

# Joseph(Gen. 30-50)

## Review

Jacob had been with Laban about 14 years when Joseph was born to Rachel. He had already seen the births of ten sons and a daughter and after Joseph was born, he prepared to leave, but Laban prevailed upon him to work for another six years.

*And it came to pass, when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, that I may go to my own place and to my country. 26 Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go; for you know my service which I have done for you." Gen. 30:25-26*

*Thus I have been in your house twenty years; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, Gen. 31:41*

So Joseph was about 7 years old when they returned to the land of Canaan. During the ten year period before he was sold into slavery, he witnessed the defilement of Dinah and the murder of an entire town by her brothers, Simeon and Levi(Gen. 34). He also saw his father return to Bethel where he collected and buried all the idols that had infected the family(Gen. 35:1-4). He was aware that God changed his father's name to Israel(Gen. 35:9-15), and experienced the death of his mother(Gen. 35:16-10). All of these things molded and created his character.

God had already told Abraham that his descendants would become servants in another land for four hundred years. When the time arrived that this should happen, *Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. 14 And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ... 16 for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." Gen. 15:13-16*

God chose Joseph to bring it about.

*Moreover He called for a famine in the land; He destroyed all the provision of bread. 17 He sent a man before them — Joseph — who was sold as a slave. 18 They hurt his feet with fetters, He was laid in irons. 19 Until the time that his word came to pass, The word of the Lord tested him. 20 The king sent and released him, The ruler of the people let him go free. 21 He made him lord of his house, And ruler of all his possessions, 22 To bind his princes at his pleasure, And teach his elders wisdom. Ps. 105:16-22*

## Joseph - Dreams & Sold as a Slave

The account begins with Joseph "*bringing a bad report*" of his brothers to their father." In itself this could be either a good or a bad thing depending upon whether he was trying to help them or just get them into trouble. But the problem of favoritism that began with Isaac now continues with his son Jacob.

*Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of many colors. 4 But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him. Gen. 37:3-4*

The real issue here was not the tattling, it was the obvious preference and gift giving. Joseph was the son of the loved wife, while the rest were sons of the unloved wife or the servants of both wives.

The dreams are fascinating. Since they came true, and also dreams became the means by which it all occurred, it is impossible to think that they were simple dreams. These were revelations from God. Whether it was wise and mature for him to have told these dreams to his brothers under these circumstances is doubtful, but how could a 17 year old have such wisdom. The dreams clearly revealed his pre-eminence, first over his brothers and second, over all Israel.

*And his brothers said to him, "Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. Gen. 37:8*

*Then he dreamed still another dream ... 10 So he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?" 11 And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind. Gen. 37:9-11*

The brothers were filled with hatred and envy over the dreams and these lusts became the motivation that led first to a desire to slay and finally to the desire to sell him into slavery.

*Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him. 19 Then they said to one another, "Look, this dreamer is coming! 20 Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, 'Some wild beast has devoured him.' We shall see what will become of his dreams!" 21 But Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands, and said, "Let us not kill him." And Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit which is in the wilderness, and do not lay a hand on him" — that he might deliver him out of their hands, and bring him back to his father. Gen. 37:18-22*

Reuben is the only one who controlled his emotions and sought to avert the sin. He was prepared to bring him back to his father, but circumstances took that opportunity away from him with the coming of the traders.

*And they sat down to eat a meal. Then they lifted their eyes and looked, and there was a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead with their camels, bearing spices, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry them down to Egypt. 26 So Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? 27 Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh." And his brothers listened. 28 Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt. Gen. 37:25-28*

The problem of Jacob's inquiries and concerns was "solved" with a lie of omission.

*So they took Joseph's tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood. 32 Then they sent the tunic of many colors, and they brought it to their father and said, "We have found this. Do you know whether it is your son's tunic or not?" 33 And he recognized it and said, "It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces." 34 Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days. 35 And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, "For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning." Thus his father wept for him. Gen. 37:31-35*

One can only wonder and consider the grave difficulty these brothers placed themselves in when they tried to comfort him over death of his son when he was not actually dead at all. But even if they admitted it, they probably assumed they would never be able to find him again.

## **Joseph bought by Potiphar**

God took control of this situation by giving Joseph favor in the eyes of Potiphar. God did this by blessing everything that Joseph did. The more authority Potiphar gave him, the greater the blessings came to Potiphar. It was not long until Joseph was head over everything to Potiphar. Whether Joseph could see this favor in his circumstances and was comforted by it, or whether he was so crushed down by the unfairness of the situation is not revealed.

*Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there. 2 The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. 3 And his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand. 4 So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put under his authority. Gen. 39:1-4*

Although things are going very well for Joseph in his work, it is not long before a terrible temptation was placed before him and though he resisted it steadfastly, it still brought about terrible consequences.

*And it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me." 8 But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. 9 There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Gen.39:7-9*

Joseph is not at home where pressure to do right was present. He was not under any real pressure at all except one. "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Joseph loved God and could not sin before his eyes. God was in his presence in his heart and soul to such a degree that any sin could not be done without a sense of great loss in disappointing God.

This is a classic example of indwelling by faith and of the true nature of godliness. God was inside, directing and guiding his heart, mind and conscience and he could not commit this act of sin because of it.

But Potiphar's wife is not one to be discouraged so day by day she sought out means to entice him, but Joseph remained fixed in his mind to resist.

*So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her. Gen. 39:10*

But his integrity cost him his liberty again, for this woman scorned became a bitter opponent (39:16-18) and she chose to lie to Potiphar. One has to wonder if Potiphar knew the truth, but couldn't face it. He would certainly have found out later when Pharaoh allowed him to be ruler over the entire land.

## **Joseph in Prison**

Once again, God took a hand by giving him favor with the keeper of the prison. Doubtless it was done the same way as with Potiphar and soon he was running the prison as he had run Potiphar's house.

*But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. 22 And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing. 23 The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's authority, because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper. Gen. 39:21-23*

## The Dreams of the Butler and Baker

We are not told how long Joseph was in the prison, but after some time two of Pharaoh's great officers who had very important duties and were close to Pharaoh somehow offended him and made him angry. The keeper of the guard put Joseph in charge of their care and in that way Joseph was in the position to hear and to interpret their dreams.

*Then the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison, had a dream, both of them, each man's dream in one night and each man's dream with its own interpretation. 6 And Joseph came in to them in the morning and looked at them, and saw that they were sad. 7 So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in the custody of his lord's house, saying, "Why do you look so sad today?" 8 And they said to him, "We each have had a dream, and there is no interpreter of it." Gen 40:5-8*

Joseph is then told each dream and God gave him the exact meaning. The chief butlers dream led to a favorable outcome and he was pleased. Joseph pleaded with him to remember him when he was restored and revealed he was imprisoned for no fault of his own.

*But remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house. 15 For indeed I was stolen away from the land of the Hebrews; and also I have done nothing here that they should put me into the dungeon." Gen. 40:14-15*

This outcome led to the chief baker also revealing his dream. But the interpretation was startling and the outcome terrible.

*So Joseph answered and said, "This is the interpretation of it: The three baskets are three days. 19 Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head from you and hang you on a tree; and the birds will eat your flesh from you." Gen. 40:18-19*

Both interpretations were fulfilled exactly as Joseph revealed them, but the Butler forgot Joseph and again his hopes were dashed.

*Then he restored the chief butler to his butlership again, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand. 22 But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them. 23 Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him. Gen. 40:21-23*

## The Dreams of Pharaoh

Two years after the dreams of the chief butler chief baker, God sent two dreams to Pharaoh. These dreams followed in quick succession in a single night and left Pharaoh so troubled in his spirit that he immediately called together all the magicians and wise men in Egypt.

The same word for "magician" occurs here, as in the confrontation between Pharaoh and Moses and in the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar. We can only draw from the Scriptures to gain some understanding. When they confronted Aaron and Moses the magicians were called were called "the wise men and the sorcerers."

*But Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers; so the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. 12 For every man threw down his rod, and they became serpents. But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. 13 And Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the Lord had said. Ex. 7:11-13*

In Daniel, "the king gave the command to call the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams." (Dan. 2:2-3) Later, Daniel called these same men "the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers" (Dan. 2:27-28). In summing this up the to Nebuchadnezzar's son Belshazzar it was said:

*King Nebuchadnezzar your father — your father the king — made him chief of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers. 12 Inasmuch as an excellent spirit, knowledge, understanding, interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar, now let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation." Dan. 5:11-12*

So these were men who in pretense or in fact had "an excellent spirit, knowledge, understanding, interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas." But these men could not help Pharaoh.

As he watched Pharaoh, troubled in spirit, the chief butler is reminded of his own feelings after his dream and the relief he felt after meeting Joseph and hearing what it meant. But to bring it up he has to remind Pharaoh of the events that had led to him being thrown in prison. He gives a very accurate account.

*Then the chief butler spoke to Pharaoh, saying: "I remember my faults this day. 10 When Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and put me in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, both me and the chief baker, 11 we each had a dream in one night, he and I. Each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his own dream. 12 Now there was a young Hebrew man with us there, a servant of the captain of the guard. And we told him, and he interpreted our dreams for us; to each man he interpreted according to his own dream. 13 And it came to pass, just as he interpreted for us, so it happened. He restored me to my office, and he hanged him." Gen. 41:9-13*

This gives Pharaoh the hope he as been seeking for and he immediately calls for Joseph to be brought. But even though the command was urgent, Joseph takes the time to shave and change his clothing.

Joseph's confidence must have come from his own dreams and the fact that God had blessed him already with the interpretation of the dreams of the butler and baker or that God had already appeared to him and told him this would happen.

*Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him quickly out of the dungeon; and he shaved, changed his clothing, and came to Pharaoh. 15 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream, to interpret it." 16 So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace." Gen. 41:14-16*

Pharaoh again recounts the dreams but this time with his own comments. He revealed to Joseph that seven fat cows came up out of the river followed by seven lean cows. The lean cows devoured the fat ones, but showed no benefit at all from eating them. The second dream had one "corn" stalk with seven ears on it. History reveals that the term corn as we use it for maize was not grown in the times and places of the Bible History. This is a general word for grain of any kind.

Corn ... There are several words thus translated in the English version of the Scriptures, in which it is used in the proper sense of grain of any kind, and never in the American application of maize or "Indian corn" ... which it is generally thought was anciently unknown. In 1817, Parmentier ... founding on the silence of Varro, Columella, Pliny, and the other agricultural and botanical writers of classical antiquity, concluded that maize was unknown till the discovery of America; (McClintock and Strong Encyclopedia)

It could have been wheat, barley, etc, but the first stalk had full and healthy grain while the second was withered, thin and blighted, but the latter ate the former good heads.

## **Joseph Interprets the Dreams**

Unlike Daniel, Joseph knows immediately the interpretation of these dreams. There are two different dreams with the same meaning.

*Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do: 26 The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads are seven years; the dreams are one. 27 And the seven thin and ugly cows which came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty heads blighted by the east wind are seven years of famine. Gen. 41:25-27*

Seven years of blessed abundance are about to come upon Egypt. But after those seven years of abundance there will be seven years of terrible famine. The seven years of famine will be so severe that all the benefits of the seven years of plenty will be lost.

*Indeed seven years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt; 30 but after them seven years of famine will arise, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will deplete the land. 31 So the plenty will not be known in the land because of the famine following, for it will be very severe. 32 And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass. Gen. 41:29-32*

Again whether Joseph's next words were prompted by the dreams he had earlier, his own inner wisdom developed over the years or God's specific revelation is not revealed. But Joseph gives Pharaoh excellent advice and Pharaoh determines that Joseph is the best man for the job.

*"Now therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. 34 Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, to collect one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years. 35 And let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. Gen. 41:33-36*

*So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants. 38 And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?" 39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you. 40 You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you." 41 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." Gen 41:37-41*

## **Joseph's Earlier Dream's about himself are Fulfilled**

In order for Joseph to be in the position to have his brothers and father bow down to him as his earlier dreams had indicated, he must first be placed in a position of authority that would force them to do so. That is exactly what happened next. God's providence, so easy for Him, often fills us with awe and reverence. Pharaoh places Joseph into the highest position in Egypt, demanding that all who come before him must bow the knee. Only Pharaoh is exempt.

*Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put it on Joseph's hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. 43 And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried out before him, "Bow the knee!" So he set him over all the land of Egypt. 44 Pharaoh also said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no man may lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." 45 And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-Paaneah. Gen. 41:42-45*

Joseph was seventeen when he had these two dreams and not long after was sold into slavery by his brothers because of their envy and jealousy. Now he was thirty. As those thirteen years passed, Joseph must have wondered why things were so difficult.

*Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers.*

.... 46 Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. Gen 37:2; 41:46

Later, God revealed to us that he was being tested, trained and tried. God never stopped being with Joseph, delivering him again and again from difficult and trying circumstances, but still, he needed that training and guidance to prepare him. The humility and submission he learned during those thirteen years helped him during his times of exaltation to remain humble and faithful to God.

*He sent a man before them — Joseph — who was sold as a slave. 18 They hurt his feet with fetters. He was laid in irons. 19 Until the time that his word came to pass, The word of the Lord tested him. Ps. 105:17-19*

*“And the patriarchs, becoming envious, sold Joseph into Egypt. But God was with him 10 and delivered him out of all his troubles, and gave him favor and wisdom in the presence of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house. Acts 7:9-10*

During the seven years of plenty, Joseph remained busy and productive, actively preparing for the terrible seven years of famine. If the dreams of Pharaoh were made known as the reason for his position, then those who believed in the power of God would also have been preparing. But many did not. He also had two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim during this time of plenty.

The years of gathering not only allowed Egypt to survive, but also became the means for those in foreign lands to have food. This obviously enriched Egypt and made Pharaoh even more favorably inclined toward Joseph. But the true reason for all of these things now comes to the surface as the famine's impact on Jacob(now Israel) forces him to send his sons to Egypt and into the presence of Joseph.

*When Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, Jacob said to his sons, “Why do you look at one another?” 2 And he said, “Indeed I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down to that place and buy for us there, that we may live and not die.” 3 So Joseph's ten brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt. Gen. 42:1-4*

Joseph is now 37 years old and the brothers do not recognize him. But just as the dreams had indicated, they all bow down before him and Joseph remembers the dreams.

*Now Joseph was governor over the land; and it was he who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down before him with their faces to the earth. 7 Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he acted as a stranger to them and spoke roughly to them. Then he said to them, “Where do you come from?” And they said, “From the land of Canaan to buy food.” 8 So Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him. 9 Then Joseph remembered the dreams which he had dreamed about them Gen 42:6-9*

## **Joseph Tests His Brothers the First Time**

The interactions between Joseph and his brothers creates a difficulty for the reader. Is he acting under God's guidance? Are the things he did in their best interests or are they vindictive acts seeking to punish and inflict pain? Was he manipulating them to see what he could learn about their character? There are no easy answers. His later forgiveness of his brothers may have begun here, or may have been brought about by have many years to think about and consider it all.

At any rate, his first interaction is not of mercy and forgiveness, but a serious accusation that brought great fear and consternation into the hearts of these ten men who twenty years earlier had committed the despicable acts of attempted murder, kidnaping and selling into slavery.

Joseph accused them of being spies and then questioned them about their family and learned his father was still alive. He then put them into prison for three days to show them how serious he considered the offense they had committed. During these days, Joseph formed his plans. He allows 9 to return home, but keeps Simeon as surety that they will return with their younger brother and thus prove their “innocence.” The entire situation strikes them as being odd enough to not have happened by chance and their only conclusion is that it was divine retribution for their sins.

*Then they said to one another, “We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us.” 22 And Reuben answered them, saying, “Did I not speak to you, saying, ‘Do not sin against the boy’; and you would not listen? Therefore behold, his blood is now required of us.” 23 But they did not know that Joseph understood them, for he spoke to them through an interpreter. 24 And he turned himself away from them and wept. Then he returned to them again, and talked with them. And he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes. Gen. 42:21-24*

Whether his motive in returning their money was one of kindness or “coals of fire” is difficult to determine, but as he did not use it later against them reveals that did not intend to harm them with it.

The brothers find it very difficult to persuade Jacob to allow Benjamin to return with them. His distrust may reveal his own suspicions about what happened to Joseph, but he is not going to entrust the life of Benjamin to them. Reuben's offer to allow him to kill two his own children(Jacob's grandchildren) did not do much to strengthen Jacob's faith in them. Only the importunity of the food running out and the brothers staunch refusal to return without Benjamin finally force Jacob to relent.

*But Judah spoke to him, saying, “The man solemnly warned us, saying, ‘You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.’ 4 If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food. 5 But if you*

*will not send him, we will not go down; for the man said to us, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.'* Gen 43:3-5

This time it is Judah, the one responsible for Joseph being sold to slavery, who offered to take full responsibility for Benjamin.

*Then Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones. 9 I myself will be surety for him; from my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever. Gen 43:8-10*

## **Joseph Tests His Brothers the Second Time**

This time Joseph brings his brothers to his home which fills them with great fear. The "coals of fire" create great consternation as they now believe he will accuse them of stealing the money, leading them to confess to the steward before they are accused, but he passes over it then brings out Simeon.

When Joseph arrives, they give him the present sent by Jacob and marvel that he has seated them in the order of their birth and given Benjamin 5 times more food than the rest.

*And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth; and the men looked in astonishment at one another. 34 Then he took servings to them from before him, but Benjamin's serving was five times as much as any of theirs. Gen. 43:33-34*

Once again we are confronted with the reasons for Joseph's behavior. He sets up the brothers for great consternation, fear and grief. He again puts the money in each man's sack, but also puts his own special cup into the sack of Benjamin. Some have proposed that Joseph is testing if their love for Benjamin and their father would lead to a different outcome than it had with him.

*And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, "Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money in the mouth of his sack. 2 Also put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, and his grain money. Gen 44:1-2*

Believing themselves to be falsely accused, they offer death for the guilty person and imprisonment for the rest of them. Beginning with the eldest, each man finds his money in the mouth of their sack. This must have led to some misgivings, and when they come to Benjamin, the cup is found. With their own mouths they have pronounced a terrible sentence upon themselves and the anguish was great.

*With whomever of your servants it is found, let him die, and we also will be my lord's slaves." 10 And he said, "Now also let it be according to your words; he with whom it is found shall be my slave, and you shall be blameless." 11 Then each man speedily let down his sack to the ground, and each opened his sack. 12 So he searched. He began with the oldest and left off with the youngest; and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. 13 Then they tore their clothes, and each man loaded his donkey and returned to the city. Gen. 44:9-13*

They all offer to share in the punishment, but Joseph states that fairness demanded that only Benjamin committed the crime so the rest can go free.

## **Judah Revealed his Growth and Remorse**

Judah takes Joseph aside and privately discusses the family circumstances. He candidly admits that Jacob loved Benjamin with a greater love than his brethren, but all traces of jealousy and envy are gone and only sympathy for the father remains.

*'We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, who is young; his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother's children, and his father loves him.' 21 Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him.' 22 And we said to my lord, 'The lad cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.' ..... 27 Then your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons; 28 and the one went out from me, and I said, "Surely he is torn to pieces"; and I have not seen him since. 29 But if you take this one also from me, and calamity befalls him, you shall bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave.' 30 "Now therefore, when I come to your servant my father, and the lad is not with us, since his life is bound up in the lad's life, 31 it will happen, when he sees that the lad is not with us, that he will die. So your servants will bring down the gray hair of your servant our father with sorrow to the grave. ... 33 Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad as a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers. 34 For how shall I go up to my father if the lad is not with me, lest perhaps I see the evil that would come upon my father?" Gen 44:20-23; 27-32; 33-34*

Judah's heart is now revealed to Joseph. What he believed he could not make right with Joseph (since he believed he was dead), he was now willing to make up for with Benjamin.

This clear evidence of growth and remorse brought Joseph to tears. He then revealed himself to them and the ten brothers were speechless, while Benjamin' heart must have been filled with joy and comfort. Joseph then revealed his own assessment of the present set of circumstances. He rightly sees God's providence in it all.

*But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. 6 For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. 7 And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. 8 So now it was not you who sent*

*me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. Gen 45:5-8*

It is difficult to imagine the feelings in the hearts of the brothers. First, Joseph's dreams that had filled them with such jealousy had come true to their own salvation. Second, the fact that Joseph was alive and that their father would hear of their deeds must have filled them with dread. Third, the one they had betrayed was now the most powerful man in Egypt and they were completely under his power. Fourth, the manner in which they had been treated with their money in their sacks, Simeon imprisoned, the cup placed in Benjamin's sack were all revealed to have been the work of Joseph and they had to be wondering why.

But Joseph does not leave them time to ponder these things(though it must have been a long and anxious ride home). He revealed to them that the famine would continue for another five years, but that he would take care of them all. He then asked them to bring a message to his father Jacob.

*"Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph: "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not tarry. 10 You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children, your children's children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have. 11 There I will provide for you, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for there are still five years of famine."'" Gen 45:9-11*

When Pharaoh heard that he now had an opportunity to repay Joseph for all the good he had done for Egypt, he is pleased and wants to do them a great favor.

*And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say to your brothers, 'Do this: Load your animals and depart; go to the land of Canaan. 18 Bring your father and your households and come to me; I will give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you will eat the fat of the land. 19 Now you are commanded — do this: Take carts out of the land of Egypt for your little ones and your wives; bring your father and come. 20 Also do not be concerned about your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.'" Gen 45:17-20*

Joseph's final admonition to his brothers are words of comfort.

*So he sent his brothers away, and they departed; and he said to them, "See that you do not become troubled along the way." Gen 45:24*

As soon as the brothers arrive home, they reveal the good news to Jacob(it doesn't appear that they confessed their part in the debacle). Jacob is filled with astonishment, and only after he sees all the gifts and provisions does he fully believe and makes the decision to go and see Joseph.

## **Israel goes to Egypt**

The next phase of God's eternal purpose now begins just as God had revealed to Abraham.

*Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. 14 And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. 15 Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. 16 But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." Gen 15:13-16*

God has several purposes. First, since the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete, Israel cannot receive its inheritance until that is fulfilled. Second, God want to give Egypt the opportunity to be tested, and after they fail the test God will use Israel's Exodus from Egypt as an opportunity to judge them.

God appeared to Jacob to reveal that He wanted Israel to now go into Egypt. It may be that Jacob had some misgivings about going and God wanted to comfort him with the promise that all would be well.

*Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, "Jacob, Jacob!" And he said, "Here I am." 3 So He said, "I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. 4 I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes." Gen 46:2-4*

After listing their genealogy, God summed up the number of people who came into Egypt as Israel.

*All the persons who went with Jacob to Egypt, who came from his body, besides Jacob's sons' wives, were sixty-six persons in all. 27 And the sons of Joseph who were born to him in Egypt were two persons. All the persons of the house of Jacob who went to Egypt were seventy. Gen 46:26-27*

Joseph's meeting with his father is only briefly recounted, while the issues needing resolved between the brother had several chapters. Thus God was much more concerned that we understand the relationship between the sinful brothers and their innocent victim than with the Father who is reunited with the son.

*So Joseph made ready his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel; and he presented himself to him, and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while. 30 And Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face, because you are still alive." Gen. 46:29-30*

## **Joseph Settles his Family in Goshen**

Joseph is very careful about the manner in which he settles his family. There are some issues between Jacob's occupation and the moral sensibilities of the Egyptians and Joseph is both cautious and very

open and honest with his family and Pharaoh. He uses this to their advantage by getting them settled in some of the best land in Egypt.

*So it shall be, when Pharaoh calls you and says, 'What is your occupation?' 34 that you shall say, 'Your servants' occupation has been with livestock from our youth even till now, both we and also our fathers,' that you may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians." Gen 46:33-34*

After the family is taken care of, the narrative of Joseph's handling of the famine is given. He is able to abundantly bless Pharaoh as a result of the famine and thus make himself very important to him. First, "And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan." Then the next year, "Joseph said, "Give your livestock, and I will give you bread for your livestock, if the money is gone," "Thus he fed them with bread in exchange for all their livestock that year. ... "Then Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for every man of the Egyptians sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them. So the land became Pharaoh's." This was done through taxation for "it shall come to pass in the harvest that you shall give one-fifth to Pharaoh." (Gen. 47:14, 16-17, 20, 23-24).

## **The Last Days of Jacob**

After living in Egypt for seventeen years, Jacob feels his body weakening and decided to ask Joseph to swear to him that he would take him back to Canaan and bury him there.

*And 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 drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "Now if I have found favor in your sight, please put your hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me. Please do not bury me in Egypt, 30 but let me lie with my fathers; you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place." Gen 47:28-30*

Later when Joseph hears that Jacob is sick he brings his two sons to be blessed by him. What must Jacob have felt as he remembers his own very similar situation so many years earlier with Esau and his father Isaac. Now Manasseh and Ephraim are brought before him and it has been revealed to him that the younger would become greater than the firstborn. When he blesses them accordingly, Joseph wants to reverse it, but Jacob overrules him.

After this event, Jacob called all his sons together and said "Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days: Gather together and hear, you sons of Jacob, And listen to Israel your father." (Gen 49:1-2) After revealing what God had shown him, he told all his sons that he wanted to be buried in the same cave where others of his family had been placed.

*Then he charged them and said to them: "I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, 30 in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite as a possession for a burial place. 31 There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife, there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah Gen. 49:29-31*

The final chapter of Genesis records the trip to Canaan and Jacob's burial. After his burial, Joseph's brothers are fearful that the day of reckoning has arrived and they plead with him for mercy. For the first time it is revealed that Jacob did know what they had done and wanted Joseph to forgive them.

*When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him." 16 So they sent messengers to Joseph, saying, "Before your father died he commanded, saying, 17 'Thus you shall say to Joseph: "I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you.'" Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father." Gen 50:15-17*

Joseph again revealed to them that it was God who brought this about and in spite of their evil intent, it was now between them and God.

*Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? 20 But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. 21 Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. Gen 50:19-21*

The final words of Genesis record Joseph's death at the age of 110, 80 years after he had become the ruler over all Egypt. How small those 13 years of sorrow must have seemed to him then when compared to all the good that they had brought to himself and to his brethren. Like his father, Joseph also asked to be carried back to be buried in the land of Canaan. But in his faith in God's promises he chose to wait until God carried the entire nation back to Canaan.

*"I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." 25 Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here." Gen. 50:24-26*

*By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones. Heb 11:22*