

# THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

GENESIS 37-50



An Outline Designed to Supplement  
Personal Bible Study



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THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

TEXT AND OUTLINE

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Tucson, Arizona

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## I GENERAL INTRODUCTION

These notes originated from of a series of expository messages delivered at *Grace Evangelical Church*, Melbourne, Australia, during 1987. However subsequent study has led to expansion of this exposition culminating in its most recent presentation at *Christ's New Covenant Church*, Tucson, Arizona, 2007. It is prayerfully hoped that they will be of encouragement to every lover and student of the Word of God, and especially help them in their pursuit of righteousness as exemplified in the life of Joseph and his glorious Antitype.

The outlined form of presentation is intended to accompany an open Bible, and in this case Genesis 37-50 in particular. Here is preparatory material, and certainly not a representation of the unction and spontaneity of the moment that no pen can reproduce. However, it is a most vital starting point that must undergird faithful expository preaching.

Perhaps children of God in today's world are tempted to wonder at the reputed purity of Joseph to the point where his noble stature seems quite beyond their attainment. And further, we may be even more astonished that an Old Testament saint should be so godly in every area of his life, particularly when he knew of Jesus Christ only by means of promise and shadow, as recounted by Abraham, rather than fulfillment and substance. Nevertheless, let us certainly agree that Joseph, like Daniel, does seem so very far ahead of us. Even so let us also beware of assuming that the standards of godliness, with which we presently find ourselves surrounded, are in fact the highest norm for authentic, contemporary Christian living. This type of reasoning is a fatal error which abounds today. For instance, it is sometimes said that times have never been as difficult for young people as they are today. Therefore, our expectations for young Christians should not be too high on account of the greater pressures they face. And thus, in the circumstances, we agree that today's performance is a most acceptable standard. Any higher demands would be unrealistic. Now we are not unmindful of the distinctive and base evils of our day. But nevertheless, the premise that our youth face greater evil today than at any other time is fundamentally wrong. In the young lives of both Joseph and Daniel, we find them being faced with depressing and pagan circumstances of a magnitude that we cannot hardly conceive of today. And yet in the midst of it all, they stood resolutely firm and boldly testified of the holiness, power, justice, and grace of Jehovah.

The unfortunate fact is that the standard of godliness today within Western Christendom is so low as to obscure the reality of Joseph as a man of history who lived exactly as the Bible describes him. To be sure, he was a son of Adam and thus as much a sinner by nature as any man. But his life was so hid with God (Acts 7:9) that his family and the surrounding pagan world could not but acknowledge it. For this reason, it is imperative that we recognize that Joseph was a real person and not some ideal, fanciful figure who never really existed. A close study of the text, especially the indications of authentic Egyptian culture, certainly upholds this truth. Then we are ready to face the fact of our own shortcomings and acknowledge that if Joseph is a reality, then it will be of the greatest profit for us to study his life carefully, irrespective of the unholy standards that are accepted in local churches today. Just as Joseph would not capitulate to the low moral standards of Egyptian society, with which he was exceedingly familiar, so may we also desire, as he did, to please and glorify God, come what may.

Some comment needs to be made concerning the fact that Joseph certainly appears to be a type of Jesus Christ in more detail than possibly any other Old Testament character. Strangely enough the Bible nowhere makes any direct reference to this fact. Nevertheless, such is the force of innumerable parallels that they simply cannot be ignored. In fact it is in the choice subject of sovereign grace that Joseph manifests as ruler and savior during the famine in Egypt that thrusts

before us such a powerful portrayal of the strong saving mercy of Jesus Christ. The brethren appear utterly captive and blind on account of their sin and gnawing guilt; it is only their being led by strong cords of love according to Joseph's design that affords them any hope whatsoever. And likewise with the lost sheep that Jesus came to save. Of themselves, they are headed for slaughter and destruction, since their feet can only tread the paths that their sinful hearts gravitate toward. But the Good Shepherd "calls his own sheep by name and leads them out" (John 10:3) with a strong, compelling hand. He then weaves the path they must tread, bringing them to a point of knowing their utter foolishness, before he perfectly reconciles them to himself on the ground of purest grace. If we cannot see such a vivid and moving portrayal in the life of Joseph, then our spiritual sight is dim indeed.

Mention should also be made of two books that were of particular help in the composition of this study outline. The first and most important is a commentary by Dr. George Lawson, a Scotsman of the late eighteenth century who Spurgeon described as, "a man of great genius who had a heart alive both to the human and divine side of truth." Though a little prolix according to the age in which it was written, yet this work cannot be too highly recommended.<sup>1</sup> The second work by Dr. Louis Ginsberg, one of the leading Talmudic scholars of the twentieth century, was a great source of illustrative material. His abbreviated compilation of Jewish traditions concerning the narrative sections of the Old Testament drawn from the Talmud, apocryphal writings, and Church Fathers, is a rich source of colorful glosses. Though some comments are obviously quite bizarre and worthless, yet others are clearly perceptive and seem very close to the truth.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> George Lawson, *Lectures on the History of Joseph* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1972), 556 pp.

<sup>2</sup> Louis Ginsberg, *Legends of the Bible* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1956), 646 pp.

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## II JOSEPH REJECTED – GENESIS 37:1-36

### A. Introduction.

1. To children and adults alike, the life of Joseph has, for several reasons, maintained a timeless appeal as a family saga that knows no equal. Certainly the principal reason must be that here we have a divine record, the impeccable Word of God. Yet related to this is another reason. It is that this part of Holy Scripture speaks of real life some 4,000 years ago that is just as real today under the same God's ordering.
  - a. It speaks of *Hebrew life*, of Abrahamic and embryonic patrimony.
  - b. It speaks of *unstable life*, of imprisonment and privilege.
  - c. It speaks of *moral life*, of passion and purity.
  - d. It speaks of *human life*, of guilt and grace.
  - e. It speaks of *family life*, of wrangling and reconciliation.
  - f. It speaks of *national life*, of disaster and deliverance.
  - g. It speaks of *divine life*, of the sovereignty of God and the foreshadowing of the Savior of the world.
2. Joseph, as the grandson of Isaac and great-grandson of Abraham, is the final leading character in Genesis concerning whom more space is devoted to than any other.
  - a. A broad outline of Genesis.
    - (1) The primeval history of the human race (Genesis 1-11).
      - (a) The creation (1-2).
      - (b) The fall (3-6:4).
      - (c) The flood (6:5-8:14).
      - (d) The new generation (8:15-11:32).
    - (2) The patriarchal history of the Hebrew race (Genesis 12-50).
      - (a) Abraham (12-25:11).
      - (b) Isaac (25:12-26).
      - (c) Jacob (27-36).
      - (d) Joseph (37-50).

- b. A contrast between Jacob and his son Joseph.
  - (1) Jacob reveals how God deals with internal problems, specially his corrupt and devious heart (Gen. 25:27-34; 27:1-45).
  - (2) Joseph reveals how God deals with external problems, especially unjust accusation and imprisonment (39:20; 40:23; 42:21).
3. Joseph was born in Haran, North Mesopotamia, as the eleventh son of Jacob and the first son of beloved Rachel. At this time his father was still serving Laban (Gen. 29:13-30; 30:22-24). When five or six years of age he accompanied Jacob in his flight from Esau (Gen. 32:1-33:17).
4. Jacob bore twelve sons from two wives and two handmaids or concubines.
  - a. A concubine was a second-class wife originally taken for the purpose of perpetuating a man's seed when his wife was barren. However Solomon, having seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (I Kings 11:3), obviously had other purposes in mind. A concubine was protected under Mosaic Law (Exod. 21:7-11; Deut. 21:10-14), and had to be supported, though if she was to be discarded, a lesser form of divorce was required.
  - b. Leah, his first wife by the deception of Laban his uncle, bore six sons, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun.
  - c. Zilpah, Leah's handmaid, bore two sons at Leah's suggestion when she became barren, Gad and Asher.
  - d. Rachel, his second and beloved wife (Gen. 29:17-20, 30), after being barren bore two sons, Joseph, and Benjamin at her death.
  - e. Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid, bore two sons when Rachel was barren, Dan and Naphtali.
5. Joseph's name means, "May He [God] add [another son]" (Gen. 30:24) which desire was fulfilled in Benjamin (Gen. 35:16-18). Hence, we begin to see why Jacob gave preference to Joseph and later Benjamin.
  - a. Joseph was the firstborn of Jacob's beloved Rachel.
  - b. Joseph was, no doubt, the child of many prayers on account of Rachel's barren condition.
  - c. Joseph was "the son of his [Jacob's] old age" (Gen. 37:3), which may mean:
    - (1) Probably at Jacob's mature age, Joseph's birth was more of a miracle than the rest, especially in the light of Rachel's barren condition.
    - (2) Probably, as was customary, with Benjamin yet an infant, he retained Joseph for his personal assistance.



(3) Possibly this manner of speaking refers to Joseph's early wisdom, like unto a sage, which contrasted with his ungodly elder brethren who were reared during Jacob's earlier years of deceptive notoriety.

d. Hence, Jacob placed Rachel and Joseph at the back of the line when he was expecting to encounter retribution from Esau (Gen. 33:1-2, 7).

B. Jacob esteeming, vs. 1-4.

1. The territorial relationship between Jacob and Isaac, v. 1.

Jacob, having a large family, lived in the land of promise given to Abraham, his father Isaac and himself (Gen. 12:1-7; 13:12, 14-17; 15:7, 18; 24:7; 28:4; 35:9-12). Like Abraham and Isaac, he was a wanderer, from Mesopotamia with Laban to near Shechem, then Bethel, Ephrath, and finally Hebron, where we now find him. The chapter break should probably start at v. 2 since v. 1 is more connected to 36:43, and especially the intended contrast of roving Jacob with the more settled "chiefs descended from Esau" (36:40).

It is well to remember that Jacob's new name is now Israel as a result of his saving encounter at Peniel with "a man who wrestled with him until daybreak," that is a Theophany or Christophany, an Old Testament appearance of Jesus Christ (Gen. 32:24, 28; 48:15-16). He is now a new man, in comparison with his contentious past, since he had "striven with God and with men and had prevailed." Thus he had "seen God face to face, yet his life had been preserved," which conversion was signified by his limping for the remainder of His life (Gen. 32:28-32). Subsequently he reaped in family conflict the fruit of his earlier devious ways. Yet in the future the people of God will experience family feuding.

- a. By way of illustration, Paul and Barnabas vigorously disagreed to the point of going separate ways concerning the usefulness of John Mark (Acts 15:36-41).
- b. By way of illustration, John Calvin, although appointed as expositor of the Bible at Geneva, yet was expelled from that city having declared, "I have lived amongst continual bickerings."
- c. By way of illustration, Jonathan Edwards was rejected as pastor of his church at Northampton, Massachusetts, after 24 years of ministry, due to a problem with the young people and the fact that he believed that the Lord's Supper should only be partaken of by believers.
- d. By way of illustration, a more recent book, *Great Church Fights* by Leslie B. Flynn, makes the point that family feuds amongst God's children have plagued all of Bible and Church history!
- e. So here in the case of Jacob, a family's dirty linen is about to be washed in public, yet God in His sovereignty turns this shameful display into a model of constantly needed family reconciliation and reformation. So today, the centuries of conflict in the Christian church will eventually result in the completion of the Lamb of God's bride, "arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright" (Rev. 19:8; cf. II Pet. 3:14).

2. The intimate relationship between Jacob and Joseph, vs. 2-3.

“These are [the records of] the generations/families/family histories of Jacob.” This is one of ten such divisional markers in Genesis (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1, 9). Thus Genesis 37-50 is actually a continuance of the life of Jacob with the life of Joseph being a sub-plot (49:33-50:14).

a. Joseph was pastoral in caring for his father’s flock, v. 2a.

Here we are introduced to the sad yet contemporary truth that family strife occurs amongst God’s people in God’s habitation, especially with regard to favoritism, approbation, ascendancy, and rivalry. Joseph, as a teenager of 17, was his father’s favourite and such favouritism is especially bound to bring strife into a family of ungodly children. We do not condone Jacob, though we can to some extent understand the reason for his partiality.

- (1) Joseph had to work in the fields as a shepherd with his corrupt brethren, and feeling a sense of responsibility, Jacob probably feared this bad influence.
- (2) Probably Joseph often suffered from the heavy-handed ways of his ten older brothers, much as David did (I Sam. 17:28-30).
- (3) Furthermore, Joseph’s mother had died at the birth of Benjamin, hence it was rather lonely in the midst of troublesome half-brothers.

b. Joseph was perceptive in caring for his father’s flock, v. 2b.

Joseph had a sensitive conscience for evil, and for this reason was moved to report to Jacob of the evil of his brethren. Was he wrong in so doing? He could have been, though the matter of motive is the issue here.

- (1) Silence can be a sin, on the other hand our motives must be pure. Did Joseph purpose:
  - (a) To improve his image with Jacob? In the circumstances this was hardly necessary.
  - (b) To improve his image of himself as righteous in comparison with his brethren? But his future humble activity would not support this.
  - (c) To gain revenge upon his brethren? No, since such an opportunity was later rejected.
  - (d) To save his father’s estate from a major loss due to corrupt dealing? Possibly.
  - (e) To uphold the cause of righteousness before God and man? Probably (Gen. 39:9).

- (f) Joseph did not merely have his lunch box taken from him by his brothers. They were most likely involved in a racket that would cause Jacob loss and shame.
- (2) Of the ten remaining sons of Jacob, excluding Joseph and Benjamin, we know something of the character of only the first four, and they were all ungodly.
    - (a) Reuben, the first-born, was grossly immoral and uncontrollable (Gen. 35:22; 49:3-4).
    - (b) Simeon and Levi were cruel, revengeful, and extreme, according to Jacob (Gen. 49:7; cf. 34:1-31).
    - (c) Judah married a Canaanite woman and was also immoral (Gen. 38:1-2, 15-17).
    - (d) But further, remember that, in varying degrees, all of the ten brothers consented to Joseph's humiliation vs. 18-24.
- c. Joseph was esteemed as the apple of his father's eye, v. 3a.
    - (1) Was this preferential treatment wrong? It could be. But in this instance, God's providential directing of these events would indicate "no," and especially because He delights in righteousness more than perpetuation of a corrupt lineage.
    - (2) Reuben was the first-born by Leah, the privileged heir, yet grossly immoral, so much so that Jacob could not forget this on his death-bed (Gen. 35:22; 49:3-4).
    - (3) It is clearly indicated in I Chronicles 5:1 that Reuben's wickedness and Joseph's virtue were the issue, not blind favoritism.
    - (4) But from where did Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah learn their evil habits, perhaps methods of shady dealing? Was it not probably at home from their father Jacob before he was converted (Gen. 32:24-32)?
- d. Joseph was endowed with a significant coat by Jacob, v. 3b.
    - (1) The KJV translates, "a coat of many colors," the NASB, "a varicolored tunic," with the marginal alternative, "a full-length robe," the NIV, "a richly ornamented robe," and the ESV, "a robe of many colors." The emphasis is not so much that of color as complexity since it was made of many strips or pieces, and thus was costly and carefully tailored.
    - (2) Archaeology suggests, concerning tribal life during the age of the patriarchs, that a Semitic chief would wear such a coat as an insignia of his rulership. Hence, Jacob may well have marked Joseph out for chieftainship of the tribes of Israel at his death. The evident animosity of the brethren suggests that

more than concern over a fashionable item was at stake. That Reuben's birthright was taken from him and given to another is confirmed in I Chronicles 5:1.

3. The hatred of Joseph by his brethren, v. 4.
  - a. Their wickedness could not tolerate Joseph's purity, not even in regular conversation. Likewise, the holy Son of God could not be endured according to the natural perversity of unholy man (Ps. 2:1-3; Luke 19:14; John 3:19).
  - b. Their envy was the fruit of their own sin. Jacob and Joseph were not primarily to blame. Likewise Jesus Christ was envied by his brethren who spurned him (Mark 15:9-10).
  - c. They hated Joseph "without a cause," just as Jesus Christ was unjustifiably hated by his brethren (Luke 19:14; John 1:11; 15:24-25).
  - d. However Joseph was upheld by his father's love, even as was the Son of God (Matt. 17:5; John 3:35; 5:20).
  - e. No doubt Joseph was a sinner being a child of Adam. Yet there is no sin credited to him in the biblical record of his life. He perfectly pictures the righteous Son of God confronted with the iniquity of mankind. Just as Jesus Christ and Joseph were scorned, so will be the child of God. The world is not anxious and longing to welcome Christ in the flesh, or as He is reflected in the life of a faithful Christian (John 15:18-20).
  - f. What a curse is envy, especially within family life, and even though it may be called "sibling rivalry." But it is born of a sinful disposition (Tit. 3:3-7). If the brethren had submitted to Jacob's sovereign prerogative and repented of their wicked hearts, the outcome would have been happily different.

#### C. Joseph dreaming, vs. 5-11.

##### 1. Introduction.

Generally, dreams are a product of our busyness. What we dream about reflects, in a distorted way, our intense involvement in prior activity. The exception is very infrequent divine intervention such as was revealed to Daniel.

- a. In the Old Testament, the prophet was earlier known as a "seer." But whatever authentic visions were later verified in Scripture as coming from God, yet the Word of God declares that dreams are an inferior means of revelation when compared with Scripture itself, especially because the Bible is more clear and objective.
- b. In Numbers 12:6-8, the Word of God spoken directly to Moses is far more authoritative than the vision of a prophet.

- c. In Deuteronomy 13:1-5, the sure knowledge of God derived from the law is to be believed before dreams.
  - d. In Jeremiah 23:25-32 the Word of God is superior to dreams and visions just as grain is superior to and more substantive than chaff.
  - e. By way of illustration, remember that religious dreams can easily be stimulated and yet in no way prove to be divinely revelatory. Just eat a box of doughnuts and read a graphic book on Bible prophecy in bed before going to sleep, and then see what happens!
  - f. In the Old Testament certain visions and dreams become part of God's revelatory process, as with Jacob (Gen. 28:10-17; 31:10-16; 46:2), Pharaoh (Gen. 41:1-36), Solomon (I Kgs. 3:5-14), Isaiah (Isa. 1:1), Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:1), Daniel (Dan. 7:1), etc., yet we need to be reminded of their dangers and limitations, as just previously referenced.
  - g. In the New Testament there are limited references to dreams. More often they are found in Matthew and refer to the first coming of Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:20; 2:12-13, 19; 27:19). The others mostly relate to Paul (Acts 16:9-10; 23:11; II Cor. 12:1). However, neither Jesus Christ nor Paul anywhere exhorts us to rely upon dreams.
2. Joseph's agricultural dream, vs. 5-8.
- a. No doubt Joseph was acquainted with sheaves, so much so that he may have on many occasions tried counting them to get to sleep! Hence his brethren would easily rationalize the origin of a dream with sheaves in it. It was a Freudian revelation of personal ambition, the ranting of Jacob's favorite son based upon a twisted understanding of the coat in which their deluded brother paraded before them! However it was personal sin that blinded Joseph's brethren to the truth that his innocent explanation was in fact with regard to divine revelation. We might ponder "what if," had the brethren accepted the true nature of Joseph's dream, in the same vein as "what if," had the Jews accepted the true messianic nature of the Lord Jesus!
  - b. The dream is of Joseph and his brethren reaping stalks of grain and binding them into sheaves, these doubtless belonging to Jacob; but one of Joseph's stood upright, while those of his brethren bowed down before it.
    - (1) The meaning of the dream may have been clear to Joseph so that one wonders what promoted him to enquire about it with his brothers who had already been aggravated at the display of the "varicolored tunic." Here was further arousal, albeit in innocence, that only resulted in additional humiliation of the self-interested sibling rivals.
    - (2) So the response is predictable, namely detestation and seething hatred. But is it justified? No, for they ought to have submitted to Jacob's authority and appointment, just as the nation of Israel ought to have submitted to Jehovah's appointment of His Son as Saviour (Luke 19:14; John 1:10-11).

- (3) Most likely the brethren considered the dream to be a reflection of Joseph drooling for the power which the princely coat represented. Further, according to their seniority, the prospect of their humiliation and Joseph's exaltation seemed absurd, and especially objectionable.
  - (4) However the ten brothers were not in fellowship with God even though they resided in a devout home under now godly Jacob. Hence, they rejected His revelation and refused to submit to His ordering. They considered it quite impossible for any good thing to come out of Joseph (John 1:46). Their sin only ignited and enflamed existing loathing. So they "hated Me without a cause" (John 15:24-25). However, such a response can only meet with crushing defeat (Ps. 2:1-6).
- c. Should Joseph have told his brethren about his dream in the first place? What motivated him?
- (1) If he was motivated by arrogance, then he was totally wrong. But Acts 7:9 declares that "God was with him."
  - (2) Might not God have declared in the dream that it was necessary for its details to be revealed to the brethren?
  - (3) Was it not God's design that the brethren know this dream so that later on they would bless a sovereign, saving God?
3. Joseph's astronomical dream, vs. 9-11.
- a. This second dream, perhaps received a day or so later, is for emphasis and intended to avoid misunderstanding with natural dreams, as was likewise the case with Pharaoh (Gen. 41:32). It also causes us to focus upon the essential truth and not become detoured by the excessive consideration of details. Yet this account does include further explanation.
  - b. The scene is celestial, with the sun (Jacob), and the moon (Rachel, now deceased), and eleven stars (the brethren), bowing once again before Joseph. The brothers may have placed a naturalistic explanation on the representation of "the sun and the moon and eleven stars," yet they especially understood the intimation of their father and Rachel also bowing before their offspring. So the brethren became increasingly offended, and at the same time jealous, while Jacob, also seeming troubled, yet "kept the saying in mind," v. 11 (cf. Luke 2:19, 51), that is he cautiously mused over what might be in store, what God may in reality have in mind for his favorite son. In this regard, had there been any divine encouragement for Jacob to promote Joseph and demote Reuben?
  - c. The details are now even more explicit, so that the truth appears transparently clear. Further, this revelation, now in duplicate, means that Joseph's exaltation from humiliation is certain to come to pass (Hab. 2:2-3), not on account of mere foreknowledge, but because of God's sovereign appointment, yet under which subsumes the conscious freedom of Jacob and his family (Acts 4:27-28). Events will now quickly proceed in the fulfillment of this exaltation. Likewise with the

Lord Jesus Christ; numerous Old Testament Scriptures spoke of his rise from humiliation to exaltation, yet his brethren spurned him (Luke 4:16-30).

- d. So God enlarges the responsibility of Joseph's brethren in view of their prospective sinful scheme, even though they will respond irresponsibly: "Indeed God speaks once, or twice, yet no one notices it" (Job 33:14). So envy gives way to simmering anger, not submission to the will of God. Yet experience has taught Jacob to wait and see, for perhaps he does harbor in his heart great hopes for Joseph, v. 11.
  - e. But the more certain the prophecy, the more certain it is that the brethren are found to be opposing God. It would be better for them to be agnostic rather than antagonistic (Acts 5:34-39; Jas. 4:15).
4. By way of application, Joseph's major test to this point is that of being misunderstood. Yet he kept calm, even meek, when provoked, v. 19. There is a conspicuous lack of physical retaliation in the whole of his life, even as with his antitype, Jesus Christ (I Pet. 2:23).
- a. The issue for the true believer is not present circumstances, as perceived by Jacob and his sons, but what the Word or revelation of God says (Rom. 4:18-22).
  - b. God's dealings with family members are not always according to human expectations, as also with Jesse and his sons (I Sam. 16:6-7).
  - c. God's ways are designed so that He will exclusively receive the glory to the confounding of the ways of man (I Cor. 1:27-29).

#### D. Brethren scheming, vs. 12-36.

- 1. Joseph ministers to his brethren, as Christ ministered to Israel, vs. 12-17.
  - a. Jacob sends Joseph, as the Father sent Jesus Christ, vs. 12-14.
    - (1) Joseph's brethren were bold to go to Shechem since Jacob's name was "odious" there on account of their deceit, especially of Simeon and Levi (Gen. 34:30), v. 12.
    - (2) The willingness of Joseph is immediate, even though he knows how unwelcome he will be. His declaration, "I will go," is closely paralleled by Christ's willingness to take on human flesh at his Father's request (John 4:34; Heb. 10:5-9), v. 13.
    - (3) Note the concern here of Jacob for his sons, knowing of their possible danger (Gen. 34), just as today a parent worries for his children employed far away, especially when they are openly carnal.
    - (4) Hence, Joseph's mission was to do good as a mediator for his father (Acts 10:38-39; I Tim. 2:5).



b. Joseph goes to his brethren, as Christ went to Israel, vs. 15-17.

- (1) Jesus Christ's initial earthly mission was to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 15:24; John 1:10-11).
- (2) From Hebron to Shechem is 65 miles, and a further 15 miles to Dothan located on a fertile plain.
- (3) God's overshadowing providence was a needed guide when Joseph could not find his brothers (Gen. 24:27; Deut. 1:30). An antitype of this guide could be either John the Baptist (John 1:29-34), or the Holy Spirit (Matt. 4:1; John 3:34).

2. The brethren minister to Joseph, as Israel ministered to Jesus Christ, vs. 18-28.

a. Joseph is hated by his brethren, vs. 18-20.

- (1) Why this hatred? Because of Jacob's sovereign action and Joseph's purity of life. Likewise did Cain slay righteous Abel (Matt. 23:35); David similarly suffered (Ps. 35:19; 38:19-20), as did his greater Son (Mark 14:1).
- (2) This hatred was murder before their plot was put into effect (I John 3:15), v. 18.
- (3) "Dreamer" is a Hebrew idiom for "master of dreams." They slighted God's special revelation, but God's revelation still stands! They hate not only the dreamer and his newly gained birthright, but also the words which flow from his lips, v. 19.
- (4) Jewish tradition declares that Simeon made the initial suggestion to kill Joseph (Gen. 42:24, 36; 43:23).
- (5) "Pits" were water cisterns in the ground with narrow necks often used seasonally by means of drainage water, v. 22.
- (6) Notice how murder leads to lying and the unforeseen complications of guilt. What a web we weave when we seek to deceive, v. 20.
- (7) The final insult is a veiled threat to God's sovereign working, even outright defiance – "Then we shall see what will become of his dreams," that is, "We shall now certainly thwart God's plan!" v. 20.

b. Reuben's compromise, vs. 21-22.

- (1) As the firstborn, being most responsible, Reuben yet takes a more righteous stand that is nevertheless coloured with an obvious streak of weakness.
- (2) Reuben was more conciliatory, even on moral matters (42:22). He evidently attempted to dissuade his brethren, and in failing offered a compromise plan – "Don't shed his blood; let him starve to death in a dry water cistern."

Although this plan was a disguise for a secret rescue, yet when Joseph could not be found, this statement of Reuben's could easily be used against him by his brethren and force him to keep quiet before his father.

- (3) A strong leader would have placed Joseph behind him and challenged any aggressor with having to deal with him first. There is a cost, however, to be paid for moral weakness, v. 29. In Genesis 42:37 we see a more commendable spirit, no doubt born of experience. However, Reuben's great sin was that although he sided with Joseph, yet he kept silence before his father for twenty two years, and thus grievously sinned against him. What ceaseless remorse and guilt must have haunted and gnawed at him.

c. Joseph is humiliated, vs. 23-24.

- (1) Dressed in his princely robe, Joseph came first of all to please his father, and it was this that especially enraged his brothers. So the Jews were especially spiteful toward Jesus on account of His proclaimed intimate relationship with His Father (John 5:17, 43; 8:28, 38, 49, 54; 10:17, 30, 32; 12:26; 14:12, 20; 15:10, 15, 23-24 16:10; cf. 5:18).
- (2) How did Joseph react? In Genesis 42:21 there is the only indication that he cried out, similar to our Saviour "with strong tears and crying" (Heb. 5:7-8). This was Joseph's Gethsemane.
- (3) But could not the brethren understand that to murder the beloved son was in fact to heinously assault the father? Why blame Joseph, for was not this whole matter primarily of Jacob's doing? But hatred blinds the heart to good and holy sense.
- (4) How the brethren must have gloated more than ever at their act of attempting to squash the truth of Joseph's revelation, v. 20. Though guilty, yet they were unwittingly bringing about a display of great grace (Ps. 75:10; Acts 2:22-23; 4:27-28).

d. Judah's compromise, vs. 25-28.

- (1) How utterly callous; the brethren ate while Joseph cried out! Amos 6:4-6 probably has this scene in mind, or possibly Genesis 40:20-23; v. 25.
- (2) Perhaps Judah was choking on his food. Hence, he also seeks a compromise. But was his plan designed to only placate his conscience, or to save Joseph as well? Most likely it was the former intention only. How often men merely seek selfish relief from their guilt rather than right satisfaction of their sin and the help of those who have been offended, v. 26.
- (3) Note that in Genesis 43:9, 44:18-34, Judah appears to have gained more integrity and courage, probably on account of a sorely tried conscience over some twenty two years. However, at this point he may even only be seeking monetary profit from the crime! v. 26.

- (4) The exact price which the brethren were paid is “twenty shekels of silver” (cf. Matt. 27:3-5), though the distribution is not revealed. Did Reuben receive a double portion? v. 28.
  - (5) Liberal scholars have charged that in the mentioning of both Ishmaelites and Midianites, we have here an error that cannot be satisfactorily reconciled. One solution suggests that the brethren saw an Ishmaelite caravan on the horizon which would take over an hour to draw near. However, it is said that some Midianites took Joseph in the meantime and sold him to the Ishmaelites, who then sold him to Potiphar in Egypt. The problem here is the conflict between Genesis 37:36 and Genesis 39:1. Almost certainly, these two ethnic terms are interchangeable, such as in Judges 8:22-24, and refer to the one racial group. In Genesis 37:28, “so **they** pulled him up,” refers to the brethren, not to the Ishmaelites, vs. 27-28.
3. Jacob mourns for Joseph, as the Father mourned for His Son, vs. 29-36.
    - a. Reuben’s despair, vs. 29-30.
      - (1) Not being present when Judah made his suggestion to sell Joseph, Reuben returns to the pit hoping to release his brother, but finds the cistern empty, and thus as the first-born is overcome with grief at his neglect of responsibility. His sorrow pictures the discovery of Christ’s empty tomb before it was known that he had risen (John20:1-11), v. 29.
      - (2) His despairing cry, “Where shall I go?” suggests, “Where shall I hide from my father’s wrath?” Reuben now commences to pay a great price for his weakness in leadership, namely twenty two years of soul-racking guilt and remorse! Note that Reuben’s immediate concern appears to be not for Joseph, but for the dismay of his father, v. 30.
    - b. Jacob’s deception, vs. 31-33.
      - (1) Just as Jacob deceived Isaac his father with a goat skin to get the blessing (Gen. 27:1-40), so Jacob is now deceived by goat’s blood, v. 31.
      - (2) The literal Hebrew translation of v. 33 is, “My son’s coat; a wild beast has eaten him! Torn, torn is Joseph!”
      - (3) Surely the blood spattered the princely coat, and its tribal significance only added to Jacob’s grief. Did the brethren earlier anticipate this? This thoughtlessness only pinpoints their callous, unmoved hearts.
    - c. Jacob’s mourning, vs. 34-35.
      - (1) His grief was quenchless; his many days of mourning were to extend for over twenty years! Joseph was not only Rachel’s first-born, but also a son of godly quality. Thus we have a glimpse of the Father’s sorrow at the death of His only beloved Son in the depraved arena of this world.

- (2) The brethren attempted to offer the most hollow type of comfort, yet for over twenty years they were haunted by their father's gaunt face. How unceasing must the turmoil and remorse of their hearts have been? How blind is hatred to the fruit of its actions! How impotent is guilt to undo the actions that gave it birth!

d. Joseph's departure, v. 36.

- (1) So Joseph was taken captive to Egypt and sold to pagan Potiphar, whose name means, "the gift of Ra," the sun god. He was a court official of Pharaoh, the captain of his bodyguard. The exact price paid for Joseph was doubtless inflated.
- (2) Perhaps at this time Joseph cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). But like his great antitype: "In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, he learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:7-9).
- (3) Like Moses, David, and Daniel, God humbles before He exalts (Phil. 2:5-11).

4. Applications.

- a. Like the type, as well as the Anti-type portrayed here, the believer is to expect being misunderstood for doing good, even to the point of being regarded as a sinner and worthy of mistreatment (John 16:2).
- b. Romans 8:28 applies here since Joseph is certainly one of "the called according to His [God's] purpose." The divine consequence of Joseph's rejection and humiliation is that of a wider salvation, both familial and national (Gen. 50:20).
- c. You can't buck the sovereignty of God. If you attempt to do so (Gen. 37:20), as did Pharaoh, Haman, Herod, and the Jewish Sanhedrin, you will only be frustrated, overthrown, and even crushed by it (Gen. 37:29-30, 35).
- d. The principle of "the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow" (I Pet. 1:11) is exemplified in the life of Joseph, and thus represents the pilgrim journeying of the Christian as he follows "in His [Christ's] steps" (I Pet. 2:21) toward "the revelation of His glory" (I Pet. 4:13) and "new heavens and a new earth" (II Pet. 3:13).

### III JOSEPH REFINED – GENESIS 38:1-40:23

#### A. A shameful interlude concerning Judah's sin, 38:1-30.

##### 1. Judah and Joseph are the two central characters in Jacob's family.

- a. Judah, the fourth of Leah's sons, appears to have been exalted as chief of the remaining brethren after Joseph's departure, due to the immorality of Reuben and the treacherous violence of Simeon and Levi.
- b. Joseph, the first of Rachel's sons, is progressively made to stand out as a model man of God, son of his father, and type of the righteous Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

##### 2. But why is this shameful, immoral interlude now inserted?

- a. To show the need for the removal of Jacob's sons from the defilement of Canaanite influences into Egypt. Thus the need of cleansing is graphically illustrated. Here we see:

###### (1) Judah's desire for the world, vs. 1-5

This son of Jacob utterly forsakes the faith of his father. He takes a Canaanite as a friend, and a Canaanite as his wife who bears disobedient sons, Er and Onan.

###### (2) Judah's ungodly sons, vs. 6-11.

He chooses a Canaanite, Tamar, as a wife for his son Er who, being evil is slain by the Lord. Onan defaults on producing offspring by Tamar and likewise is slain by the Lord. So Judah promised another husband, a son Shelah, presently too young.

###### (3) Judah's immorality, vs. 12-19.

Later, upon the death of his wife, Judah seeks a prostitute while journeying on Canaanite business. However Tamar, now frustrated at not having been wedded to Shelah, disguises herself as a harlot and positions herself so that traveling Judah propositions her for a fee. He pledges to pay later; after the encounter, Tamar returns to her role as a widow.

###### (4) Judah's irresponsibility, vs. 20-30.

Judah has difficulty in later paying his pledge through an intermediary; he is told there was no such "temple prostitute," v. 21. Tamar is found to be pregnant by harlotry, so that Judah judges her to be worthy of death by burning! But Tamar, by means of tokens, proves Judah is the guilty correspondent; he confesses. Perez (related to David) and Zerah are born,

- b. To contrast Joseph's godliness with Judah's ungodliness.
- c. To record the Messianic lineage from Abraham through Jacob, Judah, and Perez, to Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:1-3, 16) v. 29.

B. Joseph tested morally when abounding, 39:1-20.

1. God's sovereign blessing upon Joseph, vs. 1-6.

- a. Joseph is now 17 years of age, often a critical period for the direction that a young man takes in life. He will become Prime Minister of Egypt at 30, hold office for 80 years, and die at 110, having spent 93 years away from Canaan.
- b. No doubt Joseph's faith was severely tested as he entered Egypt as a captive. How unlikely seemed the fulfillment of his dreams! Yet the Lord was with him (Gen. 39:21, 23; cf. Acts 7:9; Phil. 4:11-13), vs. 2, 5.
- c. Potiphar saw that the Lord was with Joseph, not only because of a holy manner of life, but also because of spoken testimony. He could not attribute Joseph's blessings to the Lord except that Joseph had spoken about the Lord! As a responsible and disciplined officer, yet Potiphar perceived a better quality of life in his slave, v. 3.
- d. Joseph's responsibilities grew and grew, from a servant to an overseer, as God tested and prepared him for much greater tasks (Matt. 25:23). Finally, only Potiphar's food was excluded from Joseph's supervision.
- e. Here we see the frequently repeated biblical principle of God blessing the unrighteous for the sake of the righteous (Gen. 18:22-32; Matt. 24:22; II Pet. 2:9), v. 5.
- f. Hence, Joseph was beautiful in form and fair to look upon, like his mother Rachel. However, Moses' account here focuses upon his moral rather than his material attractiveness, v. 6.
- g. Possibly Satan communed with God concerning Joseph just as he did with Job (Job 1:9-12), so that the following trial resulted. Note that Satan's fury yet finally brings glory to God.

2. The initial temptation, v. 7-9.

- a. Consider that Potiphar's wife only had time for Joseph's material attractiveness insofar as it was available to feed her own carnal gratification.
- b. Illustration. Jewish tradition suggests the following conversation between Joseph and Zuleika, Potiphar's wife:

*Zuleika:* How fair is your appearance, how comely your form! Never have I seen so well favored a slave as you are.

*Joseph:* God, who formed me in my mother's womb, has created all men.

*Zuleika:* How beautiful are your eyes, with which you have charmed all Egyptians, both man and women!

*Joseph:* Beautiful as they may be while I am alive, so ghastly they will be to look upon in the grave.

*Zuleika:* How lovely and pleasant are your words! I pray you, take your harp, also sing that I may hear your words.

*Joseph:* Lovely and pleasant are my words when I proclaim the praise of my God.

*Zuleika:* How beautiful is your hair! Take my golden comb and comb it.

*Joseph:* How long will you continue to speak thus to me? Leave off! It were better for you to care for your household.

*Zuleika:* There is nothing in my house that I care for, save you alone.<sup>1</sup>

- c. Joseph's options here did not allow him to be at peace with all men. Either he will offend God and Potiphar, or Potiphar's wife. There is no middle ground. The determining factor will be his training in and love for righteousness, but specifically God's righteousness. The alternative and contrary factor is self-interest.
- d. Joseph's priorities were first to God, then his master, with his own feelings in right subservience, v.9. Note in contrast David's following of his flesh and only later being wise to God's perspective (II Sam. 11:2-4; Ps. 51:4).
- e. To Joseph this temptation involves "a great evil," not merely an affair. Those who continue to appreciate the "exceeding sinfulness of sin" (Rom. 7:13), are far less likely to tangle with its soul-numbing enticements. Hence, Joseph was not blinded by the temporary pleasure of sin (Heb. 11:25). George Lawson writes, "It is one great mystery that in a time of temptation, we lose the benefit of our knowledge, by a temporary forgetfulness that seizes upon our hearts, and renders us an easy prey to the devil."<sup>2</sup>
- f. Application. But by what power or principle did Joseph resist this temptation when a hundred other religious men might have fallen? The answer must be solid preparation in righteousness from his converted father.

- (1) Jacob was converted at Peniel (Gen. 32:33-32), when Joseph was approximately five or six. Hence, with greater exposure to this godly influence than his elder brothers, Joseph had continuous training in the Word of God. His preparation for this trial was much more than cramming at a seminar, a set of simple snappy principles, or last Sunday's sermon (Ps. 119:97; 145:2; Dan. 6:10).

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<sup>1</sup> Louis Ginsberg, *Legends of the Bible*, pp. 215-216.

<sup>2</sup> George Lawson, *Lectures on the History of Joseph*, p. 35.



- (2) Illustration. In the military, most battles are won before the day of fighting through training and preparation. Many a believer falls today because he believes he only needs several days preparation. In fact we may need all of five years spiritual training for a particular battle with Satan that is only five years away.
- (3) Illustration. George Lawson writes, “When your corrupt hearts would fix your eyes upon present pleasures, turn your thoughts to the vileness of the sin, to the intolerable misery which it brings, and to those mighty arguments which ought to steel us with unshaken resolutions to keep ourselves pure. Turn your thoughts to God the great Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy.”<sup>3</sup>

### 3. The continual temptation, vs. 10-12.

- a. With relentless pursuit, Potiphar’s wife hounded Joseph, using all of her cultured guile. Jewish tradition recounts the following struggle: “Joseph did not so much as raise his eyes to look at his mistress [Zuleika]. He remained equally steadfast when she lavished gifts upon him, for she provided him with garments of one kind for the morning, another for noon, and a third kind for the evening. Nor could threats move him. She would say, ‘I will bring false accusations against you before your master,’ and Joseph would reply, ‘The Lord executes judgment for the oppressed.’ Or, ‘I will deprive you of food,’ whereupon Joseph, ‘The Lord gives food to the hungry,’ or, ‘I will have you thrown into prison,’ whereupon Joseph, ‘The Lord looses the prisoners,’ or ‘I will put heavy labor upon you that will bend you double,’ whereupon Joseph, ‘The Lord raises up them that are bowed down,’ or ‘I will blind your eyes,’ whereupon Joseph, ‘The Lord opens the eyes of the blind.’”<sup>4</sup>
- b. Illustration. Delilah was resisted for a time by Samson, but her persistence, by means of three assaults, eventually won through (Judges 16:4-21; cf. Matt. 10:22; 13:20-22; Rev. 2:26).
- c. Potiphar’s wife also added the enticement of secrecy, which is only effective to those who believe God to be remote, deaf, or blind. No doubt Zuleika arranged that the house be empty. Jewish tradition adds the further comments: “And Joseph spoke furthermore, saying, ‘I fear the Lord my God.’ Zuleika replied, ‘Nonsense! He is not here to see you!’ Joseph replied, ‘Great is the Lord and highly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable.’ Thereupon she took Joseph into her chamber, where an idol hung above the bed. This she covered, that it might not be a witness of what she was about to do. Joseph said, ‘Though you cover up the eyes of the idol, remember, the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth. Yes,’ continued Joseph, ‘I have many reasons not to do this thing for the sake of God.’”<sup>5</sup> v. 11.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>4</sup> Ginsberg, *Legends of the Bible*, p.216.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 216-217.

- d. But Joseph saw the need to flee from sin and a compromising situation (II Tim. 2:22). God provided a way of escape, that is an available door, which Joseph in exercising his responsibility, took without hesitation (I Cor. 10:13-14). Joseph had not even given any encouragement to those invitation signals in Zuleika's eyes. Yet her persistence made it imperative that he physically depart, and not even linger to attempt to convert her! v. 12.

4. The fury of a woman scorned, vs. 13-20.

- a. Illustration. Is it a true saying, "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned?" Emphatically "No," for if this were true, then God's fury would be lesser. But hell is the measure of God's fury, and no woman has such a degree of holy indignation. For this reason, Joseph wisely opts for the fury of a woman scorned rather than that of the righteous God of Abraham.
- b. If Potiphar's wife cannot have Joseph, then she will destroy him, indicating that her desire for him was not love but lust, not selfless concern for Joseph, but a selfish, fleshly craving, vs. 13-19.
  - (1) With cunning and unbridled rage, she solicits the help of her slaves, then fires their jealousy at this exalted foreigner, and adds scorn to Joseph by tagging him as a "Hebrew," a mistake of her husband! v. 14.
  - (2) Note of course that the servants are bound to be aware of her passion and frustration, as most servants are of such private matters, but no matter since expediency is more important than justice.
  - (3) Potiphar is not so much surprised as placed on the horns of a dilemma. He knows the baseness of his wife and the purity of Joseph, but like Pilate, he yet opts for preserving his reputation rather than the cause of truth and righteousness! v. 19.
- c. The punishment of imprisonment was relatively mild, yet still an outrage. Further, Jewish tradition suggests that Zuleika repeatedly visited Joseph for a long time with evil propositions, but finally gave up and let him alone,<sup>6</sup> v. 20.

C. Joseph tested physically when lacking, 39:21-40:23.

1. God prospers Joseph in prison, 39:21-23.

- a. It is probable that Joseph was sorely tempted to feel sorry for himself, as though he were "born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7). Imagine how Satan tested him:
  - (1) "Joseph, if you had only submitted to Zuleika, how much more comfortable you would be." But how blind is temptation to the agony of remorse after the act.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp.222-223.

- (2) “Joseph, how this proves that righteousness does not pay.” But we do not follow righteousness simply because it pays and profits us. Rather, we do righteousness come what may, since God is righteous and we delight to please Him even if we suffer temporary hurt. Note how temptation is blind to the distant future (Ps. 37:17; 58:10-11; 75:10; 17-18).
- b. Note that “the LORD” was with Joseph, that is Jehovah or Israel’s covenant keeping God, vs. 21, 23.
  - c. The chief jailer here was in charge of Pharaoh’s prisoners, though as a pagan yet he himself was under God’s charge! He was in turn under Potiphar’s command (cf. Gen. 39:1, 40:3). This prison was probably the top security wing of the Egyptian federal penitentiary. Thus, since Jewish tradition confirms that Potiphar had serious doubt about Joseph’s guilt, possibly he instructed the jailer to give Joseph favoured treatment as some compensation.
  - d. But remember that in the midst of these seeming depressed circumstances, yet God is sovereign and in full control just as much as when the circumstances are favourable. But in spite of the temptation to doubt God’s righteous ways (Ps. 73:2-14), yet Joseph responsibly manifests a gracious, patient, and humble spirit that is noticed by pagan jailers.
  - e. Once again, Joseph receives a measure of relief and promotion, so that he becomes a trusted supervisor over the penitentiary inmates (Ps. 23:4-6). Again this is God’s preparation for Joseph’s oversight of a nation.
  - f. Application. “Think not that the presence of God with His people is limited to palaces or to churches. It has been often manifestly seen that He was with them in prisons [e.g. John Bunyan], in caves or dens, on gobbets, in fiery furnaces.”<sup>7</sup>
2. God proves Joseph in prison, 40:1-23.
- a. Joseph is favoured, vs. 1-4.
    - (1) The butler or “cup-bearer” was in charge of Pharaoh’s cellar and bar, but possibly was a poor mixer of drinks. Tradition suggests he attempted to poison Pharaoh, and also prepared a drink with a fly in it!
    - (2) The baker was in charge of Pharaoh’s bakehouse, but possibly his cinnamon rolls were at times below standard. Tradition also suggests that he attempted to poison Pharaoh, but as well he baked a loaf of bread with a pebble in it!
    - (3) Note that Potiphar is “the captain of the bodyguard” (cf. 39:1). He places Joseph in charge of these sad courtiers.

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<sup>7</sup> Lawson, *History of Joseph*, p. 46.

## b. Joseph is faithful, vs. 5-19.

## (1) The two troubled dreamers, vs. 5-8.

- (a) In a very dream conscious Egyptian society, yet these simultaneous dreams seemed special, revelatory, and not merely born of indigestion.
- (b) The regular court interpreters, usually professionals, were not at their disposal in such a shameful place.
- (c) Joseph's advice is both profound and humble: "Do not interpretations belong to God?" The understanding of revelation and mysteries is God's to give as He wills (Dan. 2:17-23, 27-28; Matt. 16:16-17). There is no suggestion of Joseph attempting to elevate himself.

## (2) The cup-bearer's dream interpreted, vs. 9-15.

- (a) This dream of vines, grapes, and serving Pharaoh could have been understood as wishful thinking on the cup-bearer's part. But Joseph was not deceived by mere naturalistic and psychological reasoning.
- (b) Yet Joseph's interpretation seems more reasonable once it is unfolded. But note that it is open to verification since in *three days*, not hours, months, or years, the cup-bearer will be restored. This feature in fact allows for divine verification, v. 13.
- (c) However, the real benefit of this dream is designed for Joseph rather than the cup-bearer!
- (d) Joseph's plea indicates that his privileged position was yet very restrictive. Above all else, he felt the sting of unjust treatment, vs. 14-15.
  - 1) How passionately must the cup-bearer have promised relief from Pharaoh upon his release?
  - 2) How Joseph longed for his God to vindicate his integrity (Ps. 7:8-11).
  - 3) Yet how confident was Joseph in making this plea that his interpretation was true.

## (3) The baker's dream interpreted, vs. 16-19.

- (a) The baker attempted to interpret his dream with optimism since the *three baskets* of white bread seemed, by association, also favourable.
- (b) But further details are ominous and brushed aside.

- 1) Pharaoh is not present as in the other dream.
  - 2) The birds appear to be opposing the baker.
- (c) However, Joseph's interpretation is according to truth and not personal expediency.
- 1) In three days the baker will be beheaded and his body impaled on display as was customary in Egypt. Note how such details increase the historicity of the record.
  - 2) The birds will eat the baker's flesh on display.
- (d) How the baker must have ridiculed Joseph and belittled him, calling him a false prognosticator.
- 1) But imaging the dispute that took place between the cup-bearer and the baker over the next three days. One adamantly claimed Joseph to be reliable, the other denounced him as a fraud.
  - 2) However, the fulfillment of these contrasting interpretations would settle beyond dispute Joseph's integrity and heavenly anointing.
- c. Joseph is forgotten, vs. 20-23.
- (1) Imagine after three days of wearisome debating, the contrasting expressions of hope and fear on the two prisoner's faces.
  - (2) Three days later at Pharaoh's birthday party, the contrary royal decrees were made. But why?
    - (a) Possibly the drinks were poorly mixed, so Pharaoh called out, "Bring me my former cup-bearer."
    - (b) Possibly the food was good, so Pharaoh commanded, "Get rid of my former baker."
    - (c) Possibly Pharaoh found out who was guilty of an attempt to assassinate him.
  - (3) The cup-bearer, although elated, most likely neglected Joseph on purpose, and rationalized away his responsibility of speaking to Pharaoh by means of the following excuses, v. 23.
    - (a) Joseph simply interpreted the obvious.
    - (b) The baker only got his true desert, as did the more deserving cup-bearer.

- (c) And why should he commend Joseph to Pharaoh so as to help a rival, and possibly upset Potiphar and Zuleika?
- (4) How Joseph's hopes were dashed as he languished in prison, feeling forsaken.
- (a) He was tempted to feel bitter, to let it build up into a desire for revenge.
- (b) But two years in the prime of life being approximately twenty years old, Joseph was further refined in the furnace of affliction (Is. 48:10).
- (c) Possibly "Job's comforters" suggested that Joseph was only receiving what was his due, else he would be prospering!
- (d) Yet Joseph knew that God was with him, and he only learned all the more not to trust in man (Ps. 42:5; 62:7-9; Amos 6:1-6).
- (e) Illustration. Surely the English hymn writer, John G. Whittier, well expresses Joseph's feelings at this time"

I see the wrong that round me lies,  
 I feel the guilt within;  
 I hear with groans and travail-cries,  
 The word confess its sin.

Yet, in the maddening maze of things,  
 And tossed by storm and flood,  
 To one fixed stake my spirit clings;  
 I know that God is good!

I dimly guess from blessings known  
 Of greater out of sight,  
 And with the chastened Psalmist, own  
 His judgments too are right.

I know not what the future hath  
 Of marvel or surprise,  
 Assured alone that life and death  
 His mercy underlies.

And if my heart and flesh are weak  
 To bear an untried pain,  
 The bruised reed He will not break,  
 But strengthen and sustain.

No offering of my own I have  
 Nor works my faith to prove:  
 I can but give the gifts He gave,  
 And plead His love for love.

I know not where His islands lift  
 Their fronded palms in air;

I only know I cannot drift  
Beyond His love and care.

#### IV JOSEPH RESURRECTED – GENESIS 41:1-45

##### A. Pharaoh dreams and despairs, 41:1-8.

###### 1. Pharaoh dreams, vs. 1-7.

- a. The first dream involves a river from which arise seven fat cows, then seven lean cows which devour the former. Then Pharaoh awakes troubled in his spirit.
- b. The second dream involves seven good ears of grain springing up on one stalk, and then seven blighted ears of grain which arise and devour the former good ears. Again Pharaoh awakes.
- c. Note that these verses, as with 40:16-19, have an authentic Egyptian background, especially the word “meadow” KJV, or “marsh grass” NASB, v. 2, which term Alfred Edersheim declares originates from Egypt.<sup>8</sup> Also in v. 6, the “east wind” would be the dreaded, dust-laden sirocco blowing from Arabia, sometimes lasting for fifty days and destroying crops in the process. Thus this record is not contrived as a beautiful tale, but rather is an authentic historical account of real people!

###### 2. Pharaoh despairs, v. 8.

- a. Several indications of a dream that originates from God are the indelible and disturbing impression it leaves behind (Gen. 40:5-8; Dan. 2:1; 4:5-6; Matt. 27:19), its repetition with variation, and its precise verification.
- b. The magicians consulted their dream manuals, but feared to even guess at an interpretation using vague and ambiguous interpretations.
- c. Thus the mighty Pharaoh’s “spirit was troubled,” the expression here being akin to the violent beating of one’s heart. Notice how God is able by a mere dream to confound a supposed invincible potentate; how deft and awesome is His power; how easily He humbles the wisdom of Egypt (Prv. 21:1).

##### B. Joseph interprets and instructs, 41:9-36.

###### 1. Joseph is remembered, vs. 9-13.

- a. Joseph has now been captive and tested by affliction in Egypt for approximately eight (?) years (cf. 37:2; 41:46).

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<sup>8</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *Old Testament Bible History*, I, pp. 153-155.



- b. The chief butler states, “I would make mention of my offenses” NASB. This is not a confession of his forgetfulness regarding Joseph, but a recollection of his earlier offences that led to his imprisonment, v. 9.
  - c. But how convenient it is for the butler to recall Joseph as a means of advancing himself in Pharaoh’s eyes. For this reason he has no intention of confessing his guilt and neglect (40:14-15).
  - d. Note that Joseph is known as a “Hebrew youth,” which title may refer to a strong testimony given in prison, v. 12.
  - e. However, imagine if two years earlier, Joseph had been remembered by the butler; might not he have been merely assigned to another house as a slave? Rather, greater humiliation was required so that greater exaltation might result.
  - f. By this means of sustained humiliation, Joseph’s character was further refined, and only shone all the more brilliantly in the face of all of the wisdom and learning of Egypt. Thus God derived greater glory!
2. Joseph interprets, vs. 14-32.
- a. Pharaoh’s demand for Joseph’s presence required hurried preparation, namely a shave and correct dress. The act of shaving agrees with known Egyptian practice as illustrated on tomb walls. However, the Hebrew practice was to retain a beard. Hence, again we have a real event described and not a concocted fable, v. 14.
  - b. Notice that Joseph immediately gives God the glory when asked concerning his ability, v. 16, also vs. 28, 32.
    - (1) He is fearless in testifying concerning Jehovah even before the great of this world.
    - (2) Diplomatically he also announces, “God will give Pharaoh a favourable answer” NASB, v. 16.
  - c. This second account of Pharaoh’s dreams is much more graphic, especially with regard to the lean cattle and the blighted ears of grain, which features were worrisome, vs. 19, 23, cf. vs. 3-4, 6-7.
  - d. The details of Joseph’s interpretation are as follows, vs. 25-32.
    - (1) Obviously the river is the Nile, representing Egypt, v. 29.
    - (2) The seven fat cows and full ears of wheat are seven years of great plenty that shall immediately follow.
    - (3) The seven lean cows and blighted ears of wheat are seven years of harsh famine that follow the seven good years. Possibly the lowering of the Nile could be a vital factor.

- (4) The duplication of this message was to stress its certain and imminent fulfillment, as well as increase the hearer's responsibility, v. 32.
- e. Application. Notice how Joseph manifests the characteristics of a true preacher and prophet.
  - (1) He stands spotless in character, tried and proven.
  - (2) He is called forth to speak by means of God's sovereign direction.
  - (3) He speaks "thus saith the Lord," come what may.
  - (4) He speaks of God's judgment.
  - (5) He speaks of a way of escape and God's blessing.
  - (6) And thus did the great antitype, the Lord Jesus Christ, also minister.
- 3. Joseph instructs, vs. 33-36.
  - a. Up to this point, Joseph's interpretation has not been "a favorable answer," v. 16, but now his godly instruction will bring about personal prosperity that even Pharaoh never dreamed about, through wise economic planning.
  - b. Joseph's wisdom is that which comes from above (Jas. 3:17). He is sensitive to God's will and intentions; he perceives the mind of God.
  - c. How necessary it was that a discerning and wise man be found who, with necessary authority, could enforce the following proposed plan, v. 33.
    - (1) Someone was needed who believed the dream and would continue to do so. When food abounds, people tend to disbelieve the prospect of hard times.
    - (2) Yet it is most unlikely that Joseph had himself in mind. Such exaltation was far beyond his expectations.
  - d. Thus a 20% tax on grain was recommended, and collectors were to gather this into Pharaoh's granaries during the seven prosperous years for the seven lean years, vs. 34-36.
    - (1) Joseph, having learned how to run Potiphar's household and the penitentiary inmates as well, now applies his experience on a national scale.
    - (2) Application. It is wise to plan for the future, provided that we plan according to the future that God ordains, and not the future that is according to selfish ambition.

C. Pharaoh ponders and promotes, 41:37-45.

1. Pharaoh ponders, vs. 37-38.

- a. Pharaoh himself shows the mark of a good leader when faced with clearly superior ideas that come from an inferior. Instead of squashing them out of jealousy, he incorporates them yet not as his own, v. 37.
- b. By seeking an Egyptian first, Pharaoh inadvertently provides evidence of the godless and incompetent state of his nation, and its need of a saviour, v. 38.
- c. However, Pharaoh, for all his pagan ways, yet perceives the benefits of employing staff that are spiritual. Hence, he acknowledges “a divine spirit” NASB in Joseph, just as in Joshua (Num. 27:18), and in Daniel (Dan. 5:11-12), and thus proves to be an equal opportunity employer, v. 38.

2. Pharaoh promotes, vs. 39-45.

- a. Pharaoh’s declaration of Joseph’s high appointment by himself ignores the overriding fact of God’s sovereign determination, vs. 39-41.
  - (1) Joseph was aware of the real power behind his promotion (50:20).
  - (2) Pharaoh was really a minister of God’s sovereign will (Prov. 21:1; Ezra 6:22).
  - (3) Jealous brothers, mercenary Midianites or Ishmaelites, a vicious woman, an angry Potiphar, and a forgetful butler, could not prohibit but only work toward the accomplishment of God’s desire for Joseph (Rom. 8:28).
- b. Joseph’s exaltation is total, phenomenal, vs. 42-45.
  - (1) He is made prime minister, second in the land, and this is signified with a signet ring. Yet Joseph does not appear to desire to go one step higher as some men would, v. 42.
  - (2) The gold chain was a sign of distinguished achievement in Egyptian life, v. 42.
  - (3) A procession is arranged in Joseph’s honor to educate the people to submit to his rule. Hence, they are to bow down, vs. 43-44.
  - (4) He receives a new name, “Zaphenath-paneah,” which means, “Chief steward in the realm in the face of famine,” v. 45.
  - (5) He receives a wife from Pharaoh, “Asenath,” born of an aristocratic, priestly family, v. 45.
- c. Application. Thus Joseph beautifully pictures the exaltation of Jesus Christ, the real Saviour.

- (1) Jesus Christ also receives a Gentile bride.
- (2) Jesus Christ also left his Father's bosom for humiliation that led to exaltation and dominion (Ps. 40:2-3; Is. 61:3; Phil.2:5-8, 9-11; Heb. 2:9).

## V JOSEPH REIGNING – GENESIS 41:46-57

### A. Introduction.

1. In God's plan and purpose, a much larger perspective is in view than simply a rags to riches story. Joseph is to be the agent of a great reconciliation. In fact he was raised to reconcile! Further, he is to be the means by which a small band of Hebrews shall seek refuge in a pagan land, and yet leave some four hundred years later as a strong nation!
2. Regarding Joseph's original dreams, part has now been fulfilled, namely his exaltation, but his family has yet to bow down before him.
3. Joseph and Egypt shall witness fulfilled prophecy for the next fourteen years, as a testimony to Jehovah's certain ways.

### B. The seven years of plenty, vs. 46-49.

1. As each year passed, no doubt more enforcement of the grain tax was necessary on account of scoffing farmers.
2. As the granaries increasingly increased with food, more and more was Joseph unpopular as a Hebrew foreigner. Why surely the gods of Egypt would perpetuate this prosperity!
3. But for seven years Joseph resolutely trusted God's revelation, in spite of circumstances that tempted him to believe otherwise.

### C. The birth of Ephraim and Manasseh, vs. 50-52.

1. Manasseh means, "God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household" NASB. This does not mean to completely forget, but to have these matters further back in his mind with less worry and sadness.
2. Ephraim means, "God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction" NASB. This tends to suggest contentment, especially with a wife and family. Tradition declares that Joseph was given one hundred slaves from Pharaoh and lived in a spacious and magnificent palace.<sup>9</sup> Yet his memory of family ties will soon be vividly aroused.
3. Both of these sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, will later be adopted into the tribe of Jacob (48:1-22). They will take their place amongst the twelve tribes in place of Levi and Joseph.

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<sup>9</sup> Ginsberg, *Legends of the Bible*, p. 232.

4. Note that both of these given names are Hebrew. This indicates that Joseph's faith in Jehovah never waned though surrounded with the wealth and culture of Egypt.
- D. The seven years of famine, vs. 53-57.
1. A whole nation now has bread on account of one godly man. Joseph is the mediator of bread for hungry bodies, just as Jesus Christ is the mediator of living bread for hungry souls (John 6:48:51), v. 54.
  2. As each year went by, Joseph became more popular.
    - a. With the people, as their hunger was satisfied and they increasingly realized Joseph's wisdom.
    - b. With Pharaoh, as he obtained through Joseph the wealth of Egypt.
    - c. Hence, Joseph was like Jesus Christ who "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52).
  3. Joseph's fame spread far and wide so that he became the saviour of the local world. Shortly following this he will also be the saviour of his brethren (I Tim. 4:10; Rom. 8:32; 11:25-32).
  4. But the exalted glory of Joseph is in reality the glory of God who has so blessed him (Rom. 11:33-36).

#### VI JOSEPH RECONCILING – GENESIS 42:1-47:31

- A. Introduction. This section is the heart and substance of the Genesis account of the life of Joseph. Granted that Joseph is now glorified, yet his brethren remain guilty of their crime, and Jacob is still alienated from his beloved son.
- B. The first journey of Jacob's sons to Egypt, 42:1-38.
1. The need of grain, vs. 1-5.
    - a. Both Jacob and his sons are glum and depressed at the famine which humbles Canaan, their land of promise!
      - (1) Certainly the brethren found that such circumstances only raised up in their souls the remembrance of their crimes and ungodliness. Their guilt concerning Joseph was a particular cancer to their souls that prohibited happiness, especially with regard to their father.
      - (2) Before being saved from the famine in their souls, these brethren must see the exceeding sinfulness of their sin (Rom. 7:13). They were aware that they had done wrong, but they must be brought to despair at their sin before true reconciliation is possible.

- (3) Application. Today there is likewise a desperate need for man to see his sin, not as simply shortcoming and failure on a horizontal level, but as eruptions from a well of corruption in the heart that causes us to be enemies of God and under His wrath. Only when the disease is truly diagnosed can the necessary remedy be applied with resulting reconciliation (Ps. 51:3-5; II Cor. 5:18-21; Rom. 3:9-20).
- b. Possibly Jacob has seen caravans returning from Egypt laden with grain. It is only when our wells dry up that we are led to seek a new source of refreshment.
- c. The fact that all ten sons go to Egypt suggests that they had hardly any cattle left to tend. Probably Jacob's flocks had been almost wiped out.
- (1) Thus the strong language, "that we may live and not die," v. 2.
- (2) In Genesis 46:5-7, some cattle are mentioned, but the household of Jacob and his sons and grandchildren was yet considerable.
- d. But Benjamin remains home. For over twenty years he has been a protected child, doted on by Jacob while pining for Joseph and Rachel.
- (1) Benjamin also longed for Joseph, for he was certainly more of a brother to him than the other ten.
- (2) As the baby of the family he was used to staying at home to care for his father.
- e. So Jacob's sons appear to have joined themselves to a Canaanite caravan on the way south, this possibly reflecting their lack of concern regarding unholy alliances, v. 5.
2. The conviction of guilt, vs. 6-24.
- a. Joseph reunited with his brethren, vs. 6-8.
- (1) Like Jesus Christ, Joseph knows his brethren before they know him (Jer. 1:5; Rom. 5:8; I John 4:19).
- (2) How circumstances have changed. Earlier Joseph was humiliated and his brethren were sovereign. Now Joseph is sovereign and the brethren are humbled.
- (3) Now a further part of Joseph's dream is fulfilled (Gen. 37:7-10).
- (4) Twenty years have not erased from Joseph the memory of their faces, even though sin and age have left their marks of guilt and worry.
- (5) Joseph "spoke roughly to them," or "harshly" NASB, not because of sadistic desire for revenge, v. 7.

- (a) Rather he desired to induce guilt in them that would lead to humility and genuine repentance.
  - (b) He sought to learn more about his father and family.
  - (c) Real reconciliation was only possible when the offence had been dealt with.
  - (d) Note that in the midst of dealing harshly with the brethren, yet like God, Joseph manifested grace and compassion (42:25; Hab. 3:2).
- (6) However, Joseph's brethren do not recognize their exalted brother, v. 8.
- (a) Their only hope is the pure grace of Joseph. They are stark blind, guilty, impotent, closer to just retribution than they imagined, yet pitiable.
  - (b) These brethren are strangers to the truth until Joseph determines to reveal himself. The issue is not their "decision," but Joseph's mercy in granting them sight (cf. 45:3, 8; Matt. 16:16-17; Luke 10:22-23; John 9:35-38).
- b. Joseph's brethren are led to conviction of their sin, vs. 9-20.
- (1) In remembering his earlier dreams, no doubt Joseph inwardly declared, "Blessed be the God of Israel, my father," and even now anticipated that he would yet see his father again, v. 9a.
  - (2) Why now does Joseph accuse his brethren of being spies? v. 9b.
    - (a) Not because he really believed this to be true.
    - (b) But as a disciplinary test to discover, "Are they sorry for their evil against their father and I?"
    - (c) It enabled Joseph to probe their sin without revealing himself, or listening to false confessions.
    - (d) It was also a believable charge since a hungry nation would be inclined to attack a well fed land.
  - (3) The reply of the brethren leads to further probing, vs. 10-14.
    - (a) Suddenly they are feeling the force of a charge against them that is not true, as did Joseph by his brethren and Potipher's wife.
    - (b) We are "true men" or "honest men" NASB, means they are upright insofar as their mission is concerned. However, this is a very hollow claim since at heart they are very dishonest men! v. 11.

- (c) Joseph's refusal to accept their defense leads to their revealing of more information, as Joseph desired. Subtle probing through the scalpel of God's Spirit results in the mentioning of Benjamin, Jacob, and Joseph, v. 13.
- 1) No doubt the mere mention of Benjamin brought a lump into Joseph's throat.
  - 2) Jacob is declared to be still alive with the result that Joseph is inwardly moved.
  - 3) Joseph is described as "one who is no longer alive" NASB, this being continuance of the lie told to his father. Obviously their complicity is not mentioned.
- (4) Joseph's test is designed to discover the present state of the brethren in comparison with their past attitude toward the seed of Rachel. Hopefully, there will result guilt, repentance, and confession, vs. 15-20.
- (a) Benjamin must be brought south to Egypt before Joseph will believe their story, v. 15.
- 1) Possibly the brethren thought that there was doubt by Joseph as to there being any other brother.
  - 2) In fact Joseph wanted to see Benjamin and Jacob, and possibly hoped that his father would also come down to Egypt.
  - 3) In fact Joseph wanted to see the reaction of his brethren to Benjamin. Would they bring him even by force, merely to satisfy their own needs, quite apart from the desire of Jacob? Or would they be prepared to let Simeon rot in prison for the rest of his life (v. 24)?
- (b) But now Joseph changes the terms of his test after he has placed the brethren in prison for three days, vs. 16-19.
- 1) In v. 16, one brother is to return to Jacob while the other nine remain. Perhaps the brethren rebel at this proposition. However, in v. 19, one brother is to remain while the other nine are to return to Jacob. Perhaps after some time in prison this seemed a better idea!
  - 2) In prison for three days, possibly the same cell in which Joseph was contained, they further taste the pangs of injustice. This captivity probably prompts their repentance (Gal. 3:22-24).
  - 3) Then Joseph gives the brethren comfort and encouragement when he declares, "Do this and live, for I fear God" NASB. He is confirming his integrity, and confessing his faith in Jehovah, v. 18.



- (c) However, in the midst of trial, Joseph is careful to remember mercy (Hab. 3:2). Hence, he graciously sends food to his hungry family, v. 19. He urges them to hurry that they may not die, v. 20.
- c. Joseph's brethren are convicted of their twenty year old sin, vs. 21-24.
- (1) Time has not erased the details of their guilt, but only bottled it up till it bursts forth under the pressure of gnawing remorse, v. 21.
    - (a) Illustration. Certain types of cancer remain dormant, but given a knock they suddenly erupt. Likewise here, latent guilt is knocked by the sudden remembrance of past circumstances and suddenly erupts.
    - (b) For twenty years the brethren have been haunted by vivid memories of Joseph's anguished look and his cries for help. Yet their repeated attempts to suppress these feelings did not succeed.
    - (c) How temptation blinds us to the horror of tragic and bitter consequences. True reconciliation can only take place when such sin is openly confessed and the offended party grants true forgiveness.
  - (2) Reuben's defense is pitiful and self-righteous, v. 22.
    - (a) True, he had warned his brothers and increased their responsibility (37:22, 29-30).
    - (b) But how could he look into his father's face for so long and yet remain silent? The same could be said for Judah (37:26-27).
    - (c) All of the ten brothers are guilty of Joseph's blood. More open courage on the part of Judah and Reuben might have saved Joseph.
  - (3) Joseph is moved to tears, vs. 23-24.
    - (a) Being so fluent in Egyptian, yet Joseph had not forgotten his Hebrew. Hence, although an interpreter was necessary in the circumstances, yet he knew their hearts and every aside comment, though they did not know this. Likewise, Jesus Christ knows the hearts of men (John 2:23-25), though man does not know the heart of the Saviour, v. 23.
    - (b) Note that Joseph's undoubted leadership ability did not make him immune from emotional involvement, v. 24a.
      - 1) Any family rift of twenty years should profoundly affect us, preferably with tears like Joseph rather than with temper!
      - 2) But Joseph's emotions do not override his wise judgment, which nevertheless stands.

- (c) Thus Simeon is selected by Joseph to remain, who according to Jewish tradition, originally suggested that Joseph be slain. Perhaps at this point, he was still obviously not repentant; now he sits where Joseph may have sat, and ponders whether his brothers will abandon him!
3. The provision of grace, vs. 25-38.
- a. Joseph's kindness to his sinful brethren, vs. 25-28.
    - (1) In Joseph we now see a picture of the goodness and severity of God (Rom. 11:22). Likewise the Son of God manifests himself as both a Lamb and a Lion, v. 25.
      - (a) Illustration. A wild horse may need to be whipped into line, but a wise master also encourages with lumps of sugar.
      - (b) What was Joseph's motive in being so gracious and considerate in the face of their sin?
        - 1) Perhaps Joseph wondered if in fact they would discard Simeon just as they had discarded him. Hence, he offers encouragement.
        - 2) Probably he thought, most of all, of his sad aged father. Further, how could a godly brother ignore the pressing needs of his sinful brethren?
        - 3) Remember that when God deals with our sin, yet it is only the offer of grace that causes us not to despair.
    - (2) Imagine the grief and depression that overshadowed this sorry band as they traveled home, for they anticipate their father's grief at the absence of Simeon, and his dismay at the demand for Benjamin, v. 26.
    - (3) Thus, at a wayside shelter, the brethren are confounded when one of them discovers his original purchase money in the mouth of his sack, vs. 27-28.
      - (a) Imagine how they had already spoken harshly of that Egyptian Prime Minister.
      - (b) Perhaps they expected an Egyptian contingent of soldiers at any moment to overtake them and take them back on account of a frame-up re the money in their sacks. After all, the Prime Minister seemed so suspicious of them.
      - (c) Notice how their unsettled guilt causes them to be blind to Joseph's grace. Likewise, how unsettled guilt blinds sinners to God's great grace.
      - (d) But note now for the first time a spontaneous reference to God's sovereignty, which they now fear more than that of Pharaoh, v. 28.

- b. Jacob's distress at his sorrowful brethren, vs. 29-38.
- (1) His sons recount their Egyptian experience, vs. 29-34.
    - (a) They tell the truth totally, without deception, even though they faced the temptation to lie and thus discard Simeon.
    - (b) They have a severe, tyrannical opinion of Joseph, v. 30.
    - (c) "You may trade in the land" NASB, suggests that the brethren had only a short supply of grain, but if they returned with Benjamin, then they could do larger business, v. 34; cf. v. 20 re added details.
  - (2) Jacob reacts with fearful partiality, vs. 35-38.
    - (a) The brethren now appear to discover that all of their money has been returned to their sacks, cf. v. 27, with the result that they are only all the more dismayed, along with Jacob, v. 35.
      - 1) Jacob probably also fears Egyptian retaliation.
      - 2) Application. Money is not always welcome as here, or when a man receives compensation for the loss of a limb, or when a man is so guilt-ridden as the result of larceny that he cannot enjoy his loot!
    - (b) Jacob despairs at the depletion of his family, which God said would be as numerous as the stars of heaven, v. 36.
      - 1) He lays the blame before his remaining sons concerning the loss of two and possibly three members of his family, with more truth than he realizes.
      - 2) He is full of self-pity, "All these things are against me," rather than accepting faith.
      - 3) He appears to have forgotten God's promise of blessing (35:9-12).
    - (c) Reuben, the eldest, replies to his father's criticism, feeling its sting, v. 37.
      - 1) His bold courage should have come many years earlier, but was it more like Peter's rash offer (Matt. 26:33)?
      - 2) But of what satisfaction would it be for Jacob to have lost two grandsons as well as three sons?
    - (d) Jacob's favouritism is again evidenced, v. 38.
      - 1) While favouritism is very possible in a monogamous family, yet in Jacob's polygamous situation, this problem is greatly enhanced.

- 2) Jacob appears to have no concern for Simeon. So far as he is concerned, he can just rot in prison. Such partiality here is blatant, and a stimulus to abiding trouble!
- 3) There is evident here a lack of faithful resignation to God's sovereign ways, but circumstances will educate him into a change of attitude and better trust (43:14).

C. The second journey of Jacob's sons to Egypt, 43:1-45:28.

1. Jacob gives way to Judah's persuasion, 43:1-14.

a. Jacob's controversy with Judah, vs. 1-10.

- (1) Necessity is the mother of invention, and a change of mind, especially during a prolonged famine, vs. 1-2.
  - (a) God can sovereignly lead us, according to His divine squeeze, to do that which we at first resisted doing.
  - (b) Application. God can use a famine in the soul to lead us reluctantly to food on God's terms!
- (2) Judah and the brethren take a wise stand against their stubborn father, vs. 3-10.
  - (a) Judah resists his father's command, vs. 3-5.
    - 1) Judah does not offer blind obedience to his father as some would suggest today. Yet he is right in this particular situation. He is also about forty years of age.
    - 2) Jacob is more concerned about food for himself than Simeon!
    - 3) But Joseph has insisted that unless Benjamin comes to Egypt, the other brethren will not so much as see him, and thus receive any grain at all.
    - 4) Application. We must come to Jesus Christ on his own terms, not our own. Jacob is not sovereign, but Joseph is!
  - (b) Jacob's objections are refuted, vs. 6-10.
    - 1) Jacob's reply reveals his old crafty nature: "Why were you such blabber-mouths?" But for once the brethren had simply been honest, and not deceptively talkative, v. 6.
    - 2) The reply of Judah and his brothers is both reasonable and practical, vs. 7-8.

- a) We were “straitly” or carefully investigated, cf. 42:9-13; v. 7.
      - b) Besides, the crunch question is, “Do you want to live or die?” v. 8.
    - 3) Judah offers himself as a guarantee for Benjamin’s safety, vs. 9-10.
      - a) Later we shall see that this was not an empty offer (44:33-34), v. 9.
      - b) Then he gives a final thrust, “If we had not lingered, we might have *all* been back with food,” v. 10.
  - b. Jacob’s consent is given to take Benjamin, vs. 11-14.
    - (1) His practical preparation, vs. 11-13.
      - (a) Note that Judah’s persuasion, in offering himself in servitude, works rather than that of Reuben’s offering of his two sons (42:37-38).
      - (b) He attempts to appease as was the case with Esau (32:6-21).
      - (c) The earlier purchase money is to be returned to avoid misunderstanding.
    - (2) His pious preparation, v. 14.
      - (a) Now in his loneliness and forced dependence upon God, Jacob prays.
      - (b) He trusts in “God Almighty,” that is El Shaddai, the God of power.
      - (c) He is resigned to God’s will now, not his own protective designs, come what may (Esther 4:16).
2. Joseph is reunited with Benjamin, 43:15-34.
- a. The preparation of Joseph’s house, vs. 15-25.
    - (1) Joseph learns of Benjamin’s presence, vs. 15-16.
      - (a) The ten brethren reported to Joseph’s government office where the grain was sold, v. 15.
      - (b) Apparently Joseph recognized them from a distance, since the brethren do not appear to have understood the instruction that the astonished steward received that of preparing a feast, v. 16.
        - 1) Joseph espied Benjamin, the silent brother, with indescribable delight!

- 2) Thus he agreed to see his brothers, and ordered that an animal be slaughtered, a quite usual practice because of the hot weather in that location.
  - 3) Of particular interest to Joseph would be the behaviour of the brethren towards Benjamin. Did they treat him as he was treated?
- (c) Note that there is no thought of animosity, but rather generosity; no spiteful partiality, but love.
- (2) The fearful brethren are put at ease, vs. 17-23.
- (a) On the way from the office to Joseph's house, they fear being trapped on account of the surprise money earlier found in their saddle bags, v. 18.
  - (b) On the doorsteps of Joseph's palatial home (vs. 19, 24), trembling, they make an unsolicited explanation, vs. 19-22.
    - 1) There appears to be some change of heart. Note their honesty and desire for integrity.
    - 2) But what hope would there be for Simeon if they were considered deceitful? Actually, they are known to be deceitful, but there is hope in Joseph's mercy!
  - (c) The household manager dispels their fear, v. 23.
    - 1) The greeting, "Peace to you," seems Hebrew, in which case Joseph had taught his household about the living God. The following statement would tend to support this idea, possibly indicating a real trust in Jehovah by the manager, for he speaks of, "the God of your father" (cf. Ps. 105:17-23, especially v. 22).
    - 2) "I had your money," suggests, "your money had come to me," that is the manager was definitely aware that they had paid for their previous purchase. Hence, what money they discovered was a gift from God. Though relieved, yet the brethren are more perplexed than ever.
    - 3) Thus Simeon is reunited with his brothers, and probably reports favourable treatment. Fear begins to give way to hope.
- (3) The hopeful brethren make preparation, vs. 24-25.
- (a) Liberal hospitality augurs well for the future, including water to wash with, and food for their asses, v. 24.

- (b) They learn they are to dine with the one they had spoken harshly about. So they prepare their gifts. In the east, such a meal was a sure sign of friendliness, v. 25.
- b. The presentation of Joseph's house, vs. 26-34.
- (1) Joseph converses with his brethren, vs. 26-30.
    - (a) The present of appeasement from Jacob is offered, vs. 26-28.
      - 1) How it must have hurt Joseph to receive a gift from his father on account of the sin of his brethren.
      - 2) Yet here is further fulfillment of Joseph's original dreams of twenty years ago concerning his father's submission.
      - 3) Thus Joseph understandably enquires about his father, but is careful not to reveal himself. He fears Jacob may be sick and near death, v. 27.
      - 4) But the good news that Jacob is not only alive but well revives in Joseph his hope that his father may yet see his present condition, v. 28.
      - 5) Illustration. I remember receiving a cable at Colombo in Sri Lanka when on my way by ship to England, thinking it was bad news from home concerning the health of my parents in Melbourne. But it was a greeting from a friend on another ship berthed in Colombo. I later returned home and five months later my mother passed away. Back in England and just married, we returned home and my father passed away six months after we arrived in Melbourne!
    - (b) Joseph and Benjamin are introduced, vs. 29-30.
      - 1) Joseph's acknowledgement that Benjamin is "his mother's son," is significant. Latent memories suddenly flooded his soul, v. 29a.
      - 2) Joseph's benediction might have seemed strange coming from a supposed heathen ruler, v. 29b.
      - 3) However, his heart was bursting with emotion, hence he fled to his room to cry tears of joy mingled with sadness (Ps. 126:5-6), v. 30.
  - (2) Joseph entertains his brethren, vs. 31-34.
    - (a) Regaining his composure, Joseph orders the midday feast to begin, v. 31.
    - (b) The table settings were quite strange, vs. 32-33.

- 1) The Egyptians and Joseph sat at different tables from those of the Hebrews, yet they could closely watch each other. Joseph could not appear overly forward, v. 32.
  - 2) Joseph's setting of the Hebrews' table was according to age. Hence, the brethren marveled, for how could this ruler know their ages? v. 33.
- (c) Hence, they "drank largely," or "drank freely" NASB, that is merrily, v. 34.
- 1) "Messes" KJV, were servings or "portions" NASB, of food taken from the host's table, being a sign of the regard of the host.
  - 2) Benjamin receives five times the servings as do the others. But why?
    - a) As a spontaneous sign of love according to Joseph's sovereign good pleasure.
    - b) As a test, to see the reaction of the brethren. But apparently they pass the test, for they have received mercy, and do not now question the degree of mercy, even if larger, given to another.
  - 3) How the brethren now felt relieved and relaxed. All seemed well now, for surely they would all now return to Jacob. *But all is not well*, for this is not a real reconciliation. The basic problem has yet to be dealt with.
3. Judah offers himself on behalf of Benjamin, 44:1-34.
- a. Joseph's set-up, vs. 1-5.
    - (1) His overflowing kindness, giving more grain once again than they purchased, plus their purchase money, was intended to magnify their supposed theft of Joseph's cup, v. 1.
      - (a) But why, if this is a set-up, should Joseph return every man's money? Probably so that early in their journey they would not even suspect wrong should they discover the cup in Benjamin's sack. It would simply appear as further evidence of the particular favour given to the lad.
      - (b) Joseph wants Benjamin to appear relatively innocent so that the reaction of the brethren might be fairly judged. Would they self-righteously condemn him and then forsake him?
      - (c) Application. Note that the return of all of the purchase money speaks of the fact that in no way will the salvation of the brethren be of debt; rather, it will be all of the grace at Joseph's pleasure!



- (2) The cup that was to be placed in Benjamin's saddle bag on top of his money was Joseph's "divining cup" (cf. 44:5, 15), v. 2.
    - (a) The steward would think this no more strange than giving five times the portions of Benjamin at the table.
    - (b) This silver divining cup was an Egyptian device for determining future events by the movements caused by pieces of silver or gold dropped into the liquid in the cup. But did Joseph use this practice? The answer must be no if we consider 40:8; 41:16.
  - (3) The departure of the brethren was in very good spirits. All seemed well, except that there still remained sin that had to be dealt with. They had Simeon and Benjamin, but what of Joseph? Perhaps they said, "Well, that was unfortunate, but lets forget about that now!" v. 3.
  - (4) The brethren are to be charged with theft, vs. 4-5.
    - (a) To steal from the table of the one who had offered hospitality would be the height of insult and injury.
    - (b) Even the house steward must have been amazed at this frame-up. How could his master be so friendly and then so devious? Is this method, however good the end might be, the one blot on Joseph's character?
  - (5) What then is Joseph's real reason for contriving such a scheme?
    - (a) Again the brethren, sinners through they are, are yet to experience unjust accusation, with slavery as a possible consequence.
    - (b) Primarily, Joseph wants to see how the brethren will react to Benjamin. Will they selfishly ditch him, or courageously stand by him, especially for Jacob's sake? And what will Judah do?
- b. Benjamin's up-set, vs. 6-13.
- (1) Yet trusting the integrity of his master, Joseph's steward hotly pursues the brethren, v. 6.
  - (2) The brethren argue plausibly and soundly, "If we would steal, why should we have earlier brought back the money found in our sacks?" Yet they are totally perplexed at such a charge, vs. 7-8.
  - (3) So absolutely confident were they of their innocence that they proposed the death penalty for the thief and slavery for the rest, v. 9.
    - (a) But is not their claim to innocence selective?
    - (b) Application. How vocal we are when innocent of a charge, but silent when we are guilty!

- (4) The steward's reply may indicate that he knows what is behind the ploy, for he is careful to secure Benjamin's slavery, but not his death. Hence, he adjusts the desire of the brethren for harsh punishment, v. 10.
  - (5) The brethren confidently, speedily declare all of their belongings, vs. 11-12.
    - (a) Their speech is a reflection of their total confidence, v. 11.
    - (b) The search from eldest down heightens the excitement and drama. It may well have been part of Joseph's instructions to increase the shock, v. 12.
    - (c) Benjamin is discovered as the guilty "thief," yet he remains silent, v. 12.
  - (6) How indescribably the grief that is now experienced; what a transport from the heights to the depths; how their longstanding sin now rushes before them again, v. 13.
    - (a) Probably they think that God, through Joseph (42:28), is toying with them as a cat with a mouse on account of their original crime.
    - (b) Perhaps the Egyptian prime minister, in having taken a fancy to Benjamin, is now plotting to keep him.
    - (c) But why has the steward not taken any notice of the money that was once again returned to their sacks? Further, Benjamin has been constantly under the supervision of the brethren; he could hardly have stolen the cup unnoticed.
    - (d) Imagine how Judah is now assailed with various thoughts. Surely Jacob will now collapse with shock at learning of this turn of events. But shall he forego his promise to Jacob to protect Benjamin? Shall he let events take care of this other favourite, or shall he this time make a stand, come what may?
- c. Judah's set-back, vs. 14-34.
- (1) "And they fell to the ground before him," indicates the prostration of their hearts in utter despair, that is all of them, v. 14.
  - (2) Joseph declares his power to know secrets, and thus injects into the hearts of the brethren the suggestion that he knows of their unconfessed sin, quite apart from this recent supposed act of larceny, v. 15.
  - (3) When Judah confesses, "God has found out the iniquity of your servants" NASB, he is not confessing this current charge of theft in the main, but principally their crime of long ago, v. 16.

- (a) “And how can we justify ourselves?” NASB, is a good question that demands a negative answer, for it is God who justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5; 8:33).
  - (b) Note the corporate nature of this confession. Benjamin is not singled out or condemned; they all acknowledge their guilt, and see God’s hand in these circumstances; they accept slavery as their due reward.
- (4) Here now is the essence of the brethren’s trial. Would they accept their freedom and forget about Benjamin (v. 10) or would they care enough, on account of the lessons of time, to confess and plead for mercy? How glad Joseph must have been to perceive some evidence of a change of heart.
- (5) Thus Judah makes this eloquent and moving plea, vs. 17-34.
- (a) We can see Joseph pressing the test as he declares that only Benjamin need remain. But none seem to suggest that they get out as quick as possible. When Joseph says, “But as for you, you go up in **peace** to your father” NASB, this they knew was impossible except Benjamin go with them, v. 17.
  - (b) We can almost see the tears begin to flow down and feel the depth of remorse, and the genuineness of humility. He openly acknowledges that Joseph is “lord” and pleads for mercy, v. 18.
  - (c) Note the accuracy and openness of Judah’s description of the fact of his predicament, vs. 19-32.
    - 1) Clearly Judah’s concern is for his aged father and not for himself, v. 31.
    - 2) Joseph is presumed to be dead, or is he? vs. 20, 28.
    - 3) The relationship between Jacob and Benjamin is described as intertwined souls, as between David and Jonathan (I Sam. 18:1), or Jacob and Joseph! v. 30.
  - (d) Thus Judah offers himself in place of Benjamin, the current favourite son. Having seen the grief of his father on account of Joseph, he will not be part to such deceit again, v. 33.
  - (e) Application. It is better to be in bondage for the cause of truth than to have liberty through dishonesty to oneself and others. We might call this the “prophet’s principle” (I Kings 22:14), being vital to the Christian ministry.
4. Joseph reveals himself to his brethren, 45:1-15.
- a. Joseph’s revelation to his brethren, vs. 1-4.

- (1) He is overwhelmed as uncontrollable tears stream down his face. Hence, he clears the audience chamber of his house. But why? v. 1.
    - (a) He does not wish to share his family problems in public, especially the sin of his brethren. This is itself an act of tender consideration.
    - (b) Since the interpreter also leaves, obviously Joseph intends to speak in Hebrew and thus aid in his identification.
  - (2) Joseph's vocal grief echoes throughout his house, v. 2.
    - (a) Literally, he "gave forth his voice in weeping."
    - (b) Since this occurs in Joseph's house (44:14), the news of this extraordinary outburst spread to Pharaoh's household and ultimately to Pharaoh himself, v. 16. But it appears that Pharaoh only learned that these visitors were Joseph's brothers, and not of their sinful past.
  - (3) Joseph's declaration of himself is received with incredulity, vs. 3-4.
    - (a) His first explanation is received with dumbstruck unbelief, even terror and quivering fear, drained faces and weak legs.
    - (b) Joseph's chief concern is his father, and in effect he asks, "Is it **really** true that Jacob is still alive, after over twenty years?" v. 3.
    - (c) His call to come closer breaks the electric silence as they peer at his clean shaven face, and recognize features that time has not erased.
    - (d) Suddenly every detail of their crime flashes before their eyes. Time alone does not blot out etchings of guilt!
    - (e) Fear continues to chill their hearts as Joseph reminds them, "I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt" NASB, v. 4.
    - (f) Joseph sovereignly reveals himself to his brethren according to **his** design; the brethren do not discover Joseph on account of their discernment. Likewise, Jesus Christ sovereignly reveals himself to blind sinners, but blind sinners do not of themselves discover the glory of Christ or His Father (Luke 10:22).
- b. Joseph's rationale of God's sovereignty, vs. 5-8.
- (1) Joseph's tenderness is quick to comfort. There is no word of reproach since his appreciation of God's sovereignty gives him a larger perspective than mere self-vindication. True, he sought contrition, but now that it is evident, his greater concern is that his brothers discern God's dominion and wisdom in this whole affair. Cf. "God" in vs. 7-9; v. 5.

- (a) God overrules bad events for good when “the called according to His purpose,” are involved (Rom. 8:28; 11:25-36; I Pet. 1:6-7).
  - (b) Application. Focus your attention on the goodness and glory of God which prevails in spite of men (Acts 2:23-24; 4:27-28; Ps. 76:10; Rom. 9:17).
  - (c) The brethren intended death, but God desired life, and His will prevails (50:20). Satan’s evil desires were brought to naught by God’s holy desires. Such a perspective of God is intended by Joseph to bring comfort and rest to the souls of his brothers.
  - (d) John Bunyan’s twelve years in prison were intended by Satan for evil, yet from this seeming defeat God brought forth great good, namely *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, which allegory has set free many a soul from prison!
- (2) It is now overt twenty years since Joseph was sold into slavery by the Ishmaelites to Potiphar at the age of seventeen. Thirteen years were spent in captivity, and the last nine have been spent as prime minister of Egypt. He is presently thirty nine years of age, and there are yet five more years of famine to come. But God desires through Joseph “to preserve many people alive” NASB (50:20), both Hebrew and Gentile, v. 6.
- (3) Again we see Joseph’s theocentric perspective. Although the brethren were free agents, yet it was God who sovereignly determined that Joseph should come to Egypt to be a saviour. But note that God especially desires “a remnant in the earth” to be preserved, so that His original promise to Abraham might stand, and a wider blessing might result. There is deeper meaning here; Joseph appears to have been well instructed, v. 7.
- (a) Jacob’s seed could not perish for God had determined His certain covenant before Abraham (Gen. 15:1-21), and confirmed it to Israel (Gen. 35:9-12).
  - (b) For the same reason in Romans 11:26-32, Paul declares that the nation of Israel shall finally be saved, and yet at the same time be instrumental in a wider blessing, namely the saving of the Gentiles.
  - (c) Thus Jesus Christ, though the recipient of Satan’s and man’s worst, yet through this opposition is ordained “to preserve many people alive” NASB (50:20; cf. Acts 2:23-24; Heb. 2:9-10).
- (4) Again Joseph presses home the point that it was God who sent him to Egypt; thus he also admits that it was God who ordained that he suffer. God allows evil, yet He is sovereign over it. However, men remain responsible for their evil which God overrules, v. 8.
- (a) The brethren here are not excused, but they are forgiven.

- (b) Joseph recognizes what every wise ruler understands, that he reigns only by God's sovereign appointment (Dan. 4:17, 34-35).
  - (c) Thus it is God, the God alone of Jacob and Joseph who supremely reigns over pagan Egypt, and not Pharaoh.
- c. Joseph's rescue of Jacob, vs. 9-13.
- (1) His command to bring Jacob down to Egypt comes from a panting heart, just as the Son of God on earth longed to be in glory with the Father (John 1:18; 7:33; 14:28; 16:28; I Tim. 3:16), v. 9.
    - (a) By implication, the brethren must confess their sin to Jacob, and no doubt this they readily did, cf. 42:36.
    - (b) "Hurry and go up to my father" NASB, expresses his anxiety to see Jacob before he dies.
    - (c) The brethren are to tell Jacob how God, undoubtedly Jehovah, has exalted him way above what his father had earlier designed with the tribal coat. He is now "lord of all Egypt" NASB. How Joseph hopes that this will thrill his father all the more, for his son has "made good," but by God's power!
  - (2) He invites Jacob to share in his exaltation, vs. 10-11.
    - (a) Goshen, in the Nile Delta, had the finest pasture land in all of Egypt, v. 10a.
    - (b) "And you shall be near me" NASB, would be music to Jacob's ears. How often this sentiment is lacking today in children with regard to their elderly parents, v. 10b.
    - (c) Joseph does what every godly son or daughter should do, that is he lovingly cares for his parent in his old age (Ex. 20:12), v. 11.
  - (3) Joseph again invites the brethren, but especially Benjamin, to carefully look at his face and listen to his voice so that they are in no doubt as to his Hebrew features, v. 12.
  - (4) How anxiously, how proudly Joseph desires that Jacob should delight in his splendor. The brethren can only tell of this, with a good spirit, if their repentance is genuine, v. 13.
- d. Joseph's reconciliation with his brethren, v. 14-15.
- (1) His partiality for Benjamin, v. 14.

- (a) As a lad of seventeen, he had especially cared for Benjamin, a mere toddler. At the same time Benjamin remembered the special kindness of his brother some twenty years ago.
  - (b) Rachel had taught them both that their mother was Jacob's real love, and thus they were also special and favoured (43:29).
  - (c) But note again there is no evident bad reaction on the part of the brethren to this act of partiality.
  - (d) Here is the only response of any kind attributed to Benjamin, namely weeping, in the whole of this account of Joseph's life.
- (2) His passion for the brethren, v. 15.
- (a) "And he kissed all his brothers" NASB, means that all are forgiven. This reconciliation is not merely academic or perfunctory, but profoundly climactic.
  - (b) Joseph, as the offended one, like the prodigal's father (Luke 15:20), yet makes the first move, not the brethren who are still stricken with fear. His response is not guarded or limited, but overflowing toward these humbled sinners.
  - (c) Then the curiosity of both sides explodes. They all have so many questions to ask.
    - 1) The brethren want an explanation of Joseph's circumstances, and especially his recent modus operandi toward them.
    - 2) Joseph wants to know more about his father, his sister Dinah, and his grandfather Isaac who has now died.
  - (d) Application. Jesus Christ has made strong overtures toward sinners; they have not made genuine and appropriate overtures toward Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:8; Gal. 4:4-5). As the grossly offended party, yet Jesus Christ moves with determination and strong moves of peace toward his enemies as the Mediator, the reconciler (Rom. 5:10-11; II Cor. 5:18-21). Note that this reconciliation is not arbitrary, but righteously and graciously dispensed.
5. Jacob learns that Joseph is alive, 45:16-28.
- a. Pharaoh's invitation, vs. 16-20.
    - (1) Pharaoh probably valued Joseph more than having him visit his father, and then possibly not return. But now he delights in Joseph's family concerning which he has heard so much. Another reason Pharaoh was pleased with these visitors was the fact that possibly he was one of the Hykos semetic kings that

ruled Egypt at that time. This fact may have also helped Joseph in his earlier promotion to leadership, v. 16.

- (2) This is really a seconding of Joseph's initial invitation (vs. 9-11), with the offer of added benefits, vs. 17-20.
    - (a) He offers "the best of the land of Egypt" NASB. What a testimony this is to his regard for Joseph. In other words, these reconciled sinners are blessed "for Joseph's sake," vs. 17-18, that is with the "riches of grace" (Eph. 1:7, 18; 2:7; 3:8, 16).
    - (b) He understands that speed is important lest Jacob die. Hence, he offers the brethren to quickly get going and not worry about household goods lest they slow them down, vs. 19-20.
- b. Joseph's preparation, vs. 21-24.
- (1) He does not go himself, being needed too jealously by Pharaoh so as to supervise the famine relief. But he does lavishly provide for the journey, v. 21.
  - (2) His partiality towards Benjamin continues, v. 22.
    - (a) In the East it was customary to give a change of clothing as a sign of love and regard. Fashions did not change so much in those times. Note that **all** receive these tokens of reconciliation.
    - (b) However, Benjamin receives money and five times the raiment. Is this partiality right? Yes, according to sovereign good pleasure!
    - (c) Application. To His own children, God sovereignly gives gifts and talents that vary in quality (Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 12:48). Some were given the office of apostleship, while others appear as insignificant members of the Body of Christ. Such appointing is God's to determine. Our responsibility is to submit to His ordering. This the brethren have learned to do after years of rebellion.
  - (3) To Jacob he delivers up tokens of the kingdom he reigns over as an act of obeisance (46:29; I Cor. 15:24), v. 23.
  - (4) He sends **all** the brethren away as a sign of trust and regard for his father, v. 24a.
  - (5) His final word is "Do not quarrel on the journey" NASB, since while they are justified yet they are not fully sanctified, v. 24b.
    - (a) Don't be angry at Benjamin or jealous as you were with me.
    - (b) Don't simmer over Simeon who started the whole problem, that is according to tradition.



- (c) Don't recriminate Reuben for being a weak leader and as a consequence throw him into a pit (37:22).
  - (d) Don't plot to save face before Jacob, for his wrath will be turned into peace on my account!
  - (e) Do be at peace with each other.
- c. Jacob's exaltation, vs. 25-28.
- (1) On the way home, the brethren talk deep and long, but are agreed that they should submit to God's sovereignty, else what shall befall them? Above all they glory in the grace that Joseph has manifested and in which they stand (Rom. 5:2; I Cor. 15:1; I Pet. 5:12), v. 25.
  - (2) Probably either Reuben or Judah breaks the good news to Jacob, or did they first confess their original sin as should have been done much earlier? v. 26a.
  - (3) To Jacob, this news seems only a very bad joke, v. 26b.
    - (a) His heart as it were stops beating, and unbelief is quick to set in.
    - (b) The brethren see their father once more suffer as a result of their sin.
  - (4) But finally Jacob believes the truth, and learns that Joseph is risen from the dead, so to speak, and as a result a great reconciliation has taken place, v. 27.
    - (a) Did the brethren tell all concerning Joseph? Almost certainly they did (50:16-17). Their humiliation was now complete.
    - (b) But if Joseph is yet alive, then Jacob's wrath is cooled for Joseph's sake (Rom. 5:1).
    - (c) As the details pour forth, they mesh with the previous events, while the lavish gifts add further weight. Then Jacob's heart happily begins to beat again as unspeakable joy floods in and displaces twenty two years of sadness.
  - (5) Jacob is now transformed, and as it were declares, "What care I for all these poultry Egyptian trinkets? Joseph my son is still alive," v. 28.
    - (a) Confusion gives way to comprehension. How he is now rebuked by his own faithlessness. But God is proven to be faithful.
    - (b) Jacob now likewise proves Romans 8:28, and no doubt worships God. Furthermore, his prodigals have come home, and now his family which once was full of corruption and strife, is reconciled and at peace. His joy is almost full, but it will be completed when he sees Joseph face to face!

- (6) Application. Here the typology concerning the relationship between God the Father and God the Son is particularly strong. When Jesus Christ was put to death, the Father was turned away in grief (Matt. 27:46), yet at his resurrection and ascension, the Father was pleased to receive him back to His bosom after His beloved Son had made a great reconciliation and saved a multitude from famine in their souls (Acts 2:33-36; 5:30-31; Eph. 1:20-23; II Cor. 5:18-19; Rev. 7:9-17).

D. The third journey of Jacob and his family to Egypt, 46:1-47:31.

1. God's blessing on Israel and his children, 46:1-7.

a. Israel seeks God's approval to leave for Egypt, v. 1.

- (1) Note the increased references to "Israel" rather than "Jacob." This emphasis draws our attention to a man changed through a divine encounter with Jehovah, who has received ratification of a great promise given to his father Abraham (32:22-32; 35:9-15)
- (2) In spite of his initial decision (45:28), and his yearning to see Joseph, yet he first seeks God's approval to temporarily leave the land of promise, cf. "do not be afraid to go down to Egypt," v. 3. This action indicates a man with God's perspective having the priority in his life, a true man of God. Jacob had respect for God's Word and will over and above regard for his family!
- (3) The journey from Hebron to Beersheba was a spiritual pilgrimage to a sacred shrine where Abraham (21:33), and Isaac (26:25), had called upon the name of the Lord, and theophanies appeared to Hagar (21:17), and Isaac (26:24).
- (4) His sacrifices provided access and signified faithful submission. Though extremely happy at Joseph's invitation, yet he hesitated to leave the promised land since Isaac was earlier forbidden to travel to Egypt in a time of famine (26:1-4).

b. God gives Jacob leave to go down to Egypt, vs. 2-4.

- (1) God identifies Himself as "God, *the* God of your father [Isaac]," hence the God who has unconditionally promised to bless the seed of Abraham. v2. 2-3a. "God's only speech in chs. 37-50 reiterates the promise to Abraham and Isaac (cf. 12:2-3; 26:2-5), assuring Jacob that his departure from the promised land will not void God's commitment to his forebears."<sup>10</sup>
- (2) Why does God now allow Jacob and his family to go down into Egypt? v. 3b.

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<sup>10</sup> *The Jewish Study Bible*, eds. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, p. 91.

- (a) It was necessary for the newly conceived nation of Israel to be protected from Canaanite pagan influences, as represented by the Amorites, while Canaan was judged with famine (15:13-16; 47:13).
  - (b) It was necessary for Israel to grow in a fat land, with some degree of separation, such as Goshen.
  - (c) Egypt was to be the womb for the formation and birth of Israel as “a great nation” (Deut. 10:22), with a gestation period of 430 years (Ex. 12:40-41).
- (3) Jacob is assured of God’s sovereign leading of Israel into and out of Egypt, v. 4.
- (a) Hence, no enemies shall overcome them, nor shall the Egyptians assimilate them.
  - (b) But Jacob will die before the return to Canaan, in Egypt, yet in the presence of Joseph (49:33-50:1).
- c. Jacob and his family journey to Egypt, vs. 5-7.
- (1) Jacob is now 130, and he will spend his final seventeen years in Egypt (47:28). Now he is weaker in his old age and must be respectfully carried in Pharaoh’s vehicles.
  - (2) Likewise, respect is given to the wives with their children. Such regard is fundamental to the living of God’s people, that is when they are right with God!
  - (3) Hence, while Egypt may at times be a type of the world, here it rather pictures a place of refuge (cf. Matt. 2:13-15).
2. The children of Israel who are heirs of God’s covenant blessing, vs. 8-27.
- a. This updated list of Jacob’s sons and their offspring groups progeny according to their mothers, vs. 8-25.
    - (1) The descendants of Leah, being thirty three, vs. 8-15.
    - (2) The descendants of Zilpah, being sixteen, vs. 16-18.
    - (3) The descendants of Rachel, being fourteen, vs. 19-22.
    - (4) The descendants of Bilhah, being seven, vs. 23-25.
  - b. The total reckoning of Jacob’s family that migrated to Egypt, vs. 26-27.
    - (1) The listing in vs. 8-25 totals 70, which agrees with v. 27. However, v. 26 is concerned with “all the persons *belonging* to Jacob, *who came to Egypt*.”

Thus we must here exclude Jacob, Joseph, and Ephraim and Manasseh, which number when subtracted from 70 gives us a total of 66.

- (2) However, Stephen in Acts 7:14 declares that 75 were descended from Jacob at this time. From where do the additional 5 come from? Apparently Stephen is quoting from the Septuagint or Greek version of Genesis 46:20, 27, which adds to the text three grandsons and two great-grandsons, as mentioned in Numbers 26:28-37.
- (3) Thus this small Hebrew tribe of 70-75 persons will yet leave Egypt some 430 years later as a nation with 603,550 men twenty years of age and older (Num. 1:46). This exodus probably exceeded two million when women and children are included. But such growth is according to grace through promise (Rom. 11:28-29), and in no way according to works.

### 3. Israel and Joseph are reunited, vs. 28-30.

- a. Judah is wisely selected to go ahead and discuss with Joseph the place in Goshen where they have been appointed to reside (44:18-34), v. 28.
  - (1) Traditional Jewish interpretation suggests that Judah, having been appointed by Jacob as head of his sons, over Reuben, therefore went ahead to establish a house of teaching, so highly was their children's education regarded.
  - (2) Thus Joseph, out of respect, will go from his residence, probably in Rameses, cf. 47:11, to his father's appointed allotment nearby in Goshen, and not vice versa.
- b. Joseph's meeting with Jacob is one of submission and satisfaction, vs. 29-30.
  - (1) Normally, people would come and pay their respects to Joseph, but this time it is different. Jewish tradition tells us that when Joseph had come close to his father, he bowed himself before him down to the earth. Then Joseph fell upon Jacob's neck and wept, even sobbing with trembling. He was particularly grieved that he had permitted his father to bow down before him but a little while before. (Jacob had earlier bowed before some Egyptian dignitaries and not known that Joseph was present).
  - (2) The weeping and embrace were extended with speechless emotion, since it was twenty two years after they last saw each other. Now Joseph's original dream was completely fulfilled. Now Jacob understood the greater bliss and blessing that Job experienced after such a prolonged trial (Job 42:10-17).
  - (3) Israel is so supremely satisfied with the presence of his beloved son that he is now content to die in peace; he is not as other parents who die heart-broken concerning their children. How well this ecstasy illustrates that how we die is more important than how we live!

4. Joseph honors Jacob's family in Egypt, 46:31-47:12.
  - a. Joseph makes provision for his father's flocks, 46:31-34.
    - (1) He first declares the "low status" of Jacob's family, that is their shepherd lineage, which was so distasteful to the Egyptians. Evidently Joseph had not mentioned this aspect of his background to Pharaoh.
    - (2) But because of his unimpeachable stature, Joseph will yet gain favour for his family, and at the same time promote their necessary separation from pagan influences.
    - (3) Consequently, Israel and his sons are not to conceal their shepherd background. They are to be truthful and also gain the best grazing land.
    - (4) Again we notice Joseph's care for his family as a dutiful son, even though his princely image might be tarnished.
  - b. Joseph introduces Jacob to Pharaoh, 47:1-12.
    - (1) Joseph presents himself before Pharaoh, vs. 1-6.
      - (a) Joseph's position of privilege does not result in presumption regarding Pharaoh's generosity (cf. 45:17-20); rather he seeks his formal blessing, v. 1.
      - (b) Who were the five brethren presented before Pharaoh? Probably Benjamin, his favourite, Simeon who initiated the problem and was kept in an Egyptian prison, Reuben the firstborn, and Judah who made such an eloquent, selfless plea before Joseph. But who would probably the fifth? Perhaps Levi, v. 2.
      - (c) Pharaoh's concern for Joseph's sake is spontaneous, magnanimous, vs. 3-6.
        - 1) Imagine how relatively uncultured and low in status this Hebrew gathering looked, with beards, shepherd's clothing and its attending aroma!
        - 2) But their attitude is humble, honest and loyal to their "fathers," v. 3, which characteristics Pharaoh has learned to appreciate in Joseph, vs. 3-4.
        - 3) Pharaoh's graciousness and respect is evidenced by his willingness to appoint any able brethren to care for his own cattle, vs. 5-6.
    - (2) Jacob is presented before Pharaoh, vs. 7-10.
      - (a) With great reverence, Joseph presents his aged father to Pharaoh; there is no shame, only esteem and love. Likewise Jacob felt equal delight in

his son. Jacob's "blessing" of Pharaoh was the invoking of Jehovah's mercy upon his pagan "superior," v. 7.

- (b) Pharaoh's enquiry regarding Jacob's age is probably a result of the patriarch's weathered countenance, v. 8.
  - (c) Jacob declares his age to be 130, and summarizes the days of his life as being "few and unpleasant," v. 9.
    - 1) Jacob considered his life to have been relatively short when compared to Abraham who lived to 175, and Isaac who lived to 180.
    - 2) He also looked on his life as being full of trouble sadness (cf. 25:28; 27:41-45; 29:21-25; 30:1-2; 31:1-3, 23-42; 32:6-8; 34:1-31; 35:19; 37:33-34; 42:36), often self-inflicted.
    - 3) However, note that his life is yet a sojourn, a pilgrimage, a mere passing through, so to speak (Heb. 11: 13-16).
  - (d) Jacob's further blessing of Pharaoh (cf. v. 7), v. 10, reflects Hebrews 7:7. This concluding prayer of benediction indicates that for Jacob there is only one sovereign God, and thus he testifies about Him. Further this God has blessed Jacob to a place of privilege far above that of Pharaoh.
- (3) Joseph preserves Jacob and his brethren, vs. 11-12.
- (a) Ramases is identical with the region of Goshen, being in the north-east portion of the Nile delta. So Joseph probably lived close by his Father and brethren, v. 11.
  - (b) Thus none lacked in their newly reconciled state, even down to the little ones. Joseph's care, the blessings of his redemption, were total, v. 12.

5. Joseph prospers Pharaoh during the famine, vs. 13-26.

a. The severe state of the famine, v. 13.

- (1) Illustration. The severity of this famine must not be underestimated. One historian tells of a famine in this region so bad that the eating of human flesh was common, and the road between Syria and Egypt was a vast field sown with human bodies.
- (2) God sent the famine to judge the Canaanites as well as for the protection of Israel (Ps. 105:12-17).
  - (a) As a small band, the tribe of Israel was troubled by Canaanite influences, as the early character of the brethren seems to indicate.

- (b) But God jealously guarded His own children (Ps. 33:18-19; 37:18-20, 25).
  - (3) Famine is frequently a product of godlessness, even among God's people (Ezek. 5:5-17), as is even evident today. But God's man prospers through faith even in the worst conditions (Hab. 3:17-19).
- b. Joseph acquires money for Pharaoh, v. 14.
- (1) He first requires payment for grain by money. The grain is never merely given away as a welfare gift.
  - (2) This results in three positive advantages.
    - (a) Joseph's reputation is yet further enhanced as a faithful steward, and thus Jehovah is glorified.
    - (b) Pharaoh becomes not only the ruler, but also the owner of Egypt.
    - (c) The people are guarded from the traps of welfarism, such as making a needy people slothful and presumptuous. There is no government dole; grain and food must be earned.
  - (3) There is no suggestion that the grain price was outlandish, but it was reasonable.
  - (4) Note the implied integrity of Joseph, for the money went not for himself, but into Pharaoh's treasury.
- c. Jacob acquires real estate and labour for Pharaoh, vs. 18-26.
- (1) "When that year was ended, they came unto him the second year" KJV, but the NASB better reads "they came to him the next year," which in fact was the final or seventh year of the famine, v. 18a.
  - (2) The people offer their land and bodies for food, vs. 18b-19.
    - (a) Should they offer their liberty for life? But in this situation, rebellion would do them no good.
    - (b) However, remember that the people are subjecting themselves to Joseph for Pharaoh, their appointed rulers. The true child of God desires subjection to Christ as Saviour, not freedom from him even when our souls experience a famine.
  - (3) Joseph revises the Egyptian economy and so consolidates Pharaoh's reign, vs. 20-26.
    - (a) Remember that the obtaining of all of the Egyptians and their land by Pharaoh was an emergency measure. Extreme laws are often required

when disaster strikes. However, it would seem implied from v. 20 that the Hebrews were treated differently from the Egyptians who alone surrendered themselves.

- (b) To facilitate distribution, the people are gathered around the larger cities, knowing that at the end of the year, relief is in sight, v. 21.
- (c) The Egyptian priests are exempted from such submission, for already they have land given to them by Pharaoh, and eat from the grain which he supplies, v. 22.
- (d) A nation dependent upon welfare is put to work in the final year, in anticipation of rain and bountiful crops. Drones are not tolerated, v. 23.
- (e) The earlier emergency tax of one fifth (20%), not a tenth, is made a permanent fixture (cf. 41:34)! Reconstruction was probably in mind; it also could be protection against a similar famine in the future, vs. 24, 26.
- (f) The welfare populace respond with an attitude that is uncommon today, v. 25.
  - 1) A gratefulness for grace.
  - 2) A willingness to serve both Joseph and Pharaoh.
  - 3) Thus Joseph gains favour with the people and Pharaoh as Egypt's saving sovereign.
- (4) Application. How plainly we see here the necessity of hunger and poverty in both the Hebrew and Gentile so that they might be driven to a gracious saviour (47:19, 25), as is supremely the case with Jesus Christ. Those who so come respond with gratefulness for grace, and willingness to serve (cf. Matt. 5:6; John 6:35).

6. Joseph promises to bury Jacob in Canaan, vs. 27-31.

- a. Whereas the young nation suffered in Canaan when out of fellowship with God, now having been reconciled, they prosper and multiply. Note how Jacob's new name is now equated with his seed, v. 27.
- b. Jacob was 130 year of age when he came to Egypt, and approximately 12 of his 17 year sojourn there are gone. He has yet 5 years before he dies. But what counts is that his end is better than his beginning, v. 28.
- c. Jacob makes preparation to die, vs. 29-31.
  - (1) Many men in old age attempt to ignore death while at the same time fearing it. But Jacob prepares for his death with strong hope.



- (2) Joseph is to be the executor of Jacob's will since he is best equipped morally and politically to carry it out, v. 29a.
- (3) The oath which Jacob administers is a solemn call to loyalty. Since children came from the thigh or loins, it signified swearing according to one's life and being, v. 29b.
- (4) Jacob requests that his body be buried in Canaan, specifically the ancestral cave of Machpelah, where Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca were already buried. But why this request? vs. 29c-30a.
  - (a) To avoid heathen Egyptian practices regarding burial at his death, and thus wrong associations.
  - (b) To declare his dying faith in Jehovah and His promise that the great nation would reside in Canaan (46:3-4; 48:3-4).
- (5) Thus Joseph signifies his agreement under oath. His integrity was not in question; he simply and solemnly testifies to the gravity of his commitment. Also Pharaoh, would more likely agree to such a duty when asked for leave; such reasoning is in fact employed (50:4-6). Consequently, Jacob now rests in peace, v. 30b-31.

#### VII JOSEPH REWARDED – GENESIS 48:1-49:33

##### A. Joseph is rewarded with blessing for his sons, 48:1-22.

1. Joseph seeks a blessing for his sons, vs. 1-2.
  - a. Jacob knew that he was to die (v. 21), and Jewish tradition declares that he asked God for such knowledge so that he might bless his sons before it was too late.
  - b. Notice the intense patriarchal respect which Joseph has for his father, like all well trained Hebrews. He especially desires his father's blessing upon his children (cf. John 17:9-11). Jacob also delights to bless through his son (cf. Ps. 2:7-8).
  - c. Joseph's two sons by his Egyptian wife, Asenath, were first Manasseh, then Ephraim; by now they are lads or even grown men.
    - (1) "Manasseh" means "causing to forget" (41:51). He caused Joseph to forget his previous toils and troubles. Hence, he was greatly beloved. His descendants include Gideon and Jephthah.
    - (2) "Ephraim" means "double fruit" (41:52). He represented Joseph's fruitfulness that followed his earlier barren state. His descendants include Joshua and Samuel.

2. Jacob declares the ground of his blessing, vs. 3-4.
  - a. He recalls the blessing of the sovereign grace of El Shaddai, God Almighty, at Luz, when the Abrahamic Covenant was confirmed to him (28:10-19).
  - b. He especially remembered that God had promised that his seed would be “as the dust of the earth” (28:14). Hence, he believed that these grandchildren were part of that seed, and thus should also inherit Canaan. Joseph has come seeking such recognition, and Jacob is only too pleased to bestow it.
  - c. Application. The ground of blessing for any child of God is the promises of God, but particularly God’s unconditional covenant with Abraham (Matt. 1:1; Rom. 11:28-29; Gal. 3:6-9, 16, 29). Our hope is in God’s faithfulness and not our own!
3. Jacob promises to bless Joseph’s sons, vs. 5-7.
  - a. Just as Jacob continues to include Reuben and Simeon in his inheritance, though they had greatly sinned against their father, so he is graciously disposed to embrace Ephraim and Manasseh into the circle of blessing. If he can determine not to exclude, he can also determine to include! v. 5.
    - (1) Because of immorality, Reuben lost his birthright, the double portion, which now Jacob once again confers upon Joseph in the blessing of his two sons.
    - (2) Note the reversed order; the younger Ephraim is mentioned first.
    - (3) Thus full tribal rights shall belong to Ephraim and Manasseh and their seed.
  - b. However any further sons by Joseph shall be allotted to either of these two new tribes, v. 6.
  - c. Suddenly, almost parenthetically, Jacob sadly muses upon his beloved Rachel; in her honour Joseph will be blessed, so that she will be the mother of three rather than two tribes, v. 7.
4. Joseph presents his sons to Jacob, vs. 8-12.
  - a. Jacob is now dim of eye like his father Isaac was when he deceived him and took Esau’s blessing. But Joseph is a better son to him than he was to Isaac; there is no deception here, v. 8.
  - b. Joseph acknowledges that his children are a heritage of the Lord (Ps. 127:3-5). He much more desires that they be princes of Israel rather than princes of Egypt. Few fathers today have such a right sense of priorities. Most promote their sons to be princes of mammon rather than princes of righteousness, v. 9a.
  - c. In giving his patriarchal welcome, Jacob marvels at the grace of God that he is now experiencing, vs. 9b-11.

- (1) The ground of blessing is Jacob's sovereign bestowal, not Joseph's initiative, v. 9b.
  - (2) Note Jacob's happiness in his old age rather than bitterness; he is now right with God, and acknowledges that this blessed end is God's sovereign doing, vs. 10-11.
- d. Now Joseph prepares his sons for the formal blessing, and in bowing expresses his own humble gratitude, his deepest respect for his father, v. 12.
5. Jacob blesses Joseph's sons, vs. 13-20.
- a. The laying on of the hands by Jacob, vs. 13-14.
    - (1) This is the first instance in the Bible of this particular ritual of laying on of hands, which signified the transference of blessing.
    - (2) Joseph's left hand presents the elder Manasseh to Jacob's right hand, assuming that the greater blessing would be given to him, v. 13.
    - (3) But Jacob purposely crosses his hands so as to give the greater blessing to Ephraim; evidently his eyes were not totally dim. Now Joseph must accept an unexpected reversal of headship, just as the brethren were required to accept Joseph's appointment over Reuben, v. 14.
    - (4) Application. God is not contained by a pattern He may have previously established. Though God ordained the Sabbath, yet He works on the Sabbath (John 5:16-17). Here divine sovereignty is seen illustrated in that Jacob's action is not according to merit in Ephraim, but solely on account of the mystery of Jacob's (God's) will.
  - b. The formal blessing, vs. 15-16.
    - (1) Joseph is in fact the object of Jacob's blessing, though the sons are a channel, v. 15a.
    - (2) The blessing of God the Father, the God of sovereign, immutable promise, the gracious God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is invoked, v. 15b.
    - (3) The blessing of God the Father, the God of good providence, the God who shepherds, is invoked, v. 15c.
    - (4) The blessing of God the Son, the Angel of Jehovah (cf. 32:24-32), the Angel who redeems, is invoked, v. 16a.
    - (5) And thus the blessing is detailed, v. 16b.
      - (a) Bless the lads for incorporating them into the Covenant given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

- (b) Bless the lads by making them a multitude in the nation of Israel.
- (6) Application. As in the New Testament, so in the Old Testament; the source of blessing is the Triune God, and especially its mediation through the Son of God (Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:7; Phil. 4:7).
- c. Joseph attempts to correct Jacob, vs. 17-18.
- (1) Joseph here, in a moment of weakness and unlike his great antitype, represents man attempting to correct God, “when he occasionally makes a mistake”! (Job 40:1-9; Rom. 11:34). The problem is that Joseph is somewhat a traditionalist, but God is not.
- (2) Joseph attempts to modify Jacob’s blessing according to his desires, and thus he attempts to reverse Jacob’s hands. But has he not learned that as Jacob sovereignly blessed Joseph as a lad, therefore he may bless as he pleases even now?
- d. Jacob corrects Joseph, vs. 19-20.
- (1) Jacob may be dull in the flesh, but his spirit is sensitive to the Spirit of God. Ephraim shall indeed be greater than Manasseh, just as God appointed Seth over Cain, Shem and Japheth over Ham, Isaac over Ishmael, and Jacob over Esau.
- (2) But how shall Ephraim become a multitude of nations, v. 19? Not through the British Commonwealth and the United States, but through the divine kingdom after Solomon, the ten tribes of the northern kingdom, which took the synonymous titles of Israel and Ephraim (Is. 11:13; Hos. 5:5). Ephraim ruled over the northern tribes.
- (3) Jacob declares a prophecy that from then on Hebrew parents shall desire their sons to be as Ephraim and Manasseh. Thus a conservative Jewish commentator states, “To this day, every pious Jewish father on Sabbath eve places his hands on the head of his son, and blesses him in the words: ‘God make thee as Ephraim and Manasseh.’ Ephraim and Manasseh would not barter away their ‘Jewishness’ for the most exalted position, or the most enviable career, in the Egyptian state.”<sup>11</sup>
- (4) Application. While God blesses all of His children, it is not for us to dictate to God who receives what blessings. His gifts are bestowed in sovereign grace. After all, did not Joseph likewise sovereignly bless Benjamin? (45:22).
6. Jacob blesses Joseph, vs. 21-22.
- a. In saying, “I die,” Jacob is yet at peace, but he also desires that Joseph be not overly disturbed.

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<sup>11</sup> Hertz, J. H., ed., *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, p. 182

- b. Jacob promises that God shall bless Joseph and his brethren, and bring them back into the land of promise, because His Word is sure.
  - c. Jacob promises a portion of the land to Ephraim and Manasseh, probably that purchased from Hamor at Shechem (33:19), which the Amorites temporarily possessed. Being a double portion, it indicated Joseph's favoured position in his father's eyes.
  - d. Thus Joseph spiritual's blessings are infinitely greater than his earthly ones in Egypt; likewise with all of his brethren (Heb. 11:24-27).
- B. Joseph is rewarded with blessing amongst his brethren, 49:1-33.
- 1. Jacob invites his sons to receive a prophetic blessing, vs. 1-2.
    - a. Jacob, as the last of the patriarchs, now fulfills the role of a prophet (Ps. 105:8-15).
    - b. He is declaring what God has determined, not Jacob. Thus the injunction, "listen to Israel you father," is a solemn command for the sons to heed God's spokesman.
  - 2. Jacob declares his prophetic blessing (cf. Moses' blessing on the twelve sons, Deut. 33:1-29), vs. 3-27.
    - a. Reuben has both glory and disgrace. He had dignity as the first-born as well as physical strength. But his recklessness, fluid character, instability, and immorality, deprive him of his first-born privileges. He is forgiven, but not worthy of responsibility, vs. 3-4.
    - b. Simeon and Levi are brethren in violence, with weapons as their friends. This was evidenced when they slew the men of Shechem (34:25-26). They shall be divided and scattered. In Joshua 19:1-9, Simeon's inheritance is intermingled with that of Judah, while in Deuteronomy 33 his name is not mentioned. Levi, representing the priesthood, received no land inheritance, and in number was relatively small in size (Num. 3:22, 28, 34), vs. 5-7.
    - c. Judah is a lion's cub, and thus he shall rule with strength as the national leader. To him shall be ascribed military glory, prosperity (cf. 44:14-34 and his improved character). "Messiah, Shiloh, peaceful, giver of rest," shall be born of his line (Rev. 5:5-6), vs. 8-12.
    - d. Zebulun shall dwell near the sea, both Galilee and the Mediterranean. This would be a favoured position, v. 13.
    - e. Isaachar, whose name means, "a hired worker," shall enjoy prosperity to such an extent that consequently he prefers peace to adventure (Deut. 33:18b-19), vs. 14-15.

- f. Dan, meaning “to judge,” would judge his people, and being in an exposed position to the north, as well as the west, would be involved in constant guerrilla warfare, vs. 16-18.
  - g. Gad, meaning “good fortune,” would first have misfortune, but later strongly retaliate (cf. Moses portrayal as like a lioness, Deut. 33:20), v. 19.
  - h. Asher, meaning “happy, fortunate,” likewise is a picture of tribal prosperity (cf. Deut. 33:24), due to much commerce and export, v. 20.
  - i. Naphtali is not only gracious and swift in movement, but also eloquent, as epitomized in Deborah and Barak (Judges 5), v. 21.
  - j. Joseph receives the greatest adoration, the most loving praise, the fairest portrait that a father could lavish on his son, v. 22-26.
    - (1) He is a fruitful vine planted beside the fountain of life (Ps. 1:3; Jer. 17:7-8), v. 22.
    - (2) He is a proven vessel in the furnace of God’s affliction where he was sustained by God’s grace, vs. 23-24.
    - (3) He is to be blessed from heaven, upon earth, and within his family, v. 25.
    - (4) He is to be blessed as greatly as was Jacob himself, for he is the prince among his brethren (cf. Moses’ similar opinion, Deut. 33:13-17), v. 26.
  - k. Benjamin is as a ravenous wolf, warlike and at the same time skillful (Judges 20:14-16; I Chron. 8:40), v. 27.
3. Jacob is blessed in death, vs. 28-33.
- a. Even Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, were blessed nevertheless, or appropriately, for they still had part in the inheritance of Jacob, v. 28.
  - b. His burial instructions are repeated to the brethren in great detail. This small parcel of land in Canaan was yet the beginning of the whole yet to be received (Gen. 23:20). The splendor of an Egyptian Pyramid had little appeal compared to the import of God’s sure promises (50:3, 7, 11), vs. 29-32.
  - c. Thus Jacob died at the age of 147, being full in faith, not yet having received the promise (Heb. 11:21. 39), v. 33.
    - (1) Drawing his feet to his bed, with great composure and serenity, he yielded to death without a struggle such as when he entered life (Gen. 25:25-26).
    - (2) It is not so important how we enter life as how we leave it. Some are attractive at birth, but ugly at death; others like Jacob are ugly at birth, but attractive at death!

- (3) Jacob is confident that he shall be with his Redeemer (48:16), and his redeemed brethren. Certainly the Redeemer knows that Jacob shall be there (Matt. 8:11; Luke 13:28).

### C. JOSEPH RETURNING – GENESIS 50:1-26

#### A. Joseph returns with his brethren to Canaan to bury Jacob, vs. 1-13.

##### 1. The mourning for Jacob, vs. 1-3.

- a. With true manliness, Joseph weeps for his father in the flesh, who also was his spiritual father. But yet he has sweet consolation, v. 1.
  - (1) He has no cause for bitter regret on account of neglect of his brother, as is the case with some children.
  - (2) He can easily recall Jacob's recent, generous and tender blessing of him as, "the one distinguished among his brothers" NASB (49:26).
  - (3) But how full of regret were the other brethren, having grieved their father for so long. They were truly reconciled, yet nevertheless could not forget their sin which had continuing results in terms of Jacob's final blessings.
  - (4) How Joseph must now have clung for comfort to the Abrahamic Covenant that was confirmed to Isaac and Jacob, and taught to him as a lad (50:24). His great hope was the final resurrection, which Abraham certainly believed in (Heb. 11:17-19).
  - (5) Thus Joseph closed the eyes of Jacob according to God's promise (46:4).
- b. Both the embalming and mourning were elaborate though not essential to Jacob's wishes, vs. 2-3.
  - (1) The Egyptians, as masters of the art of embalming, took forty days to mummify Jacob. Joseph did this out of respect, though he did not attach any magical significance to it, such as prolonging the life, which the Egyptians believed this process obtained.
  - (2) In venerating Jacob for Joseph's sake, the Egyptians also took seventy days to mourn the Hebrew patriarch.
  - (3) Joseph gave visible honour to his father, but not like some children who care more for their parent's bodies when dead than when alive.

##### 2. Pharaoh permits Joseph to bury Jacob in Canaan, vs. 4-6.

- a. Why does Joseph use a mediator to go before Pharaoh and not speak direct? v. 4.

- (1) Frequently eastern kings were averse to encountering that person who spoke of death or gloom.
  - (2) Probably Joseph's days of mourning were days of separation with his Hebrew people.
- b. Joseph declares that Jacob had already dug his grave in Canaan, at least seventeen years ago, probably out of love for God's covenant promise given to Abraham and Isaac. Further, he advises that he had been appointed executor to his father's will, and thus he had sworn to bury him there. Thus Joseph requests leave of absence, v. 5.
  - c. Pharaoh unhesitatingly agrees to Joseph's request, for Joseph has promised that he will return, v. 6.
3. The funeral procession and burial at Canaan, vs. 7-13.
    - a. The great Egyptian delegation only confirms the esteem in which Joseph was held after being in office for over twenty years! vs. 7-9.
      - (1) His secular life was a testimony.
      - (2) His family life was a testimony.
      - (3) His spiritual life was a testimony.
    - b. The watching Canaanites were amazed to see the Egyptians so moved on account of the death of a foreigner, who surely must have been a great man. Probably Joseph replied that rather he was a man with a great God! vs. 10-11.
    - c. Thus Jacob was buried in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre. It is good to be buried on home ground. A magnificent tomb is of little consequence, but a certain hope in the God of Abraham is! (Rev. 14:13), vs. 12-13.
- B. Joseph returns with his brethren to Egypt, vs. 14-21.
1. Guilt revives amongst the brethren, vs. 14-18.
    - a. Illustration. How often when we have been injured and scarred in our flesh due to our own fault, yet we later pick at these scars and make them fester again instead of letting the healing process be completed.
    - b. Illustration. It is also a sad fact that men sometimes forgive temporarily or defer judgment after they have been offended, for any number of reasons other than that of pure mercy and grace.
    - c. The brethren now appear to spend more time at this point on reflecting on their past sin than on the pardon of Joseph. Imagine the multiplication of guilt feelings that arise amongst the ten brethren when the devilish suggestion is put forth that Joseph's forgiveness may have been temporary! v. 15.



- (1) Note how poor their memories are of grace, and acute regarding their guilt. But recall the moving scene (45:1-15).
  - (2) Application. How Satan loves to depress believers with a review of their sin, and then suggest, “Hath God said?” (Gen. 3:1) concerning their forgiveness.
- d. The brethren in fact impugn the word of Joseph when they attempt to gain “real” forgiveness on the ground of Jacob’s request, vs. 16-17a.
- (1) So cowardly are they and lacking in assurance that they send a message rather than face Joseph themselves. But they need to draw near, not away (Heb. 10:22).
  - (2) But how wretchedly blind our sinful hearts are to the facts of our forgiveness. Why Joseph had forgiven the brethren and lavished grace and kindness upon them before Jacob was brought into the picture!
  - (3) Application. When the believer questions his justification before God, he is impugning the Word of God, and attempting to be “saved” again, though quite impossible (Heb. 6:4-6). But Christ Jesus has given us his memorial supper to remind us that God’s Word of forgiveness is final!
- e. Joseph calls the brethren before him in tearful dismay, vs. 17b-18.
- (1) His tears are tears of tender grief at the thought that his brethren are yet plagued by the guilt of their sin, v. 17b.
  - (2) The brethren have regressed from faith to fear, and thus fall down in fear rather than confidence. But then they possibly wonder if revenge is ever evidenced by tears.
2. Joseph responds with gracious and wise reassurance, vs. 19-21.
- a. Note that Joseph’s frame of mind is godward, for his resolution of the problem he faces is a right understanding of the sovereignty of God regarding justice and forgiveness, v. 19.
    - (1) In terms of the request for forgiveness, Joseph acknowledges that this is ultimately God’s work, and not his. Again Joseph’s forgiveness is understood and rest results.
    - (2) Illustration. Our Saviour submits to this same principle in I Peter 2:22-23. Paul likewise admonishes us to leave judgment to God and return good for evil in Romans 12:19-21. This manner of living Joseph certainly manifested.
  - b. However, Joseph also perceives God’s sovereignty as ordering for a good end those evil deeds of his brethren, v. 20.
    - (1) God was sovereign over the evil events in Joseph’s life, so much so that he confounds Satan’s wicked designs by making them to be instruments for his

glory (I Peter 1:6-7). Thus God can cause the wrath of men to praise Him (Ps. 76:10).

- (2) Just as the sin of Jacob's sons ultimately led to the saving of many people alive in Egypt, so God can cause the unbelief of Israel to lead to the saving of many Gentiles (Rom. 11:25, 28).
- (3) For the sake of "the called," God does marvelous works even in the midst of the most sinful circumstances, and His plans cannot be thwarted (Rom. 8:28). It is a true saying that "man proposes, but God disposes."
- (4) This doctrine is most comforting for those who submit to God's sovereignty, even in the most trying of circumstances, as Paul teaches in Romans 8:31-39.

c. Thus Joseph manifests words and deeds of kindness, v. 21.

- (1) The whole intent of Joseph's teaching on sovereignty was that it might draw his brothers' attention from their guilt and direct their sight toward God's good and wise ordering. He desires that fear should give way to peace and contentment.
- (2) Thus Joseph comforted and spoke kindly to the brethren; again he kissed and wept over them (45:15; 50:17).
- (3) He vindicated his words and emotions by deeds of kindness towards those who "despitefully used him" (Luke 6:27-28).
- (4) Application. The issue is not whether we can forgive and forget, but whether we can forgive and show practical kindness.

C. Joseph prepares for his final return, vs. 22-26.

1. Joseph's concluding days in Egypt, vs. 22-23.

- a. Joseph continued to live in Egypt. But could he not have conspired to return to Canaan? Yes, he could have, but this would have been contrary to God's clearly revealed will, as declared by Jacob. Joseph was in fact to be Israel's overseer during its gestation period in the womb of Egypt.
- b. Thus Joseph died at 110, not so much full of years for those days, but certainly overflowing with the fullness of God!
- c. The fruit of the womb was also Joseph's reward as he watched his family grow in peace and prosperity, which is God's **ultimate** desire for those who are reconciled with Him.

2. Joseph's death and promised departure, vs. 25-26.

- a. Like father like son, Joseph has the same desire at death as did Jacob, namely that his remains be placed in Canaan near those of his father (Ex. 13:19). This was a

testimony to his final faith in God's promises, not pagan Egyptian deities (Heb. 11:22).

- b. Thus Joseph was embalmed and placed in a coffin, but not a pyramid, waiting for over 400 years till Moses fulfilled his wish when the nation of Israel was given birth (Ex. 13:19).
  - c. Thus Joseph died, full of faith that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, through the agency of the Angel of Jehovah, the Son of God, would one day raise them to life in God's glorious, righteous kingdom (Luke 13:28-29).
    - (1) Joseph died, as must all men, but "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord" (Rev. 13:14).
    - (2) Joseph's earlier life was not always apparently blessed, but again we see that what counts is not how we have earlier lived so much as how we live now and how we shall die. Joseph died full of faith in God's gracious redemption. But how shall we fare at that appointed, inevitable hour?
3. Dear reader, the only God of heaven and earth is the God of Joseph, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There is no other. This same God is in full control of the affairs of our lives, whether they be good or bad. You cannot possibly escape from His reign or dominion. You may resist, but *finally* it will be to no avail, as Joseph's brothers eventually discovered. Either God will judge you as you plead your own case, or He will save you as Jesus Christ pleads your case for you. Either you will stand guilty before His bar of justice, or you will be pardoned through bowing in humble submission to His merciful plan of redemption.
- a. Submission means acknowledging that you are corrupt in all of your being. For this reason you acknowledge that if there is to be any hope for the saving of your soul, you know that such hope can only come about through the grace and saving work of the God of Joseph, from the start to finish.
  - b. Submission means bowing before the Saviour of Jacob (48:16), pleading, "Lord have mercy upon me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13). Listen as the Word of God calls on you to submit to Jesus Christ, and believe on Him as your sovereign Lord and Saviour: "Do homage to the Son, lest He becomes angry, and you perish in the way. For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!" NASB (Ps. 2:12; cf. John 3:14-16).
  - c. Submission means fleeing to Jesus Christ since He is, as Charles Wesley has well written, the believing sinner's only refuge.

Jesus! lover of my soul,  
 Let me to Thy bosom fly,  
 While the nearer waters roll,  
 While the tempest still is high,  
 Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,  
 Till the storm of life is past,

Safe into the haven guide,  
O receive my soul at last!

Plenteous grace with Thee is found,  
Grace to pardon all my sin;  
Till the healing streams abound,  
Make and keep me pure within.  
Thou of life the fountain art,  
Freely let me take of Thee;  
Spring Thou up within my heart,  
Rise to all eternity.

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