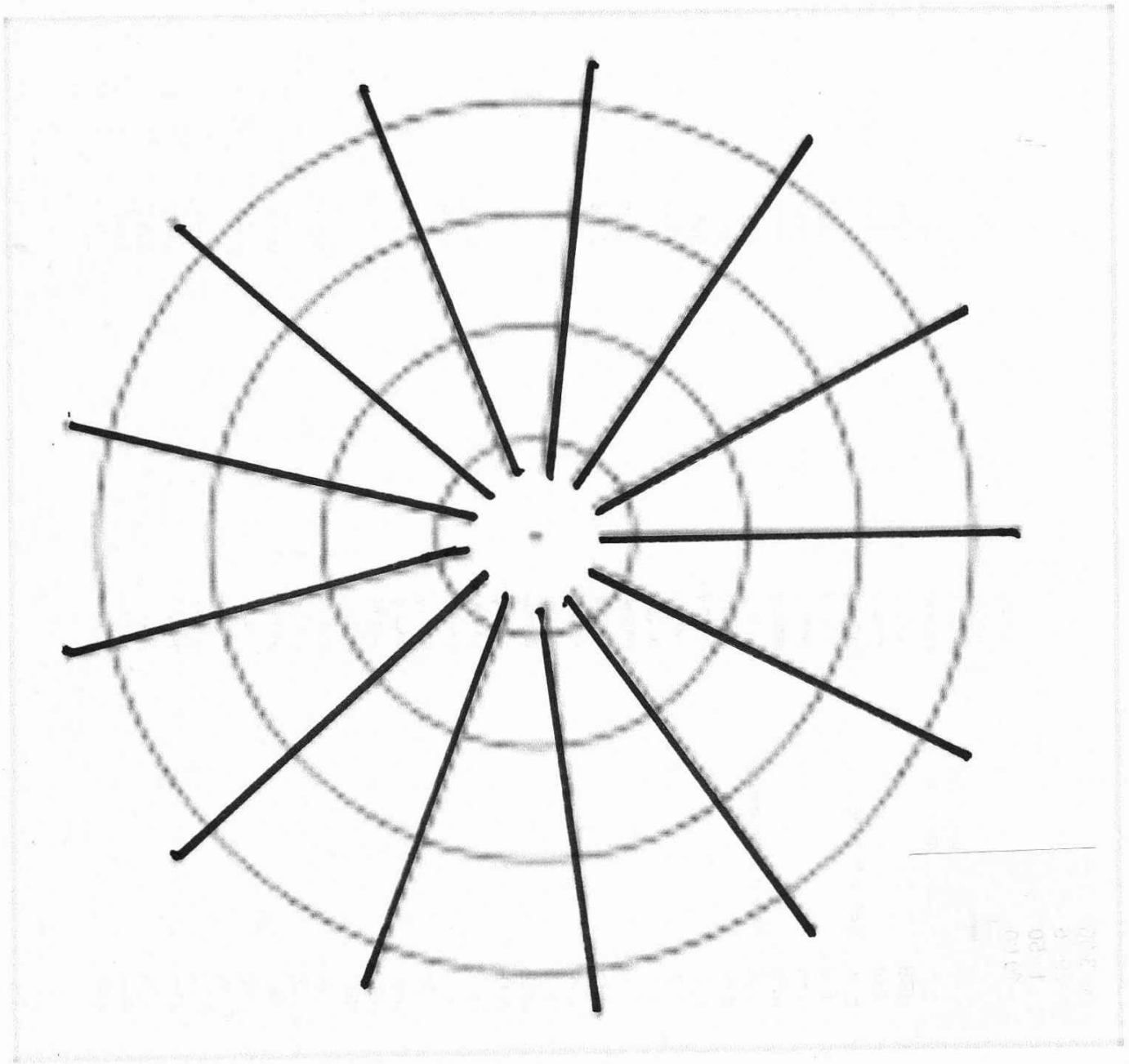
with

Money

Livestock

Land

Themselves



<http://artbyjean.blogspot.com/2007/03/circle-template-13.html>



Jacob said to Joseph, "I give you one portion more than your brothers" (Genesis 48:22).

Color two parts of this circle the same to show Joseph's double portion. For the other brothers, color one section, each a different color.