

# Genesis: The Book of Beginnings

Focus	Four Great Events								Four Great Persons				
<b>Divisions</b>	1	2	3	4	5	9	10	11	12	25:19	27	37:2b	50
	<b>Creation</b>		<b>Fall</b>		<b>Flood</b>		<b>Nations (Babel)</b>		<b>Abraham</b>	<b>Isaac</b>	<b>Jacob</b>	<b>Joseph</b>	
<b>Topics</b>	<b>Primeval History of Humanity</b>								<b>Patriarchal History of Israel</b>				
	<b>Beginning of the Human Race</b>								<b>Beginning of the Hebrew Race</b>				
<b>Locations</b>	<b>East (Eden to Ur)</b>								<b>West (Canaan to Egypt)</b>				
<b>Time</b>	<b>2,000 + years (20% of Genesis)</b>								<b>About 286 years (80% of Genesis)</b>				

**Author:** Moses

**Date written:** after 1445 BC

**Theme:** Israel's Origin & Early Years

**Purposes:** 1) to present the beginning of everything but God  
 2) to record God's choice of Israel & His covenant plan for the nation  
 3) to show how the sin of man is met by the redemption of God



# The Book of Genesis

1:1-2:3 – The Creation of the Heavens and the Earth

2:4-4:26 – The Generations of the Heavens and the Earth

5:1-6:8 – The Generations of Adam

6:9-9:29 – The Generations of Noah

10:1-11:9 – The Generations of Shem, Ham and Japheth

11:10-26 – The Generations of Shem

11:27-25:11 – The Generations of Terah

25:12-18 – The Generations of Ishmael

25:19-35:29 – The Generations of Isaac

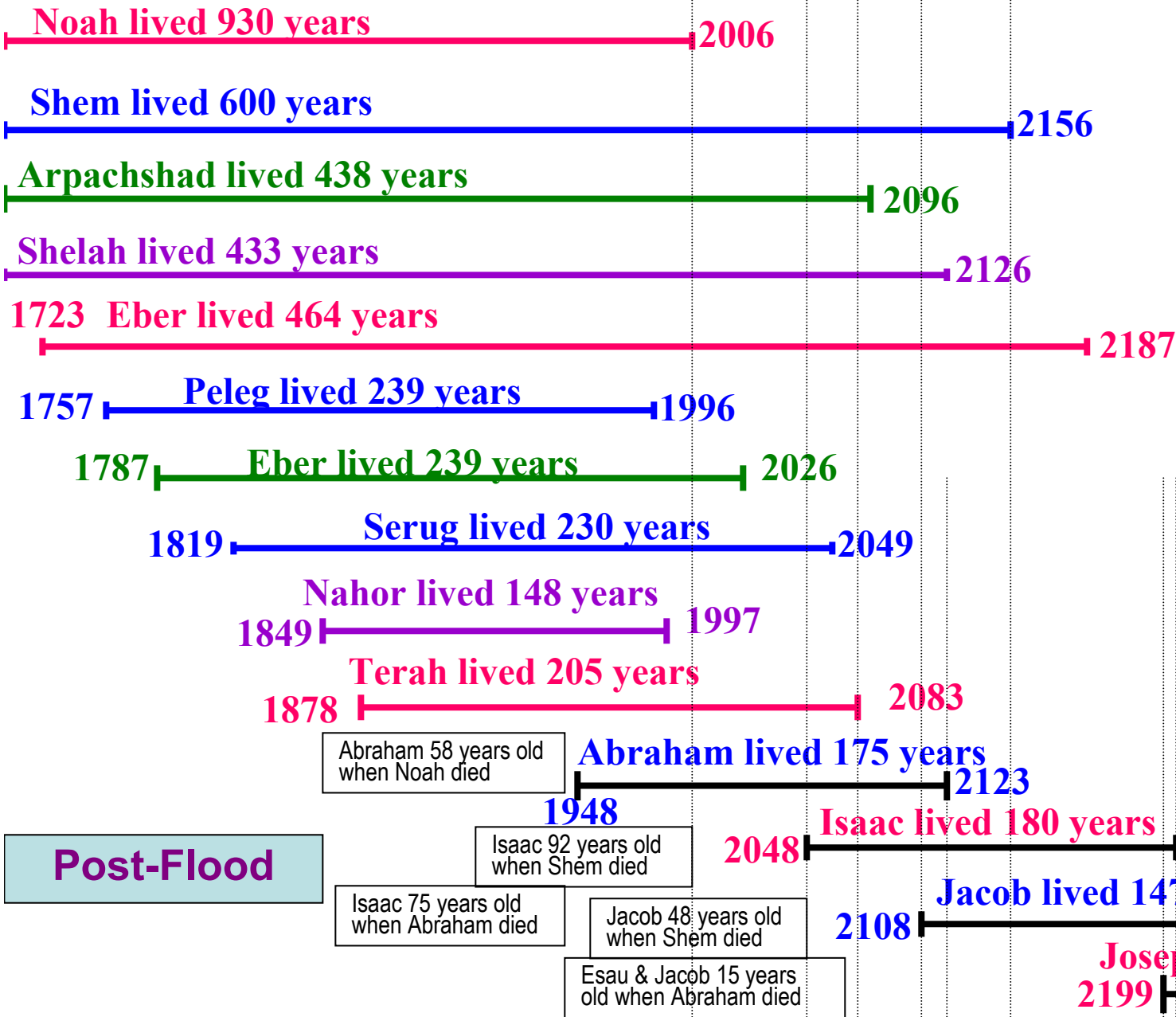
36:1-43 – The Generations of Esau

37:1-50:26 – The Generations of Jacob



Years from Creation

1700	1800	1900	2000	2100	2200	2300
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**BC**

- 2165 - Abram born
- 2090 - Abram reaches Canaan
- 2089 - To Egypt because of famine
- 2066 - Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed
- 2065 - Isaac born
- 2028 - Sarah dies
- 2025 - Isaac marries Rebekah
- 2005 - Esau and Jacob born
- 1990 - Abraham dies
- 1928 - Jacob flees to Haran
- 1921 - Reuben born
- 1914 - Joseph born
- 1897 - Joseph sold into slavery
- 1885 - Isaac dies
- 1875 - Jacob and family enter into Egypt
- 1858 - Jacob dies
- 1804 - Joseph dies

**Post-Flood**

Abraham 58 years old when Noah died

Isaac 92 years old when Shem died

Isaac 75 years old when Abraham died

Jacob 48 years old when Shem died

Esau & Jacob 15 years old when Abraham died

Joseph 29 years old when Isaac died  
Joseph 54 years old when Jacob died

# Genesis 41:1-57 – Pharaoh’s Dreams and Its Fulfillment

## v1-13 Pharaoh’s Two Dreams

Joseph, 30 years of age in 1884BC

1 Now it happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had **a dream**, **and behold**, he was standing by the Nile. 2 **And lo**, from the Nile there came up seven cows, sleek and fat; and they grazed in the marsh grass. 3 Then behold, seven other cows came up after them from the Nile, ugly and gaunt, and they stood by the *other* cows on the bank of the Nile. 4 And the ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven sleek and fat cows. Then Pharaoh awoke. 5 And he fell asleep and **dreamed a second time**; **and behold**, seven ears of grain came up on a single stalk, plump and good. 6 **Then behold**, seven ears, thin and scorched by the east wind, sprouted up after them. 7 **And the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump and full ears**. Then Pharaoh awoke, **and behold**, *it was* **a dream**.

8 Now it came about in the morning that his spirit was troubled, **so** he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them **his dreams**, **but** there was no one who could interpret **them** to Pharaoh.



# Genesis 41:1-57 – Pharaoh’s Dreams and Its Fulfillment

9 Then the chief cupbearer spoke to Pharaoh, saying, “I would make mention today of my *own* offenses. 10 Pharaoh was furious with his servants, and he put me in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, *both* me and the chief baker. 11 And we had **a dream** on the same night, he and I; each of us **dreamed** according to the interpretation of **his own dream**. 12 Now a Hebrew youth was with us there, a servant of the captain of the bodyguard, and we related **them** to him, and he interpreted **our dreams** for us. To each one he interpreted according to **his own dream**. 13 And it came about that just as he interpreted for us, so it happened; he restored me in my office, **but** he hanged him.”

## v14-36 Joseph Interprets Pharaoh’s Dreams

14 Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph, and they hurriedly brought him out of the dungeon; and when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came to Pharaoh. 15 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I have had **a dream**, **but** no one can interpret **it**; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear **a dream** you can interpret **it**.”



# Genesis 41:1-57 – Pharaoh’s Dreams and Its Fulfillment

16 Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, “It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.”

17 **So** Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, “In **my dream**, **behold**, I was standing on the bank of the Nile; 18 **and behold**, seven cows, fat and sleek came up out of the Nile; and they grazed in the marsh grass. 19 **And lo**, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such as I had never seen for ugliness in all the land of Egypt; 20 and the lean and ugly cows ate up the first seven fat cows. 21 **Yet** when they had devoured them, it could not be detected that they had devoured them; **for** they were just as ugly as before. Then I awoke. 22 I saw also in **my dream**, **and behold**, seven ears, full and good, came up on a single stalk; 23 **and lo**, seven ears, withered, thin, *and* scorched by the east wind, sprouted up after them; 24 and the thin ears swallowed the seven good ears. Then I told it to the magicians, **but** there was no one who could explain it to me.”



# Genesis 41:1-57 – Pharaoh’s Dreams and Its Fulfillment

25 Now Joseph said to Pharaoh, “Pharaoh's **dreams** are one *and the same*; God has told to Pharaoh what He is about to do. 26 The seven good cows are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years; **the dreams** are one *and the same*. 27 And the seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven thin ears scorched by the east wind shall be seven years of famine. 28 It is as I have spoken to Pharaoh: God has shown to Pharaoh what He is about to do. 29 **Behold**, seven years of great abundance are coming in all the land of Egypt; 30 and after them seven years of famine will come, and all the abundance will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will ravage the land. 31 **So** the abundance will be unknown in the land because of that subsequent famine; **for** it *will be* very severe. 32 Now as for the repeating of the dream to Pharaoh twice, *it means that* the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about.



# Genesis 41:1-57 – Pharaoh’s Dreams and Its Fulfillment

**33** “**And now** let Pharaoh look for a man discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. **34** Let Pharaoh take action to appoint overseers in charge of the land, and let him exact a fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven years of abundance. **35** Then let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and store up the grain for food in the cities under Pharaoh's authority, and let them guard it. **36** And let the food become as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which will occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish during the famine.”



<http://www.whiteestate.org/books/pp/pp20.html>

The interpretation was so reasonable and consistent, and the policy which it recommended was so sound and shrewd, that its correctness could not be doubted. But who was to be entrusted with the execution of the plan? Upon the wisdom of this choice depended the nation's preservation. The king was troubled. For some time the matter of the appointment was under consideration. Through the chief butler the monarch had learned of the wisdom and prudence displayed by Joseph in the management of the prison; it was evident that he possessed administrative ability in a pre-eminent degree. The cupbearer, now filled with self-reproach, endeavored to atone for his former ingratitude, by the warmest praise of his benefactor; and further inquiry by the king proved the correctness of his report. In all the realm Joseph was the only man gifted with wisdom to point out the danger that threatened the kingdom and the preparation necessary to meet it; and the king was convinced that he was the one best qualified to execute the plans which he had proposed. It was evident that a divine power was with him, and that there were none among the king's officers of state so well qualified to conduct the affairs of the nation at this crisis. The fact that he was a Hebrew and a slave was of little moment when weighed against his evident wisdom and sound judgment. "Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?" said the king to his counselors.



# Genesis 41:1-57 – Pharaoh’s Dreams and Its Fulfillment

## v37-49 Joseph’s Promotion to “Prime Minister”

**37** Now the proposal seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his servants.

**38** Then Pharaoh said to his servants, “Can we find a man like this, in whom is a divine spirit?” **39** So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are. **40** You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you.” **41** And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See I have set you over all the land of Egypt.”

**42** Then Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand, and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen, and put the gold necklace around his neck. **43** And he had him ride in his second chariot; and they proclaimed before him, “Bow the knee!” And he set him over all the land of Egypt.



# <http://www.whiteestate.org/books/pp/pp20.html>

The appointment was decided upon, and to Joseph the astonishing announcement was made, "Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: 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." The king proceeded to invest Joseph with the insignia of his high office. "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; and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee."

"He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance: to bind his princes at his pleasure; and teach his senators wisdom." Psalm 105:21, 22. From the dungeon Joseph was exalted to be ruler over all the land of Egypt. It was a position of high honor, yet it was beset with difficulty and peril. One cannot stand upon a lofty height without danger. As the tempest leaves unharmed the lowly flower of the valley, while it uproots the stately tree upon the mountaintop, so those who have maintained their integrity in humble life may be dragged down to the pit by the temptations that assail worldly success and honor.



<http://www.whiteestate.org/books/pp/pp20.html>

**But Joseph's character bore the test alike of adversity and prosperity. The same fidelity to God was manifest when he stood in the palace of the Pharaohs as when in a prisoner's cell. He was still a stranger in a heathen land, separated from his kindred, the worshipers of God; but he fully believed that the divine hand had directed his steps, and in constant reliance upon God he faithfully discharged the duties of his position. Through Joseph the attention of the king and great men of Egypt was directed to the true God; and though they adhered to their idolatry, they learned to respect the principles revealed in the life and character of the worshiper of Jehovah.**

**How was Joseph enabled to make such a record of firmness of character, uprightness, and wisdom? - In his early years he had consulted duty rather than inclination; and the integrity, the simple trust, the noble nature, of the youth bore fruit in the deeds of the man. A pure and simple life had favored the vigorous development of both physical and intellectual powers. Communion with God through His works and the contemplation of the grand truths entrusted to the inheritors of faith had elevated and ennobled his spiritual nature, broadening and strengthening the mind as no other study could do. Faithful attention to duty in every station.**



# <http://www.whiteestate.org/books/pp/pp20.html>

from the lowliest to the most exalted, had been training every power for its highest service. He who lives in accordance with the Creator's will is securing to himself the truest and noblest development of character. "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." Job 28:28.

There are few who realize the influence of the little things of life upon the development of character. Nothing with which we have to do is really small. The varied circumstances that we meet day by day are designed to test our faithfulness and to qualify us for greater trusts. By adherence to principle in the transactions of ordinary life, the mind becomes accustomed to hold the claims of duty above those of pleasure and inclination. Minds thus disciplined are not wavering between right and wrong, like the reed trembling in the wind; they are loyal to duty because they have trained themselves to habits of fidelity and truth. By faithfulness in that which is least they acquire strength to be faithful in greater matters. An upright character is of greater worth than the gold of Ophir. Without it none can rise to an honorable eminence. But character is not inherited. It cannot be bought. Moral excellence and fine mental qualities are not the result of accident. The most precious gifts are of no value unless they are improved. The formation of a noble character is the work of a lifetime and must be the result of diligent and persevering effort. **God gives opportunities;** success depends upon the use made of them.



# Genesis 41:1-57 – Pharaoh’s Dreams and Its Fulfillment

44 Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Though I am Pharaoh, yet without your permission no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.” 45 Then Pharaoh named Joseph Zaphenath-paneah; <sup>=treasury of the glorious rest</sup> and he gave him Asenath, <sup>=belonging to the goddess Neith</sup> the daughter of Potiphera <sup>=he whom the Ra gave</sup> priest of On, as <sup>=strength or vigor</sup> his wife. And Joseph went forth over the land of Egypt.



# Kiel & Delitzsch on Gen 41:45

But in order that Joseph might be perfectly naturalized, the king gave him an Egyptian name, *Zaphnath-Paaneah*, and married him to *Asenath*, the daughter of *Potipherah*, the priest at *On*; The name *Zaphnath-Paaneah* (a form adapted to the Hebrew, for  $\Psi\omicron\nu\theta\omicron\mu\phi\alpha\nu\eta\chi$  Ixx; according to a Greek scholium,  $\sigma\omega\tau\eta\rho\ \kappa\omicron\sigma\mu\omicron\nu$ , “*salvator mundi*” (Jerome), answers to the Coptic *P-sote-m-ph-eneh*, - *P* the article, *sote* salvation, *m* the sign of the genitive, *ph* the article, and *eneh* the world (lit., *aetas, seculum*); or perhaps more correctly, according to *Rosellini* and more recent Egyptologists, to the Coptic *P-sont-em-ph-anh*, i.e., *sustentator vitae*, support or sustainer of life, with reference to the call entrusted to him by God....

...This promotion of Joseph, from the position of a Hebrew slave pining in prison to the highest post of honour in the Egyptian kingdom, is perfectly conceivable, on the one hand, from the great importance attached in ancient times to the interpretation of dreams and to all occult science, especially among the Egyptians, and on the other hand, from the despotic form of government in the East; but the miraculous power of God is to be seen in the fact, that God endowed Joseph with the gift of infallible interpretation, and so ordered the circumstances that this gift opened the way for him to occupy that position in which he became the preserver, not of Egypt alone, but of his own family also. And the same hand of God, by which he had been so highly exalted after deep degradation, preserved him in his lofty post of honour from sinking into the heathenism of Egypt; although, by his alliance with the daughter of a priest of the sun, the most distinguished caste in the land, he had fully entered into the national associations and customs of the land.



# Genesis 41:1-57 – Pharaoh's Dreams and Its Fulfillment

46 Now Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went through all the land of Egypt. 47 And during the seven years of plenty the land brought forth abundantly. 48 **So** he gathered all the food of *these* seven years which occurred in the land of Egypt, and placed the food in the cities; he placed in every city the food from its own surrounding fields. 49 **Thus** Joseph stored up grain in great abundance like the sand of the sea, until he stopped measuring *it*, **for** it was beyond measure.



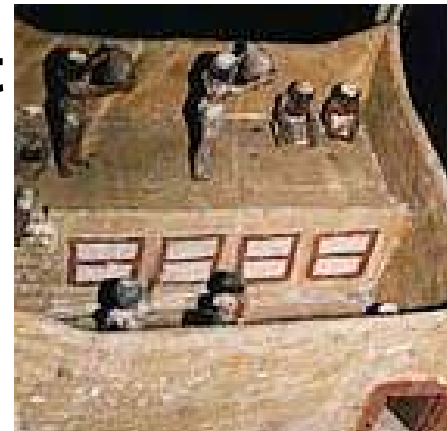
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The total amount of grain harvested depended on the surface covered by the flooding Nile, which was between perhaps 20,000 and 34,000 square kilometres. Taking pre-green-revolution wheat yields of about 750 kg/ha [1] as a base, the annual amount of corn [11] produced was approximately between 1.5 and 2.5 million tons, supposing that most of the surface was used to produce corn. About 4 to 5 million people lived in Egypt during the New Kingdom [3]. In a bad year the annual yield was less than 300 kg per head, possibly considerably less.



Granaries at Akhetaten

Source: Kemp, Barry, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization*



# Genesis 41:1-57 – Pharaoh’s Dreams and Its Fulfillment

## v50-52 Joseph’s Two Sons

50 Now before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On, bore to him. 51 And Joseph named the first-born <sup>=causing to forget</sup> Manasseh, “**For,**” *he said,* “**God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household.**” 52 And he named the second <sup>=I shall be doubly fruitful</sup> Ephraim, “**For,**” *he said,* “**God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.**”



# Genesis 41:1-57 – Pharaoh's Dreams and Its Fulfillment

## v53-57 The Fulfillment of Pharaoh's Dreams

53 When the seven years of plenty which had been in the land of Egypt came to an end, 54 and the seven years of famine began to come, just as Joseph had said, then there was famine in all the lands; **but** in all the land of Egypt there was bread.

55 **So** when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried out to Pharaoh for bread; and **Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, you shall do."**

56 When the famine was *spread* over all the face of the earth, then Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to the Egyptians; and the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. 57 And *the people of all the earth* came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, **because** the famine was severe in all the earth.



# <http://www.jacksonsnnyder.com/arc/2006/o-asenath.htm>

Joseph named his first son "Manasseh," related to forgetting past sorrows and forgiving past injustices he suffered. Indeed, Joseph had forgiven his brothers for everything they did to him, and he did not seek revenge on others who had wronged him. He put these things in the past and focused on the future. He named his second son "Ephraim," because he had become so fruitful. This illustrates for us the dual aspect of Messiah's work of salvation in our lives. The first aspect is forgiveness of our sins, washing away of our old lives of worldliness. If anyone is in Messiah, he is a new creation – the old is gone and the new has come. (2 Cor. 5:17)

Through his death on the cross, Yahshua took away our sin and gave us a new life of forgiveness and restoration. Even so, his work does not stop there. **Yahweh wants to produce fruit in our lives.** He gives us his Holy Spirit and his ongoing revelation – our daily manna – so that we will be his witnesses, producing both the fruit of righteousness and fruit in evangelism. **"All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing..."** (Col. 1:6).



# <http://www.jacksonsnnyder.com/arc/2006/o-asenath.htm>

"If any man remains in me and I remain in him, he will bear much fruit." (John 15:5) "I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last." (John 15:16). **Yahshua has both aspects in his work in our lives – forgetting the sins of our past and producing much fruit during our time in this world** (this world of suffering, as Joseph said). It is interesting that Manasseh became much more numerous, but that Ephraim would be greater or more powerful. (See Genesis 48:19-20). This is indeed what we see today. Many, many more people conceive of salvation only in terms of forgiveness of their sins (Manasseh was the most numerous tribe). Far fewer understand that Elohim saved them so they could produce spiritual fruit for eternity. Such understanding usually comes a little later, with maturity (hence Ephraim was born second), but is greater, or more important, from Yahweh's perspective. **He "gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do his will." (Titus 2:14) "For we are his workmanship, created in Messiah Yahshua to do good works, which Elohim prepared in advance for us to do." (Eph. 2:10)**



# Genesis Chapter 42



# [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=120](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=120)

Think of what you could do in a situation where you had absolute control.

Such was Joseph's position in [Genesis 42](#). The famine had created an international disaster. People from the surrounding nations heard that Egypt alone had provisions enough to survive the famine that had ravaged the Near Eastern world. And who should arrive to buy bread but Joseph's brothers, who had thrown him into a pit to starve, while they ate their lunch, oblivious to his cries for help. Can you imagine the thoughts that would go through the mind of someone in Joseph's position?

Until now, I have always considered the suffering and injustice of Joseph at the hands of his brothers, Potiphar's wife, and his master to be the greatest tests of his life, but I was wrong. What test could possibly be greater than the one which Joseph faced in [Genesis 42](#)? Here he was, faced by his brothers, absolutely destitute and defenseless, while Joseph had unlimited power. Without a doubt this was the greatest test of Joseph's character. It is one thing to be tested when you are powerless to resist. It is quite another to be given the opportunity to get revenge when your enemies are mere putty in your hands.

While poverty, suffering, or injustice may be tests that come our way from time to time, I believe that we, like Joseph, are tested most by the power that is ours and the way that we use it. For this reason, we must take a hard look at what enabled Joseph to use the power at his disposal for the betterment of his brothers rather than as an opportunity to vent all the bitter feelings that could have been his.



# Genesis 42:1-38 – Joseph’s Brothers

## First Visit to Egypt

### v1-5 Jacob’s Sons Goes to Egypt

1 Now Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, and Jacob said to his sons, “Why are you staring at one another?” 2 And he said, “**Behold**, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down there and buy some for us from that place, **so that** we may live and not die.” 3 Then ten brothers of Joseph went down to buy grain from Egypt. 4 **But** Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, **for** he said, “I am afraid that harm may befall him.” 5 **So** the sons of Israel came to buy grain among those who were coming, **for** the famine was in the land of Canaan *also*.



# Genesis 42:1-38 – Joseph’s Brothers First Visit to Egypt

v6-17 **Jacob**

**6 Now Joseph**  
**sold to all**

**and bowed**

**Joseph said**  
**himself to**

**“Where had**

**And then**

**8 But Joseph**  
**not recognize**

**he had about**

**come to look**

**Genesis 37:5-11** - <sup>5</sup> Then Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. <sup>6</sup> And he said to them, "Please listen to this dream which I have had; <sup>7</sup> for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf rose up and also stood erect; and behold, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf." <sup>8</sup> Then his brothers said to him, "Are you actually going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. <sup>9</sup> Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, "**Lo**, I have had still another dream; and **behold**, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me." <sup>10</sup> And he related *it* to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?" <sup>11</sup> And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying *in mind*.

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# [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=120](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=120)

Far more is meant by verse 9 than that Joseph merely remembered his dreams about his brothers and recognized their fulfillment in their bowing down to him. All this would have done would have been to puff up his pride. **Joseph not only realized the fulfillment of his dreams but also the reason for them. He saw that God had a purpose for placing him in his position of power, and this purpose was for him to function as the family head, protecting and preserving his family. He had great power and prestige, but God had given these to him for a purpose much greater than merely to seek revenge. He saw that leadership involved power, but that it also brought upon him the weight of responsibility. At times the greatest need is not to be aware of the power at our disposal, but of the purpose for which this power has been given.**

I need to digress for just a moment to show how our character affects our understanding and application of the Word of God. It has been observed by saints and sinners for centuries that “you can make the Bible say anything you want.” Like it or not, this is true. Think of what Joseph could have made of his dream. This was a message from God! If he had been dominated by bitterness and hatred, Joseph could have viewed his vision as a mandate from God to make life miserable for his brothers. Hadn't God revealed to him that his brothers would bow down to him? He could have rubbed their proverbial noses in the dirt and given them a proof text for it, had he wished. It is alarmingly possible for us to justify sinful actions with biblical texts if we choose to, but this will always be at the expense of other clear passages which we have chosen to ignore.



# Genesis 42:1-38 – Joseph’s Brothers

## First Visit to Egypt

10 Then they said to him, “No, my lord, **but** your servants have come to buy food. 11 We are all sons of one man; we are honest men, your servants are not spies.”

The Pain of Not being believed

12 **Yet** he said to them, “No, **but** you have come to look at the undefended parts of our land!”

13 **But** they said, “Your servants are twelve brothers *in all*, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; **and behold**, the youngest is with our father today, and one is no more.”

14 And Joseph said to them, “It is as I said to you, you are spies; 15 by this you will be tested: by the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go from this place unless your youngest brother comes here! 16 Send one of you **that** he may get your brother, while you remain confined, that your words may be tested, whether there is truth in you. **But if** not, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies.”

17 **So** he put them all together in prison for three days.



[http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=120](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=120)

Joseph's severity was feigned, not real. He needed to learn more information without his brothers realizing who he was or what he was attempting to accomplish. His harshness was intended to produce fear, for at this point in the lives of his brothers fear produced more facts than faith. In their fear they blurted out the things which Joseph yearned to know. Was his father alive? And how was Benjamin? Desperately trying to talk their way out of the charge that they were spies, they supplied him with facts they would never have given otherwise. Later Jacob would rebuke his sons for what they revealed (43:6). Disclosing the disappearance of one brother and the existence of another in Canaan provided Joseph with the opportunity to test his brothers in the area of their greatest failure.

And Joseph said to them, "It is as I said to you, you are spies; by this you will be tested; by the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go from this place unless your youngest brother comes here! Send one of you that he may get your brother, while you remain confined, that your words may be tested, whether there is truth in you. But if not, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies." So he put them all together in prison for three days ([Genesis 42:14-17](#)).



# [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=120](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=120)

Joseph narrowed the situation down to two options: either they had come as spies, in which case their story about a younger brother was a mere fabrication, or they were telling the truth. The matter could easily be settled by their producing the younger brother. All of the brothers would be detained except one, who could be dispatched to bring back the proof of their honesty. **How cleverly Joseph handled this situation to bring about his desired ends without his brothers seeing his purpose in it all.**

Joseph then placed all of the brothers in confinement. I cannot prove it, but my suspicion is that the prison was probably one that we know well — Potiphar's prison. More significant is that Joseph put them in confinement together (verse 17). More than giving them comfort, as opposed to solitary confinement, it caused them to consider the meaning of what was taking place in their lives. This is more fully seen in their conversation recorded in later verses. **Even if not bodily present with his brothers in prison, his heart must have been with them in their confinement. This was not punishment, but it was preparation, just as his confinement had been. It served to intensify their comprehension of the gravity of the situation.**



# Genesis 42:1-38 – Joseph’s Brothers

## First Visit to Egypt

### v18-28 Jacob’s Sons Return to Canaan

18 Now Joseph said to them on the third day, “Do this and live, **for** I fear God: 19 **if** you are honest men, let one of your brothers be confined in your prison; **but** as for *the rest of you*, go, carry grain for the famine of your households, 20 and bring your youngest brother to me, **so** your words may be verified, and you will not die.” And they did so.

21 Then they said to one another, “Truly we are guilty concerning our brother, **because** we saw the distress of his soul when he pleaded with us, **yet** we would not listen; **therefore** this distress has come upon us.”

22 And **Reuben** answered them, saying, “Did I not tell you, ‘Do not sin against the boy’; and you would not listen? Now comes the reckoning for his blood.”



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Those three days must have been miserable. They must have been filled with fear and foreboding. Would they ever return to their father? Would they ever regain their freedom? And, most delicate, who would be the one who was released to return to Canaan while the others remained captive? For them, Joseph's experience, which took years, was **condensed to days**. Joseph's words to them were like the sunrise dispelling the darkness. His words are filled with hope and encouragement, not fear and judgment. "Do this and live," Joseph urged them (verse 18). Life, not death, joy, not misery, was what Joseph desired for his brothers. But certain changes had to occur before this could be their experience. The self-interest and cruelty which had caused them to sell him into slavery must be dealt with. That would not come easily or quickly, but it would come.

Joseph's statement, "I, too, fear God" (verse 18) should have been the cause of much deliberation in the days and months to come. What could this "Egyptian" despot possibly have meant by these words? I understand this statement to be a technical expression reserved for use only by those who had a genuine faith in the one true God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When Abraham stood before Abimelech, trying to explain his deceit in passing off his wife as his sister, he said, "Because I thought, surely there is no fear of God in this place; and they will kill me because of my wife" ([Genesis 20:11](#)).

The expression "to fear God" was a technical one, I believe, equivalent to our contemporary expression "born again." **It was spoken by Joseph to inspire hope and to encourage contemplation of what was taking place. It was only after Joseph had given expression to his faith that his brothers began to recognize the hand of God in their lives through these events.**



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Another cause for encouragement was the significant decrease in the demands that were made upon these foreigners. While they were initially told that all must remain captive while one would be allowed to return home for Benjamin, now all but one may return to the land of Canaan. They are expected to take life-sustaining grain to their needy families and then to return with their youngest brother. The words “and they did so” (verse 20) seem to indicate that the ten agreed to the terms Joseph laid down and set out to do them, only to be resisted by their father upon their return (cf. verses 36-38).

It is at this point that the brothers began to talk among themselves, unaware that Joseph understood every word. All along he had used an interpreter, giving them the impression that this “Egyptian” could not speak their language. This kept them from even considering that they might know him, let alone that they might be related to him.

The relationship between their present predicament and their treatment of Joseph was too obvious to overlook. Each of them acknowledged that their difficulties were the result of their sin in regard to Joseph. They had pled for mercy and not received it, just as Joseph had cried for help from the pit and they had ignored him. Reuben then reminded them of his warnings and their resistance. Sin always has consequences, and they were beginning to realize how painful these can be.



# Genesis 42:1-38 – Joseph’s Brothers

## First Visit to Egypt

23 They did not know, however, that Joseph understood, for there was an interpreter between them. 24 **And he turned away from them and wept. But when he returned to them and spoke to them, he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes.** 25 **Then Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain and to restore every man's money in his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. And thus it was done for them.**

26 **So** they loaded their donkeys with their grain, and departed from there. 27 And as one *of them* opened his sack to give his donkey fodder at the lodging place, **he saw his money; and behold, it was in the mouth of his sack.** 28 Then he said to his brothers, **“My money has been returned, and behold, it is even in my sack.”** And their hearts sank, and they turned trembling to one another, saying, “What is this that God has done to us?”



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The heart of Joseph is openly revealed in verse 24. Having overheard the spiritual soul-searching that went on among his brothers, Joseph could contain his emotions no longer. He had to leave their presence, lest by his tears they should discover his identity. **Joseph's actions were not those of a man who did not care for his brothers, but of one who cared so much that he resisted the urge to identify himself in order to promote their spiritual well-being.**

It was Simeon who was chosen by Joseph to remain behind. Was there any particular reason for this choice? It seems so. In a marginal note, the editors of the Berkeley Version suggest,

With Reuben absent when Joseph was sold down to Egypt, Simeon was the responsible leader, being next to the oldest; hence his being retained.

...It was time for his brothers to return home, for their families were soon to run out of grain. Orders were given to fill his brothers' bags with grain and to return their payment, but to conceal it within their bags.



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Probably to ensure that they would not discover the money until it was too late to turn back, provisions were made to meet their needs on the journey home. I would imagine that smaller, separate sacks were provided with food for the men and perhaps their animals, so that the grain sacks with the money would not need to be opened until they arrived home.

Inadvertently, one of the brothers opened his large sack to feed his donkey and discovered his money returned. The brothers' response was, in my estimation, a sign of positive growth. Evil men would have laughed at the stupidity of the servant who must have misplaced the payment and would have enjoyed having put one over on the Egyptians. Such an event would have been considered a stroke of good luck. Yet these men were distraught, for they saw that this was the hand of God, not fate, and that this might be discovered back in Pharaoh palace where their brother Simeon was being held prisoner. They knew that they had promised to return with Benjamin. If this missing money was made known to Joseph, things might not go so well for them on their next visit. It never seemed to occur to the other eight brothers that their money would be found in their sacks too (cf. verse 35).



# Genesis 42:1-38 – Joseph’s Brothers

## First Visit to Egypt

### v29-38 Jacob’s Sons Report to Jacob

29 When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them, saying, 30 “The man, the lord of the land, spoke harshly with us, and took us for spies of the country. 31 **But** we said to him, ‘We are honest men; we are not spies. 32 We are twelve brothers, sons of our father; one is no more, and the youngest is with our father today in the land of Canaan.’ 33 And the man, the lord of the land, said to us, ‘By this I shall know that you are honest men: leave one of your brothers with me and take *grain* for the famine of your households, and go. 34 **But** bring your youngest brother to me that I may know that you are not spies, but honest men. I will give your brother to you, and you may trade in the land.”



# Genesis 42:1-38 – Joseph’s Brothers

## First Visit to Egypt

### v29-38 Jacob’s Sons Report to Jacob

35 Now it came about as they were emptying their sacks, that **behold**, every man's bundle of money was in his sack; and when they and their father saw their bundles of money, they were dismayed. 36 And their father Jacob said to them, “You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and you would take Benjamin; all these things are against me.”

37 **Then** **Reuben** spoke to his father, saying, “You may put my two sons to death **if** I do not bring him *back* to you; put him in my care, and I will return him to you.”

38 **But** Jacob said, “My son shall not go down with you; **for** his brother is dead, and he alone is left. **If** harm should befall him on the journey you are taking, **then** you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow.”



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Upon their arrival the brothers had quite a story to tell. Jacob certainly insisted on an explanation for the absence of Simeon. Still, there is not the response of grief we might expect if one of his more beloved sons had been taken captive. A blow-by-blow account was given by the nine, ending with the bad news that Benjamin would have to be taken along on the next trip if they expected to see Simeon again or to purchase more grain (verse 34).

Apparently the sacks of grain were being unloaded and opened as the report was given to Jacob, for his response to the whole affair is delayed until the discovery of the money in the rest of the sacks which they brought back...

I find it interesting to compare the response of Joseph's brothers to the discovery of the money in the one sack along the way (verses 27-28) with that of Jacob here. There the hand of God was seen. Here nothing is said of God, but only of bad luck and of personal disaster for Jacob.



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In these chapters dealing with the life of Joseph, three different responses to adversity are seen. **For Joseph, his suffering was ultimately from the hand of a loving heavenly Father, Who was near in his affliction** (cf. 39:23, 21-23; 40:8; 41:16,51-52). For his brothers, their adversity was punishment from an angry God, Who was getting even with them for their sin (42:21-22, 28). **For Jacob, it was no more than the fickle hand of fate or, worse yet, the stupidity of his sons, that made his life miserable** (42:36-38). And yet in every instance affliction was the gentle and gracious hand of God, drawing His sons closer to Himself.

**Jacob was in a far different spiritual state than his son Joseph. No wonder it fell to Joseph to function as head of the family so that a spiritual lesson would be learned and the faith of all would be strengthened. How self-centered Jacob's words are. "Poor me!" That is the essence of them. He could not see the gentle hand of God in all of this, but it was there regardless. While affliction drew Joseph ever closer to God, Jacob had seemingly forgotten his faith.**



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A further indication of the breakdown in Jacob's spiritual life was his reaction to the necessity of sending Benjamin to Egypt. Reuben sought to assure Jacob that things would work out all right. Jacob was not to be convinced. Indeed, he was not willing to even take a chance on losing Benjamin. In effect, this meant that Jacob was willing to sacrifice his son Simeon rather than run any risk of losing his favored son Benjamin. Partiality was still very much a part of Jacob's nature.

**No wonder Jacob's sons were willing to sell Joseph into slavery to secure their own selfish interests. For their own gain, they were willing to let Joseph live out his life in Egypt as a slave. This is exactly the effect of Jacob's decision here. Rather than run the slightest risk of losing his beloved Benjamin, Jacob would allow Simeon to spend the rest of his life in Pharaoh's prison and give that Egyptian potentate (Joseph) the impression that his sons' words were untrue. Joseph's brothers were truly sons of their father.**



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Jacob could not live without Benjamin, he protested. There was no way that he would ever give him up (verse 38). **And yet this was precisely the way God had determined to save Jacob and all his family.** Just as Abraham expressed his faith by showing his willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac (22:1-19), Jacob must be willing to give up his son Benjamin. **The very thing Jacob thought would destroy him was to be the means of his salvation.** But this is dealt with in the next chapters. **How blind we are to the workings of God, especially when we are going our own way.**



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In order to understand how Joseph was able to handle his position of power and use it in a way which honored God and blessed his family, we must understand some biblical principles of power. Let me attempt to spell these out.

(1) **Power, like money, is not evil, but a stewardship.** If the power we hold is legitimate power, then it is power that is given by God. From the beginning of the creation, power was given to man by God... ([Gen 1:26](#)).

In [Genesis 9:5-7](#), **governmental authority** was given to man, and this power is reaffirmed in the New Testament...([Romans 13:1](#)).

When Pilate sought to evoke a response from Jesus by impressing Him with the authority he had, Jesus quickly put this power in proper perspective. It was **delegated power**, given by God ... ([John 19:11](#)).

Joseph was well aware that the power he had was given by God. We can see this, for example, when Pharaoh told Joseph that he was aware of his ability to interpret dreams. Joseph was quick to clarify that this power was not his, but God's... ([Genesis 41:15-16](#)).

**The first step toward pride and misuse of power is to forget the source from which our power has come and to overlook the responsibility it brings upon us as stewards...** ([I Corinthians 4:7](#)).



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(2) **Power is not to be sought for self-gain, but used to serve others.** Money is only evil when it is sought for its own sake... ([1 Timothy 6:9-10](#)).

The same is true of power. The Old Testament prophet Ezekiel charged Israel's leaders with having lost sight of the purpose for their power. They began to use it to serve their own ends... ([Ezekiel 34:1-4](#)).

The same evil use of power was evident when our Lord walked upon the earth. He sternly rebuked the scribes and Pharisees for their arrogance and pride as leaders... ([Matthew 23:1-12](#)).

No wonder the disciples were continually inclined to think in terms of rank and to strive after preeminence and power ([Mark 9:34, 10:35-45](#); [Luke 9:33, 22:24](#)). **Greatness cannot be measured in terms of power, but in terms of service.** This is why our Lord said of Himself: For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many ([Mark 10:45](#)).

Is it any surprise that the basic issue between Jesus and the religious establishment was that of authority (cf. [Matthew 21:23](#))? Here was where the great difference was to be seen in their ministries. **Jesus used His power to serve others while they sought it to serve their own ends.**



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As Joseph recalled his dreams, he must have realized that his power was God-given, not to satisfy selfish desires, but to save the nation Israel from physical famine and from spiritual decadence. Therefore he gave grain freely to his brothers rather than to make them “eat crow” to get it. Power in the hands of a servant is a blessed thing, but power in the hands of a tyrant is a curse.

(3) Power is obtained and exercised in various ways. This is not a principle that is particularly evident in our passage, but it is one that enables us to see the application of the principles underlying Joseph’s use of power to our own day and time. You and I will likely never be elevated to the second highest office in our land. Because power comes in a variety of forms, whatever kind of power we have must be seen in the light of the biblical principles pertaining to power. Let me suggest several types of power which are all about us in our time and culture.

**Positional Power.** The first form of power is that which comes with office. A sergeant in the army has authority over a private simply because of his position. An employer has authority over an employee (some might challenge this nowadays). A manager or supervisor has authority over those under him or her. A parent has certain authority over his child, and so on.



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Positional power is not to be confused with personal character or with intrinsic worth. A man who is a rotten person may be a sergeant. Such power is not the product of one's personal qualities but of one's position. A father may be a good one or a bad one, and so with any position. The power which should be granted with any position may be used wickedly, righteously, or not at all, depending upon the one in that position. Joseph had positional power by virtue of his political office of second in command, accountable only to Pharaoh. As Pharaoh expressed it, "Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, you shall do" (41:55).

**Situational Power.** While positional power is the formal mechanism for allocating power, circumstances also have a way of putting power into our hands, for a time at least. For example, suppose that you are a used car salesperson and someone comes into your lot to look at cars. They find a particular car they like but think the price is too high. They tell you they will think it over and get into their car to drive off. Just as their engine starts, clattering and banging begins under the hood, followed by billows of smoke, one last gasp, and silence. That salesperson now has situational power.



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Joseph had situational power as well as positional power. He was second in command to Pharaoh, but his brothers were not under his authority for they lived in Canaan. Once the famine came and Jacob was desperate to purchase grain to keep his family alive, circumstances were such that his sons were forced to come to Joseph and to be subject to his whims. They had no other alternative.

Many of us fail to appreciate the power that comes to us from time to time because of particular situations that give us the upper hand. We may think of these times as opportunities, and we may view our power as “clout” and our manipulations as shrewd. In reality we may be using situational power to gain the advantage over our fellows. I find it interesting to consider the Old Testament Law in the light of this kind of power. God seemed to make it extremely difficult for a Jew to take advantage of his brother just because he was in dire straits (and thus disadvantaged). Money could not be loaned to him at interest ([Exodus 22:25-27](#)), and the poor were to be generously loaned what they needed ([Deuteronomy 15:7-11](#)). At the end of seven years all debts were to be canceled ([Deuteronomy 15:1-2](#)), and slaves were to be released ([Deuteronomy 15:12-15](#)). In the fiftieth year all property purchased from a fellow-Israelite had to be returned to its original owner ([Leviticus 25:8-17](#)).



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It must be said that a **distinction is drawn between Israel's conduct toward a fellow-Israelite and their conduct toward a non-Israelite.** Interest could be charged of non-Israelites for example (Deuteronomy 23:19-20). But never was undue advantage to be taken of anyone, even of foreigners (Exodus 22:21; 23:9,12; Leviticus 19:10). **Situational power is never to be viewed as an opportunity to gain an advantage over a brother.**

**Expert power.** Somewhat more pragmatic is the matter of expert power. Normally, though not always, **expert power is based upon performance.** Few people ask a mechanic where he received his training, or a doctor for that matter. What they really want to know is whether or not that person knows what he is doing.

Joseph provides us with as good an example of this kind of power as can be found. Pharaoh did not really care about Joseph's past, his prison record, or his nationality. What mattered to him, in his time of need, was whether or not he could interpret his dreams. **Beyond his ability to do this, Joseph demonstrated his ability to administrate by proposing a plan of action to deal with the seven years of famine. Joseph's positional power was granted because of his expert power.** Pharaoh was right to place Joseph in a position of power because he had the ability to fulfill the requirements of the job.



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Expert power can be easily abused. A “scientist,” in our day of “sciencism,” is regarded as being an expert, when this may not be the case. Some scientists tell us that the world did not begin as the creative product of an infinite God. They need not be right just because they are scientists, even if they are speaking of matters in their own field of study. Einstein, I am told, was wrong in a number of his scientific theories, but people assumed him to be an expert in every area of scientific investigation. Worse yet, Einstein began to make speculations in other areas, such as theology, where he had little knowledge or expertise.

Those of us who have had the luxury of a seminary education are automatically elevated to the level of a religious “expert,” while this need not be the case. The mere mention of a Hebrew or Greek word, or the employment of an unfamiliar theological term can silence the objection of a godly and mature saint who is intimidated by such apparent expertise. Education can greatly sharpen an open and inquisitive mind, but it can also provide ammunition for a narrow mind which seeks only further confirmation of previously conceived prejudices and opinions.

Especially beware of those times when we who stand behind the pulpit begin to speak authoritatively of things concerning which we have little or no expertise. It is a very tempting thing to use the power of the pulpit and the appearance of an open Bible to substantiate our prejudices and theories. Let us not attempt to misuse the power of our expertise by attempting to add force to our opinions on things about which we are ill informed.



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**Psychological power.** There are various forms of psychological power available to most of us. For example, when I taught school I sometimes found it necessary to paddle students. In particularly serious situations I would take the student(s) to the principal's office and sit them on the floor. Everyone who entered would look down at them and, either verbally or by body language, ask why they were there. In addition to this, I could place the paddle on the desk where they could fix their attention on its every feature (such as the air holes, for added "umpfh"). By the time the paddling time came around, the greatest impact had already been made.

**What power Joseph had over his brothers in this area!** This was a foreign land, and these Hebrew shepherds could neither speak the language (cf. 42:23), nor were they well thought of by the Egyptians (cf. 43:32; 46:34). They were men from the country, and this was the big city (cf. 41:35). The pomp and circumstance of their surroundings as well as the feigned austerity and harshness of Joseph were just about enough to unnerve these brothers (cf. 43:18). **In addition to their fear, Joseph could easily have played upon their guilt, which was not concealed from him** (cf. 42:21-22). These men were like putty in the hands of one as shrewd as Joseph. Such power could have been easily corrupted.

Today psychological power is a very common phenomenon. **Many men have great power because of their physical prowess, booming voices, and aggressive, assertive personalities** (these people make great salesmen). People usually step back and let them control the situation rather than run the risk of confrontation or opposition. Saul had this awesome kind of demeanor, I think (cf. [1 Samuel 9:1-2](#)). Incidentally, so did Goliath ([1 Samuel 17:1-12](#)), as well as the Nephilim ([Numbers 13:32-33](#)). Women who are striking in appearance also have tremendous psychological power.



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**Those of us who are neither physically awesome nor attractive still have some opportunities to exercise psychological power, however.** Women have the uncanny ability to “turn on the tears,” thereby disarming many of us of the opposite sex. Men who have violent tempers have the ability to control things simply by virtue of everyone’s desire not to trigger an explosion that will scald everyone unfortunate enough to be around at the time of a temper tantrum.

There is a variant of psychological power which is especially effective in religious circles. I have labeled this Christian clout “pious power.” **Pious power takes advantage of the impression of greater spirituality by preying upon the insecurity or inferiority feelings of those who feel less spiritual.** By the employment of pious expressions, spiritual jargon, or even tear-filled eyes, those we wish to manipulate are inclined to feel unspiritual, immature, or uncommitted if they do not do what we suggest. This may be done either by an aggressive and assertive Moses-like leader, or by a meek and humble appearing “saint.” Who, for example, can turn down a request to teach a Sunday School class by one who tells us that they have prayed about it for months, often in the early morning hours, and God has told them we are the one to perform this sacred task? That is pious power.

**Reward and punishment power.** While other forms of power have been identified and discussed in the secular arena, I wish only to mention one further form of secular power. It is the power that comes from our ability to give or withhold desirable rewards and the power that can execute or stay judgment.



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A parent most obviously has this kind of power. Husbands can sulk or refuse to talk to their wives, and the wives have subtle ways of punishing their husbands. Preachers from behind the safety (sanctity?) of the pulpit may praise the efforts of certain “cooperative” individuals, or they may “ask for prayer” for those who are resistant to their plans and programs. Joseph, too, had great reward and punishment power over his brothers. He could imprison them as traitors, or he could bestow an abundance of blessings upon them (cf. 45:10-11,16-20).

**Spiritual power.** All of the previous types of power can be used to the glory of God, but they are, in reality, a secular type of power. In contrast to these we must make mention of what I shall refer to as spiritual power.

**Spiritual power does not originate from within man, but it comes from God, Who is the all-powerful Creator and Sustainer of the universe. This power is available to every believer....** ([II Cor 4:7](#); [I Chron 29:10-12](#); [Eph 1:19](#); [3:20-21](#)).

**Spiritual power is inconsistent with human devices and manipulative techniques....** ([I Cor 2:1-5](#); [Zech 4:6](#); [Acts 1:8](#)).

**Spiritual power is not given to those who are humanly capable and confident, but to those who are weak and dependent upon Him for enablement....** ([Isa 53:2-3](#); [I Cor 4:7-13](#); [II Cor 12:9-10](#); [Isa 40:29-31](#)).

**Spiritual power is the divine enablement to save, to keep, to sanctify, to serve, and to rise from the dead when our Lord comes again....** ([John 1:12](#); [Rom 1:16](#); [I Pet 1:5](#); [II Pet 1:3](#); [Matt 28:18-20](#); [Rom 8:11](#); [I Cor 6:14](#)).



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**(4) Spiritual results are the product of spiritual power, not of political power. The great temptation for Joseph was to employ his political power in order to get even with his brothers for the evil they had done to him. While Joseph did employ his secular power to benefit his brethren, it was, in my opinion, his spiritual power which had the greatest results.**

**Did you notice that while Joseph's feigned harshness produced fear, it was his graciousness that resulted in spiritual awareness and the beginnings of repentance? The gruff accusations of Joseph did produce the facts he sought about his father and brother (42:8-13), but it was grace that caused his brothers to consider their circumstances as coming from the hand of God. It was only after Joseph released his brothers from prison and relaxed his demands and offered hope and life by assuring them that he, too, feared God (42:18) that they began to consider God's hand in their dilemma (42:21-22). And it was after they realized that their money was given back to them in the grain sack that they said, "What is this that God has done to us?" (42:28).**

**...That is what Joseph's dealings with his brothers are all about. He was in a position to employ secular power to vent all of his feelings of anger and bitterness but, instead, he used the spiritual power of God, manifested in serving and setting the interests of others first. That began a process of restoration in his brothers.**

**The selfless spirit of Joseph is a remarkable contrast to the self-seeking spirit of Jacob and his ten sons. Joseph could never expect to see his brothers restored by the exercise of secular power, motivated by selfish desire. There is a law of physics which states that every action has an equal and opposite reaction.**



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Human power, motivated by carnal motives, brings about similar reactions. Spiritual power, exercised from godly motives, brings about spiritual ends. Like produces like.

What kind of power do you employ, my friend? And how do you exercise that power that is in your hand? Fathers, do you employ mere physical superiority to bring about only compliance from your children? Or do you use spiritual power to bring about spiritual submission? Do we frustrate our children by a misuse of our power? Do we discourage and embitter our wives by using the authority God has given us in our marriage only to serve our own interests rather than to enrich and enhance our mate? **The question which Joseph poses to every Christian is this: How do we exercise the power which is at our disposal? Do we use it to serve others or to seek our own selfish ends?**

Perhaps we have resorted to secular, worldly power to achieve our goals, even godly goals, simply because we are more accustomed to it. I fear that much that we attempt to accomplish for God is done through merely secular means. Many of our churches could probably be taken over by unbelieving executives and administrators, and we might not even know the difference. Mere religious forms are no guarantee of spiritual power:

... holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power ... ([II Timothy 3:5](#)).

May God enable us to employ spiritual power through spiritual means for His glory and our good.



# BREAK TIME



# Genesis 43:1-34 – Joseph’s Brothers

## Second Visit to Egypt

### v1-14 Jacob and His Sons in Canaan

1 Now the famine was severe in the land. 2 **So** it came about when they had finished eating the grain which they had brought from Egypt, that their father said to them, “**Go back, buy us a little food.**”

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

6 Then **Israel** said, “**Why did you treat me so badly by telling the man whether you still had *another* brother?**”

7 **But** they said, “The man questioned particularly about us and our relatives, saying, ‘Is your father still alive? Have you *another* brother?’ **So** we answered his questions. Could we possibly know that he would say, ‘Bring your brother down?’”



# [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=121](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=121)

We men are going to find Jacob's response to his circumstances most distressing, for it serves as an illustration of leadership very poorly exercised. The characteristics of Jacob's leadership are all too familiar today.

His first response was to “put it off,” to delay in taking action until the matter had reached crisis proportions. Joseph had made an agreement with his brothers that they would take the desperately needed grain home and then return with Benjamin....

This is what his brothers purposed to do, but they were prohibited by Jacob, who refused to let Benjamin leave his side (42:38). Not until their grain had virtually run out did Jacob face up to the matter:

Now the famine was severe in the land. So it come about when they had finished eating the grain which they had brought from Egypt, that their father said to them, “Go back, buy us a little food” ([Genesis 43:1-2](#)).

Judah put his finger on Jacob's procrastination when he chided, “For if we had not delayed, surely by now we could have returned twice” ([Genesis 43:10](#)).



# [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=121](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=121)

If the first principle of Jacob's administration was "put it off," the second was "play it down." One of the ways we can put things off is by convincing ourselves that they are not really all that important. Jacob minimized this matter of the famine, Simeon's captivity, and the inevitable fact that all his sons would have to return to Egypt. I find a clue to this in verse 2 where Jacob said, "Go back, buy us a little food." Why would he possibly tell his sons to buy only a little food? Why would they not buy all the grain they could carry? Naturally, he did not know that the famine was to last another five years (cf. 45:6), but he was aware that the famine was severe (43:1). **Rather than face the problem head on, Jacob wanted to dabble with it a piece at a time. More than anything, I believe he hoped that if only a little grain were sought, perhaps the governor (Joseph) would not hold to his original demand that Benjamin accompany his brothers on their next trip.**

Judah, however, was unwilling to accept the minimizing of his father. After all, it was not Jacob who would have to stand before that Egyptian governor and explain Benjamin's absence. Joseph had insisted that he would not see these men again unless their youngest brother was with them. **The leadership of their father, authority seldom challenged, was firmly rebuffed. They would not return for more grain unless Benjamin accompanied them.**



[http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=121](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=121)

Hoping to alter the course of history, Jacob sought to change the minds of his sons by placing the responsibility for their circumstances **solely on them**. In effect, Jacob said to his sons, “It’s all your fault. None of this would have happened if you hadn’t told the Egyptian about your youngest brother.” If it were all their fault, then why should they be belligerent about trying to solve the matter on their own without jeopardizing the life of Benjamin and the happiness of their father?

But the matter went much deeper than this. It was not just a matter of telling family secrets out of school—it was an issue of being truthful. The information they gave to Joseph was in response to very direct questioning (43:7). The reason for this directness would only be learned at a later time when Joseph disclosed his identity. **Jacob, then, was rebuking his sons for telling the truth. The old ways of deception were still there, and in times of adversity Jacob did not hesitate to employ them. Jacob’s response might be summarized, “Why didn’t you do as I would have done? Lie about it.”**



# Genesis 43:1-34 – Joseph’s Brothers

## Second Visit to Egypt

8 And Judah said to his father Israel, “Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, we as well as you and our little ones. 9 I myself will be surety for him; you may hold me responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame before you forever. 10 For if we had not delayed, surely by now we could have returned twice.”

11 Then their father Israel said to them, “If it must be so, then do this: take some of the best products of the land in your bags, and carry down to the man as a present, a little balm and a little honey, aromatic gum and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds. 12 And take double the money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was a mistake. 13 Take your brother also, and arise, return to the man; 14 and may God Almighty grant you compassion in the sight of the man, that he may release to you your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.”



# [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=121](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=121)

While Reuben's efforts to persuade his father to let Benjamin return to Egypt with the others had been resisted, Judah begins to emerge as a leader in the family. His words encourage Jacob to make that painful decision to let Benjamin go...

Judah's offer is once more forcefully made. He urged his father to stop thinking of himself and to act in accordance with his responsibility for the entire clan. While Jacob spoke only of "I," "me," and "my," Judah thought in terms of "we," "us," and "our" (contrast 42:36,38 with 43:8). Judah seems to speak for all his brothers in refusing to go again to Egypt without Benjamin. He also rebukes Jacob for his needless delay in sending Benjamin to Egypt. Whereas Reuben offered only his sons in return for his failure, Judah offers himself as the guarantee of a successful mission (verse 9).

I believe it was a combination of all these forces—the severity of the famine, the depletion of the Egyptian grain, the threat of the brothers not to return to Egypt without Benjamin, and the assurances of Judah—which persuaded Jacob to consent to release Benjamin for the journey to Egypt. The verses which follow indicate that Jacob is only passively and reluctantly surrendering to his circumstances. His leadership at this time lacks any sign of spiritual maturity or great faith.



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Taken as a whole, we can suggest the principles which seemed to have governed Jacob's actions at this time in his life. I do not recommend them to anyone, but at least we shall spell them out in order to stimulate a re-appraisal of our own leadership.

### Jacob's Seven Laws of Leadership

- (1) **Whatever problems arise today are best dealt with tomorrow.** Jacob delayed acting decisively on the issue of sending Benjamin to Egypt until the situation reached crisis proportions. Given enough time anything could happen, Jacob reasoned, and he was willing to wait indefinitely on this slim hope.
- (2) **No problem can possibly be as bad as it seems.** If the first principle betrays a "manana mentality," the second is the effort to minimize the problem to the point that it hardly seems worth giving time to its solution. If the problem is not serious, then it can be put off indefinitely.
- (3) **Honesty is not the best policy.** Jacob still had a lot of the old deceiver in him. He believed that good communication only causes problems. He thought that the less others knew about him, the better off he and his family were. Judah was thus rebuked for telling Joseph any facts about the family. Many Christians today operate on this same principle. They think that keeping others from knowing them well avoids problems, but they, like Jacob, are desperately misled. Sin loves secrecy and darkness, while righteousness loves the light (cf. [John 3:19-21](#)).



# [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=121](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=121)

(4) **Always look out for number one.** Jacob's leadership was consistently exercised in the light of his own personal interests. It was Judah who urged his father to think of others rather than himself (cf. verse 3). No leader is harder to follow than the one who seeks only his own interests. Conversely, **no leader is easier to follow than the one who seeks the best interests of those he leads** (cf. [Ephesians 5:22ff.](#)).

(5) **As much as is possible, see to it that others receive the blame for any problems.** Jacob sought to place the responsibility on Judah and his brothers because they told the truth (verse 6). **A good leader is one who is willing to accept the responsibility for his mistakes.**

(6) **If our efforts to solve a problem fail, add money.** Jacob hoped that his presents, along with double payment, would help achieve his desired ends. Christians are often accused of being the last to reach for their wallets. Whether this is true or not, we are all tempted to resort to monetary solutions to our problems. We may pay our children for behaving as they should or offer to pay whatever it takes to solve their problems. Money seldom solves problems, while it causes many.

(7) **When all else fails, trust God.** It is no accident that Jacob mentions God last. It never seemed to occur to him as it did to Joseph that God was active in all of his troubles. His wish that God would be with his sons is only a last ditch effort when it should have been his first line of defense. "Foxhole religion" is not new, and it did not cease with Jacob.



# Genesis 43:1-34 – Joseph’s Brothers

## Second Visit to Egypt

### v15-25 Joseph Meets His Brothers Again

15 **So** the men took this present, and they took double *the* money in their hand, and Benjamin; **then** they arose and went down to Egypt and stood before Joseph. 16 When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to his house steward, “**Bring the men into the house, and slay an animal and make ready; for the men are to dine with me at noon.**” 17 **So** the man did as Joseph said, and brought the men to Joseph's house.

18 Now the men were afraid, **because** they were brought to Joseph's house; and they said, “***It is because of the money that was returned in our sacks the first time that we are being brought in, that he may seek occasion against us and fall upon us, and take us for slaves with our donkeys.***”



# Genesis 43:1-34 – Joseph's Brothers

## Second Visit to Egypt

19 **So** they came near to Joseph's house steward, and spoke to him at the entrance of the house, 20 and said, “Oh, my lord, we indeed came down the first time to buy food, 21 and it came about when we came to the lodging place, that we opened our sacks, **and behold**, each man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full. **So** we have brought it back in our hand. 22 We have also brought down other money in our hand to buy food; we do not know who put our money in our sacks.”

23 And he said, “**Be at ease, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money.**”

**Then** he brought Simeon out to them. 24 **Then** the man brought the men into Joseph's house and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their donkeys fodder. 25 **So** they prepared the present for Joseph's coming at noon; **for** they had heard that they were to eat a meal there.



# [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=121](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=121)

When Joseph looked out and beheld Benjamin with his older brothers, he set a plan in motion, apparently without talking to them. He instructed his servant to take these men into his house and to prepare a meal for them in a way that parallels the reception of the prodigal son in the New Testament ([Luke 15:11-32](#)).

Unaware that they were being taken into Joseph's home to partake of the noon meal, they thought it was they who were destined for slaughter. Their fears were largely due to being taken to his house (verse 18). We must remember that **prisons were located in the homes of well-to-do political figures.** Now what do you suppose was to be found at Joseph's house? These brothers were not so much concerned with being conducted into this house as they were with being confined under it, in the dungeon. Perhaps this was the dungeon where Simeon was being detained.

In desperation they took the steward aside to explain how they had found their money in their sacks and that they had brought it with them to repay it. The steward sought to calm their fears by assuring them that he had received the money for their grain. Indeed he had, but he did not mention to them that it was he, under Joseph's orders, who also returned it. In keeping with later biblical instruction on giving (cf. [Matthew 6:2-4](#)), the steward informed these men that it was their God and the God of their father who had provided this money (verse 23). To further assure them, he brought out Simeon and returned him to them.



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Then the man brought the men into Joseph's house and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their donkeys fodder. So they prepared the present for Joseph's coming at noon; for they had heard that they were to eat a meal there ([Genesis 43:24-25](#)).

By this time the men had learned that the reason for their being brought to Joseph's home was to partake in the noon meal with him (verse 25). Anticipating Joseph's arrival, they first were given water to drink and freshen up and fodder to feed their animals. After this, they set themselves to the task of preparing the gift which they would present to Joseph when he arrived (verse 25).

I think **they must have put a great deal of effort into the preparation and presentation of the gift.** For one thing, it appeared that they had gained **some favor in the eyes of Joseph, to be invited for a meal.** What better time to follow up with their gift? Also, their efforts to give back the money found in their sacks had been brushed aside. It had seemingly not made the impression which they had hoped for. **Everything seemed to ride on how they handled matters when they again met Joseph.** I can imagine these men arranging their goods, first one way and then the other. How important this gift was going to be, they supposed.



# Genesis 43:1-34 – Joseph’s Brothers

## Second Visit to Egypt

### v26-34 Feasting in Joseph’s House

26 When Joseph came home, they brought into the house to him the present which was in their hand and bowed to the ground before him. 27 **Then** he asked them about their welfare, and said, “Is **your old father** well, of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?”

28 And they said, “**Your servant our father** is well; he is still **alive.**” And they bowed down in homage.

29 As he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, he said, “Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me?” And he said, “May God be gracious to you, my son.” 30 And Joseph hurried out for he was deeply stirred over his brother, and he sought a place to weep; and he entered his chamber and wept there. 31 Then he washed his face, and came out; and he controlled himself and said, “Serve the meal.”



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To Joseph's brothers nothing was more important than those pistachio nuts and almonds. These nuts, along with the other products of the land of Canaan, were expected to win Joseph's favor. He never gave them a glance. He did not ask how they were grown or what year they were produced. He didn't care. Joseph was only concerned with people, not pistachio nuts; he cared about his brother Benjamin, his father Jacob, and the rest of his brethren. His first utterance sought information on the health of his aged father (verse 27). Next he turned his attention to Benjamin, who he had not seen for over twenty years. Joseph pronounced upon Benjamin a blessing which should have sounded strange coming from an Egyptian (cf. [Genesis 33:5,11](#); [Numbers 6:25](#); [Psalm 67:1](#)).

Seeing the only other son of his mother was too much for Joseph to contain. Quickly he left the presence of his brothers to weep and to regain control of his emotions (verse 30). After regaining his composure and washing his face, Joseph returned and ordered the meal to be served. In complete harmony with the Egyptian culture (and to continue concealing his identity), Joseph ate at one table, his Egyptian servants at another, and his brothers at still another table, somewhat separate, yet in front of him...



# Genesis 43:1-34 – Joseph’s Brothers

## Second Visit to Egypt

### v26-34 Feasting in Joseph’s House

32 **So** they served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians, who ate with him, by themselves; **because** the Egyptians could not eat bread with the Hebrews, **for** that is loathsome to the Egyptians.

33 Now they were seated before him, the first-born according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth, and the men looked at one another in astonishment. 34 And he took portions to them from his own table; **but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs.** **So** they feasted and drank freely with him.



# [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=121](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=121)

Most puzzling of all, Joseph had arranged for his brothers to be seated in the order of their ages, from the oldest to the youngest. While all of his brothers were well fed, Benjamin received a portion that was five times greater than his brothers. The seating arrangement did not pass Joseph's brothers by without notice, and they were amazed at how this could be done. **While it did not suggest to them that Joseph was their brother, it did convince them that this man had a knowledge and insight that was far from normal. He possessed a power greater than others (cf. 44:15)....**

...While Joseph's generosity to Benjamin served to highlight the fact that he was now, in place of Joseph, the favored son, I don't believe this was Joseph's reason for his actions at the table. This, like the return of the money to his brothers, was motivated by genuine love and benevolence. Joseph did have a more intimate relationship with Benjamin, and he did not hesitate to reveal it. This act provided more food for thought for his brothers to digest....

Joseph understood his responsibility as head of the family and as God's instrument to bring his father and brothers to the point of spiritual insight and genuine change. I believe that he did this in just the same way that we serve as God's instruments, one step at a time. The kindness which Joseph showed to his brothers in chapter 43 was with no hidden or ulterior motives, but only to bestow blessing upon them. The test of chapter 44 is seen to **be necessary in the light of their departure, yet without fully revealing their character. The blessings at Joseph's disposal were to be poured out on men who had shown genuine repentance. That repentance would become evident in the test which was to follow.**



# Genesis Chapter 44



# Genesis 44:1-34 – Judah’s Plea for Benjamin

## v1-13 Joseph’s Silver Cup

1 **Then** he commanded his house steward, saying, “Fill the men’s sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man’s money in the mouth of his sack. 2 And put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, and his money for the grain.” And he did as Joseph had told *him*.

3 As soon as it was light, the men were sent away, they with their donkeys. 4 They had *just* gone out of the city, *and* were not far off, when Joseph said to his house steward, “Up, follow the men; and when you overtake them, say to them, ‘Why have you repaid evil for good? 5 Is not this the one from which my lord drinks, and which he indeed uses for divination? You have done wrong in doing this.’”



# Genesis 44:1-34 – Judah's Plea for Benjamin

6 **So** he overtook them and spoke these words to them. 7 And they said to him, “**Why does my lord speak such words as these? Far be it from your servants to do such a thing.** 8 **Behold**, the money which we found in the mouth of our sacks we have brought back to you from the land of Canaan. How then could we steal silver or gold from your lord's house? 9 With whomever of your servants it is found, let him die, and we also will be my lord's slaves.”

10 **So** he said, “**Now let it also be according to your words; he with whom it is found shall be my slave, and *the rest of you shall be innocent.***” 11 **Then** they hurried, each man lowered his sack to the ground, and each man opened his sack. 12 And he searched, beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest, and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. 13 **Then** they tore their clothes, and when each man loaded his donkey, they returned to the city.



# [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=121](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=121)

Contextually and historically, chapter 43 serves at least two functions. First, it reveals the fears of Jacob and his sons to be entirely groundless. The best that these men could hope for was the release of Simeon and the safe return of all the men (verse 14). Little did these men know that the governor of Egypt was the son of Jacob and brother to his sons. What God had planned for them through the instrumentality of Joseph was more than they could ask or think (cf. [1 Corinthians 2:9](#)). **While Joseph had faced his trials with faith, his father and brothers agonized in their testing, plagued with unfounded fears.**

In a very special way, chapter 43 prepares us for the “acid test” of chapter 44. We might be inclined to view Joseph as engineering this plot in order to vent some of his hostilities toward his brothers. Was this not a cruel and inhuman test? The answer is a resounding “No!” as evidenced by the genuine tears of love and compassion he shed, unknown to his brothers, in chapter 43. **Why did Moses inform us of the emotional feelings of Joseph (42:23-24, 43:30) if they were not known to his brothers? Simply because he intended for us to understand Joseph’s motivation for his actions. Every test and every hardship which Joseph imposed upon his brothers was an act of genuine love.**

What a lesson this gives us in the area of discipline. We are inclined to glibly tell our children, “This hurts me more than it does you,” when we correct them, and I would hope from the example of Joseph that this is really so. **Discipline that makes us feel better should be subject to careful scrutiny. Discipline that brings genuine tears to our eyes is from a heart filled with love....**



# [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=121](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=121)

I learn another lesson from Joseph. I see that **in his dealings with his brothers he found it necessary to control his emotions in order to do what was right.** Now his emotions were not wrong, and thus to be denied or repressed. **Joseph's tears were the proper response to his circumstances. His tears were shed in private to conceal his identity, but his emotions were brought under control so as to do what was best for his brothers.** Had Joseph's emotions reigned, his brothers would not have been brought to genuine repentance. If Joseph had merely "done what his heart told him," he would have immediately revealed his identity, but stimulating their spiritual growth was more important.

Our emotions are God-given, and most of us (men, at least) are always trying to deny them. Tears were not a shame to Joseph; they simply did not further his purpose. It is a commonly held viewpoint that we should do what our heart tells us to do, that we should let love lead the way. I do not believe this is true if we equate "love" with our emotional feelings. Biblical (agape) love is not an emotion so much as it is a commitment. **Acting in love may involve acting contrary to our feelings.**

Let me seek to illustrate this. Those of us who believe in spanking our children (as the Bible instructs us, [Proverbs 13:24](#); 19:18; 23:13-14) know how this works. We hardly have gotten the paddle into our hand when our child begins to wail as if he or she is dying, but we haven't done anything yet. Those cries tug at our heart strings, and our hearts plead with us to put down the rod. At this point our emotions must be controlled, and love must will to do what is right. It should be no pleasure to punish our children, and the pain we cause ourselves may indicate that what was done was in genuine love...



# [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=121](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=121)

Love, that is, real love, must always be regulated by and subject to knowledge and discernment. What may appear to be loving, may be the opposite.

What a beautiful picture this chapter provides us of the discipline which God exercises in the lives of His children. Only Joseph fully recognized all of these things as coming from the hand of a loving and caring God (cf. 45:5-8; 50:20). Jacob and his other sons saw it mainly as the “fickle hand of fate.” When some did realize that their trials were from God, it would appear that they perceived an angry God who was only seeking vengeance (cf. 42:21,28). This is just the way they viewed Joseph, as a harsh and angry man (cf. 43:3). But just as Joseph’s severity was feigned (42:7), so God’s apparent harshness toward His children is unreal. The discipline which comes from God, like that which came from Joseph, is from a heart filled with grief and injured love (cf. [Hebrews 12:1-13](#)). Its desired end is not revenge, but restoration. It seeks to bring us to the place where His blessings may once again flow freely into our lives. But so long as we choose to go our own wayward way, we will discover that “... the way of the treacherous is hard” ([Proverbs 13:15](#)).

Joseph’s brothers provide us with an excellent illustration of salvation. In their current spiritual state they faced Joseph with the greatest fear. They perceived their only “salvation” to be in their “works” of returning the money they found in their sacks and in the pistachio nuts and other presents they brought from Canaan. The first was refused by the steward, and the second was ignored by Joseph. It was not their works that endeared these brothers to Joseph; it was their relationship to him. That is what they did not yet realize.



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In the same way today sinful men dread the thought of standing before a righteous and holy God. The future must be faced with great fear. Frantically men and women seek to gain God's favor and acceptance by their "pistachio nuts" of good works. Such things as trying to live by the Golden Rule or the Sermon on the Mount, joining the church, and being baptized, are unacceptable to God as a basis for salvation. **What saves a man or a woman is a relationship with Him through Jesus Christ.**

When we stand before the throne of God, the only thing God will be interested in is our relationship to His Son, Jesus Christ. As our Lord Himself put it, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me" ([John 14:6](#))....

From Jacob we can learn a number of lessons. **First**, as we have already pointed out, Jacob provides us with an excellent example of how we are not to lead. **Second**, Jacob reminds us that it is our efforts to save ourselves that lead to our ruin. It is only when we give up striving to save our life and accept God's provision that we are saved... ([Mt 16:25](#)).



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Jacob was putting all his hopes for the future on his son Benjamin (42:38; 44:29-31). **Without Jacob's realizing it, God had purposed to save him and his sons through Joseph**, who was rejected by his brothers, marked for death, and who was, so far as Jacob knew, dead. Later this son who "was no more" was elevated to the throne where he was able to save his brethren. Jacob's hopes were placed on the wrong son. It was through Judah, who offered himself in place of Benjamin, and Joseph, who was rejected and then exalted, that Jacob and his sons were saved. **Jacob would be saved God's way or not at all. God had to systematically pull out all the props from under him before he was willing to accept things God's way.** How characteristic this is of us.

**Finally**, Jacob reminds us that the only reason the saints persevere is because God perseveres to bring about the accomplishment of what He has promised. Humanly speaking, if Jacob had gotten his way (by keeping Benjamin home with him, where it was "safe"), the nation would never have gone to Egypt where it was spared from physical famine and spiritual disaster (e.g., [Genesis 38](#)). Jacob was in no way furthering God's purposes; he was fighting them. **God saved the nation in spite of him**. How encouraging it is to know that our ultimate destiny is in His hands, not ours.

For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus ([Philippians 1:6](#)).



# Genesis 44:1-34 – Judah’s Plea for Benjamin

## v14-17 The Brothers Reject the Offer to Leave Without Benjamin

14 When **Judah** and his brothers came to Joseph's house, he was still there, and they fell to the ground before him. 15 And Joseph said to them, “What is this deed that you have done? Do you not know that such a man as I can indeed practice divination?”

16 **So Judah** said, “What can we say to my lord? What can we speak? And how can we justify ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants; **behold**, we are my lord's slaves, both we and the one in whose possession the cup has been found.”

17 **But** he said, “Far be it from me to do this. The man in whose possession the cup has been found, he shall be my slave; **but** as for you, go up in peace to **your father.**”



# [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=121](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=121)

Here was the first phase of the final test of Joseph's brothers. While they had initially insisted that the thief die and the others remain as slaves, the steward set the penalty as slavery only for the culprit. The others could go on their way. And yet, **all of the brothers tore their clothes as a sign of grief and mourning, and all of them returned to Joseph's house.** Had they acted only in self-interest, they would have renounced Benjamin as a thief, deserted him, and fled from Egypt as quickly as possible. But something different was taking place. **These were not the same men that had determined to do away with Joseph at Dothan** (cf. [Genesis 37:18ff.](#)).

More than twenty years had passed since they had sold Joseph into slavery, and yet it was as though they were reliving the event in the person of Benjamin. **Before, they had resented the fact that Joseph had observed their misconduct and reported it to Jacob (37:2).** Further, they resented the favoritism Jacob showed to Joseph (37:4) just as Jacob was now partial to Benjamin (cf. 44:27-31). When far from the watchful eye of their father, they found an occasion to get rid of Joseph. First they decided to kill him violently (37:20), then to starve him to death in a pit (37:22), and finally to sell him into slavery for silver (37:26-28).



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Now they were faced with a most similar situation. Benjamin, Jacob's beloved, was in their care, far from Jacob's protection. He was accused of a terrible crime for which there was no opportunity to establish his innocence. They, without any real guilt, such as they deserved before, could merely choose to walk away and enjoy their liberty at Benjamin's expense. They could return to their father just as they had done so long ago and break his heart with the news that his other son was "no more." More than twenty years later, the same temptation faces these men. Will they evidence a change of heart, or will they act in self-interest? That is what Joseph must know. The moment of truth has arrived.

... Joseph is still at home as the heartbroken party returns. They fall prostrate before him, no longer seeking justice as before (verses 7-9), but mercy. Joseph rebuked them for their wicked deed, again reminding them of his ability to learn (by "divination") the true facts of the matter. They could not deceive him; he knew all. That is the thrust of his words.



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Judah seeks to convey their brokenness. They are without any defense. He does not acknowledge guilt in the matter of the cup, nor does he seek to give an explanation. **He does confess that they now see the origin of this disaster. It is God against whom they have sinned** (verse 16). It is not for the theft of Joseph's cup that they are now in trouble, but for their sins of the past. While not stated (how, after all, would this Egyptian know anything of their previous sins?), Judah's acknowledgment of sin must refer primarily to the sale of Joseph into slavery. As all were guilty of that sin (except Benjamin, interestingly), so they are all guilty before the governor of Egypt, and thus all are his slaves. They will suffer together since they shared in a common act of sin.

But Joseph would not hear of this. Why should all suffer for the sin of one? As a mere Egyptian he could not know of their past sins. He was only intent upon making matters right in regard to the theft of his silver cup. No, all would be sent home to their father except Benjamin, and he would remain as Joseph's slave (verse 17).



# Genesis 44:1-34 – Judah's Plea for Benjamin

## v18-34 Judah's Plea

18 Then **Judah** approached him, and said, “Oh my lord, may your servant please speak a word in my lord's ears, and do not be angry with your servant; **for** you are equal to Pharaoh. 19 My lord asked his servants, saying, ‘Have you **a father** or a brother?’ 20 And we said to my lord, ‘We have **an old father** and a little child of *his* old age. Now his brother is dead, **so** he alone is left of his mother, and **his father** loves him.’ 21 **Then** you said to your servants, ‘Bring him down to me, **that** I may set my eyes on him.’ 22 **But** we said to my lord, ‘The lad cannot leave his father, **for if** he should leave **his father**, **his father** would die.’ 23 You said to your servants, **however**, ‘**Unless** your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall not see my face again.’”



# Genesis 44:1-34 – Judah’s Plea for Benjamin

24 “**Thus** it came about when we went up to **your servant my father**, we told him the words of my lord. 25 And **our father** said, ‘Go back, buy us a little food.’ 26 **But** we said, ‘We cannot go down. **If** our youngest brother is with us, **then** we will go down; **for** we cannot see the man's face **unless** our youngest brother is with us.’ 27 And **your servant my father** said to us, ‘You know that my wife bore me two sons; 28 and the one went out from me, and I said, “**Surely** he is torn in pieces,” and I have not seen him since. 29 And **if** you take this one also from me, and harm befalls him, you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow.’



# Genesis 44:1-34 – Judah’s Plea for Benjamin

30 “Now, **therefore**, when I come to **your servant my father**, and the lad is not with us, since his life is bound up in the lad's life, 31 it will come about when he sees that the lad is not *with us*, **that** he will die. **Thus** your servants will bring the gray hair of **your servant our father** down to Sheol in sorrow. 32 **For** your servant became surety for the lad to **my father**, saying, ‘**If** I do not bring him *back* to you, **then** let me bear the blame before **my father** forever.’ 33 Now, **therefore**, please let your servant remain instead of the lad a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers. 34 **For** how shall I go up to **my father** **if** the lad is not with me, **lest** I see the evil that would overtake **my father**?”



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Everyone knows what happens next. Joseph will identify himself as their brother, and the entire situation is suddenly reversed. But that is the subject of the next chapter. The question which we must concern ourselves with is this: **Why did Joseph suddenly reveal his identity now? What caused him to suddenly throw off his disguise?**

A casual consideration of this passage might lead us to conclude that Judah had been successful in tugging at Joseph's heart strings. Joseph disclosed himself because he could stand it no longer. This explanation is not sufficient, and it does not fit the facts. On previous occasions Joseph had also been emotionally touched (42:24; 43:30), but he had always been able to restrain these emotions. It was not that now his emotions finally controlled Joseph, but that Joseph's purposes had been realized. **Judah's appeal did not change Joseph's heart so much as it revealed that Judah's heart had undergone a significant change since the day many years before when he had been instrumental in selling Joseph into slavery. In short, Joseph was now able to reveal his identity because genuine repentance had been evidenced.**

Up until this moment there was insufficient evidence of repentance. Previous chapters have indicated that Joseph's brothers recognized their suffering as the result of their sin, but at best they felt only regret. They wished, I believe, that they had not sold Joseph into slavery. Perhaps they were sorry that their father



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had to suffer as he did. And they regretted that they had to endure the consequences of their sins. This was a good beginning, but it was not enough. Regret is no more than what we would expect from anyone who is faced with the unpleasant consequences of sin. Every prisoner regrets their crime, or at least the fact that they were caught. **But repentance is more than regret.**

The regrets of Judah and his brothers had not brought them to the point of confessing their sin to Jacob nor of making any attempt to learn of Joseph's fate. But now, **given the opportunity to repeat their sin, there is a significant change of heart and action on the part of Joseph's brothers, as exemplified by Judah.** They had once determined to do away with Joseph, regardless of its impact upon Jacob, in order to seek revenge and to avoid becoming Joseph's subordinates. Now, just the opposite was true. **Judah was willing to become the slave of Joseph, even though he was declared innocent of the theft of the silver cup. He could not stand the thought of causing any further suffering.** That, my friend, is genuine repentance.

That brings us to the point of defining repentance. **Repentance is the recognition of our sins which results in the kind of sorrow that brings about a change in our intellect, emotions, and will.** In other words, **repentance recognizes sin and is genuinely sorry for it, so much so that this sin will be shunned and a new course of action will be sought.**



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The principle which underlies the protracted dealings of Joseph in the lives of his brothers is this: **there can be no reconciliation without genuine repentance.** That is what caused Joseph to delay so long in revealing his identity to his brothers. If there were to be true unity in his family, there must first be true reconciliation. And that reconciliation would not come before his brothers experienced and evidenced biblical repentance.

...Joseph's dealings with his brothers have a great deal of application to men today. For those who have never come to faith in Christ, there is an illustration of salvation. **God, like Joseph, desires to pour out upon men, whom He loves, the riches which are His to give.** But men cannot be blessed until their sins have been dealt with. To Joseph's brothers, this Egyptian potentate was all-wise and all-powerful, but harsh and to be feared. Yet to us, he was a loving brother whose tears revealed his heart and his earnest desires. In order to bring his brothers to repentance, Joseph had to put them to the test and make their lives appear to be in peril. **But when they recognized themselves as sinners deserving any sentence Joseph had to pronounce upon them, repentance was realized, and Joseph was free to reveal himself to be a loving brother, not a vengeful master.**

**Regretting your sins and their consequences in your life is not enough. That sorrow for sin must turn to a hatred of sin, a desire to turn from it, and a dependence upon God for forgiveness from sin and freedom from its power.**

