

# **Joseph**

## A Study in God's Sovereignty

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## **Introduction**

Most of the time when you read or listen to a study or sermon on Joseph, the focus tends to be on the faithfulness of Joseph, his integrity and his trust in God. While these are certainly valid truths and worthy of our study and attention, certain themes besides the integrity of Joseph jumped out at me when I set out to study the life of Joseph in preparation for creating these lessons. I saw the sovereignty of God being played out in Joseph's life unlike in any other section of scripture save for the book of Esther. Perhaps as a byproduct of God's sovereign plan, I also saw how that God prepared Joseph over the course of thirteen years of slavery for the role he was going to play in God's plan. Finally, I saw the integrity of Joseph, both morally and in his trust in God, without which God's plan for him would never have come to fruition.

## **God is sovereign**

When we study Joseph's life we see the hand of God throughout. Sometimes the evidence is subtle and sometimes it is obvious. Joseph is not unique in the sense that God is also at work in our lives even though sometimes we may not see what He is doing. As we will see, Joseph did not recognize what God was doing in his life until years later. God has a plan that is continuously unfolding, one that cannot be thwarted by Satan, men or circumstances. If we could only rest in that truth then our stress levels would drop significantly.

God's plan for the human race is multi-layered like an onion. The outer layers are broad and general, consisting of the plan of salvation, how that Christ would be born, live a perfect and sinless life, and then die on the cross for our sins that He may redeem the human race. These are the "big picture" plans of God. If you peeled off these outer layers you would begin to see more focused plans, such as God's plans for Israel (the creation of the nation, Christ being born from the nation of Israel, its setting aside until the time of the Gentiles, and the final restoration and blessing of Israel). If we kept peeling off layer after layer, the plans get more and more focused until we reach the innermost layers. These layers are where God is dealing with each of His children in their day-to-day circumstances. These are the layers where God walks with us on a personal basis, leading us as we go through daily lives. All of these layers are interdependent and make up the whole onion. God accomplishes His will in the inner layers in order to accomplish His purposes in the outer layers.

## **God's preparation of Joseph**

God has a role for each one of us in His plan, and Joseph was no exception. His role was to preserve the nation of Israel through seven years of famine, and as we study his life we can see how that God was preparing Joseph to fulfill that role. He prepared Joseph "professionally" by training him to be steward under Potiphar and in prison so that when the time was right he would be ready to become the steward of the entire nation of Egypt.

God also was preparing Joseph in his maturity for his role as ruler and steward of Egypt. The hardships Joseph endured over the thirteen years prior to him becoming ruler helped him grow from being an spoiled teenage "daddy's favorite" to being a man responsible for the lives and welfare of millions.

## *Introduction*

God's preparation of Joseph can also be seen in how He moved Joseph step-by-step from watching his father's sheep in Hebron to the throne room of the Pharaoh of Egypt. Throughout Joseph's experiences in Egypt we can see how that God would use both positive and negative circumstances as a means to position Joseph in just the right place to move him to the next step on the path to becoming a ruler in Egypt. What we think are "setbacks" may actually be God preparing to move us to where He wants us.

## **The integrity of Joseph**

Joseph's integrity is an impossible fact to ignore and essential to God's plan. If Joseph had not been faithful in all his ways, God would never have been able to use him as He did. There were instances in Joseph's life where he could have satisfied his own sinful desires, such as by keeping a little money for himself or indulging the advances of Potiphar's wife. However, if he had then God's plan would have failed. In fact, God likely would have chosen someone else and we would never have even heard of Joseph. It may be that many times God doesn't choose to use us because He knows He can't trust us. We need to be men and women of integrity so that we will be available for God to use as He pleases.

## **The purpose and scope of this study**

To thoroughly cover the topic of the sovereignty of God would require a much larger study than this one and someone much more knowledgeable on the subject than I. However, this particular study is focused on the life of Joseph and what we might learn by observing the sovereign hand of God in Joseph's life. The lessons we learn from how God worked in the life of Joseph should help us to recognize how God is working in our own lives and strengthen our faith and trust in Him.

May the Lord bless this study and help us learn that no matter what the current circumstances are in our life, we can have confidence that He is in control and that He is accomplishing His purposes. Our life's story is still unfolding according to His plan and we should trust Him to let it work out for His glory.



## Lesson 1 - Joseph at seventeen (Gen. 37)

### Context

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1 And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan.

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The writer gives us the context of the events in this chapter. Jacob has returned from Haran where he had been serving his uncle Laban. He has been reunited with his brother Esau, made things right with him, and now Jacob has settled down in the land of Canaan where his father was a stranger [*sojourner; temporary dwelling*]. Canaan was the land that God had promised to Abraham and his descendants.

### Joseph the informant

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2 These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.

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**“These are the generations [*family; or figuratively a history*] of Jacob”** - this is the family history of Jacob, as the remainder of Genesis concerns Jacob’s sons.

**“Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren”** - We are told that Joseph is only 17 at this time, not yet considered a man in that culture but still able to share the responsibility his brothers also had of watching over their father’s flock of sheep.

**“the lad was with the sons of Bilhah...of Zilpah, his father’s wives”** - Bilhah and Zilpah were female servants given to Rachel and Leah respectively by Laban their father when they each got married to Jacob. They are called “wives” of Jacob because both Rachel and Leah had Jacob sleep with their handmaids when they couldn’t bear children themselves, and so Jacob had sons by each of these women.

**“Joseph brought unto his father their evil report”** - Joseph told his father about his brothers’ misdeeds while they were away from their father. We don’t know if these were things done to Joseph or merely things done that Joseph knew about, but it seems that Joseph was a bit of a tattle-tale. Quite likely the beginnings of the brother’ ill-will toward Joseph began here.

### Jacob’s favoritism

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3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours. 4 And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

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**“Israel loved Joseph more...”** - It’s only natural that some parents may have favorites among their children, but they should never treat their children differently because of that. Jacob apparently did not make it a secret that Joseph was his favorite. Joseph was born after Jacob may have given up hope of ever having children by Rachel, his favorite wife and the one he had originally intended on marrying.

**“made him a coat of many colours”** - Some commentators believe this coat represented Jacob’s intention for Joseph be the future leader of the family, an honor customarily reserved for the firstborn

## Lesson 1 - Joseph at seventeen (Gen. 37)

son. This would be consistent with Joseph being the firstborn son of Rachel, the favorite wife. The brothers would naturally have been jealous that their younger brother was being elevated above them and this would make the dreams Joseph had later even more annoying.

**“and could not speak peaceably unto him”** - This statement shows how intense their hatred was toward Joseph. They could not speak to Joseph without their words being laced with anger, sarcasm, or malice.

### Joseph's dreams

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5 And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.

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If Joseph's brothers hated him for being their father's favorite and being elevated above them, these dreams only made things worse. They hated that he had the dreams and they hated that he didn't keep them to himself. In the face of the intense hatred he knew the brothers had for him, why would Joseph tell them a dream that surely he knew would anger them even more? Perhaps he was taunting them, knowing that he was “daddy's favorite.”

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6 And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: 7 For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. 8 And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.

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The meaning of the dream was obvious: Each sheaf represented their owner and the sheaves of the brothers were bowing before Joseph's sheaf. The brothers knew the dream represented them bowing before the authority of Joseph, an idea that they hated and they told him so.

**“And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words”** - They hated him for his dreams, but they also hated Joseph for his words. This could just refer to the fact that he told them his dream but it could also refer to the way he told them the dream or even to things he said afterward.

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9 And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. 10 And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?

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Joseph has another dream and again, he can't keep it to himself. The brothers and Jacob easily recognize the meaning of this dream: the sun and the moon represent Joseph's parents, the eleven stars represent his eleven brothers, and they are all bowing down to Joseph. However, this time Jacob rebukes Joseph for the dream. We don't know how Jacob reacted to the first dream, but now that Joseph's dream involves his parents bowing to him it doesn't seem to set well with Jacob. He's essentially saying “Aren't you getting too big for your britches?” Jacob may have found the first dream amusing (especially if the coat of many colors represented his intention for Joseph to eventually lead the family), but he certainly wasn't amused by this dream.

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11 And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.

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envied [*jealous*] – the dreams only made the brother's jealousy even worse.

observed [*to hedge; guard; protect; beware*] – Jacob didn't dismiss the dreams as youthful foolishness and forget about them but instead made a point to remember and think about them. He may have considered the possibility that these dreams could have come from God and be prophetic.

## **Conclusion**

In these verses we can see signs that Joseph had become a bit spoiled as a result of the favoritism his father had shown him. Along his journey to being a ruler in Egypt God will purge this aspect of his character from him through the hardships he will experience. Sometimes God has to humble us before He can use us.

From our perspective we can also see that Joseph's dreams came from God and that He was using them to set His plan into motion since He obviously knew how Joseph's brothers would react to them. As we study Joseph's life we'll see the sovereign hand of God manipulating circumstances to move Joseph to the next step in this plan. Sometimes those circumstances looked like setbacks to the natural eye, but God had things totally under control. We don't know how God is using the circumstances in our own life to position us and those around us to accomplish His will, but we have to trust Him that He knows what He is doing.

## Lesson 2 - The betrayal by Joseph's brothers (Gen. 37:12-30)

In the last lesson we saw God's hand on Joseph's life, preparing circumstances to accomplish His will. In this lesson we see God continuing to work, despite the evil plans of men and even of Satan. Even in the midst of Joseph's brothers being driven by hatred to the point of wanting to kill Joseph, God is there controlling the situation and guiding it according to His will.

### Joseph sent to check on his brothers (vs. 12-17)

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12 And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. 13 And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I. 14 And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

**“Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem?”** - Apparently Jacob and Joseph were in the vale (valley) of Hebron and the brothers were in Shechem, some 50 miles north of Hebron. Dothan, where Joseph eventually finds his brothers, is another 15 miles north of Shechem and is near a main trade route that merchants used to travel to Egypt. God is guiding circumstances in order to send Joseph to Egypt via this trade route (vs. 25-28).

**“I will send thee unto them...Here am I”** - Jacob wants to send Joseph to check on the brothers' welfare and Joseph is ready to obey his father.

**“bring me word again”** - Obviously Jacob cares about the welfare of his sons and his flocks, but it's possible that he doesn't completely trust them and knows that Joseph will tell him the truth and not cover up for his brothers.

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15 And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? 16 And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks. 17 And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan.

**“he was wandering in the field”** - Jacob had bought a field in Shechem (Gen. 33:19) and so this may be the field where Joseph was expecting the brothers to be. Perhaps he was searching the field for signs that his brothers had been there and clues to where they had went when this man found him.

**“I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan”** - We don't know why the brothers moved on to Dothan, but this “certain man” apparently was familiar with the brothers and overheard their discussion to go to Dothan. We see God's hand again, as this man “happened” to know where the brothers had went and then this same man “happened” to come across Joseph wandering in the field.

### The brothers' plan to kill him (vs. 18-20)

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18 And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. 19 And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. 20

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Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams.

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**“And when they saw him afar off”** - The brothers' camp may have been in a flat or elevated area and as a result they could see anyone approaching them from a distance. Since Joseph was wearing his “coat of many colors” (v. 23) they recognized him immediately, even from a distance. The text doesn't mention any horse or other animal, so it's probable that Joseph was on foot and so the brothers would have had plenty of time to discuss their plans for Joseph.

**“Behold this dreamer cometh”** - Obviously Joseph's dreams were still a sore spot with the brothers, compounded with the fact that Joseph was wearing the coat of many colors, the emblem of their father's favoritism for Joseph.

**“let us slay him...and we will say Some evil beast hath devoured him”** - The brothers are thinking this through, from the doing of the deed through how to cover it up. They aren't just daydreaming what it might be like to be rid of Joseph; these brothers are seriously planning premeditated murder!

**“we shall see what will become of his dreams”** - Notice the contempt they have for Joseph's dreams. They're saying “He dreams that we will bow down to *him*? Let's see if his dreams can come true if he's dead!”

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## Reuben plans to rescue Joseph (vs. 21-24)

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21 And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him. 22 And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.

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**“Let us not kill him”** - Reuben is listening to the other brothers' plans to kill Joseph but he is not willing to commit murder and is able to convince them to not go so far as killing. God is intervening by touching Reuben's heart with enough compassion to come up with a plan of his own. Instead of killing Joseph themselves, he wants the brothers to throw Joseph into a pit (perhaps to leave him to “die”) so that he could come back later and rescue Joseph and take him home to his father.

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23 And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him; 24 And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it.

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**“when Joseph was come unto his brethren”** - By the time Joseph has reached his brothers, they have decided to follow Reuben's plan to not kill him outright. They grab Joseph, take the coat of many colors off of him (they hate that coat!) and toss him into a pit.

**“the pit was empty, there was no water in it”** - This pit may have been originally dug to catch rainwater (like a cistern). Either Reuben made sure they threw Joseph into a dry pit or else God providentially ensured that the pit was dry (either way, God was in it). Otherwise Joseph likely would have drowned since the pit was too deep for him to climb out.

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## The brothers sell Joseph into slavery (vs. 25-30)

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25 And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and

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myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.

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**“And they sat down to eat bread”** - It seems they had no remorse for what they were doing since it apparently didn't affect their appetite. Their hatred of Joseph overrode their consciences.

**“a company of Ishmeelites”** - Apparently these were traders on their way to Egypt to sell their goods. Verse 28 mentions Midianite merchantmen; in those days traveling in large groups was safer from bands of robbers, so the Midianite merchantmen were traveling with the company of Ishmeelites and so the group was collectively called “Ishmeelites” even though there were other people in the company.

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26 And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? 27 Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content.

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**“What profit is it...”** - Notice the reasoning of a sinful heart: Not content just to do away with Joseph, Judah says they ought to make a little money at it as well.

**“and let not our hand be upon him”** - more twisted reasoning of a sinful heart: “we shouldn't kill our own flesh and blood” (as if his suggestion is more noble) “but let's sell him and then whatever happens to him will not be our doing.”

**“his brethren were content”** - The other brothers agreed with Judah's twisted thinking.

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28 Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt.

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**“Midianites merchantmen”** - within the group of Ishmeelites were these merchantmen.

**“they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit”** - from the grammar of the sentence, it may seem ambiguous as to who the “they” were who lifted Joseph out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmeelites, but the context seems to indicate that it was the brothers. Exercising the best tool for interpreting scripture (with itself) we indeed see that it was the brothers. Joseph himself says it was the brothers in Gen. 45:4 when he reveals himself to his brothers and says “I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.” Also, when Stephen in preaching just before he's stoned to death, he's going through a brief history of the Jewish people. He mentions Joseph in Acts 7:9 when he says “And the patriarchs [Joseph's brothers, the fathers of the tribes of Israel], moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt.”

**“for twenty pieces of silver”** - this was the average price for a slave under the age of 20.

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29 And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes. 30 And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?

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**“And Reuben returned to the pit”** - apparently Reuben wasn't present when the other brothers decided to sell Joseph. Perhaps he had made some excuse to leave so he could sneak Joseph out of the pit on his way back, but Joseph was already gone when Reuben attempted to make his move.

**“The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?”** - Reuben wanted nothing to do with the other brothers' plot but now he had no choice but to go along with the cover-up.

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## The cover-up (vs. 31-36)

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31 And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the

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blood; 32 And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no.

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**“dipped the coat in blood”** - Before forensic science was invented faking evidence was easy. There was no way to distinguish between animal and human blood.

**“know now whether it be thy son's coat or no”** - They bring the coat to Jacob and feign ignorance whether or not it was Joseph's coat, letting Jacob draw his own conclusions.

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33 And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.

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The brothers' plan works exactly as they hoped. Probably because of the amount of blood on the coat, Jacob assumes the worst and believes that Joseph is dead and not merely wounded for he proclaims that Joseph is not just “dead” but “rent in pieces.” Perhaps God allowed Jacob to be so overwhelmed with grief that he didn't think critically about the matter and gave up without sending someone out to search for Joseph in case he was merely wounded and in need of help. God's plan is for Joseph to be taken to Egypt so He allows the brothers' plan to succeed and Jacob to be completely deceived.

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34 And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. 35 And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him.

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Jacob is totally heartbroken because his favorite son has been taken from him. It takes a long time before Jacob is able to get on with his life. We have to wonder how the brothers dealt with seeing their father mourning like this day after day, knowing that they were responsible.

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36 And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard.

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The Midianites who had bought Joseph take him down to Egypt where Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, buys him as a slave. God is positioning Joseph for the next step in His plan. No doubt at this point Joseph believes that his world has fallen apart but he will come to realize that God was in control the whole time.

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## Conclusion

Throughout this ordeal the brothers believe they have taken matters into their own hands and have successfully rid themselves of their “thorn in the flesh.” However, they have only done as God has allowed for He is using their evil intentions to further His plan for both Joseph's and their good. Romans 8:28 says *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”* This verse doesn't say that all things are good but that God can take all things, good or bad, and use them to produce a good result in our lives. As in Joseph's life, God may take His time in producing the good in our life. Planting seeds, baking cakes, building a house, etc. all take time before we can enjoy the results and rushing the results will only ruin them. No doubt at this point Joseph believed he had suffered a tragedy and wondered why God had forsaken him, but in reality God was moving him to the next step of His sovereign plan. However, it will be years before Joseph will be able to see the results of what God is doing.

## Lesson 3 - Joseph in slavery (Gen. 39:1-20)

We've seen so far how that God is moving forward with His plan for Joseph and has now transported Joseph to Egypt. God takes care of Joseph while in Egypt even though at times it doesn't look like it from Joseph's perspective. However, God is moving Joseph along step-by-step so He can bless Joseph beyond what Joseph thought was possible and accomplish His divine plan. In this lesson we also see that Joseph remains faithful to God despite his circumstances.

### Joseph is bought by Potiphar

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1 And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither.

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This verse picks up where the end of Chapter 37 leaves off, repeating the fact that Joseph, now a slave, is bought by Potiphar, who is an officer of Pharaoh. As we will see, God is at work positioning Joseph closer to Pharaoh and his eventual position as second-in-command over Egypt.

### God prospers Joseph in Potiphar's house

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2 And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

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**“And the LORD was with Joseph”** - God never left Joseph, prospering him in the midst of his circumstances. Joseph was faithful in whatever he did, so God was able to bless him.

**“he was in the house of his master”** - God saw to it that Potiphar used Joseph as a house-slave rather than a field worker where his stewardship gifts would not have been noticed.

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3 And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand. 4 And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.

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**“his master saw that the LORD was with him”** - As God blessed Joseph and prospered whatever task he was assigned to do, Potiphar took notice.

**“Joseph found grace in his sight”** - Potiphar liked Joseph and was pleased with his work, another sign of God's hand at work.

**“and he served him”** - Joseph served his master, which speaks of his faithfulness to his master and his work.

**“he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand”** - Noticing that whatever Joseph did prospered, Potiphar decided to take advantage of this and made Joseph manager over not only his household but over everything that he had. It is interesting how that God influences people's hearts in such a way that they trust Joseph enough to give him a free hand over all that they have. We will see this later when Joseph is in prison as well as when Pharaoh places him in control over the entire nation of Egypt.

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5 And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over

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all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field. 6 And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured.

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**“the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake”** - Unbelievers often get blessed by God as a side-effect when He blesses His children. Remember Laban's statement to Jacob in Gen. 30:27 *“And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry: for I have learned by experience that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake.”*

**“he left all that he had in Joseph's hand”** - Potiphar had recognized Joseph's faithfulness and integrity and so trusted him completely. He apparently had no concerns about Joseph's honesty and so he didn't bother with keeping up with his financial affairs but let Joseph manage everything.

**“Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured”** - “goodly” [*outline; figure*] perhaps referring to his body; “well favored” [the two words come from a Hebrew word meaning *“beautiful to look at”*]; Joseph was good looking, both in body and face.

## Joseph resists temptation

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7 And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me.

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After seeing such a handsome young man as Joseph working around the house day after day, Potiphar's wife becomes fixated on him and tries to convince him to sleep with her. Joseph is now faced with a major temptation to compromise his integrity.

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8 But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; 9 There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

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**“my master wotteth not what is with me in the house...”** - Joseph is reminding Potiphar's wife of the great trust that her husband has placed in him, saying that his master knows not what he has because he has committed everything into the care of Joseph. His master has promoted Joseph to being the greatest in the house (in authority) and has put everything into the control of Joseph except one thing: Potiphar's wife.

**“how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”** - As good as Potiphar has been to Joseph and considering the great trust he has in Joseph, how could Joseph do this great wickedness (take advantage of and betray Potiphar's trust) and sin against God? Joseph is recognizing that he would be betraying two people: Potiphar and God. He would be betraying Potiphar's trust after all the privileges he had given Joseph and he would be sinning against God after God has been with him and prospered him. It seems that Joseph is recognizing that God has been with him since he has come to Egypt.

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10 And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her.

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**“she spake to Joseph day by day”** - This woman would not take “no” for an answer but kept after Joseph day after day. We shouldn't think that resisting Satan's temptations once means he will give up

### Lesson 3 - Joseph in slavery (Gen. 39:1-20)

and leave us alone. Satan will return over and over to tempt you, often when you are at your weakest. **“he hearkened not unto her”** - Joseph said “no” and stuck by his guns. He didn't listen to her asking him to sleep with or to be with her. He didn't compromise. It might have been easy to meet her half-way and hope that just spending time with her might satisfy her but sin is not that way. If we open the door to sin even a little bit, it can pull us in deeper.

## Joseph is falsely accused

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11 And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within. 12 And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

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Joseph had been avoiding Potiphar's wife, or making sure he wasn't alone with her so that she wouldn't try anything. However, this time she was able to catch him alone and became insistent that he sleep with her, grabbing his clothes in order to prevent him from escaping.

**“he left his garment in her hand”** - Joseph was so determined to not commit sin with this woman that he was willing to leave at least a portion of his clothes behind while he made a run for it. It doesn't say how much clothing Joseph was still wearing when fled, but he apparently left enough behind to make the false accusation that this woman makes against Joseph believable.

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13 And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, 14 That she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice: 15 And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out.

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When this woman saw how desperate Joseph was to not sleep with her, she became angry and insulted. She used the garment Joseph left behind as “evidence” that he had tried to force himself on her and had already taken some of his clothes off when she supposedly cried out and scared him away. She decided to revenge herself on Joseph since it was clear that he would not comply with her desire for him to sleep with her.

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16 And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home. 17 And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me: 18 And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out.

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Potiphar's wife repeats her story to her husband when he came home and showed him Joseph's garment to substantiate her story.

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19 And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled.

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Potiphar believes his wife, either because she is his wife or because she has Joseph's garment as “evidence” or both. He becomes angry, no doubt feeling betrayed after putting his full trust in Joseph over all his possessions. He's feeling the betrayal that Joseph had spoke of as the reason he couldn't sleep with Potiphar's wife, but now this woman has made it appear that Joseph has done exactly that.

## Joseph is placed in prison

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20 And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.

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We are not told if Joseph got the opportunity to defend himself or if Potiphar simply took his wife's account of the situation as the truth without giving Joseph a chance to explain his side of the story. Since he was angry, emotion apparently drove Potiphar's decision to imprison Joseph. God protected Joseph since he could easily have been put to death, but instead he was put into prison. And this wasn't just any prison but it was the prison where the king's (Pharaoh's) prisoners were kept. God is again positioning Joseph for the next step in his journey to becoming the second-most powerful man in Egypt by moving him ever closer to Pharaoh.

## Conclusion

This lesson shows us that being faithful to God and a man of integrity doesn't always keep us out of trouble. Sometimes false accusations come our way despite our innocence. Sometimes we are treated unfairly even though we have done nothing to deserve it. Like Joseph, we should endure our circumstances with patience and stay faithful to God, knowing that He will take care of us and use our circumstances, whether they are good or bad, to further His plan for us. Romans 8:28 says *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”* Throughout all his problems Joseph remained faithful regardless of his circumstances and God remained with him.

## Lesson 4 - Joseph in prison (Gen. 39:21 – Gen.40:23)

God is taking care of Joseph throughout the events of his life. What might look like bad luck to the natural eye is in reality God guiding the unfolding of circumstances as He sees fit. In this chapter we see God blessing Joseph for his faithfulness and causing him to always rise to the top despite what might be seen as setbacks. However, it's easy to see God's hand in things that seemed at the time like random events that occurred to further God's plan to move Joseph into a position of authority.

### God prospers Joseph in prison (Gen.39:21-23)

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21 But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. 22 And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. 23 The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper.

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**“But the LORD was with Joseph...”** - God was faithful to Joseph in the midst of negative circumstances. These circumstances had been arranged by God and now He is continuing to manage Joseph's life, setting the stage for the next step in His plan. In order to accomplish this God causes the keeper of the prison to favor Joseph.

**“the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand...”** - God was certainly with Joseph because people continue to demonstrate great trust in Joseph, placing great responsibility on his shoulders. Potiphar showed complete trust in Joseph, and now the keeper of the prison entrusts Joseph with everything that was done in the prison. Joseph seems to always rise to the top as the Lord blesses him.

**“The keeper of the prison looked not to anything that was under his hand”** - Like Potiphar, this keeper completely trusted Joseph, both his honesty and his competency, and didn't worry about anything that Joseph did. He saw that anything Joseph did, it was done correctly and prospered, because God was with him. Normally it would be unthinkable to allow a prisoner to manage the other prisoners but the keeper apparently had confidence in Joseph's integrity and the LORD's influence did the rest.

### Joseph interprets dreams (Gen. 40:1-23)

Instead of giving Joseph dreams, God now gives Joseph the gift of being able to interpret dreams, and it is this ability that God uses to move Joseph to where He wants him to be.

### Pharaoh's butler and baker are imprisoned (vs. 1-4)

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1 And it came to pass after these things, that the butler of the king of Egypt and his baker had offended their lord the king of Egypt. 2 And Pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers. 3 And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound. 4 And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them: and they continued a season in ward.

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**“it came to pass after these things”** - We don’t know how long Joseph has been in prison, but we now see God working on the next step after an appropriate period of time. We must remember that God is preparing Joseph as well as the circumstances for the later steps in His plan.

**“Pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers”** - We’re not told what these two men did to anger Pharaoh, but we can be certain that God was behind the scenes guiding the circumstances in order to place these two men in contact with Joseph.

**“he put them in ward...where Joseph was bound”** - These two men are placed in the “house of the captain of the guard” which is the same place where Joseph is being confined. The “captain of the guard” is the same title attributed to Potiphar (Gen. 37:36; 39:1), which may mean that Potiphar was in charge of the prison and the “keeper of the prison” (Gen. 39:21-23) served under Potiphar.

**“the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them”** - The captain of the guard assigns Joseph the responsibility of taking care of these men. If this “captain of the guard” was indeed Potiphar, it may be that by now he has realized Joseph’s innocence but is unable to restore him to his previous position because of his wife. Perhaps he realizes that it would only be trouble to put Joseph back into the same house with his wife (either she is still holding a grudge or he doesn’t want her chasing after Joseph again). Joseph is given the responsibility of attending to these two new prisoners while they stayed there in the prison for “a season” (an indefinite period of time).

### **The two men each have a mysterious dream (vs. 5-8)**

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5 And they dreamed a dream both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream, the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, which were bound in the prison. 6 And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and, behold, they were sad. 7 And he asked Pharaoh's officers that were with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, Wherefore look ye so sadly to day? 8 And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you.

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**“they dreamed a dream both of them...in one night”** - It is hardly a coincidence that both of these men have their dream the same night. Each man had their own dream that had an interpretation specific to him.

**“behold, they were sad”** - The common belief of the day was that dreams had supernatural significance and they each felt their dream meant something. The reason for their sadness was that they didn’t know the meaning of their dreams.

**“Wherefore look ye so sadly to day?”** - Joseph notices their sad demeanor and when he asks about it they reply it is because they have no one to interpret their dream (they had no access to Pharaoh’s magicians or wise men). Joseph attributes the ability to interpret dreams to God (and not magicians or wise men) and asks the men to tell him their dreams. Since dream interpretation was God’s domain and Joseph was a servant of God, perhaps God would give him the interpretation of their dreams.

### **The butler’s dream (vs. 9-13)**

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9 And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, In my dream, behold, a vine was before me; 10 And in the vine were three branches: and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes: 11 And Pharaoh's cup was in my hand: and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave

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the cup into Pharaoh's hand. 12 And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days: 13 Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place: and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler.

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In the butler's dream he saw a grape vine that had three branches and each branch grew buds that blossomed and brought forth grapes, which he then pressed into Pharaoh's cup and gave to Pharaoh. Joseph gives the interpretation that in three days Pharaoh would restore the butler to his previous position.

### **Joseph's request (vs. 14-15)**

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14 But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: 15 For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon.

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Joseph appeals to the butler and asks that once he is restored to his position and things returned to normal, if the butler would remember him and mention his situation to Pharaoh. He mentions that he is in Egypt against his will and that he is in prison as an innocent man. This request is Joseph's attempt to get justice for himself. No doubt he has been praying to God to help him get back home and he may be hoping that God might use the opportunity of the butler speaking to Pharaoh to liberate him. However, God's plan didn't include Pharaoh setting Joseph free at this time; He had something better in mind. Like Joseph, we ask God to resolve our problems and attempt to get the ball rolling ourselves, but nothing seems to come of it. We must be patient and trust that God has everything under control. It is another two years before God moves Joseph out of prison (Gen. 41:1).

### **The baker's dream (vs. 16-19)**

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16 When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said unto Joseph, I also was in my dream, and, behold, I had three white baskets on my head: 17 And in the uppermost basket there was of all manner of bakemeats for Pharaoh; and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head. 18 And Joseph answered and said, This is the interpretation thereof: The three baskets are three days: 19 Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.

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The baker is encouraged by the positive interpretation of the butler's dream, and so proceeds to tell Joseph his own dream. Unfortunately for him, the interpretation of the baker's dream is not good news. In three days Pharaoh is going to take the baker out of prison but, instead of restoring him to his position, Pharaoh is going to behead him and then hang his headless body in a tree so that the birds can eat his flesh. This was a common means of capital punishment in Egypt at the time.

### **The fulfillment of the dreams (vs. 20-23)**

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20 And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his

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servants. 21 And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand: 22 But he hanged the chief baker: as Joseph had interpreted to them.

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Joseph's interpretations prove to be accurate because in three days the dreams were fulfilled. The third day was Pharaoh's birthday and he decided to celebrate with a feast. Since feasting meant he would need both his butler and his baker this became a good occasion to evaluate the cases of the butler and the baker. Whatever the offenses of the two men were, the butler was either found innocent or forgiven and was therefore restored to his position while the baker was found worthy of death and was executed.

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23 Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgat him.

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It may not necessarily have been ingratitude on the part of the butler that caused him to forget Joseph; he may have been so focused on proving to Pharaoh that restoring him was not a mistake and so get tossed back into prison that by the time he felt secure enough in his position to be able to speak to Pharaoh, Joseph was far from his mind. We must also recognize that God also had a hand in causing the butler to forget Joseph in order to further His plan. If the butler had spoken to Pharaoh and Joseph's case subsequently investigated then Joseph quite possibly would have been set free and sent back home to Hebron, causing God's plan to use Joseph to preserve the nation of Israel as well as millions of lives to fail. However, as we will see in the next lesson, God jogs the memory of the butler at just the right time to totally alter Joseph's circumstances forever.

## Conclusion

Studying Joseph's time in prison reveals God's hand at work. Joseph could see that God was with him during his time in prison and yet his attempt to gain his own freedom seemed to fail. However, God was only postponing Joseph's freedom until a more opportune time, one that came two years later. We can see that what might seem to be bad luck or even God "working against us" can actually be God performing His will in our lives for the greater good. We often think the "greater good" is what we want or prefer to happen, but we have to see the "bigger picture" and trust that God has a good and perfect plan that He is accomplishing.

## Lesson 5 - Joseph is given authority (Gen. 41)

God has brought Joseph down a long road to get to this point, but now is the time for God's plan to finally manifest itself for Joseph. Verse 46 tells us that Joseph is 30 years old by this time after being sold into slavery at 17, so Joseph has been in Egypt for 13 years. God's plan didn't unfold overnight or quickly. Sometimes it may take years before we see the results for which God has prepared us. Two whole years have passed since Joseph's interaction with the butler and the baker.

### Pharaoh's dream (vs. 1-8)

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1 And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river. 2 And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine and fattleshed; and they fed in a meadow. 3 And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and leanfleshed; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river. 4 And the ill favoured and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke. 5 And he slept and dreamed the second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good. 6 And, behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them. 7 And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, it was a dream. 8 And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.

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**“at the end of two full years”** - Two full years had passed since Joseph asked the butler to remember him before Pharaoh, and it seemed that nothing had come of it. God could have given Pharaoh the dream the next day after restoring the butler so why did God wait two full years? We can only guess, but God seldom gets in a hurry and His timing is perfect.

**“and Pharaoh dreamed”** - Verses 1-7 give only a brief overview of Pharaoh's dream. Later we get a more detailed account of the dream when Pharaoh describes his dream to Joseph. Actually, Pharaoh has two dreams, for he awakes after the first then goes back to sleep and dreams a second time.

**“there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh”** - Pharaoh is troubled in the morning by his dreams because he feels that they must mean something but he can find no one to interpret them for him. We see God's hand at work here, for He gives Pharaoh these dreams and causes him to be troubled enough to want to know what they meant. God prevents the magicians [*diviner; astrologist; occultist*] and wise [*learned; educated*] men from giving Pharaoh an interpretation, providing the opportunity for Joseph to be brought before Pharaoh.

### The butler remembers Joseph (vs. 9-13)

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9 Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day: 10 Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the captain of the guard's house, both me and the chief baker: 11 And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream. 12 And there was there with us a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard; and we told him, and he

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interpreted to us our dreams; to each man according to his dream he did interpret. 13 And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged.

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**“Then spake the chief butler”** - God gives the butler a nudge in his memory, having Pharaoh's dream remind the butler of his own dream from two years prior. “My faults” could either refer to what he did wrong that angered Pharaoh back then or to the fact that he failed to satisfy Joseph’s request that he speak to Pharaoh on his behalf. Since he doesn’t mention Joseph’s request it’s probably the former.

**“he interpreted to us our dreams”** - The butler recounts the occasion that caused him to meet Joseph and that Joseph was able to correctly interpret the dreams of both the butler and the baker.

## Joseph is called before Pharaoh (vs. 14-16)

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14 Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh. 15 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it. 16 And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.

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**“Pharaoh sent and called Joseph”** - God is at work here, for Pharaoh is so anxious to know what his dream means that he is willing to consult with a foreign slave who is in prison. They hastily [*to run*] clean up Joseph (either because this is Pharaoh calling for him, or else the urgent nature of Pharaoh's command) and send him to Pharaoh.

**“It is not in me”** - Pharaoh tells Joseph that no one has been able to interpret his dream but that he has heard of Joseph’s ability to interpret them. Joseph responds humbly and gives God the glory. He says that it will be God that will reveal the meaning of Pharaoh's dream and relieve his anxiety over finding the meaning of it.

## Pharaoh describes his dream to Joseph (vs. 17-24)

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17 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river: 18 And, behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fatfleshed and well favoured; and they fed in a meadow: 19 And, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill favoured and leanfleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness: 20 And the lean and the ill favoured kine did eat up the first seven fat kine: 21 And when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them; but they were still ill favoured, as at the beginning. So I awoke. 22 And I saw in my dream, and, behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good: 23 And, behold, seven ears, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them: 24 And the thin ears devoured the seven good ears: and I told this unto the magicians; but there was none that could declare it to me.

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Pharaoh recounts his two dreams to Joseph. In each he saw seven healthy, fat, well-fed things (kine [*heifer*]) or ears of wheat) followed by their seven malnourished counterparts (“skin and bones” cows or withered ears of wheat). In each dream the bad consume the good, but their condition doesn’t improve. Pharaoh repeats the fact that none of his magicians could interpret these dreams.

## Joseph interprets the dream (vs. 25-32)

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25 And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do. 26 The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one. 27 And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them are seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine. 28 This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh. 29 Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt: 30 And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land; 31 And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous. 32 And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

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**“The dream of Pharaoh is one”** - Joseph is immediately able to interpret the dream and recognizes that both dreams are one in meaning, stating that God has revealed to Pharaoh what He is about to do. Joseph acknowledges that God is in control.

**“This is the thing that I have spoken to Pharaoh”** - Joseph repeats and emphasizes that the dreams are prophetic in nature; God is revealing to Pharaoh what He plans to do.

**“There shall come seven years of great plenty”** - The well favored cows and ears represent seven years of great plenty in Egypt where the land will produce an abundance of crops. But these seven years of plenty will be followed by seven years of famine which will be so severe that the seven years of plenty will be forgotten.

**“the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice”** - The fact that there were two dreams given with the same meaning emphasizes both the certainty and the urgency of the matter. God wants to make sure that Pharaoh gets the message.

## Joseph makes a recommendation (vs. 33-36)

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33 Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. 34 Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years. 35 And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. 36 And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.

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**“Now therefore let Pharaoh...”** - The last thirteen years God has been training and preparing Joseph for this moment and Joseph uses his experience as a steward/manager to recommend a course of action. Joseph’s plan is to store 20% of all that the land produces over the next seven years under the supervision of a wise man in preparation for the seven years of famine.

## Pharaoh recognizes Joseph’s gifts (vs. 37-39)

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37 And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants. 38 And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the

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Spirit of God is? 39 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:

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**“the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh”** - Pharaoh and all his servants are impressed with both the wisdom of the plan and the man that created it (although God is the ultimate originator of the plan). Again, we see God causing Joseph to find favor with those around him.

**“Can we find such a one as this”** - Like all of Joseph’s previous superiors, Pharaoh recognizes that God is with Joseph and that they need look no further for a man to implement Joseph’s plan for preparing for the seven lean years.

## Pharaoh promotes Joseph (vs. 40-45)

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40 Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. 41 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.

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It’s amazing to see that Pharaoh was willing to raise Joseph, a foreign prisoner, straight from the prison to being a ruler over all of Egypt, and the only explanation is that God was in it.

**“Thou shalt be over my house”** - Everyone who encounters Joseph wants to put him in charge. That can only be God.

**“according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled”** - Pharaoh entrusts the entirety of the people of Egypt to Joseph’s care.

**“only in the throne will I be greater than thou”** - This phrase can be read either of two ways: (1) Only I will be greater than you in terms of the throne (the seat of authority); (2) I will be greater than you only in terms of the throne (because I’m Pharaoh). If Pharaoh’s meaning was the latter, then it would mean that he is doing just as Potiphar and the keeper of the prison had done before and turned total control of everything over to Joseph. That would be incredible change of fortunes for Joseph when looking at it from a human standpoint but not when you consider God’s hand in the matter. Nothing is impossible with God.

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42 And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; 43 And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.

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Pharaoh endows Joseph with all the symbols of authority: the king’s ring (signet ring, by which he would seal in wax all decrees with the authority of the king); fine clothes befitting his new position; a gold chain that represented his royal authority; Pharaoh puts Joseph in his second chariot and parades him around crying out to all that they should bow the knee to Joseph. Thus Pharaoh puts his stamp of approval on Joseph in the eyes of the people. Pharaoh is pulling out all the stops for Joseph because he wants the whole nation to recognize the authority Joseph now has.

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44 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt. 45 And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnathpaaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt.

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**“I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand...”** - Pharaoh's statement here speaks

## Lesson 5 - Joseph is given authority (Gen. 41)

of the absolute authority that he is giving Joseph.

**“Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Zaphnath-paaneah”** - The name means “revealer of secrets.” It seems Joseph gains a reputation that he later uses when testing his brothers (“*wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?*” Gen. 44:15).

**“and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On”** - The priests were the highest and most privileged class in Egypt, so it was an honor to be given the daughter of a priest for a wife. Yes, Joseph’s father-in-law was a pagan priest, but no doubt Joseph taught his wife about the true and living God.

## Joseph implements his plan (vs. 46-57)

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46 And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.

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Joseph has been in Egypt for thirteen years (30 – 17 = 13) and now God has placed Joseph in the position He has intended for him. Joseph begins implementing the plan for storing back grain in preparation for the seven years of famine.

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47 And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls. 48 And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same. 49 And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number.

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With God’s help Joseph is able to collect an amazing amount of grain, so the plenteous years must have been very abundant. The amount of grain stored is so large that there is not only enough to feed everyone in Egypt but there is also enough to sell to people from other nations.

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50 And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him. 51 And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. 52 And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.

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God blesses Joseph with two sons, and we can see from the meaning of names Joseph gives them that he is expressing his gratitude to God that his current blessings far eclipse the years he spent suffering in bondage, both as a slave and as a prisoner.

**Manasseh** (“Forgetfulness”) - God has enabled Joseph to forget his years of toiling and homesickness for his father’s house and put them behind him.

**Ephraim** (“Fruitful”) - God has enabled Joseph to be “fruitful” (either by having children, or by being prosperous) in the land where he was “afflicted” (lived as a slave).

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53 And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended. 54 And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.

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Joseph’s planning immediately pays off once the seven years of famine begin for Egypt still had bread while the surrounding lands were starting to suffer hunger.

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55 And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do. 56 And the famine was over all the face of the earth: And Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. 57 And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands.

**“Go unto Joseph...”** - Pharaoh has left the well being of Egypt in the hands of Joseph and so when the people become hungry and ask Pharaoh for help, he sends them to Joseph. Pharaoh makes no attempt to monitor Joseph’s activities but allows him to exercise complete authority.

**“All countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn”** - The Egyptian people bought corn from Joseph’s storehouses and then people from other countries came to buy as well. Obviously there was enough extra from the years of plenty to feed not only Egypt for seven years but people from other nations as well. God knew what He was doing and gave Joseph the wisdom to manage it all.

## Conclusion

The manner in which God has Pharaoh promote Joseph was nothing short of remarkable. Joseph made such an impression on Pharaoh that he lifted Joseph immediately from prison and gave him near-absolute power over Egypt. Nothing is impossible for God when He is ready to accomplish His purpose.

We can also see that God has used the years that Joseph spent as a slave and in prison as training to prepare him for the task that God had for him. Had Joseph had his way, he’d still be helping his brother’s watch his father’s sheep but with an empty stomach. Fortunately, we are not in control of our own destiny despite what we would like to think. God is sovereign and thankfully so, for He is the only one qualified for the job.

## Lesson 6 - Joseph sees his brothers again – Part 1 (Gen. 42:1–38)

God's plan for Joseph is continuing to unfold as He has now placed Joseph in the position of being the steward of all of Egypt and will be responsible for preserving the lives of millions. However, God is not finished with Joseph as there is unfinished business with his brothers and God's plan to preserve the nation of Israel has yet to be fully realized.

### Jacob sends his sons to buy grain in Egypt (vs. 1-5)

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<sup>1</sup> Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? <sup>2</sup> And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die.

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By this time the famine was getting bad in Hebron where Jacob and his sons were living and having heard of that there was grain to be bought in Egypt, he sends his sons to go buy some before they starve.

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<sup>3</sup> And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt. <sup>4</sup> But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren; for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him.

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So the sons of Jacob go to Egypt, except for Benjamin. Being Joseph's brother and also the son of his favorite wife (which apparently made Joseph his favorite son) and remembering what (he thought) happened to Joseph, Jacob is being over-protective of Benjamin and doesn't allow him to go to Egypt. He had already lost one son of Rachel and didn't want to lose the other. Maybe he thought the sons of Rachel were jinxed.

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<sup>5</sup> And the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those that came: for the famine was in the land of Canaan.

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Here the brothers enter Egypt among all the other people who had come to buy food. They were just ten men among the hundreds or even thousands who came to Joseph to buy food, but Joseph will still recognize them.

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### First trip to Egypt (vs. 6-38)

The brothers will make two trips to Egypt before Joseph reveals himself to them. This chapter covers the first trip.

### Joseph's brothers present themselves before Joseph (vs. 6)

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<sup>6</sup> And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth.

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**“he it was that sold to all the people of the land”** - Joseph is called the “governor” over the land (i.e. he was the man in charge) and apparently everyone had to appear before him before they were allowed

to buy grain. It appears that Joseph was personally involved in every transaction.

**“bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth”** – The brothers did not realize that they were fulfilling the dreams that they hated so much (Gen. 37:5-11) some 20+ years later. We should never doubt that what God says will indeed come to pass.

### Joseph challenges their integrity (vs. 7-13)

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<sup>7</sup> And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food.

**“he knew them, but made himself strange unto them”** - Apparently Joseph recognized his brothers immediately, despite it being 20+ years since the last time he saw them. No doubt he had changed more than they had over that period of time, but likely God helped Joseph recognize who they were. Joseph, however, wasn't ready for them to recognize him, so he “made himself strange.” In other words, he acted like he didn't know them and probably acted even more like an Egyptian in order to cover up any behaviors that might cause them to recognize him.

**“and spake roughly unto them”** – He interrogates them, asking where they were from, but this was part of the ruse since he knew exactly where they were from. Joseph probably wanted to see how honest they were going to be and whether or not they had changed.

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<sup>8</sup> And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him.

Joseph has the advantage for he knows who they are but they haven't recognized him. He likely is wanting to glean as much information from and about them as possible.

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<sup>9</sup> And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.

**“And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them”** - Perhaps God reminds Joseph of the dreams given to him at the age of 17 and so Joseph's faith is strengthened by seeing that God's is in control. One commentator suggested that Joseph might have revealed himself to his brothers but the remembrance of the dreams made him realize God had more that He wanted to do between Joseph and his brothers.

**“Ye are spies...”** - after remembering the dreams Joseph immediately challenges their integrity by accusing them of being spies. He says they have come, not to buy food, but to look for weaknesses that an enemy of Egypt could exploit.

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<sup>10</sup> And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come. <sup>11</sup> We are all one man's sons; we are true men, thy servants are no spies.

The brothers deny the accusation of being spies on the grounds that they are all brothers (“one man's sons”) and are being honest. Ten brothers are unlikely to be spies.

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<sup>12</sup> And he said unto them, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. <sup>13</sup> And they said, Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not.

Joseph repeats the accusation and the brothers respond by elaborating on their claim of being one man's sons. They say that they are twelve brothers, the youngest of which is still at home with their father,

## Lesson 6 - Joseph sees his brothers again – Part 1 (Gen. 42:1–38)

and the other one “is not.” They are, of course, stretching the truth a bit here since they don’t know that Joseph is dead. The truth is that they have no idea what ever become of Joseph, but they are not ready to confess to what they did, nor was this the time or place to open that kettle of worms. Little did they realize that the one who they claimed “is not” was the one to whom they were speaking!

### Joseph sends them back for their youngest brother (vs. 14-20)

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14 And Joseph said unto them, That is it that I spake unto you, saying, Ye are spies: 15 Hereby ye shall be proved: By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither. 16 Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you: or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye are spies. 17 And he put them all together into ward three days.

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**“That is it that I spake unto you...”** - Joseph says “This is what I say (or this is my belief): You are spies.”

**“Hereby ye shall be proved...”** - Joseph is giving them a chance to prove that they are not spies.

**“except your youngest brother come hither”** - It may be that since Joseph knows they weren’t completely honest about their twelfth brother (“one is not”), he may not completely trust them about Benjamin being alive. Another possibility is that this is part of the testing that Joseph is putting his brothers through to see if they have changed.

**“he put them all together into ward three days”** - After declaring that all of the brothers would stay in prison except for one who would go and retrieve Benjamin in order to prove that they are not spies, Joseph puts them “in ward” (prison) for three days. Quite likely this is the same prison where Joseph spent several years before Pharaoh promoted him, which would be a bit of poetic justice.

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18 And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live; for I fear God: 19 If ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison: go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses: 20 But bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they did so.

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**“This do and live; for I fear God”** - Joseph revises his command under the pretense that he has reconsidered because of his fear of God.

**“If ye be true men”** - the implication sounds like if they didn’t agree to the terms (because they were spies) then they would have to return home with no food.

**“let one of your brethren be bound”** - Joseph has revised the condition to require only one brother to remain in prison as a hostage while the rest return for their youngest brother. The reason is so that they can bring corn home to feed their families. Apparently one brother would not have been able to carry home enough food to feed the families and so fearing God “caused” Joseph to have the compassion of insuring that their families didn’t starve while waiting for the brothers to prove their honesty. Of course, this is all part of the ruse since Joseph had no intention of starving his own relatives.

**“bring your youngest brother to me...”** - Joseph repeats the condition that the only way for the brothers to prove their story and free their imprisoned brother is to bring Benjamin and show him to Joseph.

**“ye shall not die”** - This phrase combined with verse 18 (“This do and live”) could mean either of two things: (1) If the brothers could not verify their story then they could be put to death as spies; (2) If the brothers could not verify their story they would starve to death along with their families.



## The guilty conscience of the brothers manifests (vs. 21-24)

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21 And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. 22 And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required.

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Here we discover more background details from the day when the brothers sold Joseph into slavery. Joseph must have been pleading with his brothers not to sell him to the Ishmaelites and doing so in a heart-rending manner. The brothers hardened their hearts against him and would not listen, but obviously the guilt of what they had done had weighed on them ever since. God had made sure they never forgot.

**“Reuben answered them...”** - Apparently Reuben must have been more open in his opposition to what the other brothers were planning than what was apparent in the description of the events in Genesis 37. **“behold, also his blood is required”** - Either they have believed all these years that Joseph was probably dead or else they come to the conclusion that Joseph must be dead to warrant the punishment that they believed God was inflicting on them.

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23 And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter. 24 And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes.

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**“they knew not that Joseph understood them”** - All this time Joseph had been using an interpreter to speak to them, pretending to be a native Egyptian. The brothers think they are having a private conversation (except perhaps for the interpreter) for they are talking to each other in Hebrew which they believe that Joseph could not understand. When Joseph hears their grief over what they did to him he is overcome with emotion and has to turn away from them before they can see his tears.

**“took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes”** - He has Simeon bound in front of them for dramatic effect.

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## Joseph pricks the brother’s conscience even more (vs. 25-28)

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25 Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man’s money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way: and thus did he unto them. 26 And they laded their asses with the corn, and departed thence. 27 And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the inn, he espied his money; for, behold, it was in his sack’s mouth. 28 And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored; and, lo, it is even in my sack: and their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done unto us?

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**“Then Joseph commanded...”** - Joseph seems to show more compassion to his brothers than what an ordinary business transaction would require, for in addition to filling their sacks with corn (what they paid for), he also gives them provision (food) for the trip home. Then secretly he “refunds” their money and puts it back in their sack.

**“their heart failed them”** - When they stop on the way home and one of the brothers starts to feed his ass he discovers his money and tells the others. This situation scares them to death for they had just left Egypt having their honesty questioned under the threat of death and now this new turn of events

## Lesson 6 - Joseph sees his brothers again – Part 1 (Gen. 42:1–38)

makes them look even more dishonest.

**“What is this that God hath done unto us?”** - Now their guilty conscience is kicking into overdrive. They already believed that God was punishing them for what they did to Joseph and now they take the mysterious return of their money as evidence that God is sabotaging them.

### The brothers return home and tell Jacob of their experiences in Egypt (vs. 29-38)

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<sup>29</sup> And they came unto Jacob their father unto the land of Canaan, and told him all that befell unto them; saying, <sup>30</sup> The man, who is the lord of the land, spake roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country. <sup>31</sup> And we said unto him, We are true men; we are no spies: <sup>32</sup> We be twelve brethren, sons of our father; one is not, and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan. <sup>33</sup> And the man, the lord of the country, said unto us, Hereby shall I know that ye are true men; leave one of your brethren here with me, and take food for the famine of your households, and be gone: <sup>34</sup> And bring your youngest brother unto me: then shall I know that ye are no spies, but that ye are true men: so will I deliver you your brother, and ye shall traffick in the land.

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The brothers return home with the food they had bought in Egypt and proceed to tell Jacob (almost) everything that happened to them. They still don't seem to be ready to confess what they did to Joseph.

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<sup>35</sup> And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks, that, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack: and when both they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid. <sup>36</sup> And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.

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**“when both they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid”** - Apparently only the one brother had discovered his money and no one else had opened his sack until they returned home for now they open all the sacks and find that every one of the brothers had his money restored. Not only does this scare the brothers, but Jacob, after hearing what had happened in Egypt, is afraid as well. **“Me have ye bereaved of my children”** - Jacob feels that he is losing sons left and right: he had already lost Joseph, now Simeon is “gone” and they want to take Benjamin away to Egypt where he will probably never return (in Jacob's thinking). It seems that these days Jacob is very pessimistic for he says “all these things are against me.”

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<sup>37</sup> And Reuben spake unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again. <sup>38</sup> And he said, My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

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**“Reuben spake unto his father...”** - Reuben offers his two sons to Jacob as insurance to guarantee that he will bring Benjamin back home safely. It's hard to believe that Jacob would kill his own grandsons if Benjamin did not return, so this is probably a desperate request on the part of Reuben in a stressful situation.

**“My son shall not go down with you”** - Jacob is apparently speaking emotionally and flatly refuses to allow Benjamin to go to Egypt on the grounds that his only full brother is dead and if Jacob were to lose him then he would never get over it. The way he grieved over the loss of Joseph gives us an idea

of the grief he would endure if he lost Benjamin.

## **Conclusion**

Commentators do not all agree as to the reason that Joseph didn't immediately reveal himself to his brothers but instead put them through the charade of accusing them of being spies. God has been in control of everything in Joseph's life so far, so it wouldn't be hard to conclude that God was guiding Joseph in this decision. The next question to ask would therefore be "What is God's intention here?" The answer can be found by observing the end result, which we will see in the next chapter, but an intermediate answer might be in considering what Joseph is thinking. It may be that he is testing his brothers to see if they are as cold and hard-hearted as they were when they sold him into slavery. When Joseph remembered his dream (vs. 9) he may have understood that God was at work in bringing his brothers before him and must have been working on their hearts to bring them to repentance and forgiveness for their sin against Joseph.

## Lesson 7 - Joseph sees his brothers again – Part 2 (Gen. 43:1 – 44:34)

Joseph has allowed his brothers to return home (except for Simeon) in order to take food to their families. God is apparently allowing the brothers time to think about all that has happened. They feel that God is punishing them for what they did to Joseph over two decades earlier and they no doubt dread the thought of facing the governor of Egypt again. Finally, they have no choice but to return to Egypt since the only alternative is starvation. We see God is still at work, this time in the lives of Joseph's brothers.

### Second trip to Egypt (Gen. 43:1-44:34)

#### Jacob sends the brothers to Egypt again (Gen 43:1-2)

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##### Genesis 43

1 And the famine was sore in the land. 2 And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt, their father said unto them, Go again, buy us a little food.

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We are again reminded of the severity of the famine, with no relief in sight. We are not told how long it took for the grain from the first trip to Egypt to be depleted, but it has finally run out and Jacob is again pressing the brothers to return to Egypt to buy more food. It seems that both Jacob and the brothers have been procrastinating rather than going back to Egypt immediately to retrieve Simeon, each for their own reasons. Jacob doesn't want to allow Benjamin out of his sight, and the brothers don't want to face Joseph again.

#### The brothers argue with Jacob until he allows Benjamin to go (vs. 3-14)

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3 And Judah spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you. 4 If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food: 5 But if thou wilt not send him, we will not go down: for the man said unto us, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you.

---

Judah reminds Jacob of what "the man" told them the last time they were in Egypt. He says it will be pointless to go unless Benjamin goes with them for "the man" will not deal with them otherwise. He doesn't mention it, but he probably doesn't want to be imprisoned or executed for being a spy. Judah and his brothers refuse to go to Egypt without Benjamin.

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6 And Israel said, Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother? 7 And they said, The man asked us straitly of our state, and of our kindred, saying, Is your father yet alive? have ye another brother? and we told him according to the tenor of these words: could we certainly know that he would say, Bring your brother down?

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Jacob is argumentative and blames the brothers for "the man" insisting on seeing Benjamin. Of course, the brothers protest by saying there was no way to predict what Joseph would ask them or where the questioning would lead. It seems that the brothers are describing things in a manner to favor their

position rather than the way the events actually unfolded, as the narrative in chapter 42 describes the conversation a bit differently.

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8 And Judah said unto Israel his father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go; that we may live, and not die, both we, and thou, and also our little ones. 9 I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever: 10 For except we had lingered, surely now we had returned this second time.

---

**“And Judah said...Send the lad with me...that we may live”** - Judah seems to be taking the lead here, because he tells Jacob to send Benjamin so they can leave and return so that they all won't starve. He seems to be stressing the urgency of the situation and that sending Benjamin is the only way to survive.

**“I will be surety [security; guarantee; pledge] for him...”** - Judah declares that he will take responsibility for Benjamin's safety and will take the blame if anything happens to him.

**“except we had lingered...”** - Judah makes the point that if they hadn't procrastinated they would have already been back with more food, Simeon would have been set free, and Benjamin's safety would have been a non-issue.

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11 And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds: 12 And take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight: 13 Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man: 14 And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.

---

**“If it must be so...”** - Jacob finally gives in and allows them to take Benjamin, but he doesn't want to take any chances. He has them take gifts to give to “the man” as well as the money that they had found in their sacks (in case it was a mistake). The phrase “double money” could refer either to the fact that they were bringing the money for the first grain purchase as well as for the second one, or else in addition to the money for the first purchase they were willing to pay double for this second purchase. Jacob wants them to do everything they can to find favor in the sight of “the man.”

**“If be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved”** - Jacob is facing the reality that he has no choice but to leave the situation in the hands of God. If he doesn't send Benjamin, then he, his sons, and their families will die of starvation. But if God shows mercy then he will regain Simeon as well as Benjamin.

## **The brothers return to Egypt (vs. 15)**

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15 And the men took that present, and they took double money in their hand, and Benjamin; and rose up, and went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph.

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The brothers obey their father's instructions and then return to Egypt to stand before Joseph.

## **They are uneasy because of the unexpected hospitality (vs. 16-25)**

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16 And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the ruler of his house, Bring these

men home, and slay, and make ready; for these men shall dine with me at noon. 17 And the man did as Joseph bade; and the man brought the men into Joseph's house.

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Joseph, essentially the “steward” of Egypt, also has a steward over his own house. When he sees that Benjamin his brother has come with the other brothers, he decides to treat them all as honored guests in his own house, commanding his steward to prepare lunch time meal for him and the brothers. He has had plenty of time to think and pray about what to do when his brothers returned, probably deciding on two courses of action depending on whether or not they had brought Benjamin.

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18 And the men were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time are we brought in; that he may seek occasion against us, and fall upon us, and take us for bondmen, and our asses.

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**“the men were afraid”** - They recognize that this is an unusual move for a ruler of Egypt to make toward foreigners who had simply come to buy grain, especially considering that they had previously been accused of being spies. They apparently suspect that they are being set up for more accusations. They probably would be even more afraid if they had seen the movie “The Godfather” and had heard the line “...keep your friends close and your enemies closer.”

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19 And they came near to the steward of Joseph's house, and they communed with him at the door of the house, 20 And said, O sir, we came indeed down at the first time to buy food: 21 And it came to pass, when we came to the inn, that we opened our sacks, and, behold, every man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight: and we have brought it again in our hand. 22 And other money have we brought down in our hands to buy food: we cannot tell who put our money in our sacks. 23 And he said, Peace be to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your money. And he brought Simeon out unto them.

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**“they came near to the steward of Joseph's house”** - As they arrive at Joseph's house, they decide they had better defuse the potential situation over the money from their previous trip and confess to Joseph's steward about finding their money in their sacks. They show him that they have brought the money back as well as the money for more grain. They want to prove their innocence in the matter.

**“he said ‘Peace be to you, fear not’”** - Imagine their surprise to hear that the steward was the one who handled their money and had it put into their sacks! The steward informs them that they have nothing to worry about and that their God had given them “treasure.” One has to wonder if Joseph has been teaching his steward about the Lord or at least had influence on the man. It's also possible that Joseph had entrusted this man with the truth of who the brothers were and was participating in Joseph's plans.

**“be brought Simeon out unto them”** - Not only does this man attempt to calm their fears, but he returns Simeon to them.

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24 And the man brought the men into Joseph's house, and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their asses provender. 25 And they made ready the present against Joseph came at noon: for they heard that they should eat bread there.

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The steward continues to show hospitality to the brothers because he brings them into Joseph's house, allows them to wash their feet and even feeds their asses. Obviously Joseph had instructed him to show the brothers every courtesy.

**“they made ready the present...”** - They prepare the gifts that they had brought in anticipation of Joseph's arrival at noon because they had heard that he was coming home to eat lunch.

## The brothers eat with Joseph (vs. 26-34)

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26 And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves to him to the earth. 27 And he asked them of their welfare, and said, Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive? 28 And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive. And they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance.

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When Joseph arrives, the brothers give him the gift of honey, spices and nuts and bow before him, fulfilling Joseph's dream yet again. He is courteous and asks them of their welfare and that of their father. Notice how he acts as if he doesn't know who their father is, as he refers to their father as "the old man of whom ye spake." Obviously Joseph is keenly interested in the welfare of his father for he no doubt wants to see him again. They answer Joseph and bow again (you can't defy God!).

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29 And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son. 30 And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there.

---

Joseph had either recognized Benjamin or else assumed this was Benjamin when he saw there were eleven men back in verse 16. Here he is either confirming that this was Benjamin or just pretending to not know him.

**“Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother”** - The bowels were considered to be the seat of the emotions (like we consider the heart now). Joseph has to excuse himself quickly because he felt himself being overcome with emotion at the sight of his only full brother just a few steps away. He knew if he didn't seclude himself he would have lost control in front of the brothers and he wasn't ready to reveal himself yet. So he goes to his "chamber" (bedroom) and weeps there in an attempt to get it out of his system.

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31 And he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself, and said, Set on bread.

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Joseph regains control of himself, cleans himself up and comes back out, keeping his emotions in check. He commands for lunch to be served.

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32 And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians.

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Joseph ate by himself, probably due to his position and status as ruler over Egypt; the other Egyptians were not worthy to eat with him. The rest of the Egyptians ate separately from the brothers since eating with a Hebrew was considered an abomination. The reason isn't clear but quite likely it was against their religion to eat with foreigners. Another possibility might be found in Gen. 46:34, where Joseph tells Jacob that shepherds are an abomination to Egyptians.

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33 And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marvelled one at another.

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The brothers get another surprise: they were seated before Joseph according to their birth order. No doubt they wondered how the Egyptians knew what order they were born!

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34 And he took and sent messes unto them from before him: but Benjamin's mess was five

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times so much as any of theirs. And they drank, and were merry with him.

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**“he took and sent messes unto them from before him”** – One way to show favor to an honored guest in Egyptian culture was to take food from one’s own table and give or send it to the guest. While sending portions to the brothers showed Joseph’s favor, sending a portion five times as large to Benjamin indicated special honor. Was Joseph merely showing favoritism to his full brother or was he wanting to see how the other brothers reacted to Benjamin being shown favoritism? They had reacted negatively to Joseph being shown favoritism by their father so many years ago so perhaps Joseph wanted to see if they had changed.

**“they drank and were merry with him”** - The brothers were enjoying themselves and apparently had forgotten their earlier fears.

### **Joseph sends the brothers home (with a test) (Gen. 44:1-3)**

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#### **Genesis 44**

1 And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money in his sack's mouth. 2 And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn money. And he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken. 3 As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they and their asses.

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Joseph had come home for lunch and eaten with the brothers and, although the text doesn’t say, he may have spent the rest of the day with them. It also doesn’t say where they spent the night but it sounds like Joseph may have provided them a place to sleep in his house.

**“put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack’s mouth of the youngest”** - Under the guidance of the Lord Joseph is continuing to test the brothers – a test designed expose the true nature of the brothers. He has his silver cup placed in Benjamin’s sack in order to provoke a response from the brothers. The supposed value of the cup is more than its weight in silver because this cup was supposed to be Joseph’s “divination” cup whereby he could reveal hidden truths. It was common in Egypt for such cups to be owned by those who were purported to have mystical powers. Since Joseph’s Egyptian name meant “revealer of secrets” it would be easy for the brothers to believe that he used one. Of course, Joseph didn’t rely on such mystical objects since he knew the true revealer of secrets: The Lord God.

### **The brothers are called back to Joseph with an accusation (vs. 4-13)**

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4 And when they were gone out of the city, and not yet far off, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good? 5 Is not this it in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth? ye have done evil in so doing. 6 And he overtook them, and he spake unto them these same words.

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Joseph gives the brothers time to make it out of the city and then sends his steward to overtake them and accuse them of stealing the silver cup.

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7 And they said unto him, Wherefore saith my lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing: 8 Behold, the money, which we found in our sacks' mouths, we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan: how then should we steal out

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of thy lord's house silver or gold? 9 With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen.

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The brothers deny the accusation, defending themselves on the basis that they had brought back the money from their first trip and therefore that should be an indication of their honesty and prove that they had no reason to steal anything from Joseph's house. They are so confident in their innocence that they are willing for the thief to die and the rest of them to become slaves if the cup is found among their belongings.

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10 And he said, Now also let it be according unto your words: he with whom it is found shall be my servant; and ye shall be blameless. 11 Then they speedily took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack. 12 And he searched, and began at the eldest, and left at the youngest: and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. 13 Then they rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city.

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The steward (speaking for Joseph) agrees with the slavery idea, but limits it to just the guilty party. All the brothers take down their sacks and submit to being searched. Although the steward knows exactly which sack the cup is in, he makes a show by starting at the oldest brother's sack and working his way down to the youngest and "finds" the cup in Benjamin's sack. Again, we have to wonder how much this steward knows about what is going on or if he's merely following Joseph's explicit instructions. When the cup is found the brothers are grieved and tear their clothes, then pack their asses back up and return with the steward to Joseph's house. Imagine the distress they must have been in!

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### **Joseph confronts the brothers (vs. 14-15)**

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14 And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house; for he was yet there: and they fell before him on the ground. 15 And Joseph said unto them, What deed is this that ye have done? wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?

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**"Judah and his brethren..."** - The writer of Genesis seems to be showing Judah taking the lead of the brethren.

**"came to Joseph's house; for he was yet there"** - Of course Joseph was still there! He's the one who set up this confrontation.

**"and they fell before him on the ground"** - The brothers come before Joseph as broken men, for they know they have no defense and so they surrender themselves to Joseph's mercy. This is the same way that we have to come to God, for we also have no defense for our sin.

**"What deed is this that ye have done?..."** - Joseph challenges them to answer for themselves.

**"wot ye not that...I can certainly divine?"** - Joseph could easily have said "Didn't you know that my name means 'a revealer of secrets?'" He's saying that it was foolish for them to think they could steal from him and get away with it, for his "powers of divination" would make him aware of what they had done. Of course, Joseph didn't actually practice such dark arts; he is merely creating a crisis point for the brothers.

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### **Judah intercedes (vs. 16-34)**

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16 And Judah said, What shall we say unto my lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found.

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*Lesson 7 - Joseph sees his brothers again – Part 2 (Gen. 43:1 – 44:34)*

The brothers have now come to a crisis point. Judah, speaking for the brothers, admits that they have no excuse. It's possible that the "iniquity of thy servants" that Judah refers to may have a double meaning. He's probably primarily referring to the supposed guilt of Benjamin, but he may also be thinking in the back of his mind to the iniquity of their sin against Joseph 20+ years prior. He surrenders both himself and the rest of the brothers as slaves to Joseph.

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17 And he said, God forbid that I should do so: but the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father.

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Joseph rejects the idea of enslaving the whole group but focuses the punishment only on the "guilty" party, allowing the rest of the brothers to go free. This is where Joseph will see the character of these men. Are they the same men who were willing to sell their brother into slavery in order to satisfy their own selfish desires or will they be willing to give up their freedom in order to stand with their brother? Joseph has put them into the position where they could choose to save themselves and leave Benjamin as a slave in Egypt while they return home, or stay and attempt to convince Joseph to free Benjamin at their own peril.

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18 Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou art even as Pharaoh. 19 My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother? 20 And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him. 21 And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him. 22 And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father: for if he should leave his father, his father would die. 23 And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more. 24 And it came to pass when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. 25 And our father said, Go again, and buy us a little food. 26 And we said, We cannot go down: if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down: for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother be with us. 27 And thy servant my father said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two sons: 28 And the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces; and I saw him not since: 29 And if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

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Judah summarizes the events that have transpired up until that point, stressing the fear that Jacob their father had that something might happen to Benjamin. We might wonder if there are tears in Judah's eyes as he is speaking.

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30 Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life; 31 It shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die: and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave. 32 For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever.

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Judah stresses the terrible impact on Jacob if they return without Benjamin and how he will bear the responsibility forever.

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33 Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord;

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and let the lad go up with his brethren. 34 For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.

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**“let thy servant abide instead of the lad”** - Judah is begging to take Benjamin’s place so that the boy can return home to their father.

**“how shall I go up to my father...lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father”** - Judah would rather stay as Joseph’s slave instead of going home without Benjamin and seeing what that would do to his father. No doubt he remembered the anguish that Jacob went through when he believed that Joseph was dead and knowing that he was responsible. Judah obviously can’t bear the thought of putting his father through that again.

## **Conclusion**

Even though God was working with Joseph since his arrival in Egypt, God had also been simultaneously working on the hearts of the brothers. In Gen. 42:21-22 we see evidence of their guilty consciences because as soon as the brothers start suffering adversity they immediately believe it to be punishment for their sin against Joseph. God has used Joseph to put the brothers through a series of challenges designed to bring them to a place of brokenness, repentance and surrender. They are now finally willing to sacrifice themselves for the well-being of Benjamin and their father. We should never underestimate God’s ability to bring even the hardest of hearts to repentance.

## Lesson 8 - Joseph reveals his true identity (Gen. 45:1-28)

Using Joseph and the famine as tools, the Lord has brought the brothers of Joseph through a period of testing designed not only to reveal their true character but also to bring them to a place of repentance for what they did to Joseph over two decades before and to gain forgiveness. We saw back in Gen. 42:21-22 that when they were accused of being spies their minds immediately went back to the day they sold Joseph into slavery. They felt they were being punished by God and had obviously been dealing with the guilt ever since that day. Through a series of events, Joseph has brought the situation to a head in the last chapter when he gives the brothers a choice of leaving Benjamin behind as a slave forever or staying behind and standing with Benjamin. In an emotional plea Judah begs to take Benjamin's place because he can't bear to see what it would do to Jacob their father if the brothers returned home without Benjamin. Finally, Joseph can take no more for he can see that his brothers have truly repented and are changed men.

### Joseph reveals his true identity (vs. 1-4)

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1 Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. 2 And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. 3 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. 4 And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.

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**“Joseph could not refrain...”** - Joseph is so overcome with emotion that he can't hold back any longer.

**“Cause every man to go out from me...”** - Joseph sends all the Egyptians out of the room so he can be alone with his brothers.

**“he wept aloud...”** - “Aloud” seems to be an understatement, for Joseph's weeping is not just audible, but he weeps loudly. In fact, his weeping is so loud that the Egyptians who were in other parts of the house can hear him and even those in the house of Pharaoh can hear (Pharaoh's house must have been adjacent to Joseph's). The volume of this weeping indicates how great of a release of emotion this is and how much Joseph had been holding back.

**“I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?”** - Joseph reveals his true identity and asks about his father. He must be speaking Hebrew now instead of using an interpreter for all the Egyptians (presumably including his interpreter) had been sent out. He asks about his father despite having heard from the brothers more than once that Jacob was in good health. Perhaps he wasn't sure if the brothers had been totally honest or more likely the question was simply an expression of Joseph's great love for his father.

**“his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled [to tremble; to be alarmed; to be agitated] at his presence”** - The brothers are afraid for they don't know what to make of the situation. This man, who they thought did not know Hebrew, has been weeping loudly and profusely in an intense outburst of emotion and is now speaking directly to them in their native tongue. They don't know whether or not to believe that this man really is Joseph, and if he is, is he going to seek revenge on them?

**“Come near to me, I pray you”** - It may be that the brothers have stepped back in fear when Joseph’s weeping started and/or when he reveals himself as Joseph. He repeats that he is Joseph and supplies a fact that presumably only Joseph would know: that they sold him into slavery.

## **Joseph acknowledges God’s sovereignty in the events of his life (vs. 5-8)**

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5 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. 6 For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. 7 And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. 8 So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

---

Joseph has come to understand God’s purpose in bringing him to Egypt and allowing him to endure thirteen years of adversity. He had no doubt asked God many times during those thirteen years to help him return home to his family but now he understood why his prayers had went unanswered.

**“be not grieved...God did send me before you...”** - In a spirit of forgiveness Joseph tells the brothers not to grieve over what they did so long ago for it was all part of God’s sovereign plan to bring him to Egypt so that he could preserve life.

**“For these two years hath the famine been in the land”** - They are still not quite a third of the way through the seven years of famine at this point. Joseph has now been in Egypt 22 years.

**“God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity [remnant; remainder]...”** - God is using Joseph to ensure that the sons of Jacob (Israel) will have a remnant that will survive. God’s purpose throughout all this has been to preserve the people that will eventually become the nation of Israel.

**“...and to save your lives by a great deliverance [escape]”** - God is making sure that the family of Jacob, who will become the nation of Israel, will escape the consequences of the famine.

**“it was not you that sent me hither, but God”** - Joseph has learned that God can take even the evil intentions of men and use them to accomplish his purpose. Joseph makes the statement that he is in Egypt because of God, not because of the selfish and sinful acts of his brothers. He then provides the evidence that it was God and not random chance because only God could have put him where he is now as a father to Pharaoh, lord [master; governor] of his house and a ruler throughout Egypt.

## **Joseph provides for his family during the famine (vs. 9-13)**

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9 Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not: 10 And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast: 11 And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty. 12 And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. 13 And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.

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**“Haste ye, and go up to my father...”** - Joseph wants his brothers take the message from him to his

## Lesson 8 - Joseph reveals his true identity (Gen. 45:1-28)

father that he is alive and ruler over Egypt and that his father should come to Egypt without delay. This invitation is not for a visit but Joseph wants his father to dwell in the place he is preparing.

**“I will nourish thee”** - Jacob should come and dwell in Goshen where Joseph will provide for their needs. Joseph is recognizing that this is the reason God brought him to Egypt and he wants to make sure that he is fulfilling his purpose.

**“behold your eyes see...that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you”** - The brothers (including Benjamin) are eyewitnesses of what Joseph is telling them; they will not be telling Jacob something that was sent to them through a messenger but they are hearing it firsthand from Joseph’s own mouth.

**“tell my father of all my glory in Egypt”** - Joseph repeats the command to tell Jacob of all they have seen and to bring him down to Egypt without delay. There is a sense of urgency due to the famine.

### The emotional reunion (vs. 14-15)

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14 And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. 15 Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.

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**“he fell upon his brother Benjamin’s neck...”** - It has been 22 years since Joseph has seen his full brother and Joseph’s love is evident because Benjamin is the first brother he embraces.

**“he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them”** - Joseph probably kissed Benjamin and then moves to the other brothers as he kisses, embraces and weeps upon each of them. There is no anger or resentment in Joseph’s heart for he has learned that God was in control the whole time.

**“after that his brethren talked with him”** - We can only guess what was said between Joseph and his brothers. Perhaps they apologized and expressed regret for what they had done. They may have asked Joseph about his journey from being a slave to being ruler over Egypt. They had a lot of catching up to do.

### Pharaoh extends his hospitality (vs. 16-24)

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16 And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come: and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants.

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We can see how well liked Joseph was for Pharaoh and his servants were glad to hear that Joseph’s brothers had come to Egypt.

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17 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan;

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Pharaoh extends his hospitality to the brothers through Joseph by having him to pass along Pharaoh's message of generosity.

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18 And take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. 19 Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. 20 Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours.

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**“I will give you the good of the land...ye shall eat the fat of the land”** - Although Pharaoh was well

pleased with Joseph, the providence of God was the real reason for his generosity. God causes Pharaoh to want the family of Joseph to have the best of everything when they arrive in Egypt.

**“take you wagons out of the land of Egypt”** - Pharaoh donates wagons to help Jacob and his sons to relocate to Egypt.

**“regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours”** - Pharaoh’s generosity is further evidenced by the declaration that they shouldn’t bother bringing their own possessions to Egypt because the best that Egypt had to offer would be available to them. He’s saying “make yourselves at home!”

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21 And the children of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way. 22 To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment. 23 And to his father he sent after this manner; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way. 24 So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way.

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**“Joseph gave them wagons...”** - Joseph did as Pharaoh commanded and provided his brothers with wagons as well as supplying them with provisions for their trip.

**“he gave each man changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave...”** - He gives each brother a change of clothes, but he again shows favoritism to his full brother Benjamin and gives him five changes of clothing and 300 pieces of silver. The other brothers probably understand this.

**“to his father he sent...”** - The best gifts he sends to his father: 10 male donkey carrying “the good things of Egypt” (possibly silver, gold, special cloths, changes of clothing, etc.) and the female donkeys carrying a variety of food.

**“See that ye fall not out [to quiver (with violent emotion such as anger or fear)] by the way”** - Joseph warns them not to become angry or quarrel with each other on the way. Two possibilities: (1) He knows how they are and that they will argue over anything; (2) Perhaps knowing that they will finally have to confess what they did to Joseph to Jacob, they may start arguing over whose fault it is. Joseph has forgiven them and he doesn’t want them to argue and blame each other.

## **The brothers return home and break the news to Jacob (vs. 25-28)**

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25 And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, 26 And told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not.

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**“he believed them not”** - The brothers come home and tell their father that not only is Joseph alive, but he is governor over all the land of Egypt. Jacob’s heart “fainted” [*to be sluggish*] when they told him, which could mean that he literally passed out, but more likely he got “weak in the knees” and had to sit down when he heard the news. He had been so convinced of Joseph’s death for 22 years and possibly still grieved the loss that he didn’t dare believe that Joseph could still be alive. His heart couldn’t take it if he got his hopes up only to be crushed again.

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27 And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw

the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: 28  
And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.

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**“and when he saw...the spirit of Jacob their father revived”** - The brothers may have been gathered around Jacob as he sat there weak and not wanting to get his hopes up, and they continued trying to convince him that their story was true. After they told him all that Joseph had said and showed him the wagons that Joseph had sent, he finally started regaining his strength.

**“It is enough...”** - Jacob may have held up his hand and said “Enough. You’ve convinced me.” He accepts that Joseph is still alive and expresses his desire to see his long lost son again before he dies.

## Conclusion

Let’s see if we can create at least a partial list of what God has accomplished in Joseph’s life so far:

- He has placed Joseph in a position of authority so that he can preserve lives of not only his family, but millions of people in the region.
- He has taught Joseph that He is sovereign and is at work even when it looks like life is out of control.
- He has brought the brothers on a spiritual journey so that they can face their sin, repent and be forgiven.
- He has reconciled Joseph with his brothers and will soon reunite Joseph with his father, as we’ll see in the next lesson.

These are the more obvious accomplishments that God has done; many more are probably present and are either not evident from the information provided us in the text or only recognized through more thorough study.



## Lesson 9 - Joseph reunited with his father (Gen. 46:1 – 47:26)

### Jacob and his family set off for Egypt (Gen. 46:1)

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1 And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac.

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After being convinced that Joseph was indeed alive, Jacob (Israel) packs up everything that he had and started on his journey to Egypt to see Joseph. On his way out of Canaan, the land that God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and now him, Jacob stops at Beersheba to offer sacrifices to God in thanks for the blessing of being able to see his son Joseph again. Beersheba was a location of spiritual significance in the lives of both Abraham and Isaac. Beersheba means “well of an oath” and was where Abraham had made a peace covenant with Abimelech, king of the Philistines (Gen. 21:31), and so it was Abraham who gave the place its name.

### God confirms His plan (vs. 2-4)

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2 And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. 3 And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: 4 I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.

---

God speaks to Jacob in a dream and answers the question that Jacob likely had in his mind. God’s blessing on Jacob and his family was based on them being in the land that God had promised to them, so Jacob may have been wondering if God would still be with him if he went to Egypt to see Joseph. God tells him not to be concerned about going to Egypt and the implication is that this is part of God’s plan.

**“for I will there make of thee a great nation”** - God’s plan is to use Egypt as an incubator to transform the children of Israel from a small family clan into a great nation of people. An incubator’s purpose is protection and to provide favorable conditions for growth.

**“I will go down with thee...I will also surely bring thee up again”** - Egypt is a temporary dwelling place for the children of Israel. They will not be leaving God behind at the border of the promised land waiting until they return, but God promises to go with them and return them to the land at a some point in the future. God is not going to forget the promise of the land that He has made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

**“Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes”** - It was the tradition at the time for the closest and dearest family member to close the eyes of the deceased at the time of death. God is telling Jacob that he will die in Egypt, but that Joseph will be there to perform this special duty.

### List of those who come with Jacob to Egypt (vs. 5-27)

These verses list the family members that came with Jacob to Egypt. According to verse 27, once Jacob arrived he had 70 descendants with him in Egypt, including Joseph and his two sons.

## Jacob arrives in Egypt/Goshen (vs. 28)

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28 And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to direct his face unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen.

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Jacob sends Judah ahead to Joseph to get directions to Goshen and so they arrive.

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## Joseph travels to Goshen and is reunited with his father (vs. 29-34)

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29 And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. 30 And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive.

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Joseph, apparently being alerted by Judah, gets his chariot ready and rides to meet his father in Goshen. When he presents himself to his father, it is yet another emotional reunion, for they hug and weep for a long time. The Hebrew for “good while” literally means “*continuously*.” They probably didn’t want to let go of each other.

**“Now let me die...”** - In effect, Jacob is saying “I can die a happy man now that I have seen you again and know that you are alive!” This statement is understandable considering the grief Jacob expressed when he thought Joseph was dead.

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31 And Joseph said unto his brethren, and unto his father's house, I will go up, and shew Pharaoh, and say unto him, My brethren, and my father's house, which were in the land of Canaan, are come unto me; 32 And the men are shepherds, for their trade hath been to feed cattle; and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have.

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**“I will go up and shew Pharaoh...”** - Joseph tells his family that he is going to inform Pharaoh of their arrival.

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33 And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What is your occupation? 34 That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, and also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians.

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**“when Pharaoh shall call you...”** - Joseph knows that Pharaoh is going to want to meet his family, so he is giving his family instructions on how to handle the situation when they are called before Pharaoh.

**“What is your occupation?”** - When Pharaoh asks them about their occupation, Joseph instructs his family to specifically mention that they are shepherds. He seems to want Pharaoh to be aware that his family are multi-generational shepherds (therefore not likely to choose another occupation), so that Pharaoh will be agreeable to give them Goshen to dwell in. Joseph knows that his family dwelling in Egypt as shepherds would cause a problem since shepherds are an abomination to Egyptians. Also, he may be wisely wanting to keep the children of Israel separate from the idolatrous influences of the Egyptians. “Cattle” means livestock, and so could refer to sheep as well as cows.

**“every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians”** - This could be for social or religious reasons.

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## Joseph presents his brothers to Pharaoh (Gen. 47:1-6)

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1 Then Joseph came and told Pharaoh, and said, My father and my brethren, and their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have, are come out of the land of Canaan; and, behold, they are in the land of Goshen. 2 And he took some of his brethren, even five men, and presented them unto Pharaoh.

---

Joseph notifies Pharaoh that his family has arrived in Goshen and brings five of his brothers to meet him. It's unclear if he brought the five men at the same time as the notification or sometime after, but Joseph seems to be wanting them to make a good impression before Pharaoh because five was a favorite number in Egypt.

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3 And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, What is your occupation? And they said unto Pharaoh, Thy servants are shepherds, both we, and also our fathers. 4 They said moreover unto Pharaoh, For to sojourn in the land are we come; for thy servants have no pasture for their flocks; for the famine is sore in the land of Canaan: now therefore, we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen.

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Just as Joseph predicted, Pharaoh asks the brothers their occupation and they answer according to Joseph's instructions. They ask permission of Pharaoh to dwell in the land of Goshen so they can find pasture for their flocks.

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5 And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee: 6 The land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle.

---

Pharaoh's favor (no doubt initiated by God) continues toward Joseph's family. He wants Joseph to have his father and brothers to dwell in the best of the land, which apparently turns out to be Goshen. **“if thou knowest any men of activity [strength; ability] among them...”** - If Joseph knows of any men with good leadership and/or management skills, Pharaoh wants to offer them a job in managing his cattle [livestock]. It may be that Pharaoh is thinking there might be more men like Joseph among his kin folk.

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## Joseph presents his father to Pharaoh (vs. 7-10)

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7 And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. 8 And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou? 9 And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage. 10 And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh.

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**“Jacob blessed Pharaoh”** - Joseph now has Pharaoh meet Jacob, his father and Jacob blesses Pharaoh. The word “bless” comes from a root meaning “to kneel” and basically means to show respect and appreciation. Apparently Jacob is showing the reverence to Pharaoh due his position and gratitude for the kindness he has shown Jacob's family.

**“The days of the years of my pilgrimage...”** - Jacob describes his life as a “pilgrimage” (a temporary dwelling). Apparently at his age he is especially conscious of the fact that his time on earth is

## Lesson 9 - Joseph reunited with his father (Gen. 46:1 – 47:26)

temporary, as is the case for all mankind.

**“few and evil...”** - At this time Jacob is 130 years old, and he calls these years as being both “few” and “evil” (bad). He’s comparing the length of his life so far to the length of his fathers, probably Abraham and Isaac who lived to be 175 and 180 respectively. He also feels his days have been “evil” or bad. He’s saying he’s had a rough life, which we might be inclined to agree as we recall his experiences with Esau, Laban and his own sons.

**“And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out...”** - Out of respect for Pharaoh, Jacob blesses him again before he leaves Pharaoh’s presence.

### Joseph provides for his family (vs. 11-12)

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11 And Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. 12 And Joseph nourished his father, and his brethren, and all his father's household, with bread, according to their families.

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**“And Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession...in the land of Rameses...”** - Joseph gives his family possession of the best of the land, specifically in the land of Rameses. Commentators differ on where Rameses was, but since we know that it is described as “the best of the land” and that it was according to the commandment of Pharaoh it likely was part of Goshen or an alternate name for Goshen (vs. 6).

**“Joseph nourished his father and his brethren...”** - Joseph makes sure that no one in his family goes hungry.

### Joseph makes Pharaoh wealthy (vs. 13-26)

These verses describe how Joseph uses the skills and wisdom that God gave him to make Pharaoh a wealthy man.

### The Egyptians spend all their money on food (vs.13-14)

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13 And there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very sore, so that the land of Egypt and all the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine.

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The focus of the narrative turns back to the famine. which is continuing to get worse and things are getting desperate for the normal citizens of Egypt.

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14 And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house.

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The Egyptian citizens were buying “corn” (grain) from Pharaoh and so all of the cash in the land was being transferred from the people to Pharaoh's treasury.

### The Egyptians trade all their livestock for food (vs. 15-17)

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15 And when money failed in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread: for why should we die in thy presence? for the

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money faileth. 16 And Joseph said, Give your cattle; and I will give you for your cattle, if money fail. 17 And they brought their cattle unto Joseph: and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for horses, and for the flocks, and for the cattle of the herds, and for the asses: and he fed them with bread for all their cattle for that year.

---

**“Give us bread...for the money faileth.”** - Eventually the Egyptian citizens ran out of money and there was still a lot of famine left to go, so they appeal to Joseph for a solution to their need for food and lack of money.

**“I will give you for your cattle”** - Joseph proposes to trade grain for their cattle (livestock).

**“they brought their cattle unto Joseph...”** - The people agree and bring their livestock to Joseph and in exchange he gives them enough grain to feed them for a year.

### **The Egyptians sell all their land for food (vs. 18-26)**

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18 When that year was ended, they came unto him the second year, and said unto him, We will not hide it from my lord, how that our money is spent; my lord also hath our herds of cattle; there is not ought left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies, and our lands:

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**“they came unto him the second year...”** - Obviously not the second year of the famine, but the second year after Joseph had initiated the barter system for grain. The people come to Joseph and confess that they have nothing left to trade for food except themselves (“our bodies”) and their land.

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19 Wherefore shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land? buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh: and give us seed, that we may live, and not die, that the land be not desolate. 20 And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them: so the land became Pharaoh's.

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**“buy us and our land for bread...”** - the people offer to sell their land and themselves to work it (land was useless without someone to work it) in exchange for bread. They also ask for seed grain in order to plant for the first crop after the end of the famine. Either this was the last year of famine or else they plan to store the grain until that time.

**“that we may live, and not die, that the land may not be desolate [lie waste]”** - The people argue that if they die then the land will be desolate for there will be no one to work it. It will grow up and not be usable to grow grain.

**“Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh...so the land became Pharaoh's”** - Pharaoh's treasury was full of all the wealth of Egypt, he owned all the livestock, and now he owns all the land (except for the land of the priests).

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21 And as for the people, he removed them to cities from one end of the borders of Egypt even to the other end thereof.

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Joseph has the people moved to the cities, presumably to have them near the grain stores so it will be easier to feed them.

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22 Only the land of the priests bought he not; for the priests had a portion assigned them of Pharaoh, and did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave them: wherefore they sold not their lands.

---

The priests of Egypt were exceptions to the previous verses, for they had no need to sell their land to

## Lesson 9 - Joseph reunited with his father (Gen. 46:1 – 47:26)

Joseph. Pharaoh provided for them and so they were not in any danger of starving. As representatives of the state religion, these priests were supported by the government.

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23 Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh: lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the land. 24 And it shall come to pass in the increase, that ye shall give the fifth part unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones.

---

Joseph creates a share-cropper system, where he provides them with seed to get them started and afterward they give Pharaoh 20% of the resulting crop. The remainder of the crop the people will use for feeding themselves and seed for the next year.

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25 And they said, Thou hast saved our lives: let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants. 26 And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt unto this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth part; except the land of the priests only, which became not Pharaoh's.

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**“Thou hast saved our lives”** - The Egyptian people are grateful for Joseph’s solution and apparently do not feel cheated by not owning their own land.

**“Joseph made it a law...”** - Joseph formalizes the arrangement into a permanent law. The only exceptions are the priests, who kept their own land and were not required to give 20% of their crops to Pharaoh.

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## Conclusion

In this lesson we see God’s plan to preserve the children of Israel during the famine is being fulfilled as Jacob and his sons relocate (temporarily) to Egypt. God confirms that this is His plan by reassuring Jacob in Gen. 46:2-4. He also promises to bring them back out of Egypt, which is another part of God’s plan for Israel that won’t be fulfilled for another 430 years (Ex. 12:40). We continue to see God’s sovereign care for His people in the favor that Pharaoh shows them. We should never sell God short in what He can do.

## Lesson 10 - Jacob's final days (Gen. 47:27 – 49:33)

### Jacob plans for his burial (Gen. 47:27-31)

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27 And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly. 28 And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years: so the whole age of Jacob was an hundred forty and seven years.

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Over the next 17 years after Jacob's arrival, the children of Israel prospered and grew in number "exceedingly." God's plan and promise to use Egypt as an incubator to grow Israel into a great nation is off to a good start. Jacob is now 147 years old and approaching the end of his life.

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29 And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt: 30 But I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their buryingplace. And he said, I will do as thou hast said. 31 And he said, Swear unto me. And he sware unto him. And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head.

---

**"And the time drew near that Israel must die"** - Jacob knew his time was short and so he wanted to make his last request to Joseph.

**"If now I have found grace in thy sight"** - Even though Jacob is the elder, he makes a humble request of Joseph rather than a demand.

**"put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh"** - This represents a solemn and serious promise or oath that Jacob is asking Joseph to make. The meaning of putting one's hand under another's thigh has been debated, but more than one commentator gave this explanation (one even quoting from a Rabbi): The Hebrew word translated "thigh" can mean "loins" and so the idea is of putting one's hand under the part of the other person's body that was circumcised. An oath sworn in this manner was thought to be as binding as God's promise made through the covenant of circumcision.

**"bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt"** - It is not for mere sentimental reasons that Jacob wants to be buried with his fathers, but he is remembering the promises of God to Abraham, Isaac, and himself concerning the land of Canaan. He may be thinking of the resurrection and doesn't want to be caught dead outside the promised land. Joseph will make a similar request of his family in Gen. 50:24-25.

**"and he said, I will do as thou has said. And he said, Swear unto me"** - Joseph agrees to bury his father in Canaan as he asks, but Jacob insists that Joseph swear the oath. Jacob is serious about this matter and wants to make sure that it will be done.

**"Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head"** - Israel bows himself in worship, apparently thanking God for His goodness.

### Joseph visits his sick father (Gen. 48:1-2)

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1 And it came to pass after these things, that one told Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. 2 And one told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed.

---

## Lesson 10 - Jacob's final days (Gen. 47:27 – 49:33)

**“after these things”** - after an indeterminate amount of time; this could be days, or weeks, perhaps even a few months.

**“one told Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick”** - The word comes to Joseph that his father is sick, and thinking that this may be his final chance to see his father and have him bless his sons, he takes his two sons with him to see Israel.

**“Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee”** - When Jacob hears that Joseph is coming, he prepares himself for Joseph's arrival by summoning his strength to sit on the bed out of respect for Joseph. He wants to make himself presentable.

### Jacob speaks of God's promises (vs. 3-7)

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3 And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, 4 And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession.

---

Jacob recalls the promise that God had made to him concerning the land and his descendants.

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5 And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.

---

Jacob claims Joseph's two sons as his own, elevating them to have equal inheritance with the other sons of Jacob. 1 Chron. 5:1-2 make an interesting statement concerning this:

*“1 Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel, (for he was the firstborn; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. 2 For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joseph's:)”* These verses support the idea that Joseph was Jacob's choice of being the head of the family. That position traditionally belonged to Reuben as the first born but he forfeited that right by laying with Bilhah, his father's concubine. Joseph gets a “double portion” by virtue of his two sons having equal inheritance with Joseph's other brothers.

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6 And thy issue, which thou begetteth after them, shall be thine, and shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance. 7 And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath; the same is Bethlehem.

---

Jacob says that any sons that Joseph may have after Ephraim and Manasseh will be treated as Joseph's sons, and will not have their own inheritance like Ephraim and Manasseh.

**“Rachel died by me”** - Jacob speaks of the place where Joseph's mother died.

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### Jacob blesses Joseph and his two sons (vs. 8-22)

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8 And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who are these? 9 And Joseph said unto his father, They are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them.

---

Jacob asks about the two people with Joseph because he sees them standing there but apparently



doesn't recognize them because of his weak eyes. Joseph introduces them as the two sons that God had given him while he has been in Egypt. Since this is 17 years after Jacob came to Egypt and these sons were born to Joseph during the 7 years of plenty, Ephraim and Manasseh were now adults, at least 24 years old. Now knowing who they are, Jacob wants to bless them which is probably why Joseph has brought them. It's probably significant that Ephraim and Manasseh are receiving their blessings before the other sons of Jacob, perhaps further evidence that the birthright is being given to Joseph and his two sons.

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10 Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see. And he brought them near unto him; and he kissed them, and embraced them. 11 And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed.

---

Jacob's eyesight was bad and he was weak from being sick, so Joseph brings his sons near to his father. Jacob then does as grandfathers do with their grandchildren and embraces them and kisses them. Then he expresses how God has been good to him to not only see Joseph's face again, but to also see Joseph's children.

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12 And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth.

---

Joseph pulls the boys back from between the knees of his father because apparently Jacob was still hugging them. Joseph knows it's time for the blessing so he shows his father reverence and bows before him in respect. One commentator points out that the word "bowed" in Hebrew is plural, suggesting that Ephraim and Manasseh are also bowing.

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13 And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near unto him.

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In the Bible the right hand has significance as the hand of strength or skill. Here, Joseph guides Manasseh toward Israel's right hand so that Manasseh, the first born, would get the superior blessing.

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14 And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn.

---

Apparently the boys are kneeling before Israel so that he can reach their heads with his hands from a seated position on the bed (assuming the height of his bed was similar to ours).

**"Israel stretched out his right hand...guiding his hands wittingly [wisely; intelligently]"** - Instead of placing each hand on the head of the boy in front it, Israel crosses his hands "wittingly" (or intentionally) so that his right hand was on Ephraim's head and the left on Manasseh's head. Israel knew exactly what he was doing despite Joseph thinking otherwise (verse 18).

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15 And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, 16 The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

---

**"And he blessed Joseph"** - Israel is blessing Joseph through his two sons. The eldest son traditionally got a double-portion of the inheritance, and so here Israel is giving Joseph a double-portion by blessing Joseph's two sons.

Lesson 10 - Jacob's final days (Gen. 47:27 – 49:33)

In the blessing Israel calls upon God to bless the boys, referencing Him in three different ways:

- **“God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk”** - Israel has been serving the same God that his fathers served.
- **“the God which fed [to tend a flock; to pasture it] me all my life long unto this day”** - Israel is saying that God has cared for him as a shepherd cares for his flock.
- **“The Angel [messenger] which redeemed [to buy back; ransom] me from all evil [adversity; calamity]”** - Many times in the Old Testament we see references to “the angel of the LORD” and sometimes it’s hard to discern if it is an actual angel or a physical manifestation of God Himself that is meant. Sometimes the “angel” says things as if God Himself is speaking. Here Israel is calling God an angel. Genesis 32 describes how on the way to meet Esau Jacob wrestled with a “man” until the breaking of the day and Jacob leaves the encounter saying that he had seen the face of God and lived. Hosea 12:4 speaks of the event as Jacob wrestling with an angel, so this angel must have been God in physical form. Here Jacob describes this “angel” as redeeming him from all evil. No matter what troubles Israel got into, God was there to “redeem” or to rescue him out of the situation.

**“let my name be named on them”** - Israel asks that the two boys will be given equal status with the other sons of Jacob. Ephraim and Manasseh will become their own tribes instead of there being a tribe of Joseph.

**“and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac”** - Israel asks that the blessings/promises that God gave to Abraham and Isaac be also given to these boys along with the other brothers of Joseph.

**“let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth”** - Israel asks for God to give these boys many descendants, similar to the promise that God gave Abraham. This came to pass for the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh become two of the larger tribes in Israel. Although this blessing is given to both boys, because Ephraim was under the right hand, he received the larger portion. In fact, later in the Old Testament the nation of Israel is often referred to as “Ephraim.” Israel gives Joseph the birthright and Ephraim gets the larger portion of Joseph’s sons.

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17 And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head. 18 And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head.

---

Joseph apparently thought that Israel got the boys mixed up due to his poor eyesight because he expected that Manasseh, being the eldest son, should get the right-hand blessing. He attempts to correct his father by lifting the right hand from Ephraim’s head and placing it on Manasseh’s head while pointing out which son is the firstborn.

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19 And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.

---

Israel resists Joseph’s attempt to reposition his hands and tells Joseph that he knows what he is doing. Apparently the Spirit of God was guiding where Israel placed his hands as well as giving him the prophetic blessing that he gave the boys. Israel says Manasseh will also become “a people” (a tribe) and a great one at that, but Ephraim will become a “greater” (larger) tribe than his brother.

**“his seed shall become a multitude [fullness] of nations [nations (usually Gentile)]”** - Most commentators ignore this statement and the one that I found that did mention it said it speaks of not

only the number but the completeness of Ephraim's race, as well as the future preeminence of the tribe. So perhaps this statement is still yet to be fulfilled.

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20 And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh.

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**“And he blessed them that day, saying”** - Summarizing that Israel blessed Ephraim and Manasseh. **“In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh”** - This statement becomes a blessing of a sort that the children of Israel would later repeat to their children, roughly paraphrased: “May this blessing of Israel (Jacob) be on you, so that God would make you to prosper as Ephraim and Manasseh.” The children of Israel would recognize the significance of this blessing that Israel gave to the two sons of Joseph, so much so that they used it as the epitome of blessings. **“and he set Ephraim before Manasseh”** - The mentioning of Ephraim first shows his preeminence over Manasseh.

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21 And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die: but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers. 22 Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.

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**“Behold, I die...”** - Israel declares to Joseph what God had revealed to him: He will die in Egypt but God will bring the children of Israel out and return them to the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Gen. 46:4).

**“I have given thee one portion above thy brethren...”** - Commentators believe that Israel is giving Joseph a special tract of land, one that was originally purchased (Joshua 24:32) and then retaken from the Amorites by force. Joseph is eventually buried on this tract of land when Joshua leads Israel back into Canaan.

## **Jacob prophesies over his twelve sons and blesses them (Gen. 49:1-28)**

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1 And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. 2 Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father.

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When fathers blessed their sons in the Bible, the blessing seem to take on a prophetic nature. It's unclear if these blessings are predictive or causal, for calling it a “blessing” insinuates a cause/effect situation, but it may be that God is revealing future events as Jacob says in verse 1. In verse 2 Jacob calls his sons together to listen to what he has to say.

### **Reuben, Simeon and Levi: (vs. 3-7)**

Jacob seems to be taking the sons in the order they were born. What he has to say about the first three sons isn't too flattering.

### **Judah (vs. 8-12)**

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8 Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. 9 Judah is a lion's whelp: from

the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? 10 The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. 11 Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes: 12 His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.

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Judah's blessing is the most interesting, because Judah becomes the tribe from which the royal line of David and eventually Jesus Christ comes.

**“The sceptre shall not depart from Judah...”** - This verse (v. 10) seems to be the most obvious, as it predicts the eternal nature of the throne of David. The name “Shiloh” means “he whose right it is.” Jesus Christ, as the “son of David,” is in the royal line of David and has definitely earned the right to the throne by His death and resurrection.

### **Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Joseph and Benjamin (vs. 13-27)**

Researching each of the blessings on the remaining sons would be beyond the scope of this study.

### **Summary of the blessings (vs. 28)**

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28 All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them.

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The blessings of the previous verses are what God gave Israel to speak to his sons. He blessed them according to the blessing that God gave.

### **Jacob's final instructions to his sons (vs. 29-32)**

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29 And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, 30 In the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a buryingplace. 31 There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah. 32 The purchase of the field and of the cave that is therein was from the children of Heth.

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Jacob commands his sons on where to bury him, giving the specifics on the location. Joseph has already heard the command and promised to obey, but here the rest of the sons are included in the obligation. Jacob wants to be buried in the “family grave” as it were, where the rest of his family has been buried. It's interesting that Jacob is to be buried with Leah and not his favorite wife Rachel. He buries Rachel (who died in childbirth when Benjamin was born) near Bethlehem and it seems that there is no attempt to bury her in the family grave like he did Leah. The reason may simply one of practicality: When Rachel died, Jacob may have been too far away from the family grave to bury her there without access to embalming.

## **Jacob dies (v. 33)**

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33 And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.

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It appears Jacob used the last of his strength taking care of all his unfinished business. After performing the blessings on each of his sons and then commanding them concerning his burial, he then lays back and pulls his feet into the bed to rest. As he relaxes, his breathing shallows and he dies. It's a beautiful thing for a child of God who is at peace to relax and commit his/her spirit to God.

## **Conclusion**

God is preserving the children of Israel through by having them stay in Egypt until they have grown from a family clan into a nation of people (Gen. 46:3-4). Jacob's blessings on his sons and grandsons before his death reveal some of God's plans for the individual tribes of Israel.

God's sovereign plan is progressing despite the death of Jacob, for God's plans are larger than us. Sometimes we think God's plan does (or should) revolve around us, but the opposite is true. We each have a part in His plan, be it large or small, but the nature of that part is decided by Him.

## Lesson 11 - Jacob's funeral and Joseph's final days (Gen. 50:1-26)

### Jacob is mourned by all of Egypt (Gen. 50:1-3)

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1 And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him.

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Jacob has just died and immediately Joseph is overcome with grief as soon as he realizes that his father is gone. We can tell that Joseph is a compassionate man for he embraces his father's head, weeping and gives him a farewell kiss (presumably on his forehead). The reaction of the other brothers, who are probably still in the room, is not recorded.

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2 And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father: and the physicians embalmed Israel. 3 And forty days were fulfilled for him; for so are fulfilled the days of those which are embalmed: and the Egyptians mourned for him threescore and ten days.

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**“Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father...”** - Apparently Joseph had physicians on his payroll and so he called upon these to embalm his father. The Egyptians knew how to embalm, as evidenced by the mummies that have been discovered. There were different kinds of embalming done, depending on how much money was spent. No doubt Joseph had the best embalming done on his father, comparable to that done on the Pharaohs.

**“forty days were fulfilled for him; for so are fulfilled the days of those which are embalmed”** - Apparently the embalming process required forty days to complete, which may have included ceremonial practices of the Egyptians as well as the physical replacing of the blood and treatment of the body.

**“the Egyptians mourned for him threescore and ten days”** - The mourning period for royalty (such as when a Pharaoh died) was 72 days, so 70 days for Jacob was a testament to the honor being bestowed upon Jacob.

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### Joseph asks permission of Pharaoh to bury his father in Canaan (vs. 4-6)

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4 And when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spake unto the house of Pharaoh, saying, If now I have found grace in your eyes, speak, I pray you, in the ears of Pharaoh, saying, 5 My father made me swear, saying, Lo, I die: in my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me. Now therefore let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again. 6 And Pharaoh said, Go up, and bury thy father, according as he made thee swear.

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**“when the days of his mourning were past”** - Joseph apparently allowed the Egyptians the full 70 days to mourn for Jacob before fulfilling the request Jacob had made him swear to perform.

**“Joseph spake unto the house of Pharaoh”** - Joseph had always had full access to Pharaoh, yet on this occasion he doesn't go personally to Pharaoh but speaks to the servants of Pharaoh's house to make request of Pharaoh in his behalf. The most likely reason is that in the custom of the day no one

who was mourning was allowed to come into the presence of the king. Joseph was likely unkempt and unshaven and therefore not presentable to Pharaoh.

**“If now I have found grace in your eyes...”** - Joseph humbly asks for Pharaoh's permission to bury his father in Canaan as Jacob had requested, speaking of the promise that Jacob had made Joseph to swear before he died.

**“Go up, and bury thy father”** - Pharaoh gives his permission for Joseph to fulfill his oath to his father.

## Joseph leads the funeral procession to Canaan (vs. 7-11)

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7 And Joseph went up to bury his father: and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt,

**“And Joseph went up to bury his father: and with him went...”** - A great number of Egyptian officials went with Joseph, as befitting a state funeral. Since Pharaoh wasn't able to go himself, he sent officers of his house and servants to represent him at the funeral. Also, the elders of his house and of Egypt go, which were rulers over different districts of the nation of Egypt.

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8 And all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house: only their little ones, and their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen.

Pretty much the entire adult family of Israel also came along. Only the children who were too young to travel or appreciate what was happening did not go along. They left their belongings in Egypt for they were not planning on remaining in Canaan.

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9 And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen: and it was a very great company.

These were the escorts for the funeral procession. They may have provided protection from marauders but most likely they added to the prestige, honor and respect being shown to Jacob. The resulting funeral party was a “very great company.”

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10 And they came to the threshingfloor of Atad, which is beyond Jordan, and there they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation: and he made a mourning for his father seven days. 11 And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians: wherefore the name of it was called Abelmizraim, which is beyond Jordan.

**“they came to the threshingfloor of Atad...”** - The funeral procession comes to an open area (apparently a meadow) and have a final period of mourning for Jacob over the next seven days. The mourning was “a great and very sore lamentation” which was noticeable to the Canaanites.

**“when the inhabitants of the land...saw the mourning...”** - Such a great company of Egyptians mourning in such a loud and conspicuous manner was hard to miss by the Canaanites. They were so struck by the occasion that they named the place Abel-miz-raim, which means “meadow of Egypt.”

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## Jacob is buried (vs. 12-14)

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12 And his sons did unto him according as he commanded them: 13 For his sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which

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Abraham bought with the field for a possession of a buryingplace of Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre. 14 And Joseph returned into Egypt, he, and his brethren, and all that went up with him to bury his father, after he had buried his father.

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Joseph and his brothers fulfill the oath that they had made to their father and bury him in the family burying place.

## Joseph reassures his brothers

Now that Jacob was gone and buried, Joseph's brothers start to get nervous about what he might do without the restraint of their father.

### The brothers fear revenge from Joseph (vs. 15-18)

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15 And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him.

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The brothers are afraid that up until this time Joseph had done nothing out of respect for their father, knowing that he wouldn't have approved of Joseph avenging himself upon his brothers for selling him into slavery.

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16 And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, 17 So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him. 18 And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants.

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**“they sent a messenger unto Joseph...”** - The brothers hope to head off any revenge plans of Joseph by sending a messenger to Joseph and telling him of a command that his father had left with them. They say that Jacob had commanded them to ask Joseph for forgiveness for the evil they had done to him, and then they follow that with their own request for forgiveness. Notice how they phrase the message: “Thy father did command” and “the servants of the God of thy father.” They hope to arouse Joseph's sentimental side. Some commentators believe that the brothers fabricated the story of their father's command, but just because the actual giving of the command isn't recorded in scripture doesn't mean that Jacob never gave it. Also, Joseph would have remembered if Jacob had asked him to forgive his brothers so fabricating such a story would not have helped their case.

**“And Joseph wept when they spake unto him”** - We see the kind of man Joseph is when he hears this message from his brothers. It breaks his heart that his brothers would think that he would still be seeking revenge against his own family, and so he weeps.

**“And his brethren also went and fell down before his face”** - In addition to the message, they go in person and fall down before him and submit themselves to his mercy. This time they are willingly and knowingly fulfilling the dream that God gave Joseph all those years before.

### Joseph assures them that he does not seek revenge (vs. 19-21)

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19 And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? 20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save

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much people alive. 21 Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.

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Likely Joseph has tears in his eyes as he replies to his brothers.

**“Fear not: for am I in the place of God?”** - Even though Joseph is the second most powerful man in Egypt and could easily do anything he wanted to his brothers he instead replies with a humble spirit. Joseph has seen enough of the sovereign hand of God in his life to recognize that it was not his place to seek personal vengeance, a privilege that God has reserved for Himself. Even though it had not yet been written, Joseph is expressing what God would say in Deuteronomy 32:35: *“To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.”* This verse is later referenced by the Apostle Paul (Rom. 12:19) and the writer of Hebrews (Heb. 10:30), both expressing the idea that to seek personal vengeance is to “play God.” We are taking upon ourselves something that God reserves for Himself alone. If there is any recompense to be done for what someone has done to us, we must trust that God will perform it at the appropriate time in the proper proportion. He may use the government (Rom. 13:1-6) to accomplish His vengeance or He may take care of it more personally, but it is not our place to satisfy personal vengeance.

**“ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good...”** - Joseph doesn't excuse what they did or sugar-coat it, for they did indeed intend evil upon Joseph. But the superseding principle was that “God meant it unto good.” God can take the evil plans of men and use them to fulfill His will. Romans 8:28 says *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”* God used their evil intentions to save the lives of millions of people. Only God can turn evil into good. If Joseph had held his brothers accountable for his years of suffering he endured then he would also have to hold God accountable as well, for He was the One primarily responsible.

**“therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you...”** - In an act of grace that could only come from God, Joseph responds to their fear of retribution with a promise to take care of them and their children. He soothed their fears with his words of comfort and kindness.

## Joseph's final days

Joseph's eventful life comes to a close with God's blessings.

### He lives a long fulfilling life (vs. 22-23)

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22 And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's house: and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years. 23 And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation: the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were brought up upon Joseph's knees.

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Joseph and his brothers live the remainder of their lives in Egypt. Joseph lives to the ripe old age of 110 and is able to see his great-grandchildren grow into adulthood.

### Joseph's faith in God's promises (vs. 24-25)

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24 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. 25 And

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Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.

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**“Joseph said unto his brethren...”** - Joseph repeats what his father had said concerning God's promise to his family. He reminds them of God's promise to bring them out of Egypt into the land that He promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

**“Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel...”** - Just as his father had had Joseph to swear an oath to bury him in Canaan, Joseph also has his family to swear an oath to him that when God takes them back to Canaan that they would bring his bones with them to be buried in Canaan. Joseph had faith that this would come to pass (*“By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.”* Heb. 11:22). When Israel left Egypt, they took Joseph's bones with him (Ex. 13:19) and then when the children of Israel arrived in Canaan under the leadership of Joshua they finally buried Joseph's bones (Joshua 24:32).

## Joseph dies (v. 26)

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26 So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

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Joseph dies at 110 years old and they embalm him (probably like they did Jacob) and he was placed in a coffin (probably a sarcophagus) in Egypt. Placing him in a coffin made him portable and easier to carry to Canaan at the proper time. This may have been according to Joseph's instructions or it may have been Egyptian custom. It doesn't say if there was a national mourning for 70 days like there was for Jacob, but there probably was. Maybe they didn't take Joseph immediately to Canaan for burial in deference to Egypt, who probably felt that Joseph belonged to them. We can only speculate.

## Conclusion

Joseph died with the full confidence that God fulfills His promises. Throughout his life he had experienced the sovereign care of the same God that his fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had experienced and so he was able to die knowing that the LORD would do everything had promised. As a result he died following the example of his father by having his family swear an oath to take his bones home to the land that God had promised his family. Perhaps he wanted to make sure that on resurrection day he would open his eyes and see the fulfillment of God's promises in the land of Canaan.

Joseph's life had taken quite a journey through God's sovereign plan. God's plan was larger than Joseph, for He did not intend to make Joseph a ruler in Egypt simply to bless him but to preserve the nation of Israel. We tend to think God's plans should revolve around us and be to our benefit. If we think that the story of Joseph is about his journey to greatness then we've missed the point. God made Joseph a great man in Egypt so that Israel would be preserved. If Israel had not been preserved then Jesus Christ would never have been born as a descendant of King David, who was in turn a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. If Jesus Christ had not been born then the entire human race would be without the hope of salvation.

So we should have confidence that God knows what He is doing. Whether we are currently experiencing an upswing or a downturn in our life, God is behind the scenes quietly working to

*Lesson 11 - Jacob's funeral and Joseph's final days (Gen. 50:1-26)*

accomplish His purposes which are infinitely better than anything we could conceive for ourselves.